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Turkish forward Semih Senturk (R) celebrates with teammate Tuncay Sanli after scoring the last-minute equaliser against Croatia during their Euro 2008 quarterfinals at the Ernst Happel Stadium in Vienna last night.

Last-minute drama takes Turkey thru'

AFP, Vienna



Turkey lived up to their billing as comeback kings with a 3-1 penalty shootout win over Croatia here on Friday to put them into the Euro 2008 semifinals.

The spot-kick lottery was called for after the side's were inseparable at 1-1 after additional time, both of those goals coming in the dying minutes of what up to then had been a forgettable affair.

Ivan Klasnic put Croatia into a 119th minute lead -- for his second in successive matches -- only for Turkey to level in the first minute of time added on thanks to substitute Semih Senturk.

Croatia then fell apart, with Luka Modric and Mladen Petric shooting wide and Mladen Petric having his spot-kick saved by Turkey keeper Rustu Recber, who turned from villain to hero having made a terrible mistake to gift the Croats their goal.

Turkey, making their first appearance in the semi-finals, face Germany in Basel on Wednesday.

After Germany's drama-laden first quarterfinal win over Portugal the night before, this second quarter-final was a big let down, with

chances as rare as empty seats in the Ernst Happel stadium.

Croatia coach Slaven Bilic fielded the same team that defeated Germany in the group stages, with only two players Danijel Panjic and Raketit surviving from the side that lined up against Poland on Monday.

Turkey turned up at the Ernst Happel stadium with half a dozen of their first team missing from injury or suspension.

Veteran keeper Rustu came in for Volkan Demirel, sent off against the Czech Republic, and manager Fatih Terim also handed a start to London-born Kazim Kazim, who led the attack with Nihat Kahveci.

With so many absentees another headache for Terim was that eight of his players were one booking away from missing the semi-final, should they make it.

Croatia will never know how they didn't go into the lead in the 18th minute, Ivica Olic being guilty of a criminal miss.

Darijo Srna set up the move laying the ball on to Modric who raced down the right of the box to cross for Olic only for the Hamburg striker's shot to hit the crossbar from only a couple of metres directly in front of goal.

To add insult to injury Niko Kranjcar missed with his header from the rebound.

Tottenham signing Modric summed up the mood of frustration, banging the Austrian turf repeatedly with his fist in frustration.

The game then meandered its way, slowly, to the break, with both sides unable to mount anything much resembling a serious challenge, a 35th minute long range effort from Mehmet Topal aside.

More of the same in the second half and penalties were in the offing.

The Croats it was who looked more dangerous in the rare moments they were able to break the Turkish defence, with Rustu quick to deal with a Kranjcar effort in the 58th minute.

The match had a goal from Olic shortly after but it was disallowed for offside.

Terim then made his first substitution, taking off the ineffective Kazim Kazim for Ugur Boran, and Bilic followed, bringing off Kranjcar for Petric.

Minutes later Raketit squandered Croatia's second gilt-edged chance, his close range shot after being set up by Olic flying high over Rustu's bar.

With quarter of an hour left of normal time Terim switched midfielder Mehmet Topal for Fenerbahce striker Senturk in search of that elusive goal.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

SCORE AGAINST DANDRUFF WITH CONFIDENCE

CLEAR men

NO DANDRUFF

Asif returns home

Cricket

AGENCIES, Karachi

Pakistan fast bowler Mohammad Asif arrived home on Friday after Dubai prosecutors dropped charges against him of possession of an illegal drug.

Asif, who spent 19 days in detention in Dubai, returned to Karachi and caught a connecting flight to Lahore where the Pakistan Cricket Board headquarters are located.

But Asif stuck to his guns, insisting that he was not caught with any contraband drugs by the authorities there.

The pacer claimed he was innocent which is why he was eventually released.

"I never took any drugs or banned substances. I have never used drugs in my life and I challenge anyone to prove I do drugs. If I had taken any drugs I would have tested positive during laboratory tests in Dubai and also when I gave a random test during the Indian Premier League," he said in Lahore after returning from Dubai via Karachi.

He also rubbished reports that drug were recovered from his possession in Dubai.

"It was no drug just a substance given to me by a local Hakeem." Asif, who is due to meet Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Nasim Ashraf later Friday, thanked the PCB chairman for securing his release.

"They (Dubai authorities) kept me well but it was detention after all. I am thankful to the PCB chairman and officials that they didn't abandon me and kept on support-

ing me and fighting my case," the pacer said.

The PCB said in a statement that the attorney general of Dubai had issued instructions to release Asif and send him back to Pakistan.

"The PCB welcomes this decision and is relieved this ordeal is over. We appreciate the professional manner in which this whole issue was dealt with by the Dubai Police prosecution department and the UAE authorities," the statement said.

Asif, who has played 11 tests, was detained on June 1 while returning from India after playing in the Indian Premier League.

Authorities found him to be in possession of a small quantity of contraband which was later found to be a recreational drug.

The PCB still intends to conduct an internal inquiry into the matter.

"As soon as we get the detailed reports about the case from Dubai authorities we will hold our own internal inquiry," an official told Reuters.

The official said the drug tests conducted on Asif after his detention were clear.

"But we will have to see why he got into this mess in the first place," he added.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



Mohammad Asif arrives at the Lahore airport after his deportation from Dubai yesterday.

Booters' transfer ends Brothers, Mohammedan gain

SPORTS REPORTER

The transfer trails for the 2008 football season ended yesterday amid rain, some fun and hope for the game to return to the ground after a yearlong wilderness.

However, there were no fans to greet even the popular Mohammedan Sporting Club, who arrived at the BFF Bhawan with their latest recruits piled on horse-drawn carriages in a bid to add some excitement to an otherwise dull day.

All speculations of Muktiyoddha Sangsad not competing or playing under a different name were brushed aside when the local giants signed 20 footballers on the final day of the transfer procedures that began on May 15.

Although defending champions Abahani, the only team out of 11 not to play with a new-look side, had completed formalities in the first week of the bourse, the remaining title contenders decided

to play the waiting game and crowded the transfer scene in the eleventh hour.

Brothers Union, one of the heavyweights to feast on the departing Muktiyoddha footballers, seemed to get rid of the financial crisis that hit the Gopibagh club earlier this year and roped in midfielder Matir Munna on the final day.

The former Bangladesh international, who was billed to stay with crisis-struck Muktiyoddha, apparently and logically did not want to sacrifice a year's salary.

"In fact, no Muktiyoddha officials contacted me although they had said they would play this year. I had no offer and the uncertainty forced me to accept Brothers' offer," said Munna whose long-time colleague Arman Miah, the brightest midfielder of his generation, has already decided to end his domestic career in sheer frustration.

Brothers, who finished fifth in last year's B. League, seemed to build a seasoned team that can go for the championship.

Apart from bringing in Sheikh Russel shot-stoppers Zia and Shakil, they recruited defenders Ariful (Mohammedan), Mishu (Russel), Arup, Liton, Rony Islam (Farashganj), midfielders Juku (Arambagh), Rikta (Russel), wingers Abdullah Parvez (Abahani) and Zahed (Mohammedan) and Mohammedan striker Farhad.

Brothers also retained their own Shuvra, Rony, Shakil, Masud Rana, Liton Khan, Rezaul Karim Liton, Tapu and Manju.

Brothers manager Amer Khan was confident that he has the best local squad.

"We have a squad where it would be difficult to choose the first eleven. We have a very strong team of backups. In the long run, having more quality players is the key to success," said Amer, whose side will be looked after by head coach Sajjad Hossain Lavlu and former national winger Wasim Iqbal as his assistant.

"Still, to win the league, we need to add quality foreign players."

SEE PAGE 18 COL 3

AFC PRESIDENT'S CUP All set for last qualifiers

THE-AFC.COM, Kuala Lumpur

The MPPJ Stadium here in the capital of Malaysia will host the Group A qualifying matches of the AFC President's Cup from Sunday, featuring Bangladeshi champions Abahani who arrive here on Friday morning, Nepal's Police Club, WAPDA of Pakistan and the 2005 champions Regar-TadAZ of Tajikistan.

With only two teams -- two-time defending champions from Kyrgyzstan, Dordoi-Dynamo and Turkmenistan's Ashgabat -- punching their tickets to the semi-finals so far, there is all to play for the four teams until the curtains fall on the qualifying campaign on June 26.

The winners of this section and the best second-placed team from among the three pools go into the hat along with Dordoi and Ashgabat for the knockout stage draw, which takes place on June 30 at AFC House.

Tajik powerhouse Regar won the inaugural title three years back by defeating Dordoi 3-0 in Kathmandu but failed to qualify for the 2006 edition before losing to Mahendra Police of Nepal 2-1, thanks to a shock injury time goal, last year in the semifinals. Mahendra Police have since been renamed as Nepal Police Club.

WAPDA played in the 2005

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Bangladesh play Sri Lanka today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will take on South Asian rivals Sri Lanka in the last stage of the 3rd Men's AHF Cup -- the qualifying hockey tournament for Asia Cup -- in Singapore today.

The battle for a place in the final would be a chance to take revenge for Bangladesh, who lost to the islanders in the bronze qualifying match of the 10th SA Games in Kandy, Sri Lanka in 2006.

Bangladesh, who finished Pool A champions with three wins and a draw, have already qualified for the tournament proper.

Pool B champions Oman play hosts Singapore in the other semifinal today.



ENJOYING A RARE RIDE: Mohammedan footballers head for the BFF House on horse-drawn stagecoaches yesterday to complete the transfer formalities for the coming season.



Did U Know?

Lilian Thuram of France played most matches in the Euro Championship. The number is 16.



Guus Hiddink

(Russian football coach)
"He is a player who can choose his option really quickly, he can create danger, direct play on the right and on the left... he is a really intelligent player."

On playmaker and footballer-of-the-year Andrei Arshavin.



What to WATCH

STAR Cricket
England v New Zealand
Third ODI
Live from 3:45pm

ESPN
Euro 2008 Quarterfinal
Netherlands v Russia
Live from 12:45am (Sunday)