

What to WATCH

CHANNEL 9 & STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
Indian Premier League
Punjab v Mumbai
Live from 8:30pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT 2
English Premier League
Brighton v Man United
Live from 1:00am (Saturday)

TEN 2
La Liga
Sevilla v Real Sociedad
Live from 1:00am (Saturday)

Ferdinand's boxing dreams dashed

Former Manchester United captain Rio Ferdinand has said he is "disappointed" after being forced to hang up his boxing gloves before he had the chance to use them. The 39-year-old had to give up on his boxing dream after being denied a professional boxing license by the British Boxing Board of Control (BBBoC). Ferdinand took up the 'Defender to Contender' challenge, backed by betting company Betfair, last September with the aim of "winning a belt." "It is with a heavy heart that I am hanging up my gloves on the Betfair #DefenderToContender challenge," Ferdinand wrote on an Instagram post. "Despite having never felt better physically or mentally, after notifying the British Boxing Board of Control of my intention to apply for a licence, I have received confirmation that they would not be reviewing my application at this point in time. To say I'm disappointed by this decision is an understatement."
—AGENCIES



This picture perhaps best encapsulates the feelings that Liverpool had after advancing to the Champions League final on Wednesday night. Jurgen Klopp and his coaching staff celebrate ecstatically with their players, while another lies on the grass in relief of escaping with the 4-2 defeat that saw them advance 7-6 on aggregate.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'It was just crazy'

Klopp says after 7-6 aggregate win over Roma

AFP, Rome



Jurgen Klopp saluted his Liverpool heroes as they survived a semifinal thriller against Roma to book a Champions League final showdown with Real Madrid.

Klopp's side emerged victorious from a goal-packed Champions League semifinal, winning 7-6 on aggregate despite losing the second leg 4-2 in Rome on Wednesday. Liverpool were in control at 2-1 up, but Roma scored three times after the interval, although their last goal came with virtually the final kick of a record-breaking tie.

It was the highest scoring semifinal in the Champions League era and Reds boss Klopp admitted there was a little bit too much drama for his liking.

"It was just crazy. I forgot the score! It was 7-6 right? Unbelievable!" Klopp said. "The game was wild. They took all the risks and we punished it with the counter-attack but then we gave away a goal.

"We were a little too patient. We are usually much better, you know this. It was the first semifinal for most of the boys so it's normal to have to keep nerves in. It was a little bit exciting, more exciting than I actually wanted."

Although Klopp would have preferred a less heart-stopping evening, he was adamant Liverpool's place in the final was just reward for their superb 5-2 first-leg win.

"We are deserved finalists 100 per cent. You don't come without luck. We needed it only one time tonight. Real Madrid needed luck yesterday

too. That's how it is," he said. "The boys deserve it, the character they showed, the football they showed."

SMALL DETAILS HAUNT EUSEBIO

Roma's exit left coach Eusebio Di Francesco contemplating small details which he believed cost his team the tie, such as their sluggishness in retrieving the ball from the

again next season.

"We must make sure we get back in the competition," said captain Daniele De Rossi. "Given how big a club Roma is, reaching the Champions League semi-finals should be something we do once every three years, not once every 30."

CL SANS VAR IS A JOKE, SAYS ROMA PRESIDENT



Shattered AS Roma players walk off the pitch after coming within a goal of forcing extra time in their Champions League semifinal against Liverpool.

PHOTO: REUTERS

goal when they scored.

"What I can say is that when we score in the 86th minute we have to pick up the ball and place it back in the centre circle," he said. "There are small things we need to learn. I'm even more disappointed because there were a few occasions where we wasted time."

Third in Serie A, Roma's priority is now to finish in the top four and qualify for the Champions League

Roma president James Pallotta criticised the officiating, saying it would be an "absolute joke" if video assistant referees (VAR) are not introduced in the competition.

"I know it is difficult to ref but it is really embarrassing that we lose on aggregate like that," he told reporters. "You just can't let stuff like this happen."

Pallotta felt Roma should have been awarded two penalties in the

second leg.

Edin Dzeko was brought down by Liverpool goalkeeper Loris Karius just after the interval but the striker was ruled offside. Liverpool defender Trent Alexander-Arnold appeared to handle the ball in the box from a Stephan El Shaarawy shot but the incident was missed by the officials.

"You can all look at it yourself. In

the 49th minute he wasn't offside and he gets taken down by the goalie," Pallotta said. "It was a handball that was obvious to everyone probably in the world except people on the pitch. It should have been a red card which would have been 10 men in the 63rd minute.

"If they don't get VAR in the Champions League, it is an absolute joke."

History with fired-up Reds against Real

STAR SPORT DESK



While it is expected that Real Madrid will head into the Champions League final on May 26 as favourites, history will be with the team on the other side of the field.

It was 37 years ago at the Parc des Princes when two of European football's most storied sides met in what was surprisingly their only encounter in the final of the European Cup.

Liverpool, led by legendary manager Bob Paisley and featuring players such as Graeme Souness and Kenny Dalglish, were appearing in just their third final albeit having won the past two and edged then six-time champions Real Madrid through a strike by left-back Alan Kennedy in the 82nd minute. That was the last time Real lost a European final.

Since then Real, who won five consecutive European Cups from 1956-1960, somewhat renewed their dominance near the turn of the century and won the tournament six times, starting in 1998. They will head into these finals as the only team to have won the tournament twice in a row after it was rebranded to the Champions League, doing so in the two seasons past.

Liverpool took their haul to five after lifting the trophy twice since that famous

victory in Paris, the first coming three years later at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome and the second following the famous 'Miracle of Istanbul' against AC Milan in 2005.

In all that time, the sides have met a further four times, with the Spanish giants clearly holding the upper hand. Liverpool beat Real just once, in a round of 16 match in 2009 but unfortunately went on to lose the return tie 4-0. Other than that the duo were also drawn in Group B in 2014, where Real won the matches 3-0 and 1-0.

Recent history and the experience of Real Madrid -- Zinedine Zidane's side have retained a core group of players including Cristiano Ronaldo, Sergio Ramos, Luka Modric and Karim Benzema, who have all been involved in lifting their last three European titles in 2014, 2016 and 2017 -- will certainly favour the now 12-time winners, but with history in the final on his side and Liverpool's penchant for performing on the biggest of European nights, manager Jurgen Klopp is raring to go.

"You cannot be more experienced in this competition than Real Madrid," Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp said. "I think 80 per cent of their team played all these finals. They are [in the final] four times in the last five years and still together. They are experienced, we are not, but we will be really on fire."

THE RED FURY

Liverpool have reached their eighth European Cup/Champions League final, at least three more than any other English side.

Roma and Liverpool had the highest-scoring Champions League semifinal in history, with the two legs yielding an incredible 13 goals. The two semis produced 20 goals, another record.

Liverpool's Mohamed Salah (10), Roberto Firmino (10) and Sadio Mane (9) are now the highest scoring trio for a club in a single Champions League campaign, overtaking Real Madrid's Ronaldo, Bale and Benzema in 2013-14 (28).

Liverpool became the second team to score at least 20 goals in away games in a single Champions League campaign, after Real Madrid in 2013-14.

Firmino (10 goals, 7 assists) is the first player this decade with at least seven goals and assists in a CL season.

Neymar heading back to Paris

AFP, Paris



An almost fit again Neymar will fly from Rio to Paris on Friday some 40 days ahead of the World Cup finals in Russia, French daily L'Equipe has reported.

While his return is too late to have any impact for his club, Brazil fans are desperate for their iconic star to lead the team out in Russia.

The 26-year-old Paris Saint-Germain forward -- at 220m euros the most expensive player in history -- broke a bone in his right foot on February 26 playing for PSG and has been in a race for fitness since undergoing surgery in Brazil a week later.

According to L'Equipe Neymar has been walking without crutches for two weeks but the star striker said last week from his coastal mansion in Rio that he would not play before a final medical on May 17, two days ahead of his club's last match of the season.

PSG declined to comment on Neymar's return when contacted by AFP but could do so later Thursday at a pre-match press conference ahead of Friday's Ligue 1 game with Amiens.

VERATTI GOES UNDER THE KNIFE
Meanwhile, Italy and PSG midfielder Marco Verratti underwent surgery on a troublesome groin on Thursday in a bid to start next season in top condition, his Ligue 1 club said.

"The surgery went perfectly well," said a statement by PSG.

"The date was scheduled to allow Marco Verratti to begin the 2018-2019 season in the best conditions."

The 25-year-old Verratti missed all of PSG's matches in April because of the injury.

Italy's absence from the June 14-July 15 World Cup meant he could undergo the operation towards the end of the French league season.

With PSG already crowned champions, the Italian will notably miss the French Cup final against third division Les Herbiers on Tuesday.



WALTON U-18 FOOTBALL

Quarterfinal lineups decided

SPORTS REPORTER

The quarterfinal lineups for the Walton U-18 Football Tournament were confirmed as Arambagh and Sheikh Jamal notched wins in their respective group matches at Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Arambagh emerged as Group C champions after a 5-0 win over Chittagong Abahani, setting up a quarterfinal against Group A runners-up Saif SC on May 7, while Sheikh Jamal beat Rahmatganj 2-0 to finish second in Group B and ensure a last-eight battle against Abahani on May 8.

Group A champions Brothers Union take on Group C runners-up and defending champions Mohammedan tomorrow. Group B toppers Team BJMC will face Group D runners-up Farashganj SC on Sunday.

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:

India refuse pink ball day-night Test on Australia tour

India have refused to play a day-night Test during the tour of Australia later this year because of doubts over the quality of the pink ball, their cricket board said Thursday. "Yes, it's pretty clear that we are not playing a day-night Test in Australia, no doubt about it," BCCI administrator Vinod Rai told AFP.

Two foreign leagues for Pakistan players

The centrally contracted Pakistan players will only be allowed to play in two foreign leagues other than the Pakistan Super League (PSL). This was decided in today's Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) meeting, which has agreed upon several changes.

'Final would be Bayern-Roma with Video Assistant Referees'

Real Madrid and Liverpool have made it to the final of the Champions League at the expense of Bayern Munich and Roma, however, there were debatable decisions during the semifinal ties and Roma's sporting director Monchi suggests that with video technology, Bayern and Roma could have been playing in the final.

JFA U-14 WOMEN'S

FOOTBALL

Ratana brace drives Tangail

SPORTS REPORTER

Magura and Tangail secured victories in their respective JFA Cup U-14 Women's Football Championship matches at the Birshrestha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

Rima Biswas decided the match between Magura and Rajshahi, scoring the all-important goal for Magura in a 1-0 win.

In the day's other match, Tangail handed Thakurgaon a 3-1 defeat.

Shaheda had put Tangail ahead before Kalpna found the equaliser. However Ratana struck a brace in two second half minutes to ensure victory for victory for Tangail.



MO' SALAHS: Egyptians rejoiced after seeing this picture, thinking that they would be heading to the World Cup in June with two Mohamed Salahs tearing down the flanks. Unfortunately for them, the man on the left is a doppelganger, Ahmed Bahaa, who finally met his hero.

PHOTO: COLLECTIVE