Star SPORT
DHAKA SATURDAY AUGUST 27, 2022, BHADRA 12, 1429 BS

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS 1
Asia Cup
Afghanistan vs Sri Lanka
Live from 08:00 pm
STAR SPORTS HD 1
EPL
Southampton vs Manchester United
Live from 05:30 pm
Liverpool vs Bournemouth
Live from 08:00 pm
Arsenal vs Fulham
Live from 10:30 pm
STAR SPORTS HD 2
EPL
Chelsea vs Leicester
Live from 08:00 pm
SONY SIX
England vs South Africa
2nd Test, Day 3
Live from 04:00 pm
Australia vs Zimbabwe
1st ODI
Live from 05:40 am (Sunday)

England captain Ben Stokes (R) shakes hands with Ben Foakes during the second day of the second Test against South Africa at Old Trafford on Friday. Stokes was not out on 98 while Foakes was batting on 61 as the hosts, in reply to the visitors' first innings total of 151, reached 308 for five at Tea.

PHOTO: AFP

'CL draw was Murphy's Law'

REUTERS, *Munich*

Bayern Munich coach Julian Nagelsmann was feeling confident after his side were drawn in the Champions League group stage alongside their former striker Robert Lewandowski's new club Barcelona and Italy powerhouse Inter Milan.

The three European heavyweights were drawn on Thursday in Group C along with Czech club Viktoria Plzen only weeks after Lewandowski, Bayern's second all-time top scorer, joined the La Liga club.

"I don't know if I grinned when it (draw) happened but it was a bit of Murphy's Law," Nagelsmann, referencing the popular adage that says anything that can go wrong will go wrong, told a news conference.

"To be honest I sort of expected it to happen. It is certainly the most challenging group. In my head I have already directed the film of how it should go and I am confident we will push through," he said.

Poland forward Lewandowski enjoyed a glittering eight years at Bayern, winning almost every major domestic and international club trophy.

Cabrera left with two strikers

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh head coach Javier Cabrera will have even less options up front after striker Suman Reza was not released for the national football team's residential training camp ahead of September's FIFA-sanctioned friendlies against Cambodia and Nepal.

Cabrera now has two forwards -- Sajjad Hossain and Matin Mia -- in the squad. He discounted the nation's top striker, Nabib Newaj Jibon.

"We have always released Suman [an employee of Bangladesh Air Force] for the national football team, even for small tournaments. But this time we can't release him because of an official requirement," Air Force Sports Control Board secretary Moinul Alam told The Daily Star yesterday.

Alam later explained that the BAF was organising an inter-services football tournament in Dhaka from September 25 to 29 and that it felt they could not do as well as they want to without their national striker in a squad that has already started training under the guidance of Alfaz Ahmed.

A BFF executive also informed that Bangladesh Navy, which will also play the inter-service football tournament, allowed its employees -- Sohel Rana and Rahmat Mia -- to join the national camp, which will start from today.

Benzema's sights on Ballon d'Or and World Cup

AFP, *Paris*

For Karim Benzema, the UEFA men's player of the year prize is unlikely to be the last recognition he receives for his role in Real Madrid's memorable run to Champions League glory last season.

The Ballon d'Or will surely follow in October, before he heads to the World Cup in Qatar with France in November and December with the aim of completing a truly remarkable career renaissance.

It is not long ago that Benzema, who will turn 35 the day after the World Cup final in December, was a pariah, frozen out of the France team for five and a half years because of his involvement in a blackmail scandal over a sextape involving his former teammate Mathieu Valbuena.

The Lyon native went on trial late last year and was handed a one-year suspended prison sentence along with a fine of 75,000 euros ($74,659).

In June he decided not to appeal his conviction, eager to turn the page and keep the focus on football.

Benzema scored an astonishing 44 goals in 46 games for Real last season, including 27 in La Liga as he ended the campaign as the top scorer in Spain's top flight by a distance.

But his very best form came in the Champions League, in which he was also the leading marksman with 15 goals in just 12 appearances.

Wearing the captain's armband, Benzema scored five times in the group stage for Carlo Ancelotti's side, but the best was to come in the knockout rounds.

He scored a stunning hat-trick in 17 second-half minutes in the spectacular last-16 comeback win over Paris Saint-Germain, and another away to Chelsea in the quarter-final first leg.

It was also his extra-time goal in the return leg of that tie that nipped a Chelsea comeback in the bud, and he then scored three more goals over both legs of the semi-final against Manchester City, including an extra-time spot-kick in the return leg at the Santiago Bernabeu which secured Real's spot in the final.

"Football is difficult, there are moments when you are dominated and have to hang in there. At Madrid we never give up," said Benzema.

He was not the standout player in the final itself, with Vinicius Junior scoring the only goal of the game and goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois in inspired form at the other end.

Courtois was also nominated for the UEFA prize, along with Manchester City's Kevin De Bruyne, but there was little question of anyone other than Benzema being crowned.

Benzema scored an astonishing 44 goals in 46 games for Real last season, including 27 in La Liga as he ended the campaign as the top scorer in Spain's top flight by a distance. But his very best form came in the Champions League, in which he was also the leading marksman with 15 goals in just 12 appearances.

"What is most important to me is to win collective trophies. If you do things well on the field, individual awards will follow," said Benzema.

This season has already started with Benzema -- who was a prodigious young talent at hometown team Lyon before moving to Real aged 21 in 2009 -- scoring as Real beat Eintracht Frankfurt to win the UEFA Super Cup in Helsinki.

The Ballon d'Or should be next, and then Benzema will set his sights on the World Cup, a trophy he missed out on winning with France in 2018 during his long international exile.

Emon surprised at call-up

SPORTS REPORTER

Emon Shahriar had learned playing football in secret, beyond the radar of his parents who even pressured the local coach to keep the aspiring footballer away from the sport. And fast-forward to present, the 22-year-old forward has been drafted in the Bangladesh preliminary squad for next month's two international FIFA friendlies against Cambodia and Nepal.

Bangladesh coach Javier Cabrera's squad selection took Emon by surprise. Primarily a winger, the 5'10" player managed to score four goals and assisted three in the recently concluded domestic season.

"Like any footballer, I also dreamt of playing for the national football team. But it has been beyond my thought to get into the national team so quickly after playing the country's top-fight football for the first time," Emon told The Daily Star yesterday.

Asked about his qualities that attracted Cabrera, Emon replied, "I played a number of matches for Mohammedan and I gave my full effort on all occasions. I never gave up despite what the margin was on the scoresheet."

Emon had stood out by intimidating the opposition backline time and again with his

daunting runs, dribbling, and shooting from either flank.

During his primary education years, Emon started off as a goalkeeper. But once he reached grade six, his high school teacher in Khulna -- Saiful Islam -- positioned him up front with seniors and Emon made the cut in the school team in three years.

Meanwhile, at home, Emon faced strong resistance as his parents wanted their eldest son of four children to build up his career in conventional means; and he didn't make life easy for himself, though. The day before the SSC examination, football-crazy Emon had returned to home at 11 pm and he was unable to pass the academic hurdle in 2017. The next year, however, he redeemed with a GPA of 3.53 and his parents gave him the green signal to play football.

Everything went uphill since then as Emon played the First and Second Division Football league in Khulna in 2018 before being a part of Mohammedan's youth team in 2018. He then joined Bangladesh Army as a soldier through former national forward-turn-coach Alfaz Ahmed.

"One-day Alfaz sir instructed me to go to a Mohammedan trial but I refused, telling him that I would not be able to play for a big club like Mohammedan. I asked him to instead give me an opportunity to play for a team in the Bangladesh Championship League," Emon said.

"I even went into hiding at my home district but Alfaz sir brought me back to Dhaka for the trial and I was selected for Mohammedan for the just-concluded season."

Man Utd to face Sociedad in Europa League

AFP, *Istanbul*

Manchester United were placed in the same section as Real Sociedad in Friday's draw for this season's UEFA Europa League in Istanbul, while Arsenal will come up against PSV Eindhoven.

United, who won the Europa League in 2017, will also meet Moldovan champions Sheriff Tiraspol and Omonia Nicosia of Cyprus in Group E.

Real Sociedad qualified for Europe by finishing sixth in La Liga last season -- they faced United in the Champions League group stage in 2013/14, while the Premier League side won 4-0 on aggregate in the round of 32 on their way to the Europa League final in 2021.

Sheriff, the club from the breakaway Russian-speaking region of Transnistria who have won seven straight Moldovan league titles, famously beat Real Madrid away in last season's Champions League group stages.

Knocked out in this season's Champions League qualifiers, they have been ordered to play home European games in the capital Chisinau -- a decision taken by UEFA because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Arsenal's draw appears slightly tougher on paper, as they will also take on Norwegian champions Bodo/Glimt and Swiss title holders FC Zurich in Group A.

All three of the Gunners' rivals failed to make it through the Champions League qualifying phase.

PSV, coached by Ruud van Nistelrooy, beat Monaco in the Champions League third qualifying round before losing to Rangers in the play-offs and dropping into the Europa League.

Zurich defeated Hearts in the play-off round.

Elsewhere, Jose Mourinho's Roma will face Spanish Copa del Rey winners Real Betis in Group C, as well as Bulgarian champions Ludogorets and Finnish champions HJK Helsinki.

Monaco will take on Red Star Belgrade, Ferencvaros and Turkish champions Trabzonspor in Group H.

Dynamo Kyiv, who lost to Benfica in the Champions League play-offs, will face Rennes, Fenerbahce and AEK Larnaca of Cyprus in Group B.

Lazio and Feyenoord were drawn together in Group F, while French Cup holders Nantes will play Olympiakos, Freiburg and Qarabag of Azerbaijan.

The group stage will begin on September 8 and concludes on November 3, earlier than usual due to the World Cup in Qatar.

This season's Europa League final will be played at the Puskas Arena in Budapest on May 31, next year.

Defending champions Manchester City haven't had the best of starts to their title defence as they are in joint second position behind Arsenal with seven points from three matches, the draw against last week at Newcastle. Striker Erling Haaland, who has already scored three goals in three games, will want to make things right for his side when they take on Crystal Palace tonight.

PHOTO: TWITTER