

Korea end in style

Football

AFP, Doha

South Korea bowed out of the Asian Cup in style by edging Uzbekistan 3-2 in an entertaining third-place play-off on Friday to secure an automatic place at the 2015 tournament in Australia.

Cho Kwang-Rae's men looked on course for a handsome victory at 3-0 up in the first-half, but Uzbekistan clawed back the deficit to salvage some pride after their 6-0 drubbing by Australia in the semi-finals.

Koo Ja-Cheol's fifth goal of the competition, making him outright top scorer, set South Korea on their way, before Ji Dong-Won claimed a brace with a pair of artfully constructed strikes.

Goals either side of half-time from Alexander Geynrikh brought the Uzbeks back into the game, but Korea held on to claim third place at the continental showpiece for the third time in four tournaments.

Koo broke the deadlock in the 17th minute at the Al-Sadd Stadium, calmly beating Uzbek goalkeeper Ignaty Nesterov after Lee Yong-Rae had launched a barrelling one-man counter-attack from deep inside the Korean half.

Odil Akhmedov was partly at fault for the goal, allowing Lee Yong-Rae's pass to roll beneath his foot, but the reluctant centre-back almost atoned with a 22-yard curler that landed a

yard or two wide of the right-hand post.

Korea's football has received plenty of plaudits during the tournament and Ji's first goal in the 28th minute was a fine example of their craft.

A slick exchange involving Lee Young-Pyo, Ki Sung-Yueng, Lee Chung-Yong and Koo culminated in Ji receiving the ball in space inside the penalty area, and the 19-year-old striker rattled the ball into the bottom-left corner.

South Korean goalkeeper Jung Sung-Ryong was called into action by a low strike from Azizbek Haydarov before Ji claimed his second, a magnificent header from a Hong Jeong-Ho cross that left Nesterov clutching at thin air.

The Koreans were cruising, but an untidy challenge by Hwang Jae-Won on Olim Novkarov allowed Geynrikh to pull one back from the penalty spot on the stroke of half-time.

The bald striker lashed his spot-kick home at the second attempt, after a daring chipped effort had been chalked off for encroachment.

Geynrikh's second, seven minutes into the second period, was a delightful goal, as he leapt to bring down a left-wing cross before tricking his way past Lee Jung-Soo and beating Jung at his near post.

Re-energised, Uzbekistan drove forward in search of an equaliser, but it was Korea who came closest to another goal, with Ji's low strike bouncing back off the post.



South Korea forward Ji Dong-Won (R) tries to dribble past Uzbekistan midfielder Odil Ahmedov during their Asian Cup third place match in Doha on Friday.

PHOTO:
AFP

Kagawa arrives in Japan

Football

AFP, Tokyo

Japan forward Shinji Kagawa flew back to Tokyo on Saturday to undergo surgery on a foot injury he picked up in the Blue Samurai's Asian Cup semifinal win over South Korea in the week.

The 21-year-old was substituted in the 87th minute of Japan's penalty shoot-out victory on

Tuesday in Qatar and a scan later confirmed a broken metatarsal in his right foot.

Kagawa appeared at Tokyo's Narita airport in a wheelchair, with his right bound up.

But the star player put his faith in his team mates to win the Cup when they go up against Australia in the final in Doha later Saturday.

"The team has overcome many difficult times before," Kagawa told reporters. "I'm sure they will play a great game in the final."



STAR Cricket

Australia v England

Fifth ODI

Live from 9:20am

STAR Sports

Australian Open

Men's Singles Final

Live from 2:30pm

TEN Action

La Liga

Osasuna v Real Madrid



Bangladesh League

Sk Jamal v Feni Soccer

Venue: Kamalapur Stadium



Japan striker Shinji Kagawa arrives at Narita airport in Tokyo yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Liverpool agree Suarez deal

Football

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool confirmed Friday they have agreed a deal with Dutch side Ajax to sign Uruguayan striker Luis Suarez, just hours after they turned down an attempt by Chelsea to relieve them of Fernando Torres.

The English giants will pay a fee of up to 26.5 million euros (22.8 million pounds) subject to the player passing a medical and agreeing personal terms.

Suarez's much-anticipated move to Merseyside had been held up after the two clubs had failed to reach agreement on a transfer fee.

However 24-year-old Suarez had spoken

enthusiastically about the prospect of a move to England, telling the Sunday Times in an interview last week that he believed he could emulate the success of Carlos Tevez in the Premier League.

"(England) is a league that attracts me, a country where the football is really good," said Suarez, who notoriously committed a goal-line handball which saved Uruguay from elimination in the World Cup against Ghana last year.

"Alongside the Spanish league it is the best in the world. In England you have a lot of clubs with aspirations

to become champions and they are also very strong in the Champions League at the European level.

"I used to think that English football was not my style. But I saw Tevez play at Boca and Corinthians and I never imagined that he would play in the Premier League.

"When I see the way that Tevez plays there I think I can be a big name in England. It's because of the energy, and the spirit they put into the game in England. Now, I think it's a kind of football that suits me."

The deal comes on the same day that Liverpool turned down a bid of 35 million pounds from Chelsea for Spanish international striker Torres.

The 26-year-old Torres had already pleaded with Liverpool to prove his long-term future lies at Anfield by bringing in better players to bolster a team which has looked reborn under Kenny Dalglish.

Having scored just once in seven matches prior to the Scot's appointment as manager he has hit three in his last four games - and that would have been four in four had he not had a goal wrongly ruled out for offside in Wednesday's win over Fulham.

Suarez has been a prolific scorer in the Dutch championship, scoring 111 goals in 159 matches since joining Ajax from Groningen in 2007.

SPORTS POLL

Are you satisfied with the Tigers squad for the World Cup?

Yes 68.3%

No 31.7%

TOTAL VOTES: 654

WEEKLY QUESTION

Do you think Mashrafe Bin Mortaza will play the World Cup?

Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast vote

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Ballack inspires Leverkusen

AFP, Berlin



Germany captain Michael Ballack made his first start since September on Friday as Bayer Leverkusen side defeated Hanover 2-0 to cut the gap on Bundesliga leaders Dortmund to eight points.

Arturo Vidal gave Leverkusen a 21st-minute lead with Simon Rolfes adding the second goal three minutes before the interval as Ballack, who had been sidelined with a leg injury since September, injected a little life back into the title race.

Dortmund can restore their 11-point lead at the top when they face Wolfsburg on Saturday.

Ballack picked up his injury in the first fixture between the two teams in September and the man responsible for the crunching challenge, Portugal's Sergio Pinto, faced him again on Friday.

"I'm rather satisfied with my form even if I'm missing a few things," said Ballack, who came off the bench in the win against Moenchengladbach last weekend.

"I need matches, but I am not an exception. Everybody is the same. I am not going to think about what happened, it's in the past. There was no intention to hurt me.

"The win tonight was difficult to go out and search for, but it was deserved. We need to improve if we are going to finish second, that's our objective."

Despite his return to the starting side, Ballack still faces a battle to convince Germany coach Joachim Low to recall him for the friendly international against Italy on February 9.



Bayer Leverkusen captain Simon Rolfes (R) celebrates his goal with teammate Michael Ballack during their Bundesliga encounter against Hanover in Leverkusen on Friday.

PHOTO:
AFP

IN brief

Inter snap up Pazzini

AFP, Rome

Italian international striker Giampaolo Pazzini has left Sampdoria for Inter Milan on a contract that runs until June 2015, his new club announced Friday.

Frenchman Jonathan Biabiany moves the other way, the Milan outfit added, without disclosing any transfer sums.

Pazzini, 26, has won 14 caps for Italy, scoring one goal.

Vela joins West Brom

AFP, London

Arsenal's Mexican international striker Carlos Vela joined struggling Premier League rivals West Brom on loan until the end of the season on Friday.

The 21-year-old, who was in his country's World Cup squad, has made just 13 appearances for the Gunners this season, scoring three goals.

In total he has played 62 times for Arsene Wenger's men, scoring 11 times.

"I'd like to officially welcome Carlos, who is an exciting signing for this club," said West Brom coach Roberto Di Matteo.

"Carlo has great technical ability and pace and we're hoping he can make a big impact during the remainder of the season.

"There's no doubt that Carlos has the potential to become a great player and it will hopefully be a win-win situation, where we help him by giving him game time in the Premier League while he helps us achieve our goal."

Prize money next time

AFP, Doha

Asian football chief Mohammed bin Hammam said on Saturday that prize money will be introduced to the Asian Cup from the 2015 tournament in Australia onwards.

Until now, no incentives have been offered, unlike at the FIFA World Cup, where each team that exited at the group phase in South Africa got eight million dollars and tournament winners Spain took home 30 million.

The 2015 Asian Cup will be held in Australia and 10 million dollars will be made available to share between the first-, second- and third-placed teams.

"Our revenues so far have been very limited and used to support our development programmes and for competition expenses," said Bin Hammam.

"But it is our expectation that in the coming cycle there will be prize money. In 2015, we can allocate 10 million dollars in prize money."

Shinji poised for Stuttgart

AFP, Doha

Japan striker Shinji Okazaki confirmed on Saturday that he is poised to join German side Stuttgart from J-League club Shimizu S-Pulse after the Asian Cup.

The tenacious 24-year-old forward will board a plane to Germany following Japan's Asian Cup final match against Australia later on Saturday and is expected to complete his move to Stuttgart next week.

Okazaki claimed a hat-trick in Japan's 5-0 rout of Saudi Arabia in the Asian Cup group phase and also scored from the spot in the penalty shoot-out win over South Korea in the semi-finals.

He said he had avoided speculation about his future in order to concentrate on the tournament in Doha.

"I wanted to concentrate on the Asian Cup,"