

## FERGIE'S DIG AT LIVERPOOL

The garish cream suits worn by Liverpool's squad prior to the 1996 FA Cup final gave Manchester United the edge even before kick-off, according to ex-United manager Alex Ferguson. Liverpool players including Robbie Fowler, Steve McManaman and Jamie Redknapp, dubbed the 'Spice Boys', turned up at Wembley clad in striking suits designed by Giorgio Armani and lost 1-0 to a late Eric Cantona goal. Ferguson claims that the sight of Liverpool's players strolling onto the turf convinced him and assistant manager Brian Kidd that his side were going to prevail.

--AFP



Bangladesh players hide their frustration after their AFC U-19 Championship Qualifiers campaign ended with a 4-0 defeat against Uzbekistan at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

# Uzbeks complete hosts' misery

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's flickering hopes of qualifying for the AFC U-19 Championship finals

were put out by a 4-0 defeat at the hands of favourites Uzbekistan at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. The hosts played comparatively better in their last match against the best side of the group, yet their best effort came as no consolation as they conceded two late goals to make the scoreline far more humbling than it should have.

The only consolation for the beleaguered hosts, though, was finishing second in the group and above the two other South Asian sides. Sri Lanka edged Bhutan to the third position after beating the latter 2-0 in the first match of the day.

Having started the campaign with the target of grabbing one of the five best runners-up spots among 10 groups, Bangladesh had made their life difficult with a 1-1 draw against Bhutan Sunday following a 2-0 win against Sri Lanka, which meant they needed to win against the Uzbeks in order to qualify.

The coaching staff was hoping against hope of a surprise win against the Uzbeks, but once the team conceded the lead in the second minute, any such hopes all but ended. Having rattled the crossbar in the 12th second of the match, the Central Asian side grabbed the lead 64 seconds later when No. 10, Doston Ibragimov, picked the far corner of the net with a powerful shot as Bangladesh defence failed to clear a corner. That goal, according to Bangladesh coach Saiful Bari Titu, put the hosts on the backfoot.

"We thought we would keep them at bay in the first half and try to nick it, if we could, in the second. But once we conceded a goal within two minutes, that plan went out of the window," said the coach at his post-

## POINTS TABLE (GROUP A)

Team	M	W	L	D	Pts	GD	Status
Uzbekistan	3	3	0	0	9	14	Qualified
Bangladesh	3	1	1	1	4	-2	
Sri Lanka	3	1	2	0	3	-3	
Bhutan	3	0	2	1	1	-9	

match analysis.

Bangladesh however did not go down and looked far more resolute than they were in matches against Sri Lanka and Bhutan. Four changes in the starting eleven looked to have given them solidity at the back and sync in attack. However, the hosts failed slice open the opposition defence and were indebted to goalkeeper Anisur Rahman, who pulled out two excellent saves in the space of a minute to deny Uzbekistan forward Tukhtasinov Nurillo to double the lead. Anisur then made a vital parry in

**UZBEKISTAN 4 - 0 BANGLADESH**  
**SRI LANKA 2 - 0 BHUTAN**

the 44th minute before Bangladesh striker Mannaf Rabbi failed to connect to a cross at the other end as the referee blew the whistle for the half time.

Wingers Mohammad Ibrahim and Rabbi put tireless shifts down the flanks, but Bangladesh's only threatening moves came from corner kicks, which were wasted anyway. Anisur was somewhat unlucky in the 62nd minute when he was beaten for the second time, against the run of play, as Ibragimov's goal-bound shot took a wicked deflection off a defender, completely wrongfooting the goalkeeper.

As the hosts grew increasingly fatigued the Uzbeks took full advantage, with substitute forward Abdololikh Bobir clinically finishing a move from the deep in the 79th minute before Ganijonov Begzod putting the final nail on the coffin on the stroke of the final whistle.

## Klopp keeps mum over Reds rumour

AFP, Berlin

Jürgen Klopp is staying tight-lipped about rumours linking him to the vacancy at Liverpool with the ex-Borussia Dortmund coach widely tipped as the hot favourite to replace Brendan Rodgers.

Klopp was in Leverkusen on Monday to attend a coaching conference and refused to comment to a reporter from German daily Bild with the British media making the 48-year-old the overwhelming favourite to replace Rodgers, who was sacked on Sunday.

"There's nothing to say, neither this nor that. I'm driving home now," said Klopp, who has been on sabbatical since quitting Dortmund at the end of last season.

Meanwhile, ex-Germany captain Oliver Kahn says Klopp's good level of English makes him an ideal candidate to awaken the sleeping giants, who are 10th in the Premier League table, but the language barrier could still be a problem, especially given the strong Merseyside accent.

"The question is always a bit about the language barrier," said Kahn.

"From the technical side of things, there is nothing to think about."

"I'd absolutely trust him to have no big problem with English, but sometimes, as far as motivating a team goes, there are subtleties in the team language and whether he already has those subtleties remains to be seen."

## 12TH SOUTH ASIAN GAMES Facilities in ruins

SPORTS REPORTER

Nine weeks into the training camp for the upcoming 12th South Asian Games, the athletes are still facing constraints at different venues as well as dormitories, resulting in the athletes not fully concentrating on training.

The high-ups of the different national federations raised those issues at the meeting of the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) yesterday and requested them to solve those problems immediately so that the athletes could train unhindered.

The federation officials informed BOA officials that some 10 to 12 athletes were accommodated in a single room of the NSC dormitory, the table tennis and badminton teams couldn't practice well on the damaged floor of the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Gymnasium, the swimmers couldn't judge their real performances without electronic timers, the gymnasium and dormitory of Mohammad Ali boxing stadium are in poor condition, the NSC gymnasium lacks sufficient lighting, while there are problems in toilets and bathrooms of the Women's Sports Complex in Dhanmondi and Mirpur Kiri Palli.

"After being informed of the problems the athletes are facing, we sat with the sports

minister [Biren Shikdar] today [Tuesday] to solve those problems and the sports minister instructed the concerned authorities to fix alleviate those problems within a week," said BOA vice president Harunur Rashid, after emerging from the meeting.

"The minister also assured the accommodation problems at the NSC dormitory would be solved after evacuating some rooms which are occupied by some sports organisers," said Rashid, who will lead a three-member BOA delegation to the SA Games meeting to be held in Chennai on October 11.

"As the disciplines have already been finalized, we will be trying to include those events in which we have a good chance of doing well at the October 11 meeting. We have already discussed it with other participating members of SAARC countries and want their supports to finalise the events of the Games," said Rashid.

The Organising Committee of the SA Games in India has already excluded three disciplines -- golf, cricket and karate -- from the Dhaka SA Games in which Bangladesh won five gold medals.

The 12th SA Games are scheduled to be held in Shillong and Guwahati in India from January 10 to 20.

## FIFA fines Hong Kong

AFP, Hong Kong

FIFA has fined Hong Kong after fans jeered the Chinese national anthem and threw a drink at a rival player during a World Cup qualifier, the city's football authorities said Tuesday.

Fans booed the "March of the Volunteers" -- the anthem they share with China -- at the game against Qatar in Hong Kong last month which the home side lost 3-2.

A carton of lemon tea was also thrown at a Qatar player.

Possible sanctions from world football's governing body could have included playing future matches behind closed doors, but Hong Kong escaped with a fine and a warning.

The Hong Kong Football Association said it had been fined 5,000 Swiss francs (\$5,100) over the "improper conduct among the supporters of its team".

## Brazil missing Neymar

AFP, Sao Paulo



Much has changed for Brazil's national team since last year's humiliating World Cup exit, but as the 2018 qualifying campaign gets underway Thursday one worrying factor stays the same: the absence of superstar Neymar.

More than a year has passed since that extraordinary 7-1 meltdown against Germany in Brazil's own World Cup.

Since then there's been the almost equally embarrassing failure to survive the Copa America, going out to lowly Paraguay on penalties. The coach has been changed and there have been endless post-mortems.

But in all that turmoil, the football-mad nation has remained fixated on national captain and Barcelona star Neymar and the near obsessive fear

that without him the "canarina", as the team's called, cannot win.

He was out injured during the 2014 Cup semifinal drubbing. Then at the Copa America against Colombia he was red carded and handed a four-match suspension, missing the rest of the tournament, along with his country's disappointing exit.

Now with two matches still left on that suspension, Neymar will again be absent for Brazil's 2018 opening qualifiers against Chile on Thursday and Venezuela on 13 October.

A promise to improve his conduct -- "I mustn't let myself do such stupid things," he said in Barcelona recently -- and an appeal for his suspensions to be postponed failed. And Brazil is dreading the consequences.

For pessimists, Neymar isn't just important: the supremely skilled scoring machine is one of the last represen-

tatives of Brazil's fabled "jogo bonito," or beautiful game.

The question many here ask is whether the reliance on Neymar doesn't illustrate the broader failure of a system that focuses on exporting of young talent to clubs abroad, robbing the country of the chance to develop a whole team of Neymars.

Since his debut against the United States on August 10, 2010, Neymar has played 67 games for Brazil, scoring 46 times and missing only four non-friendlies.

When he has been missing, the yawning hole has been impossible to fill.

Three of the big recent defeats -- against Germany in World Cup semis, then a 3-0 loss to Holland in the third-place match, and the Copa America loss in June to Paraguay -- took place without Neymar. In his absence the team only won once in a full international.

## Carvajal out of Euro 2016 qualifiers

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid full-back Dani Carvajal was one of three players to withdraw from Spain's Euro 2016 qualifiers later this week due to an ankle injury.

Real Sociedad centre-back Inigo Martinez and Villarreal midfielder Bruno Soriano have also had to pull out, said the Spanish camp.

"He has been diagnosed with an injury to the peroneal tendons in his right ankle," Real said of Carvajal's injury.

Carvajal, 23, was forced off during Real's 1-1 draw at city rivals Atletico Madrid on Sunday.

## Bale voted best Welsh player

AFP, London



Real Madrid star Gareth Bale was voted Welsh player of the year for a record fifth time on Monday.

Bale won the award after being involved in eight of Wales' nine goals in their Euro 2016 qualifying campaign, scoring six times and providing two assists. The former Tottenham forward's efforts have left Wales on the brink of qualifying for their first major tournament in 58 years.

Chris Coleman's side need one point from their final two qualifiers against Bosnia-Herzegovina away and Andorra at home to make it to the finals in France next year. Bale was also named players' player of the year and fans' player of the year at a Cardiff ceremony.

## Beckenbauer backs Sexwale

AFP, Vienna

Franz Beckenbauer has backed Tokyo Sexwale as a possible candidate for the FIFA presidency to succeed Sepp Blatter and said the South African can expect support from the German FA.

Speaking at the annual Camp Beckenbauer sports conference in Kitzbuehel, Austria, 'the Kaiser' said the German Football Association (DFB) know "about the quality of the South Africans and the quality of Tokyo Sexwale".

"I certainly believe that the German Football Association would support his candidacy," added Beckenbauer.



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