

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

English Premier League
Brighton v Chelsea
Live from 6:30pm
Southampton v Tottenham
Live from 9:00pm

Man City v Everton
Live from 11:30pm
Arsenal v Man United
Live from 2:00am (Thursday)

STAR SPORTS SELECT 2

English Premier League
Burnley v Aston Villa
Live from 6:30pm
Newcastle v Leicester
Live from 9:00pm

Norwich v Crystal Palace
Live from 11:30pm



Bangladesh Police FC players and officials celebrate their 3-1 win over Saif SC in a Federation Cup quarterfinal encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. PHOTO: BFF

Bashundhara buck the trend

Beat Muktis on penalties after Police oust Saif

SPORTS REPORTER



Bashundhara Kings bucked the trend of shock results in the TVS Federation Cup, but only just, with a 4-1 win in tiebreakers against Muktiyoddha Sangsad KC in the fourth quarterfinal at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The beaten finalists of last year had taken a third-minute lead through Jalal Kdouh, and despite dominating the match, had to go through to penalties following Mahedi Hasan's equaliser for Muktiyoddha on 76 minutes.

With the 30 minutes of extra time not producing a goal, it was up to Bashundhara Kings' goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico to repeat his heroics from last year. The national team goalkeeper had produced similar penalty-saving performances in the Kings' Independence Cup triumph last season, and followed it up with two saves out of four shots as the title-contenders eased to 4-1 win on penalties.

The new powerhouse of domestic football will take on newcomers Bangladesh Police in the second semifinal on January 3 following the first semifinal between Mohammedan and Rahmatganj on the previous day.

POLICE OVERWHELM SAIF

Earlier, newcomers Bangladesh Police overwhelmed big-spenders Saif Sporting Club in the third quarterfinal with a 3-1 win to extend the spree of shock results in the season's curtain-raising tournament.

MS Bablu's side-volley gave Police a 31st-minute lead after Police goalkeeper Arifuzzaman

SAIF SC (Akhmedov 55')	1 - 3	POLICE (Sydney 45+1', 52'; Bablu 31')
MUKTIYODDHA (Mahedi 76')	1 (1) - 1 (4)	BASHUNDHARA (Kdouh 3')

Himel produced a brilliant save from Jamal Bhuiyan's free-kick to keep the favourites at bay.

Sydney Rivera doubled Police's lead in the first minute of stoppage time with a powerful shot from inside the box before the American forward made it 3-0 with a clever flick on a pass from Luka Rotkovic seven minutes after restart.

Murolimzhon Akhmedov reduced the margin with a superb curling free-kick three minutes later as Saif started creating chances. However, Jahongir Ergashev saw his attempt come off the crossbar, with the rebound headed over by Rahimuddin on

68 minutes before Denier Cordoba blasted the ball over the bar eight minutes later as Saif's effort to stage a fightback amounted to nothing.

This was a big win for a team who started their campaign with a 4-0 chastening against defending champions Abahani and third surprising result in three quarterfinals after Rahmatganj had knocked out Abahani while Mohammedan saw off Chattogram Abahani in the first two quarterfinals.

Police coach Nicolas Vitorovic was, however, unwilling to call the result an upset.

"My players played the way I wanted them to. They showed character to get one more victory. I always felt we could win. I tried to instil a winning mentality among the players," the Cypriot coach said at the post-match press conference.

Saif SC coach Mohammad Nizam was frustrated at the lacklustre approach from his players, especially the local ones.

"There needs to be bigtime change with the mindset and attitude of the players," the Maldivian coach said.

"There is lot of work to be done with the team. We gave away three easy goals. The body language and attitude of the players was not right. They did not take the opposition seriously enough," Nizam added.

Misfiring Gunners face United today

REUTERS, Manchester



At the start of this decade, clashes between Arsenal and Manchester United were still potentially title-deciding affairs, but when the pair meet tonight at the Emirates they will have more modest goals in mind.

United have not won a league title since Alex Ferguson's final season in charge seven years ago, while Arsenal have to go back to 2004 for the last time they raised the Premier League trophy, during the reign of Arsene Wenger.

Both clubs entered this season hoping to finish in the top four, but while Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has guided United to fifth place, just a point off the Champions League spots, Arsenal languish in 12th, 11 points behind fourth-placed Chelsea after their home defeat to Frank Lampard's side on Sunday.

Arsenal's poor form led to the dismissal of their Spanish manager Unai Emery

and the arrival of his compatriot, former Gunners midfielder Mikel Arteta.

Having left his role as Pep Guardiola's assistant at Manchester City, Arteta is talking big despite beginning with a draw at Bournemouth before Sunday's loss.

"We are the biggest football club in England, and we have to play a little bit with that arrogance, that belief," Arteta told Sky Sports, urging the club's fans to make the Emirates a fortress again.

United head to London on the back of wins over Newcastle and Burnley, and with French forward Anthony Martial and England's Marcus Rashford having struck five times in those games.

French midfielder Paul Pogba is expected to be part of the United squad for the clash with the Gunners as he continues his return from a three-month injury absence.

Runaway leaders Liverpool host Sheffield United on Thursday, looking to maintain their unbeaten run and 13-point advantage over second-placed Leicester City.

BANGABANDHU'S BIRTH CENTENARY CELEBRATION

Maradona to come in 2020: Salahuddin

SPORTS REPORTER

Argentine football legend Diego Maradona will come to Bangladesh in 2020 as part of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's birth centenary celebration, confirmed Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Kazi Salahuddin yesterday.

Although the time and activities of the World Cup winner has not been fixed as of yet, Salahuddin said Maradona will come here as the BFF's guest to be a part of the celebrations.

"He [Maradona] has given his consent to our invitation to come to Bangladesh as part of Bangabandhu's birth centenary.

Since there are a lot of events to be held for the celebration, it is yet to be decided when he would come," Salahuddin told The Daily Star.

BFF will host the sixth edition of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup international tournament from January 15 to 25 as the first event of the birth centenary celebrations of the father of the nation.

The Bangabandhu SAFF Football Championship will also be held towards the end of this year while there will be a number of domestic football events to commemorate Bangabandhu's birth centenary.



Brothers sign up Reza Parkas

SPORTS REPORTER

Brothers Union yesterday officially signed up Iranian-born German coach Reza Parkas in hopes of reviving the club's lost glory.

The Gopibagh outfit have been struggling in domestic circuit in recent years, avoiding them w drop from the Bangladesh Premier League by a single point last season while exiting this season's curtain-raising Federation Cup from the group stages with two defeats in two matches.

Reza, a UEFA Pro-licence holder, will replace local coach Mohidur Rahman, who was given charge after former coach Syed Nayeemuddin left midway through last season.

After signing a one-year agreement with Brothers Union yesterday, Reza told reporters that he would try his best to

revive the club's glory.

"My target is always to be champion. I know Brothers have experienced and junior players; junior players are motivated, they are willing to learn which I saw in last two- three days of training. I will try to give them best of my knowledge. We will build the club anew," Reza said in regards to vision for the club.

Reza went on to say that: "I have confidence in my knowledge and quality of works, when I change clubs I consider the situation."

Brothers president Nazrul Islam and club director Mohiuddin Ahmed said that they would try to give a new shape to the club and bring it back to the path of success.

The 51-year-old, who watched Brothers' Federation Cup matches, has five years' of coaching experience in Iran, Bahrain and UAE.



Still have a lot of fire: Sharapova

AFP, Brisbane

Former world number one Maria Sharapova said yesterday she still had "a lot of fire" as she attempts to resurrect her career after an injury-plagued 2019.

The five-time major winner will open her 2020 campaign in Brisbane after being awarded a wildcard by organisers in preparation for the Australian Open later in January.

"To be fair when I was younger I never saw myself playing past 30," the 32-year-old Russian told reporters in Brisbane.

"But I still feel there is a lot in me to give. I still have a lot of fire in me and I am big competitor."

Sharapova has not played since a first-round loss to career-long rival Serena Williams at the US Open in August. She has slipped to 133 in the world rankings after a 2019 season ruined by a shoulder injury which limited her to 15 competitive matches.

"As long as the shoulder stays healthy and my body allows me to, I hope there is a lot of time left for me," she said.

Sharapova won the Brisbane title in 2015 and joins a high-class field for next week's event spearheaded by Australia's world number one Ashleigh Barty and Australian Open champion Naomi Osaka.

World number two Karolina Pliskova is also playing as are fellow top 10 stars Elina Svitolina, Petra Kvitova and Kiki Bertens.

Lemar suffers thigh injury

AFP, Madrid

Atletico Madrid attacker Thomas Lemar, who has been linked with a move away from the club, has suffered a thigh injury, the La Liga outfit said on Tuesday, without noting the length of his absence.

Lyon and Arsenal are reportedly interested in signing the 24-year-old World Cup winner during the upcoming transfer window.

Lemar has scored three goals in 64 appearances since Diego Simeone signed him from Monaco in 2018 for 72 million euros (\$80 million).

Fourth-placed Atletico host Levante in La Liga on Saturday in their first match after the winter break.

Juan Quintero demands answers

AFP, Bogota

Colombian international footballer Juan Fernando Quintero on Monday demanded answers from the country's new army chief over the fate of his father who went missing almost 25 years ago.

"I don't want to take advantage of the new General of the Army (Enrique) Zapateiro... taking office, but I hope to be able to start a dialogue very soon and find out what happened," Quintero, who plays for Argentine club side River Plate, wrote on Twitter.

"I have the right as a son to know what happened to my father because I have suffered and I have seen my family suffering from psychological problems," added Quintero, who was only two when his father Jaime disappeared in 1995.

General Zapateiro, who was a captain in the unit in which Jaime Quintero served, was cleared of any wrongdoing by the courts in 2001.

According to his family, in 1995 Zapateiro ordered Jaime Quintero to travel to Medellin after an alleged altercation between the two men over bouts of indiscipline, but he never arrived at his destination.

Rooney set for debut

AFP, London

England's record goalscorer Wayne Rooney will make his debut for second-tier Derby against Barnsley on Thursday, the club's manager Phillip Cocu confirmed.

Rooney, 34, joined Derby as a player-coach from MLS side DC United but has been ineligible to play for his new side until January.

"If a player with the qualities, career and the experience of Rooney (is available) you have to be very happy and glad he is here," said Cocu after Monday's 2-1 home win over Charlton in the Championship.

"He's fit, he can start but he will need a few games. Expectation will be high when

he starts playing but we have to give him a few games to build up his minutes and get in the team.

"So maybe not perfect from the start but it's important he will get in the team as soon as possible so we get a certain shape in our team."

Rooney's debut can't come soon enough for Derby.

Their win on Monday moved them into 17th place in English football's second-tier.

However, they are still nine points shy of the play-off spots and 21 behind the two automatic promotion places.

On Monday, teenage midfielder Jason Knight scored his first goals in professional football to give Derby the three points, ending a run of seven games without a win.



Brothers Union's new coach Reza Parkas (C) displays the club's jerseys alongside club higher-ups at his official signing at their headquarters in Gopibagh yesterday. PHOTO: COLLECTED