

What to WATCH

GTV & MAASRANGA
Bangladesh Premier League
 Phase Two
 Dhaka Dynamites v Rajshahi Kings
 Live from 1:30pm
 Rangpur Riders v Sylhet Sixers
 Live from 6:30pm

SONY SIX & TEN 2
Australian Open
 Round-2
 Men's Singles
 Live from 6:00am

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh Premier League
 Phase Two
 Venue: Sylhet International Cricket Stadium
 Dhaka Dynamites v Rajshahi Kings

Time: 1:30pm
 Rangpur Riders v Sylhet Sixers
 Time: 6:30pm

'MBAPPE CAN BE THE NEW PELE'

Brazil great Pele has tipped Kylian Mbappe to match his legendary achievements. Pele, revered as one of the greatest players of all time, won the World Cup three times as well as guiding Santos to six Brazilian league titles and two Copa Libertadores. "He [Mbappe] won the World Cup at 19, I was only 17," said Pele. "I teased him saying he had almost equalised. I think he can become the new Pele. Many people think I say that for a laugh, but no, it's not a joke." Mbappe has emerged as arguably the key man at PSG ahead of Brazil captain Neymar as the world's most expensive player has occasionally struggled. But Pele was quick to offer encouragement. "A father does not criticise, he educates," he said. "He [Neymar] is a son of Santos. I want the best for him, for Brazil, for our national team. I will do anything to help and move him forward."

--AGENCIES



The last time I was here I was pregnant and playing at the same time which is insane. It's weird walking back on -- by myself this time -- it feels good. I have so many memories from last time I was here.

SERENA WILLIAMS



Serena Williams made her Grand Slam return yesterday after spending nearly a year off due to the birth of her daughter. However, the American barely missed a beat, dispatching opponent Tatjana Maria 6-0, 6-2 in just under 50 minutes.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Man City ready to pounce, warns Pep

AFP, Manchester



Pep Guardiola said his Manchester City team will be poised to pounce if Premier League leaders Liverpool falter, following a comfortable 3-0 win over Wolves on Monday that left City four points behind Jurgen Klopp's side.

Two first-half goals from Gabriel Jesus, either side of a straight red card for Wolves' French defender Willy Boly, allowed City to demonstrate that they had banished their shaky December form.

The City manager was in no mood to analyse the table and insisted he is interested only in his own team's performances.

"We cannot play the games against Liverpool, we cannot do anything about them," said Guardiola.

"All we can do is win our games and be there. We've spoken to our players about it and the fact we cannot control what they can do. All we can do is be there and maybe one day they fail. But if they don't lose, then they'll be champions.

"We've done incredible numbers after last season, but one team has done better than us so far. All we can do is be there until the end and the results will dictate who will win."

Two weeks into 2019, City have scored a remarkable 21 goals in four home games this year and have hit 99 in all competitions already in the current campaign.

"I don't have a magician's ball to discover when I'm going to lose points," said Guardiola.

"But I said to the players, 'don't look at the calendar for the Liverpool games -- forget about it,' because normally when this happens, in my experience, you lose your games, and after that it's over."

Jesus had scored just three times in his 16 league games coming into the new year but his two-goal performance against Nuno Espirito Santo's team continued his rich vein of recent form.

He now has seven goals in his past three outings, although City's task was made easier by a straight red card shown to Boly in the 19th minute.

Jesus's opener came in the 10th minute after a magnificent 40-yard pass from defender Aymeric Laporte exposed the Wolves defence and sent Leroy Sane sprinting down the left.

The German's low cross was judged to perfection, as was Jesus's run, as he slid in and steered the ball into an open goal.

Boly's rash challenge, an out-of-control, one-footed lunge at Bernardo Silva, may not have been malicious but was deserving of a red soon after.

"It was quite a bad tackle but I'm fine," said Bernardo. "Yes, he did apologise at the end of the game. These things happen."

With Wolves down to 10 men, Jesus's second of the evening, from a 39th-minute penalty, made it hard to see Wolves forcing their way back.

Serena, Djokovic make statements

AFP, Melbourne

A focused Serena Williams sent an ominous Australian Open warning with a 49-minute first-round demolition Tuesday as world number one Novak Djokovic destroyed his opponent as he targets a record seventh title.

US Open champion Naomi Osaka also stormed through, but world number one Simona Halep was lucky to stay alive, needing to dig deep and claw back from a set down before beating Kaia Kanepi 6-7 (2/7), 6-4, 6-2.

American giant Williams is bidding to match Margaret Court's record of 24 Grand Slam crowns on her first return to Melbourne Park since winning in 2017

SELECTED RESULTS

MEN'S SINGLES

Novak Djokovic (SRB x1) bt Mitchell Krueger (USA) 6-3, 6-2, 6-2

Alexander Zverev (GER x4) bt Aljaz Bedene (SLO) 6-4, 6-1, 6-4

Stan Wawrinka (SUI) bt Ernests Gulbis (LAT) 3-6, 3-1 retired

Milos Raonic (CAN x16) bt Nick Kyrgios (AUS) 6-4, 7-6 (7/5), 6-4

Women's singles

Venus Williams (USA) bt Mihaela Buzarnescu (ROU x25) 6-7 (3/7), 7-6 (7/3), 6-2

Eugenie Bouchard (CAN) bt Peng Shuai (CHN) 6-2, 6-1

Serena Williams (USA x16) bt Tatjana Maria (GER) 6-0, 6-2

Laura Siegemund (GER) bt Victoria Azarenka (BLR) 6-7 (5/7), 6-4, 6-2

Simona Halep (ROU x1) bt Kaia Kanepi (EST) 6-7 (2/7), 6-4, 6-2

Naomi Osaka (JPN x4) bt Magda Linette (POL) 6-4, 6-2

while eight weeks pregnant.

Now 37, she kept a low profile in the lead-up to the opening major of the year and came out of the blocks flying against fellow mum Tatjana Maria, pummelling her German opponent 6-0, 6-2.

Sporting a striking jade green jumpsuit and fine mesh stockings on Rod Laver Arena, the 16th seed wasted no time in getting out of the blistering Melbourne heat and said it was good to be back.

"The last time I was here I was pregnant and playing at the same time which is insane," she said. "It's weird walking back on -- by myself this time -- it feels good. I have so many memories from last time I was here."

Bidding for an eighth Melbourne Park crown, few are betting against Williams despite her lowly seeding and she next faces Canadian Eugenie Bouchard who eased past China's Peng Shuai.

Like Williams, Djokovic is also gunning for a slice of history as he looks to win a seventh title. Fellow six-time champion Roger Federer is aiming for the same.

The Serb blasted past American qualifier Mitchell Krueger 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 to set up a clash with Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, who he beat in Melbourne to win the first of his 14 Grand Slam crowns back in 2008.

"It feels great to be healthy and back on this court again," he said of Rod Laver Arena. "I had a tremendous success in the last six months. It got me to a great position. Hopefully I can follow up on this victory tonight with a good performance."

Fourth seed Alexander Zverev, who is looking to win his first Slam title and establish himself as a serious threat, cruised past Aljaz Bedene 6-4, 6-1, 6-4.

Amateur golf tourney ends

SPORTS REPORTER

The Orion 34th Bangladesh Amateur Championship, 2019 was held at the Kurmitola Golf Club in Dhaka from 15 to 18 January. This is the premier amateur international golf tournament of the country and was sponsored by Orion Group for the third time.

The tournament was inaugurated by Major General Md Enayet Ullah, Senior Vice President of Bangladesh Golf Federation, while Brigadier General Md Sayeed Siddiki, Secretary General of Bangladesh Golf Federation, was present as chief guest.

Apart from local amateur golfers, the national team and top amateur golfers of Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal and Pakistan participated in the tournament. Aside from which, 21 expatriates including three women took part in this tournament.

Chief of General Staff of Bangladesh Army Lieutenant General Md Shafiqur Rahman distributed prizes amongst the winners as chief guest of the closing ceremony.

Zia remains in third

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Master Ziaur Rahman maintained third position in the 17th Delhi International Open Grandmaster Chess Tournament at the close of the ninth round in New Delhi yesterday.

Zia drew his ninth board against Georgian GM Paichadze Luka to share third place with 18 others on 6.5 points each. Indian GM Narayanan Sunilduth Lina and Georgian GM Pantsulaia Levan shared top spot with 7.5 points each.

Tahsin Tajwar Zia beat Sayantan Chandra in the ninth round to raise his points tally to 4.5 while FM Fahad Rahman and Mehdi Hasan Parag drew with Pimpalkhare Vedant and Bhavesh Mahajan respectively to secure 5.5 and 4.5 points. Abzid Rahman however lost to Mushini Ajay and remains on four points after nine games.

SK Kamal Club Cup to be held in Oct

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday endorsed Chittagong Abahani's proposal to host the third edition of Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup tournament in October in Chattagram.

The decision was made at a BFF executive committee meeting yesterday after the game's governing body accorded a reception to three parliamentary members -- Abdus Salam Murshedy, Kazi Nabil Ahmed and Shamsul Haque Chowdhury -- who all are from the sports fraternity.

The Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup, which was held twice in 2015 and 2017 in Chattagram, will feature six sub-continental clubs -- three from Bangladesh, two from India and one from another country.

"We had sought written permission to host the tournament on January 12 and the BFF executive committee approved our proposal today," said tournament co-ordinator Shakil Mahmud Chowdhury.

"Chittagong Abahani, Mohammedan and Abahani will be taking part in the tournament in which we also want Indian outfits East Bengal FC and Mohun Bagan AC along with another team from any other country from subcontinent," said Shakil.

It was also decided at the meeting that the Bangmata U-19 Women's International Gold Cup would be hosted with the participation of six teams in April while the Bangladesh Championship League will get underway from February 5.

Mahadi joined in quarters by Zubaid, Roman

SPORTS REPORTER

Mahadi Hasan Alve, Zubaid Utsho and Roman Hossain moved into the quarterfinals of Boy's Singles in IITF Asian U-14 Development Championship 2019: Division-II after beating their respective rivals in Bangkok yesterday.

Alve beat Kyrgyzstan's Sultan Iunusov 6-2, 6-1 while Utsho beat Pakistan's Hassan Ali 6-4, 6-1 and Roman defeated Iran's Amirali Ghavam 7-6, 6-0.

However, all three Bangladeshi girls lost to their respective rivals and were eliminated from the second round. Mashfia Afrin lost to Nepal's Isha Shree Shah 5-7, 6-4, 2-6, Suborna Khatun lost to Mongolia's Marta Chogsomjav 2-6, 1-6 and Sadia Afrin lost to Mongolia's Maralgoo Chogsomjav.

SHORT CORNER

Kane out until March

Tottenham striker Harry Kane will be sidelined until March after suffering ankle ligament damage in Sunday's defeat against Manchester United.

Kane sustained the injury to his left ankle in the closing moments of the 1-0 loss at Wembley and scans have now confirmed the extent of the problem.

It is the third successive season the England captain has missed games due to an ankle injury.

Barca first team to spend half-a-billion on wages

La Liga champions Barcelona became the first soccer team to spend over half a billion euros in wages after their staff costs shot up by 42 percent over the past year, according to a study by KPMG.

KPMG's Football Benchmark study analysed the squads and finances of the respective champions of Europe's top eight leagues.

The Catalans, who signed Brazil playmaker Philippe Coutinho from Liverpool in January 2018 for a club record 160 million euros, have staff costs of 562 million euros a year. Along with the arrival of France forward Ousmane Dembele in August 2017 and the renewal of several players' contracts, including talisman Lionel Messi's, their expenditure in this field has increased hugely.

Paris Saint-Germain have the second highest wage bill on the list at 332 million euros, an increase of 20 percent.

Solskjaer brought back my smile: Pogba

French midfielder Paul Pogba says Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's arrival as interim manager at Manchester United has not only sparked his return to form but also put a smile back on his face.

"Before Solskjaer arrived I was in the shadows, on the bench, and I accepted that," he said after the impressive 1-0 win over Tottenham Hotspur on Sunday. "It is a pleasure to play again. Now I am always smiling."

Pogba was at United in his first spell at the club in 2010 when he first encountered Solskjaer, who had moved on from playing to become reserve team coach.

"It's a pleasure to be reunited with him," said Pogba. "I knew him from the academy and the reserves, when his nickname was 'Supersub'."

"He is doing a really good job. As a player he

knew the mentality of this club. He has come back to help us and it is going very well."

Constantine quits after Asian Cup exit
 Stephen Constantine has resigned as India's head coach after they were knocked out of the AFC Asian Cup following a 1-0 defeat by Bahrain in Sharjah on Monday.

Needing a draw to progress to the knockout stage for the first time, India finished bottom of Group A after conceding an injury-time penalty that allowed Bahrain to leapfrog them into third place.

Constantine said he was stepping down having achieved the target of helping India qualify for the continental showpiece after an eight-year gap.

"My objective from day one was to qualify for the Asian Cup," the 56-year-old Englishman told

reporters after the match.

Cech to retire at season's end

Arsenal goalkeeper Petr Cech announced on Tuesday that he will retire at the end of the season.

The 36-year-old, who won four Premier League titles with Chelsea, revealed his decision on Twitter.

He wrote: "This is my 20th season as a professional player and it is 20 years since I signed my first professional contract, so it feels like the right time to announce that I will retire at the end of this season."

The Czech, who arrived in the Premier League with Chelsea in 2004 and moved to Arsenal in 2015, added: "Having played 15 years in the Premier League and won every single trophy possible, I feel like I have achieved everything I set out to achieve."

-- AFP



Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi offered a glimpse into his holidays when he posted this photo on Instagram, showing his two sons lying on his back while his dog licks his face.

PHOTO: REUTERS

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