

**STAR SPORTS SELECT HD2**  
**Bundesliga**  
 Schalke v Eintracht Frankfurt  
 Live from 1:30am (Saturday)  
**SONY ESPN**  
**FA Cup**  
 Derby v Leicester City  
 Live from 2:00am (Saturday)

**SONY SIX**  
**Australian Open**  
 Men's singles semifinal  
 Live from 2:30pm  
**La Liga**  
 Osasuna v Malaga  
 Live from 1:30am (Saturday)

## BASTIA FAN ADMITS BALOTELLI ABUSE

"Several" Bastia fans racially abused Nice forward Mario Balotelli with monkey chants while one admitted it and faces a France-wide stadium ban, the Corsican club said on Wednesday. The Italian said he suffered racist abuse throughout Friday's 1-1 Ligue 1 draw at Bastia, where the coach of title-chasers Nice was also pelted with stones. The local public prosecutor's office confirmed it had launched a preliminary investigation for "incitement of racial hatred". The French league is also looking into the allegations and Bastia said a long-time supporter of the club had owned up after Corsican media published images to find those behind the racial abuse. Bastia said it had cancelled the fan's season ticket and banned him from entering their stadium. They also said a legal case for a nationwide stadium ban had been launched.



- AFP

# Sisters set up dream final

AFP, Melbourne

Unstoppable Serena Williams zeroed in on a record-breaking 23rd Grand Slam title Thursday by setting up an Australian Open final against her elder sister Venus, as the siblings' dream came true.

The ruthless world number two proved one step too far for unseeded Croat Mirjana Lucic-Baroni, whose fairytale tournament was finally ended in a crushing 6-2, 6-1 defeat in just 50 minutes.

In swatting aside the 34-year-old, in their first meeting since 1998, Serena, 35, stayed on track for a seventh Australian title which would take her past Steffi Graf's Open-era record of 22 major wins.

She has refused to talk about the possibility of finally surpassing the German, but now has a golden chance of further cementing her place in history.

Winning the title would also mean a return to world number one, snatching the title back after Angelique Kerber deposed her last year.

Only Venus stands in the way

after the elder Williams rolled back the years to beat fellow American Coco Vandeweghe 6-7 (3/7), 6-2, 6-3 in the other semifinal.

It opened another chapter in their eventful family history as they meet for their ninth Grand Slam final on Saturday, eight years after the last at Wimbledon in 2009. Serena won that one and holds a 6-2 advantage.

"I didn't watch (Venus). Obviously I was really proud, she's an inspiration, my big sister," said Serena.

"She's my world, my life, she means everything to me. I couldn't be happier for us both to be in the final. It's the biggest dream come true for us."

Williams added that seeing Venus reach the final had put her under extra pressure -- not that it showed.

"It felt really good because I felt like it was in my hands to force this Williams final," she said.

"Believe it or not, I was feeling a little bit of pressure about that, but it felt really good to get that win."

She also paid tribute to Lucic-Baroni, a former teenage prodigy when the Williams sisters were emerging in the 1990s before her career was

derailed by personal problems. "Mirjana is an inspiration, she deserves all the credit today. To get this far, after everything she has gone through, that just inspires me."

Despite her serve not being up to scratch in Melbourne until now, Williams has so many other weapons in her armoury that her oppo-

### TWO SISTERS IN FINALS

**PLAYED: 11**  
**Serena 8:** 1999 Munich, 2002 French Open, 2002 Wimbledon, 2002 US Open, 2003 Australian Open, 2003 Wimbledon, 2009 Wimbledon, 2009 Tour Championships Doha.  
**Venus 3:** 1999 Miami, 2001 US Open, 2008 Wimbledon.

nents have been unable to cope. Lucic-Baroni was no different.

The Croat's left thigh was again heavily strapped and the problem put her at an immediate disadvantage, restricting her movement against a player known for her pounding forehand winners.

It was one-way traffic from start to finish, as Serena asserted her authority to move into her 29th Grand Slam final.

Her sister was equally impressive against the dangerous Vandeweghe.

She was calm and focused, drawing on her vast experience to tame her supremely confident opponent, picking her shots well and conserving energy to bounce back after losing a first set tiebreaker.

In making the decider, she becomes the Australian Open's oldest finalist in the Open era.

It is also her first final at a major since Wimbledon in 2009 -- which was her 14th, winning seven and losing seven so far.

"At the end of the day, my main goal will be to execute my game," she said of the showdown with Serena.

"I've had to do that in the first round. I had to do it in this round. In the final, too. If I can achieve that, that's more or less what I'll be thinking of, not necessarily that it's the final."

While trying to treat it as just another match, Venus also knows it will be special as the sisters write another chapter in the history books.

"It's like I know that it won't be easy. This opponent is your sister, and she's super-awesome. It's wonderful."

# SHEIKH KAMAL INTERNATIONAL CLUB CUP MSC name squad of assorted players

SPORTS REPORTER



eight clubs

Mohammedan SC yesterday announced a 29-member squad for the upcoming Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup tournament with the inclusion of players from the Bangladesh Premier League.

Three Bangladeshi clubs -- Abahani, Chittagong Abahani and Mohammedan -- will be fighting against five foreign clubs in the eight-team tournament beginning from February 18 in Chittagong.

Bangladesh Premier League champions Abahani and runners-up Chittagong Abahani have retained the services of players who were part of their campaigns in the previous season, while Mohammedan, who finished tenth, have roped in most of their players from other Dhaka outfits after retaining services of about seven to eight players.

Mohammedan, semifinalists in the inaugural edition of the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup, confirmed players from Sheikh Jamal, Sheikh Russel, Brothers Union, Muktijoddha Sangsad, Arambagh,

Rahmatganj, Feni Soccer Club and Utta Baridhara Club to form a youthful squad.

"The players are scheduled to report tomorrow [Friday] but we are not sure how many players will be present as Sheikh Russel KC are playing a tournament in Magura while there are some players who are part of the national team's conditioning camp," said newly appointed coach Abdul Kayum Sentu, who was not ready to reveal his side's target.

"Last time we played the semifinals of the tournament with a squad that performed well in the league, but this time we did not produce good results in the league. Besides that, we have been assembling the team with players from other clubs. So, at the moment it is not possible to set a target," said Sentu. "Getting good results also depend on the opponents. We are definitely behind league champions Abahani and runners-up Chittagong Mohammedan and there are also some good teams who have come here to compete."

Each club is allowed to field four foreign players but Mohammedan have yet to confirm any foreign players although Sentu hinted that they may rope in foreign players from Rahmatganj MFS.



Venus Williams is ecstatic after her victory against Coco Vandeweghe in the women's singles semifinals of the Australian Open set up a family final against younger sister Serena Williams (Inset) who beat Mirjana Lucic-Baroni in the other semifinal.

PHOTOS: AFP



# Archery carnival begins today

SPORTS REPORTER

The biggest-ever archery tournament in Bangladesh is set to begin when the inaugural ISSF International Solidarity Archery Championship involving archers from 17 nations at Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium today.

Bangladesh last held the international archery tournament in 2011 with the participation of 15 nations but this time the number of participating nations has been increased to 17 in the tournament sanctioned by Islamic Solidarity Sport Federation (ISSF).

Archers from Bhutan, Sudan, Libya and Iraq already reached the capital for their final preparations yesterday afternoon while the rest of the archers, barring the Pakistani contingent, were scheduled to touch down last night. The arrival of the Pakistani archers remains uncertain as they are yet to obtain visas for Bangladesh.

"We have taken all the preparations to make this event a success although we have some limitations. It is a tournament to judge ourselves before hosting the Asian Cup Archery Championship involving 32 countries in next November," said Bangladesh Archery Federation general secretary Kazi Razibuddin Ahmed Chapal yesterday.

Hosts Bangladesh have set their sights on winning six gold medals out of nine.

"I will definitely enjoy the championship because Bangladesh are hosting such a big meet for the first time. However, we are not under any pressure because we will play at home. Our archers are well-prepared and they have been performing and scoring well in practice. Although Iran, Iraq and Malaysia are our main contenders, we have the experience to compete against them. I am hopeful we can win five to six gold medals," said coach Nishith Das.

# Azhar likely to lose captaincy

ESPN CRICINFO

Azhar Ali is likely to be removed as Pakistan's ODI captain after his side lost the series in Australia 4-1.

Pakistan were beaten in the final ODI in Adelaide, slumping to the same score line they had suffered in England last year, and the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is keen to use it as an opportunity to replace Azhar with the T20 captain, Sarfraz Ahmed.

The move could be the precursor to eventually appointing a single captain for all formats, though any such decision will have to wait until the Test captain Misbahul Haq takes a call on his future.

Leadership issues were discussed in a meeting in Lahore during the fourth ODI of this series by PCB chairman Shaharyar Khan, chief selector Inzamam-ul-Haq, and Mushtaq Ahmed, the head coach at the National Cricket Academy.

They are thought to be united in their belief that Sarfraz should take over the ODI captaincy but will wait until Misbah retires to name a new Test captain.

They differ as to whether Pakistan should move ahead with a single captain, but it could mean that the current Test vice-captain is overlooked as the Test successor to Misbah.

# Klopp fumes over rough justice

AFP, Liverpool

Jürgen Klopp claimed it was "really hard" to accept the refereeing decisions he feels are going against Liverpool on a regular basis after his side were denied a place in the League Cup final.

Klopp's team crashed out of the competition on Wednesday as Southampton reached the final for the first time since 1979.

Shane Long finished a superb counter-attack in stoppage-time to give Saints a 1-0 win in the second leg of their semifinal at Anfield, and a 2-0 aggregate victory.

But Reds boss Klopp felt his team were unfairly denied two penalties in the final seven minutes of the tie as they chased the goals to turn around their 1-0 first-leg deficit.

First, Long escaped unpunished when he appeared to handle a shot, and then defender Jack Stephens was not penalised when Divock Origi went to ground claiming a trip.

# Celta stun Real

AFP, Madrid



An excellent Cristiano Ronaldo free-kick couldn't prevent Real Madrid from being

dumped out of the Copa del Rey as a 2-2 draw at Celta Vigo on Wednesday allowed the hosts to progress to the semifinals 4-3

on aggregate. Hampered by a series of injuries, Real's hopes of turning the tie around were dealt a huge blow when Danilo's own goal handed Celta to lead on the night just before half-time.

Ronaldo gave Madrid hope with his first goal in the Copa del Rey for two years.

However, Daniel Wass restored Celta's lead five minutes from time before Lucas Vazquez's stoppage time header at least prevented Madrid from suffering a third defeat in four games.

Celta join Alaves and Atletico Madrid in Friday's semifinal draw.

Barcelona take a 1-0 lead over Real Sociedad into the final quarterfinal, second leg on Thursday.

"We are out and disappointed. Most of all I am disappointed because the boys played so well," said Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane.

"We lacked just a few minutes more or one move (to score the third goal), but it wasn't to be."

Madrid faced a huge challenge to turn the tie around with Zidane missing seven first-team regulars through injury.

However, it was the visitors who enjoyed the better chances early on.

Celta 'keeper Sergio Alvarez made a stunning save to turn Ronaldo's header onto the bar before the World Player of the Year hit the post with the goal gaping on the rebound.

Injuries had also forced Zidane to change to a 3-5-2 formation and as Real pushed forward, Celta began to find space on the counter-attack towards the end of the opening half.

Iago Aspas wasted a huge chance when he tried to square to John Guidetti with just Kiko Casilla to beat.

Guidetti then forced Casilla into a fine save at this near post with a fiercely hit volley.

However, Celta did make the breakthrough just a minute before half-time as, despite Casilla's best efforts to again deny Guidetti, the loose ball cannoned off the helpless Danilo and into his own net.

# Jamaica to appeal for relay gold

BBC ONLINE

Jamaica may appeal against the decision to strip the rest of its Beijing 4x100m relay squad of their gold medals after Nesta Carter's failed drug test.

Usain Bolt stands to lose one of his nine Olympic golds after a retest of Carter's sample from the 2008 Games was found to contain a banned stimulant.

"We have to decide what the best legal process is," Jamaican Olympic Association chief Mike Fennell said.

# Gladiators thump Greggs

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka Gladiators made a flying start to the Federation Cup Basketball tournament with a massive 98-25 win over The Greggs Club in the opening match at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.

Bappi and Moshir scored 22 and 21 points for Gladiators, who dominated the first half 41-12, while Antu scored eight points for The Greggs. Bangladesh Basketball Federation president Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin inaugurated the six-team tournament.

# Nadal faces Dimitrov threat

AFP, Melbourne



Rafael Nadal's stirring Grand Slam revival faces a threat from the in-form

Grigor Dimitrov as he attempts to reach his first major final in two-and-a-half years at the Australian Open.

The 30-year-old Spaniard has been out of the Grand Slam limelight since his last title success at Roland Garros in 2014, as injuries sidetracked his glorious career.

But victory over Bulgaria's 15th seed Dimitrov, once dubbed 'Baby Fed', in Friday's second men's semifinal will put



Nadal one win away from a 15th major title.

However, Dimitrov is enjoying some of the form of his life coming into what will be his first major semifinal since Wimbledon in 2014.

Dimitrov, five years younger than Nadal, was once hailed as a future champion and nicknamed 'Baby Fed' owing to his Roger Federer-style court movement and single-handed backhand.

After his upset of defending champion Andy Murray at Wimbledon in 2014 he lost to Novak Djokovic in the semis, reaching number eight in the rankings. But after that, his career failed to take off.

Now under Murray's former coach Daniel Vallverdu, Dimitrov is unbeaten in 2017, winning his fifth career title in Brisbane and now on a run of 10 matches without defeat.

While Federer has enthralled the tennis world with his comeback from an injury-blighted 2016, so too has Nadal's charge through the bottom half of the draw.

He has looked like the Nadal of old as he tossed aside Alexander Zverev, Gael Monfils and Milos Raonic to be just one step away from his fourth Australian final.

Nadal has added Carlos Moya to his

coaching team and since his first-round loss to Viktor Troicki in Shanghai in October he has worked hard to get his game into shape.

"It's good news, especially winning against difficult players: Monfils in quarterfinals, Zverev round of 16, and Raonic," Nadal said.

"All of them are top players. So that's very important for me because that means that I am competitive and playing well. I worked hard to try to make that happen."

Nadal is now dialled in for his next challenge presented by the increasingly impressive Dimitrov. The winner will play Federer or Stan Wawrinka in



Sunday's final.

"He's a player that has an unbelievable talent, unbelievable potential. He's started the season playing unbelievable," Nadal said of Dimitrov.

"It's going to be a very tough match for me. I hope for him, too. I have to play my best because he's playing with high confidence."

The 2009 winner is 7-1 in his matches with Dimitrov, including a four-set quarterfinal win at the Australian Open three years ago.

Another salient statistic is that Nadal is 66-8 against players with one-handed backhands at Slams.

SEMIFINAL H2H	
<b>NADAL (17) V DIMITROV (4)</b>	
Head to Head (Overall) Played: 8	
<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>
Head to Head on Hard Courts Played: 5	
<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>
AUS OPEN 2017 STATS	
<b>18</b>	Sets Played <b>17</b>
<b>3</b>	Sets Lost <b>2</b>
<b>22</b>	Return Games Won <b>23</b>
<b>28</b>	Aces <b>53</b>
<b>175</b>	Winners <b>194</b>
<b>14h 0m</b>	Hours on court <b>11h 15m</b>