



What to WATCH

SONY SIX
South Africa v Australia
Second Test, Day One
Live from 2:00pm

TEN 1
Serie A
Roma v Torino
Live from 1:45am (Saturday)

Stage set for final phase

SPORTS REPORTER



The stage is set for budding athletes to further display their talents after making it so far as the final phase of the inaugural Bangladesh Youth Games get underway tomorrow.

The Games, involving U-17 athletes from 21 disciplines, has already concluded its district and divisional rounds and the final phase will be held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. A colourful opening ceremony is expected to be followed by chief guest Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina declaring the Games open in the evening.

The first phase of the Games started across all 64 districts simultaneously on December 18 with the participation of around 27,000 athletes at the district level. From there, about 6,500 qualified for the divisional phase.

Now 2,660 athletes will be vying for medals in 159 events across 21 disciplines while also hoping to draw attention and be chosen for junior youth teams. 340 gold, as many silver medals and 430 bronze medals will be distributed among the winners as there are a total of six team disciplines.

"During the meeting of the Bangladesh Games a few years back, we felt the need for the Youth Games and our dream to introduce the Youth Games has materialised through the first edition, which is the first of its kind [in the

country]. Despite having some loopholes at district and divisional levels due to a lack of knowledge, we have completed the first and second phases successful and are now ready to complete the final phase in Dhaka with the help of respective national sports federations," said Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) secretary general Syed Shahed Reza at a press conference at the BOA auditorium yesterday.

"If we can hold the Youth Games regularly every four years, I believe some talented players will be added to the pipeline of the national teams," said Reza.

The Youth Games were introduced at a time when the appeal for all sports bar cricket have been lost in the country. The primary objective of the Games was more to create a buzz among athletes than counting how many medals were collected.

The athletes will represent eight divisions in football, hockey, kabaddi, basketball, volleyball, handball, athletics, swimming, table tennis, weightlifting, wrestling, wushu, shooting, archery, badminton, boxing, chess, judo, karate, taekwondo and squash.

The football event already began before the opening ceremony while some others are expected to get underway today. The Games will conclude on March 16.

BOA vice-president Sheikh Basir Ahmed said they would evaluate the district and divisional phases of the Games and use the knowledge to hold it more smoothly in the future.



Thousands of well-wishers gathered outside the Basilica di Santa Croce in Florence, where the funeral of Fiorentina captain Davide Astori was held yesterday.

Arrivederci, Astori

REUTERS, Florence

Thousands of fans and dozens of players turned out on Thursday to say goodbye to Fiorentina captain and Italy international Davide Astori, who died suddenly at the age of 31 on Sunday.

Astori's death left Italian football in a state of shock. All Serie A games were postponed on Sunday, and both Fiorentina and Astori's previous club Cagliari announced they would retire the defender's number 13 shirt.

The funeral was held in Florence's Basilica of the Holy Cross, but the crowd was much too large to fit inside the church, so the audio of the service was broadcast to the fans, many of them crying, who filled the square outside.

Astori's body arrived in a white Maserati

hearse as fans waved purple and white Fiorentina flags and held up their team scarves. Purple and white carnations were draped over his casket.

"There's only one captain," fans sang as he was carried out of the church after the service.

Astori, in his 10th Serie A season, was found dead in his hotel room on Sunday. It is believed that he died of cardiac arrest, according to the Udine prosecutor's office.

Born in Lombardy, Astori became the captain of the Florence team last year.

"He has always been and will always be a Florentine," Cardinal Giuseppe Betori, the city's archbishop, said during his homily.

Florence's city government declared Thursday a day of mourning. Schools and businesses have been asked to observe one minute's silence at 1300 local time.

Siddikur makes poor start in India

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's premier golfer Siddikur Rahman got off to a rocky start in the Hero Indian Open 2018, which is co-sanctioned by the Asian Tour and European Tour, as he carded a two-over-par (74) yesterday.

The 33-year-old exchanged three birdies against five bogeys in the opening round in Gurgaon and he now finds himself 9 strokes behind leader Emiliano Grillo in the US \$1,750,000 event.

The Argentine hit eight birdies and just a single bogey to take the clubhouse lead with a seven-under-par (64) and tie the course record at the Gary Player layout of the DLF Golf and Country Club.

CLEAR MEN U-17 FOOTBALL C'ship from March 25

SPORTS REPORTER

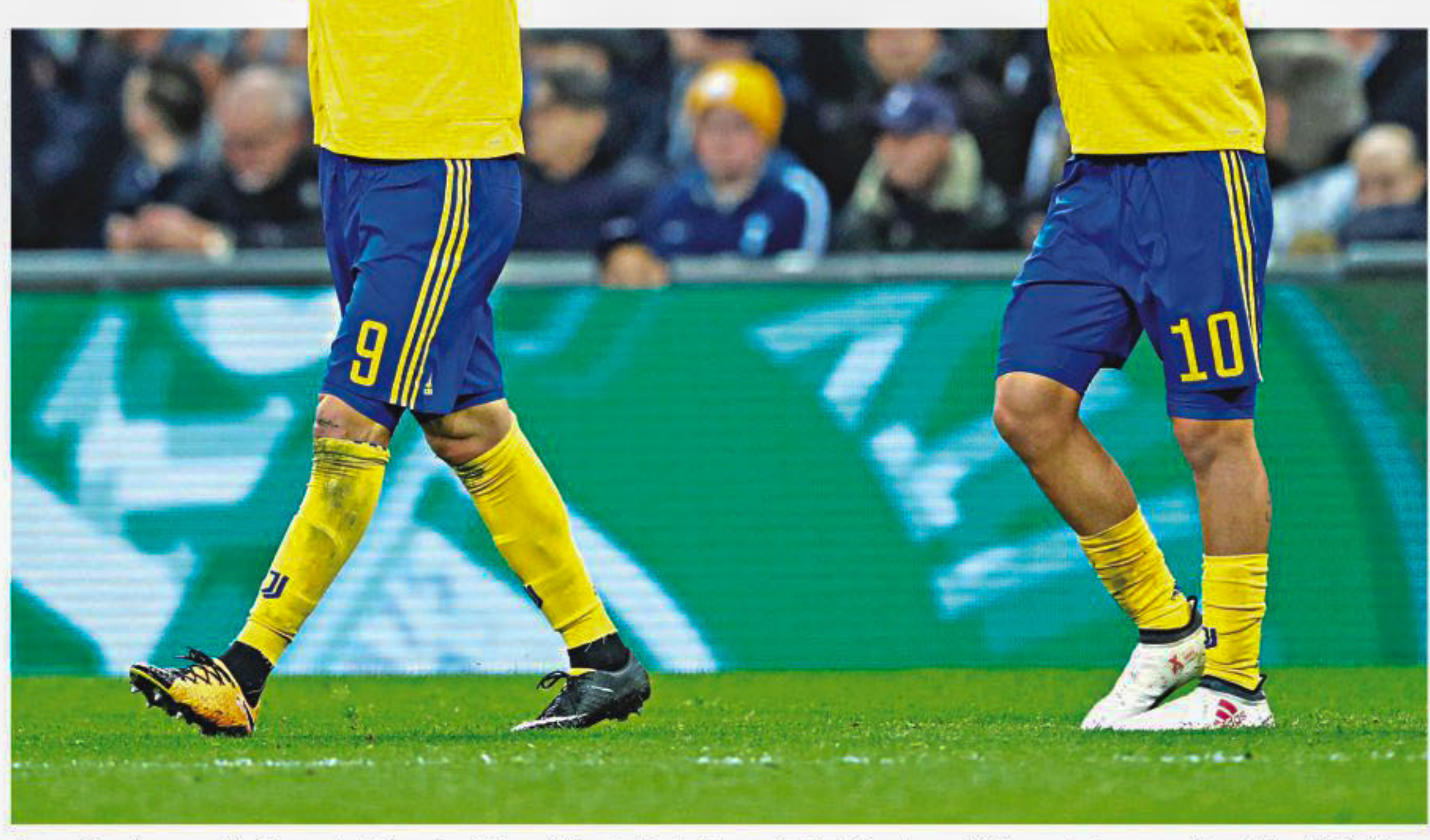


Unilever Bangladesh Ltd is going to hold the Clear Men Bangladesh U-17 Football Championship from March 25 at eight divisional headquarters.

The tournament, supported by the BFF, will feature footballers from the best schools, who will compete at the divisional level before 16 schools qualify for the final round in Dhaka.

After the final round, 26 footballers will be given a boot camp arranged by the game's governing body as the organisers of the championship want to unearth hidden gems.

Appreciating the idea, BFF president Kazi Salahuddin said: "There is similarity of ideas between Unilever Bangladesh and BFF and we will provide them with all sorts of assistance. We believe this initiative will produce something good."



Juventus forwards Gonzalo Higuain (L) and Paulo Dybala ended Tottenham Hotspur's hopes of making it to the quarterfinals in a brutal three-minute spell. Higuain headed home first to level the match at 1-1, before releasing Dybala for the winner with a perfect through ball.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Spurs KO-ed in 3 minutes

AGENCIES, London



There is simply no substitute for experience in the highest tier of European football as Juventus proved by coming back from the abyss to beat Tottenham Hotspur 2-1 and reach the Champions League quarterfinals on Wednesday.

The Italians were outplayed by Spurs in a 2-2 first-leg draw in Turin and were on the ropes at Wembley but goals by Argentine strike duo Gonzalo Higuain and Paulo Dybala in three minutes sent them through 4-3 on aggregate.

Son Heung-min's first-half goal had Spurs in control and dreaming of a famous scalp but they paid for two defensive lapses as their 17-match unbeaten run came to an end.

Higuain, who scored twice in the

first leg, levelled in the 64th minute before Dybala burst clear to curl the winner past Hugo Lloris.

Tottenham will rue missed chances and Harry Kane's last-minute header against the post.

"In less than three minutes we conceded two goals - two big mistakes - and that is why we are out," manager Mauricio Pochettino told reporters. "In both legs we deserved more."

"We played fantastic football until that first goal and we dominated. Of course we are very disappointed but it is part of growing. We will keep going."

Juve were made to suffer at Wembley, but never raised the white flag despite a dugout deprived of any outright attackers.

"In the first leg I was criticised for my substitutions and today you are congratulating me for them? It's the players who win matches. Me, I make

mistakes and I sometimes try to repair them," Massimiliano Allegri said.

Afterwards, Giorgio Chiellini's assertion that Tottenham "always miss something to arrive at the end" would have hit a nerve for Spurs fans. Chiellini's verdict was harsh, and perhaps not entirely accurate, but coming from one of the greats of European football they cannot simply be ignored.

"It's the history of Tottenham. They always created many chances to score so much, but at the end they miss always something at the end. We believe in the history. We saw it yesterday between Paris and Real, the history is important, with experience it is important, and tonight we used our skill and arrived at the win."

He added: "We knew Tottenham have fantastic players, and are an amazing side, but we know they concede many chances every game."

ASIAN GAMES QUALIFIERS Bangladesh face Thailand today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh national hockey team's quest to defend the title of the Asian Games Qualifiers will get underway tonight when they take on Thailand in a Pool A encounter in Muscat.

Bangladesh are the second-ranked side in the eight-team tournament after hosts Oman, who are tipped as the main threat for Bangladesh. The affair against Thailand is not expected to pose any significant threat to the men in red and green, who handed tonight's opponents a big defeat in the 2014 Asian Games Qualifiers in Dhaka.

Bangladesh had nearly two months of preparation at home and ahead of their departure captain Rasel Mahmud Jimmy said his side would use the Pool A matches to fine tune their combinations and execute the game plan.

Mahbub Harun's charges also had a good practice match against Kazakhstan yesterday, handing an easy 5-0 defeat to the central Asian side with captain Jimmy, Khorshed and Rabby scoring one goal each while Hasan Jubiar Niloy struck twice in the one-sided affair.

"Today, we had a good practice session and all players are ready to play tomorrow's match. In Sha Allah, we will win the match against Thailand," said coach Mahbub Harun.



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