

'My whole world collapsed'

"My whole world collapsed. I just kept asking myself the question: Why me? I really am speechless and bitterly disappointed. I will have a lot of sleepless nights now."

--Overlooked Germany striker Kevin Kuranyi

AFP, Gelsenkirchen



**Injury time heart break for BU**

SPORTS REPORTER

A stoppage-time strike by Indian international S Venkatesh gave Mahindra United of India a 1-0 win over Dhaka Premier League and Federation Cup winners Brothers Union in their last AFC Cup Group A match at Goa yesterday.

Brothers ended their campaign with only two points from draws at home against Mahindra (2-2) and table toppers Al Muharraq of Bahrain (0-0).

The result, however, would be null and void according to tournament rules for Mahindra who are still alive for a quarterfinal berth as the best runners-up team from groups A, C and D.

Muharraq have already qualified for the last eight as Group A champions. Mahindra will qualify if Muharraq beat Lebanese side Al Ahed and Al Faisaly beat Al Nejmeh in Group D.

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**Did U Know?**

Brazil became the first team to use all 22 players in their squad during the 1938 World Cup. The South Americans were forced to deploy their entire line-up mainly as a result of their replayed match against Czechoslovakia in the quarterfinals.



**Zico**  
 (Japan football coach)  
 "I have faced a lot of criticism in the last four years but I've done the job to the best of my ability and I think you will see the best of Japan in Germany."  
 While announcing the Japan squad for the World Cup.

BARCELONA V ARSENAL

**World awaits a classic in City of Lights**



Three Arsenal fans have fun in front of the Eiffel Tower on the eve of the UEFA Champions League final between Arsenal and Barcelona at Paris on Tuesday.

AFP, Paris



Champions League final in years.

The Frenchman has seen his young side defy the odds on their way to a Stade de France rendez-vous with Barcelona, the one side in Europe who can reasonably claim to combine entertainment and efficiency as attractively as his own side.

And with each round, Wenger's belief that this could be the year for his side to become the first London club to lift European football's biggest prize has grown.

Famous victories over Real Madrid and Juventus were achieved with the help of Arsenal unexpectedly having the weekend off before both first legs.

An early FA Cup exit ensured Wenger's men were fresh for the

trip to Real while a freakish last-minute downpour forced the postponement of a Premiership match against Portsmouth before Juve came to Highbury.

Both matches effectively decided the tie and Wenger admitted: "Those are the kind of signs that strengthen your belief. It is not signs that make you win but they do offer a psychological comfort that allows you to believe a little more."

Arsenal's success in Europe has spectacularly vindicated Wenger's faith in the ability of his young players to cope after the departure of Patrick Vieira.

The former captain's strength and leadership was badly missed as Arsenal struggled domestically. But a different scenario has been played out on the European stage. Cesc Fabregas growing into Vieira's boots in midfield while a cobbled-together defence has fused into a unit to rival great Arsenal back fours of the past.

Wenger admits there were times when even he had some

doubts. "At times I really felt as if I was swimming against the tide and when everyone says 'he doesn't know what he's talking about' you have to ask yourself the question," he said.

Any fixture involving Ronaldinho, the Brazilian heartbeat of Barca, and Thierry Henry, the Arsenal skipper who could well be gracing the Nou Camp next season, would not have much difficulty drawing a crowd.

But it is the shared philosophy of Wenger and Barca coach Frank Rijkaard that has so many hoping for a classic final.

Barcelona's style, according to Ronaldinho, can be termed "a la Rijkaard."

"It's what you dream about playing as a footballer," says the Brazilian. "We are given complete freedom to attack."

All the ingredients are there but Henry cautions those who argue that fireworks are inevitable. "At the end of the day it is about winner. People said there would be lots of goals in the Milan-Barca

semi but there were hardly any. It is difficult to call but you have certainly got the players to put on a show in Paris."

Wenger believes the character of the match will be determined by whether either side manages to score early on.

"In terms of completed passes, we are the two best teams in the competition. Barca move the ball around very quickly but they also press very quickly. If we can deal with that, then we have a chance."

"In many games like that, it can be quite closed at the start but if one team scores early, I'm sure we will have an open entertaining game."

Arsenal's success in Europe has been built on a tactical shift which has seen Henry operate as a lone striker ahead of a five-man midfield.

"I think we would have scored more goals with two strikers but we would also have conceded more," reflected Wenger.

The solidity of Wenger's system

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**Argentina pull Zanetti shocker**



REUTERS, Buenos Aires

Former captain Javier Zanetti was left out of Argentina's World Cup squad on Monday while Manchester United defender Gabriel Heinze, who has been out all season with a knee injury, was included.

Coach Jose Pekerman also selected Valencia playmaker Pablo Aimar, who recently suffered an ankle sprain followed by a bout of viral meningitis, and forward Javier Saviola, who has refound his best form with Sevilla this season after two years of uncertainty.

Nineteen-year-old Oscar Ustari was included as the third-choice goalkeeper but there was no place for his club-mate, 17-year-old forward Sergio Aguero, regarded as one of Argentina's most exciting prospects.

Argentina, who fell at the first hurdle four years ago, face Ivory Coast, Netherlands and Serbia & Montenegro in their first round group.

Zanetti, 32, played for Argentina at the 1998 and 2002 World Cups and was present in most of the 18-match qualifying campaign for 2006.

He said earlier on Monday that Pekerman had called him to tell him he would not be going to Germany.

"Nobody told me I had done anything wrong but I'd known for the last week I wasn't going to be in the squad," he said. The Inter Milan player, who can play on the right side of either the defence or midfield, has lost his place to West Ham United's Lionel Scaloni.

Pekerman took a gamble on the fitness of Heinze, who has not played a competitive game since suffering cruciate ligament damage in the Champions League match away to Villarreal on Sept 14.

Meanwhile, central defender Roberto Ayala, who missed out on the 2002 World Cup through a last-minute injury, only returned to action for Valencia in March after knee surgery.

"We respect the players ... and of course these decisions are painful, there's never going to be a logical explanation," said Pekerman.

"This is the squad in which I have confidence."

"This is a top level squad with desire and hunger to bring back a little bit of happiness," he added. "I hope everyone gets behind this group which gives me hope and great confidence."

Pekerman was previously Argentina's under-20 coach and more than half of the players chosen have played in one of the teams which he coached to victory in the World Youth championships of 1995, 1997 and 2001.

"There's been a constant renovation of players and I'm enthusiastic about this," he said. The other

surprises were the inclusion of Boca Juniors forward Rodrigo Palacio, one of only three home-based players in the squad, and Inter Milan striker Julio Cruz.

**SQUAD**

**Goalkeepers:** Roberto Abbondanzieri (Boca Juniors), Leonardo Franco (Atletico Madrid, Spain), Oscar Ustari (Independiente).

**Defenders:** Roberto Ayala (Valencia, Spain), Gabriel Heinze (Manchester United, England), Juan Pablo Sorin (Villarreal, Spain), Fabricio Coloccini (Deportivo Coruna, Spain), Gabriel Milito (Zaragona, Spain), Nicolas Burdisso (Inter Milan, Italy) Leandro Cufre (AS Roma, Italy), Lionel Scaloni (West Ham United, England).

**Midfielders:** Javier Mascherano (Corinthians, Brazil), Esteban Cambiasso (Inter Milan, Italy), Luis Gonzalez (Porto, Portugal), Juan Roman Riquelme (Villarreal, Spain), Maxi Rodriguez (Atletico Madrid, Spain), Pablo Aimar (Valencia, Spain).

**Forwards:** Hernan Crespo (Chelsea, England), Carlos Tevez (Corinthians, Brazil), Lionel Messi (Barcelona, Spain), Javier Saviola (Sevilla, Spain), Julio Cruz (Inter Milan, Italy), Rodrigo Palacio (Boca Juniors, Argentina).

**Bangladesh Asiad-bound**



SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh were held to a goalless draw by Oman at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday, but the result was still good enough for the hosts to secure their place in the 15th Asian Games to be held in Doha next November.

After three wins in a row, the home side dropped their first points in the competition but the draw helped them maintain the solo lead with 10 points, one point in front of second placed Hong Kong and Chinese Taipei.

Both the South East Asian countries also won their respective matches yesterday to almost confirm their berths. Oman too stand a very good chance with seven points, four points ahead of Sri Lanka and Singapore.

Four top finishers from the seven-team meet of the Jamuna Bank Asian Games qualifying round will join India, Pakistan,

South Korea, Malaysia, China and Japan, the automatic qualifiers, in the Doha tournament.

Back to the day's match, Bangladesh faced a tough challenge from the Gulf nation to keep their unbeaten run intact in the meet although nimble striker Rasel Mahmud Jimmy made the first move for the home side in front of a small but enthusiastic crowd.

The young playmaker went close to scoring twice and earned two early penalty corners within the first 10 minutes but then drifted away from the game and spoiled the simplest of chances in the match.

Jimmy had only the opponent goalkeeper Shabr Abdul Rahim to beat in the 56th minute after receiving the ball from a Shamim Reza pass but he surprisingly made a gentle push towards the custodian.

Bangladesh dominated the first half and were on the verge of breaking the deadlock just at the stroke of the lemon break but Shabr kicked away a spectacular reverse push by Maksud Alam Habul bril-

liantly. But it was veteran Bangladesh custodian Rasel Khan Bappi who salvaged his team's pride in the match with four spectacular saves and later was adjudged man-of-the-match.

Oman regrouped in the second session after an unimpressive first-half performance, and played with 10 men for the last five minutes as Musain Abdullah got the marching orders for his rough tackle on Shansuddin Ahmed Tuhin.

Bangladesh coach Jamal Haider expressed his disappointment over his charges' performance in the match but said that the confirmation to qualify for the main event relieved him.

"Actually the boys were under pressure but now they are free. Our target now is to win the remaining two games to become champions. Oman is a very tough opponent but we missed some good chances in the match," said Haider.

On the other hand Oman coach

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Ashraful Islam of Bangladesh tries to get past a desperate Marwan Abdul Rahman of Oman (R) during their match at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium on Tuesday.

PHOTO: STAR

**Sri Lanka win a draw**



AFP, London

Tailenders Chaminda Vaas and Nuwan Kulasekara ensured Sri Lanka achieved one of the great escapes in Test history as the tourists drew their series opener against England on the final day at Lord's here Monday.

Their Sri Lankan record ninth-wicket stand of 105 compounded the effect of a shoddy England fielding display which saw the hosts drop nine catches in all during the match.

Vaas finished on 50 not out after Kulasekara, in only his third match at this level, had made a Test-best 64.

Sri Lanka, following-on in reply to England's first innings 551 for six

declared, closed on 537 for nine -- 178 ahead -- after 14 hours of resistance in an innings lasting 199 overs.

England captain Andrew Flintoff said, "If we held our catches we'd have won the game."

Sri Lanka's score was the highest total in the second innings of a Lord's Test, beating the 529 for five declared England made against them in 2002.

They had been just 62 runs ahead when pacemen Vaas and Kulasekara came together in overcast, swing-friendly conditions.

But the fact that Sri Lanka were eventually in a position to avoid defeat owed much to a century Sunday from their captain and Mahela Jayawardene, after he top-scored with 61 in his team's meagre first innings 192.

He was also a beneficiary of

England's fallible slip fielding, dropped for 58 -- 61 runs short of his eventual 119 -- by Andrew Strauss.

Hoggard finally broke a stand spanning 46 overs when he had Kulasekara, hooking, caught by Kevin Pietersen on the mid-wicket boundary.

His partnership with Vaas broke Sri Lanka's previous ninth-wicket Test best of 101 set by Sanath Jayasuriya and Dilhara Fernando against Pakistan at Faisalabad in 2004-05.

Vaas, after a brief bad light stoppage, was then dropped on 41 at backward-point by a leaping Paul Collingwood, who got two hands to the ball, off debutant quick Sajid Mahmood.

The light also denied Sri Lanka what was an outside chance of

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**Ishraq, Khadem go to Australia today**

SPORTS REPORTER

Young cricketers Ishraq Sonnet and Sirajullah Khadem are leaving Dhaka today as scholarship holders to participate in the Northern Territory Cricket (NTC) and Northern Territory Institute of Sports (NTIS) cricket programme.

The NTC confirmed the scholarships after negotiations between the BCB Game Development Department, Cricket Australia and the two institutions from the Northern Territory.

The two players will be staying in Darwin for a period of 18 weeks during which they will take part in matches and activities based on skill, fitness, training, nutrition and

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**What to WATCH**

**ESPN**  
 UEFA Champions League  
 Arsenal v Barcelona (Final)  
 Live at 12:00 am (Thursday)

**DAY'S EVENT**  
 Asian Games Hockey Qualifier  
 Singapore v Iran (4:00 pm)  
 Venue: Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium