

What to WATCH

T SPORTS & GTV

ICC Men's T20 World Cup
South Africa vs Sri Lanka
Live from 04:00 pm
England vs Australia
Live from 08:00 pm

T SPORTS

La Liga
Barcelona vs Alaves
Live from 01:00 am (Sunday)
STAR SPORTS HD 1 EPL
Leicester vs Arsenal

Live from 05:30 pm
Manchester City vs Crystal Palace
Live from 08:00 pm
Tottenham vs Manchester United
Live from 10:30 pm
STAR SPORTS HD 2 EPL

Liverpool vs Brighton
Live from 08:00 pm
STAR SPORTS 3
EPL
Newcastle vs Chelsea
Live from 08:00 pm

An even contest on the cards

AGENCIES



Star batter Quinton de Kock's expected return after agreeing to take the knee will bolster South Africa when they take on an inconsistent Sri Lanka in their Super 12 game at the T20 World Cup today.

De Kock's pullout for refusing to be a part of the anti-racism gesture in the game against West Indies kicked up a storm which subsided with a lengthy statement from him on Thursday in which he made himself available, saying he is fine taking a knee if it "educates others".

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The off-field drama surrounding the wicketkeeper-batter, who is a key member of the side, did not distract the side as they beat the Caribbeans by eight wickets. South Africa and Sri Lanka have had a mixed start to event and the today's result could decide the race for the semis.

The tie would be crucial for both, as a win would keep the side in the race for semis, while a loss could jeopardise its chances.

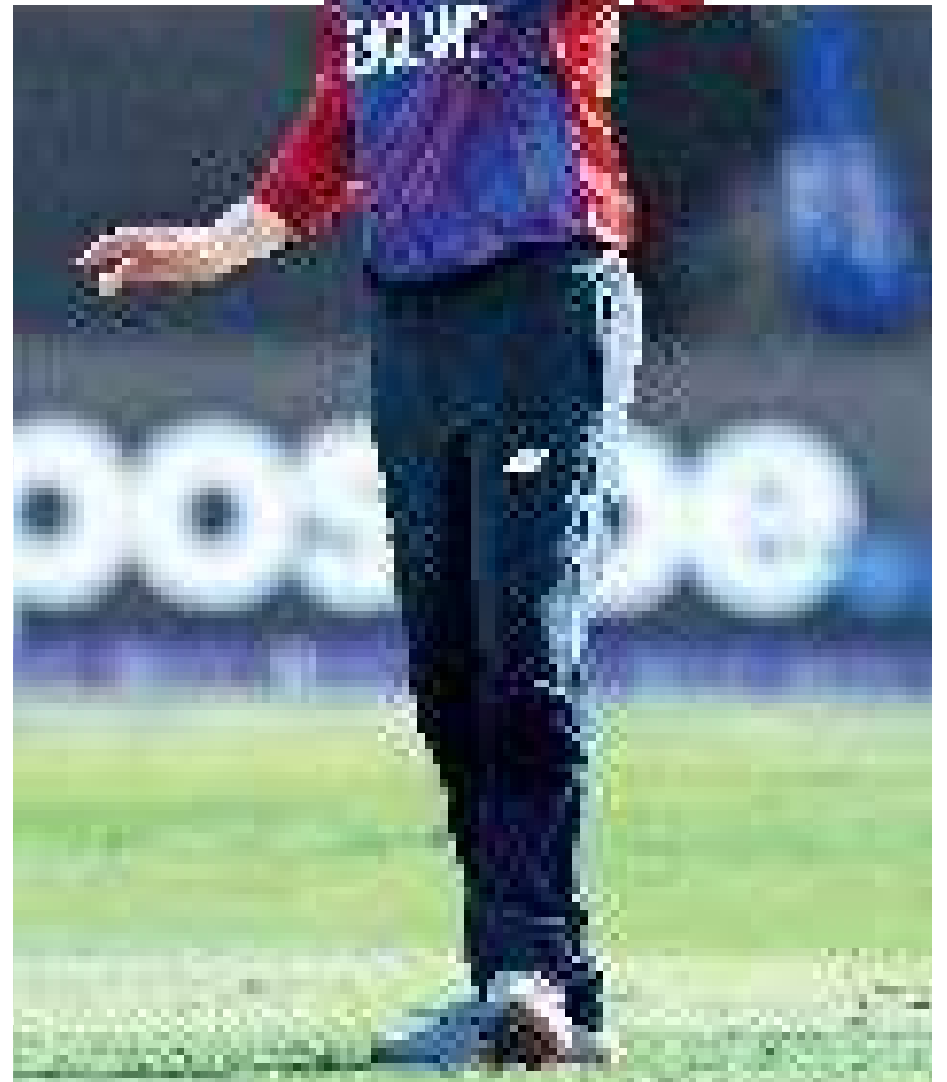
South Africa skipper Temba Bavuma, whose leadership has been outstanding during the mini-crisis, would be eager that the player and the team are able to put behind the controversy as quickly as possible.

Bavuma would also want to lead from the front with his batting as well. The right-handed opener has scores of 12 and 2 so far and he would be more than keen to find form.

All the South African batters would need to be wary of the wily Sri Lankan spin duo of Wanindu Hasaranga and Maheesh Theekshana, who have bamboozled the opposition batters.

An important role would be played for the Proteas by their spinners -- Keshav Maharaj and Tabraiz Shamsi --, who would look to run through the talented but inconsistent Sri Lankan batting order.

South Africa are unlikely to tinker with their winning combination. Sri Lanka will have to quickly put the seven-wicket hammering by Australia behind them and need to start afresh. For the Islanders, Charith Asalanka's form has been a positive. Wicket-keeper Kusal Perera, who got a start against Australia, would need to make it big against South Africa.



Old foes England, Australia brace for an

EXCITING CLASH

Banafuly bags bronze for BD while Uzbeks keep dominating

SPORTS REPORTER

Uzbek gymnasts kept their domination intact in the Bangabandhu 5th Central South Asian Artistic Gymnastics Championship with seven gold medals while hosts Bangladesh bagged a bronze medal on the second day of the six-nation event at Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Hot favourites Uzbekistan grabbed gold and silver in women's senior individual vault event, as predicted, with the gold and silver going to Miroshnichenko Anastasiya and Jumabekova Gulnaz, who scored 12.88 and 12.82, respectively, while Bangladesh's Banafuly Chakma grabbed the bronze medal after scoring an impressive 12.42 points.

Earlier on Thursday, Bangladesh achieved their first medal in the competition when the men's junior team won the bronze in all-around team event.

In the day's first two events, Uzbekistan comprising Temirov Bekhriz, Juraev Utkirbek, Mirvaliev Abdulaziz and Azamov Asadbek scored 229.65 points to clinch the gold in men's senior all-around team event while India and Sri Lanka won silver and bronze medals by scoring 225.50 and 198.95, respectively.

Solskjaer fights for Man Utd job as top three flex muscles

AFP, LONDON



Liverpool and Manchester City threaten to break away from the pack. Ole Gunnar Solskjaer is clinging to his job after United's humiliating 5-0 defeat at the hands of Liverpool last week. His side have taken just one point from the past 12 on offer.

Leaders Chelsea, Liverpool and defending champions City all have winnable matches this weekend while Leicester and Arsenal go head to head in an intriguing battle between two sides who have found their form.

Solskjaer called his team's humbling by Jurgen Klopp's men at Old Trafford his "darkest day" as Red Devils boss. The Norwegian has reportedly been given three games to save his job but the fixtures are daunting -- trips to Tottenham and Atalanta before a derby against Pep Guardiola's Manchester City.

The Liverpool drubbing came a year after 10-man United collapsed to a 6-1 home defeat against Spurs. "This is miles worse," Solskjaer said. "We have big games coming up, so no time to sulk, no time to feel sorry for yourself. We have to come together."

United have flattered to deceive since Solskjaer replaced Jose Mourinho in December 2018, failing to win silverware or mount a realistic title challenge.

Despite recently recruiting Cristiano Ronaldo, Jadon

Sancho and Raphael Varane, they find themselves eight points off leaders Chelsea and realistically out of the title picture.

They have kept just one clean sheet in all competitions this season and will be without the suspended Paul Pogba in London.

It would take a brave punter to bet against either Chelsea, Liverpool or defending champions Manchester City winning the Premier League table.

Just two points separate the clubs, with fourth-placed West Ham three points behind third-placed City. The title favourites have made their moves early this season in contrast to the 2020/21 campaign, when Everton, Arsenal, Leicester, Southampton and Tottenham all took turns at the top before City surged to their third title in four years.

Fresh from their stunning Old Trafford rout, Liverpool host a Brighton side struggling to convert their positive play into goals and victories. The Seagulls are fifth in the table but have only scored nine times in nine matches and are winless

in their past five games in all competitions. Chelsea, who smashed Norwich 7-0 last weekend, will fancy their chances against struggling Newcastle, who are being managed by interim boss Graeme Jones after this month's Saudi-led takeover and the sacking of manager Steve Bruce. City take on struggling Crystal Palace, who have won just one and drawn six of their nine league games under new boss Patrick Vieira.



LaLiga title race wide open

REUTERS, MADRID



Real Madrid and Barcelona have long dominated LaLiga, with 15 of the last 17 titles between them, but times may be changing.

After the success enjoyed by the Spanish giants, with Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo leading the charge, their run of titles was broken last season by Atletico Madrid for the second time in eight years and that could signal a new era. Real Sociedad are the surprise pace setters in the league as they sit three points ahead of Real Madrid, Sevilla and Betis. With only five points separating Sociedad from seventh-placed Osasuna, this year's race to the league title appears to be a tight one. In fact Barcelona are not even in that mix as they lie ninth and trail the leaders by nine points.

Real Sociedad are not the only surprise package of the season. Rayo Vallecano and Osasuna, who are both tied with Atletico on 19 points, took points off Barcelona and Real Madrid respectively in midweek LaLiga action.

After their relegation from the top flight in 2019, Rayo earned promotion last season and are now surprisingly high-flyers - the only team



to win all their home games this season. Their last victory was the most significant - beating Barcelona 1-0 on Wednesday, which led to the sacking of Ronald Koeman as coach of the Catalans. Rayo host Celta Vigo on Monday.

Osasuna have been as impressive as Rayo but their biggest accomplishments have come away from home. They have the best LaLiga record on the road this season, having won all of their away games until Wednesday's 0-0 draw at Real Madrid.

They will have another huge challenge to keep their streak alive on Saturday when they travel to Andalusia to face Sevilla.

Trying to keep up with Real Sociedad's pace, Real Madrid travel to Alicante to face Elche in the day's early kickoff.

As for Barcelona, they will host Alaves in the late game with Sergi Barjuan, the coach of Barca B, in charge as caretaker manager while the club try to hire Xavi Hernandez.

Other games this weekend include the Basque Country derby, when Real Sociedad host Athletic Bilbao, and the clash in Madrid between Atletico and Real Betis.

Betis, under former Manchester City and Real Madrid coach Manuel Pellegrini, travel to the Spanish capital having made their best start to a season for 60 years. The last time they had 21 points after 11 games was way back in 1963-64.

AGENCIES

Title favourites England are expected to be tested for the first time in the ongoing T20 World Cup when they face arch-rivals Australia in a battle for supremacy in the Super 12 Group today.

Australia are chasing the only major global trophy that has eluded them while England are bidding to become the first team to win both the 50-overs and the 20-overs World Cup at the same time.

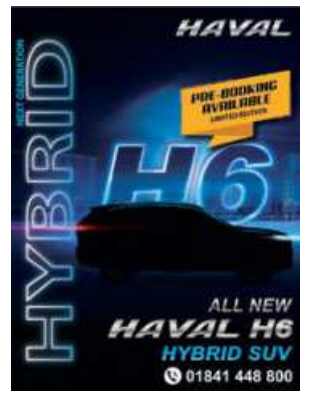
The teams have not met in a T20 World Cup since the 2010 final in Barbados when England prevailed. David Warner, Steven Smith (who batted at No. 8 and was one of five bowlers) and Eoin Morgan are three survivors from that day. Australia has not gone as deep in the tournament since then.

Both teams go into the high-pressure game unbeaten. While England started their campaign as favourites for the trophy, Australia have emerged as a strong contender

TODAY'S MATCHES

South Africa Vs Sri Lanka
4pm (BST)

England Vs Australia
8pm (BST)



the order.

Warner, however, is expecting the game against England to be a tough one. "They've obviously got a good all-around side. They bat deep, and they've got a lot of options with the ball. They are high confidence, as well. We know with their batting they're going to come hard, and in the bowling you pretty much know what you're going to get, so as I said, it's applying pressure," said Warner.

Australia bowlers, be it the pace trio of Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins, have lived up to the expectations while leggie Adam Zampa showed the value he brings to the table against Sri Lanka.

The only cause of concern would be the bowling performance of

Glenn Maxwell and Marcus Stoinis who leaked 51 runs in four overs on Thursday. England, on other hand, are coming into the game with big wins over West Indies and Bangladesh. They hardly broke a sweat in those games but Australia are likely to pose a much tougher challenge.

Off spinner Moeen Ali, who opened the bowling in both the games, has been impressive and already has four wickets to his name. In the pace department, Tymal Mills has been the standout bowler and has been brilliant in the death overs.

Leggie Adil Rashid did not have the best of nights against Bangladesh but expect him to trouble the Australians on Saturday.

with their performance in the first two games.

A win for either of the great rivals would make it three from three and put one foot in a semi-final.

Australia's batting was not very convincing in the low-scoring match against South Africa but they were clinical in the chase against Sri Lanka Thursday night. The biggest positive out of the Sri Lanka game was captain Aaron Finch and David Warner getting back amongst the runs at the top of