

What to WATCH

SONY ESPN
Indian Premier League
Hyderabad v Pune
Live from 8:30pm

TEN HD
Champions league
Man City v Real Madrid
Live from 12:45am (Wednesday)

DAY'S EVENT
AFC Cup
Sheikh Jamal v Tampines Rovers

MESSI KEEPS HIS WORD

Lionel Messi has delivered on his promise to send Stephen Curry his No.10 Barcelona jersey after the Golden State Warriors star reached 10 million followers on Instagram. In December, Messi received a Warriors jersey from reigning NBA MVP Curry when he reached 30 million followers on the social media photo-sharing service. Messi vowed to return the favour when Curry made it to 10 million on his official account and Barcelona's all-time leading goalscorer did not disappoint, fulfilling his pledge. "Hey 'maestro' as promised, here is my number 10 jersey I'm sending over you," Messi said via his official Instagram page. "I hope to see you play for many more years to come and I wish you all the success possible. Big hug."



Munir's gunmen appease none

SPORTS REPORTER

While Mohammedan's return to the hockey pitch after nearly 45 months was a relief for most hockey players and officials, the club's top official's ballistic appearance on the pitch seemingly wiped out some of that feel-good factor from the opening day of the competition. Shafullah Al Munir, the club's hockey committee chairman, stunned everyone as he entered the playing area with bodyguards who were equipped with firearms. The incident raised eyebrows and questions regarding Munir's integrity towards the game as entering the playing area with guns is forbidden as per the laws of the game.

"Those who are with me did not enter the playing area. You can ask whether I was carrying something. My personal security men did not do anything which looks odd. They just provided security as much as I needed, but they did not enter the playing area," claimed Munir, who was recently nominated as a vice-president of the Bangladesh Hockey Federation.

Munir seemingly briefed Mohammedan players with two gunmen standing behind him, and both the gunmen were around the dugout even after the game got underway. They only left the area after spotting movements of the media.

It has been learnt that Munir later sought apology to the federation's general secretary Abdus Sadeque and promised not to enter the field with gunmen again.



Mohammedan skipper Rasel Mahmud Jimmy dinks the ball over the advancing Bangladesh SC goalkeeper during their Marcel Club Cup fixture at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Napoli slip-up secures Juve title

AGENCIES, Milan



Defending champions Juventus mathematically secured a record-equalling fifth consecutive Serie A title on Sunday after Roma stunned second-placed Napoli with a last-gasp winner.

Juventus, emulating their feat of 1935 when the Turin giants won a fifth straight title for the first time, had gone 12 points clear of Napoli with a 2-1 win at Fiorentina on Saturday when goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon made a last-gasp penalty save from Nikola Kalinic.

Napoli had to beat Roma to have any chance of maintaining their bid for a first title in 26 years, but Maurizio Sarri's men were stunned when Radja Nainggolan hit an 89th minute winner for the hosts.

It left Juve 12 points clear of Napoli with only three games remaining this season. Napoli remain second but are now just two points ahead of Roma.

The game between Serie A's two highest-scoring sides was threatening to peter out into a tame goalless draw until Nainggolan slotted the ball home in the 89th minute following a move started with a delicate pass from Roma substitute Francesco Totti.

During the first half of the season, the lead had changed almost weekly with AS Roma, Napoli, Inter Milan and Fiorentina all taking turns at the top.

But, as their rivals faltered, Juventus, who beat Fiorentina 2-1 on Sunday, put together an astonishing run in which they took 73 points out of a possible 75 to win the title with games to spare.

Roma had more possession but Napoli, whose top-scorer Gonzalo Higuain returned after a three-match ban, carved out the better chances and Jose Callejon had a first-half goal ruled out by a hairline offside decision.

MSC's winning return

SPORTS REPORTER



After a 45-month hiatus, Mohammedan SC returned to hockey pitch with a victory when handed a 4-2 defeat to Bangladesh SC in the opening match of the Marcel Club Cup at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Mohammedan and three other clubs had refrained from taking part in domestic competitions since the Black and Whites' last appearance -- the 2012 Premier Hockey League which they won -- due to a row with the executive committee. The stalemate broke recently, thanks to some positional changes at the top level of BHF. And now the Mohammedan players and officials are ecstatic to return to the turf. They believe tournaments would now turn more competitive and draw more spectators.

"It is true that Mohammedan did not take part in any activities for nearly four years due to some disagreements, but it is also true that there was no play in the last two-and-a-half years. As a result a lot of players had left hockey. Now we need to keep hockey rolling to make up for that loss and I believe we can revive hockey, however, we need to work hard," said Mohammedan's hockey team manager Ariful Haque Prince, who categorically admitted that their decision to walk out was wrong.

"Now the responsibility is on the management to keep hockey rolling and we expect hockey to go on without interruption," said Mohammedan captain and national team forward Rasel Mahmud Jimmy.

Even though four-time Club Cup champions Mohammedan returned with a victory, the way they played against minnows Bangladesh SC was not convincing at all. Most of the former national players could hardly move with their bulky physique, but thanks an excellent performance by Jimmy, who scored one goal and set up two more that the Black and Whites collected maximum points.

Mohammedan took the lead in the fourth minute through a strike from Lalon before Iqbal Nadir levelled the margin four minutes into the second half. Jimmy restored the lead in the 41st minute before Rubel Hossain made it 3-1 seven minutes later. Rubel struck again in the 56th minute before Belal made it 4-2 eight minutes later.

In the day's second match, two-time champions Abahani came from two goals down to play out a 2-2 draw against Sonali Bank SRC, who went ahead through strikes from Taher Ali (15') and Helal (28'). Khorshedur Rahman pulled one back from penalty corner in the 44th minute before Maksudul Alam Habul equalised two minutes later.

Beckham's son shows up Neymar

AGENCIES, London

Neymar may have ended his five-game scoreless streak for Barcelona with goals against Deportivo and Sporting Gijon, but his week was rounded off with some bad news.

The Brazilian jetted off to Paris last month to meet up with long-term admirer and Hollywood actress Chloe Grace Moretz, sharing the night on social media to prompt speculation among fans.

The Kick-Ass and Hugo star is a big fan of the Brazilian, tweeting multiple times about Neymar during the 2014 World Cup, but has now cosied up to Brooklyn Beckham!

The pair were pictured in London, with the actor in town to film the upcoming live-action remake of 'The Little Mermaid', and now Beckham's son has hinted at the relationship on Instagram.

City plot Real downfall

REUTERS, London



Until this season Manchester City's progression in the Champions League could be measured in baby steps but on Tuesday they can make a huge leap forward when they host Real Madrid in their first European semifinal for 45 years.

The Abu Dhabi-backed English club have already broken new ground this season, moving past the last 16 stage that proved their limit for the past two seasons having failed even to survive the group stage prior to that.

In seeing off Paris St Germain, who have similar financial muscle, in the quarterfinals they delivered a powerful statement of intent to reach their first semifinal since a European Cup Winners' Cup defeat by Chelsea in 1971.

They also kept alive the intriguing possibility of a Milan final against Bundesliga giants Bayern Munich, whose manager Pep Guardiola will take over the Manchester City hot seat from former Real Madrid manager Manuel Pellegrini next season.

First, however, City's defence must find a way of keeping Cristiano Ronaldo, Gareth Bale and Karim Benzema quiet at their Etihad Stadium so as to arrive at their opponents' Santiago Bernabeu fortress with something tangible to hang onto.

Ronaldo has scored 47 times this season, including 16 in just 10 Champions League appearances, but Pellegrini says he knows how to stop the Portuguese goal machine.

"I knew all about him from [my team] playing [against] Manchester United when I was at Villarreal," Pellegrini said. "We played them four times in the Champions League and each time it was 0-0, so defensively we must have been doing something right."

While City's recent form has been on the rise, if a little late to stop the Premier League's fairytale title hunters Leicester City, Real have been almost unstoppable of late as they try and chase down Barcelona in La Liga.

Since the beginning of March Zinedine Zidane's side have won nine La Liga games in a row and even when they suffered a hiccup in a 2-0 defeat by Wolfsburg in the Champions League quarter-final they responded with a 3-0 home victory.

The Wolfsburg loss gives City cause for optimism, though, and with their Argentina striker Sergio Aguero and

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STATS

LAST 3 PREVIOUS MEETINGS:

Friendly 24/7/2015 - Man City 1 Real Madrid 4
CL Group 21/11/2012 - Man City 1 Real Madrid 1
CL Group 18/09/2012 - Real Madrid 3 Man City 2

KEY PLAYERS:

Real Madrid - Ronaldo (16 goals, 4 assists)
Man City - De Bruyne (3 goals)

DEFENCE

Real Madrid have kept a clean sheet in 8 of their last 10 CL games
Man City are undefeated in the last 5 CL games

Belgium midfielder Kevin De Bruyne finishing the season with a flourish, Real's defence will be given a testing examination.

Aguero, who recently reached the 100-goal milestone in the Premier League, never finished on the winning side against Real while he was at Atletico Madrid and he will be itching to put the record straight against the 10-times European champions.

Wales forward Bale has, however, warned City that Real, who are appearing in their 27th European Cup semi-final, will seek to inflict some damage before finishing the job next week.

"I think that the most important thing is to score away from home, said Bale, who scored twice as Real came back to beat Rayo Vallecano 3-2 in La Liga at the weekend.

"At the Santiago Bernabeu we are very strong and, obviously, we'll have a lot of chances. As long as we don't lose there, we'll be very confident at the Bernabeu."

Toure out of Real clash

APP, Manchester

Manchester City midfielder Yaya Toure is expected to miss his side's Champions League semifinal first leg against Real Madrid on Tuesday, manager Manuel Pellegrini revealed on Monday.

The Ivorian did not take part in City's final pre-match training session on Monday after picking up a muscular injury towards the end of Sunday's 4-0 Premier League win over Stoke City.

"I think he's going to be out," Pellegrini told a press conference at the City Football Academy training complex. "He hasn't recovered from a muscle injury."

Sabira flops in Tajikistan

SPORTS REPORTER

Mollah Sabira Sultana finished 17th among 20 participants in 53kg category of the Asian Weightlifting Championships in Tajikistan yesterday.

Sabira lifted a total of 130kgs, 13kgs less than what she had lifted on way to winning a bronze medal in the South Asian Games last February. Sabira lifted 60kgs in snatch and 70kgs in clean & jerk, informed coach

Mahrez voted EPL's best

AFP, London



Leicester City's Algerian winger Riyad Mahrez on Sunday became the first African player to be named English football's Player of the Year, as voted for by his

fellow professionals. The 25-year-old French-born Algerian international, outstanding in Leicester's incredible charge towards the Premier League title, received the trophy at a lavish awards ceremony in London.

Tottenham Hotspur midfielder Dele Alli was named Young Player of the Year at the



Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) awards.

Paying tribute to his teammates, Mahrez, who succeeds Chelsea's Eden Hazard as the winner of the prize, told the ceremony: "All the credit is for them, seriously."

"And for my manager (Claudio Ranieri) and the staff. Without them I wouldn't receive this award and I wouldn't score. It's the team spirit, and I want to dedicate it to them."

"I'm very grateful to receive this award, it's a pleasure. It's extra special because if the players vote for me it's because they've seen I've been great this year so I'm happy."

"But it's more team things. Without my team-mates I wouldn't get this award."

PAST WINNERS

2016	Riyad Mahrez (Leicester City)
2015	Eden Hazard (Chelsea)
2014	Luis Suarez (Liverpool)
2013	Gareth Bale (Tottenham Hotspur)
2012	Robin van Persie (Arsenal)
2011	Gareth Bale (Tottenham Hotspur)

Mahrez is the first African to win the award and just the second non-European, after Uruguayan striker Luis Suarez, then of Liverpool, in 2014.

A £400,000 (\$580,000, 514,000 euro) signing from French Ligue 2 side Le Havre in January 2014, Mahrez has contributed 17 goals and 11 assists to help put Leicester on the brink of becoming English champions for the first time.

He had scored the opener in the Foxes' 4-0 thrashing of Swansea City earlier in the day at the King Power Stadium, which left Claudio Ranieri's side eight points clear of second-placed Tottenham with three games left to play.

Mahrez was then flown by helicopter to the ceremony as he pipped club colleagues Jamie Vardy and N'Golo Kante as well as West Ham United's Dimitri Payet, Tottenham's Harry Kane and Arsenal's Mesut Ozil to the award.

Alli, 20, held off competition from Kane, Stoke City goalkeeper Jack Butland, Liverpool midfielder Philippe Coutinho and Everton duo Romelu Lukaku and Ross Barkley to take the young player gong.

Alli, who won Football League Young Player of the Year 12 months ago, joined Tottenham from third-tier Milton Keynes Dons in 2015 and was expected to be used sparingly in his first season at White Hart Lane.

However, he has been outstanding in midfield for Spurs and has already won six caps for England, scoring once.



Manchester City players jog prior to a training session in Manchester yesterday ahead of tonight's Champions League semifinal first-leg against Real Madrid.

PHOTO: AFP