



Sunderland striker Asamoah Gyan (C) scores the equalising goal against Tottenham Hotspurs during their Premier League encounter at White Hart Lane on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Gyan denies Spurs

AFP, London



Tottenham manager Harry Redknapp lashed out at World Cup final referee Howard Webb after Spurs dropped precious Premier League points in a 1-1 draw with Sunderland on Thursday.

Redknapp was left fuming after Webb failed to award Spurs a penalty when David Bentley was brought down by a challenge from Boudewijn Zenden, booking Bentley instead for diving.

And the Spurs boss also condemned Webb for only giving a yellow card to Sunderland midfielder Lee Cattermole, who triggered a second half melee after clattering into Tottenham playmaker Luka Modric.

Speaking about the penalty incident, Redknapp commented: "It was a penalty, a blatant penalty, wasn't it? I just watched the replay of it."

"He's not got anything against Tottenham or anybody else but it's how he saw it. I've never been one for criticising referees; it's never been my game."

"But it was a blatant penalty tonight. If you get the penalty, it could make a big difference."

Redknapp was also incensed by Webb's handling of Cattermole's challenge on Modric, which had sent the diminutive Croatian star crumpling to the turf.

"I don't know what (Cattermole) does other weeks; I'm only interested in that tackle today and it was a bad tackle in my opinion," Redknapp said.

"Could have broken his leg easily. He's (Modric) got some bad marks on his leg but he was lucky he didn't break his leg."

"He (Webb) has to understand the difference between going over the top of the ball and playing the ball."

Earlier, Redknapp had watched in frustration after a defensive blunder involving William Gallas and Younes Kaboul allowed Sunderland's Ghana striker Asamoah Gyan to score and cancel out Rafael Van der Vaart's opener.

Boos rang out amongst frustrated Spurs

supporters as the match finished deadlocked -- another factor that left Redknapp seething.

"What have they got to moan about? We couldn't have done any more tonight; we couldn't have tried any harder," Redknapp said.

The result left Spurs in sixth place in the standings after 12 games, nine points behind league leaders Chelsea and four points adrift of Manchester City, who occupy the fourth Champions League qualifying spot.

Sunderland are just behind Spurs in seventh, level on points and goal difference but trailing by virtue of fewer goals scored.

In Tuesday's other game, Stoke ended their four-match losing streak in an entertaining 3-2 victory over Birmingham at the Britannia Stadium.

Stoke looked to have squandered a certain three points after Birmingham fought back from 2-0 down in the second half.

But a winner five minutes from time by Dean Whitehead sealed maximum points for the Potters, who moved up to 15th place. The loss left Birmingham hovering just above the relegation zone in 17th.

Stoke had taken the lead on the stroke of half-time, skipper Robert Huth lashing in from close range after a Ricardo Fuller shot had cannoned off two Birmingham defenders.

The Potters looked to be cruising to victory midway through the second half when Fuller curled in a superb shot from distance to make it 2-0.

But Fuller's strike was the signal for a spirited Birmingham fightback. Kevin Fahey pulled one back for the Blues, slamming in from 18 yards and two minutes later Birmingham were level.

An exquisite Sebastian Larsson cross to the far post was met by Cameron Jerome, rising high to glance in past Asmir Begovic.

Yet just when Birmingham had clawed their way back into the game, Whitehead struck to ease the pressure on Stoke boss Tony Pulis.

"Our main priority was to get the three points and we got that in the end," Whitehead told Sky Sports. "They put us under a lot of pressure and pushed us back but it was nice to get the win in the end."

## RESULTS

Stoke 3 (Huth 44, Fuller 71, Whitehead 85) Birmingham 2 (Fahey 74, Jerome 76)  
Tottenham 1 (Van der Vaart 65) Sunderland 1 (Gyan 67)

## Loew set to call-up youngsters

REUTERS, Berlin

Germany coach Joachim Loew is to include five youngsters from November 17 game Loew said Andre Schuerle and Lewis Holtby, who have helped Mainz to their best Bundesliga start, would be named.

A day before he officially announces the squad for the November 17 game Loew said Andre Schuerle and Lewis Holtby, who have helped Mainz to their best Bundesliga start, would be named.

"Mainz players Schuerle and Holtby as well as Dortmund's Mario Goetze, Mats Hummels and Kevin Grosskreutz will for sure be there," he told Bild newspaper on Wednesday.

Dortmund lead the Bundesliga with 28 points from 11 games, four ahead of Mainz with traditional powerhouses Bayern Munich, Werder Bremen and Schalke 04 struggling.

Hummels, 21, and Grosskreutz, 22, have one cap each, while 20-year-olds Holtby and Schuerle and 18-year-old Goetze have yet to feature for Germany.

"All these players have played very well for a long period of time this season," said Loew. "I am convinced they can make the leap on to the big international stage."

"The old argument that you have to perform for two or three years before earning a call-up does not count for me. It can also happen after a few weeks and age does not matter."

Loew fielded Germany's youngest World Cup team in 76 years in June and July, with an average age of under 25, as they finished third in South Africa.

## Blanc ready to succeed Fergie

SOCCERNET

France coach Laurent Blanc has admitted he "could be interested" in managing Manchester United when Sir Alex Ferguson retires, but stressed that until that day comes he is fully focused on his job with Les Bleus.

"We are in a good way at the moment," he said. "The penalties we would probably have not got two months ago. The motivation shown by the players compensates for the fatigue they are feeling. Hosting a semifinal would be really nice," added Fernandez, whose side have never won the League Cup trophy.

His St Etienne counterpart Christophe Galtier said that

# Forlan offered to Real

Football

AFP, Madrid

Atletico Madrid have offered to sell Diego Forlan, voted the best player at the World Cup, to cross-town rivals Real for 18 million euros, a Spanish sports newspaper said Wednesday.

The news could come as a disappointment to Tottenham and Juventus, who are both reportedly interested in signing the Uruguayan striker, although it is not clear whether Real would be interested in the 31-year-old.

The daily Marca said the offer did not come to Real Madrid directly but through an authorized intermediary for Atletico.

The proposed price tag of 18 million euros (25 million dollars) would be just half of his buyout clause, and is negotiable, it said.

"Atletico intends to sound out the possibility of Forlan's transfer in January for one reason above all: the request of its coach Quique Sanchez Flores," said Marca, which did not quote any sources in the report.

Forlan has had a disappointing start to this season, scoring just three league goals, the last

on September 11.

Marca said Real "for the moment is not considering buying Diego Forlan," but at the club "they have learnt to never say never."

Real coach Jose Mourinho said last month that he had no plans to sign more players during the winter transfer window.

Forlan left Manchester United - where he had two inconsistent seasons - in 2004 for Villarreal, who then sold him to Atletico in 2007 for 21 million euros.

He has since been an integral part of the Atletico side, which won the UEFA Europa Cup last season with the Uruguayan scoring both goals in the club's 2-1 defeat of English side Fulham in the final.

The player has twice won the award as the Spanish Primera Liga's top scorer and twice won the European Golden Boot.

He was also awarded the Golden Ball as the best player of the 2010 World Cup after grabbing five goals in tournament, in which Uruguay finished in fourth place.

Forlan indicated in an interview with Marca last month that he could leave Spain for the English Premiership if the right offer comes along.

## Mourinho backing Benzema

AFP, Madrid

Jose Mourinho is backing French striker Karim Benzema to make the grade at Real Madrid, insisting he is satisfied with his recent showings and that "he will end up in the starting line-up."

"He is playing very well at the moment," said Mourinho ahead of the Spanish Cup return with Real Murcia, who held his stars to a goalless draw in the opening leg.

"He has a lot of class and does what we expect of him - he will start the game and we need him to score. It is a decisive match and I am waiting for a positive response from him as in the last few matches. If he works to that end he will end up in the starting line-up."

Benzema has largely featured from the bench so far this season and Mourinho has suggested he needs to galvanise his attitude. But in the recent win at Alicante and then in the draw away to AC Milan in the Champions League he impressed and laid out a goal in both games.

## Balotelli loses appeal

AFP, London

Manchester City striker Mario Balotelli has lost his appeal against a three-game ban after being sent-off against West Brom in the Premier League last weekend.

The Football Association upheld Tuesday the straight red card Balotelli, who scored both goals in a 2-0 win, received for violent conduct following a clash with Youssouf Mulumbu.

An FA statement said: "At a Regulatory Commission hearing today, a claim that the standard punishment is clearly excessive from Manchester City's Mario Balotelli was dismissed. "As a result, Balotelli will serve a three-match suspension with immediate effect."

## Gervinho punished

AFP, Lille

Lille's Ivorian international striker Gervinho on Tuesday received a 15-month suspended jail term and was fined 20,000 euros for the repeat offence of driving without a licence.

The court went above the one-year suspended sentence and 15,000-euro fine requested by public prosecutors against Gervinho, whose full name is Gervais Yao Kouassi.

The court was told how the 23-year-old footballer struck a young motorcyclist after running a stop sign on November 27, 2009 while driving his 4x4 home from training at Villeneuve-d'Ascq, near Lille.

The young victim, who is claiming 6,000 euros in damages after slightly injuring his hand, claimed that the player refused to give his details or telephone for help and had tried to buy his silence.

Two days later Gervinho was stopped by police in possession of a fake Ivorian drivers' licence.

# Auxerre reach semis

Football

AFP, Paris

Auxerre reached the French League Cup semifinals on Tuesday after two penalties saw them to a 2-0 victory over St Etienne and edge them closer to securing their first trophy since the French Cup in 2005.

Benoit Pedretti and Polish international Dariusz Dudka successfully converted their respective penalties in the 15th and 48th minutes to give the hosts a spot in the last four to extend their recent unbeaten run, after a poor start to the season, to six in all competitions including a fine Champions League win over Ajax last week.

In contrast St Etienne were going down to their third successive defeat and have won only once since beating Lyon on September 25th and that was against Bordeaux in the League Cup in the last 16.

Auxerre coach Jean Fernandez said that the luck the side had been missing earlier in the season was now going their way.

"We are in a good way at the moment," he said.

"The penalties we would probably have not got two months ago. The motivation shown by the players compensates for the fatigue they are feeling. Hosting a semifinal would be really nice," added Fernandez, whose side have never won the League Cup trophy.

His St Etienne counterpart Christophe Galtier said that

there was not much to be put right in the side.

"We have to refocus on the championship," he said.

"We have to straighten the rifle's sights but not to panic. We have to stay calm."

"There is of course the disappointment at being

we were in the League Cup quarter-finals. We are in the middle of a difficult period. But we have to keep a stiff upper lip."

Pedretti - who looked set for a long international career after winning over 20 caps for France up to 2006 but has not



PHOTO: AFP

Auxerre midfielder Benoit Pedretti celebrates his goal against Saint-Etienne during their French Cup tie at the Abbe Deschamps Stadium on Tuesday.

eliminated but there is no illness to remedy.

"We just have to keep on pushing and this moment will pass. We have 18 points in the championship (just three points off leaders Brest) and

featured since - tucked away his penalty after Sylvain Marchal was adjudged to have handled Roy Contout's cross while Dudka converted his when Contout was upended by Josuah Guilavogui.

# Rafa facing difficulties

Football

AFP, Rome

Inter Milan coach Rafael Benitez said Tuesday he had not expected "so many problems" to tackle in his first few weeks after succeeding Jose Mourinho, the man who led the club to a treble last season.

Speaking ahead of Wednesday's encounter with Lecce, former Liverpool boss Benitez said: "No, I did not expect as many problems on the part of a team which had just come off a season where it won everything."

"The players are working well, but there are also difficulties."

Inter are coming off a Champions League loss at Tottenham and a disappointing home draw with modest Brescia.

Those results came in the absence of a raft of injured players such as Brazilian keeper Julio Cesar, defensive compatriot Maicon, Argentine defender Walter Samuel - who will be out for six months - as well as midfielders Thiago Motta, Esteban Cambiasso and Wesley Sneijder.

Inter are now three points adrift of Serie A leaders Lazio and one point behind city rivals AC Milan as they bid to retain their domestic crown.

"We must work to get into the best position possible in January and we will see what we can do in January in the transfer window," said Benitez.

"We will have to do something after Walter's injury - he is an important player."

Benitez refused to be drawn on the additional significance of Sunday's Milan derby.

"The most important match is always the next one. We must defeat Lecce, then we will think about the derby."

# Hosts leave it late

AFP, Guangzhou



Desperate China needed a dramatic winning goal in the fourth minute of injury time to keep their Asian Games hopes alive in a come-from-behind 2-1 win over Kyrgyzstan on Wednesday.

Wu Xi struck the decisive goal which secured the three points and set-up a winner takes all clash with Malaysia on Saturday to secure an automatic qualifying place alongside Group A rivals Japan.

The Japanese side made sure of their place in the next stage with a 2-0 win over the Malaysians earlier in the day.

North Korea also reached the second round with a 3-0 win over the Palestinian territories, a victory which kept up their 100-per cent record in Group C.

China had lost 3-0 to Japan in their opening game and the team's state of siege was underlined by coach Sun Wei's decision to drop first choice goalkeeper Wang Dalei.

Wang had blasted the country's demanding fans as 'morons' after being widely attacked for his performance against Japan.

However, his replacement Zhang Shichang's first task was to pick the ball out of the net after just five minutes when Pavel Sidorenko scored.

China were on top for the rest of the game with Wang Xuanhong having a diving header saved by Maksim Akapov while Moshapa Murehemaitjiang saw a neat chip come back off the crossbar.

China finally levelled seven minutes from time when substitute Lu Wenjun headed in a

teasing left-wing cross from Murehemaitjiang. They wasted a golden opportunity in stoppage time when Zhang Yuan hit the post with Li Kai pushing the rebound onto the crossbar.

But Wu's 25-yard strike in the fourth minute of stoppage time gave China the three points before Lu Peng's controversial red card dampened the celebrations.

Japan had to work hard against a plucky Malaysia but goals from Kensuke Nagai and Hotaru Yamaguchi were enough to hand them the win.

"We have won two matches. Now I hope the boys have the confidence to win every match and make fewer mistakes in the future," said Japan coach Takashi Sekizuka.

In Group C, South Korea made amends for their upset defeat to neighbours North Korea by thrashing Jordan 4-0.

Koo Ja-Cheol got the ball rolling on 24 minutes with a fine strike and they went to the break two-up after he got another in the dying seconds.

Kim Bo-Kyung and Cho Young-Cheol added two more goals in the second half.

South Korea coach Hong Myung-Bo praised Monaco striker Park Chu-Young.

"Park came back into the team and created many chances for the young players," said Hong.

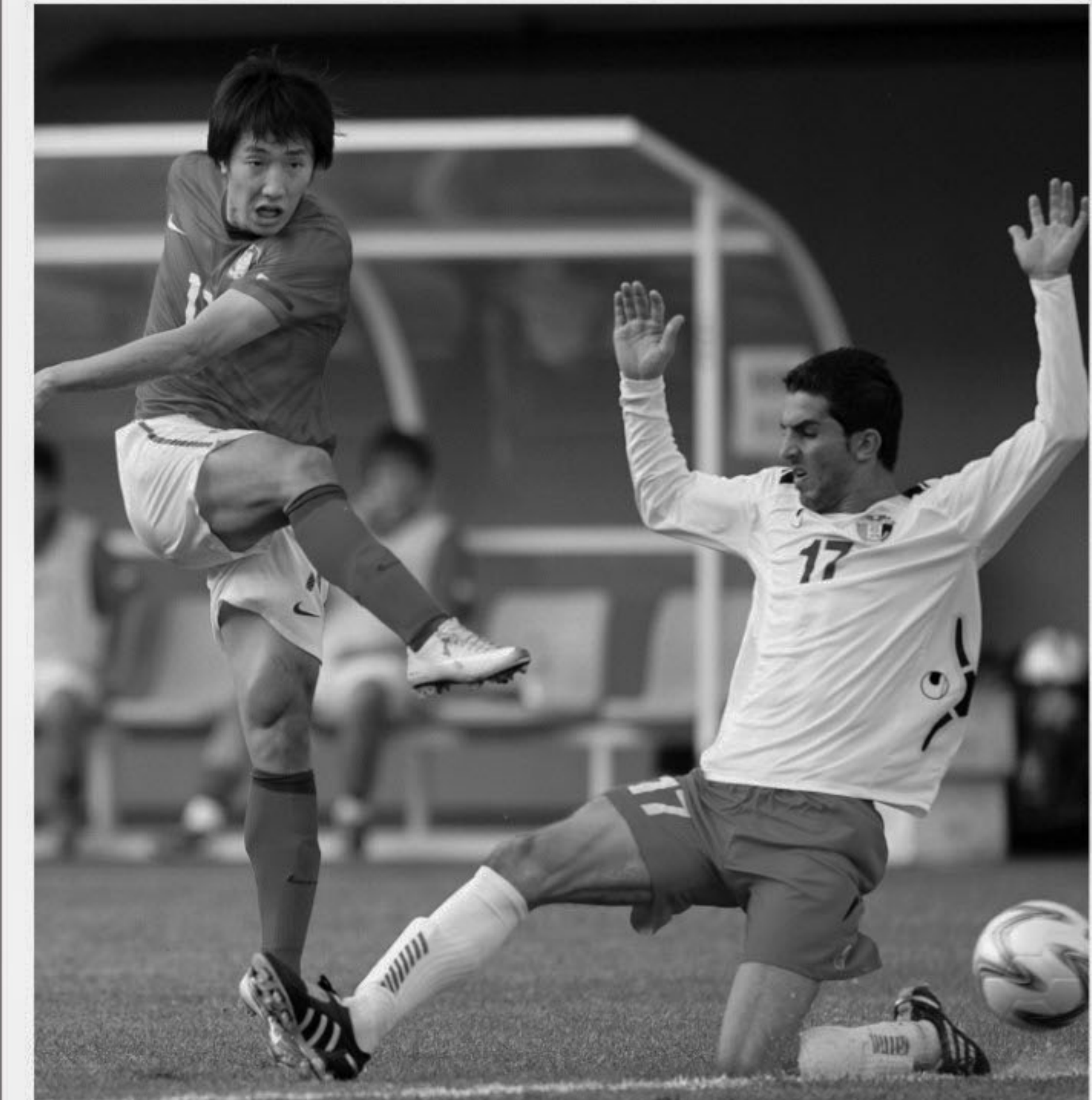
North Korea, who have brought 10 players to Guangzhou who featured at the World Cup in South Africa, were too good for the Palestinian territories with Kim Kuk-Jin, Choe Kum-Chol and Pak Kwang-Ryon all on target.

In Group B, 2002 champions Iran edged Bahrain 1-0 thanks to a late first-half goal from Karim Ansari to virtually wrap-up a second round spot.

Turkmenistan romped to a 6-2 win over Vietnam in the day's other game.

## RESULTS

Malaysia 0 Japan 2 (Nagai 26, Yamaguchi 64)  
China 2 (Lu Wenjun 83, Wu Xi 90+4)  
Kyrgyzstan 1 (Sidorenko 5)  
Vietnam 2 (Trong Hoang Nguyen 85, Anh Duc Nguyen 87) Turkmenistan 6 (Geldiyev 17, Boliyan 24, 74, Belyh 49, Amanov 62, 83)  
Iran 1 (Ansari 45+1) Bahrain 0  
South Korea 4 (Koo Ja-Cheol 21, 44, Kim Bo-Kyung 47, Cho Young-Cheol 78) Jordan 0  
Palestinian territories 0 North Korea 3 (Kim Kuk-Jin 8, Choe Kum-Chol 28, Pak



Yaser al-Rawashdeh (R) of Jordan blocks a shot by Cho Young-Cheol of South Korea during their Asian Games clash in Guangzhou yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP