

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

English Premier League

Arsenal v Burnley

Live from 5:30pm

Southampton v Liverpool

Live from 8:00pm

Man City v Tottenham

Live from 10:30pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT 2

Bundesliga

Dortmund v Augsburg

Live from 7:30pm

Monchengladbach v Schalke

Live from 10:30pm

SONY SIX

The Ashes

England v Australia

Second Test, Day Four

Live from 4:00pm

SONY ESPN

Sri Lanka v New Zealand

First Test, Day Four

Live from 10:30am



Real Madrid forward Eden Hazard (C) jogs with teammates during a training session at Real Madrid's sport city yesterday ahead of their tonight's La Liga match against Celta Vigo.

PHOTO: AFP

# Atletico dreaming of glory again

AFP, Madrid



Atletico Madrid began the summer by losing six of their best players but are ending it with greater belief than ever they can beat Real Madrid and Barcelona to the La Liga title, thanks in part to the exhilarating form of new striker Joao Felix.

Diego Simeone was tasked with his biggest rebuild since taking charge in 2011 after an exodus that not only drained his team of talent, including star man Antoine Griezmann, but caused many to wonder if the team could ever be the same again.

They lost four defenders, with full-backs Filipe Luis and Juanfran going to Brazil with Flamengo and Sao Paulo, captain Diego Godin moving to Inter Milan, and young gem Lucas Hernandez snapped up by Bayern Munich.

They also lost their defensive midfielder Rodri to Manchester City after just a year at the club, while the spat between Atleti and Barca over Griezmann's messy departure left a bad taste in the mouth.

Few would expect Griezmann and the 75 million euro (\$84 million) Frenkie de Jong not to make Barca even stronger, an ominous prospect given they won La Liga by 11 points only three months ago, but Atletico look best-placed to capitalise should they falter.

Forward Felix is at the heart of the optimism following his arrival for 120 million euros, erasing the pain of the Frenchman's exit even before a competitive ball has been kicked.

The 19-year-old has dazzled during pre-

season, his most impressive outing coming against Juventus and his fellow Portuguese Cristiano Ronaldo on Saturday, when he scored one and set up the other in a 2-1 win in Stockholm.

"Wherever you put him, he reads the game really well," said Simeone. "The best thing about him though is that he wants to learn. When this is the case, adaptation is always quicker."

Mario Hermoso, Kieran Trippier and Renan Lodi all appear excellent defensive additions while Marcos Llorente from Real Madrid should prove a shrewd replacement for silky Rodri.

Atletico finished 12 points ahead of Real last season and a series of bad summer displays from Zinedine Zidane's side -- including a 7-3 defeat to their Madrid rivals -- inspire little confidence despite the arrival of Eden Hazard.

FIXTURES

(all times GMT)

**SATURDAY**

Celta Vigo v Real Madrid (1500), Valencia v Real Sociedad (1700), Mallorca v Eibar (1800), Leganes v Osasuna (1900), Villarreal v Granada (1900)

**SUNDAY**

Alaves v Levante (1500), Espanyol v Sevilla (1700), Real Betis v Real Valladolid (1900), Atletico Madrid v Getafe (2000)

## Hazard to miss opener against Celta

AFP, Madrid

Eden Hazard will miss the start of the season after sustaining a thigh injury in training on Friday, the day before Real Madrid's La Liga opener against Celta Vigo.

Hazard was ready to make his debut in Vigo after joining Madrid for an initial 100 million euros from Chelsea in June.

But the Belgian pulled up with a minor strain at the club's training base in Valdebebas and is now expected to be out for three to four weeks.

"After tests carried out after training today on our player Eden Hazard by the Real Madrid Medical Services, he has been diagnosed with a muscular injury to the anterior part of his right thigh," a club statement read. "His recovery will continue to be assessed."

Madrid begin away at Celta on Saturday before facing Real Valladolid and a trip to Villarreal ahead of the international break.

Hazard could be in line to return for their match against Levante at the Santiago Bernabeu on September 1.

## Keeper headache for Klopp

AFP, London



Liverpool goalkeeper Adrian faces a late fitness test to see if he can face Southampton on Saturday after being injured by a pitch invader during celebrations of Wednesday's UEFA Super Cup win over Chelsea.

The Spaniard, who only joined the European champions on August 5, capped his full debut in style by saving Tammy Abraham's penalty to win Liverpool a shootout 5-4 following a 2-2 draw in Istanbul.

However, Adrian's ankle was injured when a fan ran on the pitch to join in the shootout celebrations and went careering into a huddle of Liverpool players when he slipped on the pitch.

"I really don't understand it why, in the world of social media where you are all on it, when we were all together a supporter jumped over something, was chased by some security guys, slipped and kicked (Adrian's) ankle. Crazy," said Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp.

"Yesterday it was swollen. Today I spoke to him and he said it is better, much better than yesterday, but we have to see."

"He could not have played directly after we landed in Liverpool, but I saw him now, he is ok and it looks better, but the decision will be made tomorrow -- there is no chance to make it early."

Liverpool are already without normal number one Alisson Becker due to a calf injury picked up in the Premier League season opener against Norwich and could have to cope without the Brazilian for up to two months.



ADRIAN

## Zidane now counting on Bale

AFP, Madrid

Zinedine Zidane has admitted Gareth Bale is back in his plans ahead of Real Madrid's opening La Liga game of the season against Celta Vigo on Saturday.

Eden Hazard sustained a thigh injury in training on Friday, meaning Bale could even start against Celta following a turbulent summer for the Welshman.

Zidane was keen for Bale to be sold but Madrid cancelled a deal with Chinese club Jiangsu Suning while the winger's salary of around 18 million euros a year has proven too high for other interested clubs.

Bale is also eager to stay at Madrid, where he has a contract until 2022, and is not interested in moving to Paris Saint-Germain, despite suggestions he could be included in a bid for Neymar.

"It looked like he was leaving and now he's here with us, that's it," Zidane said. "The dynamic changes and things change and now I'm going to count on him like everyone else. I said it a short time ago, I'm going to count on all the players that are here."

# City seek Spurs revenge

Lampard hoping for home comforts

AFP, London



Manchester City will seek revenge against Tottenham on Saturday for their dramatic Champions League exit last season as Liverpool and Manchester United also look to build on impressive Premier League starts this weekend.

City completed the first ever domestic treble of trophies in England last season, but fell short once more in the Champions League as Tottenham progressed from their quarter-final tie on away goals.

VAR disallowed Raheem Sterling's strike deep into stoppage time of a thrilling second leg 4-3 win for the English champions in April, robbing Sterling of his hat-trick on the night and City a place in the last four.

Yet, Sterling has started the new campaign as he finished the last, scoring a hat-trick on the opening weekend as City thrashed West Ham 5-0 to already move to the top of the table.

Tottenham were also victorious against Aston Villa, but needed to come from behind and two goals in the final five minutes from Harry Kane to secure a 3-1 win over promoted Aston Villa.

Kane has warned that Spurs cannot fall behind so early in the campaign if they want to maintain a title challenge.

"We have to make sure we get off to a good start," said the England captain.

"It's important that we stay in touch as long as we can.

"We have full belief that we can go all the way but there's a long road ahead."

Liverpool will hope to have forged ahead by the time City and Spurs kick-off at the Etihad when they travel to a Southampton side reeling from a disappointing 3-0 defeat at Burnley to start the season.

Chelsea were the only member of the 'big six' to get off to a losing start as the Blues were humbled 4-0 by Manchester United in Frank Lampard's first game in charge.

The former England midfielder fairly argued that the scoreline was very harsh on his side after they

FIXTURES

(1400 GMT unless stated)

**SATURDAY**

Arsenal v Burnley (1130), Aston Villa v Bournemouth, Brighton v West Ham, Everton v Watford, Norwich v Newcastle, Southampton v Liverpool, Manchester City v Tottenham (1630)

**SUNDAY**

Sheffield United v Crystal Palace (1300), Chelsea v Leicester (1530)

**MONDAY**

Wolves v Manchester United (1900)

enjoyed the better of the opening hour.

And there was further encouragement for Lampard in his side's performance despite losing the UEFA Super Cup to Liverpool on penalties after a 2-2 draw in Istanbul on Wednesday.

"To lose the game was disappointing but if it means Chelsea's season can be something like how we played today, we'll be OK," he said.

## Morocco appoint Halilhodzic

AFP, Rabat

Former Japan boss Vahid Halilhodzic was named as the new coach of Morocco on Thursday, his third job with an African nation.

The 67-year-old succeeds Herve Renard, who quit after the Africa Cup of Nations and has since taken over at Saudi Arabia.

"To reach the World Cup finals in 2022 is my main objective," said Halilhodzic, who was recently the coach of French club Nantes.

"It's the fourth time that I will try to take a team to a World Cup."

Halilhodzic, who left Nantes on August 2 by mutual agreement, has also coached Ivory Coast and Algeria -- whom he took to the second round of the World Cup in 2014 for the first time in the country's history.

He was in charge of Japan from 2015 until 2018 but was axed just two months before the World Cup finals in Russia.

# Alaba calls for more Bayern transfers

AFP, Berlin



David Alaba became the latest Bayern Munich star to urge the club to ramp up their activity in the transfer market, and also cast doubt upon his own future in comments to the Austrian news agency APA on Friday.

Ahead of Bayern's German league opener against Hertha Berlin on Friday, Austrian international Alaba said Bayern needed to sign "one or two" more players before the transfer window closes on September 2.

"The season is long and we need more than just a high-quality squad, we also need a large squad," the 27-year-old said.

"I think that another one or two players should come to raise the competition and then we'd be well-stocked in terms of breadth."

Alaba is the second senior player to openly call for more signings following comments from star striker Robert Lewandowski, while the agent of captain Manuel Neuer has also said more reinforcements are needed.

Bayern have faced criticism for their sluggishness in this year's transfer window after several senior players, including Arjen

Robben, Franck Ribery and Mats Hummels, left the club at the end of last season.

The German giants signed French World Cup winning defenders Benjamin Pavard and Lucas Hernandez earlier this year, and secured Inter Milan winger Ivan Perisic on a one-year loan this week.

Perisic was signed as a back-up option after Bayern's primary transfer target, Manchester City winger Leroy Sane, suffered an anterior cruciate ligament tear earlier this month.

The Bavarians have also been heavily linked to Barcelona midfielder Philippe Coutinho and Juventus forward Mario Mandzukic, so Alaba is confident more signings could be made.

"I have faith in our bosses and I think that there is more to come," he said.

The Austrian also cast doubt on his own future at the club, with his current contract set to expire in 2021.

"My focus is entirely on Bayern. I don't know what will happen in the next year," said Alaba, who has previously been linked with a move to Barcelona.

"I have always said I am a player who looks for new challenges. Whether they come at Bayern or somewhere else, I can't say."



Chelsea manager Frank Lampard smiles during a press conference at Cobham Training Centre in London yesterday on the eve of their Premier League match against Leicester City.

PHOTO: REUTERS