

Bangladesh go 5-0 down to Uzbekistan

SPORTS REPORTER

Dynamo Kiev star Maksim Shatskiikh and his injured striking partner Alexander Geynrikh each scored twice as Uzbekistan downed Bangladesh 5-0 in the Group F opener of the 2007 Asian Cup qualifier at Tashkent yesterday.

The home side, who came close to qualify for the World Cup 2006 but eventually failed to book a ticket for Germany, were leading 3-0 at the break at the Pakhtakor Stadium in the Uzbek capital.

Geynrikh opened the scoring for the eighth-ranked side in Asia after ten minutes and Bangladesh lost their goalkeeper Aminul immediately after conceding the lead. The injured keeper, replaced by Biplab, was taken to the hospital but he was reportedly okay.

Geynrikh scored his second goal seven minutes after the breather while Shatskiikh, AFC Player of the Year 2005 nominee, found the net in the 34 and 84 minutes.

Server Djeparov, one of the 11 Pakhtakor players chosen for the national side by new coach Valeri Nepomniatchi -- the former Cameroon coach -- added the other from the 24th-minute penalty.

Uzbekistan were reduced to ten men for the last five minutes after one of their midfielders received his second yellow card for a foul on Arman Mia.

Bangladesh, playing before a 30,000-strong crowd on a cold afternoon (8 degrees Celsius), created opening either side of the break but Arman and Emilly failed to utilise the opportunities.

Bangladesh will play their second match in Dhaka on March 1 against Hong Kong, who suffered a 3-0 home defeat to Qatar. He team will return home tomorrow morning.

In Group A, Japan brushed aside visiting India 6-0 at Yokohama. In Group E, Singapore shocked touring Iraq 2-0 while China blanked Palestine by the same margin at home. South Korea edged Syria 2-1 in a Group B game.

First ever motor sport in March

SPORTS REPORTER

The first ever motor sport in the history of Bangladesh will take place in Dhaka on March 17.

The event dubbed as EBL Treasure Hunt Challenge, organised by Bangladesh Motor Sports (BMS) and sponsored by Eastern Bank Limited (EBL), will start from Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre and finish after reaching different points of the city.

Any individual with a private car and valid driving license will be able to participate in the event on the basis of first come first served.

The participants, under the banner of any club, organisation, will be able to register their names paying taka 2000-2,500.

K Mahmood Sattar, managing director of EBL said, "We appreciate the initiative to promote safe and entertaining family motor sports in the country for the first time."



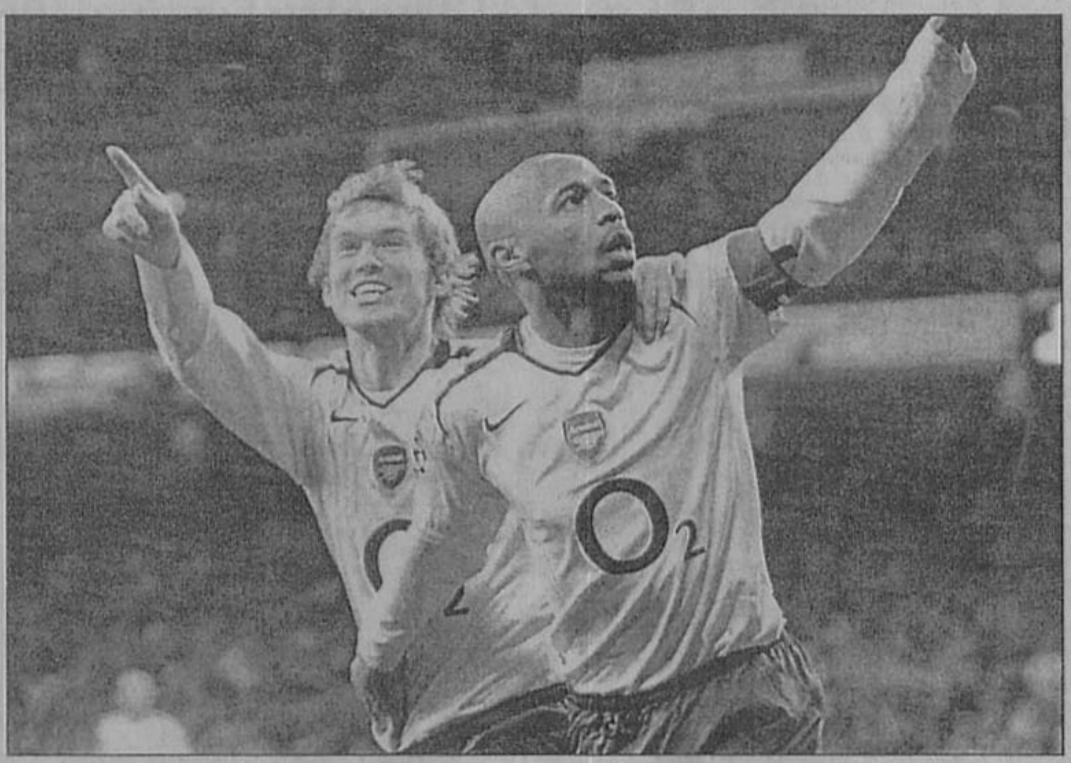
Did U Know?

Bangladesh won their first ever ODI series against Zimbabwe in 2005. The result was 3-2.



Khaled Mahmud

(Former Bangladesh cricket captain) "I think it is a great honour to quit international cricket from the ground. There is no such example in our country so I think I am very fortunate."



Arsenal striker Thierry Henry (R) celebrates with teammate Alexander Hleb after scoring against Real Madrid in their Champions League encounter at the Santiago Bernabeu on Tuesday.

Henry shows Real class

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Madrid

Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger said on Monday that he expected great things from Thierry Henry against Real Madrid and the French striker didn't disappoint as The Gunners ran out 1-0 winners here Tuesday.

Henry's goal, two minutes into the second half after using his skill to go past three Real players, puts Arsenal in the driving seat ahead of their Champions League last 16 second leg match at Highbury in two weeks time.

The goal inevitably spurred a reaction from Real but Arsenal goalkeeper Jens Lehmann and the inexperienced four in front of him followed Henry's example and showed that they were not overawed and would not be outclassed.

Arsenal defied their underdog status from the start and by the end could easily have won by two goals or more as Real became increasingly desperate to find the net.

"We started well and that may have made Real insecure. I'm happy in every department. In fact, my only regret, if there is one, is that we did not add one or two more goals," said a gleeful Wenger.

Real's defence left goalkeeper Iker Casillas, who could not be faulted for the goal, stranded twice late in the game and only the Spanish international's quick reflexes saved Real from further embarrassment.

The victory and away goal will give Arsenal a huge advantage for the return match and will also go a long way towards silencing the club's critics who have become vocal after their recent lean period in the Premiership.

By contrast, with the odds now against Real making the Champions League quarterfinals and seven points behind Spanish league leaders and bitter rivals Barcelona, it is becoming increasingly likely that the nine-times kings of Europe will go a third consecutive season without a major honour.

"But I still think they will turn up and give everything, to sit on our lead at Highbury would be a major mistake. We have to come out and score goals but we have a fantastic chance to qualify. It will be a very interesting game," added Wenger.

Wenger sprang a surprise on Real even before the kick off, naming Belarus international Alexander Hleb to the starting line up and leaving Robert Pires on the bench.

No Henry for Barca

INTERNET, undated

Barcelona have no intention of pursuing their reported interest in Thierry Henry in the short term.

The Catalan club are satisfied with the players they have at the Nou Camp and do not feel inclined to try to tempt Henry away from Arsenal, according to their vice-president Ferran Soriano.

"There are a lot of rumours in this industry. We are very happy with the players we have," Soriano told BBC Radio Five Live.

The French striker is admired at Barca, but it seems his services are not coveted at present.

"He is an amazing player. Everybody would like to have Thierry Henry in their team - all the teams in the world," added Soriano.

"But he has a team and a contract, and we respect that. One day if he is available we would talk - but not now."

Sissoko suffers retina damage

INTERNET, undated

Liverpool have confirmed that Mohamed Sissoko has damaged the retina in an eye after being hit in the face by Benfica's Beto on Tuesday night.

The Mali midfielder clashed with Beto and was caught by a high boot from the Benfica man, who was cautioned for the offence.

After being stretchered off at Estadio da Luz, there was obvious concern for the health of the Reds powerhouse, and tests have confirmed that his eye has been damaged.

The 21-year-old was left behind in hospital in Portugal as he complained of blurred vision in his right eye and needed medical attention.

Beto has already apologised for the challenge but it seems likely that Sissoko will be missing from action for a spell. The exact extent of the problem has yet to be estimated by Liverpool, so it is difficult to put a timeframe on any comeback.

Both Sehwa, Harbhajan fit

REUTERS, Baroda

India opening batsman Virender Sehwa has recovered from a shoulder injury and will be available for next week's first Test against England, chief selector Kiran More said on Wednesday.

The explosive Delhi player, 27, had been sidelined after the first two games in the five-match one-day series in Pakistan, which his team clinched 4-1 on Sunday.

Indian selectors name the squad on Thursday for the first Test.

Sehwa's fitness boost comes a day after in-form batsman Yuvraj Singh was ruled out of the opening game due to a hamstring injury.

Off-spinner Harbhajan Singh has also been declared fit after suffering a finger injury which sidelined him from the Pakistan one-dayers.

Ganguly

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Influential cricket board member Raj Singh Dungarpur, who managed the Indian team in Pakistan, was sceptical about Ganguly playing against England.

"I think it will be very difficult for Sourav to come in," Dungarpur told reporters soon after the team's return from Pakistan earlier this week.

"The young guys have come in and there is no place for him now." He scored 30-odd runs and chucked away his wicket. If he would have made 75, 80 or a hundred, it would have been different."

Former Test wicketkeeper Kiran More, who heads the five-man selection committee, emphasised the importance of grooming younger players.

Asked if Ganguly would replace Yuvraj, More said: "Besides Ganguly there are a lot of cricketers like Suresh Raina and Mohammad Kaif. We have to look at everybody and choose the best considering all aspects."

A place was created for Ganguly in the middle-order in Pakistan only because skipper Rahul Dravid opted to open the innings himself with Virender Sehwa in place of two specialist openers, Wasim Jaffer and Gautam Gambhir.

Dravid indicated after the Karachi Test that he might revert to the middle-order for the England series, leaving open the number six spot behind Sachin Tendulkar and Venkatesh Laxman.

Yuvraj, a left-hander like Ganguly who hit peak form in Pakistan before being injured in the final one-dayer, backed his former captain to play against England.

Akram inswinger

FROM PAGE 12

because he should have led the side from the front to set an example for the others.

It's visitors' night

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Paris

Three of the four away sides came away with positive results from their Champions League last 16 first leg clashes on Tuesday night.

In fact, even holders Liverpool could feel optimistic about their chances of progressing despite losing 1-0 away at Benfica on a night when goals were at a premium.

Arsenal probably pulled off the result of the night when a moment of individual brilliance by Thierry Henry made the difference as the Gunners beat Real Madrid 1-0 away.

Their inexperienced defence then held out well, far better in fact than Real's England defender Jonathan Woodgate, who further embellished his reputation as 'Mr Sick Note' by going off early in the encounter with a hamstring injury.

Liverpool's former manager Gerard Houllier enjoyed a more pleasant evening as his Lyon outfit matched their conquerors from last year's quarterfinals PSV Eindhoven in The Netherlands in the first-half and then edged them 1-0 with a second-half freekick by Brazilian playmaker Juninho.

The four-time French champions then had to hold out for the last 10 minutes with 10 men after

Sidney Govou was sent-off by the extremely card-happy Greek referee for a second bookable offence.

The other match saw Bayern Munich held 1-1 at home by Italian giants and finalists last time out AC Milan. However, the Andriy Shevchenko penalty that got the visitors their invaluable away goal sprung from a dubious decision.

Arsenal have had a pretty rough time domestically this term but like Liverpool last year they appear to have saved their best performances for the Champions League.

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger was justifiably proud of his relatively young and inexperienced team.

"We needed big nights from Thierry Henry, Kolo (Toure) and Gilberto (Silva) but the young players did well. In fact there was not a single player who did not have an outstanding game."

Real coach Juan Ramon Lopez Caro admitted his side had underperformed and let themselves down after reviving their league campaign over the past six weeks.

"We just did not play well," he said. "We were convinced we were going to put on a great performance but we hit a barrier and will have to play really well in a fortnight."

Liverpool boss Rafael Benitez was more concerned by the serious eye injury sustained by Mohamed Sissoko when it connected with Beto's high flying boot than the overall performance of his champions, who went down to a goal by Luisao.

"For me it was a game for a draw and then we conceded from a freekick," said the Spaniard.

However he had far from given up hope for the return leg in a fortnight's time.

"We know the other team is very difficult, but if we score one goal we start again and with the supporters behind us maybe we can go and get two."

His predecessor in the Liverpool hotseat, Houllier was not counting his chickens yet even after securing the excellent result at Eindhoven, who had not been beaten at home in any competition since December 2004.

"I am going to say something really banal but a realistic banality: we are only at half-time, we're leading 1-0 but nothing has been accomplished," said the 58-year-old former France and Liverpool coach.

His PSV counterpart Guus Hiddink was less than gracious in defeat and felt his team had been robbed.

AC Milan handler Carlo Ancelotti rejected any accusations his Italian boys had stolen a draw at Bayern with the penalty awarded against the German side's Valerien Ismael for handball.

Bayern coach Felix Magath was incensed by the penalty but vowed that his team would do their best to set the record straight in Milan.

'Ronaldo not for sale'

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid say they have no plans to sell Ronaldo despite media reports that they are thinking of offloading the Brazil striker after his criticism of the club's fans.

"We want to make it clear... that the board of directors did not discuss the future of Ronaldo or any other player at their meeting yesterday," the club said in a statement on their website on Wednesday.

The board analysed the financial situation of the club and also showed its satisfaction with the work being done by the team coach (Juan Ramon Lopez Caro) and the technical staff. "Ronaldo has come under fire in the Spanish media for criticising the fans and threatening to leave the club on the eve of

Tuesday's 1-0 Champions League defeat by Arsenal.

"I've never felt at home at the



RONALDO

Bernabeu, the fans have never treated me with affection," the

three times World Player of the Year told a news conference on Monday.

"The fans have never accepted me and their reaction is something to take into account when thinking about my future. I've always said that I don't want to be where I'm not loved."

There were several banners in support of the Brazilian at the Bernabeu during the Arsenal game and fans refrained from whistling him as they had done in the weekend league match against Alaves.

The 29-year-old had a quiet match and barely touched the ball as Real slumped to a first leg defeat in the last 16 tie.

His comments about Real's fans drew an interested reaction from AC Milan, whose president Adriano Galliani told Wednesday's Gazzetta dello Sport that their door was open to the former Inter Milan striker.

Tigers all smiles

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triumph in 1996, was also excited.

"It is definitely very special to me. It is nice to beat Sri Lanka at last. I am happy to see that my boys have finally implemented our strategy in the middle. If we can continue this kind of attitude, we will win more matches," the Australian said.

Whitmore agreed that criticisms sometime gave his team the much-needed inspiration to come out of bad patches.

"Yes, sometimes it helps because the boys then realise that they should do something," he said.

Sri Lanka coach Tom Moody and skipper Mahela Jayawardene did not turn in the post-match briefing.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the second one-day international between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra on Wednesday:

SRI LANKA

Table with 3 columns: Player, Runs, Wickets. Mubarak c Mashud b Raseel 2, Jayasuriya lbw b Rafique 96, Sangakkara c Mashud b Raseel 23, Jayawardene c Bashir b Rafique 5, Kapugedera c Mashud b Kapali 13, Dilshan c and b Kapali 3, Fernando lbw b Aftab 3, Maharoof c Bashir b Mashrafe 21, Bandara run out 18, Fernando c Ashrafal b Nazmul 13, Perera not out 4.

Extras: (b-1, w-8, nb-2) 11 Total: (All out in 49 overs) 212 Fall of wickets: 1-5, 2-72, 3-87, 4-116, 5-122, 6-132, 7-168, 8-187, 9-196

Super-sub: Tharanga (unused)

Table with 3 columns: Player, O, M, R, W. Bowler: O M R W, Mashrafe 10 2 31 1, Raseel 10 2 28 2, Nazmul 7 0 59 1, Rafique 10 0 40 2, Kapali 6 0 29 2, Aftab 6 0 24 1.

Result: Bangladesh won by four wickets and level the series 1-1.

Man-of-the-match: Aftab Ahmed.

Toss: Bangladesh.

Umpires: Krishna Hariharan and Mahbubur Rahman.

Third ODI: Feb 25, Chittagong.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words. Includes a solution time of 21 mins.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with numbers 1-11 and a solution key at the bottom.

CRYPTOQUIP
EU T J Q T W R G T I R F J A
UX Z B A E A K G T F F E F I Q R A X Q J
J Q E K A . E I B R A A C R C T A
T W T Z T J E X F W X Z T J E X F
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN POSTAL CARRIERS SPEND TIME TOGETHER CHATTING AND SUCH, WOULD THAT BE MAIL BONDING? Today's Cryptoquip Clue: A equals S