

SPORT

What to WATCH

T Sports

Sri Lanka vs India
First ODI
Live from 3:00 PM
Global T20
Montreal vs Toronto

Live from 9:00 PM
Surrey VS Vancouver
Live from 2:00 AM
(Saturday)
The Hundred (Men's)
Invincibles vs North-

ern Superchargers
Live from 12:30 AM
(Saturday)
Sports 18
Olympics
Live from 11:30 AM

LEGENDARY LEDECKY in pursuit of more history

AFP, Paris

American great Katie Ledecky remains on course for enriching her greatness but admitted it is not "getting easier" after powering to the Olympic 1500m freestyle title yesterday, adding an eighth gold medal to her glittering collection.

The 27-year-old was untouchable, surging home in 15min 30.02sec, an Olympic record and more than 10 seconds ahead of France's Anastasia Kirpichnikova in second. Germany's Isabel Gose won bronze.

The win elevated her as the first woman swimmer to win gold at four Olympics.

Among men, only fellow Americans Michael Phelps and Ryan Lochte have achieved the feat.

It was also her 12th medal overall after adding a bronze in the 400m freestyle behind Australian winner Ariarne Titmus.

Ledecky will also swim the 800m freestyle in Paris in the afternoon today, with Titmus standing in her way of winning a fourth straight title.

Should Ledecky manage to make it to the 800m freestyle final, she will have a chance to climb a step higher in her already storied career as she will be vying for a ninth Olympic gold, a feat only achieved by gymnast Larisa Latynina of the Soviet Union.

But so far for Ledecky, landing an eighth gold was a reward for three more years of hard toil after she claimed the title in Tokyo.

"It's not easy, it doesn't get any easier so I do try to

enjoy it each year," she said.

"There's different perspective that I have different years. Different challenges that you face each year in training and as you get older.

"I definitely appreciate it a lot and have a lot more perspective than I did back in Rio or London."

In the 1500m freestyle Thursday, Ledecky went out hard and was a body length clear after 100m with her lead growing to five seconds at the halfway mark.

She never relented, her advantage continuing to build as she reinforced her reputation as the greatest distance swimmer the sport has seen.

The result was never in doubt with Ledecky setting the last six world records and now holding the fastest 20 times ever swum.

"My mind wandered a lot," she admitted. "I was thinking about my teammates that I train with back home."



A rivalry to spice up Olympics football

AFP, Paris

There is no love lost between France and Argentina on the football field these days and their quarterfinal meeting in Bordeaux on Friday will add spice to the men's Olympic tournament.

The last-eight clash between the rivals is in many ways exactly what was needed for a competition lacking in star names.

It will be the first meeting of the nations since Argentina players were recorded singing racist chants about their French counterparts as they celebrated winning the Copa America in mid-July: a video posted by Argentina's Enzo Fernandez featured a song sung by some members of the squad about France's players of African descent.

FIFA announced that it would investigate the chants, which targeted France's star striker Kylian Mbappe among others, and included racist and homophobic insults.

Argentina players have already been booed by rival fans during the Olympic tournament and can expect another

It will be the first meeting between Argentina and France since Argentine players were recorded singing racist chants about their French counterparts as they celebrated winning the Copa America in mid-July.

This will also be the first face-off between the sides since the 2022 World Cup final in Qatar which Argentina won on penalties after an epic 3-3 draw.

heated welcome from the French crowd.

"With everything that has happened recently, everyone in France was affected, so we will see what happens in the quarterfinals," warned France's Crystal Palace striker Jean-Philippe Mateta after the hosts finished the group phase with three wins out of three.

Friday's showdown will also be the first between the sides since the 2022 World Cup final in Qatar which Argentina won on penalties after an epic 3-3 draw.

Only two members of Argentina's Olympic squad, Nicolas Otamendi and Julian Alvarez, played in the 2022 game, and none of France's.

That perhaps removes a little of the edge, but in purely footballing terms it will still be a fascinating contest.

Argentina are chasing a third Olympic gold after triumphing in 2004 and in 2008, the latter with a young Lionel Messi in their ranks.

France are going for football gold on home soil 40 years after taking the title at the 1984 Games in Los Angeles.

Both sides do have legendary coaches, however - France with 1998 World Cup winner Thierry Henry, Argentina with his fellow former Barcelona star Javier Mascherano, who won Olympic gold as a player in Athens and in Beijing.

Whoever prevails will advance to a semifinal in Lyon next Monday against either Egypt or 2004 silver medallists Paraguay, who meet in the last eight in Marseille.

"Happy isn't enough to describe how I feel," said Zheng Qinwen after she stunned top seed Iga Swiatek in straight sets (6-2, 7-5) in Paris yesterday, becoming the first Chinese player to reach an Olympic Games tennis singles final.

PHOTO: REUTERS



Pan's 'unreal' swim ignites debate



AFP, Paris

Australian Olympian-turned-swimming coach Brett Hawke questioned the legitimacy of Pan Zhanle's record-breaking 100m freestyle world record.

Teenager Pan secured Olympic gold on Wednesday with a time of 46.40 seconds, surpassing his own world record of 46.80 seconds set in February, winning by a body length.

Hawke, a former Australian Olympic sprinter who coached Brazil's Cesar Cielo, the first man to break 47 seconds, asserted that Pan's record time was "not humanly possible."

"I am angry at that swim... for a number of

reasons," he said in an Instagram video.

"That's not real, you don't beat those guys - Kyle Chalmers, David Popovici, Jack Alexy - by one full body length in 100 freestyle. That's not humanly possible, okay," added Hawke.

The victory occurred amid a doping controversy involving the Chinese swimmers.

"I was tested after the race and we will see the result," said Pan.

Silver medallist Kyle Chalmers, who won 100m gold in Rio and silver in Tokyo, accepted Pan's performance without question.

Asked if he thought the record was clean, he Australian replied: "... I trust that he's done everything he possibly can to be there and he deserves that gold medal."

Dikec's silver with casual style gains viral fame

SPORTS DESK

Turkish shooter Yusuf Dikec has become a viral sensation for his laid back style and nonchalant attitude on his way to winning a silver medal in the 10-metre air pistol mixed team event of the Paris Olympics.

On Wednesday, Dikec turned up in a plain t-shirt, wearing standard spectacles, without any specialised optical gadgets or noise-cancelling headphones like his contemporaries and took aim with his left arm inside his pocket.

The 51-year-old, a former non-commissioned officer of the Turkish Gendarmerie, later gave a simple explanation behind his unique shooting style, "I did not need special equipment. I'm a natural, a natural shooter," Dikec reportedly told Turkish media after winning the medal.

He and his partner Seval Ilayda Tarhan made history together, winning Turkey's first ever medal in shooting. The duo came close to winning the top prize, but lost 16-14 to the Serbia's Zorana Arunovic and Damir Mikec in the final.

However, social media cared little, as it exploded over the images and clips of Dikec casually shooting his way to an Olympic medal.

Many social media users have also joined in the fun, with memes referencing popular characters from movies - calling him "Turkish John Wick" for instance - and video games.

This is the fifth Olympic appearance for Dikec, who has been competing in every edition since Beijing 2008.

Dikec has won several medals from World and European Championships in various pistol events, including gold medals in ISSF World Cup and European Championships.



Sabina, three others set to play in first AFC Champions League

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's football team captain Sabina Khatun, Maria Manda, Monika Chakma and Ritu Porna Chakma have been offered contracts from Bhutan's Royal Thimphu College SC to play for them in the preliminary stage of the inaugural AFC Women's Champions League on August 25-31.

"During the two FIFA friendlies against Bhutan last week, Royal Thimphu approached us to allow Sabina, Ritu, Maria and Monika to play for them in the upcoming AFC Women's Champions League," said Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) women's wing chairman Mahfuza Akhter Kiron.

"We initially denied to release players for the sake of their preparation for the upcoming SAFF Women's Championship, but later agreed to release them after consulting with head coach Peter Butler."

Royal Thimphu College have been pitted against Iran's Bam Khatoon and Hong Kong's Kitchee SC in group stage of the 13-team competition, devoid of any Bangladesh club.



Star batter Virat Kohli was all smiles with coach Gautam Gambhir, with whom he has had multiple on-field altercations in the past, a day before playing his first match under the new coach when India take on Sri Lanka in the first ODI of a three-match series at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo today.

PHOTO: AFP

TODAY'S GOLD RUSH

ARCHERY Mixed Team 8:43 PM	Double Sculls 4:02 PM
ATHLETICS Men's 10000m Saturday, 1:20 AM	Lightweight Women's Double Sculls 4:22 PM
BADMINTON Mixed doubles 6 PM	SAILING Women's Windsurfing 7:33 PM
DIVING Men's Synchronized 3m Springboard 3:00 PM	Men's Windsurfing 8:08 PM
EQUESTRIAN Team Jumping 6:00 PM	SHOOTING Women's 50m Rifle Three Positions 1:30 PM
FENCING Men's Team Epee Saturday, 12:30 AM	SWIMMING Men's 50m Freestyle Saturday, 12:30 AM
JUDO Women's +78kg 8:48 PM	Women's 200m Backstroke Saturday, 12:36 AM
Men's +100kg 9:06 PM	Men's 200m Individual Medley Saturday, 12:43 AM
ROWING Men's Pair 3:30 PM	TRAMPOLINE Women's Trampoline 5:50 PM
Women's Pair 3:42 PM	Men's Trampoline 11:50 PM
Lightweight Men's	TENNIS Mixed Doubles 09:00 PM