



South Korean players are ecstatic after their tense penalty shoot-out victory over rivals Iran during the quarterfinals of the Asian Cup at the Bukit Jalil Stadium in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday.

Kawaguchi's dream comes true

AFP, Hanoi

Japan's Asian Cup win over Australia was a foregone conclusion in the psyche of Yoshikatsu Kawaguchi, whose goalkeeping heroics helped his country into the last four.

"Can't believe it's come true," the gritty 31-year-old former Portsmouth reserve said after stopping the Socceroos first two spot kicks as Japan won a penalty shoot-out 4-3 with the score 1-1 after extra time.

Kawaguchi had a dream a few days earlier that he saved a crucial penalty against a burly Socceroo. But he could not remember who took it.

At the My Dinh National Stadium, he saved spot kicks from Harry Kewell and Lucas Neill, with centre back Yuji Nakazawa scoring the winner for Japan.

Kawaguchi punched away Liverpool star Kewell's left-footer to his right and Neill's right-footer to the left.

"I can't tell why I could stop them," said Kawaguchi, who had repeatedly said the Blue Samurai were determined to avenge their 3-1 loss to Australia in their World Cup opener last year.

The penalty kick partly depends on luck as well as the goalkeeper's responsibility," added the Japan captain and Jubilo Iwata custodian.

Kawaguchi was also responsible for Japan's 2004 Asian Cup triumph.

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Jose plays down Arjen talk

INTERNET, undated

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho insists Arjen Robben's absence from the friendly against the Los Angeles Galaxy was due to injury and not any impending move to Spanish giants Real Madrid.

The Blues defeated the Major League Soccer side 1-0 at the Home Depot Center in Carson, California with John Terry netting the decisive strike just after half-time.

Former England captain David Beckham made a brief debut for the American side, coming off the bench with 13 minutes remaining.

Dutch international Robben, whose contract talks have stalled at Stamford Bridge, was not included in the squad to face the Galaxy, prompting speculation he is about to sign for Real.

"Robben is injured," Mourinho said, referring to the knock on the winger's knee. "He's here and he's flying home with us, not to Madrid."

Mourinho was impressed with the way the Galaxy had played in the friendly and suggested the other players in Frank Yallop's team had been trying to prove a point or too in the wake of criticism in the English media that Beckham was joining a 'pub team'.

"The game was difficult. I think LA played with a lot of class. I think maybe they wanted to show David that they have a team, maybe they wanted to show because it was an

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Korea edge an epic

AFP, Kuala Lumpur



South Korea won a grueling and fluctuating epic 4-2 on penalties against Iran here Sunday to set up an Asian Cup semi-final with Iraq.

The shoot-out became the circuit-breaker after both teams had played themselves to a standstill over the regulation 90 minutes and 30 minutes' extra time without scoring a goal.

The Koreans held their nerve with their veteran goalkeeper Lee Woon-jae proving the hero when he saved efforts from Mehdi Mahdavikia and Rasoul Khatibi to acclaim from the chanting Korean supporters.

It was the second quarterfinal at the tournament to go to a shoot-out after Japan knocked out Australia 4-3 on penalties in Hanoi on Saturday.

"Clearly I am very, very proud of

the boys. It was very hard against strong opposition," said Korea's Dutch coach Pim Verbeek, who singled out their spirit for praise.

"Mentally we were very strong. I've never seen a Korea team not play with spirit, that's why it is a pleasure for me to work with them."

While ecstatic, Verbeek knows plenty of hard work remains with just two days to recover from the energy-sapping match before facing Iraq here on Wednesday.

"We have nothing with a semi-final, we must go for the final," he said.

It was huge relief for South Korea, who had been beaten twice in their three previous quarterfinals with Iran at the Asian Cup.

South Korea twice won the Asian Cup in the origins of the tournament in 1960 and 1964 and despite final appearances in 1972, 1980 and 1988 have yet to add another trophy.

They are now just one game away from the July 29 final in

Jakarta.

It was tough uncompromising football with solid challenges and a large number of fouls with the Koreans giving as good as they got from three-time champions Iran, a pre-tournament favourite.

Midfielder Mehrzad Madanchi became the first player booked when he brought down liewire Korean striker Lee Chun-soo midway through the opening half.

South Korea almost caught Iran on the counter with slick passing for Lee to race clear but he was deemed to have fouled Madanchi and the chance was wasted.

Woon-jae was forced to make an important body block on Ali Karimi's close-range volley a few minutes from half-time, and defender Kim Jin-kyu needed to make a hurried clearance to keep his team's goal intact right on the berak.

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join a club that offers Champions' League football.

Bolton's challenge for a pre-season trophy to set up their first season under Sammy Lee's guidance failed when they were beaten by Kim Kallstrom's late goal for Lyon in the Peace Cup final in South Korea. Jussi Jaaskelainen, Bolton's goalkeeper, made a string of fine saves to keep his side in contention but he let Kallstrom's shot squirm under his body.

Tottenham made a successful start to their trip to South Africa by beating Kaizer Chiefs 2-1 in front of 50,000 in Durban. Dimitar Berbatov scored the winner from Darren Bent's pass after the new Spurs striker's former Charlton teammate, Shaun Bartlett, had

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Having had a bid for an unidentified striker turned down during the summer, Ferguson appears to have nowhere to turn if his move for Tevez falls through. He could always inquire about Nicolas Anelka, who may be allowed to leave Bolton to

Tevez affair left to FIFA

Football

THE INDEPENDENT

It is Carlos Tevez or bust as far as Sir Alex Ferguson is concerned, but it could yet be neither.

David Gill, Manchester United's chief executive, insists the club is financially sound and not about to go broke, in spite of rumours sparked by the club's failure to restructure their debts of about £660 million, which require annual repayments of a staggering £62m.

The money is still there to finance the £30m signing of Tevez, but it is still far from clear whether the Argentinian's move will go ahead. Much rests on a meeting today between representatives of Fifa, world football's governing body, and

the Football Association to try to resolve disputes over the striker's registration. Tevez's advisor, Kia Joorabchian, last week accused West Ham of saying one thing in private and another in public in their stance on the ownership of Tevez, something the Upton Park club strenuously deny.

Andreas Herren, a spokesman for Fifa, confirmed that the meeting would take place and said: "My understanding is that the meeting will be with members of the FA, not the Premier League. It could be that someone from the Premier League comes along as well."

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Real Madrid players led by (front row L-R) Javier Saviola, Fabio Cannavaro and Sergio Ramos jog during their first training session in Madrid on Saturday.

FORMULA 1 Alonso win European GP

AFP, Nurburgring

Double world champion Fernando Alonso brilliantly won the European Grand Prix here on Sunday as confusion reigned at the Nurburgring.

Alonso's third win of the season leaves him just two points behind McLaren teammate Lewis Hamilton in the overall drivers' standings.

The Spaniard made the most of his opportunity when torrential rain and car failures combined to leave him in a straight fight with Ferrari's Felipe Massa.

Alonso passed Massa superbly in the closing stages to win by eight seconds from the Brazilian, McLaren's Mark Webber was third for Red Bull Racing.

Massa's teammate Kimi Raikkonen started from pole position but his poor record on the German circuit continued as he was forced to retire after 34 laps.

It was also a tough weekend for leader Hamilton who finished ninth.

A bad crash in qualifying left Hamilton starting from tenth on the grid and his record run of nine podium finishes in nine races was always likely to end after he spun off the track early on.

Hamilton's McLaren was eventually lifted back onto the track by a crane but the rookie rejoined the race at the back of the field, a lap behind and with too much ground to make up.

Alex Wurz of Williams was fourth ahead of Red Bull's David Coulthard in fifth with Nick

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Podolski vows fight for place

AFP, Munich

Injured Bayern Munich striker Lukas Podolski, voted the best young player at last year's World Cup, has vowed on Sunday to win back his place with the German giants.

After Bayern spent a reported 69 million euros this summer to build their own 'dream team' including strikers Italian World Cup winner Luca Toni and German veteran Miroslav Klose, injured Podolski, 22, was in danger of becoming a forgotten man.

But after French midfielder Franck Ribery impressed on his competitive debut with two goals for Bayern in their 4-1 League Cup win over Werder Bremen on Saturday, Podolski is as determined as ever to get back in the starting XI.

"I am not worried about the situation," Podolski told German paper Bild Am Sonntag after a frustrating summer spent recovering from knee surgery.

"I am pretty relaxed about things. I know that I can play football and get my chance. And I know that I will assert myself."

Having joined Bayern after his World Cup success, Podolski had a difficult first season with the German giants - defenders were quick to close him down and he produced a poor return of just four goals in 22 games.

But Podolski is determined to stay at Bayern and realise his potential, even if he is one of four top strikers - German international Jan Schlaudraff also joined in the summer - competing for only two places up front.

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Anna outlasts Sania

AFP, Cincinnati

Top seed Anna Chakvetadze outlasted India's Sania Mirza 6-2, 5-7, 6-3 Saturday to reach the final of the 175,000-dollar WTA hardcourt tournament here.

The Russian, ranked eighth in the world, had dropped just one set prior to Saturday's semi-final, but she was pushed to the limit by Mirza.

The third seed from India, who was making her first semi-final appearance here after quarter-final exits each of the past two years, went to a third set for the fourth time in as many matches.

Chakvetadze, though, raced out to a 4-0 lead in the decisive set and now will look to capture her third title of the year.

She has already won titles this year in Hobart, Australia, and at S'Hertogenbosch.

In the other semi-final, seventh-seeded Akiko Morigami of Japan advanced with a 6-7 (8/10), 6-4, 6-3 victory over Uzbekistan's Akgul Amanmuradova.

A 2005 finalist here, Morigami upset second-seeded Patty Schnyder in the quarters on Friday.

Morigami, ranked 61st in the world, is making her second trip to the final here after outlasting Amanmuradova, a qualifier who is ranked 141st in the world.

"We did not have a good start, but after 20 minutes we really stamped our authority," said Bayern's new number seven.

"It was a good match, I am happy with my two goals."

"The coach switched me to

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Celebrating with gunfire

AFP, Baghdad

The militias would have pushed into neighbourhoods farther south, but a flood of US and Iraqi troops into the capital, part of a five-month-old Baghdad security plan, has -- at least temporarily -- frozen the city's fault lines.

Pictures of radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr and portraits of revered Shiite martyrs grace street lights and shop windows along the area's main commercial street, and nearby Sunni mosques have been abandoned.

The thrill of the Asian Cup quarterfinal victory takes hold, and for a few hours the sectarian and political differences tearing the country apart are drowned out in a roar of national unity.

"Everyone in the country follows football, even with our current problems," says Ammar, 30, a shop owner in the Hurraya neighbourhood.

"If you turn on the television you will see the same thing in Adhamiyah, Kadhimiyah, Hail Al-Jamaa. They will be out in the streets waving flags," he says, rattling off the names of some of Baghdad's most violent neighbourhoods.

"Whether we are happy or sad we fire guns in the air," his 37-year-old friend Ali adds with a sly smile. "We are always going to war."

In December and January around 200 Sunni Muslim families were evicted from Al-Hurriyah in a campaign of terror spearheaded by the Shiite Mahdi Army, for whom it is now a stronghold, according to US military commanders in the area.

The popping echoes overhead -- fireworks and AK-47 rounds -- but no one ducks for cover or panics.

The football match "was a heroic victory, and the country is wounded" Ali, 16, says. "It's our

tradition. When we celebrate we shoot guns into the air."

His friends nod in agreement, but they all shake their heads when asked if they shared in the tradition when this happened.

Even in the rush of victory, the war is never completely forgotten. Like any other night the alleys are filled with the sound of generators growling as they guzzle scarce and expensive fuel.

"The country is suffering, but we have a little joy sometimes," Ali, a 51-year-old civil servant says, before repeating an all too familiar lament.

"We have so many problems. There's no electricity and fuel is expensive, so we all depend on these generators. We have to gather and watch the games together."

In Iraq's cash-strapped economy, football parties often carry a cover charge -- or a "bring your own benzene" policy -- to keep the all-important generator running.

"Sometimes you have to bring your own fuel to watch the game," another teenager called Ali says. Five thousand Iraqi dinars' (four dollars) worth is usually enough.

Opting for a more subdued celebration, he and his friends sit out in the cool night air and play dominoes at a sidewalk cafe.

"Everyone has his own way of celebrating. Some people drive their cars, some fire their guns, and some people sit outside and play

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Bayern Munich's new recruit, midfielder Hamit Altintop is airborne as he celebrates his 25-yard strike against Werder Bremen during their League Cup semifinal at the LTU Arena in Dusseldorf on Saturday.

RIBERY ON THE DOUBLE

Bayern thrash Bremen

Football

AFP, Berlin

French midfielder Franck Ribery struck either side of half-time to book Bayern's place in the German League Cup semifinals with a 4-1 defeat of Werder Bremen on Saturday.

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