

# What to WATCH

## T SPORTS

SAFF U-19 Women's Championship  
Bhutan vs Sri Lanka  
Live from 03:00 pm  
Bangladesh vs Nepal

Live from 07:00 pm  
La Liga  
Valencia vs Elche  
Live from 11:30 pm  
Athletic Bilbao vs Sevilla  
Live from 02:00 am

(Sunday)  
Star Sports HD 1  
English Premier League  
Manchester City vs Wolves  
Live from 06:30 pm  
Liverpool vs Aston Villa

Live from 09:00 pm  
Norwich City vs Manchester United  
Live from 11:30 pm  
Star Sports HD 2  
English Premier League

Arsenal vs Southampton  
Live from 09:00 pm  
TEN 2  
Bundesliga  
Bayern München vs Mainz 05  
Live from 08:30 pm

SONY SIX  
The Ashes  
Australia vs England  
1st Test, Day 5  
Live from 06:00 am  
(Sunday)



## We gave everything, says Zapata after CL exit

AGENCIES



Duvan Zapata insists that he and his Atalanta teammates "gave everything" in their 3-2 Champions League defeat against Villarreal on

Thursday.

Atalanta required a win in order to leapfrog their opponents into second place in their final group-stage game, which had been rescheduled after heavy snowfall on Wednesday.

However, Arnaut Danjuma scored either side of Etienne Capoue to give Villarreal a 3-0 lead by the 51st minute, and Atalanta were unable to come back despite goals from Ruslan Malinovskyi and Zapata.

The Atalanta striker revealed that, despite the team's regret at failing to qualify for the knockout stages of the Champions League, they remain "calm".

"We are disappointed," Zapata said to Prime Video. "However, we are calm in the sense that we gave everything on the pitch."

"We are very sorry because we wanted to go through and be among the strongest 16. That's how the game went, we need to think about the [league] because it is thanks to the [league] that we are here."

"We were in trouble in the first half also because they took the lead quickly. Then we tried to attack and draw quickly. I think we played against anxiety, they are a good team who played a great match."

"There is regret for every situation that could have been done better. We gave everything. We are very sorry, but I feel the group [is] calm because we have tried in every way possible to equalise."

Atalanta defender Rafael Toloï echoed his teammate's sentiments, apologising to the club's fans for not winning the game but looking ahead to the rest of the season with optimism.

"Sorry we didn't win, but I think we gave a good response in the second half," Toloï told Prime Video. "We created beautiful situations. Sorry we didn't win, now we have to continue in the league and watch the Europa League draws."

"We tried to play the game. We conceded a goal at the beginning [due to] a mistake and then they have quality players. We played a great game. Sorry for the result, [but our heads are] held high and we still have a whole season to go."

Atalanta now drop into the knockout play-off round of the Europa League, where they will be drawn against a side that finished second in their group.



## Abahani demolish Army in quarters

SPORTS REPORTER



A brace from Daniel Colindres steered title contenders Abahani into the semifinals of Riviera Independence Cup with an emphatic 4-0 win over Bangladesh Army in the first quarterfinal of the tournament at Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

Colindres, who was in the 2018 World Cup squad for Costa Rica and was the chief architect behind Bashundhara Kings' Bangladesh Premier League triumph in their debut 2017-18 season, not only struck his first goal for Abahani but also assisted one.

Previously, the 36-year-old forward could not find the target in the two group matches despite his

wholehearted efforts on the artificial turf as he struggled to measure his shot on target with most of them having floated over the crossbar but yesterday Colindres found his rhythm to drive the Sky Blues into the last four.

"We are very happy because it was all teamwork. We are moving up and progressing forward step by step and hope to stay united for upcoming matches," said Colindres after the match.

However, it was Brazilian midfielder Raphael Augusto who had pulled the strings for the Abahani midfield by building up attack with frequently opening up channels in both flanks but Bangladesh Army managed to negate most attempts and their backline remained vigilant to frustrate Abahani forward line-

up featuring Colindres, Brazilian Dorielton Gomes and Rakib Hossain.

Goalkeeper Alamgir Hossain blocked two efforts from Brazilian duo Gomes and Augusto in the third minute to boost Army's morale from the onset as they went on to held their superior opponents for 44 minutes before Colindres brought down a well-measured pass from Augusto and broke the deadlock with a scintillating curler that kissed the top-left corner in the 45th minute.

After resumption, Abahani sent in local striker Nabib Newaj Jibon in place of injured Gomes and injected a bit more pace upfront combining good understanding between Colindres and Jibon, who came close to doubling the margin in the 56th minute after availing

a cross from the Costa Rican but keeper Alamgir had denied the opportunity.

However, Jibon made amends to double the margin 2-0 after diving head-on off a Colindres cross from the left in the 67th minute before Colindres made it 3-0 with a low free kick on the top of the box in the 70th minute.

Seven minutes later, Abahani widened the margin 4-0 when Augusto played Rakib on the right flank and the national winger darted into the box to put a nice lob for unmarked Emon Mahmud, who did not fail to head it home to complete the rout against Army.

Army played the last 10 minutes with a man down after referee Bitu Raj sent off defender Humayun Kabir Khan following a serious challenge on Rakib.

## BHF names final squad

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) yesterday disclosed a final 20-member squad for AHF Asian Champions Trophy, which will start from Tuesday in Dhaka, with the inclusion of six new players.

The newcomers are: Bilpob Kujur, Mehedi Hasan, Shafiu Alam Shishir, Sarwar Morshed Shaon and Rakibul Islam - all of whom were previously called for the preliminary national squad but could not make the final cut. However, Prince Lal Samonto made it to the final squad in his first call.

The major exclusions were experienced players like Ashim Gope, Hasan Jubair Niloy, Milon Hossain, Mainul Islam Koushik and promising Mahabub Hossain.

Coach Iman Gobinathan Krishnamurthy trimmed the initial 32-member preliminary squad to final 20 after the team suffered a 4-1 defeat against a strong Japan side in a warm-up match at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium.

Despite the defeat, Iman was not unhappy with the performance of his charges as they had only a few days' training. The coach felt the players improved as the match progressed against Japan, the champions of Asian Games.

**Squad:** Bilpob Kujur, Abu Sayed Nippon, Rezaul Karim Babu, Ashraf Islam (C), Khorshedur Rahman, Farhad Ahmed Shitul, Mehedi Hasan, Shafiu Alam Shishir, Sarwar Morshed Shawon, Roman Sarkar, Shonabur Rahman Sabuj (VC), Sarwar Hossain, Fazle Hossain Rabbi, Prince Lal Samonto, Naim Uddin, Rasel Mahmud Jimmy, Pushkor Khisa Mimo, Arshad Hossain, Rakibul Hasan Roki, Deen Islam Imon.



A Bangladesh player tries to manoeuvre the ball past a few Japan players during their practice match at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday, with the hosts losing 4-1. Both teams will be part of the six-nation Asian Champions Trophy which begins on December 14.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



## SAFF U-19 WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP STARTS TODAY

Bangladesh women's team gear up at the BFF artificial turf ahead of the SAFF U-19 Women's Championship, which begins today at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur. The hosts will take on Nepal at 7:00pm after Bhutan and Sri Lanka square off in the first match of the event at 3:00pm. All five participating teams yesterday appeared before media where Bangladesh, Nepal and India vowed to win the title while Sri Lanka and Bhutan expressed their aim to gather experience from the event, which was an under-18 champions in its inaugural edition in 2018 when Bangladesh and Nepal became champions and runners-up respectively.

PHOTO: BFF

## Hulk fever at ATLETICO MINEIRO

AFP, Belo Horizonte

Green body paint is all the rage at the stadium, where legions of fans chant his name -- there's a superhero in the house at new Brazilian champions Atletico Mineiro: the real-life incredible Hulk.

Hulk has been the talisman of the franchise film-worthy season at the Belo Horizonte club, who defied long odds to clinch their first league title in 50 years last week, with two matches of the season to spare.

The club brought the 35-year-old international, who is nicknamed for the buff, bipolar Marvel superhero, back to his native Brazil in January, signing him at the end of his stint in China with Shanghai SIPG.

Atletico Mineiro were betting the veteran forward still had some superpowers in store after 15 years playing in Europe and Asia.

The move paid off -- going into the final round of games, Hulk was the league's leading goal-scorer this season with 19, nearly a third of Atletico's total.

"He's already one of our biggest idols, even though he hasn't been here that long. He's the main reason we won the championship," says Mauricio Maoli, the DJ behind the club's public announcement system.

Maoli, 45, played a big part in Hulk fever catching on in Belo Horizonte. Hired to give matches a realistic soundtrack after fans were banned from stadiums because of Covid-19, Maoli decided he needed a chant for the newly-signed Hulk.

He found a recording from a 2012 match in which Hulk, then playing for Portuguese side Porto, scored both goals in a 2-0 win over Sporting Lisbon.

In the recording, Porto's announcer calls out, "The incredible...," and fans thunder back, "Hulk!"

Maoli remixed the audio to give it a more Brazilian feel, turning the scream into a triple "Hulk! Hulk! Hulk!" -- which real-life fans soon adopted when authorities allowed them back into the stadium in August.

"It turned into a kind of fever, like a warrior's battle cry," Maoli says

proudly.

Hulk, whose real name is Givanildo Vieira de Souza, hails from the city of Campina Grande in the northeastern state of Paraiba, more than 2,000 kilometers (1,200 miles) from Belo Horizonte.

But he has made his adopted hometown his own.

Outside the stadium, vendors sell mini Marvel Hulks sporting Atletico Mineiro jerseys at 70 reais (\$12) apiece, and fans regularly show up painted green in tribute to the

When stadiums reopened for fans, he started going to matches with Samuel, who soon rose to local fame for his fervid Hulk fandom.

Clutching a Hulk figurine, sporting a mask of the superhero and painted in green, Samuel went to four matches -- and Atletico Mineiro won them all.

"He turned into a kind of lucky charm for the team," jokes Daniel.

The Hulk mania is cross-generational.

Atletico Mineiro's all-time leading



famously jacked forward's namesake superhero.

One noted fan is 17-month-old Samuel Reis, whose vocabulary consists of three words: Mommy, Daddy and Hulk.

When he hears the player's name, the tot strikes an Incredible Hulk pose and does his best deep-voiced growl.

His father, 31-year-old Daniel, had never seen his team win the championship. He wasn't born the only other time Atletico Mineiro claimed the league title, in 1971.

scorer, Reinaldo, says signing the player was "the best move Atletico has made in recent years."

Hulk paid tribute to the 64-year-old legend at a match in November, raising a clenched fist to the sky after scoring a goal -- just as Reinaldo used to do in protest at Brazil's 1964-1985 military dictatorship.

"I'm not the only one embracing you, it's every single fan of this club," Reinaldo, who was watching from the stands, told him later.

"You'll be in our hearts forever. We love you!"