

SONY ESPN
Indian Premier League
 Hyderabad v Bangalore
 Live from 8:30pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT HD1
English Premiership
 Liverpool v Bournemouth
 Live from 1:00am (Thursday)

STAR SPORTS SELECT HD2
English Premiership
 Chelsea v Man City
 Live from 1:00am (Thursday)
SONY SIX
La Liga
 Leganes v Real Madrid
 Live from 1:30am (Thursday)

TEN 1
La Liga
 Barcelona v Sevilla
 Live from 11:30pm
TEN 2
La Liga
 Alaves v Osasuna
 Live from 12:30am (Thursday)



Mohun Bagan forward Sony Norde (R) dribbles past Abahani defender Mamun Mia during their AFC Cup match at the Rabindra Sarobar Stadium in Kolkata yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

Abahani suffer 1-3 defeat

SPORTS REPORTER



Abahani surrendered an early lead to suffer a 1-3 defeat to Mohun Bagan AC in their second match of the AFC Cup at Rabindra Sarobar Stadium in Kolkata yesterday.

The second consecutive defeat means the Bangladesh Premier League champions sit at the bottom of Group E with zero points while Bengaluru FC top with six points after a 1-0 win over Maziya Sports & Recreation Club. Maziya and Mohun Bagan have three points each.

It was the first meeting between the cross-border outfits in 28 years, which despite a spirited show from the Sky Blues, ended in a frustrating defeat for them.

Croatian coach Drago Mamic brought three changes to the starting eleven that suffered a 0-2 against Maziya in their opening match. The coach opted for a 5-3-2 formation, keeping Emeka Darlington and Nabib Newaj Jibon upfront.

The Dhanmondi giants started the match brightly and won five corners within the first quarter of an hour, but failed to take advantage of those.

Mohun Bagan soon started finding their feet, but it was Abahani who broke the

deadlock in the 21st minute. Jibon darted in from the right to cut the ball back for Welsh midfielder Jonathan David, who finished the move with a simple tap-in.

Mohun Bagan stepped up a gear, with Haitian forward Sony Norde leading the line for the men in Green and Maroon.

The hosts found the equaliser one minute into the stoppage time of the first half with a nice build up as Balwant whipped in a cross for Norde, who fed it to Jeje Lalpekhlu. The India striker comfortably beat Abahani goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel with a left-footed shot.

Abahani conceded the lead three minutes after restart as Katsumi Yusa raced past the defenders to find unmarked Balwant, who scored from an acute angle.

Abahani tried to play positive football and created a couple of chances but midfielder Sohel Rana saw his close-range shot hit the side-netting while a nice cutback from Jonathan failed to find any of his teammates on the hour-mark.

Goalkeeper Sohel then denied Katsumi but could not stop Norde, who was provided with a nice ball inside the box and the former Sheikh Jamal DC striker nutmegged two defenders to beat Sohel from just outside the six-yard box three minutes from time.

Abahani will play their third match away to Bengaluru FC on April 18.

QUICK SINGLES

The following are a few samples of stories that did not make the print edition. However, if they pique your interest, you can always read them online on The Daily Star website by simply scanning the QR codes listed below:

Eldense coach arrested after 12-0 defeat

Filippo di Piero, the Italian coach of Spanish third division club Eldense, has been arrested as part of a corruption probe following his team's 12-0 defeat to Barcelona's B team.

Real poised to snatch Atletico's Hernandez

Real Madrid are set to snatch highly-rated left-back Theo Hernandez from cross city rivals Atletico Madrid by paying the buyout clause in his contract, Spanish sports daily Marca reported.

Mother Nature ready to throw everything at Masters

US Masters week got off to a stormy start as heavy rains swept across Augusta National Golf Club with tornado warnings forcing players and spectators off the course.

Watson stands in as Bangalore captain for injured Kohli

Australia all-rounder Shane Watson has been named interim captain of Indian Premier League's Royal Challengers Bangalore team in the absence of Virat Kohli.

Costa peps up Chelsea ahead of City clash

Chelsea top scorer Diego Costa believes the Premier League leaders can effectively end Manchester City's title hopes when the two sides meet at Stamford Bridge.

Nacional arrive for emotional Chape game

Colombia's Atletico Nacional arrived in southern Brazil to fanfare for the first leg of the South American Supercup final against Chapecoense.

Sampaoli's chance to impress

AFP, Madrid



Jorge Sampaoli has a final shot to further his case to land his dream job at the end of the season when his slumping Sevilla side travel to Barcelona on Wednesday. Sampaoli looked to be at the head of the queue when Barca boss Luis Enrique announced he would step down at the end of the campaign little over a month ago.

However, since then Sevilla have been knocked out of the Champions League by Leicester City and tumbled out of contention for the La Liga title with Atletico Madrid passing them into third place.

Sampaoli's future at the Sanchez Pizjuan is far from clear with long-term sporting director Monchi's decision to leave last week adding further uncertainty.

What does seem obvious, though, is that Sampaoli would jump at the chance to coach compatriot Lionel Messi and Barca's host of other stars next season.

"I want to manage Messi to be able to watch him from the sideline every day," Sampaoli told Argentine newspaper Ole last week. "It is a unique dream to be able to see the best in the world up close."

Sampaoli may get his wish to coach Messi, albeit not on a daily basis with the Argentine Football Association reportedly set to offer him the chance to salvage their faltering World Cup qualifying campaign.

Barca, meanwhile, look set to go in another direction with Athletic Bilbao coach Ernesto Valverde and Enrique's assistant Juan Carlos Unzué emerging as the

favourites to take over next season.

Wednesday's clash gives Sampaoli one last chance to impress the Barca hierarchy, whilst the Sevilla squad are focused on booking their place in next season's Champions League without needing to win a trick August qualifier by beating out Atletico for third place.

"It is difficult for us to accept right now, but we have to turn it around because we are the same team as five games ago when we were second," said striker Stefan Jovetic after a frustrating 0-0 draw at home to third bottom Sporting Gijon on Saturday.

Unfortunately for Sevilla, though, Messi is back after missing his last two games for club and country through suspension.

"It is very difficult for a team with Leo playing well to lose," added Sampaoli. The five-time World Player of the Year's absence didn't prove a fatal blow to Barca's title hopes as Luis Suarez and Neymar both scored in Sunday's 4-1 win at Granada to remain just two points behind La Liga leaders Real Madrid.

All three are set to be reunited, whilst Gerard Pique and Andres Iniesta also return for Barca after being rested from the start against Granada.

FIXTURES	
(all times GMT)	
Wednesday	Barcelona v Sevilla (1830), Deportivo La Coruna v Granada, Alaves v Osasuna, Sporting Gijón v Málaga (1930), Leganes v Real Madrid (2030)
Thursday	Eibar v Las Palmas (1830), Valencia v Celta Vigo (2030)

Lahm seeks legal advice over spoof

AFP, Berlin

Ex-Germany captain Philipp Lahm has confirmed he is taking legal advice over a spoof April Fool's story gone wrong.

A Munich-based fitness start-up issued a grovelling apology to the World Cup winner over a fake April 1 story, which hit the German media last Saturday, falsely claiming he had invested in them.

The story even contained a fake quote attributed to the Bayern Munich star after an employee decided to circulate an internal newsletter to the German media without the knowledge of the company's bosses.

"It was an April Fool's joke which should have been sent exclusively to our members in a newsletter," explained the company's red-faced co-founder.

However, the stunt quickly backfired and although the firm apologised several times, Lahm failed to see the funny side with the prank having generated plenty of free publicity for the start-up.

"I'm taking advice and bringing the matter to the detailed attention of a lawyer," said the 33-year-old.

Jesus returns to training

STAR SPORT DESK



Manchester City forward Gabriel Jesus made a comeback from injury as he returned to training earlier than expected on his 20th birthday, the club revealed on its website. The Brazilian striker, whose career has been bittersweet so far, joined the Citizens from Palmeiras earlier this year for a fee of \$27 million. Jesus had made a magnificent start with the Premier League outfit, scoring 3 goals in his first 5 games.

"Gabriel Jesus stepped up his recovery from injury today (Monday) when he returned to the training ground for the first time since February," a statement from the club read.

"The return of the Brazilian would be a huge boost for Pep Guardiola's side and their push for a title," the statement continued.

Jesus hails from Jardim Peri, a tough but modest neighbourhood located in Sao Paulo. Nicknamed 'Tetinha' (cute little) by his first coach Mamede who felt that Jesus viewed football as something 'simple'. It was that football he played in the streets of Jardim Peri which transformed him into the unique player he is today.

Despite being raised by a single mother who had four other children, Jesus received a proper education that allowed him to learn discipline. His mother, known affectionately as 'Dona Vera', describes him as not being a bold child but rather one who always stayed out of trouble.

And although City coach Pep Guardiola has shown distaste at the young Brazilian's love of soft drinks, he will nevertheless be happy with Jesus's quick recovery.



Varane to miss key clashes

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid must negotiate a huge April programme including clashes with Atletico Madrid, Bayern Munich and Barcelona without Raphael Varane, who was diagnosed with a hamstring tear on Tuesday.

"After the tests performed today on our player Raphael Varane... he has been diagnosed with a grade two muscle tear in the left hamstring," Madrid said in a statement.

The club didn't specify how long the key centre-back might be out, but Spanish media reports suggest he will be sidelined for at least a month.

Varane returned from a month out with a similar problem in Sunday's 3-0 win over Alaves, but had to be replaced inside the first 10 minutes due to a recurrence of the injury.

The French international will miss Atletico's visit to the Santiago Bernabeu on Saturday as well as both legs of Real's Champions League quarterfinal against Bayern Munich before Barcelona's visit to the Spanish capital on April 23.

Vardy almost a party rep

AGENCIES, London

Leicester City striker Jamie Vardy would have become a party rep in Ibiza if it was not for Craig Shakespeare's intervention.

He has his own iconic chant but it could have been a lot different had he walked away from football in 2013, having considered leaving the Foxes after arriving in the Championship from non-league outfit Fleetwood Town.

Vardy was out of form and out of love with the game, until then joint-assistant Shakespeare - now manager - stepped in and convinced the 30-year-old England international that he was destined for the top.

"Our job is to support players. Sometimes they do have self-doubt and Jamie would be the first to admit he was going through a rough patch," Shakespeare said of Vardy.

"Myself, Nigel [Pearson] and Steve [Walsh] were here to support him. All we did was told him about his attributes and that we thought he could go on."

EPL 39th game 'not far away'

AFP, Los Angeles



The head of the International Champions Cup exhibition tournament said Monday he believes the English Premier League is ready to revisit proposals to stage a 39th game overseas.

Charlie Stillitano, whose company Relevant Sport runs the ICC pre-season event, told ESPN's Max & Herc podcast the Premier League was not "that far away" from adding a game to the season.

The Premier League first suggested adding a round of fixtures -- to be played overseas -- in 2008. But the idea was shelved after opposition from clubs, fans and FIFA.

However Stillitano believes the Premier League remains ready to emulate US sports such as baseball, basketball and American football by playing competitive fixtures overseas.

"We joke around about it, but I think that everyone does try to follow the US model and the NFL and Major League Baseball, and I don't think it is that crazy to think there will be a 39th game here," Stillitano said.

"The Premier League have already rolled out (plans) -- I don't think it is extraordinary news...It might be heresy but I don't think it is something that is that far away. I don't."

Stillitano's International Champions Cup has seen a slew of Premier League clubs play pre-season games in the United States and Asia in recent years. Manchester United, Manchester City and Tottenham are all due to play games at US venues this year.

Fernandinho plots Blues upset

AFP, London



Manchester City midfielder Fernandinho believes his side can reignite their Premier League title ambitions on Wednesday against a Chelsea team rocked by a shock 2-1 defeat against Crystal Palace.

Ten points clear following the international break, Chelsea saw their lead trimmed to seven points after they crashed at home to Palace on Saturday and second-place Tottenham Hotspur won 2-0 at Burnley.

City could not follow Spurs' lead, drawing 2-2 at Arsenal on Sunday, but victory at Stamford Bridge will leave them eight points below Chelsea with eight games of the season remaining.

"The Premier League is still open," Fernandinho told the City website.

"We have a tough game against Chelsea away. To be close to them, we have to win that game and we will see what will happen at the end of the season."

Chelsea came from behind to record a clinical 3-1 victory when the teams last met at the Etihad Stadium in December.

But while Antonio Conte's side remain overwhelming title favourites, failure to beat City would give hope to the chasing teams who have spent much of the season trailing in their wake.

Chelsea failed to avoid defeat against Palace despite boasting a close to full-strength team and having almost 80 minutes in which to turn the game around.



However, although neutrals will be crossing their fingers for another slip-up against Pep Guardiola's City, Conte has urged his players to think of the pressure in positive terms.

"There is big pressure, but it is normal when you are in a great club and you are very good," the Chelsea manager told the club website. "When you are lucky enough to

fight for the title there is the pressure, but not only for us, for a lot of teams.

"Don't forget, the other teams were candidates to win the title, but instead we stay top of the table and we try to keep this position."

City were one of the teams expected to challenge for the title, particularly after Guardiola's much-trumpeted appointment, but as the draw at Arsenal highlighted, they remain vulnerable in defence.

The result extended their current unbeaten run to eight league games -- the longest such sequence of Guardiola's tenure -- but the last three of those matches have all been drawn.

City twice took the lead at Arsenal, only to be pegged back on both occasions, and Guardiola believes his team struggle psychologically when they have a lead to defend.

"When the team is down, we react because everything is lost and we react in a good, good way," he told reporters at the Emirates Stadium after the stalemate against Arsenal.

"To handle a situation at 1-0 (up), we are not comfortable, not yet. But we will be better. We will improve in the future."