

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
Indian Premier League
 Chennai v Delhi
 Live from 8:30pm
TEN 2
UEFA Champions League

Barcelona v Liverpool
 Live from 1:00am (Thursday)
THURSDAY
STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
Indian Premier League
 Mumbai v Hyderabad

Live from 8:30pm
TEN 1
UEFA Europa League
 Eintracht v Chelsea
 Live from 1:00am (Friday)

TEN 2
UEFA Europa League
 Arsenal v Valencia
 Live from 1:00am (Friday)

BLACK REFEREES BLOCKED IN ENGLAND

Black referees are failing to get into the upper reaches of English football because of the way they are assessed, a campaigner said Tuesday. Reuben Simon, an ambassador for black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) officials at Ref Support UK, said overt racism at worst and unconscious bias at best were both playing a part in blocking the progress of non-white referees. Uriah Rennie was the last black referee in the higher reaches of the English game before retiring in 2009.

--AFP



Barca's old guards face Reds challenge

AFP, Barcelona

It was ten years ago Alex Ferguson dubbed them the best team he had ever faced but those left from Barcelona's iconic generation still have work to do.

Three remain and when Lionel Messi, Sergio Busquets and Gerard Pique line up against Liverpool on Wednesday, they may wonder if this could be their best chance of another, and perhaps final, Champions League triumph.

Pep Guardiola's mesmeric side had just danced around and dizzied Manchester United in 2009, their 2-0 victory completing an historic treble, when Ferguson conceded: "Nobody has given us a hiding like that."

But not long after the final whistle at Wembley, Ferguson expressed doubts too, about the longevity of that Barca group and then, whether they could ever be replaced.

"Great teams go in cycles and the cycle they're in at the moment is the best in Europe," he said. "How long it lasts and whether they can replace that team...they have the philosophy but it's difficult to say if you can find players like Xavi, (Andres)

Iniesta and Messi all the time. Probably not."

Xavi and Iniesta have gone, succeeded by the all-encompassing Ivan Rakitic and, more recently, Arthur Melo, who could mature into the kind of player his predecessors would admire.

Messi, who turns 32 in June, Busquets, who will be 31 in July, and Pique, already 32, have hung on, driving the club through fresh cycles of success.

But in some ways perhaps, Ferguson was right. They could never sustain the Guardiola method in full, in part because pressing began to neutralise possession but mainly because that group of players was unique.

In the Champions League, glory came again quickly in 2011, United again the victims, but from 2012 to 2018, it followed only once more, after beating Juventus in 2015.

When Barcelona outplayed United in 2009, they had already won La Liga, the first of eight league titles in 11 years, the last of those confirmed by victory over Levante on Saturday, when Messi scored the winner.

"Our objective now is the treble," said president Josep Bartomeu.



Led by Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (C), the Bangladesh Cricket team yesterday called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her blessings ahead of their departure for a tri-series in Ireland and the ICC Cricket World Cup in England and Wales.

PHOTO: PID

Wimbledon prize money raised

REUTERS, London

Wimbledon prize money will total 38 million pounds (\$49 million) for this year's championships, a rise of 11.8 percent, the All England Club announced on Tuesday.

The men's and women's singles champions will receive 2.35 million pounds each -- 100,000 more than in 2018.

Continuing a theme of recent years, organisers have again significantly raised the prize money for early-round losers.

Prize money for qualifying and rounds one to three in the singles will rise by 10 percent with 45,000 pounds now the compensation for a first-round singles exit.

Wimbledon's total prize money for 2019 surpasses the 62.5 million Australian dollars (\$44 million) at this year's opening Grand Slam in Melbourne but is still lower than the \$53 million prize pool at last year's US Open.

The French Open recently announced an 8 percent increase in prize money for next month's event.

Don't take any pressure: PM

BSS, Dhaka



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday advised the Bangladesh cricket team to play in the upcoming ICC World Cup with utmost confidence and taking no pressure in their minds.

"Don't take any pressure, play your natural games with self-determination... one day we will surely win the World Cup Insha Allah," she said.

The premier said this while the Bangladesh national cricket team led by ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza called on her at her official Ganobhaban residence yesterday ahead of their ICC World Cup mission in England and Wales.

The prime minister told the players that there is no need to get panicked during any crisis moment. "Face the situation with cool heads and apply your tactics," she said.

Sheikh Hasina, also an avid cricket-lover, asked them to play calculative game in the field and not to be afraid of any team whoever they are.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president

Nazmul Hasan, BCB director Naimur Rahman, BCB director and Bangladesh's World Cup cricket team manager Khaled Mahmud, team manager for Ireland tour Minhajul Abedin and head coach Steven Rhodes were present on the occasion.

The ICC Cricket World Cup 2019 is going to kick off in England and Wales on May 30.

In the 12th edition of the cricket's biggest extravaganza, a total of 10 teams including Bangladesh will compete for the most-coveted trophy.

According to the schedule, the first match of the World Cup will be held between England and South Africa at the Oval in London.

Bangladesh national cricket team in their first match of the tournament will face South Africa at the same venue on June 2.

Meanwhile, before the ICC World Cup cricket, Bangladesh will play a tri-nation ODI cricket tournament in Ireland beginning on May 5.

The other team of the tournament are the West Indies. Bangladesh team will leave Dhaka for the Irish capital of Dublin today.



Liverpool star Mohamed Salah takes part in a training session at Melwood yesterday on the eve of their Champions League semifinal first-leg clash against Barcelona.

PHOTO: AFP

Own goal costs Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER



AFC CUP

A suicidal strike from Abahani's Brazilian forward Wellington Priori handed the Bangladesh Premier League champions a 1-0 defeat against Chennaiyin FC in their AFC Cup away match at the Arena Stadium in Ahmedabad yesterday.

With their first defeat in three matches, Abahani are lagging behind in the race to qualify for the second round as they remained glued to four points while Indian Super League champions Chennaiyin FC sit on top of the four-team table with seven points from three outings.

Six-time professional league champions Abahani played comparatively well against Chennaiyin FC and created a lot of scoring opportunities but the Sky Blues were unable to secure even a point thanks to midfielder Wellington. Wellington struck

his own net while attempting to block a shot from Aniuhd Thapa inside the box in the 79th minute.

Although Abahani's Nigerian striker Sunday Chizoba was previously unavailable due to visa issues, he was ultimately able to fly out yesterday morning and join the team ahead of the match.

It was Abahani who created a lot of scoring chances from the onset but Belfort, Nabib Newaj Jibon, Rubel Mia squandered those opportunities before a strike from Jibon was caught off-side two minutes from the break.

Goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel also made some good saves but he was unable to stop Wellington's blunder towards the near post despite being in position.

Abahani will take on the same opponents on May 15 in the home leg in Dhaka.

O'Shea to retire at end of season

AFP, London

Former Manchester United defender John O'Shea will retire at the end of the season, Championship club Reading announced on Tuesday.

The Republic of Ireland international won five Premier League titles at Old Trafford, as well as the FA Cup and the Champions League.

On Tuesday, his 38th birthday, O'Shea announced his retirement, having spent the final season of his playing career at Reading after a seven-year stint at Sunderland.



Shooter Abdullah Hel Baki (R) received the Rupchanda-Prothom Alo 2018 Sports Person of the Year award during a ceremony at a local hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Mixed bag for BD U-16s

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Under-16 team experienced both highs and lows on the second day of the first three-day Test against the Pakistan Under-16 team at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah yesterday.

Resuming on 119 for five, Bangladesh lost the rest of their wickets after adding just 20 runs, leaving them trailing in the match by nine runs.

However, the hosts bounced back with the ball as Ashiqur Rahman picked up four for 21 while Mahfuzur Rahman scalped four for 38 to help bundle out Pakistan for just 110.

In chase of 120, Bangladesh ended the day on a positive note by adding 83 runs for three wickets with Sakib Shahriar and Aich Mollah remaining unbeaten on 46 and 11 respectively.

Nat'l Airgun C'ships underway

SPORTS REPORTER

Suzuki 9th National Airgun Championships got underway at the National Shooting Complex in Gulshan yesterday with some 193 shooters from 32 rifle and shooting club taking part in the four-day competition.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Zahid Ahsan Russel decaled the championships open as chief guest while Bangladesh Shooting Sport Federation president Nazimuddin Chowdhury was present on the occasion.

The participants will compete in eight events -- air pistols for men and junior men, women and junior women and air rifles for men and junior men, women and junior women.

SHORT CORNER

Hamsik struggling to adapt to Chinese football

Marek Hamsik says that he is struggling to settle in Chinese football and admitted he has problems communicating with his Dalian Yifang teammates.

The 31-year-old, Napoli's all-time leading goal-scorer, left Serie A for the Chinese Super League (CSL) in February but has failed to find the net or provide an assist in six games.

Hamsik was dropped for Sunday's 4-1 defeat at top-of-the-table Beijing Guoan and did not even make the bench.

"I am not particularly satisfied with my performances," the Slovakian international midfielder told CCTV.

"There are big differences between Chinese and European football, but I will try to overcome this and adapt."

--AFP

Altidore and Stephens announce engagement

American tennis star Sloane Stephens and USA international Jozy Altidore announced a love match on Monday with both posting on Twitter that they are getting engaged.

Altidore tweeted the news with a picture and a message that read, "Forever starts now" while Stephens wrote "Forever yes" next to a red heart.

The couple have been dating since 2016. The 2017 US Open champion Stephens has won six WTA Tour titles and was runner up at the French Open last year.

In addition to her Grand Slam success, the 26-year-old Stephens was a member of the 2017 US Fed Cup team and reached the championship match of the WTA Tour Finals in 2018.

The 29-year-old Altidore currently plays for Toronto FC in the Major Soccer League and has represented the US at almost every level, including two World Cups.

--AFP

De Roon, Pasalic fire Atalanta into fourth

Midfielders Marten de Roon and Mario Pasalic scored late as Atalanta beat Udinese 2-0 to surge back into the top four in Serie A on Monday.

The side from Bergamo move ahead of Roma into the final Champions League spot days after booking their ticket to the Coppa Italia final on May 15 against Lazio.

The battle for elite European football next season remains tight with six teams in the running to join Juventus and Napoli in the competition next season. Atalanta with 59 points from 34 games move one point ahead of Roma who drop to fifth with four games left of the campaign.

"We're experiencing something remarkable, the lads are doing incredible things," said coach Gian Piero Gasperini as his team target a place in top-tier European football for the first time.

"It's in our hands now."

--AFP

Lazio punished over 'banana' Bakayoko chant

Lazio have been handed a one-match stand closure penalty which is suspended for a year due to racist chants by their fans during last week's Italian Cup semifinal against AC Milan, the Lega Serie A announced on Monday.

AC Milan players Tiemoué Bakayoko and Franck Kessie were targeted by 'monkey chanting' by a section of Lazio supporters before and after the game in the San Siro.

Bakayoko was also targeted before the game with Lazio fans heard outside the stadium singing: "This banana is for Bakayoko".

The Lega Serie A said in a statement that "90% of the 4,049 occupants, were responsible for repeated racist chants towards Milan players Franck Kessie and, in particular, Tiemoué Bakayoko".

--AFP

Dominic Thiem celebrates with the Barcelona Open trophy after defeating Daniil Medvedev in the final on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP



Tapu Barman ruled out for season

Centre-back will miss WC qualifiers, AFC Cup & Premier League

SPORTS REPORTER



Centre-back Tapu Barman has been ruled out for the rest of the season following a surgery on his left knee last week, which means that he will be unavailable

for both legs of Bangladesh's joint qualifiers for the World Cup and Asian Cup pre-qualifying matches against Laos.

"I underwent an operation on my left knee on April 23 at Apollo Hospital under the supervision of doctor Nanda Kumar, who told me that it will take me anywhere from 27 to 52 weeks to recover," Tapu said yesterday.

"I will need at least eight weeks to take to the field and four months to train with the ball. The doctor told me that I will be able to play after five months," said Tapu, who sustained the knee injury during a tussle with Abahani teammate Kervens Belfort during a practice session in March ahead of their AFC Cup opener against Nepal's Manang Marshyangdi Club.

the national team as he is a player and a person I really enjoy working with. He played fantastically well for me. He will be a big loss for us and his club and I hope he makes a full and quick recovery," Day said over phone from England.

"We have to stay positive with the situation and for the national team it now gives someone else, who has been waiting, a chance," added Day.

"I really feel sorry for the club because I had a dream to play in the AFC Cup for Abahani. Besides, our target is to win the professional league title, but I won't be able to have any contribution there and it is really a bad feeling for a professional footballer," Tapu said. "Unfortunately, I will also miss the World Cup pre-qualifiers against Laos."

Coach Jamie Day was frustrated over the injury to his key player, but the coach advised Tapu to stay positive.

"It's a shame for Tapu and Bangladesh as he is a player and a person I really enjoy working with. He played fantastically well for me. He will be a big loss for us and his club and I hope he makes a full and quick recovery," Day said over phone from England.