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 Ali Mukul
 TNT INTERNATIONAL EXPRESS

DHAKA WEDNESDAY JUNE 21, 2006

Hosts hammer Ecuador

Germany 3 Ecuador 0
 AFP, Berlin

Germany recorded a third straight win to finish top of World Cup Group A with their Polish connection of Miroslav Klose and Lukas Podolski gunning down a weakened Ecuador 3-0 here on Tuesday.

Both teams had already qualified for the last 16 of the competition but Germany go into the second round with wind in their sails, and know this victory may have avoided a potential clash against old foe England in the knockout stage.

Ecuador, who needed just a draw to top the group, had not conceded a goal at the finals but Polish-born forward Klose needed just four minutes to change that, drilling in after a smart cut-back from Bastian Schweinsteiger.

Shortly before the interval Klose raced onto a chipped pass from captain Michael Ballack to bag his second goal and his fourth of the finals. He is now the tournament's top-scorer.

Podolski then struck his first ever World Cup goal on 57 minutes, sliding in a Bernd Schneider cross.

Hosts Germany will play their second-round match in Munich on June 24.

As it stands they will play Sweden but if England lost to Swedes in a match beginning later on the day then Germany will face their arch-rivals England.

Trinidad and Tobago also have an outside chance of facing Germany but must beat Paraguay convincingly and hope England help them by beating Sweden.

Ecuador will play in Stuttgart on June 25 against the Group B winner -- either England or Sweden.

Germany coach Jurgen Klinsmann showed how seriously he was taking this match by making just one change with Robert Huth drafted in for the injured Christoph Metzelder.

As expected skipper Ballack was in the starting lineup despite being a yellow card away from missing last 16 tie.

In contrast Ecuador coach Luis Suarez made five changes, omitting captain Ivan Hurtado, who was carrying a caution, and star striker Agustin Delgado.

It showed as Ecuador looked disjointed and the bulk of the 72,000 fans at the Olympic Stadium were up celebrating after four minutes as Klose, who scored five goals at the 2002 World Cup, found the net.

The German Player of the Year then scored a second close to half-time to effectively end the match.

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NETHERLANDS V ARGENTINA Great expectations

AFP, Frankfurt

Argentina face the Netherlands here on Tuesday in a play-off for first and second places in Group C, both sides having already recorded two wins to qualify for the last 16 of the World Cup.

Argentina beat Ivory Coast 2-1 and then handed out an impressive 6-0 drubbing to Serbia and Montenegro.

The Dutch won by a solitary goal against the Serbs and held out against the spirited West Africans for a 2-1 victory.

The winner of the group will play the runners-up of Group D, with the second-placed team playing the winner of that group.

With Iran having lost their first two games in Group D, Portugal will be one of the opponents awaiting the South Americans and Dutch, along with either Angola or Mexico.

The edge might have been taken off Tuesday's match, but Argentine midfielder Maxi Rodriguez said he expected a ding-dong battle against Marco van Basten's men.

"Even though we're both through, it will be an end-to-end match, though perhaps not as physical as it might have been had one of us needed to get something out of the game to qualify," Rodriguez said.

"One thing's for sure though, we'll be going all out for the win to finish top."

The Atletico player, who has scored twice in the campaign so far, added that the Dutch team possessed some very threatening youngsters.

"They're very competitive and have some big names. We know the likes of Arjen Robben, Ruud van Nistelrooy, Robin van Persie and Giovanni van Bronckhorst, but there's more to Holland than them."

"They've got some good young players too and we'll need to be on our guard against them for sure."

Van Basten will be hoping the star turns in the two previous group games by wingers Robben and van Persie will be repeated against the

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THIRD EYE

AL MUSABBIR SADI

Italy and France remain the only two previous World Cup winners yet to have guaranteed their places in the last 16 on completion of the second-round group stage matches on Monday. After being held by a spirited nine-man USA, Italy now have to fight it out with Czech Republic, Ghana and even USA in the latest 'group of death' after the tag had been transferred from Group C where Argentina and Holland fight today not for survival but only to determine group honours.

Without pressure, the two teams

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

Poland ride on Bosacki

Poland 2 Costa Rica 1
 AFP, Hanover

Two goals from defender Bartosz Bosacki -- his first for his country -- gave Poland a comeback 2-1 victory over Costa Rica in their nothing-at-stake Group A encounter here on Tuesday.

With Germany and Ecuador already qualified for the last 16 the teams were playing for the futures of their under-fire coaches and to avoid last spot in the group.

Costa Rica opened the scoring with a well-worked freekick in the 25th minute with Poland grabbing a hotly contested equaliser eight

minutes later.

The winner came midway through the second half with Poland on top after a good spell of pressure.

All-time leading scorer Paulo Wanchope, who nabbed two goals in Costa Rica's 4-2 loss to Germany

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STANDINGS

GROUP A

Team	MP	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Germany	3	3	0	0	8	2	9
Ecuador	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
Poland	3	1	0	2	4	3	3
Costa Rica	3	0	0	3	3	9	0

banglalink goal **banglalink picture of the day**



KLOSE-ING IN ON THE GOLDEN BOOT? German striker Miroslav Klose performs his trademark somersault after scoring the first of his two goals against Ecuador during their final World Cup Group A match in Berlin's Olympicstadion yesterday.

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TEAM	TIME	VENUE
Portugal v Mexico	7:50 pm	Gelsenkirchen
Iran v Angola	7:50 pm	Leipzig
Netherlands v Argentina*	12:50 am (Thursday)	Frankfurt
Ivory Coast v Serbia & Mont	12:50 am (Thursday)	Munich

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