

STAR SPORTS 1

India v England
3rd T20
Live from 7:20pm
TEN 1HD
South Africa v Sri Lanka
2nd ODI
Live from 5:30pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT HD1

English Premiership
West Ham v Man City
Live from 1:30am (Thursday)
STAR SPORTS SELECT HD2
English Premiership
Man United v Hull City
Live from 1:45am (Thursday)

SONY SIX

Serie A
Pescara v Fiorentina
Live from 1:40am (Thursday)

FANS CAN GET PAYET OFF THEIR BACKS

After selling Dimitri Payet to Olympique de Marseille for 25 million pounds, West Ham United are offering fans a deal to get the French forward off their backs as well. "Bring back your Payet shirt to any of the club shops & you will get a new replacement for 25 pounds," the Premier League club's vice-chairman Karen Brady said on Twitter. Basic short-sleeved 2016-17 West Ham team shirts without a player's name on the back usually retail at 55 pounds each but are currently reduced to 36.66 in a sale at the club's online store. French international Payet, who stood out for the host nation at Euro 2016, had become a fan favourite at the Hammers after he joined from Marseille in 2015 for a reported 10.7 million pounds. The relationship broke down when he told the East Londoners he no longer wanted to play for them and sought a return to Marseille. —REUTERS



Singapore's Mardan Mamat (R), champion of the inaugural edition, will be hoping to return to form while Bangladesh's best golfer Siddikur Rahman (L) will hope to win on home soil as the third edition of the Bashundhara Bangladesh Open gets underway at the Kurmitola Golf Club today. A total of 132 golfers, including 39 from Bangladesh, will be taking part in the 300,000-dollar Asian Tour event. PHOTO: ASIANTOUR.COM

'Japan tour was a learning experience'

SPORTS REPORTER



Having played seven matches in the J-Green Sakai Lady's Festival in Japan, the coaches and the players of the Bangladesh U-16 women's football team seem to have gotten a good idea about how their opponents in the AFC U-16 Women's Championship might fare.

The AFC U-16 Women's Championship in September will feature eight nations -- hosts Thailand, South Korea, Japan, China, Laos, North Korea, Bangladesh and Australia -- and the Sakai Lady's Festival actually featured two of those teams -- Thailand and Bangladesh -- along with 18 Japanese academies.

"It was a great experience for both the players and the coaching staff. We have got a good idea about the football academies after touring in Japan," coach Golam Rabbani Choton said as the team returned late on Monday night.

"Definitely, the standard of the Japanese players are much higher than that of ours as they play fast football with one or two touches and go to the right positions in the right time. The Japanese players also have the ability to take quick decisions on the field," Choton evaluated.

"One thing we have achieved is that the girls have overcome the fear of playing against superior sides and they never think about the opponents. Our players fought bravely throughout the festival and learned a

lot of things," added the coach.

To produce good results in the AFC U-16 Women's Championship, Choton believes the team needs to improve in areas such as goalkeeping and defending while introducing fast-paced football, with quick passing and distribution from the midfield.

"We dominated against Thailand and were about to win the match, but we conceded the equaliser due to a mistake from our goalkeeper Mahmuda. It is a good thing that we have got an idea about the Thailand team."

"If the girls can perform according to their ability in Thailand, it is possible to do well," Choton said.

Striker Sirat Jahan Swapna was the star performer in Japan, having struck eight out of the 13 goals Bangladesh scored. The prolific striker, however, is determined to see herself playing even better.

"During AFC U-16 championship qualifiers, I did not score. Then Choton sir sat with me to discuss the problems I was facing. I could not even understand what my problem was back then. However, I concentrated on training and tried to do the drills and now I am getting the results," said Swapna.

Meanwhile, BFF women's committee chairman Mahfuz Akter Kiron informed that the national women's team will visit Singapore to play in a four-nation tournament from February 15 to 19 and then they will travel to Korea in March-April to play a few matches there.

Mason leaves hospital

AFP, London

Hull midfielder Ryan Mason is set for a long period of rehabilitation treatment after being discharged from hospital, his Premier League club said.

The 25-year-old -- capped once by England -- fractured his skull in a horrific clash of heads with Chelsea defender Gary Cahill in the first-half of the 2-0 defeat at Stamford Bridge and was stretchered off the pitch attached to an oxygen mask.

Mason -- sold to Hull by Tottenham Hotspur for a reported £13million (15.3m, \$16.3) just prior to the beginning of this season -- has made 'excellent' progress since that according to Hull to the extent he has been discharged from hospital.

However, it is believed it will be at least four months till he can start training again and he will need a medical all clear before he does so -- others such as Czech goalkeeper Petr Cech have returned to action though he wears protective head gear.

"Ryan will now continue his recovery and early stages of rehabilitation at home and the club would once again like to place on record its thanks to everybody who has been involved in Ryan's care so far," a club statement read.

Mason wasn't short of well wishers during his stay in hospital being visited by the members of Hull's medical team, whose prompt work was heralded as being key to the player's recovery.

'MU to fight on four fronts'

AFP, Manchester



Henrikh Mkhitaryan insists Manchester United are taking all four competitions they are involved in seriously as they struggle to cope with a demanding fixture schedule.

Jose Mourinho's club is the only one in England still retaining an interest in a quartet of competitions -- the Premier League, Europa League, FA Cup and the League Cup, in which they can look forward to a Wembley final against Southampton next month.

Their success means United could face as many as 67 games, should they advance to the finals of the other two cup competitions, and has led Mourinho to criticise the English fixture schedule as "nonsense".

But after a weekend in which a

number of Premier League teams were eliminated from the FA Cup after choosing weakened line-ups, Mkhitaryan claimed United want to succeed in every tournament.

"We are taking all the competitions seriously," he said. "For Manchester United, every cup is very important."

"A trophy is a trophy. It doesn't matter if it is the League Cup, the FA Cup or the Europa League. We want to do our best to try to win them all."

United face drop candidates Hull in the Premier League at Old Trafford on Wednesday, with Mourinho again likely to make sweeping changes to his team selection.

The weekend FA Cup win over Wigan saw the United manager make nine changes from his previous game, a League Cup semifinal, also against Hull, and hand debuts to young substitutes Axel Tuanzebe and goalkeeper Joel Pereira.

Despite the Portuguese boss having expressed concerns about the lack of depth in his squad, Mkhitaryan claimed the competition for places, and the emergence of young players at Old Trafford, was healthy.

"It's great for them to play their first game," said the Armenian. "You know as a player that, when young players come into the squad, you have to help them and offer them some advice and I thought they both did well on what is a great experience for them."

After a tough beginning to his United career, in which Mkhitaryan did not start a league game for nearly three months, the £26 million (\$32 million, 30 million euros) pre-season signing from Borussia Dortmund has emerged as a key member of Mourinho's squad.

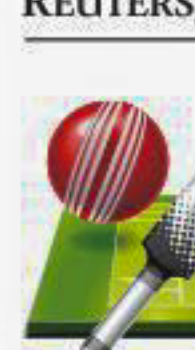
"Since he came into the team, we and Micki himself thought he was ready," said Mourinho.



Bangladesh under-16 women's football team returned from Japan on Monday night after taking part in the J-Green Sakai Lady's Festival where they won three matches, lost two and drew the other two. PHOTO: BFF

Andre Russell gets one-year ban

REUTERS, Kingston



West Indies all-rounder Andre Russell was banned on Tuesday for one year for a doping whereabouts rule violation.

The two-times Twenty20 World Cup winner was revealed to have committed the violation 11 months ago after registering three filing failures in 2015. That constitutes a failed drugs test under World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) rules.

"Mr Russell was found guilty of a doping violation," Hugh Faulkner, chairman of the independent anti-doping tribunal that handed out the punishment, said in a statement.

The 28-year-old Jamaican, who helped the West Indies win their second World T20 title in 2016, will be banned for a year from January 31.



WADA rules state that athletes across all sports must inform their local anti-doping agencies where they will be for at least one hour each day to facilitate drug tests.

Pato latest to head to China

AFP, Madrid

Former Brazilian international Alexandre Pato is the latest high-profile player to be tempted by the riches of China's Super League after joining Tianjin Quanjian from La Liga side Villarreal.

Pato, 27, will be coached by Italian World Cup-winning captain Fabio Cannavaro and joins Belgian international Axel Witsel at Tianjin after he sealed a big-money move from Zenit Saint Petersburg earlier this month.

"I'm very happy to be part of the Tianjin Quanjian family," Pato tweeted on his official account with a picture alongside Cannavaro.

Spanish media reported Villarreal are set to cash in to the tune of 18 million euros (\$19 million) for a player they spent just three million on to sign from Brazilian side Corinthians in July.

Meanwhile, Pato is reportedly set to earn 10 million euros a season.

The former AC Milan and Chelsea striker scored just six goals in his 24 appearances for Villarreal.

Pato was one of the brightest prospects in world football when he signed for Milan as a 17-year-old in 2007.

Despite netting 63 goals in 150 appearances for the Italian giants, Pato's first spell in Europe was blighted by injury before returning to Brazil with Corinthians in 2013.

Loan spells at Sao Paulo and last season at Chelsea followed before his brief stint at Villarreal.

Ronaldinho hails Neymar, Coutinho

AGENCIES, Rio de Janeiro



Barcelona and Brazil legend Ronaldinho believes that fellow compatriot Neymar will soon become the best player in the world.

Ronaldinho insists that Neymar, who missed out on the Ballon d'Or top three this year behind Antoine Griezmann, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, has to be patient in his quest to become the world's best.

"I think he's already among the best in the world, one day he'll be the best in the world," Ronaldinho told ESPN FC during his visit to former club Paris Saint-Germain.

"Us Brazilians are waiting for that because he's an idol for all Brazilian soccer. He's a great friend, it's a matter a time for



NEYMAR



PHILIPPE COUTINHO

him to be the best in the world."

Neymar has enjoyed a successful career since joining Barcelona back in 2013, thriving in a deadly front three with team-mates Messi and Luis Suarez.

The Brazilian has won two La Liga titles, two Copa del Rey's and picked up the Champions League crown once so far during his time with the Catalan giants.

But it isn't only Neymar that Ronaldinho has been very impressed with recently.

The 36-year-old has praised Liverpool star Philippe Coutinho, who had attracted interest from Barcelona before signing a five-year contract with the Reds.

"I admire him a lot. He's got a lot of talent," Ronaldinho said. "I've known him for many years, and he's proven that he can play anywhere in the world."

"He can play in France, he's proven it. He can play anywhere in the world."

La Liga to adopt video referral?

AGENCIES, Madrid

The Spanish football league is likely to use the newly-introduced video refereeing system in 2018, league President Javier Tebas said.

A mistake which cost Barcelona a goal at the weekend sparked widespread criticism of refereeing and forced the President to make the announcement on Monday, reports Xinhua news agency.

The league initially said it would not comment on the missed call in Barcelona's 1-1 draw at Real Betis on Sunday. But Tebas later said video refereeing will be implemented as soon as it wins full approval by the global football body, FIFA.

"We have always defended the use of technology in soccer and in this case we believe that video referees is the most advanced option," Tebas said.

"The tests are already underway. I believe that beginning in July 2018, if FIFA approves it, we will start using it," he added.

Barcelona coach Luis Enrique said he was in favour of using technology to aid the officiating crews.

"The referees need help, whether it's with cameras or whatever, for decisions that favour us or go against us. The technology can help us," he said.

The video refereeing system was tested for the first time by FIFA in the World Club Championships in Japan last year.

Fernandinho boost for City

AFP, London



Kevin De Bruyne believes Fernandinho's return from suspension will provide the foundation for Manchester City to get their spluttering Premier League campaign back on track at West Ham on Wednesday.

Pep Guardiola's side have dropped out of the top four and trail leaders Chelsea by 12 points after winning just one of their last four league games.

Guardiola wrote off City's titles hopes during that unexpected slump, but a comfortable 3-0 victory at Crystal Palace in the FA Cup fourth round on Saturday was a much needed tonic and De Bruyne anticipates the return of Brazil midfielder Fernandinho will be even more significant.

Fernandinho has served a four-

match ban after receiving his third red card in six games in a win against Burnley on January 2.

During Fernandinho's absence, City looked alarmingly vulnerable and were thrashed 4-0 at Everton in Guardiola's heaviest league defeat as a manager.

But the 31-year-old is expected to return to the starting line-up at the London Stadium, with De Bruyne predicting an upturn in City's fortunes.

"Obviously we've missed him. De Bruyne said, "He's been an important player throughout his time at City."

"He plays a pivotal role for us in midfield and helps keep everything organised, plus he's also very good on the ball."

"Now he's served his ban and is available for us again, so it's a big boost for the team because he's missed seven games this season through suspension."

"If you get a red card in England you're banned for three or sometimes four games which is unbelievable, but there's not much you can do about it. I think one game is enough but those are the rules, I suppose."

"I think Ferna's one of the best holding midfielders I've ever played with. We are very lucky to have him."

Fifth placed City are two points adrift of the top four and find themselves in a battle just to secure a Champions League spot after being widely tipped as likely champions following a blistering start to the season.

However, De Bruyne is confident City can put together a long winning streak as they face Swansea, Bournemouth, Sunderland and Stoke after the Hammers clash.

"Hopefully we can beat West Ham on Wednesday and then put a bit of a run together in the coming weeks," he said.