

What to WATCH

GTV, STAR SPORTS 1 & SELECT 1

Asia Cup
India v Hong Kong
Live from 5:30pm
SONY ESPN

UEFA Champions League
Club Brugge v Dortmund

Live from 1:00am (Wednesday)

TEN 1
UEFA Champions League
Inter Milan v Tottenham
Live from 10:55pm
Monaco v Atletico Madrid
Live from 1:00am (Wednesday)

TEN 2
UEFA Champions League
Barcelona v PSV Eindhoven
Live from 10:55pm
Liverpool v PSG
Live from 1:00am (Wednesday)

COSTA APOLOGISES FOR LOOGEY

Juventus forward Douglas Costa has apologised after being sent off for spitting in the face of Sassuolo's Federico Di Francesco in a 2-1 Serie A win in Turin on Sunday. Cristiano Ronaldo scored his first goals for Juventus but the champions' fourth win in as many games this season was overshadowed by Brazilian Costa's late red card for spitting at Di Francesco -- the 24-year-old son of Roma coach Eusebio Di Francesco. "I would like to apologise to all the Juventus fans for my wrong reaction during today's game," Costa wrote on Instagram. I also apologise to my teammates, who are always by my side, in good and bad times. It was ugly, I am aware of that and I apologise to everyone for that." Costa now faces an extended ban with coach Massimiliano Allegri annoyed with the forward for "rising to provocation".

-- AGENCIES



Blistering start for hosts

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts Bangladesh got off to a blistering start in their opening Group F fixture of the AFC U-16 Women's Championship Qualifiers with a 10-0 win over minnows Bahrain at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Maria Manda, Shamsunnahar Jr and Anuching Mogini scored a brace apiece while Anai Mogini, Sajeda Khatun, Shamsunnahar Sr and Saraban Tahura netted one goal each in the one-sided affair.

However, despite the massive margin of victory, it was not an entirely impressive performance from Golam Rabbani Choton's charges against a side who have only just started playing football.

The Bahrain team came into the tournament with a two-month preparation after coming into football a year ago, according to coach Khaled Hassan. They conceded an 8-0 defeat against Lebanon in their opening match and hardly had an answer to the goal glut yesterday. The Bahrain players frequently interrupted play by lying down on the pitch following light tussles with the Bangladeshi players.

However, Bangladesh failed to take full advantage of their opposition's lack of experience. The Bangladesh players, who have been in training for nearly two years since their qualification for the 2017 final round, looked disorganised in the first half and lacked a proper game plan before settling down after the break.

Amid some disorganised displays early on, right-back Anai broke the deadlock in the ninth minute, driving home a cross from the right over the head of goalkeeper Zahra Nezar, who was also helpless against a 25-yard shot from Maria in the 16th minute.

Anuching scored two successive goals from goalmouth scrambles to make it 4-0 before Shamsunnahar Jr scored the fifth goal after wasting a few chances.

The home side played better in the second half and built the game through the flanks and added five more goals against Bahrain, who had to play the last 30 minutes with 10 players following the sending off of Dana Bassem due to two bookable offences.

"We have started the campaign in positive way and the girls tried to give their best in the match," Choton said. "We dominated the match with better ball possession and we played long ball tactic due to the compact defence of the opposition."

In the day's first match, Lebanon beat UAE 6-3 to top the group with six points from two matches while Bangladesh and Vietnam are in joint second position with three points each from one match.



Bangladesh forward Shamsunnahar Jr celebrates her goal as Bahrain goalkeeper Zahra Nezar looks on dejectedly during their AFC U-16 Women's Championship Qualifiers match at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Ballon d'Or on Griezmann's mind

AFP, Madrid

Atletico Madrid star Antoine Griezmann says he still can't fathom why he was not voted one of the world's top three players by FIFA -- but hopes winning the "more prestigious" Ballon d'Or will make amends.

"It's a prize from FIFA and it seems a pity that no World Cup winners were nominated," Griezmann, who helped France to World Cup glory in Russia this summer, told Spanish sports daily AS.

Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo, World Cup finalist Luka Modric of Croatia and Egyptian Mohamed Salah, who enjoyed a stunning campaign with Liverpool last season, were the three players nominated by FIFA for the world ruling body's top prize.

Now grouped within the FIFA Best awards, it will be presented on September 24.

For Griezmann, who helped Atletico to Europa League glory as well as playing a pivotal role in France's World Cup win, FIFA's choice was unwarranted.

"We had a really good World Cup campaign, the whole team deserve to be awarded: (Kylian) Mbappe, (Raphael) Varane, (N'Golo) Kante, who had an amazing World Cup even though no-one talks about it, or even myself.

"But that's the way it is."

The snub has galvanised Griezmann's ambition to land the Ballon d'Or, the prize awarded by France Football magazine to the world's top player as voted on by journalists around the globe.

"I think the Ballon d'Or has more prestige, a richer history," said Griezmann.

'Hazard can score 40'

AFP, London

Premier League

Eden Hazard can score 40 goals this season and win the Premier League Golden Boot, according to Chelsea boss Maurizio Sarri after the Belgium forward scored a hat-trick to maintain the club's perfect start to the season.

Sarri believes Hazard can become the best player in Europe and outstrip even arch poachers Harry Kane and Mohamed Salah following his three goals in a 4-1 victory against Cardiff on Saturday.

"We have spoken and I told him he can score 40 goals," said the former Napoli manager. "He has to improve some things, but he can do it."

Hazard himself has hailed Olivier Giroud as the world's best target man after the World Cup-winning striker laid on two goals for him.

Giroud is yet to find the net for Chelsea this season but already has three assists in five Premier League games while Hazard has found the net five times.

And the 27-year-old paid tribute to the Frenchman for creating his first two goals at Stamford Bridge on Saturday.

"Olivier's a target man, maybe the best in the world, I think so," said Hazard.

"When he gets the ball he can hold the ball and we can go in deep with him, so for



us it's a pleasure to play with him."

Despite Chelsea's fluency in attack, Sarri is aware the Stamford Bridge team must improve their defending.

The Italian boss wants to turn Chelsea into the best team in England but says Liverpool and defending champions Manchester City will be the league's pacesetters.

"Eight players joined us this summer," he said. "So I think it's normal that in this period we have some defensive problems. We can cope with the problems with the quality in the offensive phase, but not in the defensive phase."

Higuain rescues Milan

INTERNET

Cagliari and Milan shared the points in a 1-1 draw at the Sardenga Arena on Sunday as early goals in each half kept the scores level until the final whistle.

Rossoneri had scored in their last 17 matches against Cagliari, averaging at least two goals a game against the home side.

However, they stumbled out of the blocks for this one and were made to play catch up as early as the fourth minute as Joao Pedro stuck the ball into the back of the net after Gianluigi Donnarumma palmed Leonardo Pavoletti's stinging shot on to the post.

The second period saw Milan burst to life. Gonzalo Higuain would level the score in the 55th minute with a calmly taken shot after rounding the Rossoblu keeper from a chance created by Franck Kessie.

'More of a team without CR7'

AFP, Madrid

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Gareth Bale has won four Champions Leagues in five years at Real Madrid, but believes the Spanish giants can be even better in their quest for a 14th European crown despite the loss of Cristiano Ronaldo.

Bale has shone in the spotlight since Ronaldo's departure for Juventus, scoring in all of Real's opening three La Liga wins and providing the equaliser for Isco in a 1-1 draw at Athletic Bilbao on Saturday.

"Obviously it's going to be a little different from having such a big player there," Bale told British newspaper the Daily Mail.

"It's maybe a bit more relaxed, yes. I suppose there is more of a team, more working as one unit rather than one player."

Fired by his anger at being left out of the starting line-up in Zinedine Zidane's last match in charge of Madrid, Bale came off the bench to score twice in last season's Champions League final to beat Liverpool 3-1.

However, it is Ronaldo's goals that have led Real to so much success on the continent in recent times.

The Portuguese has been the competition's top scorer for the past six seasons.

But ahead of their Champions League opener against last season's semi-finalists Roma on Wednesday, Bale insists Real can be even better this season.

"We can be even better again," he added. "Another star and another challenge. We're ready for it."

Bale avoided the question of whether new boss Julen Lopetegui is a better manager than the French great, but accepts Lopetegui's command of English has made it easier to communicate.

BD volleyball team top group

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national volleyball team emerged as Group B champions in the AVC 1st Asian Men's Challenge Cup after handing a 3-1 sets defeat to Mongolia in Colombo yesterday.

Bangladesh will play against Saudi Arabia in the quarterfinals tomorrow.

The men in red and green faced a tough challenge from Mongolia in the first two sets, which Bangladesh won by 25-22, 25-23 before losing the third set by 23-25 points. However, Bangladesh bounced back strong in the fourth set to ensure the victory with a 25-19 point win.

Bangladesh started the group stage with a defeat against Iraq before beating United Arab Emirates and Mongolia to finish ahead of Iraq, who lost against UAE yesterday.



Paris Saint-Germain superstars Neymar (R) and Kylian Mbappe (C) share a light moment during a training session at Saint-Germain-en-Laye yesterday on the eve of their Champions League match against Liverpool.

PHOTO: AFP

Ronaldo returns to Spain

Mouth-watering Liverpool-PSG tie today

REUTERS, Barcelona

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Fresh from scoring his first goals for Juventus, Cristiano Ronaldo makes an eagerly-awaited return to Spain when the Italian champions play Valencia on Wednesday in their opening Champions League group game.

All eyes will be on the Portuguese forward, the all-time top scorer in Europe's elite competition and a five-times winner of the trophy, when he makes his first public appearance in Spain since ending a trophy-filled nine-year stay at Real in July.

Ronaldo's last act for Real was lifting the Champions League trophy in Kiev after beating Liverpool 3-1 in the final before he dropped the bombshell in a pitch-side interview that he had decided to leave Madrid.

Ronaldo can expect a hostile reception in Valencia, who had to suffer 15 of his goals for Real and are returning to the Champions League for the first time in three years, hoping to improve on their miserable start to the La Liga campaign.

Ronaldo, who plundered a staggering 451 goals in 438 games for Real,

made a slow start by his usual standards to life at Juventus by failing to score in his first three games but broke his duck with two strikes in Sunday's 2-1 win over Sassuolo.

"I really wanted to score these first goals and I'm happy to have found the net," Ronaldo told reporters.

"Obviously, I was a little anxious with all the talk after my move from Real Madrid and not scoring and there was a lot of expectation on me, but I

knew I was working hard and it was only a matter of time before I scored."

Juventus, knocked out in the quarterfinals of last season's competition by a Ronaldo-inspired Real Madrid, will be looking to make a strong start in Group H, which also contains Swiss champions Young Boys and Manchester United, where Ronaldo became a household name before joining Real in 2009.

Real begin their bid to win a fourth straight Champions League title at home

to AS Roma on Wednesday after drawing 1-1 at Athletic Bilbao, where they certainly could have done with the firepower of all-time top scorer Ronaldo.

The week's other mouth-watering game is last season's runners-up Liverpool hosting French champions Paris St Germain, who begin another quest to win Europe's elite competition for the first time and justify the massive investment ploughed into the club by their Qatari owners since 2011.

Both sides have made perfect starts to their domestic campaigns with five wins, PSG thrashing St Etienne 4-0 at home on Friday and Liverpool enjoying a convincing 2-1 victory at Tottenham Hotspur.

English champions Manchester City host Olympique Lyonnais in Group F on Wednesday also looking to make a mark in the competition they are yet to win despite huge investment from their Abu Dhabi owners.

Five-times European champions Barcelona host Dutch league winners PSV Eindhoven in Group B on Tuesday looking to improve on their recent disappointing showings in the competition, having been knocked out at the quarter-final stage in the last three seasons.

FIXTURES

Barcelona v PSV, Inter v Tottenham, Club Brugge v Dortmund, Monaco v Atletico Madrid, Crvena Zvezda v Napoli, Liverpool v PSG