

STAR SPORTS 1

India v New Zealand
Third Test, Day 4
Live from 10:00am

STAR SPORTS 2

Kabaddi World Cup
India v Bangladesh
Live from 9:45pm

SONY ESPN

FIFA World Cup Qualifiers
Slovenia v England
Live from 12:45am (Wednesday)

Colombia v Uruguay

Live from 2:30am (Wednesday)
SONY SIX
FIFA World Cup Qualifiers

Germany v Northern Ireland

Live from 12:45am (Wednesday)
Venezuela v Brazil
Live from 6:30am (Wednesday)

SONY ESPN HD

FIFA World Cup Qualifiers
Chile v Peru
Live from 5:30am (Wednesday)

DAY'S EVENT

Nat'l Cricket League
(Four-Day Match, Day 4)
Time: 9:30am

Dhaka v Barisal
Venue: Sheikh Kamal Int'l Cricket Stadium, Cox's Bazar

Khulna v Dhaka Metro
Venue: Sheikh Kamal Int'l Stadium, Academy Ground, Cox's Bazar

Rangpur v Rajshahi
Venue: BKSP-3

Sylhet v Chittagong
Venue: Fatullah Stadium

Humiliation in Bhutan

ATIQUÉ ANAM from Thimphu

Bhutan played the proverbial last rite of Bangladesh football with a 3-1 defeat at the Changlimithang Stadium in Thimphu yesterday. The result in the Asian Cup Qualifying Play off means Bangladesh will not be a part of any AFC and FIFA sponsored events for the next two to three years until the launching of the 2022 World Cup and the 2023 Asian Cup qualifiers.

It is good news in the context that football fans in this part of the world will be spared of being witness to further humiliation of a team that reached its nadir with that defeat in Thimphu.

However, the embarrassment was not unexpected after Bangladesh's failure to score even a goal in their home leg match against the small hilly nation, whose first-ever win against Bangladesh guaranteed their rightful place in the 24-team Asian Cup Qualifiers.

Since the start of the joint qualifiers of the World Cup and Asian Cup in the middle of last year, Bangladesh have fared pathetically under four different foreign coaches. And the slide was never-ending for a team that simply lacked those basic ingredients to be competitive even at the regional level.

Bangladesh's latest coach Belgian Tom Saintfiet called up veteran strik-

ing pair of Zahid Hasan Emily and Enamul Haque to salvage something out of the ordinary, but his ploy hardly worked on that artificial turf in high altitude.

Bangladesh's initial plan was to capitalise on the break but the early pressure from the hosts saw them conceding the first goal in the fourth minute with Tshering Dorji heading a corner with his marker, if there was any, not around. However, goalkeeper Ashraful Islam Rana was partially to be blamed for failing to react before the Bhutanese striker.

After conceding the goal, Bangladesh resorted to an attacking option but it only allowed the home team to hit back again from a counter attack. Chencho Gyetshen doubled the lead in the 27th minute with a brilliant header after Bangladesh's equaliser from Tapu Barman was ruled out due to off-side in the 22nd minute.

Recalled captain Mamunul Islam reduced the margin in the 63rd minute with a free kick and it gave a glimpse of hope to a 2-2 draw when Hemanta Vincent Biswas, who was causing havoc down the left flank, providing a nice ball to substitute Emily, who however saw his close-range shot blocked by goalkeeper Hari Gurung in the 73rd minute.

Chencho killed off the game in the 75th minute from a counter-attack as the speedy striker nutmegged central-back Mamun Mia to drive a powerful

shot past goalkeeper Rana. It could have been worse had Rana not saved a late penalty awarded after defender Mamun Mia handled the ball in the forbidden zone.

"I'm still shocked. I don't know if I should protect the players because I think the first two goals were from huge mistakes, unacceptable mistakes. We gave presents to Santa Claus. Goalkeeper and central defender made catastrophic mistakes. It was my fault. I selected these players," said coach Saintfiet after the defeat.

"In the second half they pushed. We had an opportunity to make it 2-2, if it was 2-2 I think we could have qualified. But immediately after that we conceded another goal: another defensive mistake, no chance for the goalkeeper. After that we tried with putting a defender up for the high balls, but my players started dribbling and playing short passes. I don't know why. I think some players wanted Bhutan to qualify and they didn't deserve to be in the team," the Belgian added.

"It was very bad for Bangladesh football. I think Bhutan showed that despite being a small nation, with good fundamentals and hard work, you can still reach somewhere. I think some well-paid Bangladesh players should start thinking if they are ready to play at this level. I would like to apologise to Bangladesh Football Federation and all the football loving people," said a frustrated coach.



Bangladesh players were busy foiling Bhutan's attack during their 3-1 defeat in the Asian Cup qualifying playoff second-leg at the Changlimithang Stadium in Thimphu yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

Ramos suffers knee injury

AFP, Madrid

Key defender and captain Sergio Ramos suffered a left knee strain in Spain's 2-0 World Cup qualifying win in Albania on Sunday.

Ramos was hurt late in the game after falling awkwardly following an aerial duel before he was eventually replaced by Inigo Martinez.

"It looks like a strain. We hope that it won't keep him out of action for more than two or three games with his club," Spain coach Julen Lopetegui told Spanish broadcaster Teleduarte.

Ramos could miss next weekend's La Liga clash against Real Betis, the home Champions League clash with Legia Warsaw and the league visit of Athletic Bilbao the weekend after the European date.

Immobile rescues Italy

AFP, Paris



Lazio striker Ciro Immobile grabbed an injury-time winner as four-time champions Italy snatched a 3-2 comeback win at Macedonia on Sunday, narrowly avoiding a World Cup qualifying embarrassment.

Italy, who had needed a late penalty to salvage a point against Group G rivals Spain on Thursday, were staring at a shock defeat in Skopje against a Macedonia side ranked a lowly 146 in the world.

Torino striker Andrea Belotti had given Italy a 24th-minute lead just four minutes after Palermo marksman Ilija Nestorovski had crashed a drive off the crossbar for the hosts.

But Nestorovski levelled just before the hour mark when he robbed Marco Verratti before tucking the ball past veteran goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon.

Two minutes later, Macedonia were ahead when midfielder Ferhan Hasani

finished a smart move involving Goran Pandev and Nestorovski.

However Immobile put Italy back on equal terms at 2-2 with 15 minutes left after good approach work from Verratti and Antonio Candreva.

On 90 minutes, Marco Parolo had a header ruled out for offside before club teammate Immobile saved Italy with the winner two minutes into injury time, finishing off a Candreva cross.

"We were weak and let up in the second half. You can't give anything away at international level, we had to be more ruthless," admitted Immobile.

Italy are second in Group G with seven points but Spain lead the way on goal difference after a deserved 2-0 win over Albania in Shkoder.

Chelsea star Diego Costa tucked away the first on 55 minutes past goalkeeper Etrit Berisha who had pulled off a series of fine saves in the first half.

Nolito hit the second of the night just three minutes after coming on as a substitute for Vitolo.

"This was a very difficult match even

if it appeared easy," said Nolito. "Albania are a good side who know how to play."

The only downside for Spain was seeing key defender and skipper Sergio Ramos suffer a left knee injury which could sideline him for three matches with his club side, Real Madrid.

In Group D, Southampton's Dusan Tadic scored the winner as Serbia beat Austria 3-2 in Belgrade.

Newcastle's Aleksandar Mitrovic had scored Serbia's first two goals in the opening half as his side went top on seven points.

They lead the way on goal difference from the Republic of Ireland who beat Moldova 3-1 in Chisinau.

Wes Hoolahan fed Shane Long to score after just two minutes for Ireland but Moldova, beaten 3-0 by Serbia at home on Thursday, levelled in injury-time when Igor Bugaiov scored his first goal in five years.

West Brom's James McClean was on target twice after the break to give Ireland the three points.

IHF TROPHY BD women intend to carry on

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh national women's handball team intends to carry on with their winning momentum in the IHF Trophy handball tournament when they face low ranking Afghanistan in their group's second and final fixture at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium today.

An outright win over their Afghan counterparts will put the home side on top of Group A as well allow them to circumvent the semifinal clash against the possible Group B champion, India.

The girls in red and green enjoyed a brilliant start as they beat Sri Lanka 47-18 in their opening encounter. Sri Lanka however, managed to keep their hopes of moving into the last four alive by defeating Afghanistan 18-16 yesterday.

Meanwhile at the Shaheed Captain M Mansur Ali National Stadium, Bangladesh's men's team hope to bounce back during their second match against Maldives following their 31-45 defeat at the hands of mighty India, who yesterday notched up their second straight win with a comprehensive 52-14 victory over Sri Lanka.

In the day's other matches of the men's section, Pakistan thrashed Nepal 32-16 and Afghanistan beat Maldives 24-22 while India and Pakistan defeated Nepal and Maldives 45-16 and 31-8 respectively in women's section.

Maria to play in exhibition

AFP, Los Angeles



Maria Sharapova, targeting an April return to the WTA after the reduction of her doping ban, will try to start sharpening her game on Monday in the friendly confines of a charity event in Las Vegas.

The Russian superstar will play in the World Team Tennis Smash Hits event at Caesars Palace, which is hosted by Billie Jean King and Elton John for the benefit of the Elton John AIDS Foundation.

Her appearance alongside such stars as Martina Navratilova and Andy Roddick will delight her legion of fans, who remain faithful despite the controversy Sharapova stirred last week with her charge that the International Tennis Federation wanted to make an example of her in her doping case.

"I got a 24-month suspension, but they (the ITF) wanted four years for me," Sharapova said in an interview with US broadcaster PBS, a claim ITF officials denied.

In the same media offensive last week, Sharapova indicated to ESPN she wasn't convinced the drug meldonium, newly banned this year by the World Anti-Doping Agency, enhances performance.

"I think the one thing that I'd love to see -- and if anyone could show me -- is evidence on the performance-enhancing effect that it has," she told the US sports network.

Sharapova's initial 24-month ban for testing positive for meldonium was cut to 15 months by the Court of Arbitration for Sport last Tuesday.

That CAS decision divided opinion among her peers. "I can't believe it actually," Australian Samantha Stosur said at a tournament in Hong Kong, calling it "remarkable" that Sharapova's ban was reduced on the argument she didn't realize a drug she'd long used had been added to the banned list.

Stosur, in comments reported in Tennis Magazine, said she thought most WTA players felt the same.

"So I wouldn't imagine there's a whole lot of support from the playing group," the Aussie said.

But five-time Grand Slam champion Sharapova can likely expect a warm welcome in Las Vegas, where she'll arrive after a stop-off in Henderson, Nevada, to promote her candy company Sugarpop.

"Important to put this behind us for tennis and Maria," King tweeted after Sharapova's ban was reduced. "Look forward to her return to the WTA Tour@wta."



Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin took six wickets for 81 runs during the third day of the third Test against New Zealand in Indore yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Ashwin puts India on top

AFP, Indore



Ravichandran Ashwin claimed six wickets to help dismiss New Zealand for 299 and put India in pole position with a 258-run first innings lead in the third and final Test on Monday.

India, who did not enforce the follow-on, were 18 for no loss in their second innings at stumps on day three, with Murali Vijay (11) and Cheteshwar Pujara (1) stretching the lead to 276 in their quest to complete a series whitewash at Indore.

Opener Gautam Gambhir retired hurt on six after aggravating a shoulder injury, which he first suffered while fielding, as he dived into his crease to avoid a run-out.

Earlier off-spinner Ashwin ensured that India continue their domination of the series at their newest Test venue, Indore's Holkar Stadium, after recording his 20th five-wicket haul to destroy the New Zealand batting.

Opener Martin Gupthill, who struck form with a gritty 72, and James Neesham (71) put up the main resistance against an inspired Indian attack.

The Black Caps, who began the day on 28 without loss, had made a strong start in response to India's commanding first innings score of 557 for five declared, but then lost five wickets for just 30 runs.

After Tom Latham fell just before lunch for 53, caught and bowled by Ashwin, India turned the screws on the visitors by taking a further five wickets in the afternoon session.

Gupthill counter-attacked the Indian bowlers with 10 fours and two sixes during his 144-ball stay but was unlucky to be run out by Ashwin while backing up.

Ashwin's other victims included New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson, who was bowled for eight early on after dragging a turning delivery onto his stumps. It was the third time in a row he had been dismissed by Ashwin.

Neesham and B.J. Watling put on 53 for the sixth wicket to raise hopes of a revival, but left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja broke the stand by bowling Watling for 23 after the wicketkeeper-batsman had struck four boundaries.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: First innings 557 for five decl

NEW ZEALAND: First innings 299 (Gupthill 72, Latham 53, Neesham 71, Watling 23, Santner 22; Ashwin 6-81, Jadeja 2-80)

INDIA: Second innings 18 for no loss (Vijay 11 not out, Gambhir 6 retired hurt)

Must-win for Chile

AFP, Montevideo



Chile face a must-win showdown with fierce regional rivals Peru on Tuesday as the South American champions aim to make up lost ground after a stumbling start to their 2018 World Cup qualification campaign.

After a 3-0 thrashing by Ecuador in Quito on Thursday, the Chileans limped back to Santiago a full five points adrift of the qualifying places in South America's marathon battle for World Cup berths.

Chile, the dominant force in South America over the past two years with back-to-back wins in the 2015 and 2016 Copa Americas, still have plenty of time to turn their campaign around with nine games left.

But anything less than a win against Peru on Tuesday risks leaving them with a mountain to climb if they are to qualify for a third consecutive World Cup.

"We need to score goals, and we need to win because we're playing at home. Winning is the only option for us now," said Chile midfielder Marcelo Diaz, who is still smarting from last week's drubbing by Ecuador.

"We lost, we were very bad, played a lousy game and that's all I can say," Diaz said. "All we can do now is look to Tuesday to try and change the story of what we are doing," the Celta Vigo player added.

FIXTURES

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



High Commissioner of Canada Benoit-Pierre Laramee presents a crest to a member of Bangladesh U-16 women's team at the BFF House yesterday. BFF president Kazi Salahuddin and senior vice-president Salam Murshedy were also present.

PHOTO: COLLECTED