

# What to WATCH

**CHANNEL 9 & STAR SPORTS SELECT 1**  
**Indian Premier League**  
 Punjab v Kolkata  
 Live from 4:30pm

**Delhi v Bangalore**  
 Live from 8:30pm  
**STAR SPORTS SELECT 2**  
**Bundesliga**  
 Bayern Munich v Stuttgart

**Live from 7:30pm**  
**SONY SIX**  
 Ireland v Pakistan  
 One-off Test, Day-2  
 Live from 4:00pm

**TEN 1**  
**Serie A**  
 Inter Milan v Benevento  
 Live from 12:45am (Sunday)

**TEN 2**  
**La Liga**  
 Real Sociedad v Leganes  
 Live from 8:15pm

**Getafe v Atletico Madrid**  
 Live from 10:30pm  
**Real Madrid v Celta Vigo**  
 Live from 12:45am (Sunday)

**DAY'S EVENT**  
**Premier Hockey League**  
 Mohammedan v Azad SC  
 Time: 3:00pm

Dhaka Wanderers v Police Club  
 Time: 5:00pm  
 Bangladesh SC v Victoria SC

Time: 7:00pm  
 Venue: Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium, Dhaka



PHOTOS: REUTERS

**A day after breaking John McEnroe's 34-year-old record of most successive sets won on a surface by winning his 50th set on clay, Rafael Nadal endured the dual disappointment of losing his Madrid Open quarterfinal to Dominic Thiem (INSET) and losing his world number one ranking in Madrid yesterday. Incidentally, the last time he lost a set on clay was also to the precociously talented Thiem.**

## Alves out of World Cup

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil right-back Dani Alves was ruled out of the World Cup on Friday after suffering a knee injury playing for Paris Saint-Germain, the Brazilian football federation (CBF) said.

"All possibilities for his recovery being exhausted, it will be impossible to select Daniel Alves... for the World Cup," a CBF statement read.

The 35-year-old suffered the injury in Tuesday's French Cup final against Les Herbiers, coming off four minutes from the end as PSG beat the minnows 2-0.

The World Cup starts in Russia on June 14.

Brazilian legend and three-time World Cup-winner Pele tweeted: "I am so sad to hear this. Footballers hate missing games but I know first-hand that missing #WorldCup games is the worst feeling."

## Nadal 50 and out

AFP, Madrid



Rafael Nadal suffered his first clay-court defeat in almost a year when the world number one was shocked 7-5, 6-3 by Austria's Dominic Thiem in the Madrid Masters quarterfinals on Friday.

Defending champion Nadal, who came into the tournament having won both Monte Carlo and Barcelona for an 11th time, also saw his record 50-set winning streak on clay ended by the fifth-seeded Thiem.

Thiem, the runner-up to the great Spaniard in the 2017 Madrid final, had been the last player to defeat Nadal on clay at the Italian Open in Rome almost 12 months ago.

The shock result on Friday also means that Roger Federer will reclaim the world number one ranking on Monday.

"I wasn't good enough with my forehand or my backhand to open to his forehand today," admitted Nadal.

Five-time Madrid winner Nadal, who will be bidding for an 11th French Open title in Paris later this month, had won his previous 21

matches on clay.

That run included him surpassing John McEnroe's 1984 record of 49 sets won in succession on the same surface during his last-16 duel with Diego Schwartzman on Thursday.

However, in their ninth career clash, Thiem put Nadal under pressure almost from the start on Friday and broke for a 4-3 lead in the first set.

A double fault and a long forehand allowed Nadal to retrieve the break at 5-5. It was a brief reprieve as a lazy forehand volley gave Thiem a 6-5 advantage and the set came the Austrian's way in the 12th game off an ace.

Thiem, watched by his girlfriend -- and WTA star -- Kristina Mladenovic, turned the screw for a 3-1 lead in the second set but Nadal battled back to 3-3. That was as good as it got for the Spaniard as Thiem broke again for 4-3, held to love for 5-3 and secured victory with another blistering forehand.

Thiem, who next faces South Africa's Kevin Anderson for a place in Sunday's final, joins Novak Djokovic and Gaston Gaudio as just the third man to have beaten Nadal three times on clay.

World number eight Anderson battled into his first Masters semi-

final with a 7-6 (7/3), 3-6, 6-3 win over Serbian qualifier Dusan Lajovic.

Anderson, the 31-year-old US Open runner-up last year, hit 15 aces and 35 winners. Dutchwoman Kiki Bertens continued her remarkable run at the Madrid Open by thrashing French seventh seed Caroline Garcia to reach the women's final.

The world number 20 will face either Petra Kvitova or Karolina Pliskova in the biggest match of her career on Saturday, after brushing aside Garcia 6-2, 6-2.

Bertens, who had already stunned world number two Caroline Wozniacki and five-time Grand Slam champion Maria Sharapova earlier in the week, started brightly and broke twice en route to the opening set.

Garcia struggled throughout and never even mustered a break-point opportunity, falling in the semi-finals for the second straight tournament after losing to CoCo Vandeweghe in Stuttgart.

Bertens, whose five previous WTA titles have all come on clay, was rock-solid in the second set as she wrapped up the win in only an hour and seven minutes.

## Still need to get over my fear: Neymar

STAR SPORT DESK



Brazilian superstar Neymar is well on the road to recovery and has already started gym sessions but, in an interview with the legendary Zico, the Selecao's current superstar revealed that he has some fears of stepping back onto the pitch.

"The expectation [of returning to the pitch] is great. I'm working [towards that]. I have started walking again, but there is always that fear of a recurrence [of that injury]. I need to lose this fear as fast as I can to get to the World Cup at my best. At first, we're hesitant about making the complete movement and kind of make up for that later," Neymar, who fractured his leg while playing for Paris Saint Germain against Marseille in February this year, told Zico at his mansion in Mangaratiba in an interview that was taken last week and published yesterday.

The 26-year-old said that he would begin running on the treadmill soon, something he is yet to do as of yesterday. He also pointed out the irony of sustaining an injury in a year that saw him being rested more than at any time in his career. In fact, he was supposed to be rested from the match following the one against Marseille.

"I was going to be rested in the next match because there were two important upcoming games against the then second best team of France [Lyon]. I would have played them in the league and then featured again in the French Cup semifinals before being rested again. We had talked about it two days before [the Marseille match]. Unfortunately, I wound up injured on Saturday. This year was the least I played, because the coach rested me a lot," the Brazilian reflected with melancholy.

The Brazilian also spoke about his previous injury at the 2014 World Cup, when Colombia's Juan Zuniga crashed into the forward from behind, kneeling him in the back, resulting in a broken third vertebra that rendered the 22-year-old's World Cup over.

"That is not normal in a match, it's unnecessary. If you want to foul me there [in midfield], then grab me or hold me," said Brazil's latest No. 10, still visibly upset about the incident.

However, he also spoke about the talent of his teammates and specifically picked out the talents of PSG forward Kylian Mbappe for praise, joking: "I already told Casemiro to 'lay him out' if he confronts us."

"The kid is a phenomenon. At his age, he's one of the best. [Gabriel] Jesus is older than him and it's just them there [at that level]."

Neymar also reflected on fond memories of his time at Barcelona, where alongside Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez he had formed one of the deadliest forward lines in the world.

"Suarez is a monster on the field, he is very intelligent. When Messi and I would mess around in practice, he became angry. There was a game in which I made a play, dribbled and gave the pass. Messi did the same. Suarez tried to do that and failed. We started to laugh, because we had that intimacy. Suarez was the icing on the cake in the trio. We were inseparable and we had a huge relationship. With one look, we already knew what to do," concluded the Brazilian, who signed a Brazil shirt for his legendary compatriot at the end of the interview before presumably asking the 65-year-old for some advice ahead of the biggest tournament of his life.



**Brazil superstar Neymar had the tremendous honour of giving an interview to the legendary Zico (R) and he made the most of it, speaking about every subject imaginable and presumably picking the 65-year-old's astute footballing brain.**

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## 'This is just the start'

AFP, London



Mohamed Salah has reassured Liverpool fans his stunning first season is "just the beginning" of his time at the club despite speculation over interest from Real Madrid.

The Egyptian collected awards in Liverpool on Thursday after being voted player of the season by both the club's fans and his teammates before boarding a flight to collect the Football Writers' Association's award in London.

The 25-year-old has scored 43 goals in all competitions since arriving from Roma last summer, a return that has seen him heavily linked with Spanish giants Real Madrid, who face Liverpool in the Champions League later this month.

But Salah, who needs just one more goal to become the outright record-holder for the most strikes in a 38-match season in the Premier League, appears content with life at the club.

"I'm very happy here, everything is fine," he said. "Of course I have got ambitions for the future with Liverpool. As you can see we had a great season, now we are in the Champions League final and everyone is excited."

"It is just the start. This is my first year here and it is the same for some other players. It is just the beginning."

Liverpool cannot focus all of their energies on Real just yet, with the battle for a place in next season's Champions League still not settled. A point in their final match, at home to Brighton on Sunday, will be enough to secure a top-four finish, after which all eyes turn to Kiev.

Salah, who was last month crowned Professional Footballers' Association players' player of the year, won the writers' award ahead of Kevin De Bruyne and Harry Kane.

Speaking in London, he said: "I was here four years ago [with Chelsea] and a lot of people were saying he couldn't play in the Premier League. I left Chelsea but it was always in my mind to come back to make them wrong. So I make them wrong."

"I'm not the same player. I improved a lot in Rome but I can't say everything is me. The team-mates are maybe different. The coach is tough and they always help me inside and outside the pitch."



**Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah picked up two awards as the club's Player of the Season and Players' Player of the Season at Anfield before jetting off to London to complete a phenomenal Thursday with the prestigious Football Writers' Player of the Year award.**

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## 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:

### Iniesta feels it would be weird to see Neymar return

Barcelona's legendary midfielder Andres Iniesta, who is on his way out of the Catalan club has said that it would be weird to see Neymar return to Barcelona now.



### Ronaldo to appear as animated character

Cristiano Ronaldo is considered as a superhuman on the pitch as he often pulls off what no one else can imagine. Turns out superhuman Ronaldo will be starring as a superhero in a cartoon called Striker Force 7. After speculations appeared that he will produce a football drama series, the goal machine is set to create his own entertainment property.



### \$1.5m win bonus was 'fake news'

A struggling Chinese football club has dismissed as "fake news" a report that it had offered team members a combined \$1.5 million bonus to win a game, and said a number of club staff were punished over the affair.



### Zidane evades talk of Neymar move

Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane on Friday sidestepped talk of a bid for the world's most expensive footballer Neymar. "I don't know, I don't think so. What we are thinking about at the moment is the Champions League final," Zidane told a press conference when asked about a possible move for the Paris Saint-Germain and Brazil star.



### Buffon charged by UEFA for referee rant

Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon was charged by UEFA on Friday over his comments about referee Michael Oliver after the Italian side's dramatic Champions League quarterfinal loss to Real Madrid last month. The 40-year-old has been charged both with breaching UEFA's "general principles of conduct" over his outburst and also for his red card for dissent.



### Man United seal second place

Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho refused to criticise his side despite another display lacking inspiration in attacking areas as they sealed second place in the Premier League with a 0-0 draw at West Ham on Thursday. In a game of precious few clear-cut chances, Luke Shaw hit the post and Paul Pogba headed wide with United's best opening.



## UNDER-18 CLUB CUP Abahani in final

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani set up a final against Farashganj after beating Arambagh on penalties in the second semifinal of the Walton U-18 Club Cup football Tournament at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Like the first semifinal, the second one also failed to produce a goal during regulation time or 30 minutes of extra time, despite chances being created.

Arambagh threatened in the first half with Rafiqul Islam Rumon missing the target from close range in the 21st minute before Fahid Uddin's effort in the 34th minute went wide. Abahani earned a free-kick in added time of the first half, but Deepok Roy's effort went straight into the goalies' hands.

Apu Sarkar failed to beat the Abahani keeper in a one-on-one situation nine minutes after the restart and neither side managed to find the target in extra time.

In shootouts, both sides converted three of their first five spot-kicks and added two more each in sudden death. Then, a feeble attempt from Arambagh's Mohammad Sagar was grabbed by the Abahani goalkeeper before Omar Faruk scored to send the Sky Blues into the final.

The final will be held at 4:30pm at the same venue tomorrow.