

What to WATCH

CHANNEL 9 & STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

Indian Premier League
Chennai v Bangalore
Live from 4:30pm
Hyderabad v Delhi
Live from 8:30pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT 2

English Premier League
Stoke City v Crystal Palace
Live from 5:30pm
West Brom v Tottenham
Live from 8:00pm

Everton v Southampton
Live from 10:30pm

TEN 1

Serie A
Juventus v Bologna
Live from 12:45am (Sunday)

DAY'S EVENT

U-18 Football Tournament:
Quarterfinal
Brothers Union v Mohammedan

Time: 4:30pm
Venue: BNS, Dhaka
Premier Hockey League

Venue: Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium, Dhaka
Abahani v Bangladesh SC

Time: 3:00pm
Mohammedan v Victoria SC
Time: 5:00pm

Dhaka Wanderers v Ajax SC
Time: 7:00pm

'Sad' Wenger defends Ozil after defeat

AFP, Madrid



Europa League

Arsene Wenger was left devastated by Arsenal's Europa League defeat to Atletico Madrid on Thursday but made a staunch defence of midfielder Mesut Ozil. Ozil's performance was heavily criticised by former Arsenal defender Martin Keown, who said the German had cried "crocodile tears" after the game, and was "not fit to wear the shirt".

Diego Costa's strike proved decisive at the Wanda Metropolitano where a 1-0 victory secured Atletico a 2-1 win on aggregate and a place in the final against Marseille.

Defeat ends Wenger's hopes of leaving Arsenal on a high as his team missed out on a shot at a major trophy and wasted their last chance to qualify for the Champions League.

"I'm very sad tonight," Wenger said. "Unfortunately you have to go through that -- the game can be very cruel, sometimes very nice, but the suffering is very strong tonight. Looking at the chances over the two games the least we could say is we are very frustrated. The tie should have been over in the first game."

It remains to be seen how another season outside Europe's premier tournament will affect Arsenal's search both for a new coach, and new signings, this summer.

"The club now has to think about what to do for next season," Wenger said. "I think there are some good ingredients in our team and they will bounce back. With the right additions in summer I think they can compete next year."

Keown, however, was less optimistic and reserved a particularly harsh assessment for Ozil. "He wasn't fit to wear the shirt tonight," Keown told BT Sport. "I've seen this a lot this season and it needs to be said. He needs to be dug out. We expect better from him."

"These are crocodile tears I'm seeing from the player. He's not conning me."

Keown added: "I bet he doesn't play again this season. He'll have some emotional breakdown and won't play this weekend."

When Keown's comments were put to Wenger, he said: "I don't agree with that. You will see that he gave a lot. It was a difficult team, physically very intense. I'm convinced that Ozil should not be criticised by anyone just because he did not score. We had plenty of opportunities and we lose as a team."

Costa was the star of the show, providing the tenacity and killer instinct Arsenal so desperately lacked.

"Costa came back here for nights like this," Atletico coach Diego Simeone said. "To be important, to lead from the front. This side needs an aggressive striker and that's exactly what he is."



Atletico Madrid striker Diego Costa shattered retiring Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger's dream of leading his club to a maiden European trophy under his supervision in their Europa League semifinal on Thursday night.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Will dominance mean improvement? Neymar lands in Paris

SPORTS REPORTER



Target

Following their success in the 3rd South Asian Archery Championships in March, the Bangladeshi archers are expected to assert their dominance once again in the upcoming 2nd ISSF Islamic Solidarity Archery Championships, beginning at the Maulna Bhasani Hockey Stadium tomorrow.

If holders Bangladesh can repeat their feat of winning six gold medals out of the 10 they grabbed in the first edition of the ISSF Islamic Archery Championships, no doubt it will be widely praised, but where will this success stand in comparison to more global events such as the Asian Archery Championships, World Cup or Olympics?

The answer probably lies not in the number of medals they win but rather the accuracy the archers can achieve in qualification and elimination rounds.

The archers have been training under German coach Martin Frederick since late February, after the Bangladesh Archery Federation appointed the 50-year-old coach for five years, with a target of winning at least a medal in the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

Under Frederick's guidance, Bangladesh grabbed six gold medals in March's South Asian Archery Championships while competing against some young Indian archers but the scores

of most of the archers, aside from a couple, were not satisfactory. The scores of most of these archers were far less than those of top Asian archers, most of whom are dominating world archery.

Roman Sana and Ibrahim Sheikh were the two Bangladeshi archers who increased their scores to score 667 and 650 points respectively out of 720 points, which is an increase of one and 51 points from their scores in the Asian Archery Championships in November, 2017. However, promising archers Tamimul Islam and Hakim Ahmed Rubel scored less than what they had during those championships where Korean archers Kim Jongho, Lee Woo Seok and Indian Atanu Das scored 684, 682 and 680 points out of 720 respectively in the qualification round of recurve men's event.

In the women's recurve event, Nasrin Akter increased her score from 582 to 597 points but Radia Akter Shapla (572), Rabeya Khatun (570) and Beauty Roy (552) failed to improve their scores compared to their scores from November, 2017. Korea's Choi Minseon, Lee Eun Gyeong and Ki Bo Bae hit the top three scorers -- 684, 677 and 673 points respectively in the qualification round.

It has been learnt that the archers have improved their scores a bit in the ongoing training camp after the completion of the South Asian Archery Championships, but those increases are quite insignificant.

Roman, Tamimul and Ibrahim are scoring

670, 660 and 650 points respectively while Nasrin, Shapla and Beauty are scoring 600, 550 and 560 points respectively, which is still far less than the top Asian archers.

"Perfection is the key in archery. If an archer can make good scores in qualification rounds by hitting a bulls eye the maximum number of times (maximum 10 point per shot), he/she has good opportunity of producing good results in the elimination round and winning medals," Bangladesh archery team's assistant coach Ziaur Rahman explained yesterday.

Echoing the sentiment, Roman said, "If an archer has the good ability of hitting the bulls eye number of times, he/she will definitely score well in the qualification round which will give the archer an edge in the elimination round."

However, Roman added, "Throwing the arrow perfectly is not the only condition for winning medals, other things such as consistency, mental toughness, confidence, external factors such as wind also play a part in the performance and winning medals for archers."

The best archer from Bangladesh also pointed out that financial security plays a key role behind the confidence and mental ease of an archer.

"Things such as fear of opponents, over-confidence, wind, nervousness and psychological barriers can be overcome by taking part in a lot of international competitions, but Bangladeshi archers can't concentrate much on their individual improvement until they get the financial security for future."

AFP, Le Bourget

Brazil star Neymar flew back into France on Friday to rejoin his club Paris Saint-Germain after an operation on a broken foot bone in March.

An AFP photographer at the scene took shots of Neymar seemingly at ease as he strolled to an awaiting van wearing sports shoes, no sign of a foot brace or crutches.

Neymar, who arrived by private jet at an airport outside Paris, is continuing his recovery following the operation and his focus is firmly set on being fit to lead Brazil's World Cup challenge in Russia this summer.

Neymar's injury sent shockwaves through Brazil after the iconic forward had also been injured in their home World Cup in 2014, with the team losing 7-1 in the semi-finals to Germany in a landmark humiliation in his absence.

The 26-year-old forward -- whose 222 million-euro transfer from Barcelona to PSG last year made him the most expensive player in history -- broke a bone in his right foot while playing for the French club on February 25 and has been in a race for fitness since undergoing surgery in Brazil on March 3.

According to French sports paper L'Equipe, he has been walking without crutches for two weeks but he said last week that he would not play again before undergoing a final medical on May 17, two days



ahead of PSG's last match of the season.

PSG coach Unai Emery admitted Thursday he had not spoken to Neymar for "some weeks", as the striker stayed at his coastal mansion in Rio.

"I'm not sure when he's coming, I've heard he is coming though," Emery said. "He needs to be left alone to work with the physios, but we also want him to be with us for the last match."

Neymar scored 28 goals for the French side this season since leaving Barcelona. PSG were beaten by Real Madrid in the Champions League as Neymar missed the second leg, but regained the French league title, won the League Cup and face third-division Les Herbiers in the French Cup final on Tuesday.

The surgeon who operated on Neymar's foot told Brazilian daily Folha de Sao Paulo on Friday the objective is "that he is 100 percent fit for the start of World Cup training", which is scheduled for May 21 at Teresopolis near Rio.



Andres Iniesta was the man of the moment during Barcelona's dinner celebrating the double of the Copa del Rey and La Liga on Thursday night. However, although they have the league sewn up, the Blaugrana will not be taking it easy against Real Madrid when the two meet in El Clasico on Sunday as an unprecedented unbeaten league season is in their sights.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Real in unbeaten Barca's path

AFP, Madrid



La Liga

Real Madrid can transform their own season by beating Liverpool in this month's Champions League final, and on Sunday they can dent Barcelona's by becoming the first team to defeat the Catalans in La Liga.

This 'clasico' at Camp Nou will have minimal impact on the league, with Barca already crowned champions and Real's passing interest in pipping Atletico to second place diminished by their ambitions in Europe.

But there is still much at stake in what

Madrid daily Marca has billed "the clasico of honour". It could even be argued this match will go some way to defining the seasons of these two teams.

Barca, in particular, have been careful in celebrating their domestic double, their players aware of the disappointment that lingers from their Champions League crash in the quarterfinals.

Even as they ordered pizza and slurped beer from the top of their open-top bus down Las Ramblas this week, it was noticeable how many still referred to the disappointment in Rome.

To soften the blow, Barca's best response was to win the Copa del Rey and

Ety, Selima rock Laxmipur

SPORTS REPORTER

Mymensingh notched a massive 8-0 win over Laxmipur in the final round of the JFA U-14 Women's Football Championship at the Birshrestha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Ety Akter struck a treble and Selima Akter scored a brace while Salma, Aniya and Hafsa netted one goal apiece.

In the day's other match, Khulna came from behind to play out a 2-2 draw with Rajshahi, who went two goals ahead through strikes from Bristi and Nasrin before Aklima scored twice to level the margin.

'It was a no-brainer'

AFP, Glasgow



Scottish Premiership

Rangers unveiled former Liverpool and England captain Steven Gerrard as their new manager on Friday, handing the rookie boss the daunting task of ending Celtic's domination of the Scottish Premiership.

Gerrard, who has previously only worked with Liverpool's Under-18s, takes the helm of the giant club who have fallen on hard times in the past decade despite winning a record 54 Scottish titles.

Celtic -- under Brendan Rodgers, Gerrard's former boss at Anfield -- are bidding for an unprecedented successive treble and are unbeaten against their Old Firm rivals in 11 games but Gerrard said he could not wait to get his teeth into the new role.

"I'm very aware of Rangers, the size of the club, I've watched them from afar and been lucky enough to watch some of the

Old Firm games," he told a press conference at the club's Ibrox stadium.

"It was a no-brainer for me. There were a lot of different things to think about but from that first phone call I got a special feeling and I knew that Rangers were for me."

Gerrard, who named former Liverpool teammate Gary McAllister as his assistant, said he could not help his lack of experience, adding that he missed the pressure of fighting for points since he stopped playing.

"I know there will be a lot of pressure and a lot of scrutiny but that's what I love about football," added the 37-year-old.

Chairman Dave King said Gerrard "ticked every box" other than experience.

"A lot of the other managers who have been named, they have had experience but that experience was not necessarily good," he said. "Steven's character outweighed his inexperience."



New Rangers manager Steven Gerrard poses at the Ibrox Stadium's trophy room after being officially unveiled on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

Bangladesh eliminated

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh women's football team endured another big defeat in the AFC Women's Futsal Championship, losing 7-0 to Vietnam at the Bangkok Avenue ground yesterday.

Bangladesh, who also suffered a 7-1 defeat to Malaysia in their campaign opener, fell behind right from the very third minute when Nguenyn scored while VT Trinh and LT Linh struck twice in the 40-minute indoor game.

With their second successive defeat, Bangladesh were eliminated from the group stage with a match in hand. Bangladesh will play their final group fixture on Sunday against Chinese Taipei.

Koscielny in doubt for WC

AFP, Madrid

Arsenal defender Laurent Koscielny looks set to miss the World Cup after the Frenchman suffered an Achilles injury during Thursday's Europa League match against Atletico.

The 32-year-old centre-back was stretched off in tears after 12 minutes with manager Arsene Wenger saying: "It doesn't look very good, it's his Achilles. You can always hope for a miracle in the scan but the first signs don't look very good."