



Japan midfielder Keisuke Honda (R) scores the second goal against Scotland during their Kirin Challenge Cup match in Yokohama on Saturday.

Japan see off Scotland

Football

AFP, Yokohama

An own goal and Kensuke Honda's strike in the final 10 minutes gave Japan a 2-0 win over a second-string Scotland in a friendly international here Saturday.

Wolverhampton Wanderers defender Christophe Berra slotted into his own net from a cross by Japan defender Yuichi Komano on 83 minutes.

The Blue Samurai went further ahead on the stroke of injury time when Honda, a VVV Venlo midfielder, slammed in a rebound off Catania striker Takayuki Morimoto's shot inside the box.

"We could not find our offensive rhythm in the first half, struggling with our basic pass-and-move tactics. But we started to get better toward half-time," Japan coach Takeshi Okada said.

It was Japan's first win in three international matches against Scotland, having drawn twice before.

Japan, who have qualified for the World Cup, face Togo in another home friendly in Miyagi next Wednesday.

Okada rested several key players,

including midfield lynchpins Shunsuke Nakamura of Espanyol and Yasuhito Endo of Gamba Osaka, just two days after his squad outclassed Hong Kong 6-0 in an Asian Cup qualifier at home.

Scotland manager George Burley has brought an experimental squad to Japan, missing 10 regulars including Manchester United midfielder Darren Fletcher and Tottenham fullback Alan Hutton.

"It was a good workout for us," Burley said. "Japan had a lot of possession and played nice football but didn't have too many chances. But we are disappointed about giving away the own goal."

Before the match at the Yokohama International stadium, a minute of silence was observed in memory of former Scottish Football Association president David Will who died of cancer on September 24.

The Blue Samurai kept possession and squandered several scoring chances in the first half.

Blackpool midfielder Charles Adam's 30-metre free kick went wide in the 31st minute and Kawasaki midfielder Kengo Nakamura shot into the side of the net from close range from a Honda cross four minutes later.

FC Tokyo's Naohiro Ishikawa, who has scored 14 goals in 23 J-League matches this season, slotted a cross from Kashima Antlers' defender Atsuto Uchida into Scotland goalkeeper Craig Gordon's arms on 37 minutes.

Nakamura was on target again in the 41st minute.

Ishikawa fed a cross from near the baseline to Nakamura in front of the net but his shot was stopped by Celtic defender Stephen McManus.

Morimoto, 21, who has already scored three goals in Serie A games this season, was called in on 56 minutes to make his international debut.

In the 62nd minute, Gordon punched away Honda's 20-metre free kick.

Adam picked the ball in front of the goal five minutes later but blasted it over the net.

Scotland blew another chance in the 73rd minute as Burnley striker Steven Fletcher almost carried the ball past surging Japan goalkeeper Eiji Kawashima. Kawashima fell but kicked the ball away from Fletcher's feet.

The ball rolled into the right place at the right time," a smiling Honda said of his goal. "I just had to stick it away."

Wari rope in four

SPORTS REPORTER

Felipe Massa has all but ruled out a return to the cockpit at this season's Formula One finale in Abu Dhabi, despite medical reports claiming that his left eye has now fully healed after the qualifying accident he suffered in July's Hungarian Grand Prix.

The Brazilian had expressed an interest in completing his recovery from the 'life-threatening' injuries he sustained at the Hungaroring before the 2009 campaign was over but, with another planned return at Monza, he has now admitted that it is unlikely to happen.

The admission comes despite the Ferrari team confirming that Massa's vision has recovered fully, and that he will make an initial return to the cockpit of an F1 car when he takes the wheel at Fiorano on Monday. The 2008 season runner-up has been at Ferrari's Maranello base since the beginning of the week, and regularly working in the team's F1 simulator.

Ferrari's claims about its driver's health, which appeared on the team's official website, come after Massa flew to Paris for neurological and ophthalmological tests at Pitie Salpetriere Hospital. The examinations, conducted by the FIA, continued on Saturday, but doctors are already satisfied with the Brazilian's progress, especially considering that his eyesight was rumoured to have been in danger immediately after the incident.

"The first outcomes are positive, especially the ophthalmological exam which confirmed that Felipe, who arrived with his personal doctor Dino Altman, has recovered the functions of his left eye by 100 per cent," Ferrari said, before confirming that Massa would be in his native Brazil for next weekend's penultimate grand

prix, where he will wave the chequered flag over what could be the title decider.

Having won last season's finale on home soil, Massa had hoped to return for this year's equivalent in Abu Dhabi on 1 November, but now admits that he is more likely to concentrate on winter testing before returning to the grid for next season's opening round in Bahrain.

"My hope is to come back soon, although I know the ideal thing is to return 100 per cent at the start of next season," he conceded. "My dream would be to be at Abu Dhabi, but the chances of this happening are very, very small."

The Brazilian, who will line up alongside new signing Fernando Alonso in 2010, has paid tribute to the technology that helped to save not only his sight, but maybe also his life too.

"The fact that we have carbon-fibre helmets makes the difference," he admitted during a recent webchat. "If my accident had happened many years ago, the outcome would have been very different. But we're still working together with the FIA and the helmet manufacturers to improve safety further. I didn't feel any pain not even when I woke up in Budapest. Obviously, medicine helped me a lot but, all in all, I didn't have any problems."

Despite the obvious concerns of his family, Massa revealed that there was never any pressure on him to stop racing -- and he even planned to have a permanent reminder of the incident at home in Brazil.

"Only once [my wife Rafaella] asked me if I wanted to stop, but I told her that I don't and she understood," he said. "She asked me if there was at least a possibility of one per cent and I told her that there were not even half a per cent."

"And the helmet from Budapest? I'll have it in my house together with the others; it's part of my life."

Massa eyes 2010 return

INTERNET, undated



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The ICC had recently announced the groupings of the 2011 World Cup, saying the schedule and venues of the matches will be finalized by next year.

While India is placed in Group B along with South Africa, England and the West Indies, Pakistan will be in Group A along with world champions Australia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Canada.

Netherlands, Ireland and Bangladesh are also in Group B.

PCB against WC

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the tense relation between the two countries and not keen to take any risks. Pakistan has also indicated it would be more comfortable playing maximum number of matches in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh." The Nation quoted PCB insiders, as saying.

An Achilles injury was the latest blow in a tough year for Pietersen, which began with him losing the England captaincy after he expressed doubts in writing about then-coach Peter Moores to the England hierarchy. There followed a tour of the Caribbean, with Andrew Strauss and new coach Andy Flower in control.

"It was frustrating," Pietersen told The Independent. "I put into writing all my suggestions, as I was asked to, and [Andrew] Strauss has got the benefit of all that."

He added: "I've just had to watch it unfold this summer, which has been extremely hard for me, so maybe it was a blessing in disguise for me to be injured and away from everything so I could try to get my hunger back, because it certainly was dwindling."

Pietersen feels part of Strauss' success is down to his stand against Moores.

"He has a coach he can work with," said Pietersen. "I never had that."

"I didn't have the power or authority to run the team. I never had that as England captain."

Pietersen said he was no longer interested in the captaincy, adding: "I loved it, I enjoyed it, but now I leave it to Strauss, who's doing such a great job."

"Mentally I've left it. I respect Strauss too much to talk about the captaincy."

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