

What to WATCH

GTV, CHANNEL 9
India v Bangladesh
First Test, Day Three
Live from 10:00am
STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
Afghanistan v West Indies

Second T20I
Live from 7:30pm
SONY SIX
Euro Qualifiers
N Ireland v Netherlands
Live from 1:45am (Sunday)

TEN 1
Euro Qualifiers
Cyprus v Scotland
Live from 8:00pm
Croatia v Slovakia
Live from 1:45am (Sunday)

TEN 2
Euro Qualifiers
Russia v Belgium
Live from 11:00pm
Germany v Belarus
Live from 1:45am (Sunday)

DAY'S EVENT

National Cricket League
 Four-day match, Day One
 Rajshahi v Rangpur

Venue: SKS, Rajshahi
 Khulna v Dhaka Division
 Venue: SANS, Khulna

Barisal v Dhaka Metro
 Venue: BDS, Barisal
 Chattogram v Sylhet

Venue: SCS, Bogura



Portugal superstar Cristiano Ronaldo scored a hatrick against Lithuania to take his international goals tally to 98 during the Euro 2020 qualifier at the Algarve Stadium in Faro on Thursday. PHOTO: AFP

France, England qualify

Ronaldo edges closer to 100 international goals

AFP, Paris



The Euro 2020 line-up began to take shape on Thursday after big-hitters France and England qualified for next year's finals alongside Turkey and the Czech Republic.

World champions France reached the tournament without having to kick a ball thanks to Turkey sealing their own qualification after a goalless draw with Iceland in the day's early match.

Chelsea outcast Olivier Giroud then moved to within two international goals of France great Michel Platini with a late penalty that ensured a comeback win over a Moldova side ranked 175th in the world.

The scrappy victory at a chilly Stade de France put Didier Deschamps' side two points ahead of Turkey at the top of Group H ahead of their final match at Albania on Sunday.

The celebratory mood was initially dampened when Vadim Rata punished abject defending to give Moldova a shock ninth-minute lead.

However Raphael Varane levelled for the hosts 10 minutes before break despite furious protests from the Moldovan players and their coach, who were convinced Giroud had fouled

goalkeeper Alexei Koselev in the build-up.

Giroud then slotted home his 39th France goal from the spot in a confident manner that defied the fact he has only played 20 minutes for Chelsea since last month's international break.

KANE CRUSHES MONTENEGRO

Harry Kane fired England into the Euros in style with a hat-trick that helped the 2018 World Cup semifinalists dismantle poor Montenegro 7-0 at Wembley.

Kane struck his treble in the first half as Gareth Southgate's side racked up five before the break in England's 1000th match, making light of the absence of Raheem Sterling, who was dropped by Southgate earlier in the week after an altercation with teammate Joe Gomez.

England displayed the firepower that will make them one of the favourites for next year's European Championship as they sealed top spot in Group A.

Thursday's demolition took them to 33 goals in seven qualifying matches following Tammy Abraham's first international goal, further strikes from Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain and Marcus Rashford and an own goal from Aleksandar Sofranac.

Kane meanwhile moved sixth in the all-time

list of England goal scorers by taking his tally for the qualifying campaign to 11.

The Czech Republic followed England into the tournament after coming from behind to beat third-placed Kosovo 2-1.

They join former World Cup winners Spain and Italy, who kick off the multi-host tournament at Rome's Stadio Olimpico on June 12, dark horses Belgium, Poland, Russia and Ukraine.

RONALDO EYES PORTUGAL CENTURY

Reigning European champions Portugal were made to wait for their place despite Cristiano Ronaldo hitting his ninth international hatrick in a 6-0 thrashing of Lithuania in Faro.

Pizzi, Goncalo Paciencia and Bernardo Silva rounded off an easy win that keeps Portugal second in Group B behind already-qualified Ukraine and one point clear of third-placed Serbia, who beat Luxembourg 3-2.

They will secure their spot at next year's finals with a victory in Luxembourg on Sunday.

Ronaldo has now scored 98 international goals after a seventh-minute penalty, a superb curling effort midway through the first half and a simple finish in the 65th minute, and the Juventus attacker will be hoping to become the second-ever player to reach 100 this weekend.

Day defends attacking play and his charges

SPORTS REPORTER



Despite his obvious disappointment at a 4-1 defeat against Oman in their World Cup qualifiers on Thursday, Bangladesh coach Jamie Day was not looking to blame his players.

"Oman are a far better team than we are, far better players. I think they showed that quality. I am disappointed we conceded four goals and I don't think that was deserved but I cannot blame the players' effort because they did their best," the 40-year-old coach said at the post match conference.

After two good performances against Qatar and India, the expectation was high going into the Oman match, but the men in red and green failed to keep that momentum against Oman despite keeping the hosts at bay in the first half.

"We can't keep expecting them [Bangladesh players] to perform to the levels required every game against better teams. They're doing their best. They are playing above their maximum in every game. And we can't expect our players to keep playing at nines and tens every week. It's impossible. So, I'm proud of how they've done."

"The boys defended well but if you give

good teams chance, they take it and that's what happened in the second half," opined Day.

The English coach believes the same thing might happen when Bangladesh play away to Qatar on another good pitch.

Asked whether Bangladesh should have kept playing defensive football after conceding the lead, Day said, "If you are losing, you have to chase the match in order to get back into the game. So, if you are chasing the game, and when you play against teams like that, they find the space. We could've sat back and lost 2-0, but we wanted to score. There are a lot of Bangladesh fans here. We wanted to give them a game for 90 minutes."

The English coach is, however, looking forward to taking positives from the match and he is happy that his side scored a goal, which he believes Bangladesh deserved.

"I have always said it's a great experience and learning curve for the players, who don't need motivating. They're disappointed, which is a good thing. They're all disappointed we lost. That shows how far we've come. It's not a negative. We got positives from the game: for a good period of the game, we were playing well against an exceptionally good team. We can always look at negatives and say this and that, but let's look at the positives," concluded Day.

Tammy targets Euro glory

AFP, London

Tammy Abraham has set his sights on firing England to Euro 2020 glory after the Chelsea striker scored his first senior international goal in the demolition of Montenegro.

Abraham came off the bench to wrap up England's 7-0 victory at Wembley on Thursday as Gareth Southgate's side booked their place at Euro 2020.

His maiden England goal continued a memorable 2019 for the 22-year-old after winning promotion to the Premier League while on loan with Aston Villa last season and scoring 11 goals in 18 games for Chelsea this term.

With three group games and a possible semifinal and final at Wembley, Euro 2020 is almost a home tournament for England and Abraham is confident Southgate's men can get their hands on the silverware.

'We are not favourites'

REUTERS, Berlin



Germany will not be among the tournament favourites if they qualify for next year's Euro 2020, coach Joachim Loew said on Friday ahead of their final two qualifiers.

The Germans, who take on Belarus on Saturday before facing Northern Ireland on Tuesday, are level with leaders Netherlands on 15 points. Northern Ireland are third on 12. The top two earn automatic qualification and Germany could qualify as early as Saturday.

"We don't belong to the tournament favourites," Loew told reporters. "France, England have been playing with the same players for years. There are the Dutch, Spain."

"Us, with our young team, we are not among the favourites because we are still in the process of change."

The Germans suffered a shock group-stage exit at last year's World Cup and were relegated in the inaugural Nations League, promoting a major overhaul of the team.

"Maybe in two or four years when the players are at their peak. I mean a lot is possible with this team and we are working on that because it does have a lot of quality."

Loew has had to struggle with a lot of absences in recent months and his young team has rarely played with the same starting lineup, delaying, as he said, its development.

BFF AGM TODAY

High admin expense to dominate agenda?

SPORTS REPORTER



After a three-and-a-half-year gap, the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is all set to hold its annual general meeting (AGM) in Gazipur today amid fear of heated discussions over alleged financial irregularities of the past three years.

BFF president Kazi Salahuddin had promised to hold the AGM every year after being elected for a third term in 2016, but he failed to hold a single AGM since the one held on the last BFF election day on April 30, 2016. The BFF Boss may be held accountable by the delegates at the AGM as the next BFF election is knocking on the door.

BFF vice-presidents Mohiuddin Ahmed and Badal Roy made the situation more complex after bringing allegation of financial irregularities in September, but those allegations were allegedly overlooked by the BFF, with the pretence of FIFA president Gianni Infantino's visit to the country last month.

The game's local governing body, according to audit reports from 2016 to 2018, spent Tk 87.18 crore against revenue of Tk 83.12 crore with an average annual expenditure of Tk 29.06 crore.

FIFA, AFC and sponsors provided the football authority with majority of the revenue, worth Tk 57.50 crore, while the rest of the money came through ticket sale, fees from players' and clubs' registration, lottery, South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) fund and other sources.

Of the total expenditure, the BFF spent more than 38 percent [Tk 33.39 crore] as part of its administrative costs including staff salary [Tk 9.36 crore], technical director's salary [Tk 3.10 crore], fuel, utility,

maintenance, stationary, printing, courier, entertainment, gifts, sports goods, FIFA/ AFC meeting conveyance, air tickets and other account heads over the three years. The large amount raised the question whether BFF was using too much money on non-development sectors as the lower division leagues and district football leagues remained somewhat neglected.

The game's local governing body provided only Tk 1.17 crore to hold district football leagues even though it was allocated Tk 1.44 crore for this purpose by the government.

Salahuddin has kept rolling top-flight leagues such as Bangladesh Premier League, Bangladesh Championship League, but the lower leagues are still irregular as First and Second Division League were held twice in three years while Third Division and Pioneer League were held once in three years.

The BFF also kept sending age-group teams to international tournaments alongside regular assignments of the senior team, but it was reluctant to provide support to hold district leagues and country-wide national tournaments.

"The finance committee explained the queries of the two vice-presidents and the financial governance unit of FIFA and AFC also went through the audit reports, which was approved by BFF executive committee. Besides, no delegates gave any observation on the audit reports, so I think everything is right and it would be approved by AGM," BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag said.

One of the delegates, seeking anonymity, said that many delegates may enter the AGM venue with black cloths over their mouth as the BFF is trying to shut their voice from raising issues that the BFF president promised but failed to deliver on.

Iran clinch kabaddi title

SPORTS REPORTER

Iran emerged as unbeaten champions of the Junior World Kabaddi Championship yesterday after Bangladesh lost to the eventual champions in a semifinal encounter on Thursday at Kish Island, Iran.

Iran, who handed Bangladesh an emphatic 52-20 defeat in the second semifinal, thrashed Kenya 42-22 in the final to clinch the title of the tournament's inaugural edition.

Drogba kicks off 'million trees' project

AFP, Abidjan

Football legend Didier Drogba helped launch a drive Friday to plant a million trees to halt deforestation in Ivory Coast.

The "One Day, One Million Trees" campaign "is a first step, the start of the recovery," Forestry and Water Resources Minister Alain Richard Donwahi said in Abidjan.

"Our goal is to recover at least 30 percent (of lost forest cover) by 2030," he said.

Drogba said the "numbers are alarming." "I am proud to contribute to Ivory Coast's reforestation through helping awareness."



Roger Federer celebrates his straight sets victory over Novak Djokovic in the men's singles round-robin match of the ATP World Tour Finals at the O2 Arena in London on Thursday. PHOTO: AFP

Federer outclasses Djokovic

AFP, London



Roger Federer produced a near-flawless performance as he avenged his Wimbledon defeat by Novak Djokovic and qualified for the last four of the ATP Finals with a 6-4, 6-3 victory on Thursday.

The Swiss started the tournament with a chastening straight-sets defeat to Dominic Thiem but found his best form when it mattered.

Defeat for the second seed spells the end of his bid to overtake Rafael Nadal and finish as year-end number one.

Roared on by a raucous packed house at London's O2 Arena, six-time champion Federer looked in the groove from the start, cranking up the pressure on Djokovic's serve and dropping just three points on his own serve in the first set.

The Serbian upped his game at the start of the second set but Federer, 38, saved the one break point he faced and broke twice to canter to victory.

The third seed, making his 17th appearance at the ATP Finals, is into his 16th semifinal at the year-end event.

Djokovic needed to win the title to have a chance at knocking Nadal off the top spot, but now the Spaniard is

guaranteed to finish the year as the top-ranked player for the fifth time, tying him with Federer, Djokovic and American Jimmy Connors.

"Great atmosphere, great opponent," said Federer, who hit 23 winners and made just five unforced errors. "It was definitely incredibly special. I enjoyed it from the beginning."

"I played incredible and I knew I had to because that's what Novak does. It was definitely magical."

Federer finishes second in Group Bjorn Borg, behind Thiem, who also beat Djokovic earlier this week. The Swiss will face the Group Andre Agassi winner on Saturday.