

China, S Arabia split points

RIYADH Nov 7: China deprived Saudi Arabia of a chance to lead Asia's Group A when the Chinese team held their hosts to a 1-1 draw Thursday in Riyadh in a World Cup qualifier, reports AP.

The Saudis started on the attack and scored in the fourth minute from a tap in by Khaled Mousa.

China, aware that only three points would keep them in contention for a berth at next year's finals in France, responded swiftly and scored in the 12th minute through Hao He's header.

China continued to push on in the first half but were met with stiff resistance from the Saudis — especially goalkeeper Mohammed Duaya, who saved a penalty kick in the 42nd minute after he himself obstructed a Chinese player in the penalty area and was booked for the offence.

The Saudis began the second half in full force. China pulled back all their players to hold on to the draw and relied solely on counter attacks.

The Saudi pressure paid off when Sami Al-Jaber won a penalty for his side in the 65th minute after he was fouled in the box. But the Saudis failed to capitalise as China's goalkeeper Ou Chu Liang blocked Mousa's penalty kick, to the dismay of the 80,000 Saudis attending the match at the King Fahd Stadium.

With this result, China are all but out of contention.

Saudi Arabia, by contrast, now have 11 points and will be closely watching Friday's match between Qatar and group leaders Iran, who have 12 points. A win for Iran in Doha will automatically send them to the finals.

GROUP A STANDINGS

Country	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iran	7	3	3	1	13	6	12
Saudi							
Arabia	7	3	2	2	7	6	11
Kuwait	7	2	2	3	7	7	8
China	7	2	2	3	10	14	8
Qatar	6	2	1	3	5	9	7

Battle royal at Gaddafi



LAHORE, Nov 7: World champions Sri Lanka clash with South Africa here Saturday in the final of the quadrangular cricket tournament with both teams confident of victory after hitting a rich vein of form, reports AFP.

The tournament is the highlight of the golden jubilee cricket season organised to celebrate the 50th anniversary of

we are consistent and in the last league match we rested Sanath Jayasuriya, Chaminda Vaas and Muttiah Muralitharan so it will be a different match altogether," Sri Lankan captain Arjuna Ranatunga said.

Ranatunga, whose side's most glorious triumph came at the same venue when they won the World Cup final against Australia in 1996, said: "I am confident that we will win it."

South Africa are the only unbeaten side in the tournament with two wins scored in the most difficult conditions — fielding second under floodlights. Sides bowling second have found evening dew setting on the ground has made the ball very hard to grip and their performances have suffered accordingly.

"Much will depend on who wins the toss and who bowls last but at least we have the experience of bowling with a wet ball. Both teams have an even chance and the crowd will see an exciting tussle," South African coach Bob Woolmer said.

The two teams have played each other nine times in limited-overs matches each winning four, the remaining match ended without a result.

Sri Lanka have won two other one-day tournaments this year, the Sharjah Cup in April, and the Asia Cup in July at home.

"All that has happened is history and we will put our best, to take the cup. Our main aim will be to restrict their batsmen," South African captain Hansie Cronje said.

"We need to score more than 500 if we bat first," he joked.

Sri Lanka will look to Jayasuriya and Aravinda de Silva in the batting department with Roshan Mahanama and Arjuna Ranatunga in support.

South Africa will depend heavily on its pacemen Shaun Pollock, Allan Donald and Lance Klusener to put the brakes on the Sri Lankan batsmen.

Aravinda de Silva needs just three runs to top 7,000 runs in one-day internationals. He and Jayasuriya hit sparkling centuries in their league match against Pakistan.

Gary Kirsten is also in top form South Africa with scores of 89, 64 and 50 in three matches.

(Weather-permitting the final will begin at 2 pm (GST). Star Sports will cover the match.)

ARJUNA RANATUNGA

Pakistan's independence.

Ironically, the home team failed to reach the last stage, crashing out with two defeats in three matches. They lost to South Africa by nine runs and Sri Lanka thrashed them by eight wickets. Their only success was an eight-wicket win against West Indies, who lost all three games.

And it was Sri Lanka who spoilt India's golden jubilee celebrations by ousting them from their showpiece Independence Cup in May.

Sri Lanka will be at full strength for the final after resting three of its top players in the last and academic qualification match which they lost to South Africa by 66 runs.

The final promises to be a more even affair with both teams fancying their chances of lifting the cup and the first prize of 15,000 dollars.

"Our recent form proves that

Despite the presence of the three best one-day teams in the world, crowds have inexplicably stayed away from the tournament with only the Pakistan-Sri Lanka match filling the stadium.

Organisers have reduced prices of seats in three stands by two-thirds in an effort to attract a big crowd.

The decision to hold all the matches of the tournament at one venue has come under

STOCKHOLM, Nov 7: Four teams' tournament champion Boris Becker bowed out in the second round on Thursday, falling to the persistent Dutchman Jan Siemerink 7-6, 6-7, 6-3, reports Reuters.

Both players held their serve throughout the first two sets with Siemerink taking the first tie-break and Becker the second.

In the third set Becker produced increasingly erratic ground strokes and then threw the match away with a double fault when he was 5-3 down.

"We were pushing each other to the limit. I had my break point chances and he had his. Finally I made the mistake and it was all over," Becker said.

Earlier, Briton Greg Rusedski rose from his sick bed to produce an extraordinary display of serving in a 6-4, 7-6 second-round victory over France's Lionel Roux.

Korda in semis

MOSCOW, Nov 7: Second-seeded Petr Korda of the Czech Republic beat Alex O'Brien of the United States in straight sets Thursday to advance to the semifinals of the 1,125,000 dollars Kremlin Cup tennis tournament, reports AP.

He will face Wayne Black of Zimbabwe, who crushed Daniel Vacek of the Czech Republic 6-1, 6-2 in Thursday's other quarterfinal match.

Korda, who defeated O'Brien 7-5, 6-3, hit the ground in the eighth game of the second set to avoid a powerful overhead smash. He sat up looking pale and crossed himself.

Korda said he has played Black once before, beating him in a tough match on clay in the Czech Republic.

The other semifinal will be determined in Friday's quarterfinal matches. Top-seeded Yevgeny Kafelnikov, the only other remaining seed, plays Sargis Sargsyan of Armenia. Canadian Daniel Nestor faces Martin Damman of the Czech Republic.

The tournament is being played on a supreme surface in Moscow's Olympic Stadium.

The winner will get 157,400 dollars.

HANSIE CRONJE

strenuous criticism from certain quarters.

Pakistan's former batting maestro Javed Miandad came out with strong words.

The board should have spread the event to all cities and it was of no use to hold all matches at Lahore. Look at India, they spread their Independence Cup to all cities and earned good money," Miandad said.

Cricket officials said since only Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore has the floodlights. They were forced to hold all the matches there.

President Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari will be guest of honour at the final.

Besides distributing prizes he will decorate the past 19 Test captains of Pakistan with medals. Nine Test stars will get lifetime achievement awards.

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Uruguay have never played a qualifier outside the famous stadium, which hosted the inaugural World Cup final in 1930, and the move is symbolic of the two times champions' fall from grace.

With no chance of qualifying for the 1998 finals, the once mighty Uruguayans have switched to the jetset resort of Maldonado, east of the capital, where they feel the November 16 game with Ecuador may generate more interest.

Montevideo, Nov 7: Fallen giants Uruguay broke with tradition on Thursday, announcing that their final World Cup qualifying match will be played away from the historic Centenario Stadium in Montevideo, reports Reuters.

Uruguay have never played a qualifier outside the famous stadium, which hosted the inaugural World Cup final in 1930, and the move is symbolic of the two times champions' fall from grace.

With no chance of qualifying for the 1998 finals, the once mighty Uruguayans have switched to the jetset resort of Maldonado, east of the capital, where they feel the November 16 game with Ecuador may generate more interest.

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