

**STAR SPORTS SELECT 1**  
English Premier League  
Crystal Palace v Chelsea  
Live from 6:00pm  
Southampton v Man City  
Live from 8:15pm

**Man United v Bournemouth**  
Live from 10:30pm  
**STAR SPORTS SELECT 2**  
English Premier League  
Burnley v West Ham  
Live from 8:15pm

## Ronaldo brace seals new Juve record

AFP, Milan

 **SERIE A**  
2018-2019  
TIM  
Cristiano Ronaldo bagged a brace as Italian champions Juventus finished 2018 on a high with a 2-1 win over Sampdoria giving the Italian champions a new record of 53 points before the winter break.

Ronaldo curled in the opener after just two minutes in Turin adding a second from the penalty spot after 66 minutes, putting the Portuguese top of Serie A's scoring charts with 14 goals.

Fabio Quagliarella pulled Sampdoria level with a penalty after 33 minutes, with the visitors having a late Riccardo Saponara goal ruled offside after consultation with the video assistant referee.

Juventus open up a 12-point lead at the top of Serie A ahead of Napoli who can reduce the gap when they host Bologna later on Saturday.

The seven-time reigning champions also have a record number of points before the three-week winter break with 53 from 19 games.

"The team is doing very well, we had an excellent first half to the season, now we have to keep working to ensure we keep this form in the second half of the season," Ronaldo told Sky Sport Italia.

"I like VAR, because these are difficult decisions for a referee and we should wel-

come anything that makes his job easier."

The reigning champions have dropped points just twice this season, being held by Genoa at home and 2-2 against Atalanta midweek, and are firmly on track for an eighth consecutive Scudetto.

Ronaldo had come off the bench to score in Bergamo but returned to the starting line along with Miralem Pjanic.

And the Portuguese striker found a way through early picking up a Paulo Dybala cross to fire in past Sampdoria goalkeeper Emil Audero.

But Sampdoria pulled level following a penalty awarded when Emre Can handball with Quagliarella making no mistake past Mattia Perin in the Juventus goal.

The 35-year-old became the first player to score in nine consecutive Serie A games since David Trezeguet for Juventus in 2005.

Audero denied Dybala before the break with Mario Mandzukic missing a chance to finish off a Ronaldo cross.

The Sampdoria goalkeeper again deflected over a Ronaldo header on the hour but the hosts went ahead when the referee awarded a penalty for an Alex Ferrari handball off a corner after a VAR viewing.

Substitute Saponara looked to have grabbed a point in injury time but VAR ruled he was in an offside position and the goal was disallowed as Sampdoria stay fifth two points behind Lazio who occupy the final Champions League spot.



Juventus superstar Cristiano Ronaldo (R) celebrates his opening goal with teammates during their Serie A encounter against Sampdoria in Turin yesterday. Ronaldo scored twice as his team won 2-1.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## NZ on verge of historic victory

AFP, Christchurch

 **NEW ZEALAND**  
Sri Lanka Cricket  
New Zealand were eyeing an historic victory as injury and a barrage of Neil Wagner bounces left Sri Lanka in tatters at the close of day four of the second Test in Christchurch on Saturday.

The conditions were tailor-made for short-ball specialist Wagner, New Zealand bowling coach Shane Jurgenssen said, as Sri Lanka were 231 for six at stumps.

At most they have only four wickets left, but with doubt whether the injured Angelo Mathews will return to help them survive the final day.

At the crease were Dilruwan Perera on 22 and Suranga Lakmal on 16 with their 660-run target out of sight.

Wagner, who had little success earlier in the series, broke through stubborn Sri Lankan resistance, with figures of three for 47 from a marathon 28 overs.

"I think he showed what he could do once he had a little bit more bounce on offer. I thought he bowled with really good pace and really questioned the Sri Lankan batsmen," Jurgenssen said.

"I was commenting in our viewing area saying I think this day is set up for Neil."

"He was really licking his lips today to have a good crack and he certainly had that."

After rain ensured a drawn first Test in Wellington, a win in the Christchurch decider would give New Zealand a fourth consecutive series win for the first time after beating the West Indies, England and Pakistan earlier this year.

Despite losing both openers in the first two overs of their second innings, Sri Lanka fought to stay in the game until Wagner came into the

frame.

Skipper Dinesh Chandimal and Kusal Mendis produced stubborn resistance for 53 overs for the third wicket before Mendis went for 67.

They had seen off the swing and seam of New Zealand strike bowlers Tim Southee and Trent Boult at the start of the day, were untroubled by spinner Ajaz Patel, and initially they dodged the barrage aimed at the ribs by Wagner.

But Mendis, who in the course of his innings became only the second player behind India's Virat Kohli to score 1,000 Test runs this year, was frustrated as Wagner forced him onto the back foot with four successive deliveries.

When the next ball was full

length, the 23-year-old could not resist going for the drive and was smartly caught by substitute fielder Matt Henry diving to his left at extra cover.

Angelo Mathews, who in the first three innings of the series scored 236 runs and was dismissed only once, reached 22 when he was forced to retire at tea with a hamstring injury after hobbling between the wickets for the last 10 minutes before the interval.

Chandimal faced 228 deliveries before he fell victim to a Wagner bouncer that zipped from the gloves to the helmet and into the hands of close-in fielder Henry Nicholls.

Niroshan Dickwella reached 19 before he chopped a wide Southee

delivery on to his stumps.

Silva and Dilruwan Perera took Sri Lanka past the 200 mark before Wagner struck again with Silva caught behind for 18.

Wagner also clouted Perera on the helmet with a rising delivery just before stumps but the batsman was able to play on after being checked by medical staff.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**NEW ZEALAND:** First innings 178 and second innings 585 for 4 dec.

**SRI LANKA:** First innings 104 and second innings 231 for 6 (Chandimal 56, Mendis 67, Mathews 22 retired hurt 22, Perera 22 not out; Southee 2-61, Wagner 3-47)



New Zealand paceman Neil Wagner (C) is the toast of his teammates after taking three wickets against Sri Lanka during the fourth day of the second Test in Christchurch yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Wolves bite Spurs' title chances

AFP, London

Tottenham's Premier League title hopes took a major hit on Saturday when Wolves beat them 3-1 at Wembley to end their winning run.

Spurs took the lead with a Harry Kane pile-driver in the first half but the visitors staged a ferocious comeback through Willy Boly, Raul Jimenez and substitute Helder Costa.

The first few minutes of the match were scrappy as both teams looked for rhythm but Spurs gradually exerted control, Christian Eriksen and the returning Dele Alli probing for openings around the edge of the box.

Kieran Trippier hit a free-kick into the arms of Wolves goalkeeper Rui Patricio after Kane was fouled and Eriksen then tested Patricio from distance.

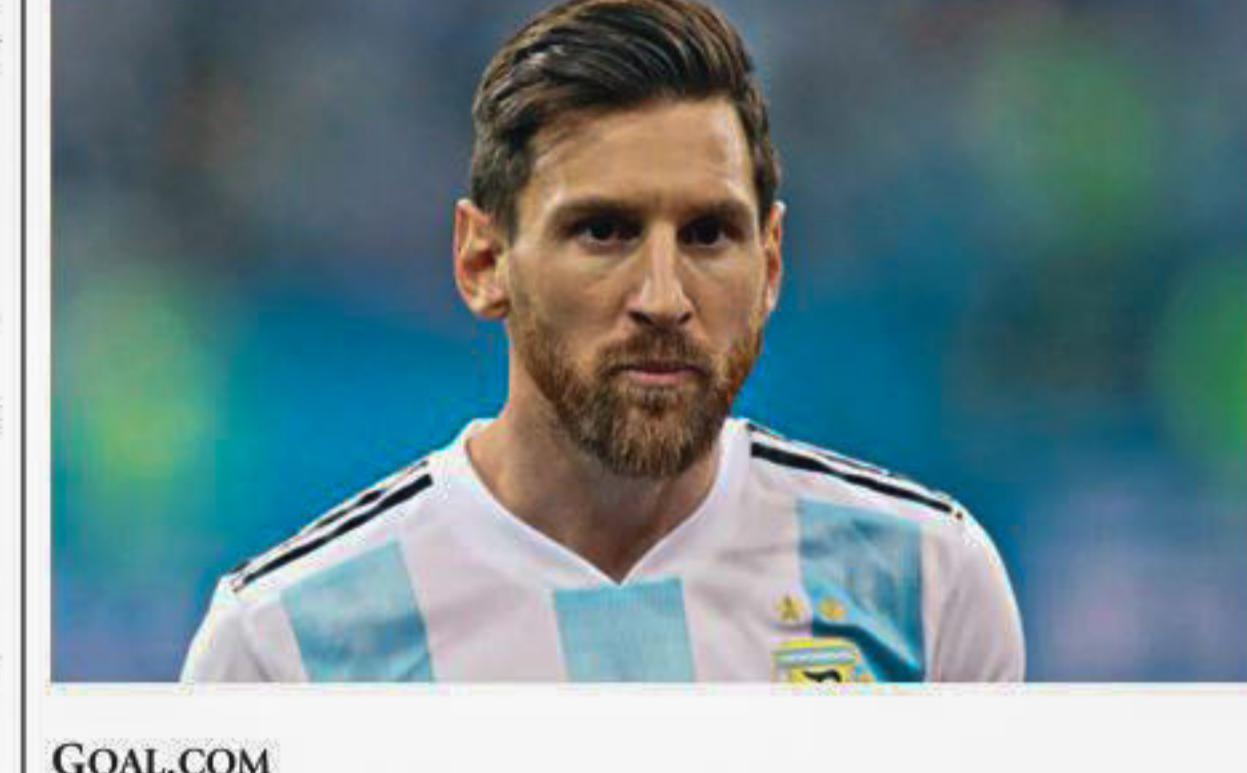
Spurs were finally rewarded midway through the first half when Son led the way.

Just before he reached the edge of the Wolves box he checked back onto his left foot and hit an unstoppable shot into the far corner past the despairing Patricio.

The equaliser came in the 72nd minute after a period of pressure from Wolves earned a corner.

Substitute Moutinho swung in the corner and Boly rose to head it past Hugo Lloris.

## Scaloni to hold Messi talks



GOAL.COM

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni will hold further talks with Lionel Messi over the captain's return to international action.

Messi has not featured for his country since the World Cup, where Jorge Sampaoli's men were dumped out by France.

The forward dragged Argentina through the group stage with a wonderful goal against Nigeria, but a chaotic campaign ended in the last 16.

Messi has given no indication over whether he will play international football again, with Argentina beginning preparations for next year's Copa America.

But Scaloni, appointed as Sampaoli's successor after initially taking over on an interim basis, is planning to hold further talks with the talismanic forward after they met when the Copa Libertadores final second leg was played in Madrid in December.

"I do not talk very often with Messi, but we have a relationship," Scaloni said on Friday.

"We are going to try for him to join us in 2019, we have pending talks and we are optimistic that it will be positive."

"For us it is something important. Any coach would like to coach him, myself more than any."

Speaking last month, Messi's Argentina team-mate Mauro Icardi said he hopes the Barcelona star can be persuaded to return to the fold.

"He's the best player in the world and we all hope he comes back with us, especially with the Copa America coming up," Icardi told TyC Sports after a friendly win against Mexico.

## 'Solskjaer has restored positivity'

AFP, London

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has restored Manchester United's attacking elan in the short space of time he has been caretaker manager said defender Luke Shaw.

Solskjaer will be seeking a third successive victory when they host out of form Bournemouth on Sunday.

Victory over Bournemouth would see Solskjaer become only the third United manager to win their first three matches.

"I think you can see from the outside how much he has changed things in such a short space of time," said 23-year-old Shaw.

"He is just a really positive manager, he knows what the club needs and also what the fans want."

## 'Why would you name your kid Cheteshwar'

AGENCIES, Melbourne

Former Australia cricketer Kerry O'Keeffe finds himself in the midst of another commentary-related controversy during the third Test between India and Australia in Melbourne.

O'Keeffe, who is commenting for Fox Cricket in Australia, and is heard on air in India as well with rights holder Sony Sports using a combination of its own in-studio commentary and the world feed, was slammed for his inability to pronounce Indian names properly.

While O'Keeffe has been on air through the series, pronouncing names like Cheteshwar Pujara and Ravindra Jadeja has not been easy for him. There is nothing alarming as such with having issues pronouncing foreign names, but the matter crossed a line on Saturday when Shane Warne asked his co-commentator about his difficulty.

O'Keeffe responded with, "Why would you name your kid Cheteshwar, Jadeja," accompanied by chuckles from his fellow commentators on air.

This is not the first time he has been called out during this Test match.

"Apparently he got the triple [century] against the Railways canteen staff," O'Keeffe, was quoted as saying on air during the first day of the Test, referring to Mayank Agarwal's triple century in the Ranji Trophy.

After getting a lot of flak on social media for his comments, O'Keeffe issued an apology, saying he had only said that "tongue in cheek". But even the apology was with a caveat, saying he was sorry if it offended someone – not exactly apologising for what was an ill-informed remark.

The fact that a commentator paid to cover the most high-profile series of the Australian summer has troubles pronouncing the opponent's names (three Tests into the series, no less) did not go down well on social media.

### Cuadrado faces long layoff

Colombian winger Juan Cuadrado has undergone successful surgery on his left knee, Serie A champions Juventus confirmed on Friday.

The 30-year-old picked up the injury during Juventus's 2-1 Champions League defeat to Young Boys in Switzerland two weeks ago.

The club said Cuadrado "underwent an arthroscopic treatment which was perfectly successful" following meniscus and cartilage damage.

"The player will begin the recovery process in the next few days," Juventus added without giving

details for how long he will be sidelined.

Italian press have estimated that the player could be out for up to three months which would rule him out of the Champions League last 16 fixtures against Atletico Madrid in February.

### Anti-racism protocol not followed in Koulibaly case

European football governing body UEFA said Friday that the correct anti-racism protocol had not been followed during the Italian league game between Inter Milan and Napoli midweek amid repeated abuse of Senegalese defender Kalidou Koulibaly.

Napoli's French-born Koulibaly was targeted

by monkey noises and racist chants at the San Siro, before being sent off for sarcastically applauding referee Paolo Mazzoleni.

According to UEFA's protocol, the match should have been suspended then but instead the game was allowed to continue.

### West Ham snap up Rice

West Ham were celebrating on Friday after rising teenage star Declan Rice signed a new long-term contract with the Premier League club.

The 19-year-old midfielder, who has made 51 appearances for the east London side, has signed new terms until 2024 -- with the option to extend for a further year.

### Wife of Andrew Strauss dies

Ruth Strauss, whose cancer diagnosis prompted her husband Andrew Strauss to step down from his role as England's director of cricket, has died, her family announced in a statement on Saturday.

The statement said Ruth had died aged 46 of the rare form of lung cancer she suffered from in her home country of Australia.

Strauss, a former England cricket captain, announced in early October he was standing down permanently as the national side's director of cricket following a period of compassionate leave.

Ruth was diagnosed with cancer during the Ashes in December 2017 and he took a break from his position earlier this year after she began a new course of treatment.

### SHORT CORNER

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