

# What to WATCH

**SONY SIX**  
**England v Australia**  
**Ashes First Test, Day-1**  
**Live from 4:00pm**

**Bangladesh Premier League**  
Time: 4:00pm  
Sk Jamal v Nofel SC

**Venue:** BNS, Dhaka  
**Saif SC v Muktijoddha**  
**RUBS, Mymensing**

**Time:** 7:00pm  
**Mohammedan v Rahamatganj**  
**Venue:** BNS, Dhaka

# FIRST ASHES TEST STARTS TODAY Eng seek double; Aussies eye history

AFP, Birmingham

England return to 'Fortress Edgbaston' for the first Test against Australia on Thursday looking to round off an already memorable season by completing a World Cup and Ashes double.

If the World Cup remains the pinnacle of the 50-over game, for England and Australia there's nothing quite like a renewal of Test cricket's oldest rivalry.

But now there's arguably more at stake for both sides than the series result.

For England, a home season billed as the most important in a generation started brilliantly with their impressive run to a first men's World Cup title.

International cricket in Britain emerged from behind its satellite television payroll for the first time since the celebrated 2005 Ashes so that millions could watch England's nerve-shredding Super Over win against New Zealand at Lord's earlier this month.

Building on that groundswell of support is a key part of the England and Wales Cricket Board's post-tournament strategy. Regaining the Ashes represents an ideal chance to keep those new followers on board, even if none of the five Tests are on free-to-air television.

For Australia, an Ashes series win under the dignified leadership of Tim Paine would help draw a line under the ball-tampering scandal in South Africa that led to long bans for former captain Steve Smith, David Warner and Cameron Bancroft.

All three batsmen are likely to feature at Edgbaston, with Bancroft set to hear the same booing that greeted Smith and Warner during the World Cup.

Australia have not won an Ashes in England for 19 years, with their batsmen struggling against the heavily stitched Dukes ball on pitches that offer seam movement.

Yet the first Test will be Australia's opening first-class match of the tour, although the likes of Bancroft, who has been captaining English county side Durham, have recent experience of local

conditions.

The way an England side featuring several World Cup stars were dismissed for just 85 by Ireland at Lord's last week before winning the first Test between the countries tells its own story of ongoing top-order woes.

England captain Joe Root plans to move back to number three to help shore up a top order featuring novice Surrey openers Rory Burns and Jason Roy.

James Anderson, England's all-time leading Test wicket-taker, is set to return from a calf injury to lead an attack.

Australia, meanwhile, are poised to put their faith in a rapid four-man attack featuring James Pattinson and Pat Cummins.

Several of England's World Cup winners appeared jaded against Ireland but Anderson, who no longer plays one-day internationals and so was not involved in that success, hopes he can revive any flagging spirits.

"For some of us this is the start of our international summer and it's our job to keep the energy going as a team," said Anderson, 37 on Tuesday.

With runs expected to be at premium while the bowlers hold sway, England will hope all-rounders such as Ben Stokes, restored to the vice-captaincy, can again make valuable contributions with the bat.

Australia have not won at Edgbaston in any format since 2001, a run that includes their recent World Cup semi-final loss to England, when Roy made a sparkling 85.

England, by contrast, have won their last 11 internationals at the raucous Birmingham ground.

But a congested schedule, the result of officials cramming an Ashes into the same season as a lengthy World Cup, could have a bigger bearing on the series, the first in the ICC's new World Test Championship.

"I really believe it's a big ask for the fast bowlers on both sides to play five Tests in six weeks," said Australia great Steve Waugh, the victorious captain in the 2001 Ashes, who is mentoring the current squad.

"Depth in the squad will be important but I honestly think if I was a betting man I wouldn't back either side because I don't know who's going to win."



England captain Joe Root (L) and Australia counterpart Tim Paine hold the urn containing the Ashes at Edgbaston yesterday ahead of the first Ashes Test which starts today.

PHOTO: AFP

# Stokes fires Warner warning

REUTERS, London

Australia's returning batsman David Warner poses the biggest threat to England's hopes of regaining the Ashes, according to all-rounder Ben Stokes who says his teammates must pressure the 32-year-old from the off.

Warner, former captain Steve Smith and Cameron Bancroft are all returning to the test arena for the first time since serving bans for their roles in a ball-tampering scandal in South Africa last March -- adding steel to Australia's batting.

But it is Warner who Stokes believes is Australia's key man.

"Warner is a player who can take games away from you," Stokes was quoted in The Times on Wednesday.

"He is a phenomenal batsman and a very dangerous opener so to tie him down and not let him

establish his authority against us would be a really big plus for us for the rest of the series.

"We don't want to give anything away to any of their batsmen. We want to let them know that we're here to be serious and everyone in the changing room is desperately trying to get that urn back."

The five-match series begins at Edgbaston on Thursday -- a ground England have turned into a fortress and have not lost a test against Australia since 2001.

Australia's returning trio will get a vociferous 'welcome' from the home fans and Stokes said it will be vital for England to apply maximum pressure on the visitors on day one.

"That first morning of any series is when you want to stamp your authority as a team with bat and ball," he said.

"Getting off to a good start can make it flow throughout the series and you want to be the team on top and you want to win that first day

because hopefully that can carry on into the next four days."

Stokes missed the 2017-18 Ashes defeat Down Under after his involvement in a brawl outside a Bristol nightclub in September 2017 but will be a key figure for England with bat and ball and as vice-captain to Joe Root.

While he has worked hard to clean up his act and Australia have been on a charm offensive after their disciplinary woes, Stokes knows that once hostilities begin on Thursday the mood could change.

"It is weird Aussies trying to be nice to you," he said. "Once you get out in the middle and cross the white line, the real competitive side of both teams will come out and the Ashes is the biggest test series played in the world."

"There is always something that happens between teams in Ashes series and I don't think this will be any different. Both teams are desperate to win."



DAVID WARNER



Tottenham Hotspur striker Harry Kane scored the all-important goal against Real Madrid.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# Real's pre-season struggles go on

AFP, Munich

Real Madrid's disastrous pre-season continued on Tuesday as they lost 1-0 to Tottenham in Munich.

"Our defeat was well deserved," Real midfielder Tony Kroos told German TV after the match. It's true that we're not quite in good shape."

In the second match of the evening, Bayern Munich thrashed Fenerbahce 6-1.

Champions League runners up Tottenham will play Bayern in Wednesday's final. Real will have a chance to find winning form run against a Turkish side that finished their game against the host in disarray.

For Spurs, Harry Kane scored the only goal of the game with a deft finish after pouncing on a disastrous pass by Marcello, who was trying to prevent a throw in, after 22 minutes.

Humiliated 7-3 last week by Atletico Madrid, Real could thank goalkeeper Keylor Navas, starting in place of injured Thibaut Courtois, for preventing a heavier against an enterprising and more aggressive Spurs team.

Madrid survived some goalmouth scares in the first half. After the break, Dele Alli went close twice and 17-year-old Troy Parrott hit the inside of the post.

Zinedine Zidane's team have conceded 13 goals and lost three of their four warm-up games.

"We started off very badly, the opponent took advantage of our mistakes," said Kroos.

With Gareth Bale, the source of turmoil in recent weeks, left out of the squad for the trip to Munich and James Rodriguez yet to start after returning from Bayern, Real rarely threatened. Star summer recruit Eden Hazard was invisible.

Both teams will be in action again tomorrow. Tottenham play the winner of the Tuesday's second match, between Bayern and Fenerbahce. Real will have the opportunity to make amends tomorrow against the loser.

Zidane's men then travel to Austria to face Salzburg on August 6, then to Italy for a match against AS Rome, the last friendly before the starting the Spanish league away to Celta Vigo on August 17.

# Liverpool trio head FIFA award shortlist

REUTERS, Zurich

Liverpool's Champions League winning trio of Mohamed Salah, Virgil van Dijk and Sadio Mane joined regulars Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi on the shortlist for The Best FIFA Men's player award, world soccer's governing body announced on Wednesday.

Salah and Mane shared the Premier League Golden Boot for the league's top scorer with 22 goals each while Messi was the leading scorer in both La Liga (36 goals) and the Champions League (12 goals) last season.

Centre back Van Dijk was voted both the Premier League Player of the Season and the Players' Player of the Year. The three finalists for each award will be revealed at a later date, with the winners to be announced in a ceremony in Milan on September 23.

# Table tennis players versus Monir

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's top table tennis players yesterday demanded immediate resignation of Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation's (BTTF) vice-president Khandokar Hasan Monir, bringing a few allegations against the official.

The players including three former champions – Manosh Chowdhury, Mahbub Billah and Javed Ahmed under the banner of Bangladesh Table Tennis Players' Association (BTTPA), yesterday gathered at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium to press home their demand, alleging that Monir has become all-in-all at the federation and that he is driving a wedge among the players.

"Khandokar Hasan Monir is destroying table tennis by dividing and creating conflicts among players with false statements and he is doing it to strengthen his own position," said BTTPA president and five-time national champion Manosh. "Mr Monir was once good to the players but he has gradually become a dictator and he is pulling the strings as the current general secretary is not



too active in the federation."

"Every discipline of SA Games have already started their preparation camp but table tennis is yet to start training due to Monir. We are in doubt whether we can retain the bronze medals in the SA Games," said six-time national champion Mahbub Billah, adding that Monir also influences national team selection.

Imran Hasan Ridoy, a young player, alleged that he had to pay Tk 32,000 for the dresses of the national

team ahead of Bangladesh's tour to Hungary for World Table Tennis Championship so that he could avail his first opportunity to represent Bangladesh.

Other players alleged that the BTTF vice-president has used his influence to rope in unqualified coaches for the national team.

Monir, however, categorically denied the allegations, saying that he has turned from good to bad in the eyes of these players just because he cannot look after the interest of the players at the moment since he is no more the general secretary.

"I was a good organiser to them a few months ago. So how have I become bad to them in just three to four months?" Monir questioned.

"The fact is I can't take care of these players violating rules. According to Bangladesh Olympic Association directives, all the players must stay in the SA Games camp but Manosh can't stay in the camp while Mahbub Billah went against me because I forced him to leave the dormitory."

The BTTF vice-president claimed that the SA Games camp will start from September 15 as there will be some renovation work at the dormitory.

# Argentina extends with Scaloni

AFP, Buenos Aires

Lionel Scaloni signed a contract extension with Argentina on Tuesday to run until the end of the qualifying period for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, the Argentine Football Association (AFA) said on its website and social media channels.

The 41-year-old was initially hired as interim coach last August, just over two weeks after Jorge Sampaoli was sacked following Argentina's last 16 elimination from the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

Last November his deal was extended until December of this year. Following a third-place finish at the Copa America in Brazil Scaloni has been given the chance to try to qualify for the World Cup.

Qualifiers begin in March 2020 and will run until mid November 2021.

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## EVRA PLAYED WITH CHICKEN IN HIS BOOT

Former Manchester United left-back Patrice Evra has claimed that he played with chicken in his boot for four months while at Monaco. The French defender had sustained an injury in an international fixture, but then-manager Didier Deschamps needed him to play through the pain and club doctors suggested that putting chicken into his boot would help. "An opponent had stamped on my foot and damaged it badly. It's too painful. I can't play. I can't even walk! But the team needed me, so the doctors tried everything to take away the pain. Nothing worked. Then someone from the club staff said, 'Why don't you just go old school?' Everyone said, 'What do you mean?' He said, 'Just slide a chicken down his boot.' --- AGENCIES



## Archer left out of team

AFP, Birmingham

World Cup-winner Jofra Archer will have to wait for his Test debut after the fast bowler was left out of the England side named Wednesday for the Ashes opener against Australia at Edgbaston.

The Barbados-born quick, who has been struggling with a side injury, was omitted from an original 14-man squad along with fellow pacemen Sam Curran and Olly Stone.

James Anderson returns to the side following a calf injury and will team up again with regular new-ball partner Stuart Broad.

**ENGLAND TEAM:** Rory Burns, Jason Roy, Joe Root (capt), Joe Denly, Jos Buttler, Ben Stokes, Jonny Bairstow (wkt), Moeen Ali, Chris Woakes, Stuart Broad, James Anderson.