

What to WATCH

DAY'S EVENT

BTV

Bangladesh v New Zealand

1st ODI

Live from 4:00am (Monday)

BOISHAKHI TV

Bangladesh Premier League

Sheikh Russel v Arambagh

Live from 3:00pm

Sheikh Jamal v Mohammedan

Live from 5:45pm

STAR SPORTS 2

Pakistan v Australia

2nd Test, Day 1

Live from 5:30am (Monday)

Bangladesh Premier League

Sheikh Russel v Arambagh

Time: 3:00om

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

Sheikh Jamal v Mohammedan

Time: 5:45pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

SYRIAN KIDS 'THE TRUE HEROES'

Cristiano Ronaldo called Syria's long-suffering children "the true heroes" as he joined a campaign to provide food, medicine and psychological help for kids in Aleppo and other war-stricken cities. "Hello, this is for children of Syria. We know that you have been suffering a lot. I am a very famous player, but you are the true heroes," the Real Madrid and Portugal star said in a video message for Save The Children posted on his social media. "Don't lose your hope, the world is with you. We care about you, I am with you," added the footballer. Nick Finney, of Save the Children's Syria campaign, said "Ronaldo is not only one of the world's most iconic sports figures, but he also has become a beacon of hope for millions of boys and girls worldwide -- and hope is something that Syria's children need now more than ever."

—AFP





Athletes of Bangladesh Army celebrate with the best team's trophy at the end of the 40th National Athletics Championship at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Hard times for athletics

Another national meet ends without records

SPORTS REPORTER

No new national records were set over the last three days as the 40th National Athletics Championship was wrapped at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday with a reflection of the continuous decline of track and field.

Back in the 80s and 90s, records were a commonplace event thing during these championships, thanks to the presence of legendary athletes like Golam Ambia, Mahbub Alam, Milzar Hossain, Shamsuddin, Shah Alam, Afzal Hossain, Ariful Haque and Azharul Islam. But over the last decade or so, our athletics has stagnated, which is evident from the fact that not a single record has been set in the last three national meets.

Sprinter Jakia Sultana's 200m sprint record in the 2013 meet remains the last one in track events while Rasheduzzaman's javelin throw in 2012 stands as the last record in field events.

"It is not possible to create records if competitions are not held regularly," opined BKSP coach Abdullah Hel Kafi. "If there are more competitions at

national level, athletes can practice with much inspiration and be prepared with a competitive attitude. But it is not fair to expect something good from the athletes if only one competition is held in a year," Kafi added.

The Bangladesh Athletic Federation (BAF) is supposed to hold two national meets at senior level in a calendar year, but the game's governing body has failed to hold the summer meet for two successive years.

"The Federation has no proper plans for the championships which is evident from the fact that the national championship is being held in December instead of March-April. The athletes are taking part without proper preparation," complained Azharul Islam, a discus thrower in the current championship.

"There are hardly any participants from district teams now and there is even shortage of athletes in the event finals. But during our prime time, there used to be tough competition among the athletes. To be honest, the services teams [Army, Navy, BGB, BJMC and Ansar] are the ones who have still kept athletics alive," said former army man

Azhar. BAF general secretary Ibrahim Chengis, however, refuted the arguments. "I can show you documents that some 400 to 500 athletes participated in this championship and there were athletes from some 35 districts but I admit that there was a shortage of athletes in the final of a few events," said Chengis.

"It is not possible to hold all tournaments with a government allocation of Tk 12 lakh per year. You have come here to cover the championship because of me who has managed sponsors to hold the event," claimed Chengis.

Meanwhile, 11 events were decided on the third and final day. Bangladesh Army dominated the medals tally with 19 gold, 19 silver and 13 bronze medals, followed by Summer Athletics champions Bangladesh Navy, who finished with a haul of 11 gold, 11 silver and 4 bronze medals. BGB finished third with two gold, two silver and two bronze medals. It is mentionable here that Army, Navy, BGB, BJMC, Ansar and BKSP shared all the 36 gold medals.

BPL returns after 5-day break

SPORTS REPORTER

JB Bangladesh Premier League resumes today at the Bangabandhu National Stadium after a five-day break following Victory Day programme as well as national athletics championship at the country's premier sports venue.

Sheikh Russel will take on Arambagh KS in the day's first match before holders Sheikh Jamal DC and Mohammedan SC lock horns under the flood-lights.

The tie between Sheikh Russel and Arambagh is important for both sides in regards to the standing of the 10-team table as Sheikh Russel are in seventh position with 24 points from 20 outings while newcomers Arambagh are a place behind with 23 points.

However, the second match is crucial for Mohammedan, who are in relegation threat with only 18 points from 20 matches. The Black and Whites are only one point above second-from-bottom Uttar Baridhara and three points clear of bottom-of-the-table Feni Soccer.

Big Sam takes charge at Crystal Palace

AFP, London



Premier League strugglers Crystal Palace appointed Sam Allardyce as their new boss on Friday in a swift return to the dugout for the former England manager. The former Bolton and West Ham manager's one-match reign in charge of the national side ended in September following a newspaper sting.

"We are delighted to be able to make an appointment so quickly and fortunate that someone of Sam's calibre and experience was available," Eagles chairman Steve Parish said, a day after sacking Alan Pardew.

After agreeing a two-and-a-half-year contract, Allardyce will have his first game in charge on Monday with an English Premier League match at Watford.

He was set to take his first training session on Saturday and has the opportunity to remodel the squad once the January transfer window opens.

"I hope I can bring some joy, particularly over Christmas and New Year, and over the long term between now and the end of the season," he said.

"The club seems to be very ambitious, certainly the chairman and the owners seem to be taking the club forward in the right

direction.

"I like the look of the squad and that's the probably the reason that I'm here, because I feel that the club can go forward from here and hopefully I can help it go forward.

"With my experience, I think I can us get a few more results on the board."

Pardew was sacked on Thursday following a miserable run of results, with the Eagles winning just four of their 17 league matches this season and only one of their last 11.

Palace are 17th in the Premier League, one point above the relegation zone and three points off the foot of the table.

Allardyce has been out of the game since being ditched by England after just 67 days in charge following ill-advised remarks to undercover journalists.

Allardyce gave advice on how to circumnavigate transfer rules, criticised the FA's decision to rebuild Wembley and mocked his England predecessor Roy Hodgson while being secretly filmed by reporters from The Daily Telegraph posing as East Asian businessmen.

Though he has never won a major trophy, Allardyce, 62, has proved adept at keeping smaller sides in the Premier League.

"Big Sam" has integrated sports science and technology into his training techniques and made his teams difficult to beat, often



V-DAY HOCKEY

Navy, Army set up final clash

SPORTS REPORTER

Star-studded Bangladesh Navy and Bangladesh Army moved into Monday's final of the Marcel Victory Day Hockey tournament with convincing wins in their respective semifinals at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Bangladesh Army handed a 7-0 defeat to Bangladesh Air Force in the first semifinal, with national defender Khorshedur Rahman slotting three goals and Milon Hossain scoring a brace. Hasan Jubair Niloy and Abdul Malek netted one goal each.

In the day's second semifinal, Bangladesh Navy breezed past BKSP 5-2 with Rasel Mahmud Jimmy scoring a pair while Roman Sarker, Moinul Islam Koushik and Krishna Kumar scored one goal apiece.

Sohanur Rahman and Razib Das reimbursed one goal each for the country's lone sports institute.

'Man Utd have lost their traditions'

AFP, London



Former Manchester United manager David Moyes says the club have abandoned their traditions ahead of his return to Old Trafford with Sunderland on Boxing Day.

Moyes, 53, lasted just 10 months as United manager after succeeding his Scottish compatriot Alex Ferguson at the helm in May 2013.

His two successors, Louis van Gaal and current manager Jose Mourinho, have invested heavily on new players and Moyes believes the present-day United are a different club to the one he joined.

"Manchester United was a club with great traditions that they tended to pick British managers. That tradition has now gone," Moyes said, in comments published by British media on Saturday.

"They are a football club who had traditions with the way they spent. They didn't try to compete with all the others clubs.

"They tried to do what they thought was the right thing to do and spend in the right way.

"I could say that's gone, so I think there have been a few changes at United, but that's the way they have chosen to go."

Moyes repeated a claim that he was "definitely unfairly treated" by United and revealed he had missed out on a string of

high-profile transfer targets.

"When I first went in my real target was Gareth Bale," said Moyes. "I felt all along that Gareth Bale was a Manchester United player.

"I fought right until the last minute. We actually offered a bigger deal than Real Madrid.

"But Gareth had his mind made up on going to Real Madrid. That was, in my mind, the player I really wanted to bring to Manchester United.

"The other one was Cesc Fabregas, who we thought we would get right up until the last minute.

"I remember when I first met Sir Alex and he always said there was a chance (Cristiano) Ronaldo might come back.

"So that was the level we were targeting. I was not going out to bring in seven, eight players, because we had a squad which had just won the league.

"Toni Kroos was agreed to come in the summer. I had agreed it with Toni himself and his agent. Sometimes you don't get deals done.

"A lot of players come into Manchester United and have not necessarily made the difference.

"But I think that, given time and having got to this period, I would have hoped I would be working with a successful team now."

United are sixth in the Premier League table ahead of Sunday's game and chasing a fourth successive league win, with

Draxler ends Wolves debacle

AFP, Berlin



Julian Draxler had the world at his feet when Wolfsburg paid Schalke 35 million euros (\$37.3m) back in August 2015 for Germany's rising star.

"We're convinced Julian will develop further with us," beamed Wolfsburg's then-director of sport Klaus Allofs with Draxler signed as a playmaker to replace Kevin De Bruyne, who had just left for Manchester City.

Wolfsburg confirmed Saturday that the attacking midfielder was joining Paris Saint Germain.

Draxler, who signed a five-year deal, wanted to play Champions League football with Wolfsburg, the 2015 German Cup winners, who had just beaten Bayern Munich in a penalty shoot-out to win the German Super Cup.

But by December 2016, the winger had repeatedly made it crystal clear he wanted to leave, which saw him kicked out of the squad for their 5-0 league drubbing at Bayern.

At 23, with a World Cup winners medal in his pocket and 27 caps for his country, he was now too big for Wolfsburg.

"This kind of attitude always brings confusion in a team," said Wolfsburg's coach Valerien Ismael.

"If you focus on something, you have to put all your heart into it."

As his team-mate Mario Gomez put it "those who want to leave should be allowed to go. It should have already been settled in the summer!"

In August, Draxler first said he wanted to leave Wolfsburg, but his request fell on deaf ears with then-coach Dieter Hecking, who was sacked in October by Allofs, who in turn left in December after poor results.

It was not an option to let their star go less than a year after signing HIM, but things went from bad to worse in the league table.

Draxler did not even bother celebrating with fans after their 1-0 victory over Eintracht Frankfurt on December 18 in the last league game of the year.

Barton charged with betting

AFP, London

Controversial footballer Joey Barton is alleged to have placed over 1000 football bets over a ten-year period and has been charged with misconduct by the Football Association.

The 34-year-old Barton is due to rejoin Burnley after his bust up with Glasgow Rangers is alleged by the FA to have placed bets between March 26, 2006 and May 13, 2016, and is thought to have placed 1,260 bets over a ten years period.

Burnley released a short statement on Friday saying they were aware of the charge and would discuss the issue with Barton.

"Burnley Football Club have today been made aware of FA charges brought against Joey Barton relating to historic betting on football matches," it read.

"The club will be discussing the matter with Joey and his legal representatives and will be making no further comment on the matter at this time."

The FA is understood to have been investigating the matter for the past few months having received information from a book-maker.

Kyrgios prepared for comeback after ban

AFP, Sydney



Australia's Nick Kyrgios said Saturday he was ready for scrutiny at next month's Australian Open, as the volatile star prepares for his comeback after a playing ban.

The controversial 21-year-old said his forced hiatus from tennis -- when a meltdown at the Shanghai Masters in October resulted in an initial eight-week suspension -- has proved a blessing.

A condition of the ATP reducing the ban to three weeks meant Kyrgios has been seeing a sports psychologist to prepare him for the new tennis season.

"I needed to shut down really after a very long and tough year," Kyrgios told Fairfax Media on Saturday.

He added he was now focusing on "managing my schedule and time better to help with physical and mental freshness".

Kyrgios knows he will be in the spotlight at his home Grand Slam tournament and he is working to ensure the media pressure does not derail his campaign.

"Look, the added media interest is never easy and it's something that I haven't fully got my head around or got used to, but what can I do?" Kyrgios said.



"As far as how I'll deal with it, I'll just keep my head down and go about my business as I have done the past few Aussie summers."

Kyrgios, who won three ATP titles this year with his world ranking climbing to 13, believes he is capable of winning the tournament.

"Will I? I don't know. But will I slog

my guts out trying to? Without a doubt," Kyrgios said.

He added despite a turbulent 12 months he would back on the year with pride.

"2016 was definitely a success ... for anyone in only their second full year on tour to win three ATP titles is pretty big," he said.

Del Potro out of Australian Open

AFP, Wellington

On-going fitness issues have forced Juan Martin del Potro out of next month's Australian Open and his planned warm up event in New Zealand, organisers of the Auckland Classic announced Saturday.

"Juan Martin del Potro has confirmed he will withdraw from the Australasian swing due to fitness issues," the Classic organisers said in a statement, referring to the two tournaments in January.

"Del Potro confirmed via his management team overnight that he has not had sufficient recovery time and will be withdrawing from the (Auckland) Classic and the Australian Open."

The announcement came a month after del Potro staged an incredible comeback to down world number six Marin Cilic of Croatia in an epic five-setter to set Argentina up for their first Davis Cup crown.

Del Potro was the 2016 tennis comeback success story. After missing most of last year because of injury, he began 2016 ranked 1,042th and finished at 38th after a