

WHAT TO WATCH

T SPORTS

Road Safety World Series  
First Semifinal  
Live from 7:30 pm

TEN 1

UEFA Champions League  
Bayern Munich vs Lazio  
Live from 2:00 am (Thurs-

day)

TEN 2

Serie A  
Torino vs Sassuolo  
Live from 8:00 pm  
UEFA Champions League  
Chelsea vs Atletico Madrid  
Live from 2:00 am (Thurs-

day)

FACEBOOK

La Liga  
Sevilla vs Elche  
Live from 12:00 am (Thursday)

## 'Messi is the best player in the world'

REUTERS, MADRID

Barcelona coach Ronald Koeman lauded Lionel Messi as the most important player in the club's history as the Argentine celebrated making a record-equalling 767th appearance for the Catalans on Monday.

Scoring twice, Messi produced another vintage display as he equalled Xavi Hernandez's appearance record in Barca's 4-1 victory over La Liga basement club Huesca.

"What more can you say (about Messi)?" a beaming Koeman told reporters.

"His level over so many years, over so many games... he's the most important player in Barcelona's history and thank goodness he's still here with us.

"I think he's shown he's the best player in the world. The first goal he scored was

fantastic, and he deserves to be the focal point of this team."

The result moved the Catalans to within four points of top spot as they chase down pace-setters Atletico Madrid.

"It is a great honor to reach this number of games played for Barcelona. Thanks to all of the colleagues who have accompanied me in these years, and to my family and friends for always being by my side."  
Lionel Messi wrote on Instagram.

"Congratulations Leo!! It's an honor that you match this record."

Xavi, currently the coach of Qatari champions Al Sadd, paid his own tribute on Tuesday by writing to his former team-mate.



Teenager Pedri, who was called up to the Spain national team for the first time earlier on Monday, also praised Messi - a player he has been earmarked to succeed at the Nou Camp.

"To play alongside Leo is an absolute joy. I enjoy going to training everyday," said the 18-year-old.

"Whenever I get it, I try and pass to him because every time he touches the ball, something happens. It's absolutely crazy what he's achieving. He's the best player in the world."

**\*\*Lionel Messi marked his historic 767th appearance - across all competitions to move level alongside Xavi - with two goals and an assist.**

**\*\*Monday night's double means he now has scored at least 20 goals in a La Liga campaign for the 13th consecutive season, an unprecedented feat.**

## A chance for youngsters to step up

SPORTS REPORTER



While head coach Jamie Day has competition for places in defence and midfield departments in the Bangladesh national football team, a lack of talent up front has forced the Brit to search for better options to get goals in international matches.

Day's charges have adopted well to his methods and defended well for nearly three years, but they are still like trainees when it comes to finding the target on the international stage.

In the absence of regular starter Nabib Newaj Jibon, Jamie last November picked forwards Suman Reza and MS Bablu for the two FIFA friendlies against Nepal in November. Suman retained his position in the national fold but Bablu was dropped following unimpressive performances in the domestic circuit.

Ahead of a tournament involving hosts Nepal and Kyrgyzstan U-23 side that Bangladesh will fly for on March 18, the 41-year-old coach again gave a couple of forwards the opportunity to grab spots, including Mohammad Jewel of Bangladesh Police, who made the jump from the standby list to a final 25-member squad by impressing in training.

"I really like playing in striking positions and I got a big opportunity by making it into the squad by proving myself. I have been playing as the forward since my childhood with an aim to score goals in every matches," said Jewel before the start of yesterday's training at Bangabandhu National Stadium.

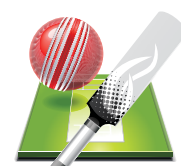
"I was kept as a standby player but my target was to do something good to secure a place in the final squad and I am really happy that I achieved my first target. I will now try to secure a place in the playing eleven," the 20-year-old who grew up in the neighborhood of Arambagh said.

Meanwhile, Jewel said that he had faith in himself and was not taking any pressure to shine for the national team immediately.

"I have just started my journey with the national team. I don't think everything will come to an end if I can't shine this time around but I am hopeful that we can deliver something good against Nepal and Kyrgyzstan as well as in the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers in June," Jewel said.

## Tigers enjoy first tune-up on tour

SPORTS REPORTER



The Tigers divided into two teams and played their first intra-squad match since landing in New Zealand on February 24, enjoying a fruitful outing at the John Davies Oval in Queenstown yesterday.

Although the result was of little consequence and it showed as Nazmul XI beat Tamim XI comprehensively by nine-wickets, coach Russell Domingo will be happy to see his charges get the feel of a match after a long time.

Despite it being a warm-up game, it would certainly have provided a lot of confidence to cricketers while also getting them into the groove of in-game situations ahead of the upcoming three-match ODI series.

It was a perfect outing for the Tigers as batsmen scored runs and spent time at the crease while Rubel Hossain was the pick of the bowlers with four wickets for Nazmul XI.

According to all-rounder Mehedi

Hasan Miraz, who played for the winning team, the overcast conditions early on helped their seamers get purchase from the surface.

"The weather in the morning helped the bowlers as it was slightly overcast. The bowlers got some extra purchase and Rubel bhai especially bowled a very good line and length," Miraz said.

Tamim XI were without ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal, who was rested as a precaution after some slight



discomfort in the thigh area, and his side were in a spot of bother early as they lost Naim Sheikh (12) and Soumya Sarkar (28).

However, Mahmudullah Riyad and Mahedi Hasan chipped in and scored thirties while Mohammad Mithun remained not out on 66 as Tamim XI posted 233 for five in 50 overs.

In reply, Nazmul and Liton Das made a flying start before retiring to give others an opportunity to bat. Najmul scored 40 while Liton added 59 before Mushfiqur Rahim and Miraz also struck fifties to chase down the total with ease.

"Everyone is feeling good after playing the match. The bowlers bowled in good areas and the batters also looked confident. I think this game proved to be really good for all of us," Miraz added.

After completing their camp in Queenstown today, the Tigers will travel to Dunedin, the venue for the first ODI in the first of the three match ODI series against New Zealand starting from March 20.

## Sumon 4-for seals Wolves whitewash

SPORTS REPORTER

With Bangladesh Emerging Team pacer Sumon Khan rattling the stumps of Ireland Wolves' Peter Chase in the penultimate over, it was ensured that the visiting side would leave the country without a single win in the multi-format series.

Sumon's four-for helped Bangladesh bundle out Wolves for 154 in 18.1 overs after posting a commendable 184 for seven to register a 30-run victory over the visitors in their only T20 match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The convincing victory also meant that the hosts bagged a clean series sweep - a 4-0 win in the five-match one-day series with first match abandoned due to Irish pacer Ruhan Pretorius testing positive for Covid, an innings victory in the only four-dayer and the latest T20 triumph.

The visiting side, however, were scheduled to play one more T20, but it got cancelled due to Covid-19 travel protocols in Ireland concerning their transit country, the UAE, on their flight back home.



Full-back Bishwanath Ghosh spends some light moments with new inclusion Mohammed Jewel during Bangladesh's practice session at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Day added at a press conference at the BFF House that the three-team event would be a good platform for youngsters to showcase their talents.

"It is a good platform to test players because Nepal are close to us in the FIFA Rankings and in terms of technique. Kyrgyzstan are probably better than us technically and maybe they are the best team in the competition, but this tournament is a good platform to see players because if they are put at a higher level, it is difficult to judge them."

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE ROUND OF 16

## Lazio need a miracle against Bayern

AGENCIES



Bayern Munich take on Lazio in the second leg of their Champions League last-16 knockout tie tonight, with the defending champions holding a 4-1 lead from the first leg at Stadio Olimpico.

As such, it would take a monumental effort from the Italians to overturn the deficit at Allianz Arena and subsequently reach the quarter-final of this competition for the first time since 2000.

After the first leg in which Bayern demolished Lazio, the second leg should just be a formality and doesn't promise a lot of excitement. Still, this is Champions League where often predictions end up trashed.

The reigning winners are on a good path to defend the title since they are practically already in the quarter-finals. The Bavarians are a well-oiled machine and they haven't missed a beat this season since they are also sitting at the top of Bundesliga with four points ahead of Red Bull Leipzig and three wins in a row.

On the other hand, it would take a miracle for Lazio to win the tie after losing the first leg. In addition to this, Lazio are not in the best form. In the past five Serie A matches, they've won only two times and lost three games.

Though they haven't exactly been the most enterprising side in the final third, the Blues have shored up their defense and all they might need to do on Wednesday is dig their heels in and defend out of their skin. Atletico have it all to do at Stamford Bridge, but on a run of two wins in seven, form is not on their side. They have, though, won four of their last six away matches, which is a boost as they look to overturn the one-goal deficit.

Atletico will have to show considerably more going forward in this game otherwise their European campaign



will be over. They have been slightly more convincing since the first leg, taking eight points from four league games in a run which has included some tough fixtures such as the Madrid derby and an away trip to Villarreal. Their most recent outing was a disappointing 0-0 draw at Getafe where Atleti failed to convert a series of late chances to win the game.

Atletico have happy memories of this ground having won a Champions League Semi-Final 2nd Leg here in 2014. Only Koke remains from the starting XI that night though and this is also clearly a very different Chelsea side.

## Can Atletico overcome their deficit?

AGENCIES

Chelsea will look to book a spot in the Champions League quarter-finals as they take on Atletico Madrid at Stamford Bridge tonight with an away goal in their kitty.

Chelsea are yet to be beaten under new manager Thomas Tuchel. They have won eight and drawn four of their 12 games played. And as if that wasn't impressive enough, the Blues have conceded just twice in that time.

ইসলামী ব্যাংক  
বাংলাদেশ নিমিত্ত  
ইসলামী পরিকল্পনা মোতাবেক পরিচালিত

আজ হতে শতবর্ষ পূর্ণ থাকবে শ্রেরগার নাম  
শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান

১৭ মার্চ  
জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান-এর  
১০১ তম জন্মবার্ষিকী  
আমাদের শ্রদ্ধাঞ্জলি