

What to WATCH

SONY SIX
The Ashes
Australia vs England
3rd Test, Day 1
Live from 05:30 am (Sunday)

DAY'S EVENT

Federation Cup
Bashundhara Kings vs Swadhinata KS, Kamalapur Stadium
Abahani vs Uttar Baridhara, Kamalapur Stadium

Fiasco over Federation Cup

SPORTS REPORTER



What had promised to showcase intense battles among 12 teams, the Federation Cup had even bestowed a dramatic string of events before it could even begin.

After powerhouse Bashundhara Kings revealed that they were to abandon the tournament yesterday, citing two reasons that concern mismanagement from the Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF) part, the BFF retreated to revert fixtures in no time.

BFF's competitions manager Zaber Bin Ansari confirmed to The Daily Star that both matches -- Kings versus Swadhinata and Abahani Dhaka against Uttar Baridhara Club -- will go ahead as scheduled today at the Bir Shrestha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

However, that effort did not

seem to appease Kings, who were adamant on staying out of it till the filing of this report. Imrul Hasan, the club's chairman, said it was a protest of a few issues and they were unlikely to budge.

"Fixture is not the only issue. We had other issues including the venue which were not solved. For the moment, we are not taking part" the Kings chairman told The Daily Star last night.

Through a letter sent to the BFF earlier yesterday, Kings had one foot at forsaking the domestic competition. They had protested against the surprising change in the draft fixture which took place on Thursday, and also against the quality of turf in store for the tournament.

According to the letter, Kings accused the BFF of 'lacking integrity' and of showing bias by 'changing fixtures to give extra advantages to other clubs'. And regarding field quality, the 'Bir Shrestha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal

Stadium is not qualified enough to run a professional level of football competition' as far as Kings were concerned.

With Kings seemingly out of the frame, the other title contenders -- Independence Cup champions Abahani, big-spenders Sheikh Russel KC, rejuvenated Saif SC and Sheikh Jamal DC -- will have a run for their money while the lightweights of Bangladesh Police FC, Rahmatganj MFS and newcomers Swadhinata will be eager to spoil a few heavyweights' party in the Federation Cup, as a continuation of what happened in the Independence Cup earlier.

Mohammedan's Australian coach Sean Lane believes anything can happen in the Federation Cup.

"I think all teams are still finalising the structure, working through their fitness levels and working out the best 11. There are always going to be surprises in these cup competitions and anything can happen," said Lane,

whose side were drawn in a relatively tough group alongside Kings and Swadhinata.

"There are no bad teams in the tournament. Every game is going to be tough. That's the way we will be approaching the competition.

"I'm happy to have all of my foreign players here, plus the five local players who were playing previously with their service teams," informed Lane, who failed to get Mohammedan out of the group stage in the Independence Cup.

Echoing a similar sentiment of his archrivals' counterpart, Abahani coach Mario Lemos said,

"You cannot underestimate any team and when you get to the knockout stage, you cannot make a mistake."

"We were happy to win but have to move on. It's important to keep the momentum and in tournaments, we have to take it match by match," concluded Lemos.

Buffon takes a dig at Ronaldo

AGENCIES



Juventus legend Gianluigi Buffon has admitted that the team 'lost their DNA' following the arrival of Cristiano Ronaldo in 2018.

A €100m signing from Real Madrid, Ronaldo's arrival was supposed to turn Juventus into all-dominant European giants, but while he picked up two Serie A titles in three years, he could not inspire anything close to success in the Champions League. Buffon, who left Juventus in 2018 but returned to play alongside Ronaldo 12 months later, has now admitted that he felt as though the Portugal international's arrival led to a change of culture at the Allianz Stadium which harmed the rest of the squad.

"Juventus had the chance to win the Champions League the first year he arrived, which was the year I was at Paris Saint-Germain, and I couldn't figure out what happened," he told TUDN. "When I returned, I worked with Ronaldo for two years and we did well together, but I think Juventus lost that DNA of being a team."

"We reached the Champions League final in 2017 because we were a side full

of experience, but above all we were a single unit and there was this competition for places within the group that was very strong. We lost that with Ronaldo."

Centre-back Leonardo Bonucci has rarely shied away from discussing the negative impact Ronaldo's signing had on the team, admitting back in September that the squad lost their desire to work as hard for one another.

Bonucci's partner-in-crime, Giorgio Chiellini, told DAZN soon after that Juventus no longer felt able to give their all for Ronaldo.

"We had arrived at a point in our relationship where Cristiano needed new goals and a team that would play for him, because when he finds a team like that he is decisive," he said.

"Here at Juventus, a programme of rejuvenation and restarting was born. If Ronaldo had stayed, he would have been an added value, but it is normal that he thought more about the present than the future."

"Ronaldo left on August 28, it would have been better for us if he had left earlier. We paid something for it, a little bit of a shock, we paid something for it in terms of points. If he had left earlier we would have had time to prepare better."



New rules for running shoes

AFP, Paris

Rules concerning new generation athletics shoes will be tightened after the Paris 2024 Olympics, World Athletics said on Thursday. The move comes at a time where carbon and foam soles in athletics shoes appears to be improving performances.

"A long-term sustainable and implementable solution for athletic shoes which balances innovation and fairness will be introduced with suppliers given time to adapt," World Athletics said.

"Sole thickness across all athletic shoes in track and field events (will change) to a stack height of 20mm from 1 November 2024." Current norms are around 25mm, meaning significant investment from suppliers to adapt.



Bangladesh team's Sayeed Al Zabir smashes one during their game of the Bangabandhu Asian Central Zone Men's Volleyball Challenge Cup match against Maldives at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The hosts, following their 3-0 win against Nepal on the opening day, notched another 3-0 win against Maldives yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Guardiola wary of Leicester

AFP, London



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola believes Leicester will pose a formidable challenge to his Premier League leaders despite a slump in form. Following two successive fifth-placed finishes, FA Cup-holders Leicester have won just six of their last 16 matches in English football's top flight.

Reigning champions City, meanwhile have won their last eight league games to go three points clear at the top of the table heading into Sunday's match at home to Leicester.

Nevertheless, Guardiola, whose side won 1-0 away to the Foxes in September, said: "Leicester remain Leicester. For me, they remain (with a) top-quality manager, absolutely, with exceptional players in all departments. But sometimes, in seasons, there are periods of highs and lows. Maybe we are used to seeing Leicester up there all the time."

Guardiola paid tribute to the set-up of manager Brendan Rodgers by saying: "Hats off to how well this club works in many senses -- recruitment of players, adapting and adjusting to many situations -- but sometimes there are periods that they are not consistent all the time."

"It happens but from one game to one game, when you see the quality they have, everything can happen."

'Managers' meeting a waste of time'

AGENCIES

Tottenham head coach Antonio Conte has described Thursday's Premier League meeting which involved all 20 top-flight bosses as a waste of time.

The Premier League met virtually with the managers to discuss issues in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the congested fixture list and other concerns.

The highly-transmissible Omicron variant has seen



13 games cancelled over the past two gameweeks, while several other teams have played with severely depleted squads. Burnley's Boxing Day fixture against Everton is the latest match to be postponed.

The meeting, however, proved unhelpful for Conte, who said: "If I have to be honest, it was a meeting that we tried to speak and some coaches tried to speak, to ask about solutions but I think everything was decided."

"I think yesterday it was a wall and for this reason I also prefer to not go into it."

Asked if it was a waste of time, the Italian added: "I think so. Because when you have a wall in front of you, you can speak and ask what you want but every decision was (already) taken."

Spurs were hit with a COVID-19 outbreak which forced them to forfeit their Europa Conference League game against Rennes and postpone their Premier League matches with Brighton and Leicester.

Bollywood replays India's 1983 triumph

AFP, New Delhi

Bollywood's retelling of the 1983 World Cup hit cinemas Friday, recalling a stunning underdog victory that was instrumental in turning India into the cricket-crazy nation it is today.

Captained by Kapil Dev, seen now as one of cricket's best ever players, India began the tournament in England as rank outsiders but ended up triumphing over the all-conquering West Indies in the final at a raucous Lord's.

The victory "was the turning point of how we saw ourselves as a cricketing nation, and... that incredible win fed into the veins of a country that till then had seen itself as also-rans on and off the cricket field," the Indian Express daily said ahead of the release of '83'.

"The next morning, banner headlines screamed 'The Cup Is Ours', and nothing was ever the same. It was a blood rush to beat all blood rushes," the paper said.

The first sign that India meant business was in the group stage of the tournament when Dev made 175 not out -- with India having been on the ropes at 17 for 5 -- against Zimbabwe.

A BBC strike on the day meant this extraordinary exploit was not filmed but hallowed cricketing almanac Wisden called it



"one of the most spectacular innings played in this form of cricket".

'NO EXPECTATIONS'

An easy semi-final victory over a fancied England side -- featuring greats like Ian Botham, David Gower and Bob Willis -- then set up the grand final against the West Indies, the defending champions.

The West Indies were the best team in the world with fearsome fast bowlers Joel Garner,

Malcolm Marshall and Michael Holding -- plus batting battleships Viv Richards, Gordon Greenidge and Clive Lloyd.

But India cruised to victory, causing pandemonium in the Lord's stands and back home.

Balwinder Sandhu, who scored an important 11 not out as last man -- and later bowled Greenidge for one -- remembers being hit on the helmet by a Marshall bouncer.

"It made me more determined... I didn't flinch," Sandhu, who helped advise the actors and director of '83' Kabir Khan, told AFP.

The West Indies had "great fast bowlers who had a 'no mercy' attitude," Sandhu said. "It was a great feeling just to get 10 or 15 runs off them."

'NEVER THE SAME AGAIN'

Veteran journalist Ayaz Memon, who covered the tournament, said that cricket was already hugely popular and that India had won a Test series in England in 1971 for the first time.

"But it was the sheer unexpectedness of the triumph. Who had thought that India would beat the world champions? It triggered so much passion and so much interest in the game in India that it was never the same again," Memon told AFP.