

What to WATCH

BOISHAKHI TV
Bangladesh Premier League
 Muktiyoddha v Uttar Baridhara
 Live from 3:30pm
 Mohammedan v Arambagh
 Live from 6:15pm

STAR SPORTS 1
England v India
 4th Test, Day 4
 Live from 10:00am
Indian Super League
 Kerala v Delhi
 Live from 7:30pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT HD 1
English Premiership
 Chelsea v West Bromwich
 Live from 6:00pm
 Man United v Tottenham
 Live from 8:00pm
 Liverpool v West Ham
 Live from 10:30pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT HD 2
English Premiership
 Southampton v Middlesbrough
 Live from 8:00pm
SONY ESPN
Serie A
 Cagliari v Napoli
 Live from 5:30pm

Torino v Juventus
 Live from 8:00pm
Inter Milan v Genoa
 Live from 1:30am (Monday)
SONY SIX
La Liga
 Eibar v Alaves
 Live from 5:00pm

Celta Vigo v Sevilla
 Live from 9:00pm
Espanyol v Sporting Gijon
 Live from 11:30pm
Real Betis v Athletic Bilbao
 Live from 1:30am (Monday)

DAY'S EVENT	Bangladesh Premier League Muktiyoddha v Uttar Baridhara Time: 3:30pm Venue: Mohammedan v Arambagh	Time: 6:15pm Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
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Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi (2nd from L) scores the first of his two goals to lead his team to a much-needed win against Osasuna during their La Liga encounter at the Reyno de Navarra Stadium yesterday.

Goalless day sees Abahani on top

SPORTS REPORTER

10-man Abahani held Sheikh Russell to a goalless draw, moving six points clear of nearest rivals Chittagong Abahani in their Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. The four-time professional league champions, who are on top of the table with 43 points from 19 matches, will need seven points from their remaining three matches to take an unassailable lead, given win their remaining four matches.

ABAHANI	0 - 0	SK RUSSEL
SK JAMAL	0 - 0	BROTHERS

A match which was marked by lack of scoring opportunities, the Sky Blues had the first opening on four minutes when league's top-scorer Sunday Chizoba danced past a defender and let loose a rather meek attempt at goal, which was scrambled for a corner by Sheikh Russel goalkeeper Biplob Bhattacharjee.

Sunday threatened Sheikh Russel goal again on the half-hour mark when he placed a shot from the left hand side of the box, this time denied by a last-ditch effort from a Sheikh Russel defender.

Abahani were dealt a heavy blow when their inspirational midfielder Andrew Lee

Tuck was shown a straight red card for a harrowing challenge on Sheikh Russel's Jean Jules Ikanga, but it was the Sky Blues who remained the dominant force.

Abahani coach George Kottan made a surprise substitution, sacrificing Sunday for a midfielder at the start of the second half but that hardly eased the pressure on Sheikh Russel. Emon Babu unleashed a clever side-volley from top of the box on 64 minutes, only to see the ball coming off the Sheikh Russel post.

The All Blues made a couple of forays inside the Abahani box, but hardly troubled goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel. There were a lot of aimless attacks at either end of the pitch towards the latter stages of the game, but eventually both teams settled for a draw, a result which took Sheikh Russel to seventh position on 21 points.

Meanwhile, defending champions Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club lost even more ground in their bid to secure a second-place finish after being held to a goalless draw by Brothers Union. The result of the lacklustre first match of the day saw the three-time champions stay seven points behind Chittagong Abahani, with three matches left to play. Chittagong Abahani, however, have four matches in hand.

Messi brings respite

AFP, Madrid



Lionel Messi struck twice as Barcelona recorded their first win in four La Liga games to close to within three points of Real Madrid at the top of La Liga with a 3-0 win at Osasuna.

Barca should have killed the game off in the first half as Luis Suarez and Messi missed two big chances each against La Liga's bottom side.

However, Suarez rounded off a fine team move to break the deadlock just before the hour before Messi's double in the final 17 minutes moved him ahead of Cristiano Ronaldo as La Liga's top scorer with 11 for the season.

Real can extend their lead once more and set a new club record unbeaten run of 35 games when they host Deportivo la Coruna later on Saturday.

"We are Barcelona and we know we can never give up," Suarez told BeIN Sports Spain. "We are candidates to win the league, it doesn't matter if we are four, five, six or seven points behind, we won't give up."

Barca were in desperate need of a lift after conceding in the last minute to Real in last weekend's El Clasico.

The Catalans' upturn in performance since captain Andres Iniesta's return from a six-week injury layoff continued in the first half at Osasuna, but Barca were in danger of paying for their profligacy in front of goal.

A brilliant pass from Messi freed Suarez inside the area just eight minutes in, but the Uruguayan pulled his shot inches wide of the far post.

Suarez then hit the woodwork as he spun

inside the area. Osasuna remain five points off safety and it was easy to see why they are still without a home win all season as the hosts were opened up at will.

Suarez turned provider for Messi, but Nautzet Perez rushed from his goal to block. And the goalkeeper frustrated the five-time World Player of the Year again moments later by just raising a hand in time to divert Messi's attempted chip behind.

"We were patient and generated a lot of chances," said Barca boss Luis Enrique. "It was key to go in front and calm ourselves down."

"The goals came in the second-half, but we deserved to go in front in the first-half and have a much easier game."

Osasuna briefly threatened to cause a huge upset either side of half time as firstly Oriol Riera just couldn't stretch to tap home a dangerous cross at the back post.

Sergio Leon then gave Barca a scare when his brilliant lob over Marc-Andre ter Stegen came back off the underside of the bar.

Barca created fewer chances in the second half, but were more clinical.

Sergio Busquets and Messi combined to release Jordi Alba on the left and his low cross was rolled into an unguarded net by Suarez despite Osasuna calls for offside.

The second goal came about in similar fashion 13 minutes later as Alba again got to the by-line and his cross was volleyed home by Messi at the near post.

And Messi didn't need any help for his second in stoppage time as he wriggled clear of three Osasuna defenders and left Perez on the floor before lifting the ball high into the net.

Luis hopeful over Leo future

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona coach Luis Enrique is confident Lionel Messi will tie his future to the Catalan giants after opening talks to extend his contract beyond 2018.

Various Spanish media sources reported this week that Messi's father and agent, Jorge Horacio Messi, has arrived in Barcelona to begin negotiations on a new deal for the five-time World Player of the Year.

"Of course (I like the news)," Enrique said on Friday.

"The day on which it is announced will be a great day for everyone to celebrate." Barca have already tied down Neymar, Sergi Busquets and Javier Mascherano to contract extensions this year.

"He would join a list of players that have renewed and want to stay at Barca and form part of the Barca family," added Enrique.

Club president Josep Maria Bartomeu also told Uruguayan radio this week he hoped to seal a new deal with Luis Suarez before the end of the year.

Guardiola against 48 teams WC

AFP, London



Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola warned Friday that plans to increase the World Cup to 48 teams as well as the global saturation of football is going to "kill" players.

Guardiola said he wants to see rules changed to allow for up to six substitutes to be used in a game rather than the three at present as a means to prevent burn-out of top stars.

"It's just three substitutions now, why can you not make four, five or six?" said the Spaniard.

"All the players are involved more than before, the coaches can use different tactics. Less injuries, more open games. Everything would be better."

The City boss was speaking after FIFA president Gianni Infantino expressed his desire to increase the number of teams playing at the World Cup from 2026.

But he fears that such demands will push players to breaking point.

"It's not just English football, it's all around the world. Now they talk about a World Cup of 48 teams -- we are going to kill the players," he said.

"FIFA will decide and we accept the decision and if we are not happy we go home. They are focusing on more and more and more -- it affects the quality. I am thinking just for the players. They need to



breathe, to (have a) break, to enjoy.

"This kind of thing is impossible because we are going to finish (the season), then after one week the World Cup then after three weeks we go to the pre-season, we go to China, the States, Australia.

"You play against Milan, Juventus, Madrid and you have to win, people demand you have to play good. No preparation then you come back and it's 11 months again and it's the European Cup.

"You do this for 10 or 12 years and we don't think about the players. For that reason there has to be huge squads, more money for the clubs to spend."

Siddikur drops to 28th

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladeshi golfer Siddikur Rahman slipped down to 28th position on the leaderboard yesterday after carding an even par for the second consecutive day at the UBS Hong Kong Open.

The 32-year-old exchanged three bogeys for the same number of birdies at the Hong Kong Golf Club for an aggregate score of three-under-par (207).

At the top of the leaderboard, Rafa Carbera Bello of Spain was joined by Sam Brazel of Australia at 11-under-par (199).

India, Vietnam scoop titles

SPORTS REPORTER

India and Vietnam shared the honours of the Yonex-Sunrise Bangladesh Open Badminton Challenge which concluded at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium in Paltan yesterday.

India's Abhishek Yelega beat his compatriot Shreyansh Jaiswal 21-17, 21-17 to win the men's singles title while Thi Thang of Vietnam beat her compatriot Thuy Linh Nguyen 21-18, 21-13 in the women's final to grab the women's singles title.

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty pair of India won the men's doubles title while Thi Sen Nguyen and Thi Trang pair of Vietnam scooped the women's doubles title.

UEFA to stick with CL reforms

AFP, Nyon

UEFA on Friday confirmed that they will push ahead with previously announced plans to reform the Champions League and will provide compensation for smaller leagues affected by the changes.

European football's governing body made the announcement after an executive committee meeting at their base in Nyon, Switzerland.

In August, European football's governing body had revealed that the continent's four leading leagues -- Spain, England, Germany and Italy -- would be guaranteed four places in the Champions League group stage for the period 2018-2021.

Bayern regain top spot

AFP, Berlin

Robert Lewandowski netted twice as Bayern Munich returned to the top of the Bundesliga on Saturday with a 5-0 win over Wolfsburg after RB Leipzig lost their unbeaten record.

Leipzig's shock 1-0 defeat at bottom side Ingolstadt, who finished with ten men, ended their three-week stint as leaders as Carlo Ancelotti's Bayern cut the three-point gap and regained top spot on goal difference with both teams on 33 points.

Second-placed RB had their 13-match unbeaten run ended -- a record for a club at the start of their first Bundesliga season -- as coach Ralph Hasenhuetl endured a horror return to Ingolstadt, who he left after last season.

Ingolstadt's Australia striker Mathew Leckie was sent off for two yellow cards in quick succession in the tense final stages.

But his team held on for the win which took them off the bottom leaving Darmstadt, who lost 1-0 at Freiburg, now last.

Vardy shreds City

AFP, London



Jamie Vardy broke his three-month goal drought with a hat-trick as Premier League champions Leicester City sensationally inflicted a humiliating 4-2 defeat on Pep Guardiola's Manchester City on Saturday.

At a rain-soaked King Power Stadium, Vardy hit his first top-flight treble and Andy King also found the net to ensure Leicester atoned for their 5-0 Champions League mauling by Porto.

City, who replied through Aleksandar Kolarov and Nolito, had previously fallen to a stormy 3-1 loss at home to Chelsea and lie four points below new leaders Arsenal, who beat Stoke City 3-1.

Nolito's late goal spared Guardiola from his joint-heaviest league defeat as a manager, but the game exposed huge flaws in a defence that has registered just one clean sheet in 17 matches.

With Sergio Aguero and Fernandinho banned after being sent off against Chelsea, Guardiola had to reshape his team, with Kelechi Iheanacho and Fernando selected to deputise.

But his plans fell apart in less than five minutes as quick-fire goals by Vardy and King put the champions on charge.

With less than three minutes on the clock, Riyad Mahrez's pass was helped on by Islami Slimani for Vardy, who drilled home his first Leicester goal since September 10. Two minutes and 15 seconds later, City failed to clear a long throw-in and Slimani teed up King

RESULTS			
Arsenal (Walcott 42, Ozil 49, Iwobi 75)	3 - 1	Stoke (Adam 29-pen)	
Burnley (Hendrick 13, Ward 16, Boyd 75)	3 - 2	Bournemouth (Afove 45+2, Daniels 90)	
Hull (Snodgrass 27-pen, Diomande 72, Livermore 78)	3 - 3	Crystal Palace (Benteke 52-pen, Zaha 70, Campbell 89)	
Swansea (Sigurdsson 51-pen, Llorente 54, 80)	3 - 0	Sunderland	
Watford (Okaka 36, 64, Prodi 59)	3 - 2	Everton (Lukaku 17, 86)	

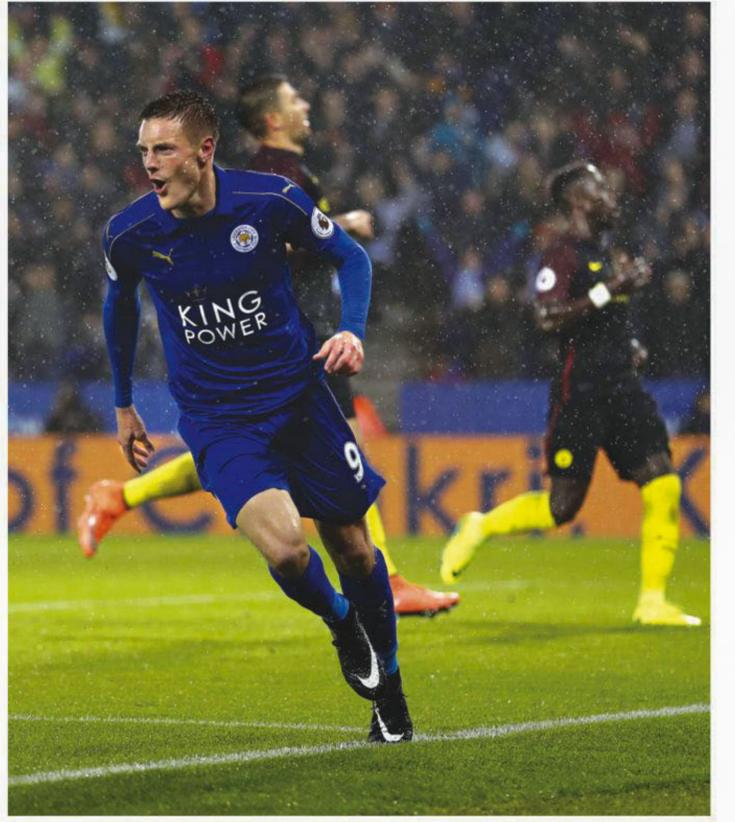
to arc a fine shot into the top-left corner. After Slimani had volleyed over, Leicester added a third, Mahrez's exquisite cushioned pass releasing Vardy to round Claudio Bravo and roll in his second.

City, who remain fourth, bossed the second half, but Vardy completed his hat-trick in the 78th minute after seizing on a wretched John Stones back-pass, rendering Kolarov's free-kick and Nolito's goal anecdotal.

The match completed a day that featured 29 goals in six games, with all six home teams scoring at least three goals.

Mesut Ozil's crafty header inspired Arsenal to a comeback victory over Stoke as Arsene Wenger's side supplanted Chelsea at the summit.

Charlie Adam's penalty put Stoke ahead at the Emirates Stadium, but Theo Walcott equalised before Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain teed up Ozil to float a delightful header over Lee Grant in the 49th minute.



Leicester City striker Jamie Vardy celebrates his second goal against Manchester City during their Premier League match at the King Power Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS