

What to WATCH

DAY'S EVENT

National Cricket League
Four-day-match, Day One
Time: 9:00am

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
English Premier League
Bournemouth v Man United
Live from 6:30pm
Aston Villa v Liverpool
Live from 9:00pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT 2
English Premier League
Arsenal v Wolves
Live from 9:00pm

TEN 2
Serie A
Roma v Napoli
Live from 8:00pm
Bologna v Inter Milan
Live from 11:00pm

Torino v Juventus
Live from 1:45am (Sunday)

Rajshahi v Dhaka Division
Venue: SKICS-2, Cox's Bazar
Rangpur v Khulna

Venue: SBNS, Dhaka
Barishal v Sylhet
Venue: SKICS-1, Cox's Bazar

Dhaka Metro v Chattogram
Venue: ZACS, Chattogram

Messi returns for Argentina after ban

AFP, Buenos Aires

Lionel Messi was called up by Argentina on Thursday for friendly games against Brazil and Uruguay next month, the country's football association announced on Twitter.

Messi has not played for Argentina since he was sent off against Chile in their victorious third-place play-off match in the Copa America on July 7.

The striker was then handed a three-month suspension for comments he made after the game, in which he accused CONMEBOL, the governing body of South American football, of corruption.

In-form Manchester City forward Sergio Aguero has been recalled after missing out on the last four friendlies, while Manchester United defender Marcos Rojo remains in the squad following his surprise recall after the Copa America.

In Messi's absence, Argentina have played four friendlies, drawing against Chile (0-0) and Germany (2-2) while thrashing Mexico 4-0 and Ecuador 6-1.

They face Brazil in Saudi Arabia on November 15 and then Uruguay in Israel on November 18. Messi's ban ends on November 3.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner has endured an injury-hit start to the season after hurting his foot in August and then

his thigh in September.

But his recovery has coincided with a return to form for Barcelona, who have won their last seven consecutive games in all competitions. Messi scored twice in a 5-1 win over Real Valladolid on Tuesday.

SQUAD
GOALKEEPERS
Agustin Marchesin (Porto/POR), Juan Musso (Udinese/ITA), Emiliano Martinez (Arsenal/ENG), Esteban Andrada (Boca Juniors)
DEFENDERS
Juan Foyth (Tottenham/ENG), Renzo Saravia (Porto/POR), Nicolas Otamendi (Man City/ENG), German Pezzella (Fiorentina/ITA), Marcos Rojo (Man Utd/ENG), Walter Kannemann (Gremio/BRA), Nicolas Tagliafico (Ajax/NED), Nehuen Perez (Famalicao/POR), Guido Rodriguez (America/MEX)
MIDFIELDERS
Giovani Lo Celso (Tottenham/ENG), Leandro Paredes (PSG/FRA), Nicolas Dominguez (Velez), Rodrigo de Paul (Udinese/ITA), Marcos Acuna (Sporting Lisbon/POR), Roberto Pereyra (Watford/ENG), Lucas Ocampos (Sevilla/ESP)
FORWARDS
Lionel Messi (Barcelona/ESP), Sergio Aguero (Man City/ENG), Nicolas Gonzalez (Stuttgart/GER), Lucas Alario (Bayer Leverkusen/GER), Lautaro Martinez (Inter Milan/ITA), Paulo Dybala (Juventus/ITA)

Paraguayan referee Mario Diaz de Vivar shows the red card to Argentina superstar Lionel Messi and Chile's Gary Medel during the Copa America third-place decider at the Corinthians Arena in Sao Paulo on July 6.

PHOTO: AFP FILE

Rafael Nadal hits a backhand return to Stan Wawrinka during their Paris Masters match at The AccorHotels Arena on Thursday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Nadal eases past Wawrinka

AFP, Paris

Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic continued their battle for the year-end world number one ranking on Thursday as both players reached the Paris Masters quarterfinals with wins over Stan Wawrinka and Kyle Edmund respectively.

The 33-year-old Nadal is already guaranteed to usurp Djokovic at the rankings summit next week, but winning a maiden Bercy title would also secure the year-end top spot before next month's ATP Tour Finals in London.

He produced an impressive display to take his career head-to-head record against three-time Grand Slam champion Wawrinka to 19-3 with a clinical 6-4, 6-4 victory.

Djokovic had earlier booked his last-eight place with a 7-6 (9/7), 6-1 win over Britain's Edmund.

Nadal has never won the Paris Masters or the ATP Finals and only two of his 84 titles have come indoors.

"That's the beautiful thing about this sport, (to) have the capacity to adapt yourself

to the different conditions," said the 12-time French Open winner, who called the doctor onto the court in the second set to help deal with a stomach problem.

Nadal will face 2008 champion Jo-Wilfried Tsonga in the quarterfinals after the French wildcard saved two match points to edge out Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff 2-6, 6-4, 7-6 (8/6).

"I have a match against a player that is playing well," said Nadal. "I need to do a lot of things well, but I hope to be ready to make that happen."

Nadal took the first set thanks to a single break of serve in game three, saving break points in the second and eighth games himself before serving it out in style.

Wawrinka's backhand started to fire at the start of the second set, but Nadal kept the Swiss at bay, helped by one incredible forehand winner to direct a smash from his opponent into the corner of the court.

The 19-time Grand Slam champion saw off Wawrinka's challenge with a break to lead 5-4 in the second set and served out the match to make it his seventh Paris Masters quarterfinal in as many appearances.

Murshed denies anomalies

SPORTS REPORTER

Although the Bangladesh Tennis Federation (BTF) can barely even hold domestic tournaments on a regular basis, the game's local governing body manages to stage International Tennis Federation (ITF) and Asian Tennis Federation (ATF) sanctioned tournaments routinely with the Bangladesh ITF Junior (U-18) Tennis Championships' play-off phase set to get underway at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna today.

However, the alleged financial anomalies found on BHF general secretary Golam Murshed are being discussed more than the tournament itself, where more than 100 tennis players are set to participate.

The treasurer of the BHF ad-hoc committee, Sheikh Mohammad Aslam, brought up the financial irregularities he found against Murshed, who allegedly pocketed Tk 72,000 from the federation's rooms' and rent budget and also tried to withdraw more money to pay unauthorized employees.

"The federation has a monthly expenditure of Tk 1.52 lakh for its employees but Mr Murshed suddenly asked me to sign a check of Tk 1.97 but I opposed it because he did not take any approval from the executive committee to appoint anyone," alleged Aslam.

"Ask him why he did not deposit the rooms' and shop rent worth Tk 72,000 to the federation account," said Aslam, adding that he was going to resign because he does not want stay in 'such an unhealthy environment'.

"He [Murshed] sent me a letter, asking me to resign because I am not helping him and trying to let down the image of country. I don't know whether he has any right to ask me to resign from the post. I will talk to my lawyer as I feel dishonoured," said

the former national footballer.

It was also learnt that Murshed withdrew Tk. 2.58 lakh from the federation's account on the grounds that it was to cover the expenses of the BTF president, state minister for youth and sports and himself for their trip to England, where they attended a Wimbledon match in July.

In addition, office executive Mahmud Alam, who has been involved with the federation since 1997, was terminated in August on the grounds that he was not helping the federation, disobeying instructions from the general secretary, violating the laws of accommodation and trying to influence the higher-ups.

Mahmud had apparently refused to sign any final documents put forward by the general secretary as Murshed allegedly went against the traditional norms. The federation also drove out caretaker Abdul Latif from his accommodations within the federation.

With Alam and Latif displaced, the career of Latif's son, under-14 champion Mehdi Hasan Alvee, and that of Alam's daughter, under-14 champion Masfia Afrin, are under threat.

However, Murshed has denied all the allegations brought against him.

"All it has done is tarnish my image because we have a small amount of budget which is met through the NSC, sponsors and international organisations and we have every record of our expenditures. You can come and see the documents," said Murshed, who also denied having withdrawn money to watch a Wimbledon match.

In response to a query, Murshed said that Alvee's and Afrin's careers would not be affected by the loss of their accommodations as both of them will still have the opportunity to utilize the facilities like any other local player.

Alli needs our support: Poch

AFP, London

Dele Alli needs people to rally round him in an effort to try and lift his form which has seen him lose his place in the England squad, Tottenham Hotspur manager Mauricio Pochettino said on Friday.

"We need to remember that he's so young and the pressure is massive," said Pochettino.

"He's English and everybody expects big things from him but he's still 23 years old."

Kareena Kapoor Khan unveils the ICC Women's and Men's T20 World Cup trophies in Melbourne yesterday. The Women's T20 World Cup will kick-off on February 21, 2020 and the men's version will kick off on October 18, 2020.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Chess C'ship from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The 45th National Chess Championship has been deferred by one day following a dispute between the participating players and organisers over the format of the tournament, which is set to get underway today at the Institution of Engineers in Dhaka.

Last year, the Bangladesh Chess Federation (BCF) opted to change the National Chess Championship format from the traditional round-robin league system to the 10-round Swiss-League system in a bid to give more exposure to junior players. However, a group of players recently demanded that they use an 11-round Swiss League format instead.

To further complicate matters, another group of players, including GM Niaz Murshed, GM Ziaur Rahman, then opposed the BCF's move to the 11-round Swiss League format without informing the players. The BCF then later convinced both factions to begin the league today with the existing 10-round Swiss League system.

"The national championship had before followed the round-robin league system with the participation of some 12 to 16 players but from last year, we have increased the players to make it 30 and introduced a 10-round Swiss League system and all players took part in the championship sans GM Abdullah Al Rakib and GM Enamul Hossain Razib.

"Regarding the issue, we have discussed with both groups and they agreed to play in existing system from tomorrow [today] and they proposed to hold a Super Championship with the top 10 players of the national championship and we have agreed in principle to introduce new a Super Championship from the next edition," said BCF general secretary Syed Shahabuddin Shamim.

Pintu Sixers win DCA U-12 tournament

SPORTS REPORTER

Pintu Sixers beat Tanvir Sixers by 21 runs in the final of the Za'n Zee DCA U-12 cricket tournament, held at the Dhanmondi Cricket Academy ground yesterday.

Batting first, Pintu Sixers reached 96 for four in 10 overs with captain Mahin top scoring with 51. In reply, Tanvir Sixers were restricted to 75 for five, with Mohaimin top scoring with 50.

After the match, Kazi Farms general manager (marketing and branding) Zakaria Hossain, DCA president Abu Mohammad Sabur and general secretary Arman Islam distributed prizes among the finalists and the player of the match.