

SONY SIX & TEN 2
EURO 2020
Quarterfinals
Switzerland vs Spain
Live from 10:00 pm
Belgium vs Italy
Live from 1:00 am (Saturday)

SONY SIX, TEN 1 & TEN 2
Copa America 2021 Quarterfinals
Peru vs Paraguay
Live from 3:00 am (Saturday)
Brazil vs Chile
Live from 6:00 am (Saturday)
T SPORTS

Bangladesh Premier League
Muktijoddha vs Sheikh Russel
Live from 5:00 pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT 1 & 2
Wimbledon
Third Round
Live from 4:00 pm

Can Switzerland write fresh history against Spain?

AGENCIES

Switzerland have beaten Spain just once in 22 meetings but showed against France that they are thrillingly capable of an upset. Switzerland wrote history once against France; now they want to pen a whole new chapter when they face Spain in Saint Petersburg tonight.

Beating world champions France in a truly dramatic EURO 2020 round of 16 tie was epic for the Nati.

History clearly favouring Spain, a new-look side almost wholly revamped under the guidance of Luis Enrique but Monday's action taught everyone to take nothing for granted.

as Spain discovered when leading Croatia 3-1 with five minutes to go, only to have to play extra time; Switzerland made a similar comeback against France before winning on penalties, their first triumph in a major tournament knockout match since the 1938 World Cup, before the inaugural EURO had even been played.

Spain have not been at their best this summer, drawing their first two fixtures with Sweden and Poland, but they put five goals past Slovakia in their final group match before scoring another five against Croatia, and La Roja must be taken seriously in this competition due to the other sides that have been eliminated.

Switzerland will certainly not want a repeat of their last World Cup knockout game: a 1-0 round of 16 loss to Sweden at this stadium in St Petersburg in 2018.



Italy will be fancying their chances against Belgium in tonight's Euro 2020 quarterfinals after rumours that both Kevin de Bruyne and Eden Hazard missed the Red Devils' final training session ahead of the game on Thursday. The onus in the cause against the Azzurri will squarely be on the shoulders of Romelu Lukaku, a player who spent last season re-writing the record books in Milan.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Euro 2020 under fire for helping spread Covid-19

REUTERS, Copenhagen

The Euro 2020 soccer tournament was on Thursday blamed for a surge in coronavirus cases as fans have flocked to stadiums, bars and spectator zones across Europe to watch the action while the pandemic still raged.

Germany's interior minister called European soccer's governing body UEFA "utterly irresponsible" for allowing big crowds at the tournament.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said the mixing of crowds in Euro 2020 host cities, travel and easing of social restrictions had driven up the number of new cases rose by 10%.

A 10-week decline in new infections across Europe had come to an end and a new wave is inevitable if football fans and others drop their guard, WHO senior emergency officer Catherine Smallwood said in Copenhagen.

"We need to look much beyond just the stadiums themselves," Smallwood told reporters. "We need to look at how people get there, are they travelling in large crowded convoys of buses? And when they leave the stadiums, are they going into crowded bars and pubs to watch the matches?"

These events were driving the spread of the virus, she said.

The final decisions with regards to the number of fans attending matches and the entry requirements to any of the host countries and host stadiums fall under the responsibility of the competent local authorities, and UEFA strictly follows any such measures," UEFA said in a statement.



PLAYER TO WATCH

Exactly a year ago, a small, slender 17-year-old midfielder was trying to prevent Las Palmas, who were hovering six points above the relegation zone, from dropping into Spain's third division.

The name of the Canary Islands-born kid toiling away for the islanders was Pedro Gonzalez Lopez. Everybody knows him now as Pedri.

Despite the fact he's still only 18, and still completing his breakthrough season in senior football, that same boyish gem is one of only three of Luis Enrique's squad - Unai Simon and Aymeric Laporte the others - to have played all 390 minutes of Spain's EURO 2020 campaign so far.

Talented teenage tyros are not a new phenomenon. Usually, however, their emergence will be down to something remarkable such as power or pace - boys in age, men in stature. Not Pedri. He plays like an experienced, decorated senior pro.

It should be implausible for anybody so young, so inexperienced and so physically slight to possess such supernatural game intelligence, peripheral vision and first touch, not to mention the innate bravery to want the ball all the time.

Pedri began the tournament as the youngest Spanish player to appear at a EURO and briefly became the youngest from anywhere to start a knockout game.

CLASH OF TITANS

AGENCIES



Belgium and Italy, two continental heavyweights, face off tonight in arguably the glamour tie of the Euro 2020 quarter-final line-up.

Belgium, currently ranked the world's number one side, have peaked at just the right time under Roberto Martinez and Euro 2020 could represent one of their Golden Generation's last shots at glory. The Red Devils edged Portugal to a 1-0 victory in their previous game and will have to be equally robust in this match.

Italy were given a run for their money against Austria last week and do have a few issues to resolve ahead of this game. The Azzurri are on an exceptional record 31 games winning streak at the moment and have a point to prove against Belgium.

Belgium have now won each of their last 14 matches throughout the qualifiers and these finals; equalling the record set by Germany and last-eight opponents Italy. That mark must fall in Bavaria, as both nations seek a 15th successive victory in the



competition - after following a perfect streak in qualifying with four wins from four so far.

In all, the Red Devils have also scored in every one of their last 34 games, while winning 23 of their last 27. Such form, befitting the top-

ranked nation in the world, saw them dominate Group B - with a 3-0 success against Russia being followed by comeback victory versus an emotional Denmark and then a regulation win over debutants Finland.

Amongst the scorers in that group-stage stroll was Golden Boot-contender Romelu Lukaku, who Italy midfielder Matteo Pessina this week described as "the best striker in the world", and the Inter forward's strike against Finland was a record-extending 63rd for his country. Lukaku leads the line for the most experienced squad at these Euros; a group which contains five players with 100 caps or more - 15 of whom played at Euro 2016, while 18 featured at the last World Cup.

After a 12th win in a row last time out, this current Italy squad - who cruised through as winners of Group A - are facing growing expectation that they can lift the trophy for the first time since triumphing on home soil at the 1968 event. The Azzurri have been runners-up twice in the intervening years - in both 2000 and 2012 - but to even reach this year's decider, Mancini's men must first beat Belgium, then either Switzerland or Spain in the semi-finals.

Abahani maintain vice grip on Ctg Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER



Six-time league champions Abahani maintained their flawless record against Chattogram Abahani

by handing their namesakes a 2-0 defeat in a Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Nigerian forward Sunday Chizoba gave the Sky Blues a first-half lead before Mamunul Islam wrapped up Abahani's 14th triumph over the port city outfit in their 21st league meeting. Although

Chattogram Abahani had beaten Abahani 2-0 in the 2019-20 season, all the matches played that season were declared null and void after the league was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chattogram Abahani, who held their superior opponents to a 1-1 draw in the reverse fixture exactly six months ago, got off to a fine start on a muddy, slow pitch that though restrained the teams from displaying their natural performances. The port city side came agonisingly close to taking the lead in the very second minute, but Brazil's Nixon Gylherme unbelievably floated over the crossbar from inside the six-yard box.

Surviving that scare, Abahani grew in confidence and played long balls which led to Chattogram Abahani's downfall. After Sunday and Jewel Rana squandered a couple of opportunities, the former finally broke the deadlock in the 34th minute with a left-footed shot from inside the box after chipping down a chip from Brazil's Raphael Augusto.

Mamunul doubled the lead with a left-footed drive from outside the box in the 52nd minute and although Chattogram Abahani created a couple of good chances, they could find a breakthrough.

Abahani raised their points tally to 36 from 17 outings, 13 behind leaders Bashundhara Kings, while Chattogram Abahani remain glued to fifth with 28 points from 17 matches.



BRAZIL V CHILE

Defending champions Brazil look to book their place in the final four of the tournament when they take on Chile in the Copa America quarter-finals on Saturday morning (6am, Bangladesh Standard Time).

Having come in with major expectations to retain the title on home soil, Brazil almost seamlessly cruised through the group stage, winning their first three matches.

In their way stands a Chile side who will also aim to bounce back from a disappointing end to the group stage, having lost their final game 2-0 at the hands of Paraguay.

PLAYERS TO WATCH:

Brazil made several changes for the final group game with Ecuador and obviously their star man Neymar will return to the front line, having hit two goals and two assists in the first three games of the group stage.

Chile are expected to remain without talismanic forward Alexis Sanchez, who was ruled out indefinitely and in his absence, the line has been led well by Eduardo Vargas, who has netted two goals to earn draws in tough clashes for his side.

HEAD-TO-HEAD:

Brazil have won 51 games, drawn 13 and lost 8 from the 72 meetings between the two sides so far and they also won the last meeting by 3-0.

PERU V PARAGUAY



In the first of the Copa America quarter-finals, Peru and Paraguay lock horn with a place in the final four on the line. Peru managed to finish second in their group with a win on the final day, while Paraguay finished a commendable campaign in group A in third place, only falling behind Argentina and Uruguay.

PLAYERS TO WATCH:

After scoring the winner against Venezuela last time out, only Lionel Messi (3) has netted more than Andre Carrillo's two goals at the 2021 Copa America so far. That Carrillo has been Peru's talisman at this tournament. Paraguay will be spearheaded by Angel Romero, offering plenty



of pace on the break. His brace settled the game against Bolivia in the final 30 minutes.

HEAD TO HEAD:

Paraguay have won 23 matches out of a total of 53 games played between the two teams. Peru have managed 16 victories against Paraguay and the other 14 matches have ended in a draw. Peru, however, has an excellent recent record against Paraguay, as they are unbeaten in seven international fixtures, with 2-2 draw in their last meeting in October last year.

