

What to WATCH

T Sports and Star Sports Select HD1
Indian Premier League
Chennai vs Punjab
Live from 4:00 pm
Mumbai vs Rajasthan
Live from 8:00 pm

Star Sports Select HD2
English Premier League
Manchester United vs Aston Villa
Live from 7:00 pm
Liverpool vs Tottenham Hotspurs
Live from 9:30 pm

Star Sports 3
English Premier League
Fulham vs Manchester City
Live from 7:00 pm



On Sunday, runaway Serie A leaders Napoli could seal their third Scudetto in record fashion. If second-placed Lazio either draw or lose their match against Inter Milan earlier in the day, a win for the Luciano Spalletti's side at home against Salernitana will see them move to 81 points and end Naples' 33-year wait for the Serie A title since club legend Diego Maradona led the team to two championships in 1987 and 1990. The fact that today's clash was moved to Sunday from Saturday for security reasons gives away a sense of the growing anticipation among Napoli fans. Even though Napoli, who hold a 17-point lead at the top of the table, still need a few more points to make their long-awaited dream come true, Italian media reported that the atmosphere in the city is such that Napoli have won the title already. Nearly every neighbourhood in the city has been adorned with sky blue and white streamers, flags bearing the faces of Napoli players, special new jerseys, graffiti depicting Maradona, and banners announcing the title yet to come: Campioni d'Italia, Italy's Champions.

PHOTO: AFP

City's chance to go top

STAR SPORTS DESK

Pep Guardiola's Manchester City will fancy their chances of toppling Arsenal at the top of the Premier League table with a win against Fulham at Craven Cottage on Sunday.

A win for Manchester City, now the favourites to win their fifth title in six seasons after thrashing the Gunners 4-1 at home last Wednesday, would ensure their return to the top of the Premier League for the first time since February 17.

Victory for City would also surely rub salt on the wounds of Mikel Arteta and Arsenal, who would have to wait at least 48 hours to regain the pole position as the Gunners next host struggling Chelsea on Tuesday.

City are currently on a roll, having won their previous seven top-flight games – their best run since a 12-match streak between November 2021 and January 2022.

Goal-machine Erling Haaland, with his 33rd strike for the season in the game against Arsenal, has already broken the Premier League record for goals in a 38-game season.

Another goal for Haaland today could see him match Andrew Cole and Alan Shearer, who currently share the record across the entire Premier League era, scoring 34 in 1993/94 and 1994/95 respectively when the season comprised of 42 matches, while a brace for the 22-year-old would see him own the record outright.

Chandika demands aggressive mindset in all aspects

SPORTS REPORTER

After Chandika Hathurusingha was appointed for his second stint as Bangladesh's head coach earlier this year, the Sri Lankan quickly started to work on instilling an aggressive mindset in the camp.

Even as the cricketers concluded a three-day training camp in Sylhet yesterday ahead of their upcoming ODI series against Ireland in England, Hathurusingha continued to hone in on those attacking aspects from the batters.

The newfound aggression was clear to see in the last few white-ball series, with batters willing to express themselves in the middle.

The clear message from Hathurusingha was to remain positive, which was witnessed during the home series against Ireland as Bangladesh posted close to 350 runs in two consecutive games.

It was also evident even during the T20I series against England, but there remain concerns about utilising the Powerplay in ODI cricket.

Bangladesh have managed to see out the Powerplay without losing a wicket in just one of their last 10 ODIs, the lone occasion being when the Tigers chased down a 102-run target against Ireland without loss.

The 54-year-old had also rectified



the weak link in the Tigers batting department by giving clear instructions to the openers to make the most of the Powerplay.

"I think the batters need to play according to their batting position. The openers need to bat the first 10 overs. It is important to know how we want to start or take the advantage of the fielding restrictions while the situation is different in the middle overs. Sometimes maybe four batters were dismissed while at times five got out," Hathurusingha told the media during the press conference in Sylhet yesterday.

"So it is important how you want to start. If you don't prepare accordingly,

you will get stuck in the middle, which we don't want. We want the batters to have a clear plan in mind regardless of the situation."

Bangladesh's middle-order has consistently been doing well, with the likes of Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim and Najmul Hossain Shanto, along with newcomer Towhid Hridoy, showing positive intent.

But Hathurusingha was unwilling to make wholesale changes in terms of mindset. He was keener to provide freedom to the cricketers.

According to the Sri Lankan, it is not just about having an attacking mindset in the batting department but more about instilling a positive attitude that permeates all aspects of the game.

"Our approach should be to play positive and aggressive cricket all the time. But it doesn't mean they will hit every ball out of the stadium and I say that to the cricketers all the time. Being aggressive means you have to be in a positive frame of mind. At the same time, you also have to be aggressive in decision-making. Whether it's team selection, field placements or change in bowling, I need to give freedom to the boys so that they are able to express themselves in the middle," he said.

The Tigers are scheduled to travel to England on May 1 to take part in a three-match ODI series against Ireland.

Indoor sports to have a home in Sheikh Hasina Stadium

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will accommodate five sport federations in the new Sheikh Hasina International Cricket Stadium complex, BCB grounds committee chairman Mahbubul Anam informed yesterday.

The influential BCB director, who went to observe the progress of the under-construction stadium, said that the National Sports Council (NSC) had previously requested the board to accommodate some of the other federations at the newly-built stadium in Purbachol.

"Not just the ground, we are going to have an academy building along with the BCB's own building. There is also a hotel space in the blueprint of the stadium complex, which we are going to build gradually. Apart from that, there will be a cricketers' club and we are also going to provide infrastructure for five sporting federations as well," Mahbubul said.

"The NSC had requested us to accommodate some federations and they sent us a list of 30 federations from which we were asked to select five. We have already allocated the space accordingly and included it in the drawing. We are going to provide separate entry and exit point so that there won't be any issues with our work."

Although Mahbubul did not disclose which five federations the BCB was going to accommodate, Zahid Ahsan Russel, the state minister for Youth and Sports, revealed the space would be allocated for indoor-based sports federations.

"We proposed the BCB to allocate some space so that we could accommodate some of our indoor games, which are not finding any place. If the board gives us some space, we could have a gymnasium and a vertical extension building where each federation can have a floor, (BCB president Nazmul Hassan) Papon bhai agreed to the proposal, but we are yet to decide which federations we are going to allocate. We are going to have a meeting next week to decide this," Russel told The Daily Star yesterday.

As for cricketing facilities, Anam informed that the main ground would have 10 pitches and that the training ground would feature six pitches. He said that it was expected that the pitches would begin to be prepared from next month, adding that the board was looking to bring in a curator from New Zealand.

MSC leapfrog to third place

SPORTS REPORTER

Struggling giants Mohammedan survived a late scare before notching up a crucial 2-1 victory over Chittagong Abahani in their Bangladesh Premier League fixture in Munshiganj yesterday.

It was Souleyman Diabate who converted a spot-kick to break the deadlock at the hour mark before doubling the margin in the 75th minute.

Chittagong Abahani, however, tested the nerves of the Black and Whites in dying minutes after Md Tarek's header narrowed the margin in the 82nd minute.

Mohammedan eventually earned their fifth win overall and leapfrogged to third place of the 11-team table, and with 19 points from 13 matches.

Elsewhere, Fortis FC once again emerged victorious in a battle between two newcomers as they handed a massive 4-1 defeat to Azampur FC in Rajshahi.



Upbeat girls face hosts

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will aim to enter the second round of AFC U-17 Women's Asia Cup Qualifiers as they meet hosts Singapore in Group D's last and final encounter today.

Despite beginning the campaign with a 6-0 thrashing of Turkmenistan, it is still a must-win encounter for Bangladesh after Singapore beat Turkmenistan 7-0 on Friday and achieved a superior goal difference.

The girls in red and green had twice qualified for the final round of the U-16 Women's Championship and the Bangladesh captain Ruma Akter appeared quite optimistic of their chances at progressing.

"Singapore is a good side with few technically sound players, but we are thinking of playing our natural game and leave the field with a victory," Ruma said.

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