

What to WATCH

DAY'S EVENT

BOISHAKHI TV

Bangladesh Premier League

Sheikh Jamal v Brothers Union

Live from 3:30pm

Sheikh Russel v Abahani

Live from 6:15pm

STAR SPORTS 1

England v India

4th Test, Day 3

Live from 10:00am

Indian Super League Semifinal

Kolkata v Mumbai

Live from 7:30pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT HD 1

English Premiership

Watford v Everton

Live from 6:30pm

Arsenal v Stoke City

Live from 9:00pm

Leicester v Man City

Live from 11:30pm

SONY ESPN

Serie A

Sampdoria v Lazio

Live from 1:30am (Sunday)

SONY SIX

La Liga

Osasuna v Barcelona

Live from 6:00pm

Sociedad v Valencia

Live from 9:30pm

Las Palmas v Leganes

Live from 11:30pm

Real Madrid v Deportivo

Live from 1:30am (Sunday)

Bangladesh Premier League

Sheikh Jamal v Brothers Union

Time: 3:30pm

Sheikh Russel v Abahani

Time: 6:15pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium



Protesting Dhaka South City Corporation's plan to make a children's park at the Dhupkhola Ground, people of Gendaria and nearby localities formed a human chain at the ground yesterday demanding that the ground be kept open to sporting activities. The ground, currently used by the East End Club, the Jagannath University and by the locals, is a centre of all sorts of recreational activities of people from a vast number of neighbourhoods of Old Dhaka. Every day the ground is abuzz with people – young and old – from early morning as youngsters play cricket and football while the elderly play volleyball and jog along the perimeter.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Real eyeing record

AFP, Madrid



Real Madrid can set a club record by extending their unbeaten run to 35 games when Deportivo La Coruna visit the Santiago Bernabeu on Saturday. Deportivo's last visit to Real was Zinedine Zidane's first match in charge back in January and the 5-0 thrashing of the Galicians was a sign of things to come in a dream debut year for the Frenchman as a senior coach.

Madrid haven't tasted defeat since April, winning the Champions League, UEFA Super Cup and opening up a six-point La Liga lead over Barcelona in the process.

"You have to congratulate the players," insisted Zidane humbly after Madrid had to settle for qualifying for the last 16 of the Champions League in second place behind Borussia Dortmund on Wednesday.

"They are the ones that are on the pitch, that have to fight and run."

Los Blancos will be looking for the perfect end to their La Liga campaign for 2016 as they head for the Club World Cup in Japan on Sunday.

However, Deportivo have also been buoyed by a surprise 5-1 romp over high-flying Real Sociedad on Monday to register a first league win since early October and

move out of the relegation zone in the process.

"I am always optimistic and I am going there with the hope of getting something from the game," said Deportivo boss Gaizka Garitano.

"We are in the more desperate situation and we are not going to the Bernabeu just to make up the numbers."

Madrid are at full strength bar the absence of Gareth Bale.

Toni Kroos and Alvaro Morata made their return from injury in the 2-2 with Dortmund in midweek and are likely to feature once more, whilst Mateo Kovacic could be recalled after being rested on Wednesday.

Barcelona can cut the gap to three points before Madrid kick-off with victory at rock bottom Osasuna earlier on Saturday.

FIXTURES

(all times GMT)

Saturday

Osasuna v Barcelona (1200), Real Sociedad v Valencia (1515), Las Palmas v Leganes (1730), Real Madrid v Deportivo la Coruna (1945)

Sunday

Eibar v Alaves (1100), Celta Vigo v Sevilla (1515), Espanyol v Sporting Gijon (1730), Real Betis v Athletic Bilbao (1945)

Monday

Villarreal v Atletico Madrid (1945)

'Camp in Australia will be crucial'

SPORTS REPORTER



the Bangladesh national cricket team will embark upon a new challenge from the end of this month when they begin their tour of New Zealand.

Bangladesh ODI and T20I skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza described the new challenge as difficult, but one that the Tigers were confident about.

"Two years ago we had targeted to win 80 per cent of our matches at home and by the grace of God we have managed to achieve that target. Now it's a different challenge to play outside home. Even established teams find it difficult to win away from home and from that aspect, it's a bigger challenge for us.

"In addition, the weather in New Zealand is very different from other places. It's going to be difficult. But we can take the momentum with us. We can take the good memories that we have into the tour of New Zealand. If we can do that, then that will give us confidence. Hopefully the practice session in Australia will

give us more confidence," explained Mashrafe during a press conference at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday morning.

Before going to New Zealand, the Tigers will be spending around two weeks in Australia in order to prepare for the series. A section of the national team left for Australia on Thursday, while another group including the likes of Mashrafe, Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad will leave today.

Mashrafe believes that Bangladesh's preparatory camp in Australia will be extremely useful for the national team.

"The entire national team will be living there together. We will live like a family and we will have the liberty to openly discuss our problems. It will make it easier to work. It has worked before.

"For example, the 15-day camp we had in Australia before the World Cup in 2015 helped us a lot. The camps we had in Khulna and Chittagong before the World T20 helped us overcome the first round of the ICC World Twenty20. That round was dangerous," explained Mashrafe.

"In addition, we will be working on the technical details of how

to bowl or bat in those conditions and also try to review the conditions over there. Honestly speaking I think all the three departments over there will be challenging. The wickets over there can offer 350 runs. We need to adjust to that.

"The biggest challenge will be to adjust to the wind. The faster we can adjust to all of this, the better. At home, even if we make a mistake, we are able to recover. I don't think we will get that opportunity over there,"

he added.

Despite the difficulties, Mashrafe was confident that his team's new brand of cricket and different mindset would help them conquer the Kiwis.

"We are in a new situation. We have a different mindset now. We have the confidence to do well no matter where we play. At least that's what people expect. We will definitely try to win, but it will be difficult," he said.



Chelsea aim for Cloud Nine

AFP, London



Antonio Conte's Chelsea juggernaut rolls back into action against West Bromwich Albion on Sunday with the Premier League leaders chasing a ninth consecutive win.

Chelsea produced the most impressive display of their winning streak last weekend when they came from behind to win 3-1 at Pep Guardiola's Manchester City.

They have not won nine successive league games within the same season since 2007 and ahead of West Brom's visit, Marcos Alonso has urged his team-mates not to let their level drop.

"Winning game after game gives you confidence, but you have to keep working," the Spanish wing-back told the Chelsea website.

"The results give you confidence to work in this way, though. We have got to use this momentum of the last eight league games and go on to have another good game against West Brom now."

While most of Chelsea's title rivals have been in European action this week, Conte's side have once again had a full week to prepare for the visit of Tony Pulis's side.

It is 32 years since West Brom last won at Chelsea, but they have drawn on two of their last three visits and have climbed to seventh in the table on the back of a four-game unbeaten run.

"(Chelsea) are on a great run of form," West Brom manager Pulis told

the club website.

"The manager's come in and he's changed things around and got the players playing the way they can. It's a wonderful, wonderful squad of players. But we'll go there and do our best."

Guardiola's City will look to kick their title challenge back into gear when they visit unravelling champions Leicester City on Saturday.

The ill-tempered defeat at Chelsea's hands left a mark, with Sergio Aguero and Fernandinho picking up red cards that will keep them out until after Christmas.

City have slipped to fourth place in the table, four points below Chelsea, and although Leicester are toiling in 16th place, Pablo Zabaleta is taking nothing for granted.

"Always it's a difficult place to go. Even if they are not doing great in the domestic competition, they are still a good team, very competitive," said the City right-back.

"It is going to be a tough game. We need to win and get three points after the big defeat last weekend to stay in the fight for the title."

FIXTURES

Saturday

(1500 GMT unless otherwise stated)
Arsenal v Stoke, Burnley v Bournemouth, Hull v Crystal Palace, Leicester v Man City (1730 GMT), Swansea v Sunderland, Watford v Everton (1230 GMT)

Sunday

(1415 GMT unless otherwise stated)
Chelsea v West Brom (1200 GMT), Liverpool v West Ham (1630 GMT), Man United v Tottenham, Southampton v Middlesbrough

While City have won their last three away matches in the league, they have won just four of their last 14 games in all competitions as Guardiola continues to search for a durable winning formula.

His problems pale in comparison, however, beside those of Leicester manager Claudio Ranieri, who saw a second-string side trounced 5-0 by Porto in the Champions League on Wednesday.

With seven defeats already, Leicester's league form is as alarming as last season's was astonishing and has left them just two points above the relegation zone.

Second-place Arsenal, three points behind Chelsea, can provisionally take over at the summit if they beat Stoke City by two goals or more at the Emirates Stadium on Saturday.

Alexis Sanchez's hat-trick fired Arsenal to a 5-1 win at West Ham United last weekend, which was followed by a superb 4-1 win at Basel in the Champions League, but manager Arsene Wenger feels there is more to come.

"I feel the team is on the way upwards," he said.

"But we have as well to show that first of all we can improve, that we have the desire to improve as a team, and as well, that we can repeat the performances week in, week out.

"Stoke is another challenge for us that we can reset, refocus and continue our development and take the points."

Like Chelsea, third-place Liverpool have had a week off to prepare for Sunday's home game with West Ham.

Mkhitaryan breaks duck Man United through; Southampton out

AFP, Paris



Henrikh Mkhitaryan scored his first Manchester United goal to set up a 2-0 win over Zorya Luhansk in Ukraine on Thursday and take Jose Mourinho's side into the last 32 of the Europa League.

United required only a point to secure progress from Group A but Mkhitaryan's 48th-minute strike and a late Zlatan Ibrahimovic goal separated the sides and took the Premier League club through in second place behind Fenerbahce, who won 1-0 at Feyenoord thanks to a Moussa Sow effort.

The game went ahead despite concerns about the state of the icy, rock-hard pitch at the Chornomorets Stadium in Odessa, almost 1,000 kilometres away from Luhansk in the conflict-torn east of the country.

After a goalless first half, United broke the deadlock three minutes into the second half as the Armenian Mkhitaryan burst forward from midfield through the middle of the Zorya defence before finishing past goalkeeper Igor Levchenko.

They wrapped up the victory two minutes from the end as a fine one-touch passing move ended with Paul Pogba sending Ibrahimovic away, the Swede running through and finishing coolly.

"I was waiting a long time for this goal. My next goal has to be at Old Trafford because I want to score at home," Mkhitaryan, who previously played in Ukraine for Shakhtar Donetsk, told BT Sport.

"The first half was a little bit difficult because we couldn't find the last pass but in the second half we created some space for

the wingers and the strikers. The important thing was to win today and go through."

Mourinho praised the playmaker, who endured a difficult start to his United career but is now starting to show his worth.

"He worked hard physically and tactically -- the talent was there, we knew that when we bought him. Now he's playing good -- in the Premier League, Europa League and EFL Cup -- and now the goal means a little more happiness for him, so I'm very pleased," Mourinho said.

United will join Tottenham Hotspur, who drop out of the Champions League, in the last 32, but there was bitter disappointment for fellow Premier League club Southampton.

Claude Puel's men knew a goalless draw or a win at home to Hapoel Beer-Sheva would see them advance from Group K but instead drew 1-1 with the Israelis and were eliminated.

The visitors went in front in the 79th minute, Yuval Shabtai pouncing on a poor pass by Oriol Romeu and setting up Maor Buzaglo to fire home.

Virgil van Dijk equalised with a deflected shot in stoppage time but they could not get a winner and Hapoel go through instead.

A brilliant late chip by Manuel Trigueros gave Villarreal a nervy 2-1 win over Steaua Bucharest that took the Spanish club into the last 32 from Group L behind the Turkish side Osmanlispor.

Fellow Spaniards Celta Vigo won 2-0 at Panathinaikos and qualify from Group G, while Fiorentina are through as winners of Group J after a 2-1 win over Qarabag in Azerbaijan secured by a 76th-minute goal from 19-year-old Federico Chiesa, son of ex-Italy striker Enrico, who was then sent off shortly after.

ASIAN U-14 TENNIS Reza finishes second

SPORTS REPORTER

Faridur Reza of Bangladesh settled for a runner-up finish in the boys' singles of the 10th BKSP Asian U-14 Tennis Competition yesterday. Reza lost the final in straight sets (3-6, 1-6) against Singapore's Lim. Xiang of South Korea won the girls' singles title beating compatriot Yung Raiu 6-0, 6-1 in the final.

Bangladesh's Sakib and Singapore's Lim won the boys' doubles title while Korea's Xiang and Sim pair won the girls' doubles title.

CHAMPIONSHIP LEAGUE Fakirerpool join leaders

SPORTS REPORTER

Fakirerpool Youngmen's Club joined league leaders Saif SC on 14 points despite being held to a 1-1 draw by Victoria SC in their Marcel Bangladesh Championship League fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Victoria took the lead in the 13th minute through Jubel Khan but Zahidul Islam Dalim scored one minute from time to earn a point for Fakirerpool.