

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS 2
ICC U-19 World Cup
Semifinal
Afghanistan v Australia
Live from 3:30am (Monday)
STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
New Zealand v Pakistan
3rd T20
Live from 12:00pm

SONY ESPN
Australia v England
5th ODI
Live from 9:20am
FA Cup
Chelsea v Newcastle
Live from 7:30pm
Cardiff v Man City
Live from 10:00pm

SONY SIX & TEN 2
Australian Open
Final
Cilic v Federer
Live from 2:30pm
TEN 1
Serie A
AC Milan v Lazio
Live from 11:00pm

Roma v Sampdoria
Live from 1:45am (Monday)
TEN 2
La Liga
Atletico Madrid v Las Palmas
Live from 9:15pm
Barcelona v Alaves
Live from 1:45am (Monday)

'I'M STILL HANDSOME'

Cristiano Ronaldo says he is "still handsome" after his face was left covered in blood from being kicked in the face against Deportivo La Coruna last week and declared he wants to remain at Real Madrid despite reports that he is unhappy in Spain. The image-conscious Portuguese was seen checking his blood-drenched face on the mobile phone of a club doctor as he left the pitch injured last Sunday following the clash and he required three stitches above the eye. "Players often hit me in games because they have to stop me but this time I wasn't so lucky," Ronaldo said in an interview with Chinese social network Dongqiudi. "Now I feel better, I am still happy, I am still handsome and my vision is as clear as before so there's no problem."
— REUTERS



DAY'S EVENT
Independence Cup
Quarterfinal
Rahmatganj v Farashganj
Time: 4:00pm
Venue: BNS, Dhaka

Siddikur ambles to home title

SPORTS REPORTER

CITY BANK AMERICAN EXPRESS DHAKA OPEN 2018
Siddikur Rahman ambled to a four-stroke victory in the inaugural City Bank American Express Dhaka Open -- his third international title on home soil in three years -- at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday.

The two-time Asian Tour winner faced very little challenge from the field which featured golfers from the BPGA, PGTI and ADT -- as he romped to a 14-under-par (274) total after a two-under in the final round yesterday.

Having started the day at 10-under, 33-year-old Siddikur exchanged four birdies for two bogeys to scoop the winners' paycheck in this tri-sanctioned event with a total prizemoney of 60,000 dollars.

Siddikur had won the Chittagong Open, the last PGTI event held in Bangladesh last year, after having skipped the BTI Open, another PGTI event, in Dhaka two months earlier. He had won the previous edition of the BTI Open in 2016. Siddikur had also won the only other ADT event held in Bangladesh seven years ago.

The ace golfer from Kurmitola felt that his experience of playing around the world and knowing this golf course like the back of his hand attributed to this comfortable victory. "Home advantage and experience -- I would say these two things counted. Since I play a lot of tournaments abroad, I have more experience. And the Indians don't play here that much. So the home advantage definitely counted as well," Siddikur told reporters after receiving the winner's paycheck of 10,500 dollars.

The win will be a huge confidence boost for Siddikur, who never lost the lead after the second round. He did not drop a single bogey on the first nine the entire week and was hardly challenged on the final day.

"Honestly I was very comfortable on the back nine. I made two birdies on the first nine and that helped a lot. Overall it has been a great week and I'm feeling healthy which is very important," said Siddikur.

While Siddikur was happy with winning his first international title since April, 2017,

he admitted he will miss playing in an Asian Tour event at home. The Bangladesh Open was held annually for the last three years, but this time there will be no Asian Tour event in Bangladesh. Siddikur's best effort in that particular event was a second-place finish in the last edition.

"I really miss that event," Siddikur said. "If I won that tournament today, I would have gone in the winner's category and got full exemption. I would have earned World Ranking points as well."

Although Siddikur did not need to put in much of an effort on the final day, it was Sweden's Malcolm Kokocinski who excelled with a 67 to grab the second position at 10-under-par (278), with India's Shankar Das settling for the third stroke behind.

Overall the performance of the local golfers was inspiring as some 30 golfer from among 59 made the cut, with Akbar Hossain grabbing fourth position. The youngster, who is tipped to be a future star for the country, ended with an aggregate of seven-under-par (281).

Jamal Hossain Mollah is the other Bangladeshi to finish inside the top ten with an aggregate of four-under-par (284).



Siddikur Rahman poses with the winner's trophy of the City Bank American Express Dhaka Open at the KGC yesterday.

Double delight for Siddikur family

SPORTS REPORTER

It was historic day for the Siddikur family as Siddikur Rahman's wife Samaun Anjum Aurooni became the first Bangladeshi female golfer to turn professional.

Aurooni, a long-time follower of her famous golfer husband, was an accomplished golfer herself having taken up the game in 2010, the same year Siddikur won his first Asian Tour title.

Aurooni was delighted in becoming the first female professional golfer from Bangladesh.

"This is a great day and an honour for me. I hope this inspires other female amateurs to follow the same path. Hopefully we will have women's professional tournaments in Bangladesh some day," Aurooni said.

After making a mark in the local amateur scene, she decided to use her knowledge of the game, going for coaching certificates.

"I earned a D level certification in 2016 and a C level certification the following year. That, in effect, made my amateur status null and void. So I was waiting for this day," Aurooni added.

Siddikur was as very happy to have learnt the news.

"This is very good news. I'm the top player in Bangladesh and my wife is the first professional from the country. So it sounds really great," he said.



THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM: After two unsuccessful attempts, Caroline Wozniacki finally won a Grand Slam final yesterday, defeating Simona Halep to win the Australian Open title and also reach the World No. 1 spot in the women's rankings.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'Dreamt of this moment for years'

Wozniacki says after beating Halep in final

AFP, Melbourne

An emotional Caroline Wozniacki finally lifted her first Grand Slam title at the 43rd attempt as she beat Simona Halep in three energy-sapping sets to win the Australian Open on Saturday.

The Dane, who will become the new world number one, burst into tears as she secured the championship 7-6 (7/2), 3-6, 6-4 against the battling Romanian top seed on her first match point of a gruelling, epic encounter.

"I've dreamt of this moment for so many years," said second seeded Wozniacki after becoming the first player from Denmark to win a Grand Slam.

"My voice is shaking. I never cry, but this is a very emotional moment.

"I want to congratulate Simona, I know it's a tough day," she added after receiving the trophy from Billie Jean King.

"I'm sorry that I had to win today but I'm sure we'll have many matches in the future and it was an incredible match and an incredible fight and again, I'm sorry."

Wozniacki, 27, had to overcome bouts of nerves throughout the long match. She wobbled when serving for the first set at 5-3 and had to come through a tiebreak.

"I want to thank my fiance," she said, looking up to American basketball player David Lee in her box. "I was a nervous wreck this morning, I wanted to win so bad, but you calmed me down."

Both players needed medical attention on court before the Dane prevailed in 2hr 49min on Rod Laver Arena.

For Wozniacki, victory meant shedding at last the unwanted moniker of best player never to win a major, having reached the US Open final in 2009 and 2014, and first becoming number one in 2010.

For Halep, who surrendered her number one status to Wozniacki in defeat, the wait goes on.

"It's not easy to talk now but first of all I want to congratulate Caroline," said Halep, who was also appearing in her third Grand Slam final and first in Australia.

"She played amazing. It's been a great tournament for me. Of course I'm sad I couldn't win today but Caroline was better than me."

"But I will fight and hopefully I will face another challenge like I did today. I'm sad that I couldn't make it the third time, but maybe the fourth time will be with luck."

Wozniacki started the stronger, breaking Halep's opening service game with the early evening temperature still above 30 Celsius (86 Fahrenheit) before racing into a 3-0 lead.

She had not won a set in either of her previous two Grand Slam final appearances and tightened visibly serving for this one, and the set headed for a tiebreak.

The Dane went 4-1 up before a second mini-break and two solid serves gave her the tiebreak 7-2.

Wozniacki was growing in confidence and Halep needed to save four break points at 1-1 in the second set in a brutal game that lasted 11 minutes.

Soon after Halep signalled to her coach Darren Cahill that she wasn't feeling well and there were worrying scenes as she had her blood pressure taken and an ice towel applied in the next changeover.

20th Slam beckons Federer

AFP, Melbourne

Only Marin Cilic stands between Roger Federer and a 20th Grand Slam title as an injury-ravaged Australian Open staggers to its Sunday final at Melbourne Park.

The 36-year-old Swiss marvel continues to defy the years and attrition rate to reach his 30th Grand Slam Australian crown and a shot at his sixth Australian title while his long-time rivals have fallen by the wayside.

World No.1 Rafael Nadal, six-time champion Novak Djokovic and former winner Stan Wawrinka succumbed to injuries, while five-time finalist Andy Murray didn't even get to the starting line.

Yet Federer is again still standing. Cilic overcame him on the way to

winning the 2014 US Open final, but it is his only win in nine encounters and the Swiss defending champion has glided to the brink of another title without dropping a set.

Federer is supremely confident he has it all in place to join Djokovic and Australian Roy Emerson with the most Australian titles.

"It's not about having to improve anything in particular," he said ahead of the final.

"I'm pleased that my game has been good from the very beginning of the tournament so far."

"I mean, I've won all my matches without dropping a set. Things must be all right if I haven't dropped a set and in the final."

Federer was waved through to the final with an all-too-brief semifinal

that lasted just 62 minutes when South Korean youngster Chung Hyeon retired with severe foot blisters.

Five of Federer's six matches have finished on or under two hours and he has been on court for a total of 10hr 50min, some 6hr 13mins less than Cilic.

"I would have preferred a normal end (to the Chung match), yes. But I must admit, as well, you do take the faster matches whenever you can," said Federer.

But he knows he faces a tough seasoned opponent in Cilic to win the big one.

"I definitely think him winning the US Open has given him great belief he can do it. If the big moments come about, that he can attain this level," Federer said.

"I like his attitude. He's very professional. He's always very much the same regardless of whether he wins or loses."

Sk Jamal in semis

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club booked their place in the semifinals of the Walton Independence Cup with a comfortable 2-0 victory over Brothers Union at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

After a barren and uninspiring first half, the Dhanmondi giants turned up their game and reaped the rewards with goals from Nurul Absar and Zahed Parvez Chowdhury.

The three-time professional league champions will play the third semifinal on February 5 against the winners of the quarterfinal between Abahani and Arambagh.

Having made the quarterfinals with two tame draws, Sheikh Jamal lacked inspiration as the first half meandered along towards the close with very little action worthy of note. But they started the second half brightly and applied pressure on the opposition from the get-go.

Absar put the Dhanmondi giants ahead ten minutes after restart with a side-volley on a rebound from the top of the six-yard box after his initial effort was blocked by Brothers goalkeeper Sujon Chowdhury.

Brothers forward Ariful Islam tried from 20 yards out, but his effort missed the crossbar. Sujon then made a double save from Zahed and substitute midfielder Rakib Sarker in the 79th minute to keep his side in the game, but Zahed's strike four minutes later took the stuffing out of them. The veteran forward stabbed home from the edge of the six-yard box following a low cross from defender Anisur Alam from the left flank.

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