

STAR SPORT SELECT 1
New Zealand v England
Fourth ODI
Live from 4:30am

TEN 1
Champions League last 16
Man City v Basel
Live from 1:45am (Thursday)

TEN 2
Champions League last 16
Tottenham v Juventus
Live from 1:45am (Thursday)

DAY'S EVENT

AFC Cup Qualifiers
Abahani v New Radiant
Time: 4:15pm
Venue: BNS

FIorentina, Cagliari retire No. 13

Fiorentina and Cagliari will retire the number 13 shirt worn by defender Davide Astori after the Italy international died of a sudden illness over the weekend at the age of 31, the Italian clubs said on Tuesday. Astori, who made 289 Serie A appearances in 10 seasons and played 14 times for the national team, joined Fiorentina on loan in 2015. The club signed him outright one year later and he went on to become their captain. He previously spent six seasons at Cagliari and one on loan at AS Roma. "In honour of Davide Astori's memory, @CagliariCalcio and #ACFFiorentina have decided to retire the No. 13 shirt. #DA13," Fiorentina said on Twitter. Cagliari posted a similar message. Astori was found dead in his hotel room on Sunday in Udine where Fiorentina had been due to play Udinese. Serie A postponed all Sunday's matches. Italian public prosecutors said on Monday they are to open proceedings to determine whether Astori's death could be considered as manslaughter. --REUTERS



Abahani aim to break Maldivian jinx

SPORTS REPORTER



Following another successful domestic season, six-time Bangladesh Premier League champions Abahani are all set to embark on another international campaign when the Sky Blues square off against Maldives Premier League champions New Radiant SC in the AFC Cup Qualifiers at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today. The match will get underway at 4:15pm.

Abahani have never gone past the qualifying stages of any AFC-sanctioned tournament before but the Dhanmondi-based outfit are expecting something better this time around. Their group, Group E, consists of two Indian clubs a Maldivian team as it did in the previous edition, where Abahani finished last in their group.

Although Abahani have secured a few points against Indian clubs, they have failed to do so against any side from Maldives, who are now superior to Bangladesh at both the national and club level.

Last season Abahani suffered 2-0 defeats at the hands of Maziya S&RC in two encounters while Saif SC succumbed to two defeats in the AFC Cup play-off Qualifiers against TC Sports Club, who also beat Abahani 1-0 in the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup in 2017.

Going by recent results, New Radiant -- boosted by nine current national players, three Spanish exports and an Afghan -- will definitely be a force to be reckoned with despite Abahani having the home advantage, although the Sky Blues want to buck that trend.

"We were used to beating Maldivian sides at any level. I even scored twice against New Radiant SC although I was



Abahani will be hoping to curb the recent losing streak of Bangladeshi clubs against Maldivian oppositions in their meeting with Maldives Premier League champions New Radiant SC in an AFC Cup qualifier today. PHOTO: STAR

not scorer. We have suffered in every match in the recent past. It will be good for us if we can come out of this losing streak against Maldives," said Abahani coach Saiful Bari Titu.

"We have worked on the opponents' playstyle, formation and combination alongside preparing ourselves according to our strength. I think our boys are ready and motivated to do something better against New Radiant and I can assure you that the boys will be fighting for the result," said the former national footballer.

Abahani will also be hoping to translate their domestic performances onto the international scene in the presence of successful striking duo Emeka

Darlington and Sunday Chizoba. And the inclusion of Japanese midfielder Seiya Kojima and Nigerian defender Nigerian Alison Udoka will also certainly boost them in their pursuit.

Oscar Bruzon, Titu's counterpart, has good options himself, with strikers Ali Faisar and the famed Ali Ashfaq in rich vein of form. However, the Spaniard was concerned by the condition of the Bangabandhu National Stadium as New Radiant's possession game relies on a smooth surface.

"We have watched some videos of Abahani and analysed two things -- one was the pitch and the second was their playstyle. We are well-informed about their long, second ball and physical game

but we don't know about the condition of pitch at the moment," said Oscar. "We are a team who like to play possession football and control the game, but that depends on the condition of the pitch, which we will see this afternoon during our scheduled practice."

"Hard-work, confidence, unity, fighting spirit and understanding of what they can play are components behind our domestic successes and what saw us remain unbeaten for 17 consecutive games in last season. But tomorrow's game is the toughest one because this tournament is tougher than our domestic competition," said Oscar, who guided New Radiant to a treble last season.

Gayle storm makes landfall on UAE

Afghanistan fall to second defeat

STAR SPORT DESK



Afghanistan's hopes of qualifying for the ICC 2019 World Cup suffered a body blow in a second consecutive Group B loss, this time by two runs to Zimbabwe in Bulawayo, while Chris Gayle got West Indies' campaign off to a rocking start with a 91-ball 123 that set up a 60-run win over UAE in the Group A match in Harare.

Afghanistan were cruising in chase of Zimbabwe's 196 all out, with Rahmat Shah and Mohammad Nabi rescuing them from 58 for three to 156, but Rahmat's dismissal in the 34th over opened the floodgates. They lost six wickets for 21 runs as Blessing Muzarabani and Sikandar Raza got among the wickets. The last-wicket pairing of Shapoor and Dawlat Zadran got them to within four runs of the target at the beginning of the last over, but Shapoor was dismissed by Brian Vitori to seal a dramatic win.

Afghanistan lost their first game to Scotland, and now need wins over Hong Kong and Nepal if they are to have a chance of progressing to the Super Six stage.

In Harare, self-proclaimed Universe Boss Chris Gayle hit seven fours and 11 sixes. Shimron Hetmyer took a cue from his compatriot and blazed his way to a 128-ball 127 with the help of 14 fours and four sixes as the West Indies posted 357 for four.

UAE's Rameez Shahzad hit an admirable 137-ball 112 in reply, but they could only reach 297 for six in the face of the mammoth total.

SCORES IN BRIEF

HONG KONG: 91 all out in 38.2 overs (Nizakat 26; Evans 3-19, Sole 4-15)

SCOTLAND: 92 for 6 in 23.3 overs (Coetzer 41 not out; Ehsan 3-29)

Result: Scotland won by 4 wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Tom Sole.

WEST INDIES: 357 for 4 in 50 overs (Gayle 123, Hetmyer 127; Haider 1-62)

UAE: 297 for 6 in 50 overs (Rameez 112 not out, Shaiman 64; Holder 5-53)

Result: West Indies won by 60 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Shimron Hetmyer.

ZIMBABWE: 196 all out (Taylor 89, Raza 60; Mujeeb 3-49, Rashid 3-38)

AFGHANISTAN: 194 all out in 49.3 overs (Rahmat 69, Nabi 51; Muzarabani 4-47, Raza 3-40)

Result: Zimbabwe won by 2 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Sikandar Raza.

PNG: 235 all out in 50 overs (Ura 151; Rankin 2-41, McBrine 3-38)

IRELAND: 237 for 6 in 49.1 overs (Porterfield 111, Joyce 53; Vala 2-39)

Result: Ireland won by 4 wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Tony Ura.



The top women sports persons of the country were honoured by ActionAid Bangladesh and Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) at an event at the university auditorium yesterday. PHOTO: COLLECTED

ActionAid, IUB honour women in sports

SPORTS REPORTER

With International Women's Day to be observed tomorrow, ActionAid Bangladesh and Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) yesterday jointly organised an event at the university auditorium to honour the top women sports persons of the country.

Eleven women achievers from different sporting disciplines were introduced and honoured before the audience, which featured members of parliament, members of civil society, academics, students, sporting personalities and journalists.

Shirin Akter -- fastest woman of the country; Ashrin Mridha -- women's basketball team captain; Rumana Ahmed -- women's cricket team captain; Wasfia Nazreen -- famed mountain climber; Maria Manda -- captain of women's under-15 football team; Samaun Anjum Auroni -- first female professional golfer of the country; Tasmina

Akter -- 12-year-old horse jockey from Naogaon; Shahnaz Parvin Maleka -- women's kabaddi team captain; Zakia Sultana Tumpa -- national gold medalist shooter; Sonia Akter -- national gold medalist swimmer; Mabiya Akter Simanta -- Saff gold medalist weightlifter -- all these eleven women were introduced as small descriptions of their struggles and achievements were highlighted. They were also handed flower bouquets and certificates by the dignitaries.

The event was hosted by Actionaid's country director Farah Kabir, with the university's vice-chancellor Dr Omar Rahman, MPs Keya Rahman and Arif Khan Joy, actor Afzal Hossain, women's rights activist Khushi Kabir, sports journalist Mostafa Mamun and others giving speeches encouraging women's participation in sports.

BTV, Nagorik TV, Maasranga to show WC

SPORTS REPORTER

The 2018 FIFA World Cup will be broadcast in Bangladesh by Bangladesh Television (BTV), Maasranga TV and Nagorik Television, it was announced in a ceremony at a city hotel recently.

With every fan in Bangladesh eagerly anticipating football's showpiece event, the local broadcasters have taken it upon themselves to bring the game of the people to the people.

Jadoo Media Ltd, K-Sports, Zircon and Mediacom Limited have purchased the media rights to broadcast the 2018 World Cup in these channels.

Juve clash to be Poch's defining moment

AFP, London



Mauricio Pochettino faces a defining moment as the Tottenham boss aims to join the managerial elite by mastering a famous Champions League triumph against Juventus on Wednesday.

Long regarded as one of the sport's brightest young managers, Pochettino can use this season's Champions League to reach the rarefied air inhabited by the likes of Pep Guardiola, Jose Mourinho and Diego Simeone.

Like his former Argentina teammate Simeone, Pochettino is coveted by some of Europe's biggest clubs.

But while Simeone has defied the odds to lead Atletico Madrid to La Liga and Europa League titles, as well as reaching two Champions League finals, Pochettino is still waiting for his breakthrough moment.

Despite earning plaudits throughout his nine-year managerial career with Espanyol, Southampton and now Tottenham, the 46-year-old has failed to lead any of his clubs to a major trophy. Clearly, silverware isn't the only measure of a manager and no one would doubt Pochettino overachieved at Espanyol and Southampton given the lack of financial backing available.

Although Tottenham have greater resources than either of Pochettino's other teams, they largely steer clear of the huge fees paid by their top four rivals in the Premier League.

Since arriving in north London 2014, Pochettino has deftly navigated those con-

straints to turn Tottenham into a genuine top four force after years of underachievement.

But the crucial black mark on Pochettino's CV remains his failure to push Tottenham across the finish line when they have been on the brink of landing a trophy.

Having reached the League Cup final in 2015, Pochettino's side slumped to a disappointing 2-0 defeat against Chelsea, while in 2016 a late-season swoon allowed Leicester to coast to the Premier League title.

A vital loss at West Ham cost Tottenham dearly last season when they were unable to keep pace with eventual champions Chelsea, who also knocked out their rivals in the FA Cup semi-finals.

Tottenham's struggles in away games against their main rivals have been a constant problem throughout Pochettino's reign, dooming them to also-ran status in this season's title chase.

But Tottenham's Champions League exploits over the last few months suggest any inferiority complex is being eroded at last. That certainly seemed the case when they crushed European champions Real Madrid 3-1 at Wembley with a vibrant display that showcased the best of Pochettino's high-tempo philosophy.

That impressive result came after a draw in Madrid and recovering from two goals down to draw 2-2 in the last 16 first leg against Juventus was another step in the right direction.

With Tottenham hoping to reach the Champions League quarterfinals for the first time since 2011, eliminating the Italian champions would be another step towards the top table for Pochettino.

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:

Mourinho blast triggered United fightback

Jose Mourinho revealed his explosive-filled half-time rant inspired Manchester United's dramatic 3-2 win over Crystal Palace. Mourinho's side fought back from two goals down at Selhurst Park to snatch the points thanks to Nemanja Matic's blistering long-range strike in stoppage-time.

'Figo was a traitor, Neymar left for money'

Former Barcelona president Joan Gaspart says Figo's move to Real Madrid was treacherous while Neymar's switch to PSG only showed that the Brazilian was for money.

Guardiola accepts FA charge over Catalonia ribbon

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has admitted a charge from the FA for wearing a political symbol, the English governing body announced.

Wenger tells coaches he won't quit

AGENCIES, London



Arsene Wenger believes that he is the best man to take Arsenal forward and has told his coaching staff that the club will have to sack him to bring an end to his 22-year tenure, British Daily The Times reported on Tuesday.

Wenger finds himself under substantial pressure with Arsenal having slumped to sixth in the Premier League and looking increasingly likely to miss

out on the Champions League again.

However, the Frenchman reportedly told his associates that he would resist any attempts to make him step down amicably and that he intends to see out the rest of the two-year deal he signed at the Emirates last summer.

The 68-year-old has lost the support of key directors at the club, but is hoping that the strength of his relationship with Stan Kroenke, the majority shareholder, will spare him the sack.

Although Kroenke has backed Wenger throughout, he handed over some of his

duties to son Josh, who is reportedly monitoring the situation at the Emirates.

Another influential figure is Ivan Gazidis, who holds the second-most shares and has been the torchbearer for change, not necessarily managerial, at Arsenal.

And fans, a plurality of whom had begun to turn on their legendary manager some years ago, now number in the majority, with 88 per cent of members of the Arsenal Supporters' Trust voting to end Wenger's contract at the end of the season.



With 100 days to go until the start of the 2018 World Cup, FIFA released a short video featuring stars such as Ronaldo, Carlos Puyol, Miroslav Klose and Maradona among a host of others, but the highlight came at the end when FIFA president Gianni Infantino (L) was seen having a kickabout with Russian president Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin yesterday.