Dortmund vs Newcastle United Live from 11:45 pm AC Milan vs PSG Live from 2:00 am (Wednesday)

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Barcelona vs

(Wednesday)

Bashundhara Kings eyeing first win against **Mohun Bagan**

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts Bashundhara Kings are looking forward to moving to the top of the table when they square off against group leaders Mohun Bagan Super Giant in their crucial AFC Cup match at the Bashundhara Kings Arena today.

The match will get underway at 8:00pm.

The four-time Bangladesh Premier League champions are three points behind Mohun Bagan in the four-team Group D, and a win over the Indian giants on home soil will push them level on seven points with Bagan.

However, a defeat or a stalemate will diminish Kings' hopes to get out of the AFC Cup group stage once again after having failed to do so in previous two editions. And, definitely It is not going to be an easy task for Kings, who never beat Mohun Bagan in their previous three AFC Cup meetings – a 4-0 thrashing in between two draws, including a 2-2 away draw two weeks ago in Bhubaneswar.

Despite making a poor start to the AFC Cup campaign with a 3-1 defeat away to Maziya SRC, Bashundhara Kings bounced back strongly to hand a 3-2 defeat to Odisha FC before playing out a 2-2 draw against Mohun Bagan



in their last match. The charges of Oscar Bruzon can definitely draw inspiration from their last two matches to catch Mohun Bagan on home soil.

We are looking forward to be competitive and contest for the top position of the group. We are aware of the strength of Mohun Bagan. But we are really looking forward and try to put all of our efforts and trying to get the positive result tomorrow," Spanish coach Oscar

Captain Robson Robinho also believes the match against Mohun Bagan will be a tough one but they are eager to secure full points in front of home crowd.

"Tomorrow is a tough and difficult game for us even though in the last game we played away from home, we should have availed chances to win the match. We will now play at our home. We will go there to have a great game tomorrow and try to get three points because it is very important for us if we want to top the group," said Robson, who will need to shine once again like the previous match in which he assisted his compatriot Dorielton Gomes before himself scoring the equaliser.

However, the defence is expected to be the main concern for the home team who have conceded seven goals in three matches and failed to keep a clean sheet in any of those matches.

Despite showing a lot of respect to Bashundhara Kings, Mohun Bagan's Spanish coach Juan Ferrando is optimistic about getting three points from Dhaka.

"It is an important match for both sides and we will try to do our best and get three points," Ferrando said at the pre-match press conference.

In our group stage, they [Bashundhara Kings] are the best team. Everyone knows about Bashundhara, who played the Asian Champions League (qualifying playoff). So it is a tough and difficult match but it is necessary for us to be focused on every detail because their foreign and local players improved a lot. We have a lot of respect for them but our mentality is to get three points," added



Sitting pretty in third position with 10 points, five-time champions Australia would look to confirm their semifinal berth with a win over Afghanistan when the two sides meet at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai today. Afghanistan, meanwhile, have been brilliant in this World Cup with four victories, and would want to eke out another big win to help their cause for a first-ever semifinal spot.

Afghanistan 'here to fight' for semifinals

Australia have won all three

ODI meetings against Af-

ghanistan. Two of those vic-

tories have come in the 2015

and 2019 World Cup, while

the other win came in 2012.

Australia have won three

out of the five ODIs they've

played at the Wankhede

Stadium in Mumbai. Afghan-

istan have never played an

ODI at the venue.

Afghanistan captain Hashmatullah Shahidi insisted his side still had plenty of "fight" left in them ahead of a crunch World Cup clash with Australia in Mumbai on

Afghanistan are currently sixth in the standings of the 10-team event and still in semi-final contention.

Having enjoyed just one win at their two previous World Cups, Afghanistan have defeated defending champions England, as well as Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the 1992 and 1996 title-winners, during a run of four victories in seven group games so far in India.

Few will give Afghanistan a chance against resurgent fivetime champions Australia when the teams meet at the Wankhede

But with Afghanistan pacemen and top-order batsmen, all coming into form, together with their proven spin trio of Rashid Khan, Mujeeb ur Rahman and Mohammad Nabi, the captain insisted there was more to come from the team.

"We are a brave nation and we've shown that through cricket also," Shahidi said on Monday.

"In such a short time, we've achieved a lot compared to other countries. And right now, we know the whole world is talking about our team's performance.

"As a team also, we are happy for that. But I think as a captain, it's not enough for me."

The 29-year-old added: "Tomorrow is one of the important games for us. And we will not relax until we are on the plane back to our country.

"Until then, we will fight as a team." Top-order batsman Shahidi, in fine form at the

tournament with 282 runs in seven innings at an average of 70.50, was clear what lay behind Afghanistan's impressive World Cup showing.

"Belief, hard work, and talent," he said.

"At the beginning we had the belief, but for that we have to win. So, when we won against England, the belief rate became higher, higher then after Pakistan. And we are now not looking back. We are moving forward."

Shahidi paid tribute to Afghanistan coach Jonathan Trott, the former England batsman, for wanting the squad to be "more disciplined...on the field, off the field." Afghanistan's recent performances have not only

been appreciated at home but by an Indian public whose own unbeaten side are already into the semi-finals.

"People back home like the way we are playing here right now, they are all feeling proud, and they are very happy for our achievements," said Shahidi.

"And the Indian people have given us a lot of support throughout the tournament.

"One taxi driver, who took me on rides, didn't take money from me. And that's how people give us love here in India. So we are thankful for that."

Monday's net session at the Wankhede was made even more special for Afghanistan by a meeting with Sachin

Tendulkar on the retired India batting great's home

"It's the first time (we've met him)," said Shahidi. "And we are all are excited because he's a legend of the

"We were watching him on TV when he was a successful player -- he was a role model for a lot of our players. So it's exciting for the team, to see him and maybe learn from him.'

'Extra sweet' 7th **Paris Masters** title for Djokovic

AFP, Paris

Novak Djokovic defeated Grigor Dimitrov 6-4, 6-3 in Sunday's final to win a record-extending seventh Paris Masters title and close in on securing the year-end number one ranking for an eighth time.

The 36-year-old Djokovic eclipsed his previous record set two years ago as the tournament's oldest champion, capturing his 40th Masters 1000 title and stretching his winning run to 18 matches.

Djokovic collected his sixth title of the season to draw level with Carlos Alcaraz, adding to three Grand Slams and the Masters victory in Cincinnati that set him up for a landmark 24th major crown at the US "It's incredible. To

be able to win it after challenging circumstances for me this week," said Djokovic, who had been hit by a stomach

virus that left him feeling under the weather in

"Considering what happened in the last six, seven days... this win has more weight and more value and it's extra sweeter.

"It's one of those weeks where you just have to accept the circumstances and fight to survive another day," he added.

Djokovic was taken to three sets in each of his three previous rounds but didn't face a single break point against the 17th-ranked Dimitrov.

Donnarumma to enter lion's den on return to crisis-club Milan

Gianluigi Donnarumma will be given a fierce reception on Tuesday when he faces crisis-club AC Milan at the San Siro for the first time since jumping ship for Paris Saint-Germain and becoming public enemy number one.

Donnarumma enraged supporters when he left as a free agent just over two years ago, costing the seven-time European champions a hefty transfer fee for a goalkeeper considered at the time one of the best, if not the best, in the world.

Milan have lost other players in that manner over the past few seasons, including Serie A title-winning midfielder Franck Kessie, but Donnarumma hurt the

The Italy 'keeper signed for Milan as a 14-year-old, became a first-team player at 16 and had repeatedly professed his love for the club, making supporters believe that he would remain a fixture in the way Gianluigi Buffon had at Juventus.

Instead he refused to bend on wage demands over months of talks and walked away, replaced by PSG academy product Mike Maignan who was crucial to Milan claiming their first title in 11 years in 2022.

However, Maignan's superb performances between the sticks did not do anything to dull the anger of the



betrayal, while Donnarumma has failed to convince fans in Paris where he moved after starring in Italy's European Championship triumph.

"It's tough but you need to distance yourself from it," said Donnarumma to Mediaset last month, talking about

"We're all human, obviously you read two years, Milan fans in the crowd making

things on social media, but you need to distance yourself from it.

"Mistakes happen, we're not robots but

Donnarumma was inundated with boos

the important thing is to work hard and

and whistles on all three occasions he has

played at the San Siro with Italy in the last

push forward with the team."

doubt of the reception he would receive should PSG ever come to town. Last week Milan's hardcore supporters

their feelings very clear and leaving no

hinted at the welcome they would give Donnarumma when he takes the field at the San Siro, publishing on their Instagram page a picture of boxes containing material for a pre-match display which will almost certainly be aimed at the 24-year-old.

An emotional night for Milan fans comes with the team at low ebb, with coach Stefano Pioli and the team booed off the field after Saturday's 1-0 defeat to Udinese which left them six points behind Serie A leaders Inter Milan.

"I have everything I need to do a good job and if the results don't come then it's my fault," said Pioli after Saturday's loss.

"I'll work on how we play, but we can't perform how we did against Udinese."

Pioli's team are yet to score a single goal in their Champions League campaign and have won just one of their last six matches in all competitions since the start of October, with three defeats in that period including last month's 3-0 hammering at the Parc des Princes.

However, despite being bottom of Group F Milan can still qualify for the last 16 as two points separate them from secondplaced Dortmund who host Newcastle in one of Tuesday's two early matches.

No drama, says defiant Ancelotti

AFP, Barcelona

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said there was "no drama" despite his team failing to build on their Clasico triumph, dropping two points in La Liga's title race with a 0-0 derby draw against Rayo Vallecano on Sunday.

Los Blancos spurned several chances as they drove Rayo back throughout at the Santiago Bernabeu but could not find the last-gasp winner they so often manage to produce.

The draw leaves Madrid second, two points behind shock leaders Girona, who came from behind to beat Osasuna, and two ahead of Barcelona after the Catalans' fortunate win over Real Sociedad on Saturday.

"In the table we are doing very well, we're in the fight, we're doing very well in the Champions League -- there is no drama," Ancelotti told

reporters. "We're confident, we will do things well, like we always do, like we did today."

The Italian said the result was not fair on his

team, who could not find the goal they craved. "We're hurt by the result, not the performance, clearly it was a game we deserved to win," added

Ancelotti. "We tried in every way, and it didn't

come off, we tried until the last second." Ancelotti lined up with the energetic Eduardo Camavinga replacing injured holding midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni, as well as starting Luka

Modric in place of Toni Kroos. Rayo are now unbeaten in eight league games, with their most recent defeat coming at the start of September.