

# What to WATCH

**STAR SPORTS SELECT 1**  
**Indian Premier League**  
 Mumbai v Rajasthan  
 Live from 4:30pm  
 Punjab v Bangalore  
 Live from 8:30pm

**STAR SPORTS SELECT 2**  
**English Premier League**  
 Tottenham v Huddersfield  
 Live from 5:30pm  
 Fulham v Everton  
 Live from 8:00pm

**Man United v West Ham**  
 Live from 10:30pm  
**TEN 1**  
**Serie A**  
 SPAL v Juventus  
 Live from 7:00pm

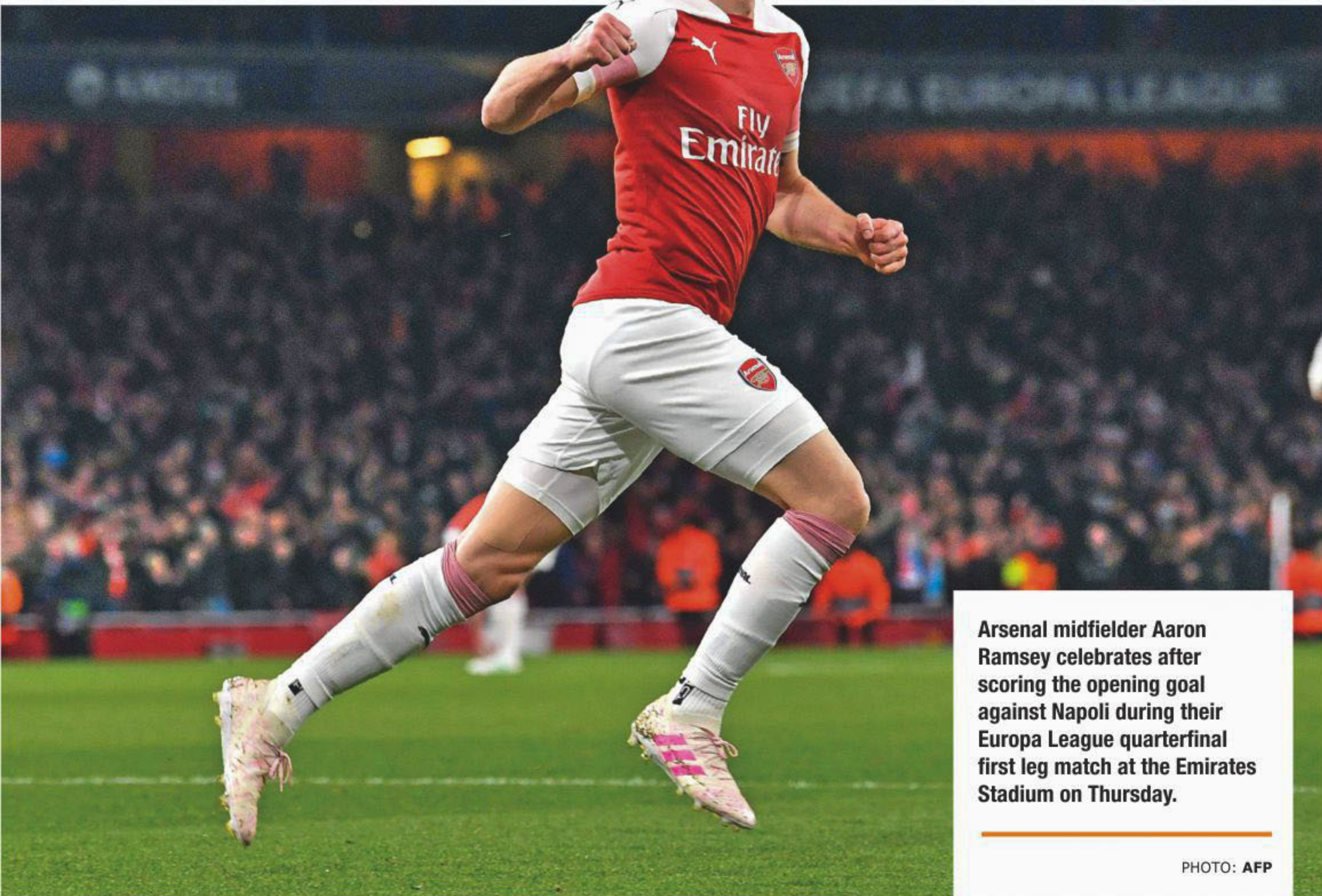
**TEN 2**  
**La Liga**  
 Espanyol v Deportivo  
 Live from 5:00pm  
 Huesca v Barcelona  
 Live from 8:15pm

**Atletico Madrid v Celta Vigo**  
 Live from 10:30pm  
**Serie A**  
 AC Milan v Lazio  
 Live from 12:30am (Sunday)

## DAY'S EVENT

**Bangladesh Premier League (Football)**  
 Team BJMC v Brothers Union  
 Time: 3:30pm  
 Venue: Shaheed Bulu Stadium, Noakhali

Sheikh Jamal v Abahani  
 Time: 4:00pm  
 Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka



**Arsenal midfielder Aaron Ramsey celebrates after scoring the opening goal against Napoli during their Europa League quarterfinal first leg match at the Emirates Stadium on Thursday.**

PHOTO: AFP

# Pep defends City after Ilkay censure

AFP, Manchester



Pep Guardiola says he "absolutely" does not agree with midfielder Ilkay Gundogan's scathing assessment of Manchester City's performance in their midweek Champions League defeat to Tottenham.

City face Spurs twice more in the next week, in the return leg of the European quarterfinal and in a home league game, as they chase an unprecedented quadruple.

Gundogan accused City of not being brave enough in the 1-0 first-leg defeat at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium on Tuesday, in which Sergio Aguerro missed a first-half penalty.

But Guardiola, whose team are second in the Premier League, two points behind Liverpool, strongly rejected the German international's analysis.

"I don't agree with him. Absolutely not," said the City boss.

"There are games when we concede a goal and we are not there, but in this case we conceded a goal and nothing happened. Especially in the second half, it was under control."

Guardiola said his side, who have a game in hand over Liverpool in the title race, did

not concede many shots on target, even if he acknowledged they did not create many chances themselves.

"We defended the set-pieces when they are so strong and after when we conceded a goal there were 10 minutes left and nothing happened," he said. "We were there and in control, in that situation."

"Of course we want to do well, especially in the Champions League but in that case in this specific game I don't think I agree."

Gundogan's surprising analysis of City's defeat clearly did not sit well with Guardiola, who used much of his press conference ahead of Sunday's Premier League visit to Crystal Palace responding to his player.

"He can say whatever he wants," Guardiola said. "I like when they express what they believe, but it's happened many times in my career in specific games when they lost a little control."

"We have been for 20 months incredible, two games in the last 24 lost. Twenty months, winning every three days, 180 points over the past two seasons."

"Regarding this specific game, it did not happen. We were stable. Of course the competition is tough and the opponents are good. Look at how many chances the teams create."

# Arsenal, Chelsea close in on semis

AFP, Paris



Arsenal and Chelsea closed in on the Europa League last four on Thursday after the Gunners saw off highly-fancied Napoli 2-0 at the Emirates, while Marco Alonso's late header earned Maurizio Sarri's side a hard-fought win at Slavia Prague.

Unai Emery's Arsenal hold a healthy advantage going into next week's second leg thanks to a fine early strike from Juventus-bound Aaron Ramsey and an unfortunate Kalidou Koulibaly own goal midway through the first half, and can rue missed chances that would have put the tie completely beyond the Italians' reach.

"To keep a clean sheet and score a couple of goals is a lovely way to start the first leg. We're delighted with that," said Ramsey, who should have added the third when he blazed over with nine minutes left, to BT Sport.

"We can go into the second leg with a little bit of a cushion, but we know it will be a difficult place to go... They are a quality team."

Chelsea meanwhile escaped from Eden Arena after a bitty display that saw Kepa Arrizabalaga have to make some fine saves to keep the Czechs out before Alonso nodded home Willian's pinpoint cross four minutes from time to seal a 1-0 win.

The Blues remain unbeaten in the Europa League, keeping eight clean sheets in the competition this season, and it was that solidity that saw them through on a tricky evening in Prague.

The Premier League pair remain on a collision course for the final in Baku, with both sides set to avoid each other if they make it through next week's second legs.

Arsenal were all over Napoli from the kick-off and got their deserved opener with 14 minutes on the clock, Ramsay waltzing in at the end of a beautiful passing move to calmly stroke home Ainsley Maitland-Niles's neat lay-off.

Napoli were completely out of sorts, barely able to get the ball out of their own half at times, and 10 minutes later the Gunners doubled their lead.

Former Sampdoria midfielder Lucas Torreira won possession in midfield and charged towards goal before letting off a weak shot that flicked off Koulibaly and flew past a bamboozled Alex Meret in the Napoli goal.

Arsenal should have made more of their first-half dominance over Carlo Ancelotti's slipshod side, but were not punished by the Serie A outfit, who through Piotr Zielinski should have bagged an away goal to take back to Naples in the second half.

"I was surprised by the lack of courage and personality from my players at the start," Carlo Ancelotti told Sky Sport.

"Turning this around will be difficult now, but we'll be home at the San Paolo, and our supporters will help us."

Arsenal will almost certainly take on Valencia should they hold on at what will be an intimidating Stadio San Paolo after the La Liga side scored twice in stoppage time to win 3-1 at fellow Spaniards Villarreal.

Goncalo Guedes scored twice, including what could be the decisive third three minutes into added time, as Marcelino's side struck with two clinical breakaway goals to give them a great chance of making the semis.

Chelsea meanwhile will likely play Benfica should they go through after 19-year-old Joao Felix became the youngest ever player to score a Europa League hat-trick and set up the other goal in 4-2 win over Eintracht Frankfurt.

Felix, a revelation in his first season in the Benfica first team, got the ball rolling from the spot in the 21st minute after Evan N'Dicka was sent off for shoving over goal-bound Gedson Fernandes.

Ruben Dias made it three when he headed in Felix's flick-on from a corner, and the 19-year-old side-footed home Alex Grimaldo's cross to complete his treble nine minutes into the second half, before Goncalo Paciencia pulled one back with his head from a corner to keep the tie alive.

# BCCI clout forces CA's summer shift

STAR DESK REPORT



Australia will reportedly not play an ODI series on home soil this summer due to the result of the latest power play from Indian cricket board, Fox Sports reported.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has rejected CA's request to reschedule a three-match ODI series in India under the new Future Tours Program, which -- in a rare move -- will take place in the middle of the Australian summer.

CA had sought to shift the series to later in the year but the BCCI refused this request, and has insisted it begin several days earlier. CA has had to drop a three-match one-day series against New Zealand, slated to begin days after the New Year's Test against the Black Caps in Sydney concludes.

The decision also means there will not be any ODIs in Australia next summer as the three matches against the Black Caps was the only series scheduled. ODIs have been a staple of Australian home summers since the World Series Cricket revolution of 1977. According to the Sydney Morning Herald, CA would have lost millions of dollars in compensation had the India series been postponed.

# Neymar wants to stay at PSG

AFP, Paris

Brazilian star Neymar wants to stay at Paris Saint-Germain, where he is under contract until 2022, according to his father and agent, Neymar senior.

Neymar arrived at PSG from Barcelona in 2017, but has been at the centre of rumours linking him with a move to Real Madrid.

"These rumours of leaving will always exist, you can't have a player like Neymar without people or clubs dreaming of having him," said Neymar senior.



# Costa suspension harsh: Simeone

AFP, Madrid



Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone believes Diego Costa's eight-match ban is harsh and has dismissed suggestions the striker could be sold in the summer.

Costa was handed the lengthy suspension by the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) on Thursday for directing a crude insult towards referee Gil Manzano during the first half of Atletico's 2-0 defeat to Barcelona last weekend.

Manzano, who sent Costa off in the 28th minute, also reported Costa had "grabbed" him by the arms during the incident.

"It seems harsh to me," Simeone said at a press conference on Friday.

The punishment means Costa will not play again this season as Atletico have seven games left in La Liga, having been knocked out of the Champions League and Copa del Rey.

But Simeone insists Costa still has a future at the club.

"Absolutely yes, you know what I think of Costa," Simeone said. "We must take care of our own and with Costa, now more than ever."

Atletico president Enrique Cerezo suggested on Thursday the club will appeal against the ban.

"It's bad news," Cerezo said. "The natural thing is for us to appeal, to ask for leniency and see what happens."

"There are players who are very temperamental. Insults should never happen on the football field but there are times when they do happen."

According to the match report submitted by Manzano, Costa insulted his mother in a foul-mouthed outburst before "grabbing me by the arms to prevent me showing cards to numbers 24 and 2 respectively".

The RFEF ruled Costa should therefore be suspended for four matches for "clear insults and offensive expressions made by the player towards the referee" and another four, after "meeting the referee with mild violence, without aggressive spirit, but in a manner that is reflected in the act of grabbing".

Costa's dismissal meant Atletico had to play for more than an hour with 10 men in a match Simeone had said they had to win to keep their title hopes alive.

Instead, defeat leaves them 11 points adrift of Barca at the top of the table.

Atletico play at home to Celta Vigo on Saturday and will also be without their captain Diego Godin.

Godin missed the team's final training session on Friday with a thigh injury.

