

# What to WATCH

GTV, MAASRANGA, STAR SPORTS 1  
Champions Trophy  
Final  
India v Pakistan  
Live from 3:30pm

SONY SIX & TEN 2  
Confederations Cup  
Portugal v Mexico  
Live from 9:00pm  
Cameroon v Chile  
Live from 12:00am (Monday)

## KRUSE THE POKER PLAYER?

Germany's international team are currently in Russia preparing for the start of the FIFA Confederations Cup, but half-way across the world, forward Max Kruse was involved in a tournament of a different kind. The 14-time Germany forward reached the final table of the \$1,500 Limit 2-7 Lowball Triple Draw event at the World Series of Poker in Las Vegas. Werder Bremen's Kruse started slowly on the first day before a strong second at the Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino saw him make it to the final table. Kruse's finished in fourth place after being knocked out by Brendan Taylor. Kruse also went home in the money, receiving \$28,740 for his final position at the tournament. It is the second time the 29-year-old has reached the final table at the event, finishing third in 2014. Kruse intends to become more involved in poker when he retires from football, telling PokerNews: "Maybe later I can play more, when I'm 35-36. We can talk to each other then and maybe I'll have another career as a poker player."

—AGENCIES



# 'They will be different in 2019'

SPORTS REPORTER

 Bangladesh ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza said upon his return from England yesterday that the experience his young guns gained from the ICC Champions Trophy would be immense for the 2019 World Cup.

The seniors did a decent job during the tournament, but younger players like Soumya Sarkar, Sabbir Rahman and Mustafizur Rahman failed to live up to expectations. Mashrafe however believed that it was not easy for any young player to perform on such a big stage.

"It's not easy for young players to perform on such a big stage, but I must say that they need to improve their performance. Senior players' performance is necessary, but young players must also step up. Unfortunately that did not happen," said Mashrafe while talking to reporters at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday.

"But these young players may play with big responsibility after two years when they will play the World Cup in England. It is now time for them to improve their performance and in two years they will be more experienced. So, I am confident that they will do much better in the 2019 World Cup," he continued.

The Tigers skipper also said that they have to give emphasis on attaining some skills and abilities like how to bowl on flat tracks to take their performance another step forward.

"It's a big thing that we played the semifinal and you should consider our group when you judge our performance in the tournament. It's not an easy task and that's why playing the semifinal was a big achievement for Bangladeshi cricket. Yes, we had the chance to make it much better but we failed to capitalise on that. It's



Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza said that the Champions Trophy would serve as a learning experience for younger players in the side like Taskin Ahmed (L) and Mustafizur Rahman.

frustrating that we failed to capitalise on the opportunity in the semifinal but from here our cricket must go forward," said Mashrafe.

"As a good team we should have played much better, something which we maybe couldn't do. But next time, we have to play with more maturity. We made some small mistakes, so now is the time to work on those aspects and at the same time do better in the upcoming series mentally, physically and obviously skill wise," he continued.

The most successful Bangladesh captain said

that the experience they gained from the ICC Champions Trophy would help the side to perform better in big events in the future. "It is now important to cash in on this experience and I am hopeful we can do it."

The cricketers will now enjoy a two-week break before returning to business to prepare themselves for the two-match Test series against Australia at home in August this year, but Mashrafe has a long break ahead as the next ODI assignment is in September when Bangladesh will tour South Africa.

# Ronaldo eyes more silverware

AFP, Kazan



Cristiano Ronaldo will put speculation over his club future firmly to one side as he leads European champions Portugal into their Confederations Cup opener against Mexico in Kazan on Sunday.

The 32-year-old Real Madrid superstar's build-up to the tournament in Russia has been overshadowed after he was this week accused by prosecutors in Spain of defrauding the authorities of 14.7 million euros (\$16.5m) in tax through offshore companies.

Now the Madrid sports media is awash with headlines suggesting Ronaldo wants out of the Spanish champions, despite only signing a new contract through to 2021 in November.

But for the next two weeks the main thing on the mind of the reigning Ballon d'Or holder is winning more silverware in the eight-nation World Cup warm-up event.

"He takes this tournament very seriously and is focused," said Ronaldo's teammate Andre Silva, the striker who has just joined AC Milan from Porto.

"It would be a beautiful thing to have on the CV. Of course it would be a dream to win it," Ronaldo said in January, since when he has powered Madrid to glory both in La Liga and in the Champions League.

It has been a dream last 12 months on the field for the former Manchester United man, who was a European champion at club and international level in 2016. More glory here in Russia will end any doubt

about him winning a fifth Ballon d'Or.

"We don't have words to describe what he represents for our country. He is an idol, even for us players," admitted veteran defender Bruno Alves, the 35-year-old who has just signed for Scottish club Rangers.

Portugal's triumph at Euro 2016 secured them a place in Russia, where they will be making their Confederations Cup debut against CONCACAF Gold Cup winners Mexico in Group A before facing the hosts and New Zealand.

Ronaldo has scored 12 goals in six international outings since coming off injured in the Euro final, but Mexico -- winners of the Confederations Cup in 1999 -- are confident they can stop him.

"It goes without saying that he's a great player. But we're a great side too, and I'm sure we can stop him," striker Raul Jimenez, a Portuguese league and cup double winner with Benfica, told FIFA.com.

It is not just Ronaldo they will need to stop though -- winger Bernardo Silva, who missed Euro 2016 through injury, is fresh from winning the French title with Monaco and sealing a big-money move to Manchester City.

"A year ago, I said Portugal were going to Euro 2016 to win it. I said we were not the favourites, but that we were candidates to win it. I have the same confidence today," Portugal coach Fernando Santos said earlier this week.

Mexico, who drew 1-1 at home to the United States in World Cup qualifying last weekend, will look to Real Sociedad's Carlos Vela and Bayer Leverkusen striker Javier Hernandez for inspiration.

## 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:

**BD can be proud of its achievements:**

**Sangakkara**

Sri Lanka



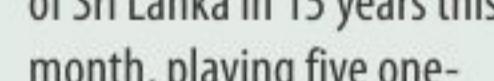
legend Kumar Sangakkara feels that Bangladesh's ICC Champions Trophy campaign was reminiscent of the Sri Lankan team which won the World Cup in 1996.

**Russia set for World Cup stress test in Confed Cup**

Russia face a stress test of its readiness to host the 2018 World Cup as the Confederations Cup kicks off amid concerns over hooliganism and security.

**Zimbabwe to tour Sri Lanka after 15 years**

Zimbabwe will embark on their first tour of Sri Lanka in 15 years this month, playing five one-day internationals and a Test match, Sri Lanka's cricket board said.



# Russia off to a winning start

AFP, Saint Petersburg



Hosts Russia got off to a winning start at the Confederations Cup on Saturday, Fedor Smolov's second-half goal sealing a 2-0 win over New Zealand in Saint Petersburg in the tournament opener.

Russia went ahead in the first half of the Group A encounter through what was credited as an own goal from New Zealand defender Michael Boxall, and Smolov -- top scorer in the Russian league last season -- wrapped up the points in the 69th minute.

It was the ideal start for the Russians in a game played at the new Krestovsky Stadium, where President Vladimir Putin and FIFA chief Gianni Infantino both gave speeches before kick-off.

Group A rivals Portugal, led by Cristiano Ronaldo, and Mexico meet in Kazan on Sunday, with Russia's next game against the Portuguese in Moscow on Wednesday.

This competition offers Russia a chance to showcase its readiness to host the 2018 World Cup amidst off-field concerns surrounding hooliganism and security.

But it is also an opportunity for coach Stanislav Cherchesov and his side to show what they can do on the pitch, although they will face far greater tests in their next two outings than what New Zealand provided here.

The Krestovsky Stadium was late in opening and came home well over budget, while serious problems have been experienced with the playing surface.

But the venue, which will also host the final on July 2, came through this opening test unscathed, even if there was a considerable number of empty seats.

Cherchesov's men were too strong for a limited New Zealand side and were unlucky not to take an early lead, Viktor Vasin heading against the post from an Alexander Samedov corner, with Michael McGlinchey



Russia forward Fedor Smolov celebrates after scoring the second goal against New Zealand during their 2017 Confederations Cup group A match at the Krestovsky Stadium in Saint-Petersburg yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

clearing off the line.

Dmitry Poloz then went down under a challenge from New Zealand goalkeeper Stefan Marinovic in the area, but the Colombian referee waved away the penalty appeals and there was no intervention from the video assistant.

Smolov had an effort ruled out for offside before the opening goal arrived just after the half-hour mark.

Alexander Yerokhin sparked the attack with an interception around 30 yards from goal, and his pass was helped on by Poloz into the path of Denis Glushakov.

The Spartak Moscow midfielder lifted the ball over Marinovic and saw his effort hit the post before Boxall, one of two defenders desperately scrambling back to try to clear, helped it over the line.

New Zealand's goalkeeper, who plays in the

German lower leagues, did well to keep the Oceania champions in the game in the second half, producing a fine double save from Poloz and Yerokhin and then turning away another effort from Rostov forward Poloz.

But Russia did increase their lead with just over 20 minutes left, Smolov finding Samedov on the right and then arriving unmarked in the box to convert his teammate's cross.

# Ordinary day for Siddikur

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman had an ordinary day at the Queen's Cup in Thailand yesterday as the 32-year-old golfer settled for a one-over-par (72) in the third round. The two-time Asian Tour winner, who had lifted himself up to ninth position with 68s in the opening two rounds, took his tally to five-under-par (208).

It was an erratic day for Bangladesh's best golfer, who carded five birdies against four bogeys and a double bogey at the Santiburi Samui Country Club on Saturday. Tied for 14th, Siddikur was six shots off the pace of leader Nicholas Fung of Malaysia, who carded 68 yesterday for an aggregate of 11-under-par (202).



PHOTO: BFF

The Bangladesh under-16 women's football team pose for a photograph at the football federation house yesterday afternoon, on the eve of their departure for Osaka, Japan where they will play three practice matches during a six-day conditioning camp. The team will take on J-Green Sakai Academy and two high school teams apart from taking part in theory classes during this tour as they build up for September's AFC U-16 Asian Championship finals in Thailand.

# Kurtz wants his job back!

SPORTS REPORTER



Oliver Kurtz, the recently released head coach of the Bangladesh hockey team, returned to Dhaka yesterday to get his job back. The 46-year-old German, who was released from his post last week on the grounds of breach of contract, sought a meeting with the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) president and Air Force chief Air Marshal Abu Esrar, it has been learnt.

Local coach Mahbub Harun has been handed the charge of the team, which is currently in a training camp for the upcoming Asia Cup.

However, BHF's general secretary Khaza Rahmatullah brushed aside any chance of the German getting back his

position. "I hope that the federation president will keep faith on the decision made by the working committee and the executive committee," Rahmatullah said. "The coach had wanted players of his choice in the camp, and threatened that he would leave his position if those players were not selected."

Terming the coach's activities as unprofessional, Rahmatullah added: "He left the country without formally informing anyone, dropping just an e-mail. He also remained absent during the camp. These are not traits of a professional coach."

Kurtz was initially appointed for three months last September to guide Bangladesh in the Hockey World League Round-2, and then his contract was extended till October this year.