

# What to WATCH

**STAR SPORTS 2**  
Australia v New Zealand  
1st T20 (Women)  
Live from 9:00am  
Australia v Sri Lanka  
1st T20  
Live from 2:30pm

**STAR SPORTS SELECT HD2**  
Bundesliga  
Augsburg v Leverkusen  
Live from 1:30am (Saturday)  
**SONY ESPN**  
Serie A  
Juventus v Palermo  
Live from 1:45am (Saturday)

**SONY SIX**  
La Liga  
Granada v Real Betis  
Live from 1:45am (Saturday)

## BOUCHARD PAYS OFF HER LOST BET

Canadian tennis star Eugenie Bouchard paid off her lost Super Bowl bet Wednesday by joining blind date John Goehrke at a Brooklyn Nets NBA home game against Milwaukee. Goehrke, a 20-year-old University of Missouri student and New England Patriots supporter, won his dream date with Bouchard, who turns 23 on February 25, thanks to the Patriots' record-setting rally to defeat the Atlanta Falcons in Super Bowl 51 earlier this month. The Montreal-born blonde predicted an Atlanta triumph on Twitter with the Falcons ahead 21-0 and her suitor pitched a date if the Patriots rallied to win. Bouchard agreed, only to then see Tom Brady lead the Patriots to a 34-28 comeback triumph. On Wednesday night, she tweeted a two-person selfie photo with her date saying, "Just met my 'Super Bowl Twitter Date' John. On our way to the @BrooklynNets game!" The two were sitting courtside, according to the New York Daily News.



Thiago Alcantara (C) volleys his second and Bayern Munich's third goal in 10 minutes after the break during their Champions League round of 16 first leg encounter against Arsenal at the Allianz Arena on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

## 'Sensational' Bayern

AFP, Munich



The German media poured praise on Carlo Ancelotti's Bayern Munich on Thursday after their 5-1 drubbing of Arsenal allowed the Italian to step out of Pep Guardiola's shadow.

"Big Bayern", "The Red Rush" and "Respect, Bayern" were the headlines here after the Bundesliga leaders dominated Tuesday's Champions League's last 16, first-leg, clash.

Bayern extended their Champions League record run to 16 home wins by putting Arsene Wenger's Arsenal to the sword with three goals in 10 magical second-half minutes.

Arjen Robben's early goal was cancelled out by an Alexis Sanchez penalty, converted at the second-attempt, as it finished 1-1 at the break.

Bayern hit top gear in the second-half with attacking midfielder Thiago Alcantara, who's performance Ancelotti dubbed 'perfect', leading the charge with two goals.

Robert Lewandowski restored Bayern's lead by out-leaping the Arsenal defence on 53 minutes and 178 seconds later, his flick put Thiago behind the defence to make it 3-1.

The Spanish midfielder then banged home, via a deflection, from outside the area to effectively slam the door shut on Arsenal's quarterfinals hopes.

Thomas Mueller simply completed the

route two minutes from time with a fifth goal off the bench.

As Bayern captain Philipp Lahm put it, "before the penalty, we were very good, up until half-time we weren't really good, but after that we were sensational."

Bild awarded Robben, Lewandowski and Thiago top marks, but arguably the biggest winner was Ancelotti.

Bayern's performance allowed him at least a step out of the shadow of predecessor Guardiola.

Bayern raised their game when it mattered, shaking off below-par German league performances to hit top gear.

"A horse jumps only as high as it needs to," wrote Munich-based TZ.

"Against the Gunners, the Red steed had to leap. And it leapt, like Ancelotti said it would."

Bild pointed out, "Ancelotti has found his first-choice team" with the same line-up which floored nearest challengers RB Leipzig in the Bundesliga last December.

Despite scoring, Mueller was a casualty on Bayern's big night.

As ex-Germany captain Lothar Matthaeus pointed out, there is no room for misfiring Mueller in Ancelotti's vision for Bayern.

The Germany star, who netted 20 league goals last season, has hit just one in 2016/17.

He is so far having a season to forget and replaced Lewandowski for the last four minutes.

## Carlo backs Arsene

AFP, Munich



Bayern Munich coach Carlo Ancelotti has backed under-fire Arsene Wenger to lead Arsenal out of their slump, despite their "sensational" 5-1 Champions League thrashing in Germany.

Wenger's 20-year reign as Arsenal coach is under pressure after their mauling at Thiago Alcantara-inspired Bayern.

The Gunners had few answers to the hosts' second-half display at the Allianz Arena and face an uphill battle for the last 16, second leg tie on March 7.

But Ancelotti believes the Frenchman has the experience to pull Arsenal out of the mire as they stare down the barrel of a seventh last-16 exit in consecutive seasons.

"This is football, Arsene has the experience to manage this result and move forward -- this is only one game," said Ancelotti, who oversaw his 148th European game.

After Alex Ferguson, who coached in 198 Champions League matches, Wenger has the second highest number of European games under his belt with 183.

Bayern extended their Champions League record to 16 home wins by flooring the Gunners with three goals in ten second-half minutes.

Arjen Robben gave Bayern the lead after 10 minutes with a curling shot from outside the area.

Arsenal's Alexis Sanchez equalised when he drilled home a penalty at the second attempt as it finished 1-1 at the break.

But Bayern hit top gear after the interval. Robert Lewandowski restored the lead with a powerful header before Thiago added

two more in a devastating ten minute spell. Thomas Mueller came off the bench for Lewandowski to net their fifth two minutes from time to complete Arsenal's misery.

Ancelotti hailed it as Bayern's best performance since he replaced Pep Guardiola as head coach this season.

He proclaimed Thiago's magnificent 90 minutes in the attacking midfield role as "perfect".

"Thiago played really well, we put him in the position between their lines. It meant he closed them down and gave us more space," said Ancelotti.

"His performance was really good -- he was perfect.

"It's the best performance since I have been here, but it's not the final, we still have another game -- unfortunately."

The Italian said the focus is now on completing the job in the second leg, which would see Bayern knock Arsenal out in the last 16 for the fourth time.

"The result was really important and we have the advantage, but we don't want to make a mistake," said Ancelotti.

"We want to play like we did tonight with the same intensity, the same spirit and the same tempo, because we don't want to give ourselves problems."

The result matched the 5-1 group-stage thrashing Arsenal received in Munich in November 2015 -- the club's joint record away defeat in Europe.

Robben also admitted he was surprised by the margin.

"I am a bit surprised that we played so well, but on the other hand, I know the team has great character and can move up a gear when it matters."

## Nightmare for Gunners' boss

AFP, London



Former players were brutal in their criticism of manager Arsene Wenger following Arsenal's latest Champions League humiliation.

And newspapers across Europe were no less scathing of Wednesday night's "nightmare" 5-1 thrashing at Bayern Munich.

Just a few days after defending his former boss by saying it was "too soon" for Wenger to leave, Martin Keown, a centre-back in all three of Arsenal's Premier League title triumphs under the Frenchman, pulled no punches this time, saying it had been a clash of "men against boys".

"It's almost embarrassing -- outclassed, outplayed," Keown, now a pundit, told BT Sport.

"This is his (Wenger's) lowest point ever. Twenty years and Arsene must be considering his future now. Arsenal were bullied, weren't they? Completely."

Another former defender, Lee Dixon, said he felt Wenger's demeanour has finally changed following years of belligerent defiance in the face of numerous failures.

"He just seems so low," Dixon told ITV.

"I think he's realising that with this team he's getting no response from them. They're not doing themselves justice or him."

"That is the first time where I've seen him where I've thought, 'he thinks it's time'."

Former goalkeeper Bob Wilson, who was a champion with Arsenal in 1971, pondered whether this result would "tip Arsene over the edge".

"He can only take so much," said Wilson on BBC Radio 5 Live. "I wouldn't be at all surprised if Arsene, given the amount of headlines that are coming his way, might just look at that and say enough is enough."

"Spineless!" screamed Britain's Dail Mail while The Times described Arsenal's latest European chastisement as "Groundhog Day".

## S'pore rout Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national women's team suffered a 0-3 defeat to hosts Singapore in their first match of the Women's Development Tournament in Singapore yesterday.

Bangladesh, comprising mostly U-16 players, will play their second and final match against their Malaysian counterparts today. The women's team are participating in the three-nation tournament as part of their preparation for the AFC U-16 Championship to be held in Thailand during September.

## Messi delays Egypt visit

AFP, Cairo

Argentine superstar Lionel Messi postponed a visit to Egypt to promote a campaign to fight Hepatitis C in the wake of Barcelona's defeat by Paris Saint-Germain, Egypt's tourism ministry said Wednesday.

"The visit has been officially postponed, (Messi) said he could not come at the last minute," said ministry spokeswoman Omaima al-Husseini.

## Clattenburg set to leave EPL

AGENCIES, London



Referee Mark Clattenburg is set to leave the Premier League to join the Saudi Arabian Football Federation, the Professional Game Match Officials Limited (PGMOL) has announced.

Clattenburg has been the subject of speculation in recent months after admitting he could be lured away from England by an offer from the Chinese Super League.

Instead it is another relatively wealthy football region that has succeeded in tempting the 41-year-old to depart, although it is yet to be confirmed what capacity Clattenburg will be employed in.

His fellow former Premier League referee Howard Webb was appointed head of refereeing by the SAFF in August 2015, but is understood to have resigned this month upon accepting a role managing Video Assistant Referee (VAR) operations in MLS.

"The Professional Game Match Officials Limited (PGMOL) would like to wish Mark Clattenburg well as he prepares for his move to the Saudi Arabian Football Federation," the PGMOL said in a statement released on Thursday.

## Zidane hails Benzema

AFP, Madrid



Real Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane hailed the impact of Karim Benzema after his compatriot lifted the European champions from the early blow of conceding to beat Napoli 3-1 on Wednesday.

Madrid are now on the brink of a seventh successive Champions League quarterfinal as they aim to become the first team to retain the trophy in the Champions League era.

Lorenzo Insigne's wonder strike from 40 yards after just eight minutes had given Napoli a shock lead at the Bernabeu.

However, Zidane was rewarded for keeping faith in Benzema despite fierce criticism of late from the Spanish press as he headed home his 51st Champions League goal to equalise before second-half strikes from Toni Kroos and Casemiro gave Madrid a commanding lead.

"I am always happy with him, said Zidane.

"He needed that goal which lately he didn't get, but I am happy not only for the goal but also for how he played generally. He made the rest of the team play better and his movement is very good."

"The performances of Karim, Cristiano (Ronaldo), James (Rodriguez) they all made the rest of the



Real Madrid striker Karim Benzema's (R) equaliser sets the tone for their 3-1 comeback win against Napoli in the Champions League round of 16 first leg clash at the Bernabeu on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

team better."

Benzema's goal also moved him ahead of compatriot Thierry Henry as top French scorer of all-time in the Champions League proper.

"It was a great night. We all played well, not just me," Benzema told Spanish TV station MEGA.

"I am very happy and proud of my work. There are a lot of sacrifices, but now I feel good."

"I scored a goal and saw that the fans were with me which is very

good for my confidence."

Napoli had chances to set up a mouthwatering second leg on March 7 as Dries Mertens blazed over with the goal at his mercy and former Madrid winger Jose Maria Callejon had a goal ruled out for offside late on.

However, Napoli boss Maurizio Sarri believes his side still have a chance of reaching the quarter-finals for the first time in their history.

"Clearly Madrid played their best

game of the past three months and we didn't play our best," said Sarri.

"If we manage to play at our best we are not that far away. We may lose (in the second leg) but we can go for it."

"It is the first game we have lost in four months. We didn't manage to express ourselves 100 percent, but we can't lose our confidence because we have the return game and league games to come."

"We don't have a great chance of turning it around but we have a chance."

Even a pre-match pep talk from former Napoli great Diego Maradona couldn't inspire the Italians to victory.

However, Sarri believes their fast start more than justified his decision to invite the Argentine into the dressing room before kick-off.

"Diego spoke with us for 30 seconds, but he is a legend so clearly it had an impact. Our first 10-15 minutes were our best."

Despite that early blow, though, Madrid responded like European champions to take control and Sarri lamented his side's distribution from the back under Real's intense pressing.

"It was difficult to mount counter-attacks because we gave the ball away so much," he added.

"We were playing a very good team, the best team in the world. The only thing is I feel we committed more errors than normal."

### Summer 2017 Admission is open

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