

Scholes, the new darling

GLASGOW, Nov 14: Paul Scholes has endured plenty of ups and downs under new England coach Kevin Keegan, but none have been sweeter than Saturday's two-goal dissection of Scotland, reports AFP.

Manchester's United's scarlet-headed pimpernel scored a hat-trick in Keegan's first game in charge but was then sent off against Sweden in June.

He was booked after running behind the goal to celebrate his first strike against the Scots, a calm sidefooted finish after he had cleverly chested Sol Campbell's lofted pass away from the Scottish defence in the 21st minute.

The second was equally clinical, a powerful header from Manchester United clubmate David Beckham's swirling free-kick just before the interval.

Ironically Scholes could easily have finished with a hat-trick or been sent off again after an incident at the start of the second half.

Scholes collected the ball on the edge of the area and toyed with David Weir before eventually going down under a clumsy-looking challenge from the Scot.

Keegan was clearly upset that the nation's heroes had been drowned out by hissing and jeering at the start of the game, but he refused to criticise the fervent Scottish crowd.

"I would have liked to have sung the national anthem but I just couldn't hear it or pick up on it at all," he said.

"I heard it later from our fans though and that made up for it. The atmosphere was tremendous. Anyone who doesn't think this place is intimidating should have been where we were when the national anthem was playing.

But he paid lavish tribute to Scholes. "His goals were fantastic," said Keegan. "The little fellow is a wonderful player. Sometimes it might seem he gets lost at Manchester United on the outside but in the dressing room

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England almost there



GLASGOW, Nov 14: England are on the verge of qualifying for next year's European Championship after their 2-0 success over Scotland at Hampden Park on Saturday in the first leg of their play-off, reports AFP.

Scotland now almost certainly have to score three times at Wembley in Wednesday's return to undo the damage inflicted by Paul Scholes' two first-half strikes for England.

The omens are not good, with Scotland having failed to score in their last five games against their oldest foes. In fact they have managed just three goals in their last 10 games against England.

The Scots have a mountain to climb but they've got enough of those here and if anybody could think they could do it they can," said England coach Kevin Keegan.

"It was a good game. We had goals in us they played well and hit the bar. In the history of England v Scotland it was probably one of the better games."

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they see him as a key player as I do.

The red-headed forward sidefooted the first after 21 minutes and headed the second three minutes before the interval to decide a hotly-anticipated match which had brought the two nations to a virtual standstill.

England's pre-match rendition of God Save the Queen was inaudible above a deafening din of whistling and booing by the Scottish supporters in 52,000 crowd as the fans relished the chance to express their prejudice in a match which has only

three minutes before the interval. David Beckham swung over a free-kick and Scholes stole an unnoticed to power a fine header past Sullivan.

Again Scotland almost scored straight after conceding and Billy Dodds was unlucky to see his lofted effort rebound off the underside of Seaman's bar.

Scholes started the second-half as he finished the first and was unlucky not to be awarded a penalty when he tricked David Weir into a rash tackle.

Scotland dominated possession for long periods thereafter

but rarely threatened to score against a well-organised England defence.

Scotland coach Craig Brown said: "I think the result flattered England but sloppy defending cost us both goals. But we are in touch and we feel we can always score away from home."

"We're 2-0 down and we have to score early. I am sure we are capable of getting a goal or two as our record away from home is good."

"We've managed to get goals against the likes of France, Germany, the Czech Republic and even Brazil, so we can do it."

England's hero Paul Scholes (C) being congratulated by teammate Michael Owen (L) after England's second goal against Scotland during their Euro 2000 play-off first leg encounter at Hampden Park. —AFP photo

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RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Collated Euro 2000 qualifier first leg results on Saturday.

At Glasgow, Scotland Scotland 0 England 2 (Scholes 21, 42)

At Ljubljana, Slovenia Slovenia 2 (Zahovic 53, Acimovic 84) Ukraine 1 (Shevchenko 33)

At Ramat Gan, Israel Israel 0 Denmark 5 (Tomasson 23, Toffing 66, Jorgensen 69, B Nielsen 72)

At Dublin, Ireland Republic of Ireland 1 (Robbie Keane 79) Turkey 1 (Tayfur 83-pen)

Slovenia prove a point



LJUBLJANA, Nov 14: Milenko Acimovic hit an opportunistic late winner for rank outsiders Slovenia who beat nine-man Ukraine 2-1 here on Saturday to leave them dreaming of qualifying for Euro 2000.

Ukraine's super-striker Andriy Shevchenko (L) closes in as teammate Sergej Kanadaurov is felled near the Slovenia goal during their Euro 2000 play-off at Ljubljana on November 13. —AFP photo

Ukraine, one of Europe's top teams, were given a lesson by lowly Slovenia, the lowest world-ranked team of the eight play-off candidates at 52. Wednesday's second leg in Kyiv is now finely balanced when it had been expected it would be a formality for Ukraine.

Olympiakos striker Zlatko Zahovic replied to the first half goal of Ukraine's AC Milan star Andriy Shevchenko before a 50 metre shot by Acimovic in the closing minutes settled the issue.

Dmitri Parfintov, in for injured captain Oleg Luzhny, was handed his marching orders for his second yellow card with half an hour to go, meaning Ukraine have a real headache for the right back spot in the return with Parfintov suspended and Luzhny likely still injured.

Slovenia only had one injury doubt and second-choice keeper Mladen Dabanovic was

finally preferred to thigh victim Marko Simeunovic who has not played the last three games for his club Maribor. Simeunovic was, curiously, on the substitutes bench however.

For Ukraine, Luzhny did not start following his groin problem which dates back to Arsenal's European Champions League match with Aik Solna 11 days ago, leaving the ill-fated Parfintov to take his place.

Werder Bremen midfielder Yuri Maximov did not even travel after fracturing his arm in his last club game.

A Zlatko Zahovic freekick in the first minute was headed away to safety before an opening spell where Slovenia, harrying and using physical tactics against technically superior opponents, were on top.

A clear-cut chance, however, did not crop up for either side in the first 15 minutes where entertainment was not at a premium.

Aleksander Knavs, who plays for FC Tirol in Austria, was handed the first yellow card of the match but Shevchenko's ensuing freekick from 25 metres came to nothing.

Shevchenko, who continually looked as if he might do something decisive, was felled on the half hour by Zeljko Milinovic who just clipped the Ukrainian's ankles but it was not long before he put Ukraine into the lead.

Following a backheel,

Luis Enrique flashed a left-footed shot just wide after being teed up by Morientes after three minutes.

Morientes then combined with Raul on the edge of the Brazilian area. Raul back-heeled to Joseba Etxebarria but the Basque's shot was comfortably held by Marcos.

Brazil were sitting back and looking to hit on the break but neither Rivaldo nor Elber, for all their strong running, could find the final ball.

Morientes was then guilty of an astonishing double miss as twice in the space of five minutes he missed free headers in front of goal.

Morientes has strong claims for a penalty (turned down at the start of the second half when he went down under a combined challenge from Cafu and Antonio Carlos).

The pace of the game dipped sharply thereafter, however, as Brazil dropped back still further.

LINEUPS

SPAIN: Molina; Michel Salgado, Abelardo, Peco, Sergi; Etxebarria (Munitis, 67); Guardiola, Valeron (Angonga, 87); Luis Enrique (Mendieta, 87); Raul (Alfonso, 85) Morientes (67).

BRAZIL: Marcos; Cafu, Antonio Carlos, Aldair, Roberto Carlos; Marcos Assuncao, Emerson, Rivaldo (Ze Elias, 90), Ze Roberto (Giovanni, 69), Elber y Anderson (Lardel, 66).

Kuwait claim Olympic berth

HONG KONG, Nov 14: Kuwait took the third and final Asian qualifying place at the 2000 Sydney Olympics soccer tournament with a 2-1 win over Qatar in Doha today, reports Reuters.

Two goals by Hamad Al Tayyar saw the Kuwaitis qualify for the Games for the third time — they appeared in 1980 and 1992 — as they topped group A ahead of the Qataris and Saudi Arabia.

Kuwait joined World Cup 2002-co-hosts Japan and South Korea in reaching the Olympics, their qualification underlining the nation's re-emergence as one of powers of Asian football.

Their full national team won the silver medal at the Asian Games in Thailand in December.

Qatar needed to defeat Kuwait by five goals to reach their first Olympics since 1984 but Al Tayyar made that mission impossible after just 18 minutes.

Adel Jodoua Ali Pulled Qatar level but Al Tayyar scored again 19 minutes into the second half to put the issue beyond doubt.

Japan, who had already qualified after defeating Kazakhstan 3-1 in Tokyo last weekend, underlined their supremacy in group C with a 6-0 trouncing of Thailand in Bangkok to leave Philippe Trossier's side with a 100 per cent qualifying record.

Tomoyuki Hirase scored twice.

South Korea, who like Japan had already qualified after group B rivals China lost to Bahrain, beat Bahrain 2-1 in Seoul with goals from Kim Jung and Park Jin-sop. They finished the qualifying tournament unbeaten.

World youth soccer roundup

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand, Nov 14: Waleed Rasoul scored on a penalty in the 14th minute as Qatar opened up Group D of the World Under-17 Soccer Championship with a 2-1 win over Burkina Faso on Sunday, reports AP.

It was the first win of the tournament for the Middle East country, who lost 2-0 to Paraguay on Friday.

In Group C Matches Sunday, Australia beat Germany 2-1 and Brazil and Mali played to a scoreless draw, the second in a row for Mali. Jamaica played Paraguay in a later Group D match.

Qatar dominated from the start and went ahead on the well-taken penalty from Rasoul, who celebrated with somersaults in front of the crowd of about 5,000 at Dunedin. Twenty minutes later, he made it 2-0 after some key leadup work from forward Bilal Abuhamda.

There was a controversial finish to the first half, when Burkina Faso striker Djibril Compaore was sent off for allegedly kicking an opponent on the ground.

Midfielder Ibrahim Kabore raised Burkina Faso's hopes with a stunning goal from a free kick early in the second half but Qatar was strong enough to hold on for the win.

Wayne Srjoc and Mark Byrnes scored second-half goals five minutes apart in Australia's win over Germany.

At QEII Stadium in Christchurch, Leonard Haas gave Germany the lead in the ninth minute before Srjoc equalized for Australia. In the 65th minute and Byrnes scored the winner and the 70th.

Israel mauled Danes virtually assured

RAMAT GAN, Israel, Nov 15: Denmark thrashed 10-man Israel 5-0 in a play-off here on Saturday to surely make Wednesday's second leg in Copenhagen a formality for qualification through to the Euro 2000 finals, reports AFP.

The 43,000 spectators at the Ramat Gan stadium saw a comprehensive display of attacking football culminating in goals for Jon Dahl Tomasson (2), Stig Toffing, Martin Jorgensen and finally Brian Steen Nielsen.

Israel's Haim Revivo was, meanwhile, sent off in the 58th minute for a reckless challenge when the home side were two goals adrift.

Denmark will not have forgotten the last time they qualified after being group runners-up in 1992, they replaced Yugoslavia because of the war in the Balkans and became surprising yet popular winners.

Tomasson put the visitors into a comfortable lead at the break, scoring in the second and 35th minutes.

However, it was not until Revivo was dismissed by English referee David Elleray that Denmark started to turn the match into a goal spree.

Toffing hit a freekick around the defensive wall to score in the 66th minute for their third.

Jorgensen scored a spectacular goal for their fourth from a free kick way out on the left. The ball came right over the area to Jorgensen on the right who volleyed the ball crisply home in the 69th minute.

Nielsen gave them their fifth with a well struck left foot shot which sailed in off the left hand post.

Meanwhile, representatives of the Palestinian Football Federation attended the match after accepting an invitation from Israeli officials.

Precious away goal for Turkey



DUBLIN, Nov 14: A penalty seven minutes from time by Tayfur Havutcu earned Turkey a 1-1 draw with the Republic of Ireland in the first leg of their Euro 2000 play-off at Lansdowne Road on Saturday, reports AFP.

Tayfur converted from the spot after Lee Carsley was penalised for handball to cancel out Robbie Keane's opener for the Republic four minutes earlier.

It was a night of frustration for Mick McCarthy's side, who will now travel to Bursa on Wednesday for the return leg as underdogs.

The visitors' goalkeeper Rustu defied an early Irish bombardment and helped build the base for his side's lightback after a grilling in the first 20 minutes.

Ireland suffered a shock before kick-off when it was announced Niall Quinn had pulled out of the match after damaging his neck in training, to be replaced by Nancy forward Cascarino who was winning his 87th cap.

There was a distinctly subdued feeling as the players lined up to observe a minute's silence before the start in respect of the latest Turkish earthquake victims.

But the Republic were up for business right from the first whistle and forced the first corner after less than 40 seconds when Kevin Kilbane, fed by Rory Delap, tried a curler from the edge of the area. Rustu set the tone for the first half, tipping the effort over at full stretch.

Within two minutes Robbie Keane was testing Rustu again with a firm, low drive from 18 metres. Then Roy Keane burst through on the right and just failed to pick out Kilbane with his low cross to the far post.

When Turkey's 26-goal marksman Hakan Sukur tried to lift them with an individual run both Roy Keane and Carsley pounced on him to curb the threat.

The Republic nearly paid the price for a lack of concentration on the half-hour, however.

Turkey were controlling possession though and the Lansdowne Road crowd were subdued until midway through the second half Rustu went down theatrically after a clash with Robbie Keane, prompting

—AFP photo

against Northern Ireland in the qualifiers, in place of Umit for the second half — and he immediately posed a powerful threat.

The talented Sergen Yalcin released a superb ball through the middle in the 48th minute, and Unsal drove over the angle of post and bar as Carr's desperate challenge came in.

Then Arif hit a low drive from the edge of the area at Kelly, and Ireland were struggling to retain their grip.