

What to WATCH

SONY ESPN & TEN 2

Asian Games

Live from 7:30am

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

US Open

Women's Round-1

Live from 9:00pm

English Premier League

Man United v Tottenham

Live from 1:00am (Tuesday)

STAR SPORTS SELECT 2

US Open

Men's Round-1

Live from 9:00pm

TEN 2

Serie A

Roma v Atalanta

Live from 12:30am (Tuesday)

Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson Becker provided a lovely little sideshow during his side's 1-0 win over Brighton on Saturday. Alisson may be a goalkeeper by trade, but he's also Brazilian by birth, which means when faced with a scurrying Anthony Knockaert trying to close him down on the edge of his own 18-yard box, he's liable to do something audacious. And he did, by flicking the ball over the onrushing attacker before passing it back to defender Virgil van Dijk. As wonderfully ridiculous as it was, it was enough to give Jurgen Klopp palpitations as he watched on: "That wasn't too cool for a manager. If it works then it's cool! Alisson is obviously a goalkeeper who can play football, which is good. He's confident enough to do it. He didn't do it for showing off, he did it to sort the situation."

AFP, Newcastle

AFP, Newcastle

Premier League



Chelsea talisman Eden Hazard (C) celebrates after opening the scoring against Newcastle from the penalty spot in their Premier League encounter yesterday. The Magpies hit back in the 83rd minute but were ultimately undone by an 87th-minute own goal.

Chelsea leave it late at St James' Park

Chelsea required an own goal from Newcastle's DeAndre Yedlin to maintain their 100 per cent start to the Premier League season as the Blues ground out a 2-1 win at St James' Park on Sunday.

Yedlin deflected Marcos Alonso's shot into his own net in the 87th minute to settle a match that had threatened to end in frustration for Chelsea manager Maurizio Sarri.

Earlier, Chelsea needed a penalty from Eden Hazard to finally breach a black and white wall erected by manager Rafa Benitez, whose defensive approach succeeded for 76 minutes.

The Newcastle manager acknowledged the massive gap in quality between the two sets of players, packing his defence and granting Chelsea the ball for 80 per cent of the game.

It was possession that they were unable to turn into goals until Fabian Schar's challenge on Spanish defender Alonso produced a penalty.

Newcastle responded with a goal from Joselu in a rare attack and looked set to steal a point before Chelsea's last-gasp winner made it three successive victories for the Blues.

Benitez will say his approach was justified and it acknowledged the gap in quality between the two squads. Before this game he earmarked Sarri's team as genuine title candidates and even gave them the edge over Manchester United, Tottenham and Arsenal, so Benitez was never likely to go toe-to-toe with Chelsea.

At the interval, Newcastle must have sensed they could collect at least a point, a target that appeared to be more difficult before the start when Benitez was forced to rule out two of his most influential players, Jamaal Lascelles and Jonjo Shelvey.

It meant four of Newcastle's summer signings were starting a game for the first time in a line-up and two of them -- Schar and Federico Fernandez -- were at the heart of Newcastle's defence.

Both performed well, particularly in the second half when the pattern was the same but Chelsea delivered more crosses towards Alvaro Morata as they started to run out of patience.

Rudiger almost made the breakthrough when he powered a shot against the bar in the 72nd minute, shortly before Hazard's penalty.

Even the most optimistic Newcastle supporter must have feared the worst, but Joselu's 83rd minute header offered them hope before Chelsea won it in dramatic fashion.

'Win, lose and stay together'

SPORTS REPORTER

It is perhaps not time to say that the scenario of Bangladesh football has changed, but the way the booters performed in the Asian Games was obvious evidence that there is a wind of change. And of course it has been the young guns driving that change which started silently before the arrival of English coach Jamie Day, who is now pushing the team to reach a better place.

Before Day took charge of the national team in June, English-born-Australian coach Andrew Ord had started making changes to fitness and stamina levels, food habits and attitude during the SAFF U-18 Championship last year. He also unearthed brave players like Mahabubur Rahman Sufil, Jafar Iqbal, Tutul Hossain Badsha, Saad Uddin, Bishwanath Gosh, Rahmat Mia, Sushanta Tripura, Anisur Rahman Zico, Pritom and others who repaid Ord's faith after posting a brilliant come-from-behind 4-3 win over their Indian counterparts. And those players are now filling the holes in the senior team.

Under Ord's guidance, those young players had also been part of a come-from-behind 2-2 draw against Laos in a March friendly, thanks to a tremendous never-say-die attitude and much fitter physical condition that allowed them to run till the last minute of the game.

After Ord's sudden departure, the National Teams Management Committee of the BFF picked a suitable successor with the appointment of Day, who has seemingly been driving the boys in the right direction so far.

"The good performance in Asian Games was the outcome of our hard work over the past two months," said



Some members of the Asian Games football contingent returned to Bangladesh on Saturday night after a momentous achievement.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

midfielder Mohammad Abdullah, who made his national team debut against Bhutan in 2016.

"I have played under three coaches -- Tom Saintfiet, Andrew Ord and Jamie Day -- and they have different approaches but Jamie injected something that the other two coaches were missing.

"Before we put our all concentration on how to defend but this time around we also think of how to attack the opponents by keeping our defensive organisation right. You can say the players are more positionally aware in term of defence and attack during transition periods and those

things were injected by Jamie," added the midfielder, who played almost all matches as a substitute.

"Now you see the changes in the team because our fitness levels and stamina have improved compared to the past. A fighting attitude and winning belief has also been grown within us," explained Abdullah, who however admitted the changes were the fruits of long-term training.

"I think the conditioning camp was the turning point of the changes that you see now and it started during the regime of Ord, who showed us that food habits were crucial to keeping our bodies fit," admired Abdullah.

Defender Rahmat Mia echoed Abdullah's sentiments, saying that the changes started from the national youth team which showed bravery in both the SAFF U-18 Championship and SAFF U-19 Championship Qualifiers last year.

"The players have grown willpower and believe that we can do anything if we give effort and we are now more self-driven to do better in international matches. For example, a player sustained an injury and sat idle previously. But an injured player is now spending more time on the pitch to recover. Besides, there is a healthy competition among the players in a bid to cement their place in the starting eleven," said Rahmat, adding that nothing was being imposed from the coaching staffs; rather the players were doing everything willingly.

"To be honest, the coach remains hesitant to choose the starting eleven because junior to senior players are now dedicated to giving their best as we all are now thinking of changing our standard of play rather than thinking of winning or losing," said Rahmat. "Jaime inserted a mantra of 'win together, lose together and stay together' and we all are following it."

Sri Lanka arrive ahead of friendly

SPORTS REPORTER

Sri Lanka last night became the first team to arrive in Dhaka to take part in next month's SAFF Championship with the other teams participating in the regional football extravaganza scheduled to land in the capital two days before the event, which will begin at the Bangabandhu National Stadium from September 4.

The Islanders came here earlier to prepare for the 12th edition of the tournament and the champions of the 1995 SAFF Championship will play a FIFA-sanctioned friendly against Bangladesh on August 29 in the northern district Nilphamari.

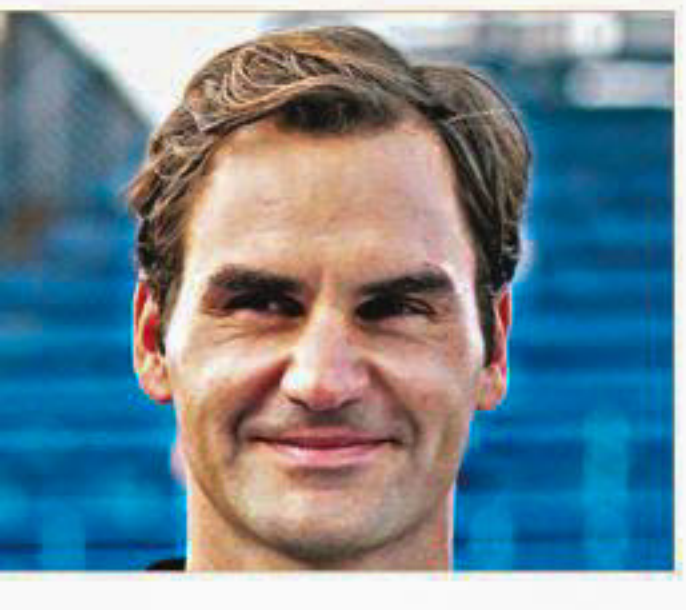
Sri Lanka were scheduled to leave today morning for Rangpur, where they will stay alongside the hosts. The hosts are expected to head to Rangpur on August 28 as the third and last contingent of the Bangladesh U-23 team returned home from Jakarta yesterday night. The rest of the players, who arrived on Saturday, will have to report to the manager today.

There is huge enthusiasm ahead of the friendly, bolstered by the U-23 team's performances in the Asian Games, where Bangladesh qualified for the knockout stage for the first time by beating Qatar and drawing against Thailand. Ultimately, they were eliminated by North Korea in the round of 16.

"Of the 20,000 tickets, some 13,000 -- with prices between Tk 100 to Tk 1,000 -- were sold in Nilphamari today [Sunday]," BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag said yesterday, adding that the state-owned BTV would telecast the match. The match will get underway at 4:00pm.

BIG NAMES RETURN AT THE BIG APPLE

The US Open will begin from tonight and the fourth Grand Slam of the year will see all of the big names returning to action. Scotland's Andy Murray, who won the event at Flushing Meadows in 2012, will return from a year-long lay-off. Joining him will be 2016 champions Stanislas Wawrinka, who was given a wildcard by organisers after his comeback from knee surgery. Other former champions feature Marin Cilic and Juan Martin del Potro while this is also the stage where 'Next-Gen' superstar Alexander Zverev will be hoping to become a 'Current-Gen' champion. However, as has been the case in Grand Slams for years now, Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer remain favourites.



FEDERER COUNTED OUT

For the first time since 2015, five-time US Open men's singles champion Roger Federer enters the tournament with a clean bill of health. After sitting out the 2016 event with a knee injury, Federer willed his way to last year's quarterfinals despite a back injury that hampered his preparation and play.

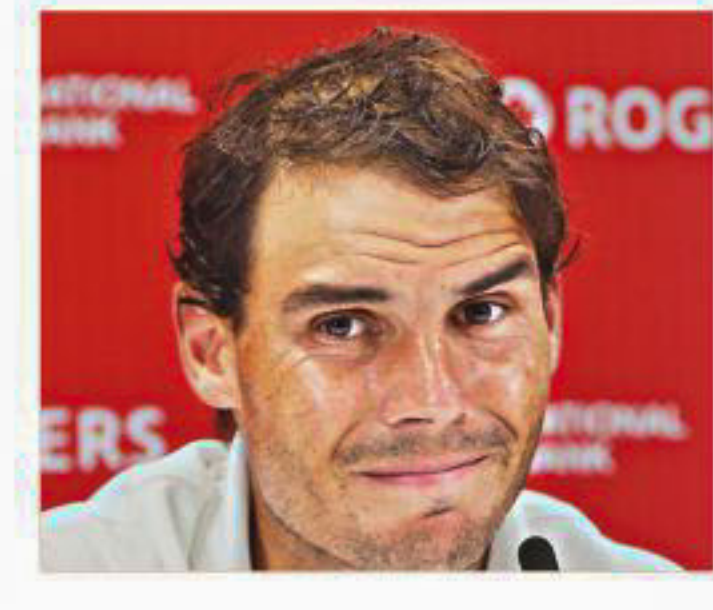
This year, he has long had the year's final Slam circled on his calendar.

"It's even bigger of a priority this year -- not that it wasn't last year," Federer said Friday. "I'm really excited and happy to be back here healthy again and feeling good and, you know, take it one match at a time and see what happens."

However, he still heads to Flushing Meadows as third favourite behind longtime rivals Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal after a season that has nose-dived since he won the Australian Open at the start of the year.

Federer was defeated in the Wimbledon quarterfinals last month before floundering against Djokovic in the Cincinnati Masters final last week.

"I'm not the favourite, they are - Rafa and Novak, in my opinion," the 37-year-old said after losing in Cincinnati.



CONFIDENCE KEY FOR NADAL

Rafael Nadal is full of confidence and ready to defend his US Open title, having enjoyed a blockbuster 2017 by claiming the French and US majors.

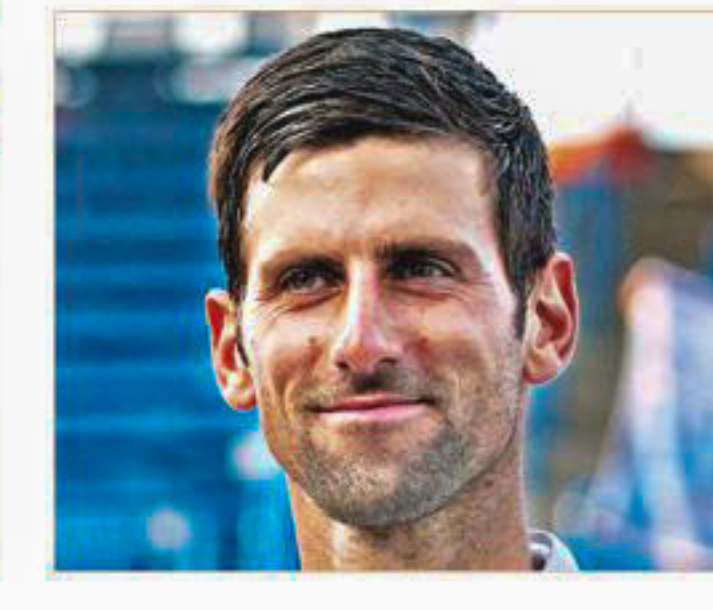
The World No. 1 told reporters on Friday that his strong performances this season -- including clinching yet another Roland Garros title in June -- have given him momentum.

"That's important for the feelings, the confidence," Nadal said. "I am here just trying to improve every day."

For Nadal, whose record 11 French Open titles have earned himself the moniker King of Clay, trophies on the U.S. Open's hard courts have been relatively harder to come by. Before 2017, Nadal had won the tournament twice, in 2010 and 2013.

Despite a semifinal exit at Wimbledon last month, the Spaniard is relying on memories of last year's win at Flushing Meadows to spur him on.

"Last year was a very special year. 2015 was not a positive year in terms of tennis," Nadal said, referring to the period when he struggled for form. "To win on hard court again is something that means a lot to me, especially here in New York."



DJOKOVIC REJUVENATED

From the pits of despair in Paris, record-setting Novak Djokovic now eyes a third US Open title where for the first time since Wimbledon last year, the sport's 'Big Four' will reunite.

Champion in 2011 and 2015, and a five-time runner-up, Djokovic sat out the 2017 US Open to nurse an elbow injury. His physical limitations were still evident when he slumped away from Roland Garros in June after a shock quarterfinal loss to journeyman Marco Cecchinato, threatening to skip Wimbledon to mend his shattered confidence.

Fast forward three months and, buoyed by an against-the-odds win at Wimbledon and his recent defeat of Federer in the Cincinnati Masters, Djokovic is again the man to beat.

"It's a wonderful feeling. It's been a couple of tough months for me with an injury but then winning Wimbledon and Cincinnati," Djokovic said.

Djokovic's Wimbledon triumph took his Grand Slam title collection to 13, just one behind Pete Sampras. He also has 31 Masters. He will head for New York buoyed by his dominance over his three major rivals as well -- he leads Nadal 27-25, Federer 24-22 and Andy Murray 25-11.



SERENA MISFIRING

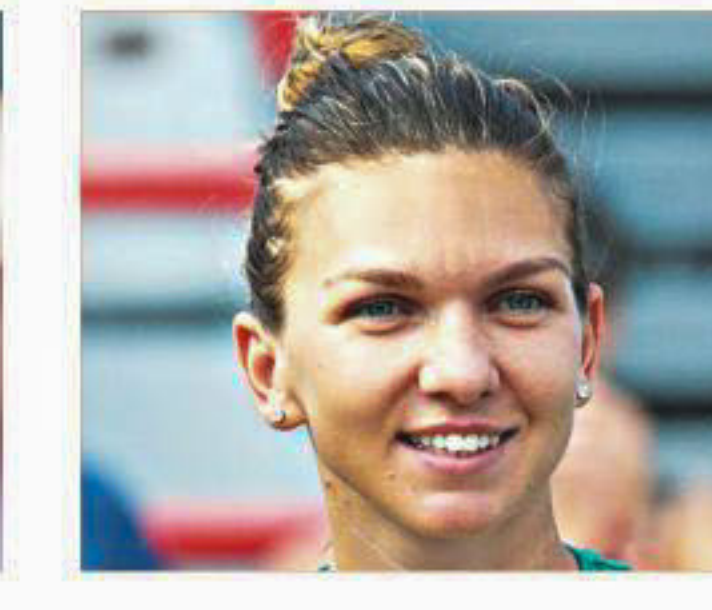
Serena Williams, riding an emotional rollercoaster as she adapts to juggling tennis and motherhood, seeks to end 2018 on a high with a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title at the US Open.

The US great counts six US Open victories among her 23 Slams and with one more would match Australian Margaret Court's record for most major singles titles. However, since an impressive run to the Wimbledon final, Williams has endured a lackluster buildup to the hardcourt showpiece.

"I'm still at the very beginning, this is a long comeback," she told reporters after a second-round loss to Petra Kvitova at Cincinnati. "I just began, I just started. I'm definitely at the very, very beginning."

She had shrugged off an even bigger disappointment two weeks earlier -- a 6-1, 6-0 loss to Johanna Konta in San Jose that was the most lopsided defeat of her career.

"I have been through a lot of stuff in my life, but I have never been through this," Williams said. "Having a baby and feeling with the emotions and the ups and downs and the fears and the excitement. Basically, my whole game needs to improve."



HALEP OVER THE HUMP

Simona Halep, her number one ranking secure and a Grand Slam title on her resume, is riding high heading into the US Open but that doesn't mean she's taking anything for granted.

"I don't feel the pressure," said the 26-year-old Romanian.

A victory in the French Open -- after disappointments in three Grand Slam finals -- confirmed for Halep that she had truly arrived at the top.

"Inside myself something changed," she said. "I'm more relaxed. These two were my dreams -- to be number one in the world and to win a Grand Slam. Always I say number one in the world without a Grand Slam, you are not a real number one. After the French Open, I really started to believe that I'm a real number one."

"I can say I have a big chance for this tournament, but it's tough to say that I'm the favorite even if I'm No. 1," she said. "Every-one is playing at maybe the highest level. Every match, every round is difficult."

"I'm just looking forward to playing my first one. If I win it, I will focus on the next one, just like that."



STEPHENS FEELING THE HEAT

Sloane Stephens has a new swagger in her step since winning last year's US Open but now faces the challenge of showing it in the New York spotlight as she gets set to defend a grand slam title for the first time in her career.

"I think there is a lot of pressure. I've never done it before. A lot of other people have. First go around sometimes isn't that great," said the 25-year-old American baseliner.

"I'm going to do whatever I can to make sure that I'm prepared, in the best shape possible, hopefully playing some good tennis by the time the U.S. Open comes around."

Stephens's triumph over friend and compatriot Madison Keys in last year's final capped one of the most remarkable comebacks in recent memory but she suffered eight straight losses afterwards until February this year. She has since picked up a title in Miami, reached the French Open final and is a career-high third in the world rankings.

"I'm playing good tennis. There's nothing to complain about. I hope that it keeps getting better. I hope it keeps improving," said Stephens. "But the way that I'm playing, I mean, I hope to continue, yeah, just kind of continue on this path and I think I'll be okay."

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:

La Liga opens disciplinary case against Valladolid

The Spanish La Liga confirmed that it opened a disciplinary case over the Real Valladolid pitch, with Barca players and manager furious at the state of the pitch at Estadio Jose Zorrilla. Barca scraped to a 1-0 win against the La Liga newcomers as Video Assistant Referee (VAR) intervened to rule out a last-minute goal from Valladolid.

Spotlight on Mourinho

The spotlight is on Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho to deliver a positive response to a week of negative publicity when faced with an opposite number who has adopted a very different attitude to similar off-field frustrations.

Barca, Atletico made to work hard

Barcelona and Atletico Madrid were both made to work hard for narrow 1-0 victories over newly-promoted duo Real Valladolid and Rayo Vallecano on Saturday. Ousmane Dembele and Antoine Griezmann of Barca and Atletico respectively made the difference.