

What to WATCH

TEN 1
UEFA Europa League
M'gladbach v Fiorentina
Live from 12:00am (Friday)
Villarreal v Roma
Live from 2:00am (Friday)
TEN 1 HD
UEFA Europa League

Krasnodar v Fenerbahce
Live from 10:00pm
Olympiacos v Osmanlispor
Live from 12:00am (Friday)
Man United v St-etienne
Live from 2:00am (Friday)
TEN 2
UEFA Europa League

Gent v Tottenham
Live from 12:00am (Friday)
TEN 3
UEFA Europa League
Celta v Shakhtar Donetsk
Live from 12:00am (Friday)
Paok v Schalke
Live from 2:00am (Friday)

POLICE CALLED TO MARADONA'S HOTEL

Spanish police were called to a Madrid hotel by concerned staff on Wednesday over an argument between former Argentine footballer Diego Maradona and his girlfriend. "When the agents and emergency services arrived, those people (Maradona and his girlfriend) showed no sign of injuries and did not press charges, there was just a discussion," police sources told AFP. According to the same source, the events took place around 8:30 am (0730GMT) after hotel staff overheard an argument. Maradona is in Madrid to watch his old side Napoli take on European champions Real Madrid in the first leg of their Champions League last 16 tie on Wednesday night. -AFP



Rollball World Cup gets rolling tomorrow

ATIQUÉ ANAM

If you happened to have visited the Bangladesh National Stadium premises in recent times, you would have noticed an imposing structure of steel and corrugated iron sheets sprung upon half of what was known to be the outer stadium ground. The structure with a steel roof supporting solar panels, with a gallery at one side and a well-decorated building behind, has been named Sheikh Russel Roller Skating Complex, and is the prime venue for the 4th Rollball World Cup, which is set to get underway tomorrow. There is a last-minute hurry to get everything in order at the complex for the world cup, which according to hosts Bangladesh Roller Skating Federation (BRSF), will be the biggest congregation of teams in any world cup at a single venue (city). A total of 27 men's teams and 39 women's teams from 40 countries are taking part in this world cup, scheduled from February 17 to 23, which saw two of its first three editions held in India, with the other one being held in Kenya. The BRSF general secretary Ahmed Asiful Hasan informed that

Bangladesh men's team, which finished seventh among 34 teams in the third edition of the world cup two years ago, are now better prepared at home. "We are better prepared this time. We played a few practice matches

What is rollball anyway?

Conceptualised by an Indian named Raju Dabhade, the game of rollball combines roller skating with aspects of handball and basketball. The game is played between two teams of 12 players, out of whom only six players of each team are allowed to play on court at a time. The game is played with a basketball and the aim is to score goals in a goalpost similar to that in handball. The playing surface can be either hard court, wooden or ice. The first Rollball World Cup was held in India in 2011, and after Kenya hosted the second edition two years later, India again hosted the event in 2015. India are the defending champions in the men's event.

against defending champions India and third-ranked side Nepal over our preparation time of last one-and-a-half months. We beat Nepal and drew against India. So we believe our team will do well. Bangladesh will be competing in both men's and women's events," he said.

The BRSF president and chief coordinator of SDG affairs of Prime Minister's Office, Abul Kalam Azad, informed that the infrastructure at the chief venue has been built at a cost of Tk 11.61 crore while the two other venues -- Handball Stadium and Mirpur Indoor Stadium -- and other accommodation facilities have been renovated at a cost of Tk 10.64 crore. All of this infrastructure has been set up or renovated with sustainable development as a goal.

Planning Minister AHM Mostafa Kamal MP will inaugurate the world cup tomorrow morning while Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will distribute prizes after the final on the afternoon of February 23, speakers informed.

The press conference was attended, among others, by National Sports Council secretary Ashok Kumar Biswas and secretary for youth and sports ministry Akhtar Uddin Ahmed.



Organisers speak at a press conference ahead of the 4th Rollball World Cup at the newly-built Sheikh Russel Roller Skating Complex in Paltan yesterday. (INSET) Players of one of the foreign teams take a look at the venue at the end of the press conference.

PHOTOS: FIROZ AHMED

Tumultuous fall for Barcelona in Paris

AFP, Paris

Barcelona coach Luis Enrique admitted his side's Champions League hopes are all but over for this season after they were outclassed 4-0 by a brilliant Paris Saint-Germain in their last 16 first leg on Tuesday.

Angel Di Maria scored twice for the French champions on his 29th birthday at the Parc des Princes, while Julian Draxler and Edinson Cavani -- on his 30th birthday -- were also on target in a stunning home performance.

The result leaves PSG on the brink of a place in the quarterfinals for the fifth season in succession, while Barcelona are staring at their earliest exit since losing to Liverpool in the last 16 in 2007.

It was the Catalans' worst night in Europe since their 7-0 aggregate mauling at the hands of Bayern Munich in the 2013 semifinals, and no team has ever gone through after losing 4-0 in the first leg of a European tie.

"It is difficult to explain. They were superior to us from the start," admitted Luis Enrique.

"There was a 15-minute spell in the first half in which we were on top, but otherwise PSG attacked quickly on the break and created a lot of chances.

"It was a disastrous night for us. They were completely superior. There is not much more to say."

This was PSG's night, though, and Unai Emery's side will surely go on to

secure a fifth successive appearance in the quarterfinals.

Di Maria, the former Real Madrid winger, opened the scoring with a free-kick in the 18th minute and Germany star Draxler marked his European debut for the club with the second goal five minutes before the interval.

Di Maria curled in his second and the home side's third 10 minutes after half-time before Cavani completed the rout with his 34th goal of the campaign in the 71st minute.

"PSG did what we expected them to do and produced their best version and we were at our poorest," the Barcelona coach added.

"It's extremely difficult for us now but we go back to our stadium and really we need a heroic performance but why not dream?"

"These players have shown down the years that they can get great results. Our chances are slim but there is a chance all the same."

The second leg will be at the Camp

Nou on March 8.

History suggests their chances are less than slim and the tie is PSG's to lose now after what was a signature European performance from the French champions.

They had twice been eliminated by Barca in the four seasons prior to this, but their 3-1 home defeat to the Catalans in 2015 was their only loss in their 42 previous European outings at the Parc des Princes.

Coach Unai Emery, meanwhile, had only won one of 23 games against

Barcelona in his coaching career, but his team destroyed their opponents right from the off.

Lionel Messi, Neymar, Luis Suarez and Andres Iniesta all endured miserable nights while the likes of Draxler, Di Maria, Adrien Rabiot and Thomas Meunier were all superb.

Centre-back Presnel Kimpembe also produced an accomplished display on his Champions League debut at the age of 21 in place of injured captain Thiago Silva.

Messi gets a 2!

AGENCIES

Lionel Messi was slammed by media after Barcelona's humiliating defeat to PSG on Tuesday night. Luis Enrique's men were battered 4-0 in the French capital to leave their Champions League hopes in tatters. Messi cut a frustrated figure throughout as he turned in one of his most ineffective displays in years.

And French newspaper L'Equipe slammed the Argentine's performance in their player ratings. Messi was given just 2/10, sharing the lowly score with Luis Suarez, Andres Iniesta, Andre Gomes and Jordi Alba.

Barca boss Enrique was also given the score as he failed to stop the PSG onslaught. Sergi Roberto had the highest outfield rating with four, while goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen getting six.

Unsurprisingly, PSG's stars scored very highly after a sensational performance. Man of the match Angel Di Maria was given a nine after scoring twice, along with Adrien Rabiot. Fellow goalscorers Edinson Cavani and Julian Draxler scored 8/10.



(L) Lionel Messi had a forgettable night in Paris, earning a two out of 10 according to a L'equipe rating, while his teammates didn't fare much better either as Barcelona were flattened to a 4-0 defeat by Paris Saint Germain on Tuesday. (R) The PSG players are ecstatic though with their remarkable feat.



PHOTOS: REUTERS/AFP

Turkey seeks to host Euro 2024

AFP, Istanbul

Turkey announced on Thursday an ambitious bid backed by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to host the Euro 2024 football tournament, brushing off concerns over security and infrastructure.

The football authorities hope it will be second time lucky for the bid after losing out to France to host the 2016 event by one vote, but Turkey is likely to face strong competition from Germany. Turkey in 2014 withdrew its bid to host final stage matches of Euro 2020 -- which uniquely will be held across Europe -- in favour of focusing on a one country bid for 2024.

Turkish Football Federation (IFF) chief Yildirim Demiroren said the bid would be formally presented to UEFA on March 2, just before the March 3 deadline for candidates.

"This time it is our right to host the championships," he told reporters at IFF headquarters.

Enrique lambasted

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona coach Luis Enrique floundered in the firing line on Wednesday after what he called a "disastrous" 4-0 defeat to Paris Saint-Germain left the Spanish champions on the brink of their earliest Champions League exit in a decade.

Enrique confronted a television reporter working for Catalan station TV3 after the match, whilst his tactics were criticised by Barca midfielder Sergio Busquets.

Barcelona sports daily Sport's front cover said "this is not Barca," whilst Madrid-based AS's headline ran "total disaster."

A former Real Madrid foe came back to haunt Barca as Angel di Maria scored twice, whilst further goals from Julian Draxler and Edinson Cavani handed PSG the glorious European night they have craved since a takeover from Qatar Sports Investments six years ago.

The joint heaviest defeat in Enrique's three seasons in charge means they face missing out on the quarterfinals for the first time since losing on away goals to Liverpool in the last 16 in 2006/07.

"It was a disastrous night for us in which we were clearly inferior," Enrique acknowledged after the game.

"I accept responsibility, but I would also like the same respect and personal treatment in the interviews when we win," Enrique said in a fiery interview with TV3.

Enrique's future at the Camp Nou beyond the current campaign was already in doubt as his contract expires at the end of the season. Barcelona also trail Real Madrid in the race for the Spanish title.

And Busquets's reaction in praising Enrique's counterpart Unai Emery for the tactical set up that caught the Catalans cold was telling.

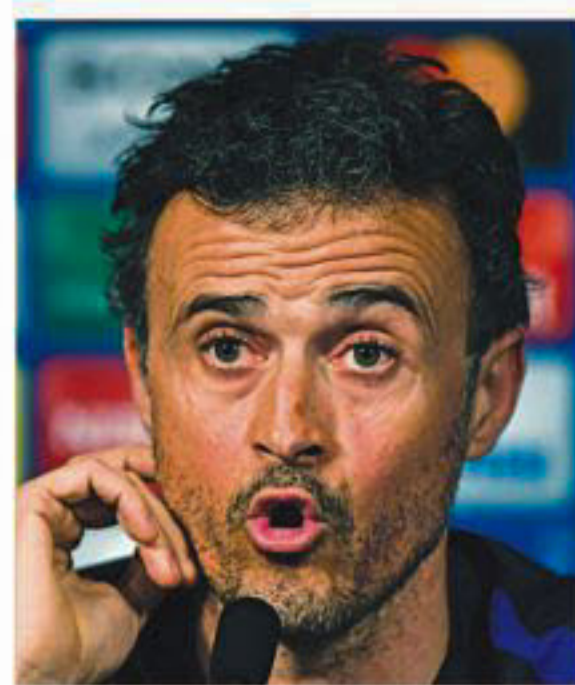
"It wasn't an attitude problem, but a football one. They pressed more and were better tactically. They had a plan and carried it out as they wanted."

Sport described Barca as a "shipwreck without a coach". "Barca fell in Paris without grandeur and without excuses," continued Sport's editorial.

"It was a tumultuous fall, from the first minute to the last... more than an accident, it manifested itself as an aggravation of many problems, some latent and others evident, that had already been shown up throughout the season."

The punishment dished out to Enrique was only further evidenced by the praise lavished on Emery in his homeland.

Emery guided Sevilla to Europa League glory in each of the past three seasons and once again proved his worth on the European stage despite having managed just one win over Barca in his previous 23 attempts.



Jesus out with broken foot

AFP, London

Manchester City's Brazilian goal-scoring sensation Gabriel Jesus has broken his foot, the club said Tuesday, sparking fears he may miss the rest of the season.

The 19-year-old striker, who has scored three goals in five games since joining City in January, suffered a "fractured metatarsal" bone against Bournemouth on Monday. He was brought off in the 15th minute of the 2-0 win which lifted City to second in the Premier League.

City did not say how long Jesus would be sidelined. "He will undergo further examinations in the coming days to establish the extent of his layoff," said a club statement.

British media reports said Jesus underwent a scan on Tuesday that revealed the fracture. He was pictured walking in Manchester with a protective boot.

City paid Brazilian club Palmeiras an initial £27 million (\$33 million/31 million euros) for Jesus.

Benfica edge Dortmund

REUTERS, Lisbon

Benfica made Borussia Dortmund pay for missing a host of chances, as the Portuguese side snatched a 1-0 win in their Champions League last-16 first leg on Tuesday thanks to forward Kostas Mitroglou's 13th goal in his last 13 games.

Greece international Mitroglou flicked the ball into the net to open the scoring in the 48th minute and Benfica then held on against their misfiring opponents to take a slender lead into the second leg in Dortmund on March 8.

Benfica, who have now not conceded a goal at home for 383 minutes, kept another clean sheet thanks largely to keeper Ederson, who denied the Germans with a string of superb saves.

Dortmund, who had netted a record 21 times in the group stage, missed a second-half penalty through Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, who also squandered several other scoring chances on a night to forget for the Gabon striker.

"We ended up scoring a goal in a situation we had been working for," said Benfica coach Rui Vitoria. "In order to play such teams one has to be prepared to suffer at the limit. We had our problems getting out of our own half to attack."

"Now we know what we have to do in the return leg. Scoring a goal there will have a huge impact," the Portuguese said.

Benfica, who had striker Jonas ruled out through injury just before kickoff, got off to

an explosive start but Dortmund began to dominate possession and gradually slowed the game down.

The visitors, looking to counter their lacklustre domestic form with European success, missed a huge chance when Aubameyang, the Bundesliga's leading scorer, fired over the bar after an outstanding through ball from Ousmane Dembele in the 10th minute.

Benfica captain Luisao was making his 500th club appearance and was kept busy at the heart of the Benfica defence, with Dembele sneaking into the box and forcing a superb save from keeper Ederson in the 23rd.

Aubameyang then missed another good opportunity before the break and Benfica were quick out of the blocks again after the restart with Mitroglou doing well to control a Luisao header and then beating keeper Roman Buerki from close range.

Aubameyang almost drew Dortmund level in the 53rd and then had a penalty, awarded for a hand ball on the hour, saved by Benfica's Brazilian keeper.

Dortmund coach Thomas Tuchel put Aubameyang out of his misery by substituting him soon after and following a sensational save from Ederson with six minutes left, the hosts held on to celebrate victory.

"We cannot do much more than carve out these golden chances," Tuchel told reporters. "We will now need efficiency in the return leg if we are to advance."