

What to WATCH

DAY'S EVENT

CHANNEL 9 & STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

Indian Premier League

Rajasthan v Bangalore

Live from 4:30pm

Hyderabad v Kolkata

Live from 8:30pm

TEN 1

FA Cup

Final

Chelsea v Man United

Live from 10:15pm

TEN 2

Serie A

Juventus v Verona

Live from 7:00pm

Premier Hockey League

Victoria SC v Police Club

Time: 2:30pm

Ajax SC v Azad SC

Time: 4:00pm


Venue: Maulana Bhasani

Hockey Stadium, Dhaka

RAMOS RELEASES DEBUT SINGLE

Real Madrid captain Sergio Ramos's goalscoring record in big games shows he is used to being something of a solo act and yesterday he took that one step further by releasing a music single. Ramos, 32, announced a debut rap composition 'SR4' little more than a week ahead of Real's Champions League final against Liverpool in Kiev. Revealing the news on his Instagram page, Ramos indicated that there would be more to come from Sergio the singer: "My house, some friends, plenty of magic and this is the result. My life in a song... and lots of verses still to write." Footballers have a long history of trying their hand on the music scene. Former Barcelona star Ronaldinho, American international Clint Dempsey, Brazil international Neymar and former Real midfielder Royston Drenthe all attempted a foray into music and released singles over the past few years.

—REUTERS





Gurjinder Singh (L) of Mohammedan celebrates his hatrick against Sonali Bank during their Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League match at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Hattricks galore

SPORTS REPORTER



Holders Dhaka Mariner Young's Club and title contenders Mohammedan SC continued their big-win run in the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League in their respective matches at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Mariner Young's overwhelmed Bangladesh SC 8-1, thanks to hattricks from Mamunur Rahman Chayan and Mainul Islam Koushik, while Mohammedan survived a first-half scare to outplay Sonali Bank 8-2 with a superb performance from Gurjinder Singh and Nasir Hossain, both of whom slammed hattricks.

With eight straight wins, both Mariner Young's and Mohammedan SC joined leaders Abahani on top of the table with 24 points while Sonali Bank lags behind with 18 points from eight matches.

Buoyed by four foreign players as well as nine national players, Mariner Young's hardly faced any challenge from Bangladesh SC, who came into the match on the back of three consecutive defeats. Penalty corner (PC) specialist Chayan converted the first PC of the match in the sixth minute before Koushik struck a brace and Chayan made it 4-0 from another PC in the 23rd minute.

Koushik completed his second hattrick of the campaign after restart, before Chayan struck the last two goals, from PCs to complete his second hattrick. In between, Mahbub Hossain and Azizul Islam netted one goal apiece for the defending champions.

In the day's second match, Sonali Bank gave Mohammedan a run for their money in the first half by coming from two goals down to draw level. Indian recruit Gurjinder Singh, who had scored six goals in the previous match against Wanderers Club, gave Mohammedan a 2-0 lead within eight minutes before Rajib Das made it 2-1 with a solo effort and Fazle Hossain equalised from a penalty stroke.

After resumption, a neck-and-neck fight was expected, but Sonali Bank, playing with only local players, were helpless against Mohammedan's foreign recruits.

It was again Gurjinder who restored the lead in the 41st minute with a nice strike from inside the circle to complete his hattrick before Nasir found the back of the net with a reverse-hit in the following minute.

Then Rasel Mahmud Jimmy, Gurjinder and Shamsher Singh fed Nasir to help him to his second hattrick and the league's 27th treble while Arvinder Singh wrote his name on the scoresheet too.

Mohammedan will face archrivals Abahani on May 21 after Mariner Young's play against Dhaka Wanderers Club on May 20.

Chelsea seek cup salvation

AFP, London

Desperate to end a dismal season on a high note, troubled Chelsea manager Antonio Conte needs Eden Hazard to ride to his rescue in Saturday's FA Cup final against Manchester United.

Conte's side have been rocked by their failure to qualify for next season's Champions League after they stumbled to a disappointing fifth place finish in the Premier League.

With Conte reportedly on the verge of leaving following his feud with the club's hierarchy over transfers, there is a sense Chelsea are lurking through one of their regular periods of self-inflicted turmoil.

While victory at Wembley wouldn't erase the problems gripping Chelsea, it does offer a chance to dispel the notion that disharmony between Conte and his players has accelerated their decline.

Just 12 months ago, Chelsea swaggered into the FA Cup final as the newly crowned Premier League champions following Conte's dazzling debut season. Yet they left Wembley empty-handed after a lacklustre 2-1 defeat against Arsenal that left a painful sting.

"You don't want to be on the back of losing two FA Cup finals in a row," Chelsea midfielder Cesc Fabregas said. "Last year we didn't play well. We have this regret in our head and we want to make it right this time for sure."

Things haven't been the same since and, despite his insistence that he would happily remain in charge next season, Conte has carried the air of a man who knows he is on borrowed time.



FIFA WORLD CUP 2018

AFP, Undated

PAYET, MARTIAL LEFT OUT; MENDY INCLUDED

Marseille star Dimitri Payet was left out of France's World Cup squad announced by coach Didier Deschamps on Thursday, completing a miserable 24 hours for the playmaker.

The former West Ham United player was forced off with a hamstring injury in the first half of Marseille's Europa League final defeat against Atletico Madrid on Wednesday, and that fitness doubt persuaded Deschamps to leave him out of the squad of 23.

Payet was one of France's stars at Euro 2016, when they reached the final as hosts before losing to Portugal. But he has also fallen victim to the number of attacking options available to Deschamps, who did call up Payet's Marseille teammate Florian Thauvin along with Lyon captain Nabil Fekir. However, Manchester United's Anthony Martial and Arsenal striker Alexander Lacazette were also left out.

Elsewhere, Manchester City left-back Benjamin Mendy was called up despite having hardly featured for Pep Guardiola's side since returning from a serious knee injury. "It always seems impossible until it's done", wrote Mendy on Twitter.

HART BROKEN OVER WORLD CUP SNUB

Former England first choice goalkeeper Joe Hart admitted he is finding it hard to accept being omitted from the England World Cup squad by Gareth Southgate.

The 31-year-old -- England's number one goalkeeper at both the 2010 and 2014 World Cups -- has suffered a dramatic fall from grace since Pep Guardiola sent him out on loan once he became Manchester City manager in 2016.

Hart's case for selection amongst the three goalkeepers to go to Russia had not been enhanced by inconsistent form at Premier League strugglers West Ham, whom he joined after a season in Serie A with Torino.

The 75-times capped stopper -- only Peter Shilton with 125 has won more

caps in goal for England -- lost out to uncapped Burnley goalkeeper Nick Pope, Everton's Jordan Pickford and relegated Stoke City's Jack Butland.

"Not going to lie, I'm gutted," Hart wrote on Instagram. "After 2 years of trying to make the most of a really tough situation, this is hard to take."

AGUERO FEELS 'LIKE NEW'

Argentina striker Sergio Aguero said on Thursday that he feels "like new" and is ready to play his "best World Cup" in Russia despite struggling in recent months with a knee injury.

The 29-year-old hasn't played for Manchester City since their Champions League quarterfinal defeat by Liverpool on April 10, and Argentina coach Jorge

team, Aguero will need to stave off challenges from Juventus pair Gonzalo Higuain and Paulo Dybala, Roma striker Diego Perotti and Inter Milan's Mauro Icardi.

But, having never scored in eight previous World Cup matches, Aguero insisted that he is preparing for his "best World Cup".

EDER, NANI MISS OUT

Forwards Eder and Nani were surprise absentees from Portugal's World Cup squad with national team coach Fernando Santos opting instead for the youth of Andre Silva and Goncalo Guedes to play alongside superstar Cristiano Ronaldo.

Also missing from the 23-man squad



PHOTO: AFP

Former French player Frank Leboeuf and Russian model Natalia Vodianova pose with the World Cup trophy during the presentation of its official case at the Louis Vuitton headquarters in Asnieres-sur-Seine on Thursday.

Sampaoli has a host of attacking options to choose from.

"My knee is like new, I've always had problems... But now I feel different, I can bend it and it's a relief," he told Argentinian TV channel TyC.

Aguero has played 84 times since making his international debut in 2006, scoring 36 goals, but faces strong competition for a place in Sampaoli's starting XI.

With Lionel Messi a shoe-in for the

was Andre Gomes who, like Eder and Nani, played at the 2016 European championships won by the Portuguese.

Injured Porto midfielder Danilo Pereira was also missing from the line-up.

Eder scored the extra-time winning goal in the Euro 2016 final against France but he was desperately out of form for Lokomotiv Moscow this season, scoring just four goals as his club side claimed the Russian Premier League title.

Ronaldo 120 per cent fit for final: Zidane

AFP, Madrid



Zinedine Zidane has declared Cristiano Ronaldo "120 percent" fit ahead of the Champions League final and says Real Madrid's star player is available to

face Villarreal in La Liga on Saturday. Ronaldo sprained his ankle against Barcelona earlier this month, prompting fears the Portuguese might not make the clash against Liverpool on May 26.

But Zidane insisted Ronaldo would be "150 percent" fit for the game in Kiev and he delivered another positive update on Friday. "Maybe right now he is 120 percent," Zidane said with a smile. "He is fine. If Cristiano is 120 percent that's fine with me."

Ronaldo has trained with the first team squad this week and could be given the chance to hone his sharpness against Villarreal in Real's final league game of the season.

Real can snatch second place from Atletico Madrid if they win and Atletico lose to Eibar on Sunday but Zidane's players will be keener to make a case for a spot against Liverpool.

Gareth Bale, in particular, will be under scrutiny, with the Welshman's place far from secure despite his man-of-the-match performance against Celta Vigo last weekend.

Bale scored two excellent goals in the victory but Zidane twice dodged the chance to say his display will influence his thinking. If they beat Liverpool, they will be the only club to have won the Champions League three times in a row while Zidane will join Carlo Ancelotti and Bob Paisley as the only coaches to own a trio of European crowns.

"It would be huge," Zidane said. "It would mean we have been doing our job well and that my message has been getting through."

"It's great to start my managerial career at this level but for me the most important final of the Champions League is this one, not the last one. We have to give it everything."



Serbia's Novak Djokovic showed his trademark fighting spirit while coming back from a set down to beat Japan's Kei Nishikori in the Italian Open quarterfinal at Foro Italico yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS



Kylian Mbappe had a waxwork unveiled at The Grevin Museum in Paris on Thursday, alongside which the 19-year-old Frenchman gleefully struck a few poses.

PHOTO: AFP

Djokovic sets up Nadal semi

STAR SPORT DESK



Novak Djokovic continued a post-injury resurgence with a hard-fought win over Kei Nishikori in the quarterfinals of the Italian Open at the Foro Italico in Rome yesterday.

The Serbian former world number one rallied from a set-down, much as Rafael Nadal had done earlier against home favourite Fabio Fognini, to win the encounter 2-6, 6-1, 6-3 over his Japanese rival.

There was not much competition in the first two sets, with Nishikori breaking Djokovic twice in the first set and Djokovic returning the favour in the second. But the third set was a dogfight with the Serb breaking Nishikori in the seventh game after a long deuce battle, before holding after another lengthy back-and-forth on deuce. Serving to stay in the match at 5-3, the fight left Nishikori and Djokovic romped to the win.

Djokovic will now play a blockbuster semifinal today against Nadal, who needs to lift an eighth career title at the Foro Italico to return to the top of the rankings after losing that position to Roger Federer last week.

Earlier yesterday in the women's draw, former world number one and five-time Grand Slam winner Maria Sharapova, won a gruelling struggle over French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko 6-7 (6/8), 6-4, 7-5.

'Trickery led to France-Brazil final in 1998'

AFP, Paris

Disgraced former UEFA president Michel Platini has sensationally admitted to a "little skulduggery" in rigging the draw to ensure Brazil and France could not meet until the final of the 1998 World Cup, where he was organising committee president.

"We organised the schedule so, if we finished first in our group and Brazil first in theirs, the teams could not meet before the final," Platini told Radio Bleu Sport in an interview to be broadcast on Sunday, highlights of which the station tweeted on Friday.

The revelation comes at a time when Platini is banned from football for receiving a "disloyal payment" of 1.7 million euros, when he was head of UEFA from former FIFA president Sepp Blatter.

The draw took place in Marseille on December 4, 1997 and was presided over by FIFA's then-general secretary: Blatter.

"Look, we were at home, you have to make the most of things, we weren't going to go through the bother of six years organising the World Cup if we could not pull off a few little tricks," said Platini, a former midfield star for Saint Etienne, Juventus and France. "Do you think other hosts didn't do the same at their World Cups?"

A France-Brazil final "was everyone's dream", said Platini.

Not everyone was happy with the fairly transparent plan, though.

At the time, the selection process of top seeds for the eight groups had provoked accusations of a "European conspiracy" by then-Brazil coach Mario Zagallo.