

PRE-OLYMPIC QUALIFIER

Kuwait ease through

Football

ANISUR RAHMAN

Kuwait saw off Bangladesh 3-0 in the second leg of the Pre-Olympic Qualifiers at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday to move into the second round with a 5-0 aggregate win. Stand-in-captain Yousef Al Sulaiman struck either half of the break after defender Fahad Al Ansari had put the visitors ahead early in front of some 1000 spectators at the new-look stadium in the first international football match after the gala ceremony of the ICC Cricket World Cup. As predicted, Kuwait dominated the game from the outset with a 3-5-2 formation against Bangladesh's 4-4-2 and did not give the home side any chance of an upset. The visitors took only two minutes to take the lead through Ansari, who found himself unmarked on the edge of the six-yard box and produced a glancing header on a Hamad Ali corner giving Bangladesh goalkeeper Mohammad Nehal no time to react. However, Rubcic's boys, who only had two days of preparation before the game due to the hectic Bangladesh

League fixtures, grew in confidence as the match progressed and mustered a few attacks. But there was clear lack of coordination among the three departments and they could hardly break the opponents' backline. Once when they did break though striker Shakhawat Hossain Rony failed to convert the opportunity. The Abahani striker's header narrowly missed the target from a Linkon corner on the half hour mark. Kuwait captain Sulaiman, who is also a member of their senior side, made Bangladesh pay for that mistake when headed home a Mohammad Al Dhefiri freekick in the first half stoppage time to go to the break with a 2-0 lead. After the resumption, the Middle Eastern side stepped up the attack and came close to scoring when Sulaiman rattled the Bangladesh bar two minutes into the second half. Sulaiman though got his second of the match with a brilliant set-piece one minute before the end of regulation time. Linkon had brought down a Kuwait player just outside the danger zone and Sulaiman coolly sent a curler over the wall and into the net to make it 3-0. Despite losing, Bangladesh coach Robert Rubcic expressed his satisfaction with the team's performance at

the post-match press conference: "Apart from conceding the goals, the boys played well compared to the first leg in Kuwait. I think the team can do well at the international level if they spend more time together." "We thought Bangladesh would play open and they did it, which actually made our job easier as we found more space to shoot on target. We did not press for goals rather concentrated on set-pieces and availed the opportunities that came our way," said Kuwait coach Maher Al Shammari. **SQUADS BANGLADESH:** Mohammad Nehal, Alamgir Kabir Rana, Uttam Kumar Bonik, Shakhawat Hossain Rony, Linkon, Monaem Khan Raju, Mithun Chowdhury (Naimur Rahman Shahed), Mintu Sheikh, Mohammad Yousuf, Shahedul Alam and Yeamin Hossain Munna. **KUWAIT:** Ahmed Al Khaledi, Sami Al Sanea (Faisal Al Harbi), Mohammad Al Dhifri, Ahmed Al Rashidi, Yousef Al Sulaiman, Hamad Ali (Abdulahadi Khudhair), Ghazi Al Qahadi, Fahad Al Ansari, Jaber Al Mutairi, Abdul Aziz Al Saleemi (Omar Buhamad), Khaled Hajiah. **Referee:** Aonkr Apisit (Thailand)



PHOTO: STAR
Kuwait captain Yousef Al Sulaiman (2nd from L) is congratulated by teammates after scoring one of his two goals against Bangladesh in their Pre-Olympic Qualifier at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Forlan going to Chechnya

AFP, Madrid
Terek Grozny, the small but ambitious side from Russia's war-torn Chechnya, is eyeing Atletico Madrid's Diego Forlan and has put together a tempting offer for the Uruguayan, a Spanish sports daily said Wednesday. Terek, coached by Dutch legend Ruud Gullit, would give the World Cup star 7.5 million euros per year over the next two seasons, rising to 10 million euros depending on goals scored and if the club qualifies for Europe, the Marca newspaper said. He would also receive two cars, a house and private security. It said the offer was made in Madrid by a "supposed" representative of the Russian Premier Division outfit. However, the paper quotes his agent as saying he "does not consider it to be official. In fact, the (Terek) intermediary was not even Russian - he spoke French" and he is waiting for "the Russians to come in person."

Shakhtar stroll past Roma

AFP, Donetsk

Ukrainian side Shakhtar Donetsk made no mistake in ensuring they reached the Champions League quarterfinals for the first time with an impressive 3-0 victory over 10-man AS Roma to win 6-2 on aggregate here on Tuesday. Goals by Tomas Hubchmann, outstanding Brazilian Willian and Eduardo extended the 2009 UEFA Cup winners' unbeaten home record in European competition to October 2008 when they went down to Sporting Lisbon. After suffering a 3-2 home defeat in the first leg, Roma's task was made virtually impossible when they were reduced to 10 men late in the first-half when Philippe Mexes was sent off for a second yellow card. Czech midfielder Hubchmann took the congratulations of his team (known as the 'Pitmen' as they come from a mining region) in the 18th minute for the goal - his first in 17 months - though it appeared that he had not got a touch to Willian's low cross. However, Roma coach Vincenzo Montella will look askance at his defence who allowed such an innocuous goal to give the visitors an

even more challenging task in coming back and becoming only the second side since Ajax in the 1995/96 edition to overcome a home loss in the first leg. Roma, though, wasted a golden opportunity to reduce the deficit just before the half hour mark as English referee Howard Webb awarded them a penalty after Armenian international Henrik Mkhitaryan was penalised for holding back Marco Borriello. But Roma's leading scorer then produced a dreadful effort which was saved by Andriy Pyatov.

The visitors' chances took another huge blow in the 41st minute when their French central defender Mexes was sent off after being booked for a second time by World Cup final referee Webb when he tugged back Luis Adriano. However, Webb was found wanting on the stroke of half-time when he booked Shakhtar captain Dario Srna instead of Roma midfielder Daniele di Rossi, who merited a red card for a clear and malicious elbow on Srna and made worse as the referee failed to award a penalty as the offence took

place inside the Italians' penalty area. The energetic Mkhitaryan provided the first action of the second-half as he cut in from the right and unleashed a fierce shot from outside the box but Roma goalkeeper Doni beat it away. However, there was little Doni could do in the 58th minute as the 22-year-old Willian produced a finish of the highest class, bringing down a corner from outside the box and curling a half-volley into the top far corner to send the Ukrainian crowd into raptures.



PHOTO: AFP
Shakhtar Donetsk striker Eduardo (L) scores the third goal past Roma goalkeeper Doni during their Champions League clash in Donetsk on Tuesday.

Van Persie blasts ref

AFP, Barcelona

Arsenal's Dutch forward Robin van Persie labelled his sending-off in the 3-1 Champions League Last 16 second leg defeat by Barcelona as a 'joke' here on Tuesday. Van Persie, who was only passed fit to play on the morning of the match, was scathing about Swiss referee Massimo Busacca questioning why he even officiated the match after a second booking in the second-half for shooting after the whistle had gone saw him sent off. "My sending off was hugely influential on the outcome of the match," Van Persie told Sky Sports. "It was a total joke. How can I hear the whistle when there are 95,000 fans jumping up and making noise. "He's (Busacca) been bad all evening and I don't know why he's here. "They are unbelievable these people." Busacca was according to reports involved in a fiery exchange with Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger in the tunnel after the final whistle but the Gunners handler refused to go into details. "I told him what I thought about his decision face to face," he told Sky Sports. "He must never have played football at that level (the highest level) to have made that decision as he did."

Real to sell Kaka

Football

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid hopes to offload its injury-plagued Brazilian star Kaka in the summer close season, although he still has four years left on his contract, a Spanish sports daily said Wednesday. The 28-year-old midfielder, signed from AC Milan in 2009 for 65 million euros, underwent surgery on his left knee on August 5 and only returned to training in December. The Spanish club then announced on Tuesday that he would be sidelined for another two weeks after he injured his same knee again. "Real Madrid will try to sell Kaka in June," the Madrid-based sports newspaper AS said in a front-page story. "His poor showing in these two seasons determined the change in policy on the

Brazilian. He was out for 85 days last season. "The problem is that he still has four years left on his (six-year) contract at nine million euros net per season," or 15 million with taxes, said AS, which did not quote any sources for the report. "That is a total of 60 million euros, and the big question is which club would take on that salary. Not to mention that he would not go free and there would be a market price on his transfer." Coach Jose Mourinho "is also tired of and disappointed with the player. The coach does not understand that a star player is not involved in the group." Earlier this month Mourinho had said he was putting no pressure on Kaka to return to form after his knee surgery in August. The latest injury means Kaka will miss Real's next league match at home against Hercules as well as next week's Champions League last-16 second leg against Lyon.

Dangerman touches down

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It has always been No 5 where I batted and I work the ball around, build my innings so there's no secret, just working on the method," added Morgan. But as Broad has said on Tuesday, the team itself is excited with his return to the England fold but Morgan is far from burdened by the expectation. "It doesn't really bother me at all. It is the same role and I'd try and execute my skills as well as I can. I don't really think about it," he said. The expectation on the 24-year-old rises due to his

abilities as well as his experience at the big stage, Morgan having played the 2007 World Cup for Ireland and on Friday will become the fourth player after Kepler Wessels (Australia and South Africa), Andy Cummins (West Indies and Canada) and Ed Joyce (England and Ireland) to play World Cups for two different countries. "I played for Ireland and all the time in that World Cup, I said I wanted to play for England. It is the bigger picture and the bigger plan," he said, also admitting that he watched the latter half of

the England-Ireland game. "Kevin O'Brien played an extraordinary innings. I was pretty distraught that we lost because we didn't get the result we wanted. But Ireland played well," said Morgan.

Sponsors

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him," said Tarek Uddin, UCBL media manager. "It doesn't harm our relationship with Shakib," he said. Pepsi too has said there is no chance of the soft drink giant pulling out.

Messi brace

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On the point of half time Barca finally found their way through as Andres Iniesta played in Messi and the Argentine kept his head to delicately chip the ball over the keeper and volley it into an empty goal. It appeared as though the visitors would be forced out of their shells but they drew level in bizarre circumstances. A corner was floated in and Busquets surrounded by other Barca players directed his header back into his own net. A deflated home crowd were on their feet minutes later though as Van Persie was harshly given a second yellow card for shooting after the whistle had blown.

Romancing

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Unpredictability is the name of this game, uncertainty in predictions a fact of life, but that is because the game is cricket. True, there is too much of science in the modern game but there is room too for the faithful to indulge in some old fashioned romancing of the game.

Tigers positive ahead

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changes in the team from the last game's eleven. There is a good chance that all-rounder Mahmudullah Riyad may be back into the side in place of Mohammad Ashraful while left-arm spinner Sohrawardi Shuvo is also under consideration. In that case, Bangladesh may play with one pace bowler but nothing has been confirmed yet. "I don't think there was any technical problem in our batting. The whole scenario will be changed if we can build a good partnership like 100-odd runs at the top-order. What happened has happened but we believe this team is capable of showing much better performances," observed Tamim Iqbal, the local hero who is eagerly waiting to hit a hundred in his home town. According to sources, it will not be an easy task for the batsmen to score runs on the track of the port city as batsmen have to apply themselves to take singles by rotating the strike and Tamim also said that they have to build up the innings first before hitting the ball hard. "I have a particular role in the team which is to give a good start and I believe in the next match we will be able to put up a good score on the board if Imrul [Kayes] and I can give a platform for the middle-order batsmen. But we must focus on the partnership," observed Tamim. In the last few months, Shakib has been marshalling the middle-order almost single-handedly but the left-hander was not at his usual best in the last three innings (55, 16 and 8), making the Tigers middle-order look vulnerable. So, the team will desperately need something from the world's No 1 all-rounder, who is under pressure not only because of his own form and the team's, but also for some of the off-field controversies. "He [Shakib] is okay," said a smiling Tamim about his captain. Junaed also said that the team is united and the team spirit is also fine and everybody is looking forward to the battle on Friday.

Fans get hold

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are suffering a bit as they have to wait for long and it's a hot day too". He said the environment of the city has heightened his enthusiasm and hoped that Bangladesh will get back to their rhythm and fight against England. His feelings were shared by Zarin Sultana, a student of Accounting Department of Govt. Hazi Muhammad Mohsin College who collected her tickets from the same booth. Despite having complaints about the slow progress of ticket distribution, and that too under a hot sun, she said she was willing to endure all that to see the Tigers play well. Meanwhile Riaz Babu, an official of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) who is designated with ticket distribution management, said the distribution of tickets from booths will run till 2pm on the match day (March 11) if necessary. He said around four thousand people have collected their confirmation letters online to enjoy the Match against England.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Recipe meas.
4 Chops
8 Partner of Peter and Mary
12 Overwhelm
13 Tiny bit
14 Grooving on
15 Exaggerated advertising
17 Favorable votes
18 Computer-use period
19 X rating?
21 Neither's mate
22 Big bother
26 Virago
29 Corral
30 Moray, for one
31 Pork cut
23 Tavern
33 Corporate symbol
34 Regis and Kelly's network
35 Weep
36 Feel
37 Attention-getting call
39 Sine non
40 Suitable
41 Sans celebration
45 Lash
48 Pokey
50 Aid
51 Pennsylvania port
52 Actress Myrna
53 Unmatched
54 Landlord's due
55 B&B
2 Trade
3 Hide
4 Pile-up area in a barn
5 Former anesthetic
6 Court
7 Suffocate
8 Schroeder's instrument
9 Whatever number
10 Salt Lake athlete
11 Part of UCLA
16 Irish export
20 A billion years
23 Drudge
24 Stamina
25 Lotion additive
26 Dispatch
27 Vagrant
28 Puerto —
29 Remuneration
32 "Whew!"
33 Draft in an apartment?
35 Police officer
36 Western event
38 Glad
39 Keystone of an arch
42 Wrinkly fruit
43 Lunch-time, maybe
44 17th-century actress Nell
45 Personal question?
46 Coop occupant
47 Under the weather
49 Raw rock

DOWN
1 Forbidden (Var.)
23 Drudge
Solution time: 25 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP

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A X E Z Q P Y T A B X R R Q P Y T A ?
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: POPULAR CARTOON
DOG WHO LOVES TO GO DIVING WITH A
PORTABLE BREATHING APPARATUS: SCUBA-DOO.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: J equals Y