

North Korea scrape into quarterfinals

AFP, Shanghai

The United States rolled into the World Cup quarterfinals on Tuesday to remain on track for a third title as Asia's top team North Korea lost but still scraped through for the first time ever.

The Americans beat African champions Nigeria 1-0 as Typhoon Wipha bore down on Shanghai, bringing heavy rain, with Lori Chalupny's first minute goal proving decisive.

It means the world number ones topped Group B with seven points and now play a rapidly-improving England in the quarterfinal in Tianjin on Saturday.

The Koreans take on defending champions Germany in Wuhan, also on Saturday, despite being beaten 2-1 by Sweden in Tianjin.

They go through on goal difference after both teams ended their group matches with four points, meaning Sweden, runner-up in 2003, failed to make the last eight for the first time in the tournament's 16-year history.

The other quarterfinal line-ups will be decided on Wednesday and Thursday.

Chalupny's goal after 55 seconds was enough to ensure not just qualification for the United States but a 50th successive undefeated match dating back to a defeat by Norway in 2004.

The pre-tournament favourites, who have won the trophy twice before, stunned Nigeria when striker Abby Wambach back-headed a throw-in into the path of Chalupny, who chested the ball down and fired on goal.

Nigeria's goalkeeper Precious Dede was well-positioned to collect the shot but the ball took a wicked deflection from a defender and ended up in the back of the net.

The US had most of the action in front of goal and it seemed just a matter of time before the attacking trio of Chalupny, veteran Kristine Lilly, and the ever-dangerous Wambach would increase the lead.

But the water-logged pitch made the going heavy for both teams and chances were few and far between.

North Korea warned before their match that they had yet to hit peak form but the desperate Swedes, who knew they needed to win by three clear goals, were the better side.

Charlotta Schelin gave them belief by opening the scoring in the fourth minute but a 22nd minute equaliser by Ri Un Suk crushed any hopes they had.

Sweden opened with an intensity missing from their earlier games, repeatedly attacking the North Korean goal and applying ferocious tackles and were rewarded when Schelin rose above the defence to head home a cross.

But North Korea hit back, with Ri beating her defender to launch a bullet from her right foot that curled into the far corner of the net, past diving goalkeeper Hedvig Lindahl.



PHOTO: AFP

Derby County striker Kenny Miller (top) is the toast of his teammates after his fabulous long-range shot earned his team a win over Premiership rivals Newcastle at Pride Park on Monday.

Derby earn first win

AFP, London



Kenny Miller scored the only goal of the game to earn Derby their first Premiership win of the season on Monday to put Newcastle's Euro 2008 qualifying star Michael Owen out of the spotlight.

Miller's 39th minute goal, from fully 33 metres, meant Derby had their first win in six matches to lift them off the bottom of the table ahead of Bolton.

And striker Owen, who scored three times in England's recent 3-0 victories at Wembley -- against Israel and Russia -- this time could not find the net.

Miller's goal was a classy one as he looked up to find Magpies goalkeeper Steve Harper off his line before sending a fierce shot into the roof of the net.

It was the perfect reply from a Rams side who were all-but written off after their 6-0 demolition by

Liverpool last time out, as they silenced Newcastle.

The home side got off to a positive start, Howard lining up a shot and seeing his effort pushed out for a corner after just 30 seconds.

Gary Teale's inswinging corner then picked out the former Luton forward in a good position but he headed high and wide.

Tyrone Mears forced Steve Harper into a save in the 10th minute, cutting inside David Rozehnal and firing hard and low at the United stopper who parried at the first attempt.

Geremi hit a fine free-kick as the game continued to open up but it was Derby, and Miller, who broke the deadlock.

The 27-year-old was way outside the box when he spotted Harper out of his goal and took an instant to release a volley over the goalkeeper.

Miller started the second half brightly and earned a corner from Rozehnal just two minutes after

the restart.

Sam Allardyce took off Michael Owen, unable to repeat his England heroics against the basement club, for Martins after 55 minutes as United desperately sought a cutting edge but it was not to be.

The hosts continued to make the most of their possession but, with 22 minutes remaining, Howard was beginning to frustrate with his accuracy.

His best chance of the match found him climbing highest six metres from goal but he missed once more with the full net to aim at.

A clumsy tackle from last man Nicky Butt looked to have denied Derby a scoring opportunity following a superb ball from Andy Griffin and he was lucky to get away with a caution.

Teale produced a pinpoint cross with nine minutes remaining but again Howard's finishing let him down as his diving header flashed wide with Harper static.

Heskey undergoes surgery

AFP, London

Emile Heskey underwent surgery Monday on the fractured metatarsal which could keep him out of England's vital Euro 2008 qualifiers against Estonia and Russia.

The 29-year-old striker suffered the injury in Wigan's 1-1 Premier League draw with Fulham on Saturday, just days after making a triumphant return to the national side in last week's Euro 2008 qualifiers against Israel and Switzerland.

A statement on the club's official website said: "The injury has now been confirmed as a stress fracture and Emile has undergone an operation this evening (Monday) where a screw was inserted into the foot."

Latics head physio Alan Tomlinson is reluctant to give a target date for the striker's return to action.

He explained: "Understandably everyone wants to know when Emile will be fit again to play, but the most important thing is that he fully recovers and the foot heals properly."

"I'm delighted with how we have dealt with this as a club; Emile was on his way to hospital before the first half had even finished and has received the best care available."

"His attitude since joining the club has been exemplary and I have no doubt he will carry that commitment into his rehab work to get fit again as quickly as possible."

Fighting Irish pair punished

AFP, Belfast

Northern Ireland duo Keith Gillespie and George McCartney have been fined by the Irish Football Association (IFA) following an in-flight fist fight on last week's return flight from Iceland.

The fight broke out between Sheffield United winger Gillespie and West Ham defender McCartney in front of shocked passengers as the Iceland air flight was about to depart Reykjavik for London Heathrow.

Gillespie later apologised for his part in the incident which occurred in the wake of Northern Ireland's 2-1 European qualifier defeat by Iceland. Their winner in the last minute came from his own goal.

In a statement the IFA said: "Issues surrounding the incidents which occurred involving certain players within the Northern Ireland squad during the trip to Iceland have now been addressed and resolved."

"The IFA wishes to apologise to any members of the public who were affected in any way by the behaviour of these players."

Details of the fines were not revealed but it is reported they could be between 75,000 and 150,000 euros (104,000-208,000 dollars) per player and will be allocated to a charity of the IFA's choice.

Russian control for Arsenal



Football

AFP, London

An investment company controlled by Russian billionaire Alisher Usmanov has become the second-largest shareholder in English Premiership football team Arsenal, it was announced Tuesday.

The purchase by Red and White Holdings Limited was announced to the London Stock Exchange and gives it a 21 percent stake in the club, just behind board member Daniel Fiszman, who owns 24 percent.

Usmanov and his fellow investor Farhad Moshiri bought a 14

percent stake in the club for around 75 million pounds (111 million euros, 150 million dollars) in August.

They bought their share in the club from David Dein, the club's former vice-chairman who left Arsenal in April, reportedly over his support for foreign investment and particularly American businessman Stan Kroenke, who wanted to take over the club. Dein is the chairman of Red and White Holdings Limited. The firm has said that it is not currently interested in gaining overall control of Arsenal and Usmanov has said his share in the club is a "portfolio investment."

The overall cost of buying Arsenal is thought to be more than

750 million pounds, including a debt of 260 million pounds from the construction of the huge new Emirates Stadium.

Usmanov is the majority shareholder in Russian mining company Metalloinvest Holding and has media and telecoms holdings in Russia's largest business newspaper and investment in a mobile phone company.

He is worth around 5.5 billion dollars, according to Forbes magazine, and is seen as being close to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

On Monday, he paid over 20 million pounds for the art collection of late Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, which will now be returned to Russia.

Hingis wins in China



Tennis

AFP, Beijing

Martina Hingis needed less than an hour to secure her first-ever win in China on Tuesday, dispatching local favourite Sun Tiantian 6-2, 6-3 to move into the second round of the China Open.

The Swiss fifth seed and former world number one is in Beijing hoping to put an end to an injury-plagued run that has kept her from reaching the quarter-finals in her last seven tournaments.

The five-time Grand Slam winner and current world number 18 last won in Tokyo in February.

She wasted no time on court Tuesday, defeating the 142nd-ranked Sun in just 58 minutes, in a match that had been postponed late Monday due to rain.

The 26-year-old from Zurich, who returned to the game in January 2006 following a three-year layoff, converted half of her 10 break attempts, while losing her own serve twice.

Hingis, who has 43 career titles, lost her first serve but broke back quickly.

"She started well with some good returns, but I was able to break her back immediately and gain some confidence," Hingis said.

The Swiss Miss will face another local favourite in the second round when she takes on number 49 Peng Shuai, a winner on Tuesday over compatriot Xu Yi-fan, 6-1, 6-4.

Peng, coached by former Chinese-American great Michael Chang, reached the semi-finals here last year, where she lost to eventual champion Svetlana Kuznetsova, who is this year's top seed.

Peng is the last local in the field. "I should be ready from the first

point, not the first game," Hingis joked.

In other action, Japan's Akiko Morigami earned the first upset of the week, defeating Spanish seventh seed Anabel Medina Garrigues 6-4, 6-4.

Greek number eight Eleni Daniilidou defeated Ukraine's Olga Govortsova, 6-2, 6-1, rebounding from an opening round loss to a resurgent Lindsay Davenport last week in Bali.

The top four seeds led by Russia's Fed Cup heroine Kuznetsova all received first-round byes.

Serbia's Jelena Jankovic, the second seed, accepted a wild card, effectively replacing world number one Justine Henin, who withdrew due to a bronchial infection.

France's Amelie Mauresmo is the third seed ahead of Russia's Elena Dementieva.



PHOTO: AFP

Swiss star Martina Hingis is all smiles after winning her first round match against Chinese Sun Tiantian at the China Open in Beijing on Monday.

Toni struggling to be fit

INTERNET, undated



Striker Luca Toni is a doubt for Bayern Munich's UEFA Cup first-round tie against Portuguese side Belenenses on Thursday. The Italy international said Tuesday he had not fully recovered from a thigh injury.

"I am not 100 per cent. The final decision will be taken on Wednesday," he said.

"I want to be fully trained and be fit going into the game. The worse thing would be injuring myself again."

Toni played in Bayern's 1-1 draw with Schalke in the Bundesliga on Saturday after recovering from a pulled thigh muscle suffered while scoring against Hanover on August 25.

The injury led to Toni missing Italy's Euro 2008 qualifiers against France and Ukraine.

Coach Ottmar Hitzfeld is already missing striker Miroslav Klose for the first-leg game in Munich.

Klose is serving a suspension

after being dismissed following a second yellow card while playing for Werder Bremen in last season's UEFA Cup semi-final elimination by Espanyol.

Meanwhile German Cup winners Nuremberg go into their first European game for almost 20 years with injury problems.

Coach Hans Meyer has question marks over midfielder Peer Kluge and strikers Ivan Saenko and Joshua Kennedy ahead of the meeting with visiting Romanian cup winners Rapid Bucharest.

Russian striker Saenko has an ankle injury, while Kluge and Kennedy are struggling with thigh muscle problems.

All three were restricted to running but did not take part in full team training Tuesday, the club said.

Nuremberg were already without injured Danish defender Lars Jacobsen (groin) and Slovakian striker Robert Vittek (knee surgery).

Nuremberg, who last season won their first trophy for almost 40 years, are playing in Europe for the first time since being eliminated in the first round of the UEFA Cup by AS Roma in 1988.



PHOTO: AFP

Bayern Munich striker Luca Toni smiles during a press conference in Munich on Tuesday.