

What to WATCH

CHANNEL 9 & STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
Indian Premier League
 Delhi v Punjab
 Live from 8:30pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT 2
English Premier League
 Everton v Newcastle
 Live from 1:00am (Tuesday)

TEN 1
Serie A
 Genoa v Verona
 Live from 12:45am (Tuesday)
TEN 2
La Liga
 Athletic Bilbao v Levante
 Live from 1:00am (Tuesday)

DAY'S EVENT

Bangabandhu International Volleyball
 Uzbekistan v Turkmenistan
 Time: 3:00pm

Bangladesh v Maldives
 Time: 5:00pm
 Venue: Mirpur Indoor Stadium, Dhaka

GO TO REAL, RIVALDO TELLS NEYMAR

Injured Brazil and Paris Saint-Germain star Neymar should leave France and resume his career in Spain if he wants to become the world's top player, Brazil great Rivaldo said Sunday. Rivaldo, who starred in the 1998 and 2002 World Cups, said that while a return to Barcelona might be too complicated, Neymar should consider rivals Real Madrid. "He could be the best in the world, but I think that if he stays at PSG he won't be," Rivaldo said, pointing out that a French club hasn't featured in a Champions League final since Monaco lost to Porto in 2004. "He needs to leave PSG. The football he needs to become best in the world has to be in Spain," Rivaldo said. "Barcelona, in his situation, is difficult. I think that judging by what I hear, by the information I get from people, that he has the chance to play at Real Madrid." Spanish media have suggested he is eyeing a move to Real Madrid. However, according to the French League, there is no release clause in his contract with PSG. — AFP



Barcelona players turned their post-game celebrations into a family affair as the squad brought out their children to celebrate a fourth Copa del Rey title in as many years. The Blaugrana can now turn their focus to La Liga, where they are aiming for an unprecedented undefeated season.

Barca make it four in a row

AFP, Madrid



Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez inspired Barcelona to what will surely be the first part of a domestic double this season as they thrashed Sevilla 5-0 on Saturday to win the Copa del Rey.

Messi had scored once and Suarez twice before even the half-time whistle had blown at the Wanda Metropolitano, with the sublime Andres Iniesta and Philippe Coutinho later compounding Sevilla's humiliation.

Barca's display earns them their 30th triumph in this competition and fourth in a row, having reached the final in each of the last five years. But, despite hugs and high-fives at the end, the real celebrations will be put on ice until Sunday, when victory over Deportivo La Coruna will confirm Ernesto Valverde's side as La Liga champions too.

But even a clean sweep of the domestic trophies, perhaps polished by La Liga's first ever unbeaten season, will not eradicate the disappointment from Barca's Champions League exit to Roma.

"Winning the Cup does not hide the disappointment in Rome," Suarez said after the match. "But at the beginning of the season any-

one would have signed for a double."

Messi was superb again on Saturday but this was not a one-man show. Suarez scored his 31st and 32nd goals of the season while Iniesta deliv-

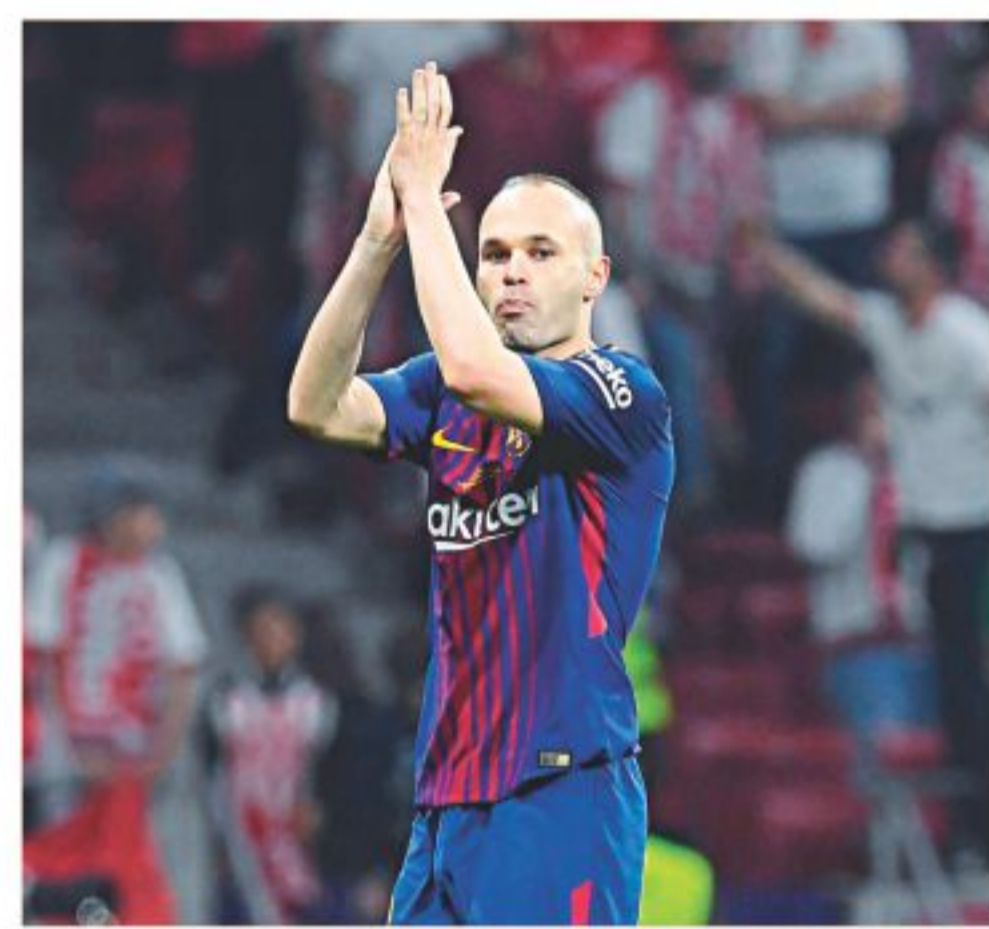


PHOTO: AFP

Andres Iniesta rolled back the years in what could be one of his last games for Barcelona, controlling the midfield and scoring a goal before walking off to thunderous applause.

ered one of those effortless displays, in which at times he was virtually unplayable. By the time Coutinho converted his penalty in the 69th minute, Barca were simply sharing the goals around.

For Sevilla, defeat was always the most likely scenario but this was a whitewash. Sitting eighth in La Liga, even Europa League qualification now looks an outside bet.

INIESTA HINTS AT FAREWELL

After the game, Iniesta hinted he may have played his last final for Barcelona, saying he would reveal his future plans "this week" as the 33-year-old weighs up an offer from China that would take him away from his boyhood club.

Iniesta looked tearful as he departed to a standing ovation in the second half, from some Sevilla fans too, before hoisting the Copa del Rey trophy aloft.

"This week I will make my decision public but we will always have days like today," Iniesta said.

Asked if this was his last final with Barcelona, Iniesta added: "It's a possibility. In a few days I'll make it public and nothing more. Today is a very special and emotional day."

"I will say what the decision is this week," said Iniesta. "I think it's a little clear but we will see."

Rafa first to 11

AFP, Monte Carlo



Rafael Nadal romped to a record-extending 11th Monte Carlo Masters title by brushing aside an outclassed Kei Nishikori in Sunday's final to retain the world number one ranking.

The 31-year-old saw off Nishikori 6-3, 6-2 to become the first man to win a single tournament 11 times in the Open era with his 76th ATP Tour title. Nadal's 31st Masters title is also an outright record, pulling him out of a tie with Novak Djokovic.

"We've had some tough moments over these last five months," said Nadal, who was playing at his first ATP event since retiring from an Australian Open quarterfinal against Marin Cilic with a hip injury in January. "I'll enjoy the moment and then tomorrow we'll start to think about the next tournament. But now I'll enjoy winning a Masters 1000 tournament which doesn't happen every day."

The 16-time Grand Slam champion's era of utter dominance on clay looks unlikely to end any time soon after Nadal took his run of consecutive sets won on the surface to 36.

Nadal had to win the tournament to remain at the top of the world rankings ahead of Roger Federer, who is skipping the clay-court season, and he did just that without losing more than five games in a match.

The Spaniard will next set his sights on an 11th Barcelona Open victory next week, and it is hard to see anyone preventing him from extending his record number of 10 French Open titles at Roland Garros at the end of the clay-court season.

He was pushed by Japan's Nishikori early on and fell a break down, but roared back against an opponent who already appeared beaten midway through the first set.

It was still an excellent week for Nishikori, who only returned from a four-month absence with a wrist injury in January.

Chelsea set United final

AFP, London

Chelsea booked an FA Cup final with Manchester United as Olivier Giroud tormented Southampton again with a sublime strike in Sunday's 2-0 win at Wembley.

Giroud has made a habit of scoring against Southampton and the France forward was their nemesis in a one-sided semifinal as the former Arsenal star produced a tremendous piece of skill to break the deadlock early in the second half.

His fourth goal for Chelsea was followed by a late header from substitute Morata, setting up the heavy-weight final against United at Wembley on May 19.

That will be Chelsea's last chance to win major silverware at the end of a troubled season. But Conte doesn't believe Chelsea, beaten by Arsenal 2-1 in last year's final despite going into the match as Premier League champions, will be regarded as favourites to lift the famous trophy.



World No. 1 Rafael Nadal takes a bite of his delicious 11th Monte Carlo Masters trophy after pouncing Kei Nishikori 6-3, 6-2 in the final yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Two editions within five months

SPORTS REPORTER

The JFA U-14 Women's National Football Championship, financed by Japan Football Association and co-sponsored by Walton, gets underway tomorrow at five different venues, just five months after the completion of the previous edition of the same event.

Some 35 districts, split into six venues, are taking part in the preliminary knockout round before six venue champions and the two best runners-up teams qualify for the final round to be held in Dhaka from April 30.

Even though 40 teams initially sent entries five teams, including Satkhira and Comilla, who played in the final round last edition, withdrew their entries citing financial constraints.

"We can't hold the preliminary round in league format because of financial constraints, but we will hold the final round in league format by dividing the participating teams into two groups," Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) women's committee chairman Mahfuza Akter Kiron said at a press conference yesterday.

"As participation money, we will provide Tk 15,000 to each participating team

which is not enough for those teams who withdrew despite sending entries. The District Football Associations are not ready to spend extra money for women's teams. We also can't increase the participation money," Kiron said, adding that participating teams in the final round would receive Tk 20,000 each, Tk 5000 less than what they received last edition.

JFA are providing US\$30,000 [Tk 24 lakh] for the championship while Walton will provide Tk 7 lakh as co-sponsors. A total of 54 matches will be played in the championship.

With JFA's support, the BFF is regularly holding this event, but the game's governing body is seemingly reluctant to hold the U-18 Women's Championship, the national women's league and club women's league.

"We are going to hold the JFA Cup for the second time within six months because this time we are maintaining the deadline we promised to JFA and we are working on the women's football league and you will get a concrete decision after Ramadan," Kiron added.

Preliminary round matches at the Gopalganj, Nilphamari, Rajshahi, Laxmipur and Khulna venues will start tomorrow while the matches of Gazipur venue will begin on April 25.



Organisers and sponsors speak at a press conference at the BFF House yesterday ahead of the JFA U-14 Women's National Football Championship, which gets underway tomorrow.

PHOTO: BFF

Siddikur Rahman (Bangladesh), Pannakorn Uthairas (Thailand), John Catlin (USA), Shohei Hasegawa (Japan), N Thangaraja (India), Ulayan Mane (India)

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