

SONY SIX
Australia v Sri Lanka
First Test, Day One
Live from 9:00am

TEN 2
Australian Open
Men's/Women's
Quarterfinals
Live from 6:00am

TEN 1
West Indies v England
First Test, Day Two
Live from 8:00pm

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh Premier League (Football)
Rahamatganj v Ctg Abahani
Time: 7:30pm
Venue: BNS, Dhaka

Team BJMC v Saif SC
Time: 3:00pm
Venue: Shahid Bulu Stadium, Noakhali

PSG FINED 100,000 EUROS FOR RACIAL PROFILING

A collective negligence led to racial profiling at youth-team level inside Ligue 1 champions Paris Saint-Germain, French league authorities said Tuesday when fining the club 100,000 euros (\$114,000). The affair began when French investigative website Mediapart revealed racial profiling by talent scouts since 2013 where potential youth signings were identified by their ethnicity. The Qatari-owned club also face an upcoming hearing from the Paris prosecutors on the same matter. The football league said the use of these forms had no part in a general racial profiling culture. "From what we can see PSG did not use the information on ethnicity for discriminatory ends. There is no case of discrimination that can be proved," LFP disciplinary commissioner Sebastien Deneux said at a press conference. "It is more a case of individual clumsiness and collective negligence," he said, explaining how the system came into being. The youth candidates were categorised as French, North African, West Indian or African. Such profiling is illegal in France. —AGENCIES



Pliskova slays Serena

Djokovic cruises into semis

AFP, Melbourne



Serena Williams's bid for a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title was brought to a halt in sensational style at the Australian Open Wednesday by Karolina Pliskova, but fellow former champion Novak Djokovic cruised into the semi-finals.

The American great had beaten world number one Simona Halep in the fourth round but folded against the tall Czech seventh seed, who saved four match points before winning 6-4, 4-6, 7-5 under the hot Melbourne sun.

Her reward is a clash against Japan's Naomi Osaka for a place in the final, after the Japanese fourth seed brutally swatted aside the injured Elina Svitolina 6-4, 6-1.

World number one Djokovic enjoyed an early night when courageous Kei Nishikori retired with a thigh strain when losing 6-1, 4-1 after going through three five-set epics during the tournament.

It kept the Serb's bid for a record seventh Australian title on track and he will now meet French 28th seed Lucas Pouille, who beat power-serving Canadian Milos Raonic 7-6 (7/4), 6-3, 6-7 (2/7), 6-4 to make his first Slam semi.

It was a gut-wrenching defeat for Williams, who battled back from a set down and was leading 5-1 in the third and serving for the match, only to throw it away with some wild shots as frustrations bubbled to the surface.

"There's nothing I did wrong on those match points. I stayed aggressive. She just literally hit the lines on some of them," said the dumbfounded 37-year-old, who rolled an ankle but refused to blame it for the defeat.

Since returning last year from giving birth, Williams has made four unsuccessful attempts to match Margaret Court's long-time standing 24 Grand Slam titles, and the wait continues with the French Open in May her next chance.

"The big picture for me is always winning," she added. "I'm not going to sit here and lie about that. It hasn't happened yet, but I feel like it's going to happen."

For Pliskova, it is only her third semi-final at a major. She made the last four at Roland Garros in 2017 and the US Open a year earlier, where she beat Williams before losing the final to Angelique Kerber.

"I was almost in the locker-room but now I am standing here as a winner. It is a very good feeling," she said after depriving Williams of a US Open final rematch with Osaka.

Asked about facing Osaka next, Pliskova replied: "She's dangerous but nobody is more dangerous than Serena."

Djokovic, who is targeting a 15th Grand Slam title, endured his own tough fourth round showdown with Daniil Medvedev and said he was glad to get off court early.

"As they say, this is exactly what the doctor ordered for me after the match two nights ago," he said. "Not to spend too much time on the court."

"I was almost in the locker-room but now I am standing here as a winner. It is a very good feeling."



Karolina Pliskova pumps her fist after winning a point against Serena Williams during their Australian Open women's singles quarterfinal in Melbourne yesterday. Pliskova won the match 6-4, 4-6, 7-5.

PHOTO: AFP

Kings add to Abahani's debutant blues

SPORTS REPORTER



Defending champions Abahani fell apart against newcomers Bashundhara Kings, suffering a humiliating 3-0 defeat at the hands of the hosts at the Sheikh Kamal Stadium in Nilphamari yesterday.

The defeat was the third occasion in the league's history that the country's football giants were undone by Bangladesh Premier League debutants. The Sky Blues were had suffered a shock 1-2 defeat at the hands of newcomers Khulna Abahani in 2007 and next experienced rookie wrath during a 1-3 reversal against debutants Sheikh Jamal DC in the 4th edition in 2011.

However, Abahani's defeat to the big-spending Bashundhara Kings was not an upset as Bashundhara Kings had earlier beaten Abahani in a shootout at the knockout stage en route to clinching the Independence Cup. They deserved the victory yesterday and Abahani deserved the loss as their vulnerable backline and lax defending was exposed, while they also wasted a few chances, including a spot kick.

The high-voltage match got off to a sparkling start in front of a sizeable crowd, who definitely enjoyed the game that featured a lot of national footballers as well as some quality foreign recruits such as Costa Rican World Cup player Daniel Colindres, Brazilian Marcos Vinicius, Haitian Kervens Fils Belfort and Nigerian Sunday Chizoba.

It was Abahani who came close to taking the lead but winger Rubel Mia was denied by the woodwork in the 12th minute before Bashundhara first mustered a shot on target in the 16th minute.

Abahani defender Tapu Barman's powerful shot was parried by the Bashundhara goalkeeper at the half-hour mark before Colindres rattled Abahani's crossbar three minutes later.

Abahani incurred a blow in the 34th minute when Afghan defender Masih Saighani sustained an injury and was sidelined, paving the way for Mamun Mia, who was seemingly to blame for his weak defending that allowed

BASHUNDHARA 3-0 ABAHANI
NASIR-40+2, MATIN-60
COLINDRES-69
MUKTIJODDHA 3-0 SK JAMAL
FAMOUSA-44, 67, 89

The margin of 3-0 was the biggest scoreless defeat for six-time champions Abahani in Bangladesh Premier League history. The Sky Blues' had previously lost by the same goal difference, 1-4, to Muktijoddha Sagnad in the sixth edition in 2013.

Bashundhara Kings forwards to tear apart the backline.

However, the scenario could have been different had Nigerian hitman Sunday not missed the penalty three minutes from the break. Bashundhara Kings then took opened the scoring in the stoppage time of the first half when Nasir Chowdhury tapped home a Vinicius free-kick from outside the box to silence Abahani.

After resumption, Bashundhara appeared to have doubled Abahani's pain in the 56th minute with a backheel from Vinicius but the goal was ruled off side. The hosts, however, did not take much time to make it 2-0 as Vinicius put a nice ball for Matin Mia, who darted into the box to beat goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel with an angular shot in the 60th minute. Colindres then put the outcome beyond doubt by widening the margin in the 69th minute, chipping the ball over advancing goalkeeper Sohel after darting through helpless Abahani defenders.

At Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni Stadium in Gopalganj, Muktijoddha Sangsads stunned three-time champions Sheikh Jamal DC with an identical 3-0 defeat, thanks to the league's first hat-trick by Ballo Famousa, who scored in the 44th, 67th and 89th minutes respectively.

It was the fourth victory for the All Reds against Sheikh Jamal in 16 professional league outings, during which Muktijoddha tasted defeat 11 times and drew once.

CCDM penalises Progoti

SPORTS REPORTER

The Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) decided yesterday to fine second-division club Dhanmondi Progoti Sangha Tk 2 lakh for walking out on their match against Azim Cricket Club on January 20.

According to a press release issued last night, the CCDM took the match referee's report and all relevant factors into consideration and imposed a fine of Tk 2 lakh on Dhanmondi Progoti Sangha, while two points were awarded to Azim Cricket Club from the match. Progoti captain Monir Uddin was also fined Tk 25,000 and handed a two-match suspension.

A CCDM meeting was held yesterday about the events in the Second Division Cricket League match at the BKSP-3 Ground. The game had to be called off in the ninth over of Progoti's innings after the team refused to play in protest of some umpiring decisions. On the day following the match, Progoti had lodged a letter of complaint with the CCDM and asked that the match be replayed.

SHORT CORNER

Marketing trump Economics

Marketing Department notched a 42-29 victory over Economics Department in the Dhaka University Inter-Department Basketball Tournament at the gymnasium of physical training center in Dhaka yesterday.

Marketing's Shahidul Islam caged the match-highest 20 points to play a key role behind the triumph. —SPORTS REPORTER

Windies make strong start against England

West Indies were 132 for three after choosing to bat first when rain forced an early tea interval on the opening day of the first Test against England at Kensington Oval in Barbados on Wednesday.

Debutant John Campbell impressed with a stroke-filled innings of 44 off 53 balls with eight fours, before becoming the only wicket to fall before lunch after home captain Jason Holder decided to bat first on a pitch which has so far offered very little encouragement for the faster bowlers.

Campbell's senior opening partner, Kraigg Brathwaite, resumed after lunch on 31 in partnership with Shai Hope. The former became the first one to fall in the session after scoring 40 runs off 130 balls. Left-hander Darren Bravo was the next one to fall having scored only two runs. Shai Hope and Roston Chase remained unbeaten on 42 and

two runs respectively.

—AFP

Police Line romp to big win

Riding on a brilliant 47-ball 72 from batsman Khan, Faridpur Police Line High School registered a five-wicket victory over Faridpur Muslim Mission School in their Prime Bank Young Tigers National School Cricket Tournament match yesterday at the S.J Stadium in Faridpur.

Faridpur Police Line dominated the game both with bat and ball as they bundled out Faridpur Muslim Mission for just 136 runs after they elected to bat. Police Line also chased down the low total in just 17.1 overs in the 47-overs-a-side game. —SPORTS REPORTER

Kohli to take rest from last two NZ ODIs

Indian skipper Virat Kohli will be rested for the final two one-day internationals and the subsequent Twenty20 series in New Zealand, the cricket board said Wednesday.

"Considering his workload in the last few months, the team management and senior selection committee is of the view that it would be ideal for him to get adequate rest ahead of the home series against Australia," the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said.

"There will be no replacement for Mr. Kohli in the squad for the New Zealand series. Rohit Sharma will captain the side in the final two ODIs and T20I series." —AFP



A bouquet of flowers with the words 'Pray for Sala' is left by a Nantes fan for the club's former player in the main square of the city yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



Bashundhara Kings' Nasir Chowdhury (number 29) celebrates his opening goal with teammates during their Bangladesh Premier League encounter against Abahani at the Sheikh Kamal Stadium in Nilphamari yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

COPA AMERICA DRAW LOOMS

Pressure on Brazil, Argentina

AFP, Sao Paulo



They may boast seven World Cup victories between them and two of the game's biggest stars in Lionel Messi and Neymar, but Argentina and hosts Brazil will be under immense pressure when the Copa America begins in June.

First they have a nerve-wracking wait ahead of Thursday's draw in Rio de Janeiro to see who they will face in the group stages.

Argentina haven't lifted a major tournament trophy in 26 years and while it has only been a dozen years for hosts Brazil, the trauma of their 2014 World Cup humiliation on home soil is still fresh in their collective memory.

The 7-1 thrashing inflicted by Germany in the semi-finals left a wound that only trophies could heal. The two South American giants can ill afford a false step in such a competitive tournament.

Brazil failed to even make it out of the group stages last time around, their only victory coming against Haiti, while a 1-0 defeat to Peru sent them packing. As for Argentina, they have lost four

of the last five finals, three of those in penalty shoot-outs, meaning Barcelona great Messi has never won a major international honour with his country.

Messi's participation is far from certain, though, as he hasn't played for his country since Argentina were dumped out of the World Cup at the last 16 stage in Russia by eventual winners France.

"I'm convinced that if he's selected, he'll play. It depends on the coach," Argentinian federation president Claudio Tapia told TyCSports TV channel.

Their World Cup campaign was a farce amid rumours of internal disputes between the coach, Jorge Sampaoli, and the players.

Sampaoli has gone to be replaced by interim boss Lionel Scaloni, but so far Messi, who hasn't claimed to be retired this time, has stayed away.

The pressure will be greatest on Brazil coach Tite, though, after he signed a new contract despite the Selecao's quarter-final elimination by Belgium at the World Cup.

He's launched something of a revolution in terms of personnel since Russia.

"We have to win," he told Estadao newspaper in November.

"I'll take the risk of losing and being fired," rather than compromising on his playing principles, he said.

The two powerhouse sides will be top seeds in the draw -- Brazil are ranked third in the FIFA world list, with Argentina 11th -- so at least they should be faced with a favourable pool.

Uruguay, the other top seeds, are the most successful team in the competition's history with 15 titles, one more than Argentina.

Boasting the likes of Edinson Cavani of Paris Saint Germain and Barcelona's Luis Suarez, they reached the World Cup quarter-finals last year, only to lose to France.

Reigning two-time champions Chile will be in the pot of second seeds but led by Manchester United winger Alexis Sanchez they retain the kind of fire-power needed to go all the way once again.

Copa America it may be but this edition will have a distinctly Asian feel to it.

With one eye on the next World Cup in Qatar, the Gulf kingdom has been invited to the tournament for the first time, alongside Japan, who were also invitees in 1999, when they failed to win a game.