

What to WATCH

GTV & MAASRANGA
BBPL
 Cumilla v Rajshahi
 Live from 1:30pm
 Khulna v Sylhet
 Live from 6:30pm

SONY SIX
 Australia v New Zealand
 First Test, Day 3
 Live from 2:00pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
 English Premier League
 Brighton v Bournemouth

South Africa v England
 First Test, Day 3
 Live from 2:00pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
 English Premier League
 Brighton v Bournemouth

Live from 6:30pm
 Southampton v Crystal
 Palace
 Live from 9:00pm
 West Ham v Leicester City
 Live from 11:30pm

Burnley v Man United
 Live from 1:45am (Sunday)
STAR SPORTS SELECT 2
 English Premier League
 Newcastle v Everton
 Live from 9:00pm

Norwich v Tottenham
 Live from 11:30pm

DAY'S EVENT

Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League
 Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Dhaka

Cumilla v Rajshahi
 Time: 1:30pm
 Khulna v Sylhet
 Time: 6:30pm

Federation Cup
 Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka
 Mohammedan v Uttar

Baridhara
 Time: 3:30pm
 Sheikh Russel v Muktijodha
 Time: 6:15pm

Sheikh Jamal pay the penalty

Ctg Abahani sink 10-man Kings

SPORTS REPORTER

Three-time champions Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club were eliminated from the group stages of the TVS Federation Cup following a 3-1 defeat against Saif Sporting Club at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The Dhanmondi giants had taken a ninth-minute lead through Omar Jobe's fine volley on a cross from Solomon King Kanform, but the lead lasted only six minutes as Saif defender Yeasin Arafat's shot from outside the box took a wicked deflection off Kesto Kumar Bose, wrongfooting Sheikh Jamal keeper Ziaur Rahman.

The three-time champions, though, continued to look the more threatening side, but a penalty in the 82nd minute dashed their hopes. Saif's Takjik forward Jahongir Ergashev clinically dispatched the spot-kick before Kyrgyz forward Murolimzhon Akhmedov's long-range effort in injury time rubbed salt into the wounds of the Dhanmondi giants.

Sheikh Jamal coach Shafikul Islam Manik was livid with the refereeing and blamed the referee for his side's early exit.

"We are out of the tournament due to poor refereeing. The penalty decision was totally wrong. We can't expect this type of refereeing," the veteran coach said after the match.

Saif coach Mohammad Nizam was happy to emerge group champions and thanked his charges for their performance. "It was not an easy match for us. I'm very happy that my players played according to my plan."

The win helped Saif emerge Group C champions with four points from two matches while Sheikh Jamal missed out on a last-eight berth with a single point. Rahmatganj MFS, who drew against both

CTG ABAHANI 2 - 0 BASHUNDHARA Rakib 25', Didier 45+2'	SAIF SC 1 - 3 SAIF SC Arafat 15', Ergashev 82', Akhmedov 90+3'
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these teams in their two matches, squeezed into the last eight as runners-up of Group C.

The result also means Saif will face newcomers Bangladesh Police in the third quarterfinal while Rahmatganj will be up against 11-time champions Abahani in the first quarterfinal.

Meanwhile, Chattogram Abahani topped Group B with a 2-0 win over 10-man Bashundhara Kings in the day's first match at the same venue.

Rakib Hossain gave the port city side the lead in the 25th minute before Charles Didier doubled the lead in the injury time of the first half. Bashundhara Kings, last edition's beaten finalists, were down to 10 men after minutes before the second goal when Tajik defender Akhmat Nazarov was booked for the second time.

Bashundhara Kings kept striker Jalal Kdouh in the bench while resting two key players -- Nicolas Delmonte and Daniel Colindres. Even though Kdouh was brought on in the second half, the Lebanese failed to make an impact. It was Chattogram Abahani, instead, who could have scored more goals.

Brazilian forward Nixon Brizolara had an effort saved from the goalline in the 75th minute while Rakib's header from pointblank range was saved by Bashundhara Kings goalkeeper Anisur Rahman four minutes later.

The win saw Chattogram Abahani through to the quarterfinals with six points from two matches while Bashundhara Kings progressed as group runners-up with three points.



Liverpool's James Milner (2nd from L) is swamped by his teammates after scoring a penalty during an English Premier League match against Leicester City at the King Power Stadium on Thursday. With Milner's 71st minute goal supplementing a Roberto Firminho brace and a solitary strike from Trent Alexander-Arnold, The Reds walked away 4-0 winners.

PHOTO: AFP

Reds thrash Foxes to stretch lead

AFP, London

Liverpool stretched their Premier League lead to 13 points by outclassing second-placed Leicester in a 4-0 win on Boxing Day as Manchester United and Tottenham cut the gap on fourth-placed Chelsea.

Mikel Arteta got off to an underwhelming start as Arsenal manager with a 1-1 draw at Bournemouth, but Carlo Ancelotti had a more positive impact on his Everton bow as Dominic Calvert-Lewin's brilliant diving header earned a 1-0 win over Burnley.

Chelsea beat Tottenham in a big win for Frank Lampard over his former mentor Jose Mourinho on Sunday, but the gap between the two is back down to three points as the Blues lost 2-0 at home to lowly Southampton.

Spurs came from behind to beat Brighton 2-1 thanks to goals from Harry Kane and Dele Alli, while United moved just a point further back in seventh as they too overturned a poor start to thrash Newcastle 4-1 with Anthony Martial scoring twice.

Liverpool's trip to their closest challengers was the top billing of a busy Boxing Day card, but there was no contest as the newly crowned world champions showed their class.

Roberto Firmino's header was scant reward for a dominant first half display as Sadio Mane and Mohamed Salah wasted big chances.

However, three goals in seven minutes in the final quarter ensured the scoreline fairly reflected their control.

Milner doubled the visitors' lead before Firmino's classy finish made it 3-0.

Trent Alexander-Arnold helped set up all of his side's first three goals and rounded off a

stunning individual display by drilling home the fourth from outside the box.

"We played our last two games against two of arguably the best teams in the history of the Premier League," said Leicester boss Brendan Rodgers, whose side also lost 3-1 to Manchester City on Saturday.

After the highs of Sunday, Chelsea again struggled when faced with breaking down stubborn defensive opponents in Southampton.

The Blues have now lost to West Ham,

TOP FIVE							
	P	W	D	L	G/F	G/A	Pts
Liverpool	18	17	1	0	46	14	52
Leicester	19	12	3	4	41	18	39
Man City	18	12	2	4	50	20	38
Chelsea	19	10	2	7	33	27	32
Tottenham	19	8	5	6	34	27	29

Bournemouth and the Saints in their last four home league games.

Southampton boss Ralph Hasenhuttl's decision to rest in-form talisman Danny Ings paid off as his replacement Michael Obafemi scored just his second Premier League goal with a calm finish into the top corner.

The visitors then secured a second straight win to move up to 14th when Nathan Redmond prodded past the onrushing Kepa Arrizabalaga 17 minutes from time.

Spurs were still feeling the after-effects of that Chelsea defeat with Son Heung-min suspended and confidence low when Adam Webster headed Brighton ahead midway through the

first half.

Kane swept home at the second attempt after his first shot was saved by Mat Ryan before Alli then delivered all three points with a delightful chipped finish from an acute angle.

United were also beaten 2-0 at bottom-of-the-table Watford on Sunday and another frustrating evening seemingly beckoned when Matty Longstaff scored his second Premier League goal -- both of which have come against the Red Devils.

However, unlike when the Magpies beat Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's men 1-0 in October, the response from United was emphatic.

Martial fired in at the near post with the help of Newcastle keeper Martin Dubravka before a thundering finish from Mason Greenwood and Marcus Rashford's header made it 3-1 before the break.

Another defensive error then teed up Martial to dink over Dubravka for the fourth early in the second half.

Arteta got an early lesson in the flaws that have blighted Arsenal's season as they were caught out trying to play from the back to concede the opening goal when Dan Gosling put Bournemouth in front.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang again rode to the Gunners' rescue to equalise just after the hour mark, but a point leaves Arsenal still down in 11th.

Sheffield United are sixth, behind Tottenham only on goal difference, as they missed the chance to close to within a point of Chelsea in a 1-1 draw with Watford.

Crystal Palace climbed up to eighth thanks to Jordan Ayew's brilliant individual run and finish a minute from time to beat West Ham 2-1.

Guardiola hails Agüero

AFP, Manchester

Pep Guardiola believes Sergio Agüero is "irreplaceable" as the Manchester City forward enters the final 18 months of his glorious career in English football.

The record-breaking Argentinian is likely to be on the bench for the reigning Premier League champions visit to Wolves on Friday as he continues his recovery from a thigh problem.

That injury has sidelined the 31-year-old since the end of November and given Guardiola a taste of what life will be like when Agüero's contract ends next year.

The City manager does not expect to be able to talk Agüero into changing his plans to end his career in his homeland and that will leave Guardiola with the thankless task of replacing a man who has, to date, scored 244 times for his club.

"I'd say it will be one of the toughest (tasks). Sergio is irreplaceable," said Guardiola.

"We have an incredible other striker in Gabriel Jesus and maybe another one will come when Sergio leaves. But he is irreplaceable."

Agüero played a pivotal role when City were crowned champions of England for the first time in 44 years when his last-gasp winner against QPR took them to the 2011/12 Premier League title.

"The most important moment of this club, more important than if one day this club wins the Champions League, is the moment when Sergio scored that goal, against QPR to win the first Premier League (2012) after I don't know how many years," said Guardiola.

"That moment is much better than four titles in one season or whatever. And he was THE guy. More than anything, more than the goals he has done at this club."

"But sooner or later it is going to happen (Agüero's departure), he'll decide when."

Agüero's efforts in the three-and-a-half seasons that Guardiola has been in charge at the Etihad have been all the more impressive given many thought the Argentinian international would not fit into the Catalan manager's demanding style of play.

Russia challenges doping ban

AFP, Moscow

Russia on Friday formally contested a four-year ban from major sporting events over doping violations that President Vladimir Putin has condemned as "unjust," the head of its RUSADA anti-doping agency said.

"In accordance with established procedure, today we have sent a package of documents to the World Anti-Doping Agency. The package contains a notice about disagreement with WADA sanctions," RUSADA director general Yury Ganus told reporters in Moscow.

Ganus, who has long argued for a major crackdown by Russia against doping cheats, warned that the legal challenge could backfire, however.

The formal statement of disagreement with WADA will trigger an appeal process against the ban at the Lausanne-based Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

Ganus, whose rigorous stance puts him at odds with his own government and supervisory board, argues that Moscow needs to accept the sanctions and own up to its faults in order to be able to reform.

Ibra set for Milan return

AFP, Milan

Sweden star Zlatan Ibrahimovic has reached agreement to join AC Milan on an initial six-month contract, according to multiple reports in Italy on Thursday.

Ibrahimovic has accepted Milan's proposal and is ready to sign a deal to return to the former European giants within the next two days, Gazzetta Dello Sport and Sky Sports Italia reported.

Ibrahimovic will reportedly sign a six-month contract worth about three million euros (\$3.3 million) with a renewal option for another year, linked to certain conditions such as goals and appearances.

The 38-year-old striker confirmed his departure from Los Angeles Galaxy last month following the club's elimination from the Major League Soccer playoffs.

The Swede should be available to coach Stefano Pioli as early as December 30, the date of the resumption of training at Milan.

AC Milan are reeling after a 5-0 thrashing against Atalanta last weekend, their worst defeat in 21 years, and are struggling 11th in the Serie A table.

The team's first game after the winter break will be at home against Sampdoria on January 6.

It is hoped that Ibrahimovic will bring some leadership and a winning mentality to the locker room.



Luis Suarez and wife Sofia Balbi renewed their wedding vows in a glitzy ceremony in Uruguay on Thursday. Barcelona teammates Lionel Messi, Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba were present on the occasion.

PHOTO: AFP

Suarez renews wedding vows

AFP, Maldonado

Barcelona forward Luis Suarez and wife Sofia Balbi have renewed their wedding vows at a star-studded gathering in Uruguay attended by Lionel Messi among others. The celebration to mark 10 years of marriage took place in a luxury tourist complex near the coastal city of Maldonado, about 130 km (80 miles) east of the capital Montevideo. A crowd of football fans, including many wearing the Barcelona strip, gathered near the entrance as Suarez's clubmates Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba arrived along with Ballon d'Or winner Messi and his wife, Antonella Rocuzzo. Brazilian star Neymar was also there, local media said. Uruguay striker Suarez and Balbi exchanged "rings inscribed with their respective names, made from white gold and diamonds", according to a statement. The couple met when Suarez was 14 and started seeing each other soon afterwards. They were married in 2009 and have three children.



Quarter Master General of Bangladesh Army Lt. General Md Shamsul Haque inaugurates the four-day Priyopranon New Year Cup Golf tournament as chief guest at the Army Golf Club yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS