

TITLE WRECKERS PALACE PUT LEICESTER ON RED ALERT



Matches on TV

(Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Everton v Arsenal	15:45
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	
Watford v Stoke City	18:00
beIN SPORTS 7 HD	
Chelsea v West Ham	18:00
beIN SPORTS 11 HD EN	
Crystal Palace v Leicester	18:00
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	
West Bromwich v Norwich City	18:00
beIN SPORTS 10 HD	
Swansea City v Aston Villa	20:30
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	

SPANISH LEAGUE

Sporting Gijon v Atletico	18:00
beIN SPORTS 3 HD	
Real Sociedad v Las Palmas	20:15
beIN SPORTS 1 HD	
Granada v Rayo Vallecano	20:15
beIN SPORTS 3 HD	
Deportivo v Levante	22:30
beIN SPORTS 3 HD	
Tomorrow	
Real Betis v Malaga	0:05
beIN SPORTS 7 HD	

ITALIAN LEAGUE

Empoli v Citta di Palermo	20:00
beIN SPORTS 4 HD	
Roma v Internazionale	22:45
beIN SPORTS 4 HD	

GERMAN LEAGUE

Wolfsburg v Darmstadt	17:30
beIN SPORTS 1 HD	
Hamburger v Hoffenheim	17:30
beIN SPORTS	
Bremen v Mainz 05	17:30
beIN SPORTS	
Koln v Bayern Munich	17:30
beIN SPORTS 5 HD	
Hertha v Ingolstadt 04	17:30
beIN SPORTS 4 HD	
Eintracht v Hannover	20:30
beIN SPORTS 5 HD	

FRENCH LEAGUE

Saint Etienne v Montpellier	19:00
beIN SPORTS 6 HD	
Angers v Lorient	22:00
beIN SPORTS	
Lille OSC v Toulouse	22:00
beIN SPORTS	
Caen v ES Troyes AC	22:00
beIN SPORTS 8 HD	
Stade de Reims v Guingamp	22:00
beIN SPORTS 6 HD	
Olympique Lyonnais v Nantes	23:00
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	

LONDON: Leicester have been warned that their fairytale challenge for the Premier League crown could be shattered by title wreckers Crystal Palace today. With only eight matches remaining, Claudio Ranieri's side are on the brink of arguably the most unexpected title triumph in English football history after establishing a five-point lead over second placed Tottenham. The unheralded Foxes have defied all expectations to remain at the top of the table while their supposed superior rivals have struggled to keep pace, but it would be remarkable if they cruised to their first ever top-flight title without a single blip. Palace manager Alan Pardew believes that wobble could come at Selhurst Park this weekend as the hosts aim to reprise their role as notorious party crashers. In May 2014, Palace famously ruined Liverpool's bid for a first English title since 1990 when they fought back from three goals down to draw 3-3 at Selhurst Park in a result that effectively gifted the trophy to Manchester City. Then last April, Pardew's men defeated City 2-1 in south London to all but end their hopes of overhauling eventual champions Chelsea.

"Human instinct is when you're trying to achieve something magnificent like Leicester are, you're going to start worrying and doubting," Pardew said. "It's been almost the perfect season for them but it doesn't always come all the way through, that perfect run. Maybe their blips are still to come. "It has been a banana-skin, this place, in the past and it's typical of Crystal Palace. Our history is littered with upsets against the odds." Leicester have been grinding out victories of late with their ferocious work-rate allowing them to capitalize on occasional moments of inspiration like Shinji Okazaki's brilliant overhead kick in Monday's tense 1-0 win against Newcastle.

Okazaki's impressive contribution has been overshadowed by the heroics of Jamie Vardy and Riyad Mahrez, but Leicester winger Marc Albrighton was quick to praise the Japan striker's efforts. "He's scored a couple of scrappy goals but that was definitely up there with the best this season," Albrighton said. "The skill and technique involved in his finish was superb. He's been terrific for us this season and the goals are coming with it."

Dispiriting

If Leicester can extend their lead, it will put pressure on Tottenham, chasing a first title since 1961, to beat Bournemouth at White Hart Lane tomorrow. Tottenham bowed out of the Europa League against Borussia Dortmund on Thursday but, with the last 16 tie effectively decided in the first leg, boss Mauricio Pochettino was able to rest Harry Kane, Christian Eriksen and Mousa Dembele to keep them fresh for Bournemouth. Languishing 11 points behind Leicester, albeit with a game in hand, third placed Arsenal have no margin for error as they look to finish a dispiriting week on a high when they travel to Everton. Successive defeats to Watford and Barcelona have ended Arsenal's interest in the FA Cup and Champions League over the last six days and they desperately need a win to remain in the title race and subdue the calls for boss Arsene Wenger to quit. "Sometimes you are high, sometimes you are low. It is about being high as much as we can and hopefully things will get better," Gunners defender Hector Bellerin said. Manchester City would love to pile on the misery for Louis van Gaal when troubled Manchester United visit Eastlands. —AFP

ITALIAN LEAGUE PREVIEW

'BITTER' JUVENTUS RETURN TO TITLE BID

MILAN: Juventus could use a lingering bitterness at exiting the Champions League in their favor as they switch focus to chasing a record-equaling fifth consecutive title away to derby rivals Torino tomorrow. Juventus, who lost last year's final to Barcelona, were seconds away from sealing progress to the competition's last eight in midweek before Thomas Mueller's last-gasp leveler for Bayern Munich drove the last 16 decider into extra time.

In the second extra period, Bayern turned up the heat to emerge 4-2 winners on the night, shattering Juve's Euro dream and quickly refocusing the Bianconeri's sights on achieving another domestic double. Juventus make the short trip across Turin tomorrow unbeaten in 19 league games, boasting 10 consecutive clean sheets and with goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon only four minutes away from overtaking retired AC Milan keeper Sebastian Rossi's 1994 unbeaten record of 929 minutes. And with Napoli snapping at their heels, only three points in arrears, the champions have little time to mull over what might have been in Europe. A slip-up at Torino's Stadio Olimpico would be a setback Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri can well do without. "The league championship is very important to us and we have to quickly focus on the derby now," Allegri said after Wednesday's defeat. "So, even though we're feeling a little bit bitter, we have to refocus and get to work straight away." With nine games remaining this season, it's crunch time for almost every team in the league, beginning today when Roma host fellow Champions League chasers Inter Milan looking to make it nine wins on the trot. Thanks to their recent purple patch, third-placed Roma have a firm grip on the league's last qualifying spot with a five-point lead on both Inter and Fiorentina.

A ninth consecutive victory would see Roma close to within two points of Napoli, while a win for Inter would see Roberto Mancini's men close the gap on the Giallorossi to just two points as they look to seal their return to the Champions League for the first time since 2012. With 15 goals from their past five home outings, it is little surprise Roma boast the best 'home' attack in the league - 35 goals from 14 games so far. For striker Edin Dzeko, who won the Premier League with Mancini when both were at Manchester City, the match could have an added significance. The Bosnian, who celebrated his 30th birthday on Thursday, has found the net four times in Roma's past five outings although Egyptian Mohamed Salah has gone one goal better in as many games. Roma's attacking threat, however, is set to be tested with the return to the fray of Inter central defensive pair Jeison Murillo and Joao Miranda, who have been formidable when playing together this campaign. For former Roma and Inter keeper Angelo Peruzzi today's clash could "go either way", but he believes defeat for Inter will end their Champions League hopes. "The Stadio Olimpico will be a huge challenge for them today," he told Gazzetta dello Sport on Thursday. —AFP

Italian Serie A table

MILAN: Italian Serie A table ahead of weekend games (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Juventus	29	21	4	4	51	15	67
Napoli	29	19	7	3	59	23	64
Roma	29	17	8	4	61	30	59
Fiorentina	29	16	6	7	50	32	54
Inter Milan	29	16	6	7	39	27	54
AC Milan	29	13	9	7	39	30	48
Sassuolo	29	11	11	7	36	32	44
Lazio	29	11	8	10	37	37	41
Bologna	29	10	6	13	30	33	36
Chievo	29	9	8	12	33	39	35
Empoli	29	9	8	12	34	42	35
Genoa	29	9	7	13	31	34	34
Torino	29	8	9	12	36	38	33
Sampdoria	29	8	8	13	43	47	32
Atalanta	29	7	9	13	26	35	30
Udinese	29	8	6	15	25	44	30
Palermo	29	7	6	16	28	51	27
Frosinone	29	7	5	17	29	55	26
Carpi	29	5	10	14	26	45	25
Verona	29	2	13	14	25	49	19

Note: Top two qualify for Champions League, third place into Champions league qualifying, next two into Europa League.

FRENCH LEAGUE PREVIEW

PSG READY TO TOAST TITLE TRIUMPH AS MONACO VISIT

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain will get the chance to celebrate winning the French title in record time when they play host to second-placed Monaco at the Parc des Princes tomorrow. PSG became the earliest champions in French football history when they wrapped up a fourth consecutive title with eight games to spare last weekend, inflicting a pitiless 9-0 defeat on bottom side Troyes in Champagne country. That left Laurent Blanc's side a scarcely credible 25 points clear of their nearest 'challengers' Monaco at the summit and removed much of the edge from their meeting with the principality club in the capital.

However, PSG will be eager to prove the gulf in class that separates them from the rest of the country as they defend an unbeaten home record in the league going back to May 2014 and close in on beating their own record for the most points in a Ligue 1 campaign. The game is a vital one for Monaco, however, with Leonardo Jardim's side just five points ahead of Cote d'Azur rivals Nice in

the fight for second and automatic Champions League qualification. Monaco have lost just one of their last 17 league games but have drawn their last three, allowing PSG to clinch the title and the teams below them to retain hope in the process.

Nevertheless, Monaco will hope PSG—who are expected to be without Marco Verratti until mid-April because of a hernia-take their eye off the ball now that the championship is secure. "It can make a lot of difference - for PSG. The players might relax a bit or could play even better. I think we'll see a slight change," Nigerian defender Elderson Echiejile told Monaco's website. Nice are at home to relegation-threatened Gazelec Ajaccio tomorrow and by then they may have lost third place to Lyon, who entertain Nantes today. A run of one defeat in seven games has revitalized Lyon, although they were held to a 2-2 draw at Rennes last time out.