

# What to WATCH

## BTV & CHANNEL 9

New Zealand v Bangladesh  
Second Test, Day-3  
Live from 4:00am (Sunday)  
**SONY ESPN**  
*Serie A*  
Chievo Verona v Fiorentina  
Live from 11:00pm

## AC Milan v Napoli

Live from 1:45am (Sunday)  
**SONY SIX**  
Australian Open  
Third Round  
Live from 6:00am  
*Primera Liga*  
Real Madrid v Malaga

## Live from 9:00pm

Alaves v Leganes  
Live from 11:30pm  
Villarreal v Valencia  
Live from 2:00am (Sunday)  
**STAR SPORTS SELECT HD 1**  
*English Premiership*  
Liverpool v Swansea City

## Live from 6:30pm

Stoke City v Man United  
Live from 9:00pm  
Man City v Tottenham  
Live from 11:30pm  
**STAR Sports Select HD 2**  
*English Premiership*  
Crystal Palace v Everton

## Live from 9:00pm

*Bundesliga*  
Leipzig v Eintracht Frankfurt  
Live from 11:30pm

## Siddikur facing cut in Singapore

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman was facing cut in the SMBC Singapore Open, the first Asian Tour event of the season, after racking up one-over-par (72) in consecutive rounds.

The 32-year-old golfer exchanged three bogeys for two birdies at the Sentosa Golf Club yesterday for an aggregate of two-over-par (144), which put him one stroke behind the projected cut mark.

However, even though there is a slight possibility that the two-time Asian Tour winner might sneak through to the weekend rounds as few of the golfers were yet to finish their second round as bad light put an early end to proceedings on Sunday.



Germany's Angelique Kerber celebrates her victory against Czech Republic's Karolina Pliskova during their women's singles third round match of the Australian Open in Melbourne yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## AFC WOMEN'S ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

# Bangladesh says no

SPORTS REPORTER



Even though Bangladesh's women's teams have recently been doing well both at junior and senior level in international tournaments, Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has surprisingly decided not to send the women's national team to the AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers, which will get underway in Amman on April 3.

The draw for the competition will be held today with 21 participating nations, split into four groups, vying for four spots of the eight-team final round. The top three highest-ranked women's teams – Japan, Australia and China – and hosts Jordan will directly join the eight teams in the final round to be held in 2018.

Though all the Asian teams are eligible to participate in this competition, the BFF did not send an entry, letting go of opportunity to see where the team stands at Asian level.

"Our senior team is not in that shape. We will only participate in the Asian Cup Qualifiers once we have a proper squad and proper training. Most of our national team

players are 16-year-olds. After two years, they will be fit for the national team," BFF president Kazi Salahuddin said while explaining reasons behind not sending an entry.

Asked whether the Asian Cup Qualifiers could have been a preparatory stage for the girls who have been training for September's AFC U-16 Women's Championship, the BFF boss said, "The girls will play practice matches in Japan. Besides, I don't want to give extra load on them who can't take much pressure in training at the moment."

Though there is a whisper that the game's governing body has pulled back from taking part in the qualifiers due to financial constraints, Salahuddin said, "It is rubbish. There is no financial problem."

The Bangladesh team, which comprises mostly of under-16 players, became runners-up in the SAFF Women's Championship and qualified for finals of the AFC U-16 Women's Championship as group champions.

Though Bangladesh team has historically taken part in regional competitions, they had once taken part in the Olympics Qualifiers in 2011 where they lost to India and Uzbekistan by identical 0-3 margins.

# Andy, Roger storm through

AFP, Melbourne

Andy Murray and Roger Federer put on a masterclass on Friday as they swept into the last 16 of the Australian Open, hoping to take advantage of Novak Djokovic's shock exit.

Murray swamped Sam Querrey 6-4, 6-2, 6-4 and Federer humbled Tomas Berdych 6-2, 6-4, 6-4 in just 90 minutes, maintaining his 100 percent record over his old rival at Melbourne Park.

Women's world number one Angelique Kerber also hit form as she dropped only four games against Kristyna Pliskova to race into a fourth-round meeting with America's Coco Vandeweghe.

Murray and Federer had both watched from afar on Thursday as Djokovic, the defending champion and six-time winner, suffered a stunning defeat to 117th-ranked Denis Istomin.

Querrey also upset Djokovic at Wimbledon last year but Murray, made a knight in Britain's New Year honours, never looked like slipping on any banana skins in round three.

He put Querrey away 6-4, 6-2, 6-4 in just under two hours, winning 77 percent of points on his first serve and facing only three break points in a

clinical display.

The Scottish world number one also showed no signs of discomfort in his right ankle, after he rolled it painfully during his second-round win over Andrey Rublev.

"I felt better and better as the match went on in terms of my movement," he said. "The ankle was a little sore and I was a little tentative at the start but it got better and better through the match."

Federer, 35 and returning from an injury lay-off, said he even surprised himself with an imperious win over Berdych that left the Czech shaking his head as he departed.

"In practice things were going well, but I've never been the practice king. I was winning tons of sets," Federer said, adding: "It's been unbelievable. I did surprise myself."

Murray and 17th-seeded Federer are on course to meet in the quarterfinals, with the Scot next facing Mischa Zverev and the Swiss veteran up against Kei Nishikori. Japan's Nishikori should provide a stern test for Federer and the fifth seed underlined his confident form by seeing off Slovakian qualifier Lukas Lacko 6-4, 6-4, 6-4.

Stan Wawrinka, the 2014 champion, survived a four-set tussle with Viktor Troicki 3-6, 6-2, 6-2, 7-6 (9/7) and now faces Italy's Andreas Seppi,

who ousted Steve Darcis of Belgium.

Jo-Wilfried Tsonga also came through in four sets against American Jack Sock and will play Briton Dan Evans, who beat Australia's Bernard Tomic 7-5, 7-6 (7/2), 7-6 (7/3).

In the women's draw, Kerber finally got into her stride with a 6-0, 6-4 destruction of Kristyna Pliskova, the 58th-ranked twin sister of Czech fifth seed Karolina. The German defending champion was an early loser at both of her warm-up tournaments and was taken to three sets in unconvincing wins in round one and two.

But Kerber clicked into gear against Pliskova, winning in just 55 minutes to set up a last-16 clash with America's Coco Vandeweghe, who ousted Canadian starlet Eugenie Bouchard. Svetlana Kuznetsova outlasted fellow thirty-something Jelena Jankovic 6-4, 5-7, 9-7 and will next play fellow Russian Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova.

Venus Williams beat Duan Yingying 6-1, 6-0 to end Chinese interest, earning a match with German qualifier Mona Barthel who overcame Australia's Ashleigh Barty in three sets.

French Open champion Garbine Muguruza was a 6-4, 6-2 winner against Anastasija Sevastova, setting up an encounter with Romania's Sorana Cirstea.

## Lyon sign Depay

REUTERS, Paris

Olympique Lyonnais have signed Dutch winger Memphis Depay from Manchester United on a four and a half year contract, the French Ligue 1 club said on Friday.

Lyon paid 16 million euros (\$17 million) for the 22-year-old Netherlands international.

Memphis scored seven goals in 53 appearances for United after moving from PSV Eindhoven for 25 million pounds (\$30 million) in May, 2015 but he has played only eight minutes since the end of October.

"He was a fantastic professional," United manager Jose Mourinho told a news conference. "If someone thinks it didn't work because he wasn't a great professional, that's totally wrong."

Memphis was the leading scorer in the Dutch top flight in 2014-15 and was signed by former United manager Louis van Gaal.

# Kottan issue hanging

SPORTS REPORTER



The possible appointment of George Kottan as the head coach of the Bangladesh national team is seemingly hanging in the balance after the 70-year-old Austrian demanded high salary from the game's governing body.

Kottan, who guided Bangladesh to their maiden SAFF Championship title in 2003, was offered the head coach's position for a ten-month period recently. However, the veteran coach, who guided Abahani to Federation Cup and Bangladesh Premier League titles last season, has demanded three times more than what he received from Abahani, according to a source inside the BFF.

Kottan, reportedly offered 10,000 dollars per month, was supposed to inform about his decision within three days after the National Teams Committee meeting on January 16, but the Austrian has yet to reply.

"We decided to appoint him as he knows Bangladesh football and the players pretty well. Besides we also know how much salary he drew from Abahani. But he has demanded too much compared to BFF's offer," said the source on condition of anonymity.

The veteran coach, through an online conversation with a journalist, claimed that he demanded 25,000 dollars for six-month coaching staff – head coach, assistant coach, fitness coach, goalkeeping coach, team doctor and a masseur.

"I think the amount I demanded for six persons is not that big and any football federation in the world must bear such expense for good results but they [BFF] didn't agree," Kottan said. "I have closed the chapter three days ago and have set a year-long programme with FIFA."

## Payet's car damaged

AFP, London

French international Dimitri Payet's refusal to play for West Ham has led to his car being vandalised according to English tabloid 'The Daily Mail' on Friday.

The 29-year-old – who along with his wife Ludivine are keen to return to the south of France and are demanding he be allowed to join former club Marseille – has also been effectively closed out by his teammates who have deleted him from the team's WhatsApp group.

He has also been barred from team-bonding sessions and dinners effectively being sent to 'Coventry' – the English term for shutting someone out and refusing to engage with them.

"The team are all part of a WhatsApp group and they were all messaging each other to arrange going for dinner at the start of this week," club insider EkWHUEmployee told The Sun.

# Chelsea will not dwell on Costa

AFP, London



Chelsea will bid to put the Diego Costa crisis behind them when the Premier League leaders host Hull, while title chasing Tottenham aim to maintain their hot streak at troubled Manchester City on Saturday.

Blues striker Costa reportedly clashed with Chelsea boss Antonio Conte last week over the club's treatment of his back injury.

Amid reports that Costa was also the subject of a lucrative offer from Chinese Super League club Tianjin Quanjian, Conte kept his players focused as they crushed Leicester 3-0 last weekend despite the absence of the Spain striker.

With Chelsea refusing to consider selling their leading scorer, Conte appears to have smoothed any troubled waters and Costa returned to full training this week.

Conte has refused to acknowledge there was even a dispute with Costa, but it will be instructive to see if he restores the notoriously volatile star to his starting line-up with so much at stake in the title race.

Hull haven't beaten Chelsea since 1988, but Tigers goalkeeper Eldin Jakupovic says the third bottom team are a more dangerous unit under new boss Marco Silva.

"He gives us confidence. We have to play our football. That's sometimes difficult in the Premier League but he's doing a good job and the players have been doing a good job," Jakupovic said.

In the unlikely event of a Chelsea slip, second placed Tottenham could close the seven-point gap on their London rivals when they travel to Eastlands.

City's 4-0 thrashing at Everton last Sunday was the heaviest league loss of Pep Guardiola's glittering managerial career and left them languishing 10 points behind Chelsea after a second defeat in their last three league games.

## FussballBild launched in Germany

AFP, Berlin

German football fans have a daily newspaper dedicated to the game for the first time with the launch of "FussballBild" ('FootballBild'), to coincide with the resuming of the Bundesliga season, on Friday.

Retired Germany striker Lukas Podolski, who now plays for Galatasaray will write a weekly column which he says will be "technical, professional, but also written with humour".

The 32-page 'FussballBild' will be published from Monday to Saturday and costs a euro (\$1.06).

The content will be pooled from the 23 regional editions of Bild.

The tabloid-format daily has been tested since the start of the season in Munich and Stuttgart, but from Friday has been distributed nationwide.

It has been launched by the Axel Springer media house, one of Europe's biggest media groups, which publishes Germany's most popular daily newspaper Bild, which sells a 1.8 million copies.

Unusually for a country where football is by far the main sport, a sports daily newspaper has never taken root in Germany.

# Barca break Sociedad jinx

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona ended a decade-long drought without winning away to Real Sociedad on Thursday as Neymar's first-half penalty handed the Spanish champions a 1-0 Copa del Rey quarter-final, first leg lead.

Atletico Madrid also took a huge step towards the semi-finals as goals from Antoine Griezmann, Angel Correa and Kevin Gameiro downed an under-strength Eibar 3-0 at the Vicente Calderon.

Barca hadn't won in their last eight meetings at Anoeta with coach Luis Enrique describing their 1-1 draw back in November as "almost a miracle" given how his side had been outplayed.

However, the Catalans continued signs of their return to form in a bright start that was rewarded when Neymar was clearly upended by Aritz Elustondo 20 minutes in.

Just as in the last round, Lionel Messi handed over responsibility from the spot to the Brazilian and he sent Geronimo Rulli the wrong way.

"It is always difficult to play at Anoeta and against Real Sociedad, but I think it was a complete performance," Enrique told GoTIV.

"We were very solid in defensive and efficient in attack.

"No matter the result we have gained, the return leg always presents difficulties but for us it is a good result and very good news."

Neymar should have added to Barca's lead early in the second-half when he took a poor touch with just Rulli to beat.

And Neymar came close again moments later when he curled just wide of the far post from a lovely Messi backheel.

Sociedad enjoyed plenty of posses-

sion, but failed to break down the Barca defence as a dangerous cross from Yuri that just had too much pace for Mikel Oyarzabal at the far post was the closest they came.

Indeed, the hosts were fortunate not to concede a second penalty when Neymar was booked for diving 25 minutes from time despite Rulli appearing to clip his heels as the Barca forward rounded the 'keeper.

The two sides meet again for the second leg at Barca's Camp Nou on January 26.

Despite largely empty stands amidst freezing temperatures in the Spanish capital, Atletico made light work of an Eibar side shorn of many of their usual starting line-up to ensure the return leg should be a mere formality.

"It was difficult in the first-half but you could see the chances would come if we were a bit more precise and that happened in the second-half," said Atletico boss Diego Simeone.

The hosts had the ball in the net on 25 minutes, but Stefan Savic was harshly adjudged to have been offside as he slotted home from close range.

However, Atletico had to wait only three minutes more to open the scoring when Jose Maria Gimenez beat Rodriguez to a free-kick lofted into the area and Griezmann headed the Uruguayan's knockdown into an empty net.

Rodriguez nearly redeemed himself in the second-half when Yannick Carrasco bore down on goal, but despite saving the Belgian's effort, the ball fell kindly for Correa to tap home the rebound.



Barcelona forward Neymar (R) celebrates his all-important goal with teammate Lionel Messi during their Copa del Rey quarterfinal first leg tie against Real Sociedad at the Anoeta Stadium on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP