

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

Cricket World Cup warm-up

Bangladesh v India

Live from 3:30pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT 2

New Zealand v West Indies

Live from 3:30pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT 2

French Open

Round-2

Live from 3:00pm

City

Rafael, Novak cruise

AFP, Paris

Defending champion Rafael Nadal got his bid for a record-extending 12th French Open title off to the perfect start by brushing aside German qualifier Yannick Hanfmann, while world number one Novak Djokovic was also a comfortable victor in the first round at Roland Garros yesterday.

Nadal, a 17-time Grand Slam champion, cruised to a 6-2, 6-1, 6-3 victory on the rebuilt Court Philippe Chatrier to set up a clash with another German qualifier -- world number 114 Yannick Maden -- in round two.

The 32-year-old Nadal raced into a 3-0 lead in the opening set before a second break of serve in the eighth game sealed it after just 40 minutes.

The second set was over in a flash as Nadal crushed nine winners past his beleaguered opponent.

The winning line honed into view when Nadal broke after a lengthy game to take a 2-1 advantage in the third, and the Spaniard completed the job on his first match point as world number 184 Hanfmann blasted long.

Djokovic laid down an early marker in his bid to hold all four Grand Slam titles simultaneously for the second time, powering past Polish youngster Hubert Hurkacz.

The 15-time major champion impressed in a 6-4, 6-2, 6-2 triumph and will face Swiss lucky loser Henri Laaksonen in round two.

The 22-year-old Hurkacz, who has claimed three wins over top-10 players this season, had no answer to the 2016 French Open winner, as Djokovic sealed a second-round spot without breaking sweat, hitting 27 winners.

Later in the day, 23-time women's major champion Serena Williams was scheduled to take on Russia's Vitalia Diatchenko.

Earlier, former world number one Caroline Wozniacki collapsed to a 0-6, 6-3, 6-3 loss to Russian world number 68 Veronika Kudermetova in the first round.

The Danish 13th seed had retired injured from her two previous matches in the lead-up to Roland Garros, and fell away badly after a strong first set.

Sixth seed and two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova was forced to pull out before her scheduled opener against Sorana Cirstea with a left arm injury, but said she should be fit for Wimbledon, which starts on July 1.

Dutch fourth seed Kiki Bertens looked in fine fettle, though, beating home player Pauline Parmentier 6-3, 6-4.

Elsewhere in the women's draw, Australian eighth seed Ashleigh Barty saw off American Jessica Pegula 6-3, 6-3.

In the men's event, three-time Grand Slam champion Stan Wawrinka progressed with a 6-1, 6-7 (3/7), 6-2, 6-3 win over Slovakian Jozef Kovalik.

Australian Alex De Minaur, seeded 21st, beat the United States' Bradley Klahn 6-1, 6-4, 6-4, although Georgian 15th seed Nikoloz Basilashvili and Russian 12th seed Daniil Medvedev both exited the tournament.



Rafael Nadal celebrates his win against Yannick Hanfmann in the men's singles first round match of the French Open in Paris yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

SHORT CORNER

'Liverpool deserve to win Champions League'

Netherlands coach Ronald Koeman hopes Liverpool pair Virgil van Dijk and Georginio Wijnaldum emerge as Champions League winners on Saturday so that they join up with his squad in a positive mood for the Nations League campaign.

Liverpool face Tottenham Hotspur in the Champions League final in Madrid.

The Dutch take on England in the Nations League semifinal in Guimaraes, Portugal on June 6.

"It would be rather sour if both ended up empty handed after such a formidable season and being so close to huge trophies," Koeman told reporters as the Dutch prepared for the Nations League with a camp in Zeist this week.

"Van Dijk, Wijnaldum and Liverpool do not deserve that." --REUTERS

Kvitova gets all clear for Wimbledon

Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova said she expects to be fit for the grass-court season despite pulling out of the French Open with a left arm injury on Monday.

The Czech, who was seeded sixth at Roland Garros, will be out for "two to three weeks".

"It means no tennis, of course, as it's my left forearm," said the big-hitting left-hander.

"Maybe I can play rightie. Two to three weeks, so I'll do some fitness and everything that I can do to prepare my body for the tennis on the grass."

Kvitova had been due to play Romania's Sorana Cirstea in her opening Roland Garros match on Court Suzanne Lenglen later in the day.

"I am so disappointed to have to announce my withdrawal from Roland Garros," Kvitova wrote on Twitter. --AFP

Kante a doubt for Europa League final

Chelsea midfielder N'Golo Kante is a doubt for Wednesday's Europa League final against Arsenal in Baku after sustaining a knee injury in training over the weekend, according to British media reports.

The France international missed Chelsea's previous two games with a hamstring injury but returned to training last week and manager Maurizio Sarri was confident he would be fit for the club's season-ending showpiece in the Azerbaijan capital.

Both the Times and Guardian newspapers reported that Kante had twisted his knee during a training session on Saturday and was not likely to recover in time for the final.

The 28-year-old's absence is a blow for Sarri, who is already without the services of defender Antonio Rudiger, midfielder Ruben Loftus-Cheek and winger Callum Hudson-Odoi due to injuries. --REUTERS

Booters play against Thai club today

SPORTS REPORTER

Coach Jamie Day will have a look at all the players when Bangladesh take on Air Force United FC in first of their two warm-up matches in Thailand as part of preparation for the joint qualifiers for Asian Cup and World Cup (Round-1) tie against Laos.

The match will get underway at 6:00pm (Thailand time) today at the Air Force UFC ground in Bangkok.

The men in red and green have already done three days' training in Bangkok where the coach spent time on tactical aspects of the players, who had been engaged in domestic football before heading for Thailand on May 24.

Day had worked with the senior players in October last year during the Bangabandhu Gold Cup and then worked with the under-23 team in March during the AFC U-23 Championship Qualifiers. The 39-year-old coach has now got all the players together to work on team combination before the crucial match against Laos on June 6.

"Everyone in the squad is fine and had good training in the last three days. It is a match where the boys will play together again. I may try different formations to bolster their confidence and get them organised. I am not worried about the match result tomorrow [Wednesday]," said Day, who is likely to test all the players in today's match.

Captain Jamal Bhuiyan said, "So far we have had good training here. The match is vital for all the players because the coach wants to see our performance and in which level we are at the moment. We will try to play our best to win the match."

Shakil flops in Munich

SPORTS REPORTER

Commonwealth Games silver medallist Shakil Ahmed frustrated in the ISSF World Cup, finishing 109th among 162 shooters in 10m air pistol event in Munich yesterday.

Shakil, also a SA Games gold medallist, scored only 565 points, 17 points less than the eighth qualifier for the final round. Two Indian shooters -- Saurabh Chaudhary and Rizvi Shahzar -- made it into the final round from where two shooters will get tickets for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Prior to departure for Germany, Shakil had said that he would try to transfer his training performance into the competition by scoring 575 to 580 points, but he was way off the mark yesterday.

BFF fines Police; bans four players

SPORTS REPORTER

The disciplinary committee of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday fined Bangladesh Championship League's new champions Bangladesh Police FC Tk 5 lakh while suspending four of its players for different terms due to an attack by a police constable and four of its players on a BFF executive during the league's last match on May 24.

The police constable, Shamim, assaulted BFF's competition manager Zaber Bin Ansari after being denied entry into the ground during that match against Feni Soccer Club. Later, four more players joined him in the assault, just after the completion of the prize giving ceremony at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

All four police players -- Amirul Islam, Tarek Aziz, Azmi Omar and Sarwar Hossain -- have been given Tk one lakh fine for their involvement. Islam and Aziz have been suspended for two matches while Omar and Hossain have been handed nine-match bans each. Physiotherapist of the team, Santanu Mallik, too, has been banned for nine matches and fined Tk 2 lakh.

Shamim has been given life-time stadium ban across the country, said a press release from BFF yesterday.

ICC WORLD CUP 2019 BITES

02 DAYS TO GO

Pace duo ready to spearhead SA charge

ICC

As soon as he saw Kagiso Rabada, Dale Steyn knew. "You could just watch him bowl one ball, how he was running in, how easy his action was; he made it look simple."

It was 2014, the Under 19 Cricket World Cup, and Rabada was en route to 14 wickets that led South Africa to victory. Steyn, watching from home, took note.

this is what he was put on earth to do. It's amazing. You don't have to teach him anything, it just comes naturally to him." There is a touch of awe in his voice. "There's not much more you can say about it. He's just got it all."

Coming from South Africa's leading Test wicket-taker, and the man who has spent more time at the top of the MRF Tyres ICC Test Bowling Rankings than any

other, it's dazzling praise. And the feeling is mutual. "Dale's action is so simple and uncomplicated," says Rabada, 11 years Steyn's junior. "When you're around quality like that, you just watch."

Watching has served Rabada well. The 24-year-old already has 106 ODI wicket and faint whispers he might become South Africa's greatest bowler are abound. But Steyn waves them aside as meaningless. How can we judge 'greatest ever', he asks? Using stats? "That's boring," he says. "We play in a different time to players who played in the past. Right now he's killing people."

“He stood out head and shoulders above everybody else,” he says.

Twelve months later Steyn was left flat on his back, staring in disbelief into a starry Antipodean sky, another ICC Men's Cricket World Cup semifinal having slipped from South Africa's grasp. Rabada joined the team later that year and, since becoming his teammate, Steyn's admiration for 'KG' has only grown.

"He's a natural athlete," the 35-year-old enthuses. "He could be a basketball player, he could be a sprinter, he could be anything. And when you put a cricket ball in his hand you quickly realise that



KAGISO RABADA



DALE STEYN

Sachin's advice for India

AFP, New Delhi

India must not press the panic button despite losing badly to New Zealand in their first warm-up game for the World Cup, the country's batting legend Sachin Tendulkar said.

New Zealand thrashed India, one of the World Cup favourites, by six wickets at The Oval on Saturday with only Ravindra Jadeja and Hardik Pandya scoring more than 20 in India's total of 179.

India's batsmen were "blown away" on the green wicket, the Hindustan Times said, sounding the alarm for their World Cup hopes. But Tendulkar called for calm.

"I will not judge the team after each and every game. It's a tournament and things like these will happen," Tendulkar was quoted as saying by the Press Trust of India news agency.

"The main tournament has not even started yet. I think, we need to settle down, one or two games may go here and there.

"India should make the most of the practice matches," added Tendulkar, the highest scorer in Test and one-day cricket.

"They should understand what kind of surfaces they might get. I won't panic at all as of now."

Atalanta, Inter qualify for UCL

AFP, Rome

Atalanta won at Sassuolo on Sunday to secure their first ever Champions League spot and Inter Milan joined them while ensuring Empoli were relegated after a frantic second half in the San Siro.

AC Milan ended up fifth despite winning at SPAL. Genoa and Fiorentina stayed in Serie A after a nerve-wracked goalless draw.

The evening started with Inter, Atalanta, AC Milan and Roma battling for the two remaining Champions League spots and Empoli knowing that if they won they would survive.

Because their ground is being redeveloped, Atalanta had to cede home advantage and play at Sassuolo where they quickly fell behind.

Duvan Zapata levelled before half-time. After Sassuolo lost their scorer Domenico Berardi, who received a red card for his part in the mass brawl that ended the first half, Atalanta comfortably sealed third as goals by Alejandro Gomez and Mario Pasalic completed a 3-1 win.

Milan took a two-goal lead at SPAL, with goals by Hakan Calhanoglu and Franck Kessie, but Francesco Vicari and Mohamed Fares replied.

Meanwhile at the San Siro, after a goal-less first half, Inter brought on Keita Balde. The striker broke the deadlock with a solo goal six minutes later, earning a yellow card for ripping off his shirt in celebration.

Inter Milan players celebrate after winning their Serie A match against Empoli at the San Siro on Sunday. Inter won 2-1 to qualify for the Champions League.



PHOTO: AFP