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Russian forward Andrei Arshavin (2nd from R) celebrates with teammates after scoring the second goal against Sweden during their Euro 2008 Group D match at the Tivoli Neu Stadium in Innsbruck on Wednesday.

Russia stun Sweden

AFP, Innsbruck



Guus Hiddink's reputation as a miracle worker was given further credence here on Wednesday as a young Russian side overcame a vastly more experienced Swedish one 2-0 in their Euro 2008 Group D clash to progress to the last eight at the expense of the Swedes.

The 61-year-old Dutchman -- whose side will face his compatriots in the last eight on Saturday -- looked on with a broad smile on his face as goals by Roman Pavlyuchenko in the 24th minute, for his second of the tournament, and Russian player of the year Andrei Arshavin in the 50th minute sealed a deserved victory.

Russia progress to their first ever knockout stages of a major tournament since the break up of the Soviet Union in 1991, and their meeting with the Dutch will be a repeat to a certain extent of the 1988 final when present Dutch coach Marco van Basten scored in the 2-0 victory over the Soviets.

Russia produced their usual flowing football in the early stages with playmaker Arshavin -- coming back after a two match suspension -- pulling the strings, and the unimaginative Swedes, who did start with star striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic despite his knee problem, content to sit back on the

whole.

It was the Russians who went closest to opening the scoring in the 20th minute as Yuri Zhirkov unleashed a fierce volley from the left side of the penalty box which just crept past the far post of the Swedes, Arshavin having provoked the corner with a cheeky chip which forced Andreas Isaksson into a tip over.

However, they got a deserved lead in the 24th minute as Pavlyuchenko tucked away a finely made goal for his second of the tournament, having been set up by Zenit St-Petersburg's ram-paging fullback Alexander Anyukov.

The Swedes hit back almost immediately as veteran striker Henrik Larsson got on the end of a long ball and his header clipped the bar much to the relief of Russian goalkeeper Igor Akinfeev.

The Russians were just playing the most delightful football, some of the best of the tournament, and in the 36th minute they went desperately close to doubling their lead as the redoubtable Pavlyuchenko was fed inside the box and his chip beat Isaksson only to clip the post.

GROUP D TABLE

TEAM	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Spain	3	3	0	0	8	3	9
Russia	3	2	0	1	4	4	6
Sweden	3	1	0	2	3	4	3
Greece	3	0	0	3	1	5	0

The ball was crossed in again and Zhirkov fired fiercely on target only for Isaksson to produce a marvellous tip away save to leave it at that point the Russians having had 13 shots to the Swedes three.

Sweden, though, could not be discounted and Swedish captain Freddie Ljungberg forced Akinfeev into a scrambled save in the 44th minute but the Swedes failed to take advantage of the corner.

The Russians at last made their overwhelming superiority tell in the 50th minute as Arshavin scored their second, the 'little jewel' as he is fondly called, sliding the ball home after another glorious team move with the Zenit St Petersburg star at the end of Zhirkov's pass.

The Swedes were pretty toothless up front with Ibrahimovic clearly labouring and it was the Russians who should have gone 3-0 up 10 minutes from time as Konstantin Zyryanov's shot was deflected onto the post and thence to safety.

Then, as the Swedes pressed forward in desperate search of a goal -- Lagerback having sent on veteran 35-year-old striker Marcus Allback in place of a defender -- Pavlyuchenko had two glorious chances to add to the Russian tally but first miskicked and then seconds later directed his header into Isaksson's welcoming hands.

However, for the Swedes there was nothing welcoming about the final result for them.

SCORE AGAINST DANDRUFF WITH CONFIDENCE
CLEAR men

Did U Know?
Germany is the most successful nation in the Euro Championship. They won the title three times -- in 1972, 1980 & 1996.

TALK TURKEY



Lars Lagerback
(Swedish football coach)
"Some young players don't understand everything, and he really helps them as he is a real team player. He is a positive man to have on and off the pitch. Every team would benefit in having such a player."
On fiery striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic.

What to WATCH

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm
Euro 2008 Quarterfinal
Portugal v Germany
Live from 12.45am (Friday)

Spain win all too

AFP, Salzburg



Spain equalled their record of nine straight wins with a 2-1 defeat of Greece here on Wednesday that confined the reigning champions to their third defeat of the tournament.

Andreas Charisteas opened the scoring for Greece before Ruben De la Red equalised and Daniel Guiza struck an 88th minute winner.

It was a game with nothing riding on it and for the first quarter both sides played as if in a training match.

Greece, who had already been knocked out before the game began, were surprisingly defensive for a game that mattered little and in which both teams had fielded weakened outfits.

Spain, already group winners, had actually made 10 changes from the starting XI that won their two previous matches.

Liverpool midfielder Xabi Alonso had the first effort on goal on 23mins, and had it gone in it would surely have been the goal of the tournament.

Spotting Greece goalkeeper

Antonios Nikopolidis, captain for the day as he was playing in his final match for his country, well off his line Alonso hit a Beckham-esque shot from five yards inside his own half, missing the top corner by only inches with the back-peddling Nikopolidis beaten.

Surprisingly, Alonso seemed the only person trying to score in that opening period and he sent two long range shots wide of the left-hand upright.

On 39mins Cesc Fabregas played a great ball in for Sergio Garcia but he fell over as he tried to shoot.

QUARTERFINALS

JUNE 19, Thursday
Portugal v Germany
At Basel, Switzerland
JUNE 20, Friday
Croatia v Turkey
At Vienna, Austria
JUNE 21, Saturday
Netherlands v Russia
At Basel, Switzerland
JUNE 22, Sunday
Spain v Italy
At Vienna, Austria
(All kick-offs at 1845 GMT, 0045 Bangladesh Standard Time next day)

Greece took the lead against the run of play on 42mins as Charisteas headed home a Giorgis Karagounis free-kick after losing his marker all too easily.

After the break it was Alonso again who tried his luck from distance, this time with a rasping drive from almost 30 yards that beat Nikopolidis but crashed off the inside of the post and away to safety.

However, Alonso played no part in Spain's well-worked equaliser with Fabregas chipping the ball into the box for Guiza, whose cushioned header back to De la Red was lashed home with venom -- the Getafe man's first goal for his country in only his third appearance.

Greece came storming straight back and Charisteas took a pass from Alexandros Tziolis around goalkeeper Pepe Reina but could only hit the outside of the post from a tight angle.

On 73mins Guiza ran onto a lucky ricochet into the box but dragged his shot from the right just past the far post.

But two minutes from time striker Guiza scored his first goal for his country in his fifth appearance, heading home a cross from Sergio Garcia.

Bangladesh held by Singapore

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh shared points with hosts Singapore after their 1-1 draw in their third Pool A match of the 3rd Men's AHF Cup Hockey tournament at the Delta Sports Complex in Singapore yesterday.

Skipper Maksud Alam Habul put Bangladesh ahead in the first-half before Singapore restored parity in the second-half to snatch an important point from title aspirants Bangladesh.

Despite the day's frustrating result, Bangladesh kept their top slot intact in Pool A with an unbeaten run that yielded seven points while hosts Singapore are just behind them with five points, both having playing three matches each.

Bangladesh earned a comfortable 6-1 victory over Brunei and a 3-2 win over Chinese Taipei in the Pool A encounters. Now they meet Uzbekistan in the last group match today at 3pm BST at the same venue.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Khelaghar earned a facile 3-0 victory over Modhubagh Friends Club in a North Zone match of the Dhaka City Corporation Pioneer Football League at the Mohakhali T&T ground yesterday.

Muktar, Bolai and Habib scored one each for the winners.

In the day's other match of the same zone, Kalachandpur defeated Moghbazar Sabuj Sangha 2-1 at the same venue in the afternoon. Rajon and Sumon scored one each for the winners while Munna netted for Moghbazar.

Moghbazar Krira Chakra, on the other hand, will play Siraj Smriti Sangsad at the Mohakhali T&T ground while Nawabpur face Khilgaon Progati Sangha in a play-off match.

DHAKA SWIMMING
The two-day Dhaka divisional age-level swimming competition begins at Munshiganj tomorrow.

Intending contenders from all the District Sports Associations under Dhaka and also the swimming clubs affiliated with the Bangladesh Swimming Federation (BSF) have been requested to be present on Friday at 12:30pm at the Munshiganj Swimming Pool.

The participants should report

More changes in A side

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The Zunaed Siddiqui-led Bangladesh A team will leave Dhaka tomorrow for a 45-day tour to Ireland and England.

The second-string Bangladesh side will open their short tour of Ireland with a three-day match in Dublin on June 23 and then play a Twenty20 game in the same city on June 27, two one-day games against the hosts in Belfast on June 29 and July 1 before leaving for England.

The national selectors brought a few changes to the 14-member team for the short trip with batsmen Rajin Saleh and Farhad Hossain and wicketkeeper Sahagir Hossain replacing batsmen Alok Kapali, Jahurul Islam and Shamsur Rahman.

Kapali, who was replaced by wicketkeeper Dhiman Ghosh for

the England trip, was ignored for the A team trip after he was recalled

ITINERARY

FOR IRELAND TRIP

June 23-25: 3-day in Dublin
June 27: T20 in Dublin
June 29: One-day in Belfast
July 1: One-day in Belfast

FOR ENGLAND TRIP

July 6-8: 3-day against England Under-19 at Loughborough
July 11-13: 3-day against Warwickshire at Birmingham
July 16-18: 3-day against Leicestershire at Leicester
July 21-23: 3-day against Derbyshire at Derby
July 25-27: 3-day against South Africa at Worcester
July 30: One-day against Lancashire at Alderley Edge
August 1: One-day against Marylebone Cricket Club at Durham
August 3: One-day against Durham at Chester-le-Street

in the senior side for the just-concluded Kitchy Cup and Asia Cup due to Aftab Ahmed's injury.

The Ireland-bound team was made with fewer national team players but as many as twelve Tigers were picked in the 15-member team for the tour to England in July-August.

Chief selector Rafiqul Alam believed that the players will take the opportunities with both hands to make the selection difficult before selecting the national side for the tour of Australia in August.

"I think it is a big platform for all young and out-of-favour players to enhance their performance to claim a place in the national side. I hope the players will understand the importance of the long trip," said Rafiqul yesterday.

"Bangladesh national team would be touring Australia after the Asia Cup, so England would be the best place to prepare before such a tough series. We will look forward

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

AFC PRESIDENT'S CUP IN MALAYSIA

Abahani leave today

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani will leave Dhaka this afternoon for Kuala Lumpur to participate in the AFC President's Cup, which will see the Bangladesh professional league champions' return to a continental club competition after almost 12 years.

Abahani, who last participated in the now-defunct AFC Cup Winners' Cup in the mid-90s, will be pitted against Nepal Police Club from Nepal, Pakistan's WAPDA and Tajikistan champions Regar-TadAZ in Group A.

The qualification campaign will kick off on June 22 in the Malaysian capital with only the group champions guaranteed a place in the semifinals.

Dordoi-Dynamo -- two-time defending champions from Kyrgyzstan who host the semifinals and the final in capital Bishkek from September 19-21 -- and Turkmenistan's Ashgabad have already booked their places in the semifinals as Group B and C winners respectively.

The Central Asian pair will be joined by Group A winners and the best runners-up of the three groups.

Kanbawza of Myanmar are strong contenders for the last four spot for

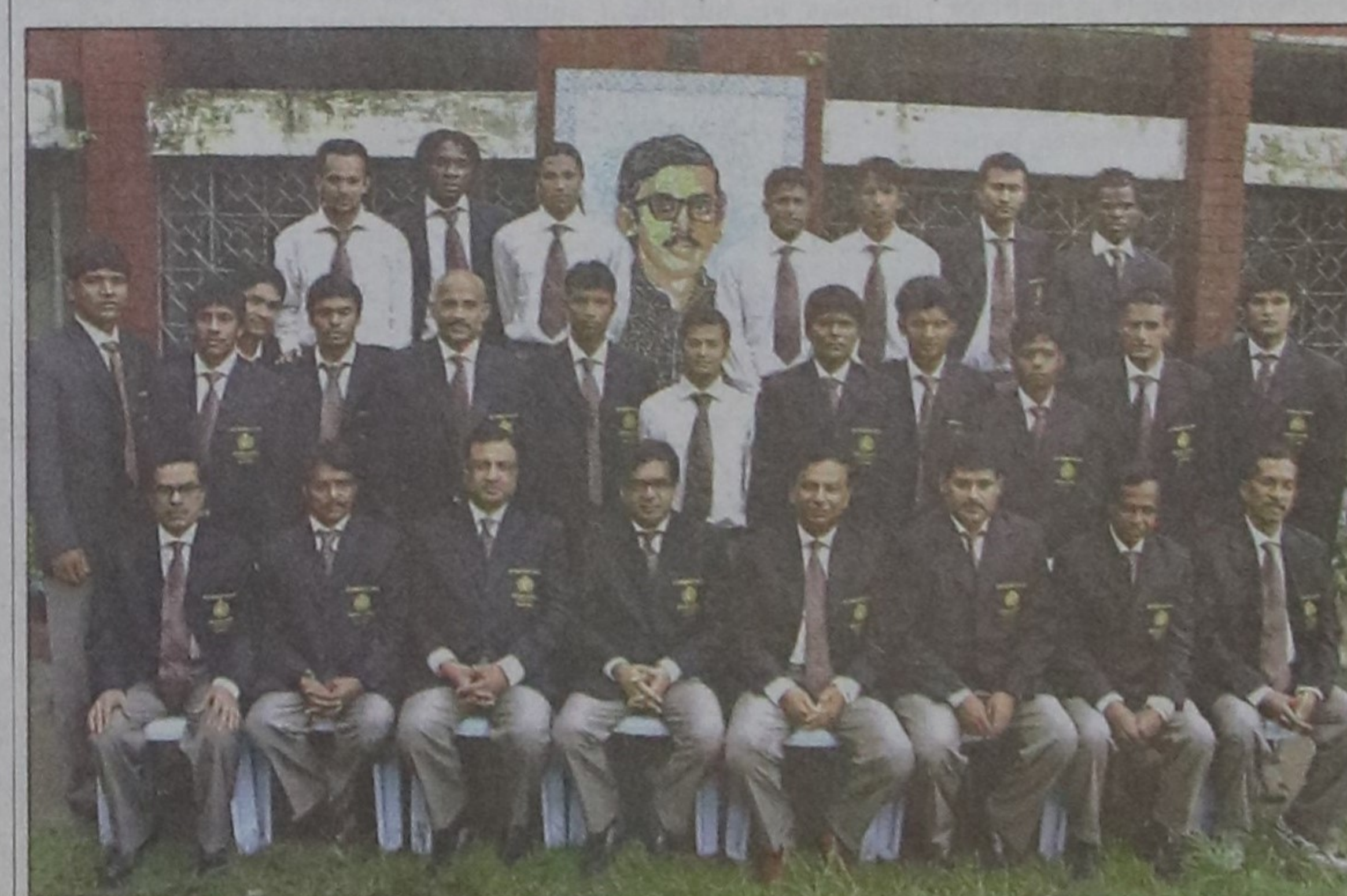
the best runners-up, having finished in Group C with six points with a handsome goal difference of 11.

Abahani will need to win their group or finish second with at least seven points to topple Kanbawza and coach Amalesh Sen knows it would be a difficult task with favourites Regar and last year's finalists Nepal Police in the group.

"The first match would be crucial for us," said Amalesh, whose side take on the Nepalese in their opening match on June 22.

"We have had a disrupted preparation and as coach, I am not 100 percent satisfied," Amalesh told on the eve of their trip.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1



Abahani players and officials pose for an official photograph at the club's Dhanmondi tent yesterday. The B League champions leave Dhaka today for Kuala Lumpur to participate in the AFC club tournament.

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SEE PAGE 18 COL 3