

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS 1

England v India

5th Test, Day 1

Live from 10:00am

STAR SPORTS 2

Pakistan v Australia

1st Test, Day 2

Live from 9:00am

STAR SPORTS SELECT HD 2

Bundesliga

Hoffenheim v Dortmund

Live from 1:30am (Saturday)

SONY SIX

La Liga

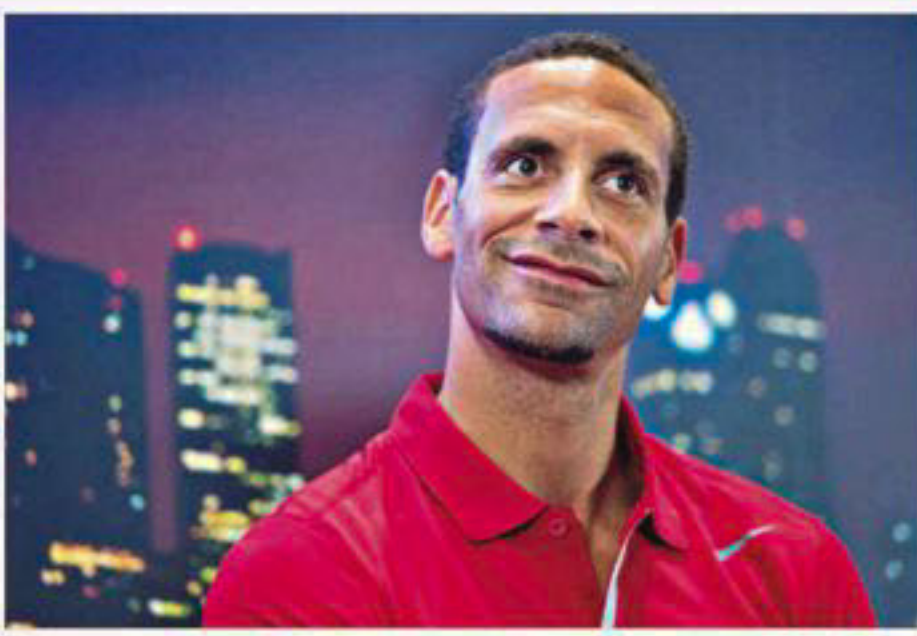
Alaves v Real Betis

Live from 1:30am

Ferdinand's half mil miracle


Footballers are often accused of splurging their wealth, but Rio Ferdinand has demonstrated incredible generosity with a Christmas donation. The former Manchester United and England defender made an enormous £500,000 donation of toys to Key 103's Cash for Kids charity on behalf of himself and his Manchester restaurant Rosso. Not only that, but Ferdinand has also revealed that he has donated 11,500 sleeping bags for the homeless. Rio said that it was his role as a father which led to the generous heart he developed for the good causes. "As a father I couldn't see children going without opening a present this Christmas. "We know there are a lot of less fortunate people so we've decided to donate £500,000 worth of toys and gifts," said Ferdinand. The Cash for Kids Mission Christmas campaign provides aid for children up to 18 years old living in poverty, or those who have suffered abuse, deprivation or neglect across Manchester.

—AGENCIES



Jibon gives life to Sky Blues

SPORTS REPORTER

 A last-gasp brace from substitute Nabib Newaj Jibon helped Abahani post a 3-2 win over Sheikh Jamal DC in a dramatic and tempestuous JB Bangladesh Premier League encounter at Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

With one minute of regulation time left, the striker was thrown into the fray with the mammoth task of turning the game which Abahani were trailing 1-2. However, the national discard struck his first goal of the season, before adding a second in a three-minute span during the four minutes of added time to rescue his side. The result sees Abahani consolidate their lead at the top of the 12-team table with 46 points from 20 outings, six ahead of second-placed Chittagong Abahani who have three games left.

The Sky Blues now need only four points from their two remaining games against lightweights Uttar Baridhara and struggling Rahmatganj MFS to take an unassailable lead and ensure their fifth professional football league title.

After the final whistle, Sheikh Jamal's foreign duo of Emeka

Darlington and Landing Darboe reacted sharply and hurled abuse towards a Sheikh Jamal official and threatened not to play in Bangladesh again.

"You saw the match and I don't want to make any comments," was the curt reply after the match from Emeka, who was furious on the pitch after Abahani equalised one minute into stoppage time.

"We played well for 90 minutes but we could not keep the momentum in injury time," said Sheikh Jamal manager Kazi Joshimmuddin Josy.

When asked if Emeka's furious outburst has to point towards his club throwing away the match, Abahani manager Satyajit Das Rupu said that such talks were 'rubbish'. He added that his side had been deprived of two penalties by referee Azad Rahman.

Missing two key players for the game -- Lee Tuck through suspension and Sunday Chizoba through injury -- Abahani fielded a depleted side but had the last laugh as winger Jewel Rana played a key role in their 13th triumph.

Without two key players -- suspended Lee Tuck and injured Sunday Chizoba, Abahani turned into a depleted side upfront but they finally had the last laugh with winger Jewel Rana playing key role in their thirteen

triumph out of 20 outings.

The Jhenaidhah local opened Abahani's account in the 44th minute with a close-range header, before Landing levelled the margin three minutes into the second half with a driven shot after a poor clearance from Abahani keeper Shahidul Alam Soheli fell to his feet.

Abahani then kept up the pressure to restore their lead but were denied by either defenders or goalkeeper Mazharul Islam Himel, before Sheikh Jamal took the lead from a flowing counter-attack in the 81st minute.

Having survived a close-range shot from Jewel, Sheikh Jamal midfielder Malik Mendy gave a long ball to Emeka inside the Abahani box and the Nigerian cleverly chipped the advancing goalkeeper to give his team the lead.

Abahani bolstered their attacking line-up by sending on Wahed Ahmed and Jibon and the move proved pivotal as the tiring Sheikh Jamal backline failed to keep up.

Jewel, with his darting moves from the left flank, was the provider for both of Jibon's goals. He provided two crosses for Jibon, who took to the pitch after a five-match gap. Jibon first chested in the ball from close range, before tapping in two minutes later to hand Abahani a dramatic victory.



Abahani's substitute striker Nabib Newaj Jibon (L) scored twice in injury time to lead his team to a dramatic 3-2 win over Sheikh Jamal during their JB Bangladesh Premier League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Nacional slam video referee

AFP, Osaka

South American champions Atletico Nacional questioned football's new video referee after the first ever penalty awarded under the system helped dump them out of the Club World Cup.

The Colombians felt aggrieved after Hungarian referee Viktor Kassai used the new technology for the first goal in their shock 3-0 defeat by Japan's Kashima Antlers on Wednesday.


In a ground-breaking moment, Kassai stopped play, ran to the side of the pitch and watched a replay, before blowing for the penalty which was converted by Shoma Doi.

Nacional were fuming as the foul in question, Orlando Berrio's trip on Daigo Nishi as he ran towards an airborne free kick, had gone virtually unnoticed by the players.

"That decision was crucial because we were in control and it unbalanced us emotionally," complained Nacional defender Farid Diaz.

Conte wants more

AFP, Sunderland

 Antonio Conte told his Chelsea players to go and make it 11 league wins on the bounce with victory at Crystal Palace on Saturday as they threaten to run away with the title.

Rampant Chelsea are six points clear at the top of the Premier League following a 1-0 victory at Sunderland and face a Palace side on Saturday that is in deep trouble at the other end of the table.

Conte turned his mind to Palace within minutes of the final whistle on Wednesday.

"I am pleased for my players because they deserve this for their commitment and work-rate every day, in every training session, during the game," he said.

"Now for sure we have to continue. In three days on Saturday we will have another tough game against Crystal Palace.

"I hope we recover very well after this battle to try to arrive at Christmas in an incredible position in the table."

Chelsea may have a significant advantage over the other title contenders but they were not wholly convincing at the Stadium of Light and needed a 40th-minute goal from Cesc Fabregas to dispose of struggling Sunderland.

The Londoners are closing in on Arsenal's record of 14 successive victories, achieved over two seasons, as they prepare

for the trip to Palace and home games against Bournemouth and Stoke over Christmas.

They are matches that Chelsea will be expected to win, but the same was said about their visit to the Stadium of Light, where Sunderland have scored only 10 goals and now won just two of their eight home matches.

"I prefer not to look at the top of the table," Conte said, attempting to play down Chelsea title talk.

"We are doing something important up to now, but the league doesn't finish today. There are still three games before the half-way stage of the season."

Conte admitted Chelsea were not at their best but he was encouraged by the way they kept fighting to secure a tenth successive league victory.

Fabregas, still adapting to Chelsea's 3-4-3 system, added: "The performance was really good and I felt we were very, very strong."

"Now we want to keep winning. Hopefully we can continue like this and send out a strong message."

"People forget that it's only my second time in my career that I've played this system. My teammates have played it much more, but I'm getting used to it and feel very comfortable."

David Moyes, the Sunderland manager, is facing a fight to avoid relegation, but he believes the strong showing against Chelsea provides hope for the future.

Messi to tie the knot?

AGENCIES, Barcelona

Football superstar Lionel Messi and long time girlfriend Antonella Rocuzzo have decided to formalise their relationship and get married, according to Spanish media reports.

The couple, who have two children together -- four-year-old Thiago and one-year-old Mateo -- will take the leap at a time convenient to Messi's footballing career, which can either be the summer or winter of 2017, according to Spanish daily Marca.

The couple met when they were both children in their neighbourhood in Rosario in Argentina and began their relationship a few years after Messi signed for Barcelona in 2000.

The star wedding will most likely be in his native Argentina and a raft of his teammates are expected to attend.

Youngmen taste first defeat

SPORTS REPORTER

Youngmen's Club Fakirer-pool suffered their first defeat in the Marcel Bangladesh Championship League when they were beaten 0-1 at the hands of Agrani Bank SC at the Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Nayeem Sheikh separated the sides in the 24th minute to take Agrani Bank to the joint second position along with Saif SC while Youngmen's Club have 14 points from nine matches, one less than league leaders Bangladesh Police FC.

European elite oppose WC expansion

AFP, Paris

The powerful body representing Europe's top clubs on Thursday said it opposed the proposed enlargement of the World Cup, saying leading players were already under too much strain.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino wants to expand the World Cup to 48 teams starting with the 2026 tournament, with Asian countries already backing the controversial plan.

"In the interest of the fans and the players, we urge FIFA not to increase the number of World Cup participants," said ECA chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge.

Rajani retires as Russel run on

SPORTS REPORTER

 Sheikh Russel KC provided a fine farewell to Rajani Kanta Barman as they notched up a 2-0 win against Mohammedan in his final JB Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Shakhawat Hossain Rony put Sheikh Russel ahead in the fourth minute before Jamal Bhuiyan converted a penalty four minutes from the break to ensure their sixth win, taking them to seventh position with 24 points. Meanwhile, with their eighth defeat from 20 matches, Mohammedan are in 10th position with 18 points.

Rajani, who captained the 2003 SAFF Championship winning squad, called time on his career at the age of 40 and symbolically donned the jersey number 40 throughout the first half in which he played as a right-back.

Rajani skipped the previous season but seems happy to retire from the field.

"I want to thank Sheikh Russel KC for providing me such an opportunity. I have got a lot from football and want to be involved with the country's football. My message to the new generation of footballers is to play for yourself, then you will develop and country's football will be benefited," said Rajani, who has also been working as the physical trainer to Sheikh Russel.

Rajani began his career in 1994 for Agrani Bank in the then first division football league and later played for Mohammedan SC, Muktijoddha Sangsad, Brothers Union, Abahani and Sheikh Russel. He also represented the national team from 1996 to 2013 as a centre-back.

Gundogan blow for Man City

AFP, Manchester

Manchester City have been dealt a blow after German midfielder Ilkay Gundogan sustained a knee injury that manager Pep Guardiola fears will sideline him for "several months".

The Germany international had to be substituted in the 44th minute of City's 2-0 Premier League win over Watford at the Etihad Stadium on Wednesday after an accidental collision with Nordin Amrabat.

Guardiola revealed afterwards he had sustained suspected knee ligament damage.

"We are going to miss him for a long time," said Guardiola. "This is the worst news."

"I'm so sad. The doctors think he has ligament damage, but he doesn't know exactly (how serious it is)."

"We will know tomorrow (Thursday), but it doesn't look good. I think it will be several months. He is so sad about it."

Real cruise into final

AFP, Yokohama

 Karim Benzema and Cristiano Ronaldo were on target as Real Madrid eased past Mexico's Club America 2-0 on Thursday to reach the Club World Cup final in Japan.

The Spanish giants will face shock finalists and local favourites Kashima Antlers in Yokohama on Sunday as they look to capture their second world title in three years.

"Our sole aim was to reach the final -- so it's job done," Real coach Zinedine Zidane told reporters after

watching his side extend their club record unbeaten run to 36 matches in all competitions.

"We didn't have a great rhythm in the first half but in the second half we created a lot of chances and Cristiano finally scored so I'm very satisfied," added the Frenchman.

"It was a long flight to Japan, but for Real Madrid the Club World Cup is an important tournament and we are here to lift the trophy."

Zidane's countryman Benzema said: "It was a hard game against a tough team. The conditions were difficult too with the long journey we've had but we played well and won the game -- now for the final."

With Ronaldo firing blanks until scoring with virtually the last kick of the game, Benzema struck in first-half stoppage time, finishing clinically with the outside of his right boot after a deft pass from Toni Kroos.

Ronaldo, who scooped his fourth Ballon d'Or earlier this week, had already squandered a gilt-edged opportunity by heading against the post.

The Portuguese superstar also saw two stinging efforts blocked by goalkeeper Moises Munoz but his persistence paid off when he swept home from a tight angle deep into injury time.

Confusion followed, however, when it appeared that Paraguayan referee Enrique Caceres would review the decision to allow Ronaldo's goal using the video technology being trialled by FIFA in Japan.

Ronaldo's face turned to thunder as the Mexicans protested he had been offside -- until the match official finally indicated that the goal stood.

"It's a new invention but to be honest I don't like it," said man of the match Luka Modric when asked about video replays.

"It causes confusion. I hope they don't continue with this system because for me it is not football."

Club America coach Ricardo La Volpe, meanwhile, insisted his side had been unfortunate to lose.

"I think the luck was against us this evening," insisted the firebrand Argentine.

"It was a very tight game which we dominated for periods. But perhaps we weren't aggressive enough and we couldn't find the final ball."



Real Madrid superstar Cristiano Ronaldo (R) scores the second goal against Club America during their Club World Cup semifinals at the Yokohama International Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



One of the finest defenders of the country, Rajani Kanta Barman, called time on his illustrious football career at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. The 40-year-old centre-back will be best remembered for making the sliding tackle an art in the domestic circuit.

PHOTO: STAR

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