

What to WATCH

RTV & NAGORIK TV
Bangamata U-19 Women's Int'l Gold Cup
Final
Bangladesh v Laos
Live from 6:00pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
Indian Premier League
Punjab v Kolkata
Live from 8:30pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT 2
English Premier League

Everton v Burnley
Live from 1:00am (Saturday)
TEN 2
Serie A
Juventus v Torino
Live from 12:30am (Saturday)

DAY'S EVENT

Bangamata U-19 Women's Int'l Gold Cup
Final
Bangladesh v Laos

Time: 6:00pm
Venue: Bangabandhu
National Stadium, Dhaka

ANOTHER YEAR AS BRIDESMAIDS?

SAMAMA RAHMAN

Another season that looked to be shaping up to be memorable for Liverpool fans is now on the verge of being remembered for reasons more melancholic than joyous. The Reds have come close to winning numerous trophies over the past 10 years, but have been denied cruelly each time.

There was the now infamous slip from captain Steven Gerrard that sealed a defeat to Chelsea in the 2013-14 season when they lost the title to Manchester City by two points. That episode was preceded by five years by Federico Macheda's heroics for Manchester United; another season that Liverpool finished second in the Premier League. Just last year, Liverpool made it to the final of the Champions League only for talisman Mohamed Salah to go down to injury 25 minutes into a scoreless match.

The Reds finished fourth, 25 points

Weekend WINDOW

season so far. They have amassed 91 points and could go on to finish on 97, a total that would have seen them win the title in each season since 2010 barring the 2017-18 one. There is a lot of pride that such a haul should instill in the players and fans, but looking back they will still be second-best.

The only silver lining is that they still have time to turn things around, however unlikely that may seem.

Barcelona threw away a three-goal lead in the Champions League last year and Liverpool, with Anfield behind them, will certainly be hopeful of a 'remontada' against the Spaniards.



Liverpool players are dejected after their 3-0 defeat against a Messi-inspired Barcelona in the Champions League semifinal first leg tie at the Nou Camp on Wednesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

behind first-place Manchester City, and reinforced in the summer. Jurgen Klopp's philosophies were ingrained more deeply into the side and yet, despite all the stellar work they have done, they look set to go trophy-less again.

Manchester City handed the 18-time top-flight winners their only loss in the league and are two points clear with two matches left in the season and Lionel Messi, who looks relentless in his search for a fifth Champions League title, all but put Liverpool's European hopes to bed in Wednesday night's 3-0 defeat.

Klopp drew on the positives as he does, saying he did "not know if his side could play much better". He made another observation, saying: "In the end, nobody is really interested -- probably only football nerds will think about it -- because it was about the result, and we lost 3-0."

Klopp is not wrong. By many measures and the eye-test, his side had outperformed Barcelona at the Nou Camp. However, in terms of the only measure that really counts, they were down three to nothing.

It is very much their story of the

They will also be hopeful that the so far imperious Manchester City will slip up against Leicester City or Brighton.

It is quite absurd that after all Liverpool have done this season, the only thing they have left to rely on is hope that their opponents stumble, but that is the reality they are faced with. Unless that happens, they must satisfy themselves with a Champions League spot, something they could have attained while finishing fourth, minus the heartbreak.

The heartbreak of it all fans and the club should be able to deal with. They have come on in leaps and bounds this season in challenging a Manchester City team that is nearly flawless and the prospect will be much the same again next year, except City will certainly reach into their bottomless pockets and strengthen again.

Even the heartbreak posed by the outlook of Liverpool not winning anything again this year can be offset by the strides that the club has made on the pitch, coupled with the exciting brand of football they play week in and week out -- meaning things are likely to change sooner rather than later.



Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi (R) scores his second and the team's third goal from a sublime freekick to condemn Liverpool to a 3-0 defeat in their Champions League semifinal first leg encounter at the Nou Camp on Wednesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Messi destroys Liverpool

AFP, Barcelona



Lionel Messi left Liverpool needing a miracle to reach their second Champions League final in as many years as his brace helped Barcelona win a pulsating Champions League semifinal first leg 3-0 on Wednesday.

Barca have one foot in next month's final ahead of Tuesday's second leg at Anfield after former Reds striker Luis Suarez gave Barca the lead during a breathless opening 45 minutes before Messi struck twice late on, the second a stunning free-kick and his 600th Barca goal.

"He's unstoppable," said Klopp afterwards. "Obviously we couldn't defend the free-kick. What a strike. He's a world-class player but I knew that already. It's no surprise."

Jurgen Klopp could only smile after Messi's curling shot nestled in the top corner but this result was harsh on his side.

They matched Barcelona in the first half, dominated them early in the second and could still have left with an away goal after Messi's deadly double, only for Mohamed Salah to hit the post.

"I said to the boys I was proud of how we played against a side like this," Klopp said. "If you lose away it's not a massive problem as long as you score a goal. That's our problem tonight - it doesn't make our life any easier."

But Messi and Suarez did what they have done all season, their tallies now at 47 and 27 goals respectively in all competitions.

It had been a breathtaking contest befitting two of Europe's most exhilarating teams. The first half was electric, a reel of chances, breaks and blocks, while the second was a tense, tactical battle where Barca dared Liverpool to over-exert.

The comeback will be even tougher for them given Barcelona, with La Liga wrapped up, will surely rest a host of players against Celta Vigo this weekend while Liverpool, a point behind Premier League leaders Manchester City, will have to be at full throttle again away at Newcastle on Saturday.

"They can still make us suffer," said Barca

Not over yet, warns Leo

AFP, BARCELONA

Lionel Messi warned his Barcelona teammates that their place in the Champions League final is still not certain despite his two-goal salvo in a 3-0 semifinal first leg win over Liverpool on Wednesday.

"It would have been better to win 4-0 than 3-0 but it is a very good result," said the Argentine star.

"It's not definitive, we are going to go into a very complicated atmosphere, with a great history."

Messi's second goal was the 600th of his Barca career and he reached the landmark in stunning style, majestically curling a free-kick into the top corner.

"It was beautiful when it went in but I was lucky that the ball lodged up there in the corner."

Messi refused to take all the plaudits for the win which also Luis Suarez score against his former club.

"We must be more united than ever, all together: the team, the fans.

"We said at the beginning of the season that we will win it together."

coach Ernesto Valverde. "The result is good but the tie is open."

Messi was already fresh, after playing just over half the La Liga minutes he could have done in April, and he looked sharp early on, weaving through the centre while for Liverpool, the sensational Sadio Mane raced down the left.

The attacks were scintillating but the defending was good too. Andy Robertson scrambled across to block Messi's finish from six yards and moments later it was Sergi Roberto on the slide, preventing Mane from racing clear.

Messi wanted a penalty when the ball jumped up on Joel Matip and Naby Keita went off injured in the 25th minute, replaced by Jordan Henderson.

A minute later came the goal. Arturo Vidal sprayed the ball left to Philippe Coutinho, who cushioned back for Jordi Alba. Alba shaped to cross but instead curved a perfectly weighted pass to the near post, where Suarez nipped in.

Liverpool came again. Mane scampered in behind then flicked the ball round Sergio Busquets. He should have scored too,

Henderson's cross finding him free from eight yards but the shot flew over.

Barca took control just as Suarez began to lose it, irked by James Milner barging Messi into the sideboards after the Argentinian had danced past Robertson.

But Liverpool were re-energised at the start of the second half. Marc-Andre ter Stegen pushed away shots from Milner and Mohamed Salah, then held a Milner drive.

Then Messi took the wind out of Liverpool's sails, striking twice in seven minutes. His own run started the first, setting Sergi free to square to Suarez. Off balance, Suarez could only volley against the crossbar but the ball came back for Messi, who chested and finished into an open net.

Two was hard on Liverpool but Messi was not done. The free-kick was central, 30 yards out, and he whipped it over the wall and into the top corner.

Barca were delirious but Liverpool almost grabbed an away goal when a clearance on the line fell kindly for Salah, who hammered against the post and left Liverpool with little hope of making the Madrid final.

All 'under control' for Casillas

AFP, Lisbon



Veteran goalkeeper Iker Casillas said "everything was under control" after suffering a heart attack in training, he posted on

Twitter on Wednesday.

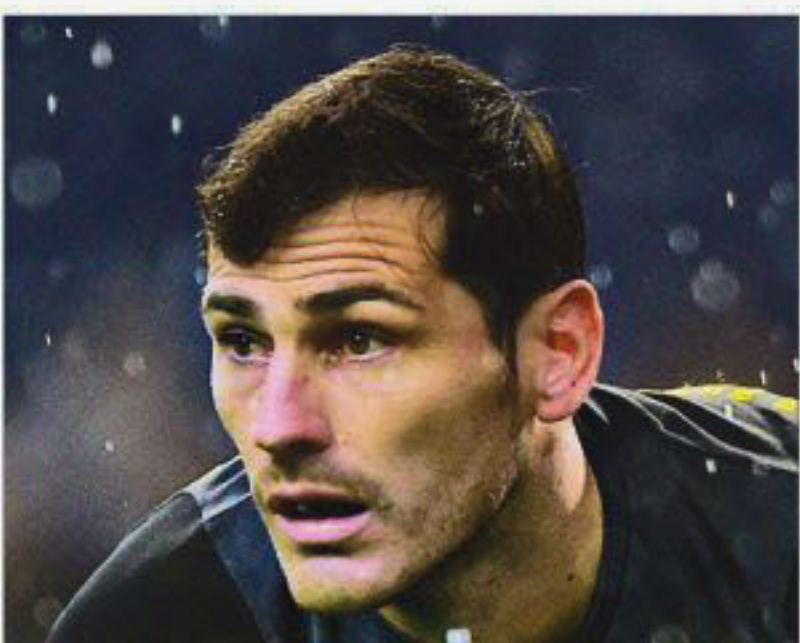
The 37-year-old, who has 167 Spain caps and played more than 500 games for Real Madrid, suffered what his club, Porto called an "acute myocardial infarction" in training earlier in the day.

"Everything is under control, a big scare but all is intact. Thank you very much for the messages and affection," Casillas said.

The club's statement on Wednesday said "the training session was interrupted to provide assistance," adding that Casillas was in a Porto hospital "well, stable and his heart problem solved."

Portuguese media reported Casillas had undergone surgery and his season was over.

Porto are second in the Portuguese championship, just two points behind leaders Benfica, and face Sporting Lisbon in the Portuguese Cup final on May 25.



The news prompted an outpouring of concern from fans, clubs former team-mates and opponents.

"Courage my friend. I hope you recover quickly," former Real teammate Cristiano Ronaldo posted on Instagram.

Spain teammate Gerard Pique tweeted: "Courage Iker, get well soon my friend!"

Former England striker Gary Lineker tweeted: "Wishing @IkerCasillas a full and speedy recovery. One of the greats."

Tennis star Rafael Nada and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, both Real Madrid fans, also sent their support.

"Real Madrid and its supporters wish to see their eternal captain

recover as soon as possible and send him all the support of the world," the club said.

Casillas joined Real before he turned 10 and played 16 seasons with the first team before moving to Porto in 2015.

The former Spain captain turns 38 later in May and recently extended his contract with Porto to next year with the option of an additional year.

In addition to a raft of domestic honours with Real and Porto, Casillas has won one World Cup, two European Championships and three Champions Leagues.

He said Porto had told him of they wanted to keep him until he turned 40.

Casillas joins a growing list of footballers who have suffered heart attacks.

The most recent fatal attack came just last week, when experienced Burundi international Papy Faty died after collapsing during an eSwatini (formerly Swaziland) league match.

The most high-profile recent case was former captain of Fiorentina Davide Astori, who died of a heart attack in his sleep prior to a Serie A match with Udinese in March 2018.

Casillas and his partner, Spanish journalist Sara Carbonero, have two sons: Martin (5) and Lucas (2).

Mumbai beat Hyderabad in eliminator

PTI, Mumbai

Mumbai Indians prevailed over Sunrisers Hyderabad in a one-over eliminator to qualify for the Indian Premier League playoffs in Mumbai yesterday.

Opting to bat, Mumbai scored 162 for five in the allotted 20 overs, and then saw Hyderabad end their innings at the same score.

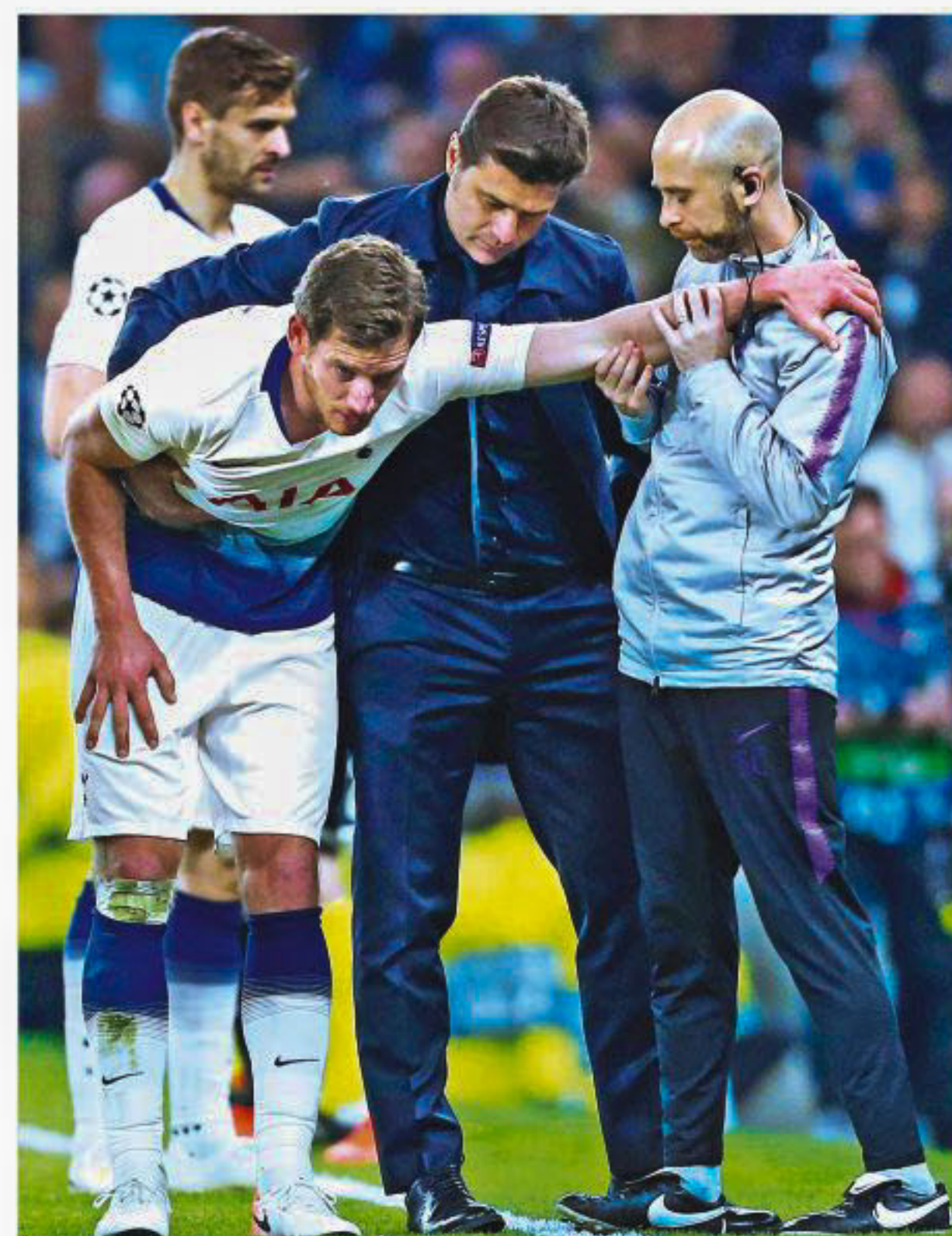
Needing nine to win in the Super Over, Hardik Pandya hammered Rashid Khan for a six in the first ball before Kieron Pollard took the side home.

SCORES IN BRIEF
MUMBAI: 162 for 5 in 20 overs (De Kock 69 not out; Ahmed 3-42)

HYDERABAD: 162 for 6 in 20 overs (Pandey 71 not out; H Pandya 2-20)

Result: Match drawn (Mumbai won the eliminator).

Player-of-the-match: Jasprit Bumrah.



Tottenham Hotspur defender Jan Vertonghen (L) is helped by coach Mauricio Pochettino as he leaves the pitch injured during their Champions League semifinal first leg match against Ajax in London on Tuesday. Ajax won the match 1-0.

PHOTO: AFP

Vertonghen to see neurologist

AFP, London

Tottenham defender Jan Vertonghen will see a neurologist on Thursday after suffering a horrific head injury during his side's Champions League semifinal 1-0 defeat against Ajax.

Vertonghen was dazed and covered in blood following an accidental collision with Tottenham teammate Toby Alderweireld in the first half on Tuesday.

The Belgium international initially tried to play on after being checked by Tottenham's medical staff, but he still looked groggy and had to be helped off the pitch moments later.

It was feared Vertonghen had suffered a concussion, raising questions about the decision to allow him to briefly resume play.