



PHOTO: INTERNET
Club America's Dulio Davino (bottom) blocks a shot attempt by Chelsea striker Andriy Shevchenko during the first half of Chelsea's opening friendly of the US tour in California on Saturday.

Chelsea's winning start to US tour

Football

AFP, Stanford

Chelsea had goals from captain John Terry and new signing Florent Malouda as the English Premiership club kicked off a pre-season US tour with a 2-1 victory over Club America of Mexico on Saturday.

Terry headed home the winner in the 83rd minute after Malouda scored the equaliser in the 74th.

Club America had gone ahead in the third minute as the Mexican side turned in a solid performance in front of a crowd that included an enthusiastic group of their fans as well as a large contingent of Chelsea supporters.

The match was the first stop on Chelsea's US Tour, which will see the team head back down to southern California to face South Korea's Samsung Bluewings on Tuesday at the Home Depot Centre in Los Angeles -- home of the Los Angeles Galaxy and their

new star David Beckham. Former England captain Beckham is expected to make his Galaxy debut when the Major League Soccer team take on Chelsea on Saturday.

Mosqued, 22, opened the scoring with a lazy shot that deflected off Terry and caught Chelsea keeper Petr Cech on the hop.

Chelsea, playing their first pre-season game after arriving in Los Angeles on Tuesday, struggled to find a rhythm early, and coach

Jose Mourinho made nine substitutions at half-time.

They pulled level when Club America keeper Armando Navarrete dropped a cross by Sam Hutchinson right on Malouda's foot.

French international Malouda, whose transfer from Lyon to Chelsea was confirmed on Tuesday, deftly slotted the ball home.

Terry sealed the victory with his header off Malouda's free-kick.

Shatskikh drubs Malaysia

AFP, Kuala Lumpur



Man-of-the-match Maksim Shatskikh struck twice as Uzbekistan hammered Malaysia 5-0 on Saturday to leave the Asian Cup co-hosts with no realistic hope of reaching the knock-out rounds.

Timur Kapadze and Aziz Ibragimov also weighed in alongside an Ulugbek Bakaev penalty to leave Malaysia rock-bottom of Group C with no points from two matches.

Malaysia, thrashed 5-1 by China in their first outing, need to beat triple champions Iran by a large margin and hope other results go their way if they are to qualify for the last 16.

Uzbekistan kept up the pressure on the top two, who play on Sunday, and served notice to China ahead of their crunch final group match next week.

"We never expected to win 5-0,

more like 4-0," said Uzbek coach Rauf Iniliev.

"We're happy but the score is not important. What's important is we showed how we can play, we won and we earned our three points."

Both sides made wholesale changes but Malaysia struggled even to touch the ball in the opening minutes and it was no surprise when Uzbekistan opened the scoring early on.

Dynamo Kiev striker Shatskikh, returning from suspension, planted the simplest of headers past goalkeeper Aziz Kadir on 10 minutes after Server Djeparov's floated free-kick was allowed to bounce in the box.

Malaysia, the tournament's lowest ranked team who were lampooned by media after the China loss, at least showed some fight with Hairuddin Omar unlucky to be given offside and Shahrulizam Mustapha's goal-bound shot nudged wide.

But Kapadze put paid to their hopes with a contender for goal of

the tournament near the half-hour mark.

Kapadze, an ever-present at the last tournament in 2004, wrong-footed Khairennismam Hussain before shepherding the bouncing ball past three defenders and finishing sharply with his left foot.

Hapless keeper Aziz only had himself to blame for Uzbekistan's third when he upended the on-rushing Bakaev in first-half injury time. Bakaev coolly slotted the penalty into the centre of the Malaysian goal.

After the break Shatskikh and substitute Ibragimov both went close before Malaysia's Indra Putra made space with a deft flick but curled his shot wide.

Djeparov then thundered a shot against the bar before Uzbekistan twisted the knife with a late goal flurry.

Ibragimov turned in Pavel Solomin's cross on 85 minutes to make it four before Shatskikh rounded off a neat passing move to complete the rout. Aziz made a smart stop to prevent Djeparov

from making it six.

"We could have had more but it's very difficult to play in this climate," commented Shatskikh, who only arrived on Wednesday from a training camp in Austria.

Malaysia coach Norizan Bakar had little to say after a second embarrassing reverse which highlighted contrasting fortunes with fellow hosts Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam.

"We tried to correct what went wrong against China but unfortunately it just didn't go to plan," said Norizan.

"Uzbekistan are a more physical team and we couldn't take our chances. I'm not happy with the result."

Malaysia are a former force in regional football, qualifying for the 1972 and 1980 Olympics, but are playing their first Asian Cup in 27 years thanks to being co-hosts.

Uzbekistan were quarter-finalists in 2004. The former Soviet republic's finest moment was winning the Asian Games title on debut in 1994.

Heat gets to Asian Cup

Football

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

After the first week of Asian Cup action nearly everyone is agreed on one thing: it's hot, very hot.

While hardly unexpected, the steamy Southeast Asian conditions have produced a number of surprising results, usually favouring the host nations.

"The biggest problem is the weather. The climate of Kuala Lumpur has brought the quality of matches down," said Iran coach Amir Ghalenoei.

Pre-tournament favourites Australia have been the biggest victims, held to a draw by Oman before being shocked 3-1 by war-shattered Iraq.

"It must be the heat when a country which reached the World Cup knock-out stages is left with one loss and one draw," mused Japan star Shunsuke Nakamura.

Australia defender Lucas Neill

said most teams were struggling with the conditions.

"You look at the last 10-15 minutes of almost every game in the tournament and everyone seems to be bringing their shirts out and struggling and making a lot of changes," he said.

Despite night-time kick-offs temperatures have soared in the Asian capitals, reaching 37 deg C (99 deg F) at times accompanied by suffocating humidity.

Within minutes of the start players are often drenched in sweat and panting heavily, a sight more closely associated with the final stages.

"It's so humid and hot here in Jakarta that it's really hard for one player to play the entire 90 minutes," said South Korea's Lee Chun-Soo.

Co-hosts Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia have all cashed in, confounding expectations to produce shock results against higher ranked opposition.

Teams like Iran and China have

profited from special fitness programmes to prepare their players, while others have fallen by the wayside. Arab teams have been especially hard hit with Iraq and Saudi Arabia the only ones to win.

"When we arrived we had a special programme knowing

Malaysia is a difficult climate with

its high humidity. So we started

with physical fitness training," said

Iran's Ghalenoei.

"Some people in the media

questioned that but we needed it

with the Malaysian weather."

In the first 12 matches only four

goals were scored in the last 10

minutes, underlining the difficulty

of the conditions.

Jeff Steinweg, head of medical

services for Football Federation

Australia, said some players felt

the heat more than others.

"We go to great lengths to

ensure we keep the hydration up

for the players," Steinweg said.

Australia's Mark Schwarzer

revealed he lost three kilograms

during the opening match -- and he's the goalkeeper.

"I lost three kilos and most of that was during the warm-up and I had to back off the warm-up because it was so harsh," Schwarzer said.

"Everyone has been losing two-and-a-half to three kilos each

training session as it is, so then to look at a game situation where guys have lost up to five kilos it just goes to show how hard it was."

Japan coach Ivica Osim summed up the difficulties faced by everyone after his team's victory on Friday against United Arab Emirates in Hanoi.

"Most of all, I am happy that it has ended without any of our players and staff suffering a heart attack," he said.

"It was such harsh weather conditions."

The Asian Cup is being held in Southeast Asia for the first time since Singapore in 1984, when Saudi Arabia beat China in the final.

10x3

10x2

4x3

6x3