

# What to WATCH

**STAR SPORTS 2**  
England v South Africa  
1st Test, Day-3  
Live from 4:00pm  
**STAR SPORTS SELECT 1**  
Wimbledon  
Third Round  
Live from 6:00pm

## BILBAO GO BALD FOR ALVAREZ

Athletic Bilbao's squad have united behind team-mate Yeray Alvarez as he battles testicular cancer, shaving their heads in solidarity. The 22-year-old is currently undergoing treatment after his cancer returned. Alvarez initially had a tumour removed in December 2016, but has been sidelined again by the disease. He played just two months after having the tumour removed, returning to action in February, and now Bilbao expect him to be out for at least three months. His team-mates at the club have backed the Spain Under-21 international, and posed for a squad photo with their heads shaved. Midfielder Benat is almost unrecognisable in the picture, having chopped off his long locks for his team-mate. Alvarez also shared a similar image of the squad's new look on his Instagram, accompanied by the caption "This family is a crazy thing!"

—AGENCIES



Victoria Azarenka of Belarus returns against Britain's Heather Watson during their women's singles third round match in Wimbledon yesterday. Azarenka won the match 3-6, 6-1, 6-4.

# Messi prison term reduced to fine

AFP, Barcelona



A Spanish court said Friday it had replaced with fines the prison sentences handed down for tax fraud to FC Barcelona's star striker Lionel Messi and his father.

Messi, the best paid footballer in the world according to the club, and his father had been convicted of hiding image rights royalties in offshore accounts and had been given jail terms of 21 and 15 months respectively.

Following Friday's ruling by Barcelona provincial court, Messi will instead pay 252,000 euros (\$287,000) and his father 180,000 euros in fines.

Under the original sentence, neither Messi nor his father would ever have had to actually serve time behind bars, because in Spain first offenders for non-violent crimes are spared jail time for sentence of less than two years.

The two were in July 2016 found guilty of using companies in Belize, Britain, Switzerland and Uruguay to avoid paying 4.1 million euros in taxes on income Messi earned from his image rights from 2007-09.

The income relates to Messi's endorse-

ment deals including with Danone, Adidas, Pepsi-Cola, Procter & Gamble and the Kuwait Food Company.

The player and his father made a voluntary payment of five million euros -- equal to the amount of the alleged unpaid taxes plus interest -- in August 2013 after being formally investigated. They were also fined around 3.5 million euro for that fraud.

The Barcelona court said it took these payments into account when deciding to exchange their prison sentence for new fines.

"This made them both deserving of having the prison sentence substituted by a fine," the court said in a ruling released on Friday.

The ruling caps off a golden week for Messi, who on Wednesday extended his contract with FC Barcelona until June 2021, just days after he married his childhood sweetheart in Argentina.

The club did not give financial details but club president Josep Maria Bartomeu said Messi was the best paid player in the world.

Prior to his contract extension, Messi was the third highest paid sportsman in the world with an income of \$80 million of which \$3 million was in salary and bonuses, according to the ranking published by Forbes magazine in June.

## ASIAN ATHLETICS Relay team's poor effort

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladeshi athletes continued to display their dismal performance in the 22nd Asian Athletics Championship as the relay team finished fourth among six teams in Heat-2 of 4x100m relay event in Bhubaneswar, India yesterday.

Bangladesh male team, comprised of Mezbah Ahmed, Abdur Rouf, Kazi Shah Emran and Masud Rana, took 42.64 seconds to finish their race.

## FIFA suspends Sudan

AFP, Lausanne

FIFA said Friday it had suspended Sudan with immediate effect due to government interference in the Sudan Football Association (SFA).

The decision bans the Sudanese national team from playing international matches and bars the country's clubs from all continental competitions.

Al-Hilal, Al Merreikh and Al-Hilal Obeid won't be able to participate in Africa's two top club competitions, the Champions League and the Confederation Cup.

## Nadal storms through Nishikori crashes out

AFP, London



Rafael Nadal slugged his way into the Wimbledon last 16 with a bruising dismissal of Karen Khachanov, while Kei Nishikori admitted he can't cut it on grass after the Japanese star crashed out on Friday.

Having won his 10th French Open crown without dropping a set last month, Nadal has made the switch from clay to grass with such ease that his title rivals might be getting a little worried.

His 6-1, 6-4, 7-6 (7/3) win against Russian 30th seed Khachanov equalled the Spaniard's personal record of 28 successive sets won at Grand Slams, a blistering streak dating back to this year's Australian Open final.

Nadal's second and most recent Wimbledon title came in 2010 and the 15-time major winner hasn't been past the fourth round for six years.

But world number two Nadal is in formidable form heading into only his second fourth round tie in his last five visits to Wimbledon.

His opponent is 16th seed Gilles Muller, who defeated Aljaz Bedene 7-6 (7/4), 7-5, 6-4 to reach the last 16 for the first time at the age of 34.

"I played fantastic for a set and a half but it got tougher after that. He started to hit stronger so I was happy to get through in three sets," Nadal said.

Former US Open finalist Nishikori had hoped to finally advance past the fourth round at Wimbledon after years of underachievement.

But the world number nine didn't even reach the last 16 as he was over-powered 6-4, 7-6 (7/3), 3-6, 6-3 by Spanish 18th seed Roberto Bautista Agut.

## Van Niekerk storms to victory

AFP, Lausanne

Nishikori's third round exit means Wimbledon remains the only Grand Slam he has failed to make the quarter-finals.

It was the 27-year-old's earliest departure from a major since his first round defeat against Benoit Paire at the 2015 US Open.

"It's not easy. I don't have good results on grass. I have got to work on it every year," Nishikori said.

Former US Open champion Marin Cilic advanced to face Bautista Agut with a 6-4, 7-6 (7/3), 6-4 win against American 26th seed Steve Johnson.

With former England captain David Beckham watching from the Royal Box, former world number one Victoria Azarenka defeated British wild card Heather Watson 3-6, 6-1, 6-4.

Competing in her first Grand Slam since taking a year off to have her first child -- son Leo -- in December, Azarenka was caught out as Watson made a fast start to her attempt to reach the last 16 for the first time.

But the two-time Australian Open champion stepped on the gas to keep alive her attempt to emulate Evonne Goolagong, who was the last Wimbledon mum to lift the Venus Rosewater Dish in 1980.

Only Goolagong, Margaret Court and Kim Clijsters have won a Grand Slam singles title after having a child.

"The whole match I was a little bit on the back foot. The second set I started to step in a little bit more," Azarenka said.

"I was very happy that I was able to find other ways to win."

Next up for Azarenka, who reached the Wimbledon semi-finals in 2011 and 2012, is world number two Simona Halep who eased through with a 6-4, 7-6 (9/7) win against China's Peng Shuai.

Van Niekerk said he was constantly inspired by his performances.

## Window into Wimbledon

WIMBLEDON DISMISSES COURT CONCERN

Wimbledon officials dismissed growing concerns over the state of the All England Club courts on Friday despite baselines on some surfaces already stripped of grass after just four days of the Grand Slam event. The tournament's Court 18, where John Isner and Nicolas Mahut famously played out their three-day match in 2010, has come in for the fiercest criticism.

"The court preparation has been to exactly the same meticulous standard as in previous years," said the All England Club. French 12th seed Kristina Mladenovic said there was a hole on Court 18 and that she and opponent Alison Riske had wanted to stop playing.

**DJOKOVIC SHRUGS OFF MCENROE COMMENTS**  
Novak Djokovic says he still respects John McEnroe despite the American comparing the Serb's slump to Tiger Woods' similar decline and hinting at troubles in the three-time Wimbledon champion's private life.

McEnroe caused a stir by claiming that Djokovic's recent difficulties on the court, which have seen him lose possession of all four Grand Slam titles, could have been caused by "off-court issues with the family".

But Djokovic, the winner of 12 Grand Slam titles, shrugged off McEnroe's comments.

"He's very well known for his kind of bold comments and not really caring too much about being politically correct but saying whatever is on his mind," said 30-year-old Djokovic. "That's all I can say. I really don't take anything personal. I always got along very well with John."

### WHO'S SAYING WHAT

"Everytime he rings, he says 'hi Spartan' and when I go out to play he tells me to 'be a Spartan'."

-- Greece's Maria Sakkari on the advice she receives from British coach Mark Petchey. Sakkari's father is, not surprisingly, from... Sparta.

### NUMBERS UP

2/1 -- break point conversion rate for Kei Nishikori in his defeat to Roberto Bautista Agut

50 -- number of Grand Slam match wins that South Africa's Kevin Anderson was hoping to achieve when he faced Belgian qualifier Rubens Bemelmans.

## Ikeme diagnosed with leukaemia

AFP, London



Nigerian international goalkeeper Carl Ikeme who plays for second tier English side Wolverhampton Wanderers has been diagnosed with acute leukaemia, the club announced.

The 31-year-old England-born goalkeeper -- capped 10 times -- returned "abnormal blood tests" during pre-season testing and further checks confirmed the diagnosis.

"It would be an understatement to say that everyone at Wolves has been shocked and saddened to hear the news of Carl's diagnosis," said Wolves managing director Laurie Dalrymple.

"That relates to both players and staff as Carl has been at the club for a very long time and remains such an integral personality within the group."

"At the same time, we all know what a fighter and a competitor Carl is, and I have no doubt that he will take all of those attributes into this battle."

Ikeme -- who has been with Wolves for his entire career, making more than 200 appearances since 2003 although he has spent spells out on loan -- has received plenty of support both in England and Nigeria.

Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) president Amaju Pinnick has backed the Wolves goalkeeper to beat the ailment.

"The Nigerian football fraternity and indeed the world, pray for @Carl\_Ikeme as he faces this tough but not impossible journey. We believe," Pinnick said via Twitter.

"We believe this strength will see @Carl\_Ikeme through. Stay strong @Carl\_Ikeme and have faith. You will beat this like a champion."

## Ronaldinho to play in Pakistan

AFP, Karachi

Eight of football's biggest stars, including Brazilian hero Ronaldinho, will play two exhibition matches in Pakistan this weekend in hopes of attracting more players from the cricket-mad country.

Recently retired Ronaldinho, famous for his stints with Spanish club Barcelona, is the lead attraction among the group dubbed "Ronaldinho and friends" set to play in Karachi on Saturday and in Lahore on Sunday.

Former Manchester United stalwart Ryan Giggs, Brazilian Roberto Carlos, former England goalkeeper David James, Dutch star George Boateng, former French players Robert Pires and Nicolas Anelka, and Portuguese player Luis Boa Morte complete the line-up.

Ronaldinho, 37, who won the World Player of the Year twice said he is on a goodwill mission aimed at inducing youngsters to play the game.

## BRADLEY LOWERY (2011-2017)



Bradley Lowery, who became one of the iconic images of last season's Premier League through his friendship with then Sunderland striker Jermain Defoe, has died aged six his family revealed on his Facebook page. The devoted Sunderland supporter suffered from a rare form of cancer -- neuroblastoma -- and had of late been receiving palliative care at his home.

PHOTO: COLLECTED