



What to WATCH

T SPORTS AND GTV
ICC Cricket World Cup
South Africa vs
Netherlands
Live from 2:30 pm

SONY SPORTS 1
European Qualifiers
England vs Italy
Live from 12:45 am
(Wednesday)

Bangladesh vs
Maldives
Live from 5:45 pm

NEWS 24
FIFA World Cup Asian
Qualifiers

Afghan upset adds desired spice

ASHFAQ UL ALAM

A spirited Afghanistan going on to shock the defending champions England had injected a much-needed zest in the ongoing ICC World Cup.

Prior to the Sunday's fixture in Delhi, the highly anticipated quadrennial tournament was following the expected route, more or less, devoid of any big upset that would force the casual fans to take notice.

A desperate shot of adrenaline boost had to come from somewhere, and it came at the expense of the English team – who now have the unwanted distinction of being the only team that have lost to all Test playing nations in the World Cup.

Seeing Rahmatullah Gurbaz take the attack to the English bowlers up front before the spin duo of Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Rashid Khan weaving their magic to dismantle England's lengthy batting line-up had somewhat compensated for the long list of matches that churned out predictable outcomes, and the manner in which they arrived.

But that win did more than just provide some momentary excitement. It has now opened the doors for some possibilities, making the tournament more interesting going forward.

Leading up to the World Cup, England were the other name alongside India who were thought



to be a shoo-in for a spot in the semifinal.

While Rohit Sharma's India have so far lived up to the promise, with three wins in the first three appearances in the competition, England have been inconsistent.

Their tournament began with a hammering against New Zealand in Ahmedabad, a match they lost by nine wickets, followed by Jos Buttler and his troops bouncing back with a commanding victory over Bangladesh in Dharmsala.

England were expected to overcome the Afghan challenge with ease and move onto bigger challenges. But Hashmatullah Shahidi's men disrupted those plans.

The defeat to Afghanistan complicates England's road to the semifinal. England have six matches to go in the round robin stage against South Africa, Sri Lanka, India, Australia, Netherlands and Pakistan.

For a team to play in the semifinals, they would likely require at least six wins out of nine. A team can also go through with five wins but in that case the net run-rate will come into play.

In that sense, the equation now for England is they have to win at least four out of their remaining six matches, if not more, if they want to keep their fate in own hands.

The defeat to Afghanistan has taken away England's safety net and put them in a tough spot with little room for error.

The fact that England's next match will be against the high-flying South Africa, who have registered dominant victories over Australia and Sri Lanka in Wankhede, adds to the already mounting pressure on the back of captain Buttler.

Despite the early slump, England have enough firepower to string together a few victories and get their tournament back on track.

All in all, England's defeat to Afghanistan has infused a hint of uncertainty into what has been an otherwise predictable tournament so far.



Bangladesh players appears relaxed and in a jovial mood during training at the Bashundhara Kings Arena yesterday, ahead of their FIFA World Cup Asian qualifiers fixture against Maldives today.

After 1900, cricket to return at Olympics

AFP, Mumbai

Cricket will feature as one of five new sports at the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

A vote of the International Olympic Committee's session in Mumbai on Monday approved the inclusion of the game's Twenty20 format, together with baseball/softball, flag football, squash and lacrosse.

The IOC's executive board last week accepted a proposal by LA organisers for the five sports to be included.

But the final choice still had to be voted on Monday at the IOC session in Mumbai, one of the global centres for cricket, as India hosts the men's 50-over Cricket World Cup.

Only two delegates at the session voted against the new sports. Organisers have proposed a six-team event, in both men's and women's Twenty20 cricket, the shortest form of the game.

The United States is set to field sides as the host nation, but no firm decision has been made on the number of teams, or how they will qualify.

Cricket last featured at the 1900 Paris Olympics, when a team from Britain beat a side representing France.

Adding cricket to the Olympic programme is an obvious move, financially speaking.

It would tap into the lucrative South Asian market, attracting fans in countries such as India and Pakistan.

Bangladesh ready for 'MATCH OF THE YEAR'

SPORTS REPORTER

After snatching a draw at stoppage time in the first leg, Bangladesh will now eye a victory over the higher-ranked Maldives in the return leg of their first round fixture in the FIFA World Cup Asian qualifiers today.

The match will kick off at the Bashundhara Kings Arena at 5:45pm, and T Sports will telecast the match live on their YouTube channel.

A lot is on the line for both teams in the match as a victory will take them to the second round where they will be guaranteed to play six more matches. A defeat, on the other hand, will end their campaign in the World Cup qualifiers.

The first leg in Male on Thursday ended in a thrilling 1-1 draw. Maldives' Hassan Nazeem scored in the 87th minute before Bangladesh's substitute Saad Uddin restored parity in the second minute of the stoppage time.

"This is the moment to show everyone what we have been doing in the last two years, especially in the last year," said Bangladesh coach Jaiver Cabrera at the pre-match conference yesterday.

"We want to show our people and supporters by achieving an important objective. I believe we are capable enough to make it – that is the message to the players," the Spaniard added.

Cabrera, who named an unchanged 23-member squad for



the match, praised his team's fight against Maldives in the first leg and is hopeful they could go one step beyond.

"We created chances and also missed them... We are very positive heading into the game. Scoring goals depends on us. We are confident that we are going to do it," Cabrera added.

Captain Jamal Bhuiyan termed the home game as the "match of the year" and said his troops are determined to leave the ground with a victory.

"We have recovered in the last few days. So, we are almost ready for the game. It's a big match for us and [in terms of what is at stake] the final match of the year. We have to win the match anyhow," said Jamal.

Jamal also urged fans to turn up in numbers to support the team in

the crucial encounter against a team ranked 34 steps higher than them.

"It is our home ground and we have to take advantage of that. We have to have the support behind us... I think tomorrow, everything will be perfect for the players.

"It is the right setup and it is the final. There will be no excuses, we must have to win," Jamal further said.

However, Maldives coach Ali Suain said that the pitch condition at the Kings Arena will comparatively favour his team.

"Considering the football condition at Kings Arena, we will have an advantage over Bangladesh because we are a team who keep the ball and play accordingly. This is a better ground than our national stadium and it will help us play passing football."

Bellingham 'the difference' as England plot Italy revenge

AFP, London

Italy return to the scene of their Euro 2020 triumph at Wembley on Tuesday to face an England side enhanced by the emergence of Jude Bellingham as one of the world's best players.

Bellingham was an unused substitute when the Azzurri broke English hearts on home soil just over two years ago, winning a penalty shootout to extend the Three Lions' wait for major tournament glory.

The 20-year-old Bellingham is now central to Gareth Southgate's plans as England look to seal qualification for Euro 2024 with revenge over the Italians.

Bellingham announced himself on the international stage with a series of eye-catching performances at last year's World Cup.

Despite more pain in Qatar as they exited in the quarter-finals to France, a frightening array of talent available to Southgate makes England among the favourites for next year's Euro.

Bellingham is the star attraction after scoring 10 goals in his first 10 games for Real Madrid since a 103 million euro (\$112 million) move from Borussia Dortmund.



Barcelona midfielder Gavi scored the only goal early in the second half in Oslo as Spain clinched their place at Euro 2024 on Sunday after a 1-0 win away to Norway, also sending Scotland through from Group A. Turkey capped off a momentous week in which they were announced as co-hosts of Euro 2032 with Italy, by turning on the style in the closing minutes to beat Latvia 4-0 and book their place at the finals.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Swimmer Rafi sets nat'l record

SPORTS REPORTER

Samiul Islam Rafi had failed to shine in the recently concluded Asian Games but the swimmer from Bangladesh Navy set a national record in the 50m backstroke on the opening day of the 32nd National Swimming, Diving, and Water Polo Championships yesterday.

At the Syed Nazrul Islam Swimming Complex in Mirpur Rafi -- who finished 22nd out of 32 swimmers in the same event in the Hangzhou Asian Games with an electronic timing of 27.20 seconds -- broke his own record of 27.39 seconds by clocking 26.90 seconds (hand timing).

Rafi finished ahead of Nur Alam and Abu Salek Ahmed, who clocked in 28.63 and 28.86 seconds, respectively.

Bangladesh Navy dominate the standings, winning nine of the ten gold medals, while Bangladesh Army grabbed the remaining gold on the opening day.



Argentine superstar Lionel Messi is expected to be handed a starting role in their 2026 World Cup qualification clash with Peru on Wednesday, 8am (Bangladesh time). While world champions Argentina will look forward to notch up four straight victories, Neymar's Brazil will be eager to return to winning ways when they take on Uruguay in Montevideo on Wednesday, 6am (Bangladesh time) following a 1-1 draw against Venezuela.

PHOTO: REUTERS/FACEBOOK



SPORTS REPORTER
Samiul Islam Rafi had failed to shine in the recently concluded Asian Games but the swimmer from Bangladesh Navy set a national record in the 50m backstroke on the opening day of the 32nd National Swimming, Diving, and Water Polo Championships yesterday.

At the Syed Nazrul Islam Swimming Complex in Mirpur Rafi -- who finished 22nd out of 32 swimmers in the same event in the Hangzhou Asian Games with an electronic timing of 27.20 seconds -- broke his own record of 27.39 seconds by clocking 26.90 seconds (hand timing).

Rafi finished ahead of Nur Alam and Abu Salek Ahmed, who clocked in 28.63 and 28.86 seconds, respectively.

Bangladesh Navy dominate the standings, winning nine of the ten gold medals, while Bangladesh Army grabbed the remaining gold on the opening day.