

What to WATCH

SONY ESPN
FIFA World Cup Qualifiers
 Ecuador v Chile
 Live from 3:00am (Friday)
 Uruguay v Venezuela
 Live from 5:00am (Friday)

Peru v Argentina
 Live from 8:00am (Friday)
SONY SIX
FIFA World Cup Qualifiers
 Italy v Spain
 Live from 12:30am (Friday)

Brazil v Bolivia
 Live from 6:45am (Friday)
SONY ESPN HD
FIFA World Cup Qualifiers
 Austria v Wales
 Live from 12:30am (Friday)

Marauding Miller seals a thriller

AFP, Durban
 South Africa beat Australia by four wickets in the third one-day international at Kingsmead on Wednesday to clinch the five-match series after an epic run chase.
 Australia piled up 371 for six in 50 overs, with David Warner and Steven Smith getting centuries on a flat track.
 South Africa reached the target with four balls to spare with David Miller making an undefeated 118 of 79 deliveries as the home side triumphed in the second-highest run chase of all time. South Africa lead the five-match series 3-0.
SCORES IN BRIEF
AUSTRALIA: 371 for 6 (Warner 117, Smith 108; Tahir 2-54, Steyn 2-96)
SOUTH AFRICA: 372 for 6 in 49.2 overs (Miller 118 not out, De Kock 70; Hastings 2-79)
Result: South Africa won by 4 wickets and took a 3-0 lead in the 5-match series.

Jimmy sure of return for India Tests

REUTERS, London
 England seamer James Anderson is confident he will be fit to play some part in the team's Test tour of India starting in November after sitting out this month's two-match series in Bangladesh with a shoulder injury.
 The 34-year-old, England's most prolific wicket-taker in Tests, sustained a stress fracture during the home series against Sri Lanka in June, although he did play three matches against Pakistan in July and August.
 Anderson hopes to be fully fit to take on the world's top-ranked Test side.



Bangladesh footballers chill out at the team hotel yesterday afternoon after a draining practice session earlier in the morning. The team will leave for Bhutan tomorrow to take on the hosts in a crucial Asian Cup Qualifying Playoff fixture on October 10. PHOTO: BFF

Emily, Mamunul in final squad

SPORTS REPORTER



Veteran striking pair of Zahid Hasan Emily and Enamul Haque as well as midfielder Mamunul Islam have staged comebacks to the national team ahead of Bangladesh's crucial second leg fixture of the Asian Cup Qualifying Playoff against Bhutan as head coach Tom Saintfiet yesterday announced a 23-member final squad.
 The 43-year-old coach has clearly pinned hopes on most of the players who were in the squad for the first leg match which ended in a goalless draw last month, but he also included six players -- Emily, Enamul, Mamunul, Sohel Rana and goalkeepers Mamun Khan and Mohammad Nehal -- who had represented Bangladesh in the past.
 Both Emily and Enamul played against Australia in September last year in the joint qualifiers of the Asian Cup and the World Cup while Mamunul and winger Sohel last played against Tajikistan in round -1 of Asian Cup Qualifying Playoff this year. Goalkeeper Mamun Khan returned to the side for the first time since 2013 while Nehal returned after a six-year gap.
 Saintfiet said he considered three things while picking the final squad.

SQUAD	
GOALKEEPERS	
Ashrafur Islam Rana, Mamun Khan, Mohammad Nehal	
DEFENDERS	
Tapu Barman, Mamun Mia, Raihan Hasaan, Rezaul Karim and Atiqur Rahman Meshu	
MIDFIELDERS	
Enamul Haque Sharif, Emon Babu, Mamunul Islam, Mohammad Abdullah, Atiqur Rahman Fahad	
FORWARDS	
Jafar Iqbal, Mahub Hasan Nayan, Rubel Mia, Sohel Rana, Jewel Rana, Mohammad Sohel Rana, Enamul Haque, Zahid Hasan Emily, Shakhawat Hossain Rony and Hemanta Vincent Biswas	

"The first thing was the players' performance at club level as I watched 36 league matches; the second thing was the players' performance in the national team under my guidance as well as in the training sessions, and the third and final thing was the tactical choice of our game, the climate, the altitude and everything else," explained the Belgian.
 Saintfiet emphasised more on attacking players as his 23-member squad features 10 forwards, five defenders and as many midfielders alongside three goalkeepers.
 "I didn't select many defenders because my idea is that we need to score," Saintfiet said. "I am only going to change a defender if there is

an injury or if we score five goals in first ten minutes. If we can keep the same defence, it will be good."
 In response to a query regarding drafting 10 forwards, Saintfiet said: "I saw few improvements in the last weeks. [Shakhawat Hossain] Rony missed a lot of chances in the first leg but he is a good player. He didn't get to play for six months. Same thing goes for Hemanta [Vincent Biswas] and Jewel Rana. Emily was out for months, but he has scored 17 goals for the national team and he is the best striker of Bangladesh."
 Saintfiet hinted that he would like to keep a compact defence and attack on the break.
 "Our strategy is that the whole team will play a defensive role and I would expect Bhutan to come in attack to take the advantage of the 2400m altitude and 16 degrees [Celsius temperature] and a full house crowd. In the first half we are going to play compact. I will want to start with players with strong physical attributes. It will be a physical challenge. We are not going to play blind attack. We are going to play with good organisation. And hopefully this time we will score goals," hoped Saintfiet.
 Bangladesh team will leave for Bhutan tomorrow morning. The match will be played on October 10 at the Changlimithang Stadium in Thimphu.

Spain seeking revenge

AFP, Milan
 Italy defender Leonardo Bonucci expects a "more motivated" Spain to come seeking revenge for their early exit at Euro 2016 when the sides meet in a mouthwatering 2018 World Cup qualifier in Turin on Thursday.
 Italy host 'La Roja' at Juventus Stadium in what is their first meeting since Spain's 2-0 last-16 defeat to the Azzurri at the Stade de France in June ended their hopes of a record third consecutive European Championship crown.
 Both have since undergone coaching changes, Giampiero Ventura replacing Antonio Conte at the Italy helm and Julen Lopetegui stepping in for Vicente del Bosque.
 While Spain put eight unanswered goals past minnows Liechtenstein in their opening Group G qualifier in Leon last month, 10-man Italy returned from Israel with the points from a battling 3-1 win in Haifa.
 In his second competitive game in charge, after succeeding now-Chelsea manager Conte during the summer, Ventura is under pressure to deliver.
 And Bonucci warned: "We're expecting a different Spain side with respect to the one we faced at the Euros. They will have fresh motivation, they'll be in a new state of mind and looking to avenge their Euro 2016 defeat."
 "We have to step up a gear with respect to how we played against Israel."
 Asked if Spain were favourites, he added: "Totally, yes. And if we're to upset predictions we'll have to play like we did at the Euros, with pace, commitment and by being clinical in front of goal."
 Barcelona and Spain midfielder Sergio Busquets admitted Tuesday: "At the Euros we made a few slips but now it is time for revenge. Qualification for the World Cup is at stake here."
 Expectations that Spain and Italy will stick to the form book and take maximum points from remaining home and away fixtures against Macedonia, Liechtenstein, Israel and Albania remain high.
 With only the group winners progressing automatically to the finals in Russia, that means Italy and Spain's direct encounters take on special importance.
 And if Ventura ever needed reminding, Busquets added: "It's not a decisive match for either of us, but it is important to fight for the top spot, especially as we're the strongest sides in the group."
 Ventura, who suffered a 3-1 friendly defeat to France on his maiden outing as Italy coach, is under no illusions as he prepares to face off against a coach who, he says, has given Spain fresh energy and conviction.
 "They're the strongest opponents in the group," he said. "Since Lopetegui took over they've changed the way they play, and their approach to games. He's given them an adrenaline boost, and conviction."
 "It's a delicate game for us, an important test."
 After Spain, Italy face Macedonia away on Sunday in the midst of a hectic period for many members of his squad with their clubs.
 Ventura complained: "I'm going to have players who will have played seven games in the space of 20 days."

Daunting task for Chile

Argentina missing Messi, Brazil on a roll

AFP, Montevideo
 Chile face a daunting trip to Ecuador on Thursday as they attempt to get their faltering 2018 World Cup qualification campaign back on track at a venue where they have never won.
 After eight rounds of South America's marathon qualifying campaign, two-time Copa America champions Chile are languishing in seventh place, two points adrift of Ecuador in fifth.
 The failure of Chile's star-studded squad to impose themselves on their rivals has been one of the biggest surprises of the qualifiers to date.
 With back-to-back Copa America victories in 2015 and 2016, the Chileans have been the dominant force in competitive South American football in the past year.
 However despite being able to call upon the likes of Alexis Sanchez, Arturo Vidal and Claudio Bravo, Chile have stumbled from one setback to the next so far.
 Last month they were beaten 2-1 by Paraguay in Asuncion and were then held to a 0-0 draw by minnows Bolivia at home in Santiago.
 While there is still plenty of time for Chile to turn their campaign around, they can ill afford to lose further ground in what is expected to be a tight battle for places.
 Chile coach Juan Antonio Pizzi has recalled playmaker Jorge Valdivia following a 10-month exile while Bravo, Sanchez and Vidal are all expected to start at Quito's Estadio Olimpico Atahualpa, which is some 9,000 feet above sea level.
 Chile, like many visitors to the stadium, have often struggled in the thin air and so far have not won a competitive fixture at the arena.
 Ecuador, meanwhile, head into the game looking to rediscover their winning habit. After starting qualifiers with four straight wins, Ecuador have

FIXTURES
Ecuador v Chile, Uruguay v Venezuela, Paraguay v Colombia, Brazil v Bolivia, Peru v Argentina

taken only one point from their last four games.
 In other matches on Thursday, Uruguay will be confident of holding onto their position at the top of the standings when they face Venezuela in Montevideo, with star strikers Edinson Cavani and Luis Suarez both expected to play.
 Venezuela are bottom of the 10-nation standings with no wins from eight games, although they gave Argentina a mighty scare in their last outing on September 6, taking a 2-0 lead before eventually being held for a 2-2 draw.
 A resurgent Brazil meanwhile will attempt to extend the feelgood factor created by back-to-back wins over Ecuador and Colombia last month when they take on eighth-placed Bolivia in Natal.
 Argentina, who are level with Brazil on 15 points but trail their rivals on

goal difference, face an awkward trip to Lima to face Peru, with coach Edgardo Bauza mulling how best to plug the gap created by injury to captain Lionel Messi.
 Messi returned from a short-lived retirement from international football last month to inspire a crucial 1-0 win over Uruguay, but is out of Thursday's game after suffering a groin injury while on Barcelona duty last month.
 Bauza has indicated either Juventus's Paulo Dybala or Atletico Madrid's Angel Correa could start in Messi's place. "Either of them could do a job. I will see how they train this week and decide," Bauza said in Lima on Monday.
 Argentina's Everton defender Ramiro Funes Mori meanwhile urged his teammates to beware the threat posed by Peru's veteran striker Paolo Guerrero, the 32-year-old Flamengo attacker who is his country's all-time leading scorer with 27 goals in 73 games.
 "We may be the favourites but you always have to be careful around a guy like Guerrero. He's a tricky player," the defender said.



Argentina players (L-R) Nicolas Gaitan, Martin Demichelis and Angel Di Maria take part in a training session in Lima on Tuesday ahead of tomorrow morning's 2018 World Cup qualifier against Peru. PHOTO: REUTERS

Azam's 3rd ton leads clean sweep

AFP, Abu Dhabi
 Rising star Babar Azam hit his third successive hundred to anchor Pakistan's 3-0 clean-sweep of the West Indies with a comfortable 136-run win in the third and final one-dayer on Wednesday.
 Azam smashed a 106-ball 117 while skipper Azah Ali score a 109-ball 101 as Pakistan compiled 308-6 before restricting West Indies to 172 in 44 overs on a flat Sheikh Zayed Stadium pitch.
SCORES IN BRIEF
PAKISTAN: 308 for 6 (Azhar 101, Babar 117; Joseph 2-62)
WEST INDIES: 172 all out in 44 overs (Ramdin 37, Brathwaite 32; Nawaz 3-40)
Result: Pakistan won by 136 runs and took the series 3-0.



After defeating BCB XI in a well-contested match the day before, the England players, led by captain Jos Buttler (2nd from L), took their feet off the gas as they unwound with a round of golf at the scenic Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday. PHOTO: THEGOLFHOUSE

Hamid, Eva in lead

SPORTS REPORTER
 WIM Rani Hamid and WFM Nazrana Khan Eva shared the lead at the close of the third round of the Saif Global Sports 36th National Women's Chess Championship, which is being held at the Bangladesh Chess Federation (BCF) hall room.
 Hamid beat last edition's runner-up WFM Sharmin Sultana Shirin while Nazrana beat Zahuratul Zannat Zisha in the third round yesterday. Both the players have three points, said a press release from the BCF.

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