

What to WATCH

TEN 1
FIFA WC Qualifiers
Croatia v Greece
Live from 2:00am (Friday)

TEN 2
La Liga
Real Madrid v Las Palmas
Live from 10:30pm
FIFA WC Qualifiers
Northern Ireland v Switzerland
Live from 2:30am (Friday)

'DON'T CONFUSE FINE CHOCOLATE WITH NUTELLA'

While many greats have lined up to wave off Andrea Pirlo into retirement, perhaps the most honest, touching tribute has come from Gennaro Gattuso, the man who partnered him in midfield for many years, both at AC Milan and at international level. Under Carlo Ancelotti they formed a formidable duo at the Rossoneri, as well as toiling their way to a World Cup title under Marcello Lippi, with Gattuso acting as guard dog and Pirlo providing the more creative, esoteric element. Speaking to Radio 24, Gattuso paid homage to his veteran comrade, who bowed out at the grand old age of 38 on Monday: "Until I saw Pirlo play, I'd say we both played the same game. Then I saw him play and I asked myself if I should change my profession. Was I like Pirlo? Don't talk nonsense. You're confusing fine chocolate with Nutella. I played alongside him for 20 years, especially with the national team. Nobody is better placed to say that than me. In difficult moments I just gave it to him, I always felt assured when I was next to him. I understood what I had to do, and he was taking care of the rest. He helped me much more in my career than I did him." — AGENCIES



Seven BKSP coaches forged certificates?

SPORTS REPORTER

The Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday approved filing of cases against seven coaches of the Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishthan (BKSP) after an initial inquiry found those coaches to have forged educational certificates.

The inquiry, which was undertaken in 2016 and conducted by a deputy director of Dhaka-2 zone of the ACC, was recently completed.

The allegation against the seven coaches of seven different disciplines is that they had submitted forged graduate certificates.

One of the coaches in question, Syed Asbab Ali, who resigned as head coach of shooting discipline after the inquiry began, refuted the allegation levelled against him.

"I didn't submit any false certificates," Asbab said. "The BKSP authority gave me the job in 2005. When the post of head coach was vacant in 2011, I was asked to apply but I told them that I didn't have educational qualifications. Despite that, one of the directors asked me to apply."

"I was even served a show-cause notice and I replied with the documents I had. I didn't submit any graduation certificate because I don't have any," he added.

Archery coach Sajjad Hossain, the coun-

try's first international gold medallist in his discipline, expressed similar sentiments.

"I left the job when the question regarding certificates was raised," he said. "Later, I was called by the ACC for an interview and I talked to them. I had got the job with a genuine HSC certificate, but later they [BKSP] demanded graduation certificates in line with the ministry's instruction. So I resigned from the post of my own accord."

Gymnastics coach Kazi Akram, another of those who resigned after the inquiry started last year, suspected that a vested quarter inside the BKSP might be behind this. He said that the coaches were told that graduation certificates were needed only for promotion to head coach's position.

"My graduation certificate was genuine and I submitted it for the promotion. However, I resigned the job as senior coach in [June] 2016 when the allegation came against me," the coach said. "A BKSP official told me that I would get benefits if I left the job because I was supposed to retire in 2017 anyway."

"I went through three interviews to get the job. If I had submitted false certificates, they could have denied me the job at that time. I was questioned by an ACC official and I told him everything," Akram added.



Bangladesh forward Mahbubur Rahman Sufil manoeuvres the ball into the Sri Lankan box during their AFC U-19 Championship Qualifiers fixture in Dushanbe, Tajikistan yesterday. The forward scored twice as Bangladesh beat the islanders 4-0.

PHOTO: BFF

Shearer reveals dementia fears over heading



AFP, London

The Premier League's all-time leading goalscorer Alan Shearer fears he may be at risk of suffering from dementia due to heading footballs during his playing days, calling for more research on the issue.

The 47-year-old former England captain, who bagged 260 Premier League goals during an 18-year career, has revealed his fears over his long-term health.

"For every goal I scored with a header during a game, I must have practised it 1,000 times in training," the former Blackburn and Newcastle player told Britain's Daily Mirror newspaper. "That must put me at risk if there is a link."

Shearer, who also netted 30 goals in 63 appearances for England, had tests to examine how heading the ball has affected his brain.

"The tests were pretty nerve-racking," he said. "I have got a terrible memory. I don't know if that is

because I don't listen, but I have got a poor memory.

"When you play football as a professional you expect in later life you are going to have problems with your knees, your ankles, or your back, like I have.

"But never did I think playing football could be linked to having a brain disease. That is why the research has to be done."

The TV pundit believes more research needs to be carried out and greater support for ex-players with dementia should be on offer.

"Nowhere near enough research has been done," said Shearer. "The authorities have been very reluctant to find out any answers. They have swept it under the carpet, which is not good enough."

"Football must look after old players with dementia and put an end to this sense that once you are done playing, you can be put on the scrapheap."

"It's a tough game, it's a brilliant game, but we have to make sure it's not a killer game."

U-19s end on a high

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh ended their AFC U-19 Championship Qualifiers campaign on a high, outclassing Sri Lanka 4-0 in their final group match at the Hisor Central Stadium in Dushanbe, Tajikistan yesterday.

The win means Bangladesh finished third in Group B with seven points from four matches, with hosts Tajikistan clinching the direct spot for the finals by finishing top with 10 points following their victory over Uzbekistan in the day's second match.

Uzbekistan, with nine points, are likely to snatch one of the five best runners-up positions for the 16-team final round.

Bangladesh coach Mahbub Hossain Roxy brought three changes in his starting eleven by drafting in defender Riyadul Hasan, winger Rahim Uddin and forward Shaikat Mahmud in place of Atiquzzaman, Monir Hossain and Jafar Iqbal.

With a target of recording a big-margin victory to keep their slim hopes of qualifying alive, Bangladesh came at their opponents strongly and scored four goals in the first half, but they failed to add any further goals after the break.

Bishwanath Ghosh broke the deadlock in the 13th minute when the right-back drove a rebound home after Mahbubur Rahman Sufil's powerful shot came off the post while Riyadul doubled the margin in the 33rd minute after nodding in a well-judged cross from Rahmat Mia from the left flank.

Sufil, who had scored a late winner against Maldives, widened the margin with a left-footed shot in the 38th minute before scoring the fourth in the stoppage time of the first half with a powerful shot following a lengthy exchange of passes among his teammates in the midfield.

While it seemed that Bangladesh would add a few more goals to their tally in the second half, the boys in red and green failed to find the target

despite creating a lot of scoring chances.

"At the break, we tried to inspire the boys to score as many goals as they can, but the message did not work as the boys tried to perform individually and some seven scoring chances were wasted," Roxy said over phone last night.

"As the forwards were wasting the chances one after another, I sent two fresh players - Jafar Iqbal and Faisal Ahmed Fahim - but they too squandered chances," said the former national footballer.

Roxy, however, believes his team has achieved more than expected as they held strong Tajikistan to a draw and lost to Uzbekistan through an own goal while registering victories over Maldives and Sri Lanka.

"The boys played well in the SAFF Championship and the AFC Championship Qualifiers and they are the future of Bangladesh football. We need to take care of them and give them more space to play against strong teams instead of the South Asian opponents," said Roxy.

JFA U-14 WOMEN'S C'SHIP

Mymensingh, Thakurgaon in final

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Mymensingh set up a final clash against Thakurgaon in the JFA U-14 National Women's Football Championship after winning their respective semifinals at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Mymensingh eased to a 4-0 victory over Rajshahi in the second semifinal, thanks to a hat-trick from Rony Akter.

The first semifinal was a more even affair as Thakurgaon beat Tangail 3-1 on tie-breakers after regulation time ended 1-1.

Kalpna Akter had given Thakurgaon a third minute lead, only for Ila Mony to equalise in the 44th minute.

The final will be held at 3:00pm tomorrow at the same venue.

Tainted Modric key to hopes

Croatia face Greece in play-off first leg today

AFP, Athens



Croatia will hope Real Madrid star Luka Modric can carry the nation to the World Cup finals as they go into the first leg of a tricky play-off with Greece on Thursday.

The 32-year-old captain has faced a tumultuous year, with his shining reputation tarnished by a scandal in June over allegedly false testimony he gave at a major corruption trial. But anger from the fans appeared to be forgotten after his brilliant performance in the 2-0 victory against Ukraine in Kiev in October, which secured Croatia a play-off place.

The national team now hopes the midfielder will be at his best to help them beat the 2004 European champions and secure a place in the tournament in Russia.

Modric was popular in Croatia until he testified in the multi-million-euro corruption trial of former Dinamo Zagreb boss Zdravko Mamic, considered the most powerful man in Croatian football, is accused of abuse of power and corruption.

They allegedly deprived the former Croatian champions of more than 15 million euros, and the state of 1.5 million euros.

While testifying, Modric was visibly uncomfortable and confused. After prosecutors said his statement differed from the one he gave during investigations in 2015, Modric went from being a witness to a suspect. He is being probed over false testimony, which is punishable by up to five years in jail.

If Croatia qualifies it would be Modric's sixth tournament. He has played in two World Cups and three European championships, including France 2016.

N IRELAND RELISHING UNDERDOG STATUS
Northern Ireland forward Jamie Ward says the team will thrive as underdogs against Switzerland in the Russia 2018 play-offs as they seek to qualify for their first World Cup since 1986.

Northern Ireland, ranked 23rd by FIFA, take on the 11th-ranked Swiss in Belfast on Thursday, with the return leg on November 12 in Basel.

Vladimir Petkovic's team arrived in Belfast on Tuesday ahead of the first leg, and Ward said: "They've got to take their chances. Everyone is expecting them to win in the football world."

"They're obviously the seeded team, so the pressure's more on them than us. We're always great as the underdogs, so I think it was a bit of a bonus us not being seeded."

"If you're seeded, you get a little more pressure on yourself so we'll go into this game as underdogs again. Hopefully we can be worthy winners."

"If we play the way we can play, I don't see why we can't take a lead out there or at least a positive result," he added.



Croatia's midfield maestro Luka Modric (3rd from R) will be looking to win over his country's fans -- who turned on him after allegations that he bore false witness at a corruption trial -- by securing qualification to the 2018 World Cup. PHOTO: COLLECTED

The bedrock of City's success

REUTERS, London



With Manchester City scoring at will and playing some bewitching attacking football, it has been easy to overlook the contribution made by their three most defensive outfield players.

Fernandinho, John Stones and Nicolas Otamendi are never likely to hog the headlines in a team that has plundered 52 goals in all competitions and features flamboyant playmakers Kevin De Bruyne and David Silva behind deadly finishers such as Sergio Aguero and Gabriel Jesus.

Yet statistics suggest they hold a valid claim to being the three most important players in Pep Guardiola's squad, following an unbeaten start to the season that has left City eight points clear at the top of the Premier League.

Their record of conceding just 11 goals in 17 matches in all competitions this season is impressive enough on its own, yet the argument gathers pace when you consider their contributions to City's domination of possession and attacks.

Argentine centre back Otamendi, for example, has had more touches in the Premier League and Champions League combined than any other City player this season, with England centre back Stones second and Brazil midfielder Fernandinho fourth behind De Bruyne. It is a similar story with passing.

In fact, Stones's rate of 96.6 percent is bettered in European leagues only by the 96.7 percent completed so far by Paris St Germain's Thiago Silva.

These stats suggest that all three are the glue binding this most exhilarating of attacking forces together and the bedrock of the goals being bagged by



FERNANDINHO



NICOLAS OTAMENDI



JOHN STONES

Otamendi is at the top of the charts for passes attempted, ahead of Fernandinho in second place and Stones in third.

While for pass completion, Stones leads the way ahead of Otamendi in second place and Fernandinho in fourth -- all three of them currently registering above 90 percent.

Aguero and the like.

Not that they haven't been scoring themselves. Stones and Otamendi have netted three times apiece this season while Fernandinho has scored twice.

That contribution could end up being the key to any success City go on to enjoy this season.

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:

Federer paired with Zverev in ATP Finals draw

Six-time champion Roger Federer will face rising star Alexander Zverev at the ATP Finals in London after they were placed in the same group on Wednesday while Rafael Nadal headlines the other section.



Messi keen to avoid Spain in World Cup

Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi says the worst possible draw for his Argentina side at next year's World Cup would be Spain in the first round.



Mustafizur set to return to practice ahead of Dhaka phase

There is speculation that Bangladesh's ace paceman Mustafizur Rahman may not be available even for the Dhaka phase of the BPL.



England, Germany to wear poppies in friendly

England and Germany's players will wear black armbands bearing commemorative poppy motifs in Friday's friendly at Wembley, the Football Association announced on Wednesday.



Bayern must bring in new blood to stay on top: Lewandowski

Bayern Munich must make sure they bring in top players every season to stay competitive and ease the pressure on an ageing squad, Poland captain Robert Lewandowski said on Tuesday.

