

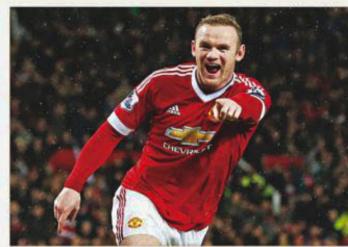
**SONY SIX**  
**Australian Open**  
**Women's Singles Semifinal**  
**Live from 6:00am**  
**Men's Singles Semifinal**  
**Live from 2:30pm**  
**STAR SPORTS 1**  
**India v England**  
**First T20!**

**Live from 5:00pm**  
**STAR SPORTS 2**  
**Australia v Pakistan**  
**Fifth ODI**  
**Live from 9:20am**  
**TEN 1 HD**  
**EFL Cup**  
**Hull City v Man United**  
**Live from 1:00am (Friday)**

## 'ROONEY'S RECORD ONE FOR THE AGES'

Alex Ferguson believes Wayne Rooney's Manchester United goal-scoring record is one for the ages and unlikely ever to be broken. The 31-year-old England forward scored his 250th goal for United when his superb free-kick late on rescued a 1-1 draw away to Stoke in the Premier League on Saturday. In the process Rooney surpassed the previous record of 249 United goals set by England great and World Cup winner Bobby Charlton back in 1973. Ferguson believes Rooney's place in United's history is already secure. "Well, it lasted for 44 years, I think, and when Wayne Rooney joined the club I could never imagine anybody could beat Sir Bobby's record," Ferguson told MUTV. "So his achievement is outstanding. It's amazing, he's 200-odd games short of Bobby's playing record and that makes it even more amazing. I don't think (anyone can overtake Wayne)."

— AFP



Roger Federer (L) of Switzerland battles his countryman Stan Wawrinka today for a place in the Australian Open final.

PHOTOS: AFP

# All-Swiss blockbuster semi

AFP, Melbourne

Roger Federer's Grand Slam renaissance faces the difficult if familiar obstacle of Stan Wawrinka Thursday in an all-Swiss blockbuster for a place in the Australian Open final.

The 35-year-old Swiss marvel has been the talk of the year's first major in his unforeseen, roll-back-the-years career, to reach the last four and a date with long-time Swiss team-mate Wawrinka, the world number four.

"If someone would have told me I'd play in the semis against Stan, never would I have called that one for me. For Stan, yes, but not for me," Federer admitted.

It is an intriguing match-up as the all-time great sizes up his long-term accomplice Wawrinka, with much

on the line.

The statistics point to a Federer victory, after 18 wins to just three in their career meetings and 5-1 in Grand Slam encounters.

But Wawrinka has developed into a great player in his own right under the coaching of Swede Magnus Norman, with three major victories in the last three years including a 2014 breakthrough triumph in Australia.

"He's become such a good player, I super-respect that, that the guy is able to transform his game in his footwork, in his mind, also in his game plan," Federer said.

"He's always been a believer that he can do it. It shows how far you can go."

Wawrinka, for so long in the shadow of Federer's stellar career, remains respectful but there is a self-belief that makes him a formidable opponent in Thursday's showdown.

"I'm more confident with myself. When I step on the court it doesn't matter who I play. I know what I have to do if I want to win," Wawrinka said.

"For sure, against Roger, it's always special because he's so good."

"He's the best player of all time. He has an answer for everything. But

SEMIFINAL H2H			
<b>FEDERER (17) V WAWRINKA (4)</b>			
Head to Head (Overall) Played: 21			
<b>18</b>		<b>3</b>	
Head to Head on Hard Courts Played: 13			
<b>13</b>		<b>0</b>	
AUS OPEN 2017 STATS			
<b>18</b>	Sets Played	<b>18</b>	
<b>3</b>	Sets Lost	<b>3</b>	
<b>27</b>	Return Games Won	<b>21</b>	
<b>77</b>	Aces	<b>69</b>	
<b>282</b>	Winners	<b>243</b>	
<b>10h</b>	Hours on court	<b>12h</b>	
<b>33m</b>		<b>44m</b>	

I managed to beat him in a Grand Slam, so we'll see.

"Most important is that I step on the court and I play my best tennis."

Wawrinka got one over Federer on clay in the quarterfinals of the

2015 French Open, although he was well beaten in their last Grand Slam meeting in the semifinals of the 2015 US Open.

"Last time I got killed in US Open. He was playing way better than me, moving really well, really aggressive from the court," he said.

"He's playing so well since the beginning of the tournament. He's really flying on the court."

"It's great to see him back at that level. Hopefully I can manage to play a great match."

In the recent dominance of Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray, Federer's hopes of adding to his record 17 Grand Slams appeared forlorn, given his advancing years.

Federer is looking to become the second oldest man in the Open era after Ken Rosewall (at 37) to win a Grand Slam title.

The Swiss legend won his last Grand Slam at Wimbledon in 2012 and made his last major final at the 2015 US Open.

But Murray and Djokovic are no longer in Melbourne after stunning early round exits, boosting Federer's initially remote chances.

It is a fascinating sub-plot that his close friend Wawrinka may yet have the final say.

# Basic training before Suhrawardi Cup

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federation is planning to provide basic training to each of the participating districts before starting the Suhrawardi U-18 Football Championship, which was supposed to get underway today after a nine-year gap.

"We want to hold a fruitful tournament after providing basic training to the district teams as there has been no regular football activities at district level," said BFF vice president Badal Roy, who is also chairman of the BFF development committee.

"The Development Committee has showed interest to be involved with the tournament because the committee believes if the upcoming players are given basic training, the tournament will be competitive and the players for upcoming AFC U-19 Championship Qualifiers can be picked easily from across the country," Roy said adding that the BFF Competition Committee also accepted the proposal.

The veteran football official further informed that appointed BFF coaches will conduct a 15-day training at each district

and then select a 30-member squad after scrutinising age of the players and later the district coaches will work for another 15 days with the selected squads to prepare the boys for the tournament.

The former national footballer said that they have suggested holding the tournament on league basis instead of knockouts so that the footballers get more space to show their worth in the tournament.

The BFF Competition Committee has already estimated a budget of Tk one crore as the participating teams are supposed to be provide Tk 50,000 each for all the expenditure including initial training.

"As there are some new proposals, we have to prepare another budget which is expected to be completed tomorrow [Thursday] after a meeting with the BFF president and the chairman of the finance committee," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag, who also informed that they have also put this tournament in FIFA Forward programme which has not yet been approved by the World game's governing body.

"We could not start the tournament on time as per calendar, but we will be able to complete the tournament within two months' timeframe mentioned in the calendar," said Shohag.

# Champion cyclist Parul no more

SPORTS REPORTER

National gold medallist cyclist Parul Akter breathed her last in the early hours of Wednesday, eight days after allegedly attempting to commit suicide over family disagreements.

The Bangladesh Ansar cyclist allegedly attempted to commit suicide on January 17 by hanging herself from the ceiling of her home in Shafipur, Gazipur before neighbours rushed her to Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Memorial KPJ Specialised Hospital, where she was on life support for the last eight days, Moteleb Mia, officer in charge (OC) of Kaliakoir Police Station, confirmed to the Daily Star yesterday.

The OC also informed that an unnatural death case had been filed with the station by a maternal uncle of the deceased yesterday.

Parul's husband Firoz Alam, who is also a cyclist of Bangladesh Ansar, told reporters that his wife attempted suicide over a small disagreement in family matters. Parul left behind one daughter.

Parul became the best female cyclist of the 2013 Bangladesh Games by winning five gold medals while setting a new national record in the team pursuit event. The cyclist represented Bangladesh in the 2014 Asian Cycling Track Championship in New Delhi where she won a silver and a bronze medal.

The body of Parul was taken to Magura last evening for burial.



# Fed Cup Basketball from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Federation Cup Basketball Tournament, involving top six clubs of the country, will get underway at the Dhanmondi Indoor Basketball Gymnasium this morning.

The six teams - Dhaka Gladiators, The Greggs Club, The Gregarious Club, Dhaka Club, Bakshibazar Club, The Shawon's Club - will compete in two groups in the initial phase, said a press release from Bangladesh Basketball Federation.

Dhaka Gladiators will take on The Greggs Club in the opening match at 8:00am after BFF president Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin inaugurates the tournament.

# Benfica star to join PSG

AFP, Paris

Portuguese forward Gonçalo Guedes was on the verge of a reported 30 million euro (\$32M) move from Benfica to Paris Saint Germain on Wednesday as the French side said he was undergoing a medical with them.

The 20-year-old winger arrived in Paris Tuesday and the PSG official website featured a front page photo of Guedes holding up a PSG club scarf and wearing one of their track suits.

Portuguese dailies A Bola and Record both said the player would sign a five-year deal worth 30 million euros.

With two caps for Portugal Guedes can play on either wing but most recently played either centre-forward or playmaker.



SERENA WILLIAMS



VENUS WILLIAMS

# Sisters eye family final

AFP, Melbourne

America's Williams sisters can write another chapter in their eventful family history as they attempt to set up their ninth Grand Slam final, eight years after the last, at the Australian Open on Thursday.

In a plot straight from the 2000s, both sisters have raced into the Melbourne semifinals without a dropping a set, and they appear equally focused on getting their hands on the title.

At least one American is guaranteed to be in Saturday's decider, with Venus confronting confident compatriot Coco Vandeweghe in their last-four clash on Rod Laver Arena.

Following them on court will be Serena against fellow former teenage prodigy Mirjana Lucic-Baroni, who is into her first Grand Slam semifinal in 18 years.

It has become a tournament of the golden oldies, with Venus 36, Serena 35 and Lucic-Baroni 34. Vandeweghe at 25 is the young pretender.

Serena said it was a testament to the Williams' staying power that they were still fighting for titles at their age.

"I've been doing this for many years. The past few years I've been super-consistent," she said. "But yeah, I'm just really happy for Venus, obviously. She's doing amazing."

"I'm really happy for Mirjana, as well. I was there when she first started. To see her be able to never give up actually is super-inspiring to me. It's a wonderful story."

Few would have picked a Serena-Venus final as the tournament got underway, but it is now a 50-50 chance.

They last met in a major decider at Wimbledon in 2009, which Serena won. The younger Williams has the clear edge, winning six of their eight Grand Slam final encounters stretching back to the US Open in 2001.

Venus said she was not interested in the past, only the future and the immediate threat posed by the aggressive Vandeweghe.

"Anything that's happened before is just so. I'm ready for the future, if I can be honest," she said.

"I have a lot to give. I have a lot to give to the game. I feel like I have a lot of great tennis in me. I have nothing to lose, literally."

Vandeweghe is a major threat to an all-Williams final.

She demolished French Open champion Garbine Muguruza in a blitz of big hitting to make her first Australian semi, and she is supremely confident to boot.

"It's amazing to be in a semifinal. But, you know, not satisfying," said Vandeweghe, who also stunned world number one Angelique Kerber in round four.

# Kalou quits int'l football

AFP, Oyem

Ivory Coast forward Salomon Kalou announced his retirement from international football after the reigning champions were eliminated from the Africa Cup of Nations on Tuesday.

"I am 31, this is my sixth Africa Cup of Nations. I have been to a final and won another," said the 31-year-old after a 1-0 defeat to Morocco in Oyem condemned the Elephants to a group-stage exit.

"This time things did not go so well. There are young players like (Franck) Kessie, (Wilfried) Zaha... I think they are the future of Ivorian football and I wish them god luck."

# Alaves ease into semis

AFP, Madrid

Alaves became the first side to book their place in the semifinals of the Copa del Rey on Tuesday as a 0-0 draw at home to second division Alcorcon was enough to seal a 2-0 aggregate win.

Ibai Gomez's two late goals in last week's first leg had given the first division side a commanding advantage. However, the Basques had to rely on goalkeeper Adrian Ortola to prevent Alcorcon a route back into the tie.

# Khaka in 'racism' probe

AFP, London



Arsenal midfielder Granit Khaka has been interviewed by police over an allegation he racially abused a staff member at London's Heathrow Airport on Monday.

The 24-year-old Switzerland international was not arrested but voluntarily attended a nearby police station after the incident was reported by a third party.

According to British media reports Khaka, shown a red card in Arsenal's 2-1 win over Burnley in the Premier League on Sunday, was seeing off a friend when the alleged incident took place.

"Police were called at 19:29 (1929 GMT) on Monday, 23 January following an allegation that a member of staff had been racially abused at Heathrow Airport, Terminal Five," said a statement issued by London's Metropolitan police on Tuesday.

"The allegation was made by a third party."

"Officers attended and spoke with a man in his 20s. He was not arrested. He voluntarily attended a west London police station where he was interviewed under caution. Enquires continue."

Khaka joined Arsenal from German Bundesliga club Borussia Monchengladbach for a fee in excess of £30 million (\$38 million, 35 million euros) in pre-season.

We are grateful for our collaboration on the journey towards prosperity & looking forward to a brighter future.

Best wishes to the Republic of India on this 68<sup>th</sup> Republic Day.



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