

# Iraqi miracle

AFP, Jakarta



Skipper Younis Mahmoud's thumping headed goal crowned Iraq as Asian Cup champions for the first time with a stirring 1-0 win over Saudi Arabia Sunday that was welcomed in Baghdad by barrages of gunfire.

Mahmoud rammed home the 71st-minute header off a Hawar Mohammed corner for the only goal in the fiercely-contested all-Arab final over the three-time champion Saudis in a seething Gelora Bung Karno Stadium.

The huge roar inside the stadium was matched by celebrating supporters back in their war-ravaged homeland where Iraqis risked death to rejoice the unifying triumph.

Thousands of Iraqis defied a strict government ceasefire order to welcome the victory with gunfire, although many others stayed indoors after car bombs killed more than 50 fans after Iraq's semi-final victory on Wednesday.

"I had a lot of belief inside myself that we could do something today," said Iraq's Brazilian coach Jorvan Vieira, who said on Saturday he would resign whatever the result.

"I came here to win from the beginning because I am a very bad loser," he added.

"My players had so much confidence and were so sure. They wanted to do something for their country.

"We played very well and, to be honest, I am not happy with 1-0. We should have won 3-0."

Iraq blunted the resistance of the Saudis, who could not counter the determination and steel of their

Gulf rivals in the crackling decider to the three-week continental tournament.

Mahmoud's goal came after concerted Iraqi pressure when Hawar's corner directed at the far post went beyond goalkeeper Yaser Al Mosailem and on to the striker's head for a terrific header.

It was his fourth goal to finish joint leading scorer in the tournament with Saudi Arabia's Yasser Al Qhatani and Japan's Naohiro Takahara.

"Iraq deserved to win," admitted Saudi Arabia's Brazilain coach Helio DosAnjos.

"They made it very difficult for us to play our football. I feel sorry for the Saudi people but proud of my players and optimistic for the future."

Iraq, who have captivated the football world, finished conceding just two goals in their six games and put a spanner in the free-flowing Saudis, who were the leading scorers with 12 goals.

The driven Iraqis have showed great resolve throughout the tournament, crushing Australia 3-1 and negotiating South Korea on penalties in their gruelling semi-final.

It was a combustible opening 45 minutes with Australian referee

## ROLL OF HONOUR

YEAR	CHAMPIONS
2007	Iraq
2004	Japan
2000	Japan
1996	Saudi Arabia
1992	Japan
1988	Saudi Arabia
1984	Saudi Arabia
1980	Kuwait
1976	Iran

Mark Shield issuing five yellow cards -- three to Iraq and two to the Saudis -- as tackles flew in with a take-no-prisoner approach from both teams.

The Iraqi defence handled the twin Saudi threat of Malek Maaz and Yasser Al Qahtani capably with left-back Bassim Abbas having a particularly solid game with his trademark acrobatic overhead clearances.

There was plenty of off-the-ball incidents with defender Ali Hussein Rehema going down clutching his face in the penalty area awaiting a free kick with the referee speaking to Al Qahtani but not taking the matter further.

Iraq, who had the better chances in the fiercely-contested exchanges, went close in the 28th minute when Karrar Jassim wriggled past two defenders and forced goalkeeper Yaser Al Mosailem to punch clear.

Iraq skipper Mahmoud went down dramatically grabbing his head after defender Waleed Jahdali appeared to head-butt him, but television replays showed that Mahmoud milked the incident and both were booked by the referee.

Al Qahtani had his only chance of the half when he made some space nearing half-time but blazed his shot well over the bar.

Playmaker Nashat Akram gave Mahmoud a chance in the box but his close-range shot was blocked by Waleed Jahdali 15 minutes after the interval.

Iraq goalkeeper Noor Sabri made a flying save to prevent a screaming volley from Taiseer Al Jassam going in and the action switched to the other end where Al Mosailem made a double save to stop Mahmoud and then Hawar Mohammed.



STUFF OF DREAMS: Iraq captain Younis Mahmoud (C) holds aloft the Asian Cup as his teammates erupt in raptures behind him after they beat Saudi Arabia in the final at the Bung Karno stadium in Jakarta on Sunday.

Did U Know?

The last British woman to win Wimbledon was Virginia Wade in 1977.

**Roberto Donadoni**  
(Italy football coach)

*"How can I miss someone who was never here? Totti is a closed book now, there is nothing more to talk about."*

**On Francesco Totti's retirement from the Azzurri.**

What to WATCH

ATN Bangla

Abahani v MuktiJoddha

B. League

Live from 4:15 pm

ESPN

Sportscenter India

Sports News

Live from 8:30 pm

DAY'S EVENT

B. League

Abahani v MuktiJoddha

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

Time: 4:15 pm

## India keep a stranglehold



AFP, Nottingham

Sachin Tendulkar and Sourav Ganguly both missed out on hundreds but India were still well-placed in the second Test against England at Trent Bridge here on Sunday.

India, at tea on the third day, were 419 for six, a first innings lead of 221, after Tendulkar had made 91 and Ganguly 79.

VVS Laxman was 37 not out and Anil Kumble unbeaten on one.

India, who had held on for a draw at Lord's with just one wicket standing in the first Test of this three-match series, were 338 for three at lunch.

Tendulkar, already the world record-holder for Test hundreds, was 87 not out and Ganguly, who'd survived a close lbw appeal on five, 53 not out.

"The Little Master", who during the course of his innings had become only the third batsman in Test history to score 11,000 Test runs, went into the 90s in the first over after lunch when he uppercut Paul Collingwood for four.

But the medium-pacer, in his first over of the day, had the last laugh when, with his sixth ball, Tendulkar was lbw padding up outside off-stump for 91 to a ball that looked as if it might miss the stumps.

Australia's Simon Taufel, the ICC Umpire of the Year for the last three years, took his time over the decision before giving Tendulkar out.

The disbelieving Tendulkar laid himself open to a charge of showing dissent by lingering in his crease for several seconds before finally walking off with India on 342 for four.

He batted for more than four hours, facing 197 balls with a dozen

boundaries and put on 96 in 31 overs with Ganguly.

Laxman edged left-arm quick Ryan Sidebottom just short of Andrew Strauss at first slip when on 16.

But there was no mistaking the batsman's authority when he pulled Collingwood, not quick enough to pitch short, for four.

But Anderson had a wicket when Ganguly, shaping to leg-gance, was caught by diving wicket-keeper Matt Prior off what appeared a thin



PHOTO: AFP

Indian batsman Sachin Tendulkar drives through the covers on his way to scoring 91 during the third day of the second Test against England at Trent Bridge on Sunday.

## Tendulkar crosses another milestone



AFP, Nottingham

India's Sachin Tendulkar became only the third batsman in history to score 11,000 Test runs on the second day of the second Test against England at Trent Bridge here on Sunday.

The 34-year-old Tendulkar, playing his 139th Test only needed

**11,000 TEST RUN-GETTERS**

Batsman	C	M	I	N/O	R	HS	Ave	100s	50s
B Lara	W Indies	131	232	6	11953	400no	52.88	34	48
A Border	Australia	156	265	44	11174	205	50.56	27	63
S Tendulkar	India	139	223	23	11066	248no	55.33	37	44

deflection at best.

However, Taufel was in no doubt and Ganguly's 156 ball innings, featuring a six and 12 fours was at an end. The left-hander put on 67 with Laxman.

Then 409 for five became 414 for six when Sidebottom, who'd bowled well without reward, saw his luck change when he had dargerman Mahendra Singh Dhoni caught behind for just five.

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## New challenge for new body

SPORTS REPORTER

The ad-hoc committee of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) was finally announced yesterday to put an end to all confusions over the last few days.

The Caretaker Government formed the makeshift committee -- which mostly features persons known to the sports arena -- following resignation of the Mahbubul Anam-led elected body in it's attempt to reform the country's richest sport body and bring accountability and transparency to the activities of the board.

After a controversial election of the BCB in 2005 there had been whisperings about corruption of some members of the last elected committee and when a number of names from that very committee appeared in a probable 'draft committee' leaked by the media, criticisms flowed from different corners.

But yesterday's announcement came as a surprise in the sense that the 12-member committee missed those controversial organisers as well as the names mostly discussed for long since rumours were rife that the Caretaker Government was going to ring changes in the BCB.

The government might have shelved the controversy by making the list public but the committee,

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## Abahani's last match today

SPORTS REPORTER

B. League champions Abahani will give their fans the chance to watch their today's match against MuktiJoddha for free.

The last league match for both sides, which kicks off at 4.15 pm at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, will be telecast live by ATN Bangla.

However, the club did not mention how would it pay the due of Bangladesh Football Federation -- seven percent of the total ticket sales. It was learned that Abahani officials have not talked with the authority about their decision.

It was also learned that the clubs have been irregular in their payments to the B. league authority.

Abahani, who began their campaign against the same side on March 2 in the opening match of the country's inaugural professional football league, have secured the title after beating Sheikh Russel 2-0 last Friday and will look to end with a win in their home match.

The Reds, who shared points in a goalless draw with Abahani, have a chance to finish third if they win.

Tickets for VIP gallery, however, will cost Tk 50.

## Brothers finish fifth



CU CORRESPONDENT

Brothers Union signed off their inaugural professional football league campaign with a come-from-behind 4-1 win in an ill-tempered match against the local Abahani here yesterday.

Both sides ended with ten players after Abahani's foreign recruit Baneil Othello and Brothers' Mamunul Islam, who got his maiden national call last week, were sent off.

Just before the short whistle, the two players were locked in a scuffle following a foul by Othello that spread among the officials. The home tent had more men than permitted and they invaded the pitch which needed police intervention to stop the chaos.

The match resumed after referee Shahidul Islam Lalu, who failed to handle the situation properly, showed red cards to both the midfielders.

The Dhaka giants, two-time defending Premiership champions, ensured fifth place in the 11-team B. League table with 26 points while Chittagong Abahani remained third from bottom with the

threat of finishing one place below.

Khulna Abahani and Rahmatganj will fight to avoid a bottom-table end and if one of these two win their tomorrow's game, Chittagong Abahani will slip to tenth place.

The home side, however, got off to a flying start when Nepalese international Santosh Shahukhal put the port-city sky-blues ahead after eight minutes at the MA Aziz Stadium with a superb shot from the right side of the penalty area.

Brothers, who had won 3-0 against Chittagong Abahani in Dhaka in both sides' opening match of the competition, restored parity eight minutes later through Ashraful Quader Manju, whose brace in the last round helped the Oranges edged Rahmatganj 2-1.

Manju collected a pass from skipper and leftback Masud Rana to finish inside from the box.

The match went into halftime 1-

POINTS TABLE									
Teams	M	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts		
Abahani	19	13	5	1	35	8	44		
MSC	19	11	6	2	39	12	39		
MuktiJoddha	19	9	6	4	29	18	33		
Russel	19	8	8	3	22	12	32		
Brothers	20	8	5	7	32	19	29		
Arambagh	19	8	2	9	21	22	26		
Ctg MSC	19	7	4	8	19	25	25		
Farashganj	20	5	7	8	17	22	22		
Ctg Abahani	20	4	3	13	18	39	15		
Kln Abahani	19	3	4	12	18	43	13		
Rahmatganj	19	3	4	12	15	45	13		

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PHOTO: STAR

Brothers Union and Chittagong Abahani players are engaged in a fight during their yesterday's B. League match at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong.