

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS SELECT 2

England v West Indies
1st Test, Day-3
Live from 7:00pm
SONY SIX
Caribbean Premier League
Guyana v Trinbago
Live from 10:00pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

English Premiership
Swansea v Man United
Live from 5:30pm
Liverpool v Crystal Palace
Live from 8:00pm
Stoke City v Arsenal
Live from 10:30pm

TEN 2

La Liga
Celta Vigo v Real Sociedad
Live from 10:15pm
Girona v Atletico Madrid
Live from 12:15am (Sunday)
Sevilla v Espanyol
Live from 2:15am (Sunday)

TEN 1

Serie A
Juventus v Cagliari
Live from 10:00pm
Hellas Verona v Napoli
Live from 12:45am (Sunday)

SAFF U-15 CHAMPIONSHIP

Faisal leads Sri Lanka rout

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's bid to defend the title of the SAFF U-15 Championship got off to a flying start when they handed a 4-0 defeat to Sri Lanka in the opening game of the regional age-group tournament at the ANFA Complex ground in Nepal yesterday.

Forward Faisal Ahmed Fahim slotted a hat-trick while Nazmul Biswas struck the other in the one-sided encounter. The win all but ensured Bangladesh's semifinal berth from the three-team group. Bangladesh will play against

Bhutan in their final group match on Tuesday.

A draw in that match will be enough to see Bangladesh through while a stalemate or an outright win in favour of Bhutan against Sri Lanka in Sunday's encounter will seal Bangladesh a semifinal berth even before they face Bhutan.

The charges of Parvez Babu dominated from the outset and put huge pressure on the Sri Lankan defence which conceded the opening goal in the 29th minute.

Availing a through pass, Faisal entered the box from the left side and drove an angular left-footed shot that embraced the far net, giving Sri Lanka goalkeeper Sandeepa no chance to

react. Faisal doubled the lead four minutes later, with the attack being initiated from a clever free-kick. A fellow teammate pushed the ball between the legs of another teammate and Faisal stepped up to hammer it home.

The defending champions kept on pressing and Nazmul made it 3-0 in the 45th minute when a corner kick came to him outside the box, leaving Nazmul to tuck it in with a lofted attempt.

Bangladesh wrapped up victory by the 76th minute, thanks to a third goal from Faisal, who buried the ball home from the spot after Yeasin was brought down by a Sri Lankan defender inside the box.



Faisal Ahmed Fahim jumps for joy after completing his hat-trick in the opening match of the SAFF U-15 Championship against Sri Lanka at the ANFA Complex ground in Nepal yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

And then there was one

STAR SPORT DESK



The Spanish La Liga began last night, but the race for the title will only commence on Sunday. Although Atletico Madrid -- now three years removed from their La Liga triumph -- will play a match today, it is unlikely that they will be able to mount a challenge as they did in that fantastic 2013/14 campaign when they shocked the world by surmounting Real Madrid and Barcelona.

Los Blancos and Blaugrana have traditionally fought it out for their top domestic prize over the past decade and more, courtesy of the revenue-sharing deal that sees the two clubs cop the lion's share from broadcasting rights. Although the Liga de Futbol Profesional (LFP) -- the league's governing body -- have moved towards a more equitable model, their distribution system does not depend on where a team places in the table. Instead, Real and Barca are given almost double of what 'third-ranked' Atletico Madrid earn.

That, combined with their already burgeoning revenues from being two of football's biggest powerhouses, ensures that a fairytale run such as Atletico's is a once-in-a-decade occurrence, if that. It also means that they can buy players from any of their rivals, such as Barcelona did with Dani Alves, and more recently Ivan Rakitic.

However, what has always been considered a two-horse race may be trending more towards the Bundesliga model this year, as Real are expected -- and rightly so -- to run away with the title with Barcelona and Atletico occasionally bothering them.

The Catalan side have stepped down significantly since enjoying their golden years moving into the 2010s. Their midfield has especially taken a considerable step back from the days of Xavi and Andres Iniesta but the biggest blow

of all was Neymar leaving the Nou Camp to seek greener pastures in Paris.

Lionel Messi looked a lost figure over the two legs of the Spanish Super Cup. He often dribbled the ball up to Madrid's half and spun on a dime, but when he looked for a surging Iniesta run or sought a Xavi in a pocket of space, there was no one. When he made his own runs after a pass there was no return from a Neymar. Luis Suarez was his best hope, and the Uruguayan will be out for a month with injury, which means this could be the quickest that a La Liga campaign has been decided.

On the other hand, Real have been the most dominant force European football has seen since the turn of the century. Zinedine Zidane, considered a shortstop solution as manager when Rafa Benitez was unceremoniously sacked, has proven his credentials at the very top of world football, in its hottest seat, with seven titles in 19 months.

He has also developed talents like Casemiro, considered the catalyst behind Real's dominance, and brought out the best in Isco. Marco Asensio also found his groove under Zidane, going from an unknown quantity to being rated the best U-21 footballer in the world in the span of a season.

Last season most teams in La Liga found it hard to stop Madrid's 'B team', with Zidane regularly bringing out his second XI to play in the league while his first teamers, including the best player in the world two years running Cristiano Ronaldo, focused on and succeeded in retaining the Champions League title.

The season is long and full of terrors, but even with injuries Real Madrid have the depth to cope with any unfortunate circumstances. But when it comes to Barcelona, they will need Messi to have a superhuman, injury-free season, one that perhaps surpasses all the incredible ones he has had to date, if they are to have a sliver of a chance to stop Real.

LA LIGA TRANSFERS

NEYMAR

The only person on the list to have moved away from La Liga, but definitely the transfer that had the most impact on the league, Neymar's 222-million-euro departure from Barcelona to PSG has seen an already ailing side blend into the background. Harder than ever to stop Los Blancos.



THEO HERNANDEZ

Hernandez has swapped Madrid clubs, moving from Atletico to Real for 27 million euros, and will stay as a back-up for Marcelo at left-back as Real add even more depth to their already rich squad. The French-born 19-year-old is the first player since Santiago Solari in 2000 to make the switch between the city rivals.



PAULINHO

Eyebrows were raised when Barcelona announced a deal for former Paulinho. The eyebrows reached Dwayne Johnson heights when the fee was announced as 40 million euros. Although many have written off the Brazilian, Paulinho has shown that he still has what it takes by turning in some brilliant performances for Brazil.



DANI CEBALLOS

Real's other signing is one of La Liga's hottest prospects. Ceballos was named Player of the Tournament as Spain reached the European U21 Championship final and Zinedine Zidane saw off competition from Barcelona to sign the youngster. He is already adjusted to Spanish football, having made over 100 appearances for Real Betis.



NELSON SEMEDO

Signed for 29 million euros, the Portuguese right-back is expected to challenge Alexis Vidal at the Nou Camp as Barca's search for a Dani Alves replacement continues more than a year after the Brazilian's departure. The right-back showed plenty of promise at Benfica and will likely take over as the first choice right-back in short time.



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:

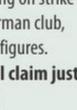
Dembele strike damaging Dortmund

Ousmane Dembele's bid to force Borussia Dortmund to sell him to Barcelona by going on strike damages the German club, according to key figures.



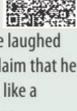
Costa's criminal claim just a joke to Conte

Antonio Conte refused to make peace with Diego Costa as he laughed off the striker's claim that he has been treated like a criminal by Chelsea.



'Bangladesh will be a challenge'

Former Australia cricketer Mike Hussey said that Bangladesh will be a tricky opponent on turning tracks when Australia play them on August.



SL seek redemption

Sri Lanka are looking to new captain Upul Tharanga for redemption in the ODI series starting Sunday against India after enduring a humiliating Test whitewash on home soil.



United aim to build on formidable start

Anthony Martial has warned Manchester United not to get carried away by their impressive start to the Premier League season as the leaders head to Swansea on Saturday.



Messi, Ronaldo unite for Barcelona

AFP, Madrid

Football icons and longtime rivals Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo joined Spanish sports stars around the world in expressing their grief after Thursday's terror attack in Barcelona left 13 people dead.

Barcelona's most famous street Las Ramblas was packed with tourists when a van drove into the crowds, leaving scenes of carnage.

"I want to send my condolences and all my support to the families and friends of the victims of the terrible attack in our beloved Barcelona, in addition to totally rejecting any act of violence," Messi wrote on Instagram.

"We are not going to give up, there are many more of us who want to live in a world in peace, without hate and where respect and tolerance are the basis of coexistence," he added.

Real Madrid captain Ronaldo took to Twitter to express his shock at the attack.

"Dismayed at the news coming from Barcelona. All the support and solidarity (to) the family and friends of the victims," he wrote.

Other athletes also took to Twitter in an outpouring of solidarity.

"All my support for the families affected and the city," Spanish tennis ace Rafael Nadal wrote, while basketball player Pau Gasol, declared himself "devastated by what happened on the Ramblas in Barcelona."

All football clubs in the Spanish first and second divisions will observe a minute's silence in memory of the victims when the new La Liga season starts on Friday.

"All clubs will pay homage to the victims after the tragedy in Barcelona," Spanish league officials said in a statement.

Three-time world motorcycling champion Marc Marquez, also a Catalonia native, accompanied his message with an image of a circle formed with the motto "I love Barcelona".

Spain's previous No 1 goalkeeper Iker Casillas wrote: "What sadness, all my solidarity with the victims and their families. A lot of strength Barcelona."

"No to terrorism. No to the dictatorship of fear. Stop terrorism," wrote Sergio Ramos.

Wounded Chelsea take on Spurs

REUTERS, Manchester



Tottenham Hotspur begin life at Wembley Stadium on Sunday when they take on Chelsea, hoping to quickly quash talk of discomfort at their temporary home by taking advantage of their rivals' current problems.

Spurs, who finished runners-up to Antonio Conte's champions, were unbeaten at White Hart Lane last season but managed just one win from five outings at Wembley, where they played in the Champions League group stage and lost in the FA Cup semi-final to Chelsea 4-2.

While Chelsea looked a tough opener when the fixtures were announced, there is little of the swagger of champions about Chelsea at the moment.

Conte's side lost their opening Premier League home game 3-2 to Burnley and will be without Gary Cahill and Cesc Fabregas, who are suspended after earning red cards against in that defeat.

With winger Eden Hazard and forward Pedro still sidelined with injury, Chelsea will hope that new arrival Alvaro Morata can rise to the occasion after impressing during his substitute appearance on Saturday.

CR7 leads FIFA award nominees

AFP, Paris

Real Madrid star Cristiano Ronaldo leads the nominees unveiled on Thursday for the Best FIFA Men's Player 2017 award.

The 32-year-old Portuguese is favourite to retain the title after success in both the Champions League and La Liga.

Among the 24 men's nominees are Ronaldo's Real Madrid teammates Dani Carvajal, Toni Kroos, Marcelo, Luka Modric, Keylor Navas and Sergio Ramos.

The list also includes Barcelona rivals Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez, as well as PSG's record signing Neymar.

Champions League finalists with Juventus, Italian goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon and teammate Paulo Dybala are also in the running, alongside former Juventus player Leonardo Bonucci, who has since signed for AC Milan.

FIXTURES

(1400 GMT unless stated):

Saturday: Bournemouth v Watford, Burnley v West Brom, Leicester v Brighton, Liverpool v Crystal Palace, Southampton v West Ham, Stoke v Arsenal (1630), Swansea v Manchester United (1130)
Sunday: Huddersfield v Newcastle (1230), Tottenham v Chelsea (1500)
Monday: Manchester City v Everton (1900)

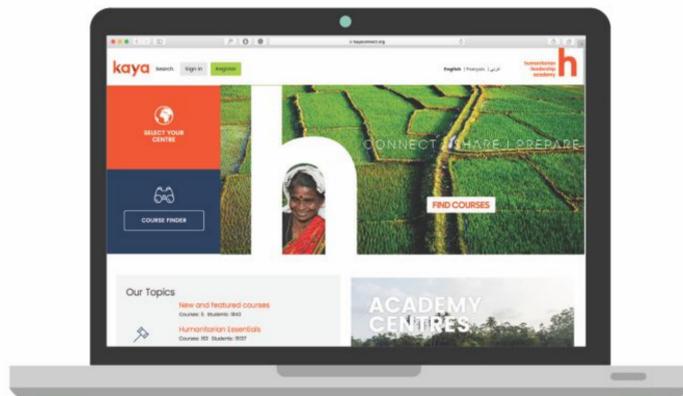
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