

STARSPORTS 1
Women's World Cup
Semifinal
England v South Africa
Live from 3:30pm

TEN 1HD & TEN 3
Sri Lanka v Zimbabwe
1st Test, Day 5
Live from 10:30am

PATO FINDS HIS MOJO IN CHINA

Alexandre Pato is rediscovering his love for football in China after a turbulent few years saw his career nosedive before he had even reached his prime. The 27-year-old forward hit a crater from long distance in Tianjin Quanjian's 3-0 weekend win over Shanghai Shenhu, for whom Carlos Tevez now has just two league goals during an injury-disrupted season. In contrast, Brazilian Pato has hit nine goals in 16 Chinese Super League (CSL) matches in his debut campaign – eight in his last 10 – and appears to be flourishing under Italian World Cup winner Fabio Cannavaro. "Believe in yourself," Pato tweeted following a win which moved Tianjin up to third, summing up his rejuvenation after an unsettled five years that included a disastrous loan spell at Chelsea.

—AFP



AFC U-23 C'SHIP

Tired booters play Jordan tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh U-23 national football team reached the Bethlehem city of Palestine yesterday to participate in the AFC U-23 Championship Qualifiers, which is scheduled from July 19 to 23.

After training for three days in Qatar and playing a practice match against their away counterparts, the booters embarked a long travel to Bethlehem by road after landing in Amman, the capital of Jordan. Following the taxing journey where they were held up for roughly four hours at the Israeli border, they rested at the team hotel, the Al Jacir Palace, before a scheduled afternoon practice session.

"The team took a long bus journey to Bethlehem passing through the Allenby checkpoint of Israel," said a BFF statement.

The team manager Satyajit Das Rana added: "Finally we are here in Palestine. Ibrahim joined the team in Amman. We had a three and half hours hassle in the Israel boarder which was unfortunate but after more than 12 hours journey we are here. The boys will train at 3:30pm Palestine time today to adjust themselves with the condition and prepare for match."

Bangladesh will start their campaign against Jordan tomorrow.

Hart set for West Ham

AFP, London

England international goalkeeper Joe Hart is set to have a medical with West Ham on Monday as he looks to finalise a loan move from Manchester City, according to media reports. The 30-year-old had been told by City boss Pep Guardiola that he could find another club, and he appears set for a season-long loan with the East Londoners after spending last season with Italian side Torino.

Hart, who has 71 England caps, is expected to have the option of making the move permanent, while City will pay some of his wages as part of the deal, according to the reports.

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Bayern land in China

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich landed in China on Monday for their pre-season tour with the German giants already tipped to win a sixth straight Bundesliga title – five weeks before the new season starts.

Bayern touched down in Shanghai to start their tour of China and Singapore with the new German league season to start on Friday August 18.

They play Arsenal Wednesday and AC Milan on Saturday, then Chelsea on July 25 and Inter Milan on July 27.

As part of their preparations, the German giants have already won their first title – beating Werder Bremen 2-0 on Saturday to win a pre-season tour tournament in Moenchengladbach.

The Bavarians have held an iron grip on the German league title for the last 32 seasons – and one of their rivals has already waved the white flag for 2017/18.

"I turned the television on Saturday and thought 'well, that's it then' – this Bayern team is not going to be stopped. They already have the (league) title in the bag," Martin Kind, president of newly-promoted Hannover 96, told German daily Bild.

Germany forward Thomas Mueller, who captained Bayern in the absence of injured Manuel Neuer, scored and set up Juan Bernat's goal in the final, but had a penalty saved.

New signings Corentin Tolisso and James Rodriguez, on loan from Real Madrid, both shone in making their debuts in Bayern's famous red shirt.

James particularly impressed on the right side of Bayern's attack.

"You could see that he was always looking to combine, he has a superb left foot and is always looking for where his team-mates are," said Mueller.

Bayern's head coach Carlo Ancelotti also heaped praise on James, who he worked with at Real in 2014/15. "In James, we have one more fantastic player."



Wimbledon men's and women's singles champions, Switzerland's Roger Federer (L) and Spain's Garbine Muguruza pose with their respective trophies at the Champions Dinner in central London on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Federer to play till 40

AFP, London

Buoyed by his record-setting eighth Wimbledon title, Roger Federer warned rivals Monday that he could play until he's 40, spearheading a late-life era of supremacy alongside Rafael Nadal.

Federer eased past injury-hit Marin Cilic to become the oldest Wimbledon men's champion of the modern era on Sunday, breaking the tie for seven All England Club titles he had shared with Pete Sampras since his last triumph in 2012.

It also gave him a 19th Grand Slam title in his 29th final at the majors.

With his 36th birthday just three weeks away Federer believes that he could still be playing the tournament when he's 40.

"You would think so, if health permitting and everything is okay," said Federer, who won his first Wimbledon title in 2003.

His confidence in his longevity is based on the radical transformation he's made to his playing schedule since his semifinal defeat to Milos Raonic at Wimbledon in 2016.

He immediately shut down his season, missing the Olympics and US Open, to rest a knee injury.

As consequence, his world ranking slumped to 17 in January, his lowest since 2000.

But the gamble paid off as a rejuvenated Federer won a fifth Australian Open on his return before adding back-to-back Masters at Indian Wells

and Miami.

He skipped the clay court season in the knowledge that a fully-fit Nadal was always likely to dominate the French Open.

Back on grass, Federer won a ninth Halle title before exiting to his stunning Wimbledon landmark.

Wimbledon, where he became the first man to win the trophy without dropping a set since Bjorn Borg in 1976, was only his seventh tournament of 2017.

By contrast, the unfortunate Cilic was playing his 15th, so it was hardly surprising that wear and tear contributed to his downfall, albeit in the shape of a humble but debilitating blister.

Federer's match-win record for 2017 now stands at 31-2.

His appearances on the tour will remain limited. He hinted he may sit out the Montreal Masters and play only in Cincinnati before an assault on a sixth US Open where he hasn't won since 2008.

As always, it's a decision he'll make with those closest to him just as he did when he took his six-month break in 2016.

"I did ask them the question sincerely, to everybody on my team, if they thought I could win majors again," Federer explained.

"Basically the answer was always the same from them: that they thought if you're 100% healthy and you're well-prepared, you're eager to play, then anything's possible.

"That's how it played out, so they were all right. I believed them. I had the same feeling. I think that's why the break last year was necessary to reassess and get back to 100% physically."

Federer is also within touching distance of returning to the world number one ranking by the end of the year.

Eleven of the last 14 Wimbledon champions have finished the season on top of the pile.

That list includes Nadal who, despite losing to Gilles Muller in a five-set last-16 epic at Wimbledon, remains one of the year's in-form players with 46 wins and just seven losses.

The 31-year-old Nadal made history in June with a 10th French Open.

As well as winning the first three majors of 2017, Nadal and Federer have also captured four of the five Masters played so far.

Where Federer triumphed in California and Miami, Nadal swept to victories in Monte Carlo and Madrid.

Highly-rated, but still unproven, Alexander Zverev prevented a Masters sweep by the two old-stagers by winning in Rome.

If Federer and Nadal remain fit, they will start as favourites for the US Open which gets underway in six weeks' time especially with question marks over the fitness of Andy Murray (hip) and Novak Djokovic (elbow).

Sponsor may pull-out

SPORTS REPORTER



Saif Global Sports Limited, the Bangladesh Premier League's sponsorship rights holder, has threatened to pull out from the upcoming professional football league after failing to rope in sponsors following the league's deferral in addition to reduction of venues.

"We have brought the rights of the Bangladesh Premier League to resell it but we can't resell the sponsorship because the sponsors have lost their interest following the deferral of the league and the reduction of venues," said Saif GSI managing director Tarafdar Mohammad Ruhul Amin yesterday. "We have asked to the BFF through a letter on Thursday to let us know what we should do because we can't proceed. We may be forced to scrap the contract if we can't manage any sponsors."

Tarafdar also blamed the authorities concerned of taking decisions bypassing Saif GSI whereas they were supposed to work together to fix dates and finalise the schedule.

After admitting to receiving the letter, BFF General Secretary Abu Nayem Sohag said that they will meet with Saif GSI and discuss the matter as soon as the Professional Football League Chairman Abdus Salam Mursheedy returns from a trip abroad.

Last year, Saif GSI signed a five-year deal with the BFF worth Tk20 crore. The agreement stated that the league will be held across seven different venues. However, only five venues – Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet, Mynenshingh and Gopalganj – were used last season and despite this, Saif GSI paid the first instalment, Tk 4 crore, in full to the game's local governing body.

This time around, the upcoming 10th Bangladesh Premier League will be held in only two venues – Dhaka and Chittagong, something Saif GSI has already protested against.

U-16 girls hold Hwacheon

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh U-16 women's football team played out a 2-2 draw against Hwacheon Information Industry High School Women's FC in the third practice match in South Korea yesterday.

Although the girls in red and green notched up an easy 9-0 win over Yulmyun Middle School Women's FC in the previous match, Hwacheon made them sweat. Thapu broke the deadlock in the 27th minute before Ching Ching Wu doubled the home team's lead in the 63rd.

Trailing 2-0 at this point, Bangladesh stepped up their attack and pulled a goal back in the 73rd minute through winger Sanjida Khatun. Defender Shamsunnahar then struck the equalizer in the 78th minute of the match, where Krishna Rani Sarker did not take part while striker Itrat Jahan Swapna played out the last 20 minutes.

"We conceded the lead against their fourth and final practice match, against Paju Football Academy on July 19. These practice matches were all part of Bangladesh's preparations for the AFC U-16 Women's Championship in September.

Anunching Mogini and Itrat Jahan Swapna squandered two separate one-on-one situations respectively while Monica Chankma rattled the crossbar in the dying moments of the game.

"The Korean girls are ahead of us physically and technically but the girls really fought neck-and-neck with the opponents, who have been together for the last four years," said Litu, adding that Krishna suffers from a knee injury and Swapna is also nursing a slight injury on her thigh.

Bangladesh will now play their fourth and final practice match against Paju Football Academy on July 19. These practice matches were all part of Bangladesh's preparations for the AFC U-16 Women's Championship in September.

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:

CWAB stands beside Mushrif

The Cricketers' Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB) lauded the response of the Bangladesh Premier League's (BPL) governing body.

AC Milan sign Bignia

AC Milan have signed Argentine midfielder Lucas Bignia on a three-year deal from Serie A rivals Lazio.

Bayern end bid to sign Sanchez

Bayern Munich boss Karl-Heinz Rummenigge has confirmed they have dropped their interest in signing Arsenal striker Alexis Sanchez for next season.

FARAAZ CHALLENGE CUP
Brac's three in a row

SPORTS REPORTER

Brac University notched up their third consecutive victory in the Walton Inter-University Football Tournament as they overhauled Prime Asia University 6-0 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Meanwhile, hosts Green University picked up their second win from as many matches by handing a massive 5-0 defeat on Ahsanullah University at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Mustafa Kamal Stadium, which also saw Far East University beat Daffodil University 1-0 while the match between the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh and Southern University ended in a goalless draw.

In the last match of the day, North South University defeated Bangladesh Textile University 4-1.

The champions of the tournament will receive Tk 2 lakh as well as a trophy, named the Faraz Challenge Cup.



(From L) Barcelona stars Luis Suarez, Lionel Messi and Neymar do warm up exercises during a training session at the Sports Center Joan Gamper in Sant Joan Despi yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP