

GTV, MAASRANGA, STAR SPORTS 1

Champions Trophy

Bangladesh v New Zealand

Live from 3:30pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1HD

French Open

Quarterfinal

Live from 7:30pm

TEN 3

West Indies v Afghanistan

1st ODI

Live from 12:30am (Saturday)

SONY ESPN

World Cup Qualifiers

Latvia v Portugal

Live from 12:45am (Saturday)

TEN 1HD

World Cup Qualifiers

Sweden v France

Live from 12:45am (Saturday)

## Two Sr Div clubs relegated

*Allegations of match fixing proved irrevocably*

SPORTS REPORTER



Dhaka United Sports Club and Friends Social Welfare Organisation have both been scrapped from the Senior Division Football League and relegated to the second division after it was 'irrevocably proved' that the two sides played a fixed match in the recently concluded Saif Powertec Senior Division Football League.

The two clubs have also been imposed a monetary fine of Tk 50,000 each and the match between the two sides has been scrapped as well. Three players of Dhaka United SC were suspended for different terms due to their involvement in the match, which had helped Friends Social Welfare Organisation avoid relegation.

The Dhaka Metropolis Football League Committee (DMFLC) disclosed the decisions at a press conference at their Bangabandhu National Stadium office yesterday. The DMFLC had formed a three-member probe

committee to look into the allegations following a complaint lodged by Badda Jagarani Sangsad.

Now, the standings of the 12-team league will be finalised in another DMFLC meeting and the already-relegated Badda Jagarani may avoid demotion due to the cancellation of Dhaka United SC and Friends Social's points.

"The decisions were taken in light of a recommendation from the probe committee as well as opinions of members of the league committee at the league committee meeting on Monday," said DMFLC chairman Harunur Rashid.

"There were whispers regarding the match between Dhaka United and Friends Social. So we had taken measures by sending members of the disciplinary committee and the league committee to watch the match. Besides, we have reports of the referees and the match commissioner. So it was irrevocably proved and identified that the match between the two clubs was fixed even though no player or club official admitted to match fixing."

Rashid said as he explained how they reached the verdict.

Though the bylaws of the Senior Division League does not have a clause for scrapping any team for playing fixed matches, it does mention that the league committee can take any decision necessary if there is no clear explanation of anything in the bylaws. Therefore, the league committee took the opportunity to relegate both teams.

When asked why the clubs did not face any harsher punishment such as being suspended altogether, Rashid said: "The general secretaries of neither club admitted to the allegations, rather they claimed the allegations were brought against them to damage the image of the clubs. But we have given the highest punishment to the clubs."

Rashid also informed that the DMFLC will recommend the Bangladesh Football Federation to impose maximum punishment on the players and clubs in line with the BFF code of conduct and the AFC/FIFA laws.

## Premier League put off by a month and a half

SPORTS REPORTER



The Professional Football League Committee (PFLC) once again bowed down to the clubs' demands by deferring the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League by one-and-a-half months citing the clubs' demands as well as Bangladesh team's preparation for next month's AFC U-23 Championship Qualifiers.

Six clubs including Sheikh Jamal DC, Mohammedian SC, Brothers Union demanded they start the league after the Eid-Ul-Fitr vacation while the National Teams Committee, too, sought some time to prepare the Bangladesh U-23 team for AFC campaign in Palestine. Now, the 10th edition of league, which was supposed to get underway from June 12, will start from July 28.

"If we start the league from June 12, it will be interrupted by the Eid break as well as the preparation of U-23 team, which is why the clubs wanted an uninterrupted league. Besides, the clubs have also injury problems with some of their players," PFLC chairman

Abdus Salam Murshey said, explaining the reasons behind the deferment.

"The residential camp of the U-23 team will start from July 7 and the clubs don't want to play the league without their U-23 players," Murshey added.

However, Federation Cup champions Abahani, Chittagong Abahani, Rahmatganj MFS and Saif Sporting Club protested the move as they felt they are fully prepared to take part in the pre-scheduled time.

The local game's governing body had, last December, during its disclosure of four-year calendar, declared that it would strictly enforce the calendar by holding every tournament on time.

Due to the frequent halt of the league and unplanned preparations of the national team, one season over the last nine years has already disappeared from the calendar, and the question rises as to whether the BFF can complete the season within the stipulated timeframe.

India and Maldives have already completed their seasons while Bangladesh just completed the Federation Cup, with the league and the Independence Cup remaining.

### Halim attempts third Guinness record

SPORTS REPORTER

Abdul Halim, a double record holder in the Guinness Book of World Records, made his third attempt to set a new record yesterday by cycling 13.74 kilometres with a football balanced on his head.

Halim attempted the greatest distance covered on a bicycle with a football balanced on the head as per prescribed by Guinness at the Sheikh Russell Roller Skating Complex.

With each lap covering 151 metres, Halim covered 91 laps at a time of one hour and 19 minutes before losing his control over the ball. Guinness set a target of five kilometres for Halim but the man from Magura ended the feat after having covered 8.74 kilometres more than the target.



Latvia's Jelena Ostapenko celebrates a point against Switzerland's Timea Bacsinszky during their French Open semifinal in Paris yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Simona, Jelena to vie for first title

AFP, Paris

Simona Halep reached her second French Open final on Thursday with a 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 win over Karolina Pliskova, taking her to within touching distance of a first Grand Slam title and the world number one spot.

Romanian third seed Halep, the runner-up to Maria Sharapova in 2014, will face unseeded Latvian 20-year-old Jelena Ostapenko, who downed Timea Bacsinszky 7-6 (7/4), 3-6, 6-3, in Saturday's final.

The 2017 champion will be first-time major winner while victory will also crown Halep as the new world number one, replacing Angelique Kerber.

"It's an amazing feeling right now," said Halep after her fifth win in six meetings against Pliskova, the world number three. "It was extremely tough today as Karolina is a very tough opponent."

"To be in the final again is great. I hope to win this time. But I am facing a young opponent, it will be a big challenge."

Pliskova ended the tie with 45 winners and a staggering 55 unforced errors. In contrast, Halep registered 14 in both columns. Halep settled faster than her opponent. The 25-year-old broke for 2-1 and never looked back.

Pliskova saved three set points but was powerless on the fourth as Halep wrapped up the opener after 45 minutes.

Halep only hit eight winners but Pliskova's 24 unforced errors proved key to the outcome. However, Pliskova rallied, breaking for a 4-2 lead in the second and levelling the contest at a set apiece.

It was an impressive recovery in stifling heat, but wasn't enough to encourage the large number of fans who had abandoned their seats to return.

Halep carved out a break for 3-1 in the decider, an inch-perfect pass proving fair reward for her stalwart defence. She was hauled back in the seventh game but Pliskova handed it back, allowing Halep to serve for the match.

Halep sealed the deal when Pliskova went long off a service return.

TEN 3

World Cup Qualifiers

Sweden v France

Live from 12:45am (Saturday)

TEN 1HD

World Cup Qualifiers

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AFP, Paris



Andy Murray and Rafael Nadal can edge closer to an intriguing French Open final rich in landmark moments on Friday after drastically contrasting campaigns in Paris.

World number one Murray was the first British man in the Roland Garros final since Bunny Austin in 1937 when he finished runner-up to Novak Djokovic last year.

Two more victories, however, starting with his semifinal against 2015 winner Stan Wawrinka, would make him the first Briton to lift the men's trophy since Fred Perry 82 years ago.

Nadal, who tackles Dominic Thiem, the conqueror of defending champion Djokovic, is bidding to become the first man to capture the same major on 10 occasions.

Murray arrived in France suffering from a fever, the latest woe in a season which has seen him endure an elbow injury, flu and shingles.

"I came in playing garbage," admitted the 30-year-old of a Masters clay-court swing which saw him exit in the third round in Monte Carlo and Madrid and lose his opener in Rome.

"If someone had offered me a semi-final spot before the tournament, I would have signed up for that."

His form in Paris has sent out mixed messages.

He needed four sets to get past Andrey Kuznetsov and Martin Klizan in the first two rounds.

Then, in what was expected to be a third-round ambush, he sailed past Juan Martin del Potro in straight sets and was similarly at ease against Karen Khachanov in the last 16.

However, in the quarterfinals, he dropped the first set against Kei Nishikori before his greater stamina proved decisive.

Nadal, meanwhile, is the hot favourite to collect an unprecedented 10th French Open and 15th career major.

### SEMIFINAL H2H



ANDY MURRAY (1) V STANISLAS WAWRINKA (3)

Head to Head (Overall) Played: 17

10 7

Head to Head on Clay Played: 4

1 3

### FRENCH OPEN 2017 STATS

18 Sets Played 15

3 Sets Lost 0

33 Return Games Won 26

24 Aces 30

174 Winners 166

13h Hours on court 10h

42m 45m

### SEMIFINAL H2H



RAFAEL NADAL (4) V DOMINIC THIEM (6)

Head to Head (Overall) Played: 6

4 2

Head to Head on Clay Played: 6

4 2

### FRENCH OPEN 2017 STATS

14 Sets Played 15

0 Sets Lost 0

33 Return Games Won 29

12 Aces 35

118 Winners 181

07h Hours on court 09h

52m 40m

about this. I only care that I am in the semifinals," said Nadal.

"My only goal is to be ready to play my best. The rest of these things, we can always find behind the stones."

Wawrinka, like Murray a three-time major winner, has made his trademark understated progress to a third successive Roland Garros semifinal.

The Swiss third seed, at 32, is the oldest man to get to the last four since Jimmy Connors back in 1985.

He trails Murray in head-to-head meetings 10-7 and lost to the Briton in four sets in the semifinals last year.

Wawrinka has lost 54 games – identical to the figure at the same stage in 2015 when he became champion.

"In the semifinal last year, Andy was really aggressive," said Wawrinka.

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