

What to WATCH

T SPORTS & GTV
ICC Men's T20I World Cup 2021
Australia vs West Indies
Live from 04:00 pm
England vs South Africa
Live from 08:00 pm

T SPORTS
La Liga
Real Madrid vs Rayo Vallecano
Live from 02:00 am (Sunday)
MTV India
La Liga

Celta de Vigo vs Barcelona
Live from 09:15 pm
STAR SPORTS HD1
EPL
Manchester United vs Manchester City
Live from 06:30 pm

Chelsea vs Burnley
Live from 09:00 pm
TEN 2
Bundesliga
Bayern Munich vs Freiburg
Live from 08:30 pm



Confident England look to dash SA's hopes

AGENCIES

T20 MENS T20 WORLD CUP 2021
A semifinal spot virtually assured, in-form England would look to dent South Africa's hopes of reaching the last-four stage when the two teams meet each other in a high-voltage Group 1 Super 12 match of the ICC T20 World Cup on Saturday. With a net run rate of +3.183, England are more or less through to the semifinals with four wins from as many games, while South Africa are lying in the third spot with six points from four matches.

Both South Africa and Australia are in close race for the second semifinal spot from Group 1 but the Australians are above the Proteas on the basis of a better net run rate, though they have six points each. It will all boil down to Saturday's game and South Africa will know what exactly they need to do before facing England as Australia play West Indies in the first match of the day. The Proteas can't afford to slip even a bit and need a resounding win to keep their hopes alive. But with form

on their side, an ominous-looking England will definitely start as firm favourites against the Proteas. After three consecutive wins over Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and West Indies, South Africa suffered their first defeat against Australia in their last match, putting questions on their campaign.

England would look to capitalise on it and finish off their group campaign with a perfect record. They have more or less ticked all boxes in their campaign so far. England looked one of the best teams in the tournament other than

Pakistan. While it hasn't been a cakewalk in all the four matches, the Englishmen were clinical in their approach and somebody or the other stepped out to bail the team out whenever in trouble. England's batting revolves around Jos Buttler, Jason Roy, Dawid Malan, Jonny Bairstow and skipper Eoin Morgan.

On the bowling front, the spin duo of Moeen Ali and Adil Rashid have been excellent so far, while Chris Woakes, Chris Jordan and Liam Livingstone have responded well to the team's call in the pace department.

South Africa's fate entirely doesn't lie in their own hands. The Proteas need to win by a big margin against England to go over Australia on NRR or hope West Indies beat Australia by a margin that reduces Australia's NRR. South Africa will depend on Quinton de Kock, Aiden Markram, Rassie van der Dussen, Temba Bavuma and David Miller to deliver the goods in the batting department, while the bowling unit will be led by top-ranked T20 bowler Tabraiz Shamsi with the likes of Anrich Nortje and Dwayne Pretorius in support.

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Footballers and officials of Bangladesh national team were greeted warmly upon their arrival in Colombo on Friday ahead of a four-nation tournament. Bangladesh will take on Seychelles in the opening match of the tournament, also featuring Maldives and hosts Sri Lanka.

PHOTO: BFF

Conte's winning start with Spurs

REUTERS, London

Antonio Conte got a crash course in what he can expect as Tottenham Hotspur's new manager after the Italian's first game in charge ended

in a 3-2 home victory over Vitesse Arnhem in the Europa Conference League on Thursday.

Conte, who replaced Nuno Espirito Santo this week, n1N2RT0T0 after the Portuguese was sacked 10 Premier League games into his first season, watched his side tear into a 3-0 lead after 28 minutes with Son Heung-min and Lucas Moura on target plus an own goal.

He then watched Vitesse score twice in seven minutes before halftime in a frantic tie complete with three red cards and an outbreak of crowd trouble amongst the

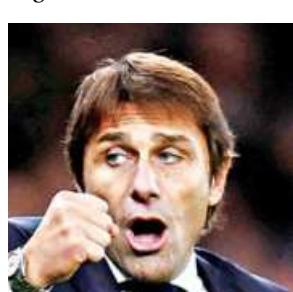
visiting supporters.

"It was a crazy game. Usually I don't like this type of game -- a crazy game means anything can happen. But at the same time I think we should win and we won," Conte said.

Conte will have plenty to ponder though ahead of this Sunday's league trip to Everton.

"For sure we have to improve. It's not easy because in two days we prepare for this (Everton) game ... now we have only one day," Conte said. "Tomorrow it's impossible to work with the players who played tonight."

"We need to have a bit of patience because we need to work on many aspects -- tactically and physically. I'm not afraid about the work. I know only through the work you can reach important targets."



Real fighting fit to put pressure on rivals

REUTERS



Real Sociedad may be the surprise LaLiga leaders, but Real Madrid are close to full strength and can begin to steal a march on their rivals this weekend when they face Rayo Vallecano, with Barcelona and Atletico Madrid still underperforming.

Carlo Ancelotti's side are one point behind Sociedad but have a game in hand. Real Madrid are also eight points ahead of old foes Barca, who are yet to announce a permanent successor to sacked coach Ronald Koeman.

Karim Benzema and Vinicius Jr. have been in great form this season for Madrid and forwards Eden Hazard and Gareth Bale are also close to returning to match fitness after lengthy injury layoffs.

That gives Ancelotti a welcome

selection headache ahead of Saturday's match at the Bernabeu.

"Hazard is ready to play, we will see how Bale trains before the game. All players that are not playing need to have faith and work hard," Ancelotti said after Real's 2-1 win over Shakhtar Donetsk in the Champions League on Wednesday.

Hazard and Bale will have a hard time trying to displace Vinicius Jr. in the starting line-up as the Brazilian, who assisted Benzema twice on Wednesday, has seven goals and three assists in 11 LaLiga games, only two goals behind the Frenchman in the scoring charts.

Real's city rivals Atletico fell flat in their European encounter this week, losing 2-0 to Liverpool, though it could have been more devastating. On Sunday they travel to Valencia, who snapped a seven-game winless run in their last match against Villarreal.

On Sunday, Sociedad will face another of the season's surprise packages in Osasuna who have risen to seventh in the standings in their third campaign back in the top flight.

Sevilla travel to bitter rivals Real Betis the same day looking to stay level on points with Real Madrid. Julen Lopetegui's side lost 2-1 to Lille in the Champions League on Tuesday but only have one defeat in 11 league games this season.

Despite a slim victory over Dynamo Kyiv in midweek, Barcelona are still on a dismal run domestically and travel to Celta Vigo on Saturday ninth in the standings on 16 points.

The Catalans have not won in three league matches but are trying to reach an agreement with Qatari club Al-Sadd so they can hire former Barca midfielder Xavi Hernandez as their new manager.



Barca close in on Xavi

AFP, Doha

Barcelona are set to announce Xavi Hernandez's return to the club as coach, after Al Sadd confirmed on Friday a deal has been agreed between the clubs.

The Qatari club said in Barca had paid the release clause for Xavi, who has been coaching in Qatar since 2019 and now rejoins the club where he enjoyed huge success as a player.

Al Sadd chief executive Turki Al-Ali said in a statement: "The Al Sadd



administration has agreed on Xavi's move to Barcelona after the payment of the release clause stipulated in the contract.

"We've agreed on cooperation with Barcelona in the future. Xavi is an important part of Al-Sadd's history and we wish him success." Barcelona sent vice-president Rafa Yuste and director of football Mateu Alemany to Doha for talks on Wednesday.

But Turki Al-Ali insisted on Wednesday that Al Sadd were "committed to keeping Xavi" and they appear to have held their ground in the negotiations, with Barca needing to pay Xavi's release clause, reportedly set at five million euros.