

What to WATCH

DAY'S EVENT

SONY ESPN

International Friendly

Croatia v Georgia

Live from 11:00pm

Euro Qualifiers

Netherlands v Estonia

Live from 1:45am (Wednesday)

SONY SIX

Euro Qualifiers

Poland v Slovenia

Live from 1:45am (Wednesday)

TEN 1

Euro Qualifiers

Belgium v Cyprus

Live from 1:45am (Wednesday)

TEN 2

Euro Qualifiers

Germany v N Ireland

Live from 1:45am (Wednesday)

National Cricket League

Four-day match, Day Four

Rajshahi v Rangpur

Venue: SKS, Rajshahi

Khulna v Dhaka Division

Venue: SANS, Khulna

Barishal v Dhaka Metro

Venue: BDS, Barishal



Stefanos Tsitsipas celebrates with the ATP World Tour Finals trophy after winning the men’s singles final against Dominic Thiem at the O2 Arena in London on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

# New era or false dawn?

AFP, London



Stefanos Tsitsipas said he was ready for a breakthrough Grand Slam victory after winning the ATP Finals in London -- but a glance at recent history invites caution.

The 21-year-old Greek was in bullish mood after he beat Dominic Thiem, having ousted Roger Federer in the semifinals, to become the season-ending event's youngest winner since 2001.

"I believe I'm really close to being crowned a Grand Slam champion," he said, after his 6-7 (6/8), 6-2, 7-6 (7/4) triumph in London on Sunday. "I know these are strong words that I say but I do feel I belong there."

But although Tsitsipas's victory feels significant, he is the fourth first-time champion in as many years at the season finale, which has proved a poor predictor of future success.

Last year, young German Alexander Zverev pummelled Novak Djokovic in the final but he had a miserable time at this season's Slams -- while the Serb, 32, picked up the Australian Open and Wimbledon titles to take

his overall tally to 16.

Rafael Nadal, 33, won a barely credible 12th French Open title and added the US Open, underlining the fact that the old guard were still very much in charge.

No member of the "Big Three" -- also featuring Federer -- has won the season-ending ATP Finals since 2015, when Djokovic picked up his fifth title.

Djokovic was also the last ATP Finals champion to go on to win a major title.

Injury-plagued Andy Murray has won only two trophies since he secured his sole ATP Finals title in 2016, crowning his strongest season.

And the lavishly gifted but inconsistent Grigor Dimitrov has not won a tournament since his 2017 success at the season finale.

The fact remains that despite all the razzmatazz surrounding the ATP Finals, it is the Grand Slams that are the true yardstick in tennis.

Since 38-year-old Federer won his first Grand Slam title in 2003, the Big Three have collected an astonishing 55 out of the 66 majors on offer, with Murray and Stan Wawrinka also winning three apiece.

There has long been speculation over who would have the guts and talent to overthrow the established order.

Players such as Milos Raonic, Dimitrov and Kei Nishikori -- members of a previous supposed "next generation", consistently failed to challenge the dominant trio.

However, that is not to say that there's no hope for the younger players, who now appear to be getting closer.

Russia's Daniil Medvedev, 23, pushed Nadal all the way in the US Open final in September, and should have avenged the loss at the ATP Finals but he collapsed from a seemingly impenetrable position against the Spaniard.

Zverev demolished Nadal to reach the semifinals in London, but was disappointing in a straight-sets defeat against Thiem.

Tsitsipas's impressive win against Federer in the semifinals also felt like a statement of intent -- backing up his victory against the Swiss at the Australian Open.

Zverev, 22, predicted next year will bring a new Grand Slam champion, saying the "young guys are playing incredible tennis".

## Shila to carry BD flag at SA Games

SPORTS REPORTER



Last edition's double-gold medallist Mahfuza Khatun Shila will carry the national flag of Bangladesh during the opening ceremony of the 13th South Asian Games, which will be held in Nepal from December 1 to 10.

Swimmer Shila, who won gold medal in 50m and 100m breaststroke events of the last edition in Guwahati, India, will however not compete this time as she has already withdrawn herself from the swimming squad, which reached Kathmandu on Sunday.

Even though Shila attributed her withdrawal to being physically unfit, it is widely believed that he pulled out due to constant apathy showed towards her by the swimming federation. However, Bangladesh Olympic Association recognised her feat by selecting her as the flag-carrier for the Bangladesh contingent.

"Shila is the best swimmer in 50m and 100m breaststroke in South Asia even though someone else may take her position in the upcoming games. We have chosen her as a delegate of our contingent," Bangladesh contingent's chef de mission and joint secretary general of BOA, Asaduzzaman Kohinoor, said.

## Mohammedan vibrant again

SPORTS REPORTER



The premises of Mohammedan Sporting Club has turned vibrant again in presences of former players, organisers and supporters, brushing aside September's casino scandal which resulted in director-in-charge Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan being arrested.

The arrest of Bhuiyan in fact paved the way for return of former players and organisers, who once shied away from the club. Badal Roy, former national footballer and current vice-president of Bangladesh Football Federation, is playing a key role behind reorganising the popular club regarding the transfer window of Bangladesh Premier League.

With heavy financial crisis jostling the club, Roy on Sunday sat with some business people to seek financial help to run the club ahead of next annual general meeting, which is likely to give directives to the new board of directors.

Some 17 businessmen including Mohammedan's interim president Kutubuddin Ahmed and Dhaka City Corporation (North) mayor Atiqul Islam attended the meeting to discuss different aspects of the club including the AGM, election, forming squads in football, cricket and hockey.

"We invited approximately 20 businessmen who love Mohammedan or were once involved with the club even though not all of them were present. The club's president Obaidul Karim could not join the meeting due to suddenly falling ill.

"However, the response from the well-wishers was really satisfying as they promised to help the club financially as I told them I am not physically fit enough to look after everything," Roy said.

Former president Kutubddin said, "Everyone is interested to help Mohammedan as they have good memories with the club. Those who attended the meeting promised to provide financial help to run the football squad."

Roy, who suffered a stroke in 2017, said that he urged all former players and organisers to come back to the club after RAB busted casino at the club para. The former players and organisers responded immediately by helping form a squad for top-flight football, he said.

"The club president [Obaidul Karim] has showed more interest than we expected. He said that he gave Tk 7 crore in two years but there was lack of accountability," Roy said, adding that they are going to appoint a chief executive officer after abolishing the post of director-in-charge.

Former additional general secretary Mustaqur Rahman said that most of the club members and former players are happily contributing to help the club survive.

Former national defender Imtiaz Sultan Jonny said, "Other clubs may suffer due to the casino scandal, but the scandal actually helped Mohammedan rebuild itself."

Ahead of today's players' registration formalities, the club has been decorated with lights. Former players, current ones and the club's supporters will turn up for the registration at the BFF today with a rally, which will be the first of its kind since 2009.

## Akash Cup Golf held

SPORTS REPORTER

The first Akash Cup Golf Tournament was held at the Jashore Golf and Country Club from November 14 to 16 November.

A total of 70 golfers participated in the event in gents, ladies, juniors and sub-junior categories.

55th Infantry Division GOC and Jashore Golf Club president Major General Ataul Hakim Sarwar Hasan and head of marketing of Beximco Communications Muhammad Abul Khair chowdhury were present as guests at the inaugural and closing ceremonies, said a press release.

## Depay calls for action

AFP, Brussels

Netherlands international Memphis Depay called upon UEFA to act after racist chants halted a Dutch second-division match on Sunday.

The referee stopped the match, but the teams returned to complete the game.

"I'm sick and tired to see these images over and over! When is it going to stop!!!", Depay wrote on Twitter.

# Khulna on verge of 7th crown

SPORTS REPORTER



Table-toppers Khulna Division were on the verge of defending their National Cricket League title as they took the first-innings lead over potential contenders Dhaka Division and were in a commanding position after the third day of the sixth and final round at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna yesterday.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**BARISHAL V DHAKA METRO**  
**BARISHAL:** First innings 414 and second innings 30 for 3 (Fazle 19 not out; Arafat 2-10)  
**DHAKA METRO:** First innings 466 all out (Rakin 23; Shamsur 108, Marshall 109, Al-Amin 92, Zabid 62 not out, Arafat 31; Shohag 3-98, Fazle 2-26)  
**RANGPUR V RAJSHAH**  
**RANGPUR:** First innings 274 and second innings 228 for 6 (Jahid 33, Tanbir 72 not out, Ariful 48; Delwar 4-73, Muktar 2-44)  
**RAJSHAH:** First innings 254 all out (Avishek 67, Junaid 37, Farhad 75, Sabbir 22; Ariful 6-41, Sajedul 2-59)  
**DHAKA V KHULNA**  
**DHAKA:** First innings 279 and second innings 102 for 5 (Raqibul 39 not out, Shuvagata 42; Ziaur 3-23)  
**KHULNA:** First innings 379 all out (Robiul 45, Anamul 50, Tushar 82, Nurul 150 not out; Shuvagata 5-46, Nazmul 2-114)

Even a draw would be enough for Khulna, who are at the top of the four-team Tier-1 table with 29.96



SHAMSUR RAHMAN...108



MARSHALL AYUB...109



NURUL HASAN...150 not out

points -- to clinch their seventh title. Dhaka, meanwhile, are in second place with 24.1 points and need a victory to seal the championship.

Resuming the third day on 252 for three, Khulna rode on an unbeaten century from skipper Nurul Hasan before being all out for 379, which amounted to a 100-run first-innings lead.

Nurul and Tushar Imran resumed on fifties, but the latter departed on 82, adding seven runs to his overnight score. Nurul went on to register his eighth first-class hundred and remained unbeaten on 150 off 227 balls, which included 13 fours and seven sixes.

Off-spinner Shuvagata Hom picked up his seventh five-wicket haul while left-arm spinner Nazmul Islam took two wickets for Dhaka.

In reply, Dhaka were in a spot of bother and ended the day on 102 for five and will resume the fourth

and final day leading by just two runs with five wickets in hand. Khulna's medium pacer Ziaur Rahman picked up three wickets while Moinul Islam and Nahidul Islam took a wicket each.

In the other Tier 1 game at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi, Rangpur made a good comeback and were leading by 248 runs with four wickets in hand against the hosts.

Rangpur managed to take a 20-run first-innings lead after Rajshahi, resuming the day on 224 for five, lost their last five wickets for the addition of just 30 runs, with Rangpur medium pacer Ariful Haque bagging six wickets.

Rangpur, however, kept losing wickets at regular intervals in their reply with pacer Delwar Hossain's four wickets doing the bulk of the damage. Tanbir Hayder remained not out on 72 off 145 balls as Rangpur reached stumps on 228 for six.

In Tier 2, Dhaka Metropolis rode on twin hundreds from Shamsur Rahman and skipper Marshall Ayub to take the first innings lead over Barishal before being bundle out for 466.

Resuming the day on 225 for two and trailing by 189, both overnight batsman Shamsur and Marshall reached their hundreds.

Shamsur was the first to depart after registering his 18th first-class ton, scoring 103 off 289 balls with five fours, bringing the 187-run third-wicket stand to an end. Marshall too departed after his 19th first-class hundred and his second consecutive century in the league, having scored 109 off 170 balls with 11 fours.

Al Amin was dismissed eight runs shy of his hundred as Dhaka eventually took the first-innings lead.

Barishal, in reply, lost three quick wickets and ended the day on 30 for three, trailing by 22 runs.



Brazil players celebrate with their medals after winning the FIFA U-17 Men's World Cup final against Mexico at the Bezerro Stadium in Brasilia on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Platini slams VAR as 'load of crap'

AFP, Rome



Former UEFA president Michel Platini has slammed the use of VAR technology, the introduction of which he has always opposed, as a total nightmare, in an interview on Italian television.

"It would take half an hour to explain why it doesn't solve problems," the former France international told

the "Che tempo che fa" late-night talk show on Rai on Sunday.

"It shifts them. I'm against VAR. I think it's a load of crap and unfortunately we will not go back."

The 64-year-old has always been against the use of VAR which he refused to consider after he became UEFA chief in 2007.

European football's governing body has now also introduced the use of the video replay technology in this year's Champions League.

Meanwhile, the former Juventus star believes he could still play a role in football after his four-year suspension from the sport ended in October.

"At 64, I have the opportunity for one last adventure, but I have no room for error and I have to think about it," he said.

A triple Ballon d'Or winner, Platini had been expected to succeed Sepp Blatter as FIFA president in 2016 but fell spectacularly from grace a few months earlier.

# Shahadat faces ban for alleged assault

SPORTS REPORTER



Fast bowling national discard Shahadat Hossain may face a one-year ban from all forms of cricket for his alleged physical assault on Dhaka Division teammate Arafat Sunny Junior. Apparently the altercation began when 24-year-old Sunny admitted that he did not know how to shine the ball during a National Cricket League final round fixture against Khulna on Sunday.



The other Dhaka Division players had to restrain Shahadat, who has featured in 38 Tests, 51 ODIs and six T20Is, during the clash on the field. It was also learnt that Shahadat was displeased with Arafat for poor fielding. Shahadat eventually gave in to his emotions and slapped Arafat.

The 33-year-old was immediately withdrawn from the match and sent home with the match referee reporting the matter to the NCL technical committee.

"The match referee mentioned that Shahadat committed a Level-4 offense and the punishment for breaching this law ranges from a one-year ban to a lifetime suspension from cricket. We will have a meeting of our technical committee tomorrow [today] and will only let you know after that," Minhajul Abedin, head of the NCL technical committee, told reporters yesterday.

However, this is not the first incident of this nature for Shahadat, who was behind bars back in 2015 for assaulting his domestic help. He also made headlines a few years ago for engaging in a fight with an auto-rickshaw.