

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS 1
India v New Zealand
Fourth ODI
Live from 2:00pm
TEN 1 HD
EFL Cup
Man United v Man City
Live from 1:00am (Thursday)

SONY ESPN
Serie A
Inter Milan v Torino
Live from 12:45am (Thursday)
SONY SIX
Serie A
Juventus v Sampdoria
Live from 12:45am (Thursday)

GRIEZMANN LA LIGA'S BEST

Atletico Madrid forward Antoine Griezmann was named La Liga player of the season for 2015/16 on Monday, ahead of the likes of star duo Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. Atletico's Diego Simeone also took the coach of the season award while Barcelona's Uruguay striker Luis Suarez was named the top non-EU player. Curiously, though, Barca's Argentina international Messi was recognised as the best forward at the award ceremony in Valencia. Atletico dominated the awards as Jan Oblak was best goalkeeper, Diego Godin top defender and Frenchman Griezmann also claimed the fans' award. Real Madrid weren't left empty-handed, though, as Luka Modric was named best midfielder.

- AFP



Rahmatganj: Of passion & dedication

ANISUR RAHMAN

Dhaka football is no longer the most followed sporting event in the country. You can now only find a couple of hundred die-hard football fanatics turning up at the famous Banganabdhū National Stadium apparently confused about which team to support in an era where that magnificent rivalry no longer exists.

Dhaka football without its soul - the fans who has gradually distanced themselves after years of decline of the standard of football -- is now being played, won or lost just for the records. Nobody even bothers to follow a particular team, let alone a player or a coach of any repute.

There are many reasons behind the freefall of Dhaka football as well as the decline of the national football team. And one of those is football has now become 'limited' instead of being passionate. The game at club level is now run by people who are anything but selflessly passionate for the cause of the beautiful game which was once everyday dose of entertainment for millions of fans.

And how passion and commitment can still make a lot of difference even for a lightweight Dhaka club and win the hearts of fans has already been well documented this year by Rahmatganj Muslim Friends Society.

With an age-old reputation as giant-slayers and often criticised as the ringleader of 'trading points', the club from the southern part of Old Dhaka are the surprise title contenders in the Professional Football League, finishing two points behind leaders Chittagong



A non-descript two-storey building and a bare training ground at the southern part of Old Dhaka is the home to Rahmatganj MFS club, who are being dubbed as the Leicester City of Bangladesh this season for their phenomenal run in the Bangladesh Premier League.

PHOTO: STAR

Abahani at the end of the first phase.

The secret of success of Rahmatganj, who are gunning to be like the Leicester City of last season, has so far been very simple. The club management has a home grown coach who is hardworking. They did not splash money like the big teams but judiciously used their resources to strike a proper balance.

When their coach Kamal Babu said that his team would be one of the title contenders at the pre-league briefings, many had laughed it out. But after three-and-a-half-months' hard work with a set players, whose payments range from a meagre Tk 50,000 to

Tk 1000,000, Babu has already floored a lot of heavyweights on the field and at the technical area.

"It is an outcome of hard work," was the simple answer from Babu, who believes that this was a league where there is little difference between the so-called top players and average players.

"It was not easy to change the mentality of the players and make them fit for the 90-minute game. I made my players understand that there is little difference between the national footballers and the others. I think my boys believe it now which is evident on the field. If you talk about the

difference between Rahmatganj and other teams, I will tell you that my players are capable of playing full ninety minutes at the same pace and rhythm," said Babu, whose match reading about the opponents gives him an edge in the matches.

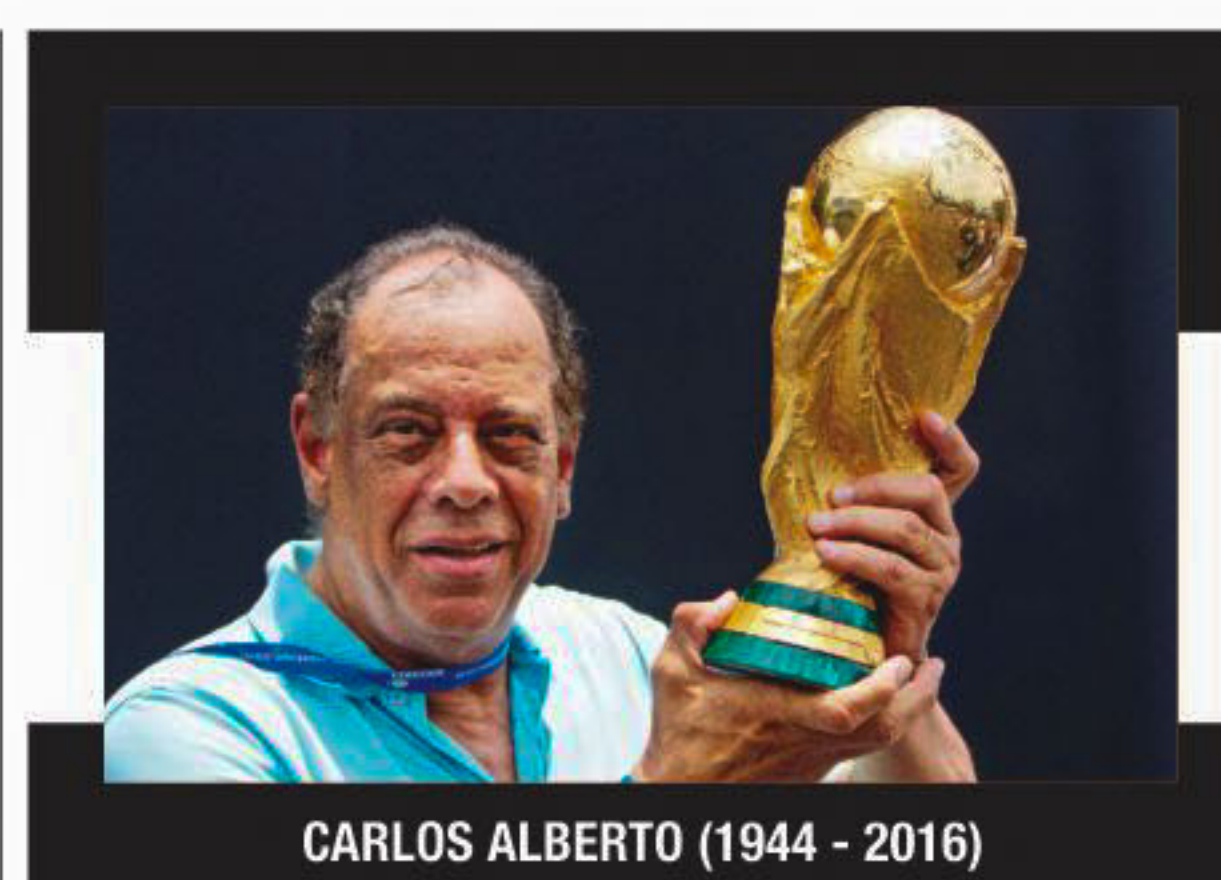
According to Babu, discipline at the camp also played a big part in his team's success. They made sure of uninterrupted training and players have been strictly barred from playing on 'hire' in any other lesser known competitions across the country.

"Proper plan, effort, hard-work and honesty have taken us to this stage. We have already paid 80 to 90 percent payment to all players, we are giving them monthly salary regularly and conducting training sessions regularly despite financial constraints," Rahmatganj's general secretary Imtiaz Hamid Sabuj said, adding that the club is being run by money earned from the cattle market of Eid-ul-Azha (Tk 50-60 lakh), rents of the club's market (Tk 20 lakh) and donation from different business associations and individuals (Tk 12 to 15 lakh) of the locality.

The consistently good performance of the club has already created enormous enthusiasm among people of the locality. The club management is being confronted with an influx of demand for tickets for each of their games.

"It's not only about tickets, we are also struggling to keep the local fans away from training sessions and sometimes we have to force the fans out of the training venue," said the coach with a big smile on his face.

The enthusiasm among a small section of people is only a reflection of football's glorious past when passionate club officials drove the passionate fans.



CARLOS ALBERTO (1944 - 2016)

Brazil legend Alberto no more

GOAL.COM

Brazil's 1970 World Cup-winning captain Carlos Alberto has died of a heart attack at the age of 72, former club Santos has announced on Tuesday.

Widely regarded as one of the finest defenders of all time, Carlos Alberto is most fondly remembered for scoring the stunning fourth goal in Brazil's 4-1 final win over Italy at Mexico 1970.

A sublime team move, that concluded with a thunderous finish after Pele rolled a pass nonchalantly into the right-back's path, sealed a third world title for Brazil, allowing them to keep the Jules Rimet Trophy that Carlos Alberto hoisted at Estadio Azteca.

After beginning his playing career with Fluminense, Carlos Alberto moved to Santos, where he played alongside Pele in a celebrated line-up, making 445 appearances and scoring 40 goals.

Capped 53 times by his country from 1964 to 1977, Carlos Alberto went on to become one of the star names to take part in the North American Soccer League, representing New York Cosmos in two spells between 1977 and 1982, when he hung up his boots.

MLS posts record attendances

AFP, Los Angeles

Major League Soccer attendances climbed to record levels for a third straight year this season, putting the US top flight above Italy's Serie A and France's Ligue 1 in average gates, figures.

The 340 games of the 2016 regular season drew a total of 7,375,144 fans, an average of 21,692, figures released by MLS showed.

The average number places the MLS sixth in the ranks of the world's best attended football leagues, according to www.worldfootball.net.

Germany's Bundesliga heads the list with an average of 41,969 fans per game, ahead of the English Premier League at 35,517 per match.

The MLS total compares favourably with other leagues in Europe, coming in sixth ahead of Serie A (21,069) and France's top flight (19,697).

Players' Support Seminar held

SPORTS REPORTER



The country's Professional footballers have been advised to inspect the details of their contract when signing agreements with clubs during a Players' Support Seminar yesterday which was organised by the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) in collaboration with the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

A combined total of nearly 200 players from Sheikh Jamal DC, Sheikh Russel KC, Mohammedan SC, Abahani, Brothers Union and Muktiyoddha Sangsad attended the seminar in two separate sessions while players of the other five premier league clubs are supposed to attend the programme today.

This is the first time since the of professional football league was introduced in 2006 that the game's governing body has organised such a seminar even though the players are updated every year about the latest rules and regulations of the game prior to the start of the season.

"We are covering a lot of issues which is summed up as players' support seminar. We have taught about contracts and made the players aware that usually they don't read what is in the contract. We have explained to

the players what should they see and what matters they should raise before signing contracts," Yogesh Desai, AFC development officer, said during a break at the BFF House.

Desai said that they have not only taught the players about the monetary aspect of contracts, but also about the legal sides, insurance, diet, integrity, medicine and about the players' second career after their retirement.

"More or less, we are aware of things that were presented before us but the fact is that we don't have a professional structure. It is not enough to teach players about professionalism because club officials and the BFF officials should also attend this type of seminars if we want to take the game forward," said national defender Ariful Islam.

Ariful had to return his contract's money [Tk 20 lakh] to Mohammedan SC and Sheikh Jamal DC in the past after he failed to provide his services due to injuries. Ariful himself bore all medical expenses on both occasions even though the clubs were supposed to do so in order to make the players fit again.

The players demanded that the contract papers be prepared in Bengali instead of English.

FIFA fines Spanish FA

REUTERS, Madrid

FIFA have fined Spain's football federation (RFEF) for breaking rules governing the international transfer and registration of minors by allowing Atletico and Real Madrid to sign underage players from other countries.

In January, world football's governing body banned the Madrid clubs from participating in two consecutive transfer windows for breaching rules regarding the signing of underage non-Spanish players.

FIFA's Disciplinary Committee ruled yesterday that the Spanish federation must pay 220,000 Swiss francs (\$221,283) for breaching article 19 of their regulations on the status and transfers of players, which is designed to protect minors.

The Spanish FA have been given a further six months to regularize their "existing system within the country" and have also been issued with a "warning and a reprimand."

'City have upper hand'

AFP, Manchester



Manchester City captain Vincent Kompany believes bitter rivals Manchester United have handed his team an advantage by playing down Wednesday's League Cup local derby at Old Trafford.

The injury-plagued Belgium international defender started a game for the first time since April in Sunday's 1-1 Premier League draw with Southampton and came through unscathed as City gained a point that put them top of the table on goal difference.

Now Kompany hopes to retain his place for the EFL Cup fourth-round tie, especially as United manager Jose Mourinho - beaten 4-0 at his old side Chelsea on Sunday -- has described the competition as being fourth on his club's list of priorities.

"It's just physically impossible for me to play down a derby," said Kompany, 30. "But the more they say this is the fourth competition, the better it is for us."

"Am I looking forward to Wednesday? Come on, always. The bigger the game, the better."

"That's how I've always approached it in my career and I will for the rest of my career. Those games are what you play for."

City hold the League Cup after beating Liverpool on penalties in a Wembley final in February, but they make the journey across

Manchester on a run of five league and cup games without victory.

However, the return of a fully fit Kompany is a major boost for a City defence that appears determined to implode at least once a game.

Kompany, regarded as one of the top centre-backs in the Premier League, has suffered a mammoth 34 injuries in his eight years with the Blues.

The majority of his injury history relates to hamstring and, particularly, calf problems, although Kompany's latest issue has concerned his groin.

"It's hard to come back, obviously, but I know what I have to do to be back at my level," said the City stalwart.

"I'm always confident. The last thing I want to do, when you've lived through your career as a footballer, is give up."

"If I give up then I know the outcome. But if I carry on, there's always a chance that I'll relive those moments. So my motivation can never be in doubt."

"God knows what would have happened if I'd never had those injuries but I need to get something that makes me stronger out of it, something different from other players, and that's what I believe in."

City manager Pep Guardiola is looking to end an unusually barren spell by his high standards and following City's latest disappointment against Southampton he kept his players locked in the dressing room for nearly an hour.

FA Cup telecast deal worth \$1b

AFP, London



England's governing Football Association announced on Monday it had agreed a new overseas broadcast rights deal for the FA Cup worth a reported \$1 billion (919 million euros, £820 million).

The new agreement will run for six seasons starting in 2018/19. Although the FA refused to specify an exact figure, simply saying the agreement was "hugely significant", the \$1 billion figure has been widely reported in the British media.

While concerns have been expressed within English football that the FA Cup has become increasingly less important as a football tournament following the rise of the Premier League, this broadcast deal is evidence of the ongoing global popularity of the world's oldest senior football knockout competition.

"This is a hugely significant deal for the FA as a not-for-profit organisation," said FA chief executive Martin Glenn.

"It means we will be able to invest even more than we currently do in pitches, facilities and participation programmes to make football available for all."

"It is not overstating it to say that it could have a transformational impact on what we are able to achieve across the country. It also underlines the global popularity of the Emirates FA Cup. With its history and tradition, it has the remarkable ability to create fantastic stories and inspire fans, players and clubs to believe anything is possible."

"On top of that, by the time we get to the Wembley showpiece next May, more than £30 million will have been distributed to competing clubs this season, from the amateur game right through to the elite level."

The FA added the financial terms would remain confidential, and that domestic rights will remain with terrestrial broadcaster BBC and satellite station BT Sport.

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