

# What to WATCH

## T SPORTS

Sri Lanka vs West Indies  
2nd Test, Day 5  
Live from 10:30 am  
Abu Dhabi T10  
Qualifier 1

Live from 06:00 pm  
Eliminator  
Live from 08:00 pm  
Qualifier 2  
Live from 10:00 pm  
La Liga

Granada vs Alaves  
Live from 02:00 am (Saturday)  
**STAR SPORTS 1**  
India vs New Zealand  
2nd Test, Day 1  
Live from 10:00 am

## Fans salute 'Ballon d'Or Benzema'

AFP, Madrid

Karim Benzema applauded Real Madrid's fans after they chanted "Karim, Ballon d'Or" as his goal against Athletic Bilbao on Wednesday sent Madrid seven points clear at the top of La Liga. Benzema's 20th goal in 24 games this season proved the difference in a 1-0 victory at the Santiago Bernabeu that puts Madrid firmly in charge of the Spanish title race, even after only 15 games played.

"We're on a good run and I like the atmosphere right now in the team," said Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti.

A run of seven consecutive wins in all competitions has helped pull Ancelotti's team away from the chasing pack and Benzema, along with the explosive Vinicius Junior, has been instrumental.

Ancelotti insisted on Tuesday Benzema had not been "crying" about losing out to Lionel Messi in the Ballon d'Or on Monday, with the Frenchman

finishing fourth in the final vote.

But there was more than a hint of rebellion in the air when the Madrid fans toasted his goal by chanting "Karim, Ballon d'Or" and the 33-year-old responded by applauding them back.

Ancelotti predicted Benzema would be even more motivated to win the award next season and perhaps his best hope would be to play a decisive role in Madrid winning either La Liga or the Champions League.

With Barcelona rebuilding under Xavi Hernandez and Atletico Madrid struggling to balance their usually dependable defence with a wealth of options in attack, Real Madrid are certainly emerging as clear favourites now in Spain.

They defeated Sevilla 2-1 last weekend and now face third-placed Real Sociedad and second-placed Atletico in their next two games, fixtures that could give them a formidable lead if the victories keep coming. Athletic, meanwhile, stay eighth, without a win now in six.

## A 'boyhood dream' for Carey

REUTERS, Melbourne

Alex Carey will be Australia's wicketkeeper for at least the first two Ashes Tests, replacing former captain Tim Paine who has taken a mental health break after a 'sexting' scandal.

The 30-year-old from the Riverland town of Loxton in South Australia will make his Test debut against England in the Ashes opener at the Gabba on December 8, having represented Australia in 45



one-day internationals and 38 T20 matches.

He will become the country's first wicketkeeper to soak up a first Test on home soil since Adam Gilchrist debuted against Pakistan at the same venue in 1999.

"Debuting for Australia no matter where it is, it's going to be super exciting and, yeah, for me to do that at the Gabba and in an Ashes series is again, boyhood dreams," Carey told reporters in Brisbane on Thursday. "That's what sort of comes to mind."

Carey once flirted with an Australian Rules football career but went back to cricket after missing out on a contract with AFL expansion side Greater Western Sydney Giants when they joined the professional league in 2012.

In claiming the Test spot he has beaten out fellow uncapped wicketkeeper Josh Inglis, who returned to his home Western Australia state this week and will play for Australia 'A' against the England Lions team.



## Local booters steal the show

SPORTS REPORTER

Local footballers outshone the foreign recruits to give title contenders Saif SC a thrilling 3-2 win over Muktijoddha Sangsad in their Riviera Independence Cup encounter at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Following back-to-back victories, the past edition's runners-up now need a draw in their last match against Mohammedan SC, who were stunned 2-1 by Bangladesh Army, to confirm their quarterfinal berths from Group C.

Ranju Sikdar gave Army an 18-minute lead before Shahriar Emon wrapped up the remarkable win in the 69th minute over the Black and Whites, who pulled one back in stoppage time through Minhajur Abedin Rakib. Now Mohammedan and Army both find themselves at three points in the table.

Back to the first match, Saif were in a safe position until 80 minutes, with three strikes from as many local

players, after which the charges of Argentinian coach Andres Cruciani suddenly conceded two goals within the last six minutes.

However, Saif kept their backline unbroken until the final whistle to leave the field on a high, courtesy of brilliant performances from the local players, especially national forward Faisal Ahmed Fahim, who had troubled Maldives in Mahinda Rajapaksa trophy in Colombo during his international debut.

The left-winger, who represented Bangladesh U-15, U-19 and U-23 teams, broke the deadlock with a nice placing shot after Uzbekistani Asror Gafurov and the Nigerian duo -- Sunday Udoh and Emeka Ogbugh -- failed to cash in on the early opportunities.

The 19-year-old forward, availing a through-pass from Sunday darted into the left box, dribbled past one defender before driving a right-footed angular shot into the far net in the 18th minute to give Saif a well deserved lead.

While Sunday and Emeka continued to miss more

opportunities, former national player Nasirul Islam doubled the lead in the 41st minute with an overhead shot from close range.

After resumption, Muktijoddha were reduced to 10 men in the 66th minute and Saif looked in a relaxed mood. Cruciani then brought some changes to raise up the tempo again and substitute Sajjad Hossain made it 3-0 with a placing shot in the 81st minute after.

In the dying minute, Muktijoddha brought some excitement back in the game to pull back two goals within six minutes when Japanese Tetsuaki Misawa reimbursed a goal in the 87th minute with a ground shot and then made it 3-2 by converting a penalty in the penultimate minute of the four-minute added time.

The strike from Fahim indicates that the national forwards, who usually struggle to find the target in international matches, have been in good form in the ongoing tournament, with national forward Mehedi Hasan Royal and promising forward Mannaf Rabbi also finding the net in their respective matches.



## Liverpool win derby as top trio break clear in title race

REUTERS

Liverpool won the Merseyside derby with a 4-1 victory at Everton on Wednesday while Premier League leaders Chelsea fought for a 2-1 win at Watford and Manchester City enjoyed a 2-1 victory at Aston Villa.

With fourth-placed West Ham held to a 1-1 draw at Brighton they are now seven points behind third-placed Liverpool who, along with Chelsea and Manchester City, look set for a three-horse race for the title.

After 14 games, Chelsea lead on 33 points with City a point behind



then Diogo Jota produced a brilliant turn before blasting past Jordan Pickford to complete the rout.

"I liked what I saw and it was by far the best performance we've done at Goodison," said Klopp.

"We made a big step in our development that we can take these kinds of games, even though they are really important for the opponent. We can put emotions to the side. It was for sure a nine-out-of-10 performance from each of the boys," added the German.

After recent draws against Burnley and Manchester United, Chelsea could ill afford to drop points at Watford but manager Thomas Tuchel conceded they were fortunate to collect all three from Vicarage Road.

"We need a lot of points if we want to stay in the title race. We felt like we lost two points against Burnley and Manchester United. We stole minimum two, maybe three back today," said Tuchel.

"Overall we can do much better. There are some reasons -- we have injured players and some key players due to overload were not on the pitch. I don't want to be too critical. Watford deserved more," he added.

Outstanding first-half goals from

Ruben Dias and Bernardo Silva set Manchester City on their way to victory at Steven Gerrard's Aston Villa.

Portugal centre-half Dias blasted home from more than 20 metres after Raheem Sterling's cutback flashed across the penalty area.

Silva doubled their advantage with a breathtaking effort in the 43rd, volleying superbly past Martinez from 15 metres after City broke away from their own penalty area with Riyad Mahrez releasing Gabriel Jesus on the right flank.

Ollie Watkins got Villa back into the game but City collected their fourth league win in a row.

"We came here against an incredible team with quality and top players and the way we played in the first half and even the second was magnificent," said City manager Pep Guardiola.

"We conceded in the first minute of the second and it's so difficult but we played with huge personality, a really good game," he said.

An 89th-minute overhead kick from Neal Maupay frustrated West Ham at Brighton after the Londoners had taken an early lead through Czech midfielder Tomas Soucek's header.



and Liverpool on 31.

Juergen Klopp's side got four goals at the home of their neighbours for the first time since 1982, with Mohamed Salah scoring twice to maintain his electric form.

Jordan Henderson put Liverpool in front with a magnificent curling shot in the ninth minute before setting up Salah for the second.

It was one-way traffic and Everton, led by former Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez, looked at real risk of an embarrassing scoreline.

Demarai Gray pulled back a goal before the interval to give a restless home crowd some hope before a mistake by Seamus Coleman allowed Salah in on goal to make it 3-1 and

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