



PHOTO: AFP

NOW THAT'S A PROPER CELEBRATION! Argentina coach and legend Diego Maradona's joy knows no bounds after his striker Martin Palermo scored deep into injury time to ensure a dramatic last gasp win over Peru in their World Cup qualifying match at the Monumental Stadium in Buenos Aires on Saturday. Maradona celebrated the goal with a slide across the rain-slicked turf, but his team still need a draw from their final match away to Uruguay to ensure qualification.

Argentina survive

THE GUARDIAN



Substitute Martin Palermo's close-range finish deep into injury time earned Argentina an unbelievable last-gasp win over Peru in Buenos Aires just minutes after Diego Maradona's men looked to have suffered yet another World Cup qualifying setback.

Palermo, whom Maradona has recalled to the national team after a 10-year absence, tapped home at the far post in driving rain to send his coach diving across the sodden turf in celebration.

Hernan Rengifo had headed an equaliser for Peru in the 90th minute to cancel out debutant Gonzalo Higuain's opener early in the second half. Rengifo's goal looked to be the death knell for Argentina and quite possibly for Maradona who would have struggled to survive as manager had they failed to win against South America's bottom side.

Palermo's strike earned Argentina all three points, but even his 93rd minute strike was nearly cancelled out as Rainer Torres hit a shot straight from the kick-off which crashed against Argentina's crossbar.

The win moves Argentina up to fourth place in the South American qualifying table, a point ahead of Uruguay, whom they play on Wednesday, and two clear of Ecuador.

Maradona sprung a surprise with his team selection, leaving big-name strikers Carlos Tevez and Sergio Aguero on the bench and instead handing Higuain his first cap, but it was a frustrating first period as the home side missed a host of chances that would have settled their nerves.

Maradona turned to Palermo rather than Tevez or Aguero at half-time, but his side almost found themselves behind scarcely a minute into the second period. Former Newcastle player Nolberto Solano's corner picked out Juan Vargas who crashed a first-time left-foot volley off the top of the crossbar from well outside the area.

It was Argentina who took the lead moments later when Pablo Aimar stabbed a pass through into the right of the area, which Higuain ran on to and slotted into the far corner.

Argentina grew more nervous as the second half wore on, their chances drying up as torrential rain started to pour down. Moments after keeper Sergio Romero had made a superb point-blank save, Rengifo nodded home a cross from the left from barely two yards bring Peru level.

But just as Argentina's World Cup dreams looked to be slipping away, Palermo came up trumps for his under-fire boss. With no fewer than eight Argentinian players in a packed Peru penalty area, the Boca Juniors striker found himself in the right place at the right time to convert the easiest of chances after a low ball across the box came all the way through to him.

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SAFF CHAMPIONSHIP NTMC seeks 5 weeks to ready the players

SPORTS REPORTER

The National Team Management Committee (NTMC) of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday sought five weeks to prepare the national players for the SAFF (South Asian Football Federation) Championship to be held in Bangladesh from December 4 to 14.

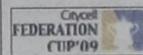
"We recommended the BFF to grant six weeks for the national team from November 1 to December 15 for the SAFF Championship. Apart from this, we have also sought a period from January 8 to 15 for the Under-23 teams for the South Asian Games to be held in Bangladesh next year," said NTMC chairman Badal Roy after the meeting at BFF House yesterday.

Bangladesh have been drawn in Group B along with Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bhutan

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Mohammedan prevail Enter semifinals via shootouts

SPORTS REPORTER



Holder Mohammedan survived a scare to move into the semifinals of the Citycell Federation Cup with a 5-4 shootout win over minnows Shuktara Jubo Sangsad at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The first quarterfinal tie rolled straight into the penalty shootout after the 90-minute regulation time ended in a 1-1 draw. National striker Zahid Hasan Emily had put star-studded Mohammedan ahead in the 25th minute before Rezaul Karim Liton converted a spot kick to level the margin for the Narayanganj outfit five minutes from time.

Both Mohammedan and Shuktara converted their first three shots from the spot to raise tension among some 5,000 spectators before Mohammedan's Nigerian goalkeeper James Paul, playing his first match following second choice keeper MN Shakil's shaky performance in the group stage, stopped a Majumder shot to give the Black and Whites an advantage.

Veteran Hasan Al Mamun and Emily found the back of the net in their fourth and fifth shots respectively to take big-

budget Mohammedan to the last four of the seasons curtain-raising tournament.

Coach Maruful Haq blamed the uneven pitch and the lack of concentration for Mohammedan's shaky performance, but thanked goalkeeper

Paul for stopping a shot to pave way for their semifinal berth.

"It was not possible to play the natural game on such an uneven pitch that eventually lead to a lack of concentration by the players and they struggled hard throughout the

match," said Maruf.

"The opponents' players (Shuktara) were boosted morally in the second half to level the margin as we could not play as expected and we must say we were lucky enough to win

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PHOTO: STAR

Mohammedan striker Zahid Hasan Emily (R) runs with the ball during their Federation Cup quarterfinal match against Shuktara Jubo Sangsad at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.



Did U Know?

The word 'gymnasium' comes from the Greek root 'gymnos' meaning nude; the literal meaning of 'gymnasium' is 'school for naked exercise.' Athletes in the ancient Olympic Games would participate in the nude.



What to WATCH

STAR Sports
Champions League T20
Somerset Sabres v Trinidad & Tobago
Live from 5:30pm
Royal Challengers v Otago Volts
Live from 9:30pm
ESPN
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 9:30pm

English youths get on the field today

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Under-19 coach Minhazul Abedin said his boys are ready to produce an improved performance in the longer version of the game against their English counterparts during the month-long home series that starts with a two-day practice match at the Fatullah Stadium today.

Bangladesh youths badly lost the two-Test series during their trip to England in July but performed commendably in the five-match ODI series.

"We had trouble adapting to the conditions initially, so we struggled in the practice matches and in Tests. But we did great in the one-day series," said Minhazul ahead of the home series that includes one Test and seven one-dayers. The former national cap-

tain admitted that Bangladesh were less competitive in the longer version than shorter versions at all levels.

"We will be conscious when we practice. England are

a very good side. Most of them play county cricket. They have Asian players as well. And they do particularly well in longer version of the game. But our

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PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh under-19 captain Mahmudul Hasan (R) speaks at a media conference ahead of their series against England under-19 side at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. Coach Minhazul Abedin is also seen alongside him.

Bangladesh A lose again

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh A were beaten by Maharashtra Cricket Association by five wickets in the first T20 tie of the two-match series at the Poona Club in Pune yesterday.

Having lost the toss yet again, Bangladesh were invited to bat. They put on a modest 117 in their allotted twenty overs for the loss of seven wickets.

Veteran all-rounder Faisal Hossain was the top scorer for Bangladesh with 51 runs off 58 deliveries while Ziaur Rahman added 23 and paceman Dollar Mahmud hit a quick-fire 20 off just 13 balls to give some

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Strauss may not come

Cricket

INTERNET, undated

England captain Andrew Strauss has admitted he may sit out the Bangladesh tour in February in a bid to stay at the peak of his powers in the run up to the Ashes defence next winter.

After one of the busiest international summer on record, England's schedule shows no signs of slowing down with a tour to South Africa followed by the Bangladesh trip and another World Twenty20 in the West Indies all before the domestic programme gets under way.

"I can't guarantee anything. I don't know what will happen in the next few months. We only select one tour at a time," he told BBC Radio Five's Sportsweek programme. "The South Africa tour is a massive one and then we've got Bangladesh in February and March."

He added: "When we select that we'll sit down and see where we are as a side with injuries, niggles and all that stuff. We'll sit down and decide the best course of action."

"We have a busy summer of cricket before the Ashes in Australia so there's a lot of cricket ahead. The key is to make sure the players are fresh but at the same time you don't

want to be tinkering with the side too much.

"The Bangladesh tour is quite a useful one in our development in terms of playing on

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Federation Cup Football
Rahmatgani v Feni Soccer Club (5:00pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
BCB Selection XI v England U-19
Two-Day Practice Match, Day 1
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium