

Platini gets backing from S Americans

AFP, Paris



The South American confederation (CONMEBOL) on Saturday gave its backing to UEFA chief Michel Platini, saying it was against the 90-day ban imposed on him by FIFA.

Platini, who is running to take over from Sepp Blatter as head of FIFA early next year, was handed the ban on Thursday as part of a FIFA investigation into fraud and corruption among its leaders.

The Frenchman, who is also a vice-president of FIFA, has launched an official appeal against the sanction and he will be boosted by the support he has received from the powerful CONMEBOL body.

A statement from CONMEBOL said: "The confederation does not agree with the decision provisionally banning FIFA presidential candidate Mr Michel Platini from all football-related activities.

"It is imperative that sporting justice continues its course in order to clarify all of the facts as soon and definitely as possible. At the same time the presumption of innocence is a fundamental right that has to be

considered.

"Mr Platini has not been found guilty of any charge, therefore the provisional ban jeopardises the integrity of the electoral process to the FIFA presidency, of which Mr Platini is a candidate. The confederation, considering the above, believes that the ban is untimely and disproportionate."

The 60-year-old Platini, a frontrunner to succeed Blatter as chief of the scandal-tainted world governing body, denies any wrongdoing in taking a \$2 million (1.8 million euros) payment from FIFA in 2011.

The former France skipper has slammed the ban as "farical", insisting the payment was legitimate, and has confirmed he will remain a candidate to succeed Blatter despite the ban on him.

In its statement CONMEBOL said that it fully believed in Platini's capacity "to lead FIFA and the football world towards a brighter future."

The South Americans' action intensifies the crisis which FIFA finds itself in, ahead of an extraordinary meeting of its executive committee called for October 20 in Zurich when plans for the February election will likely be top of the agenda.

Pique jeered again by fans

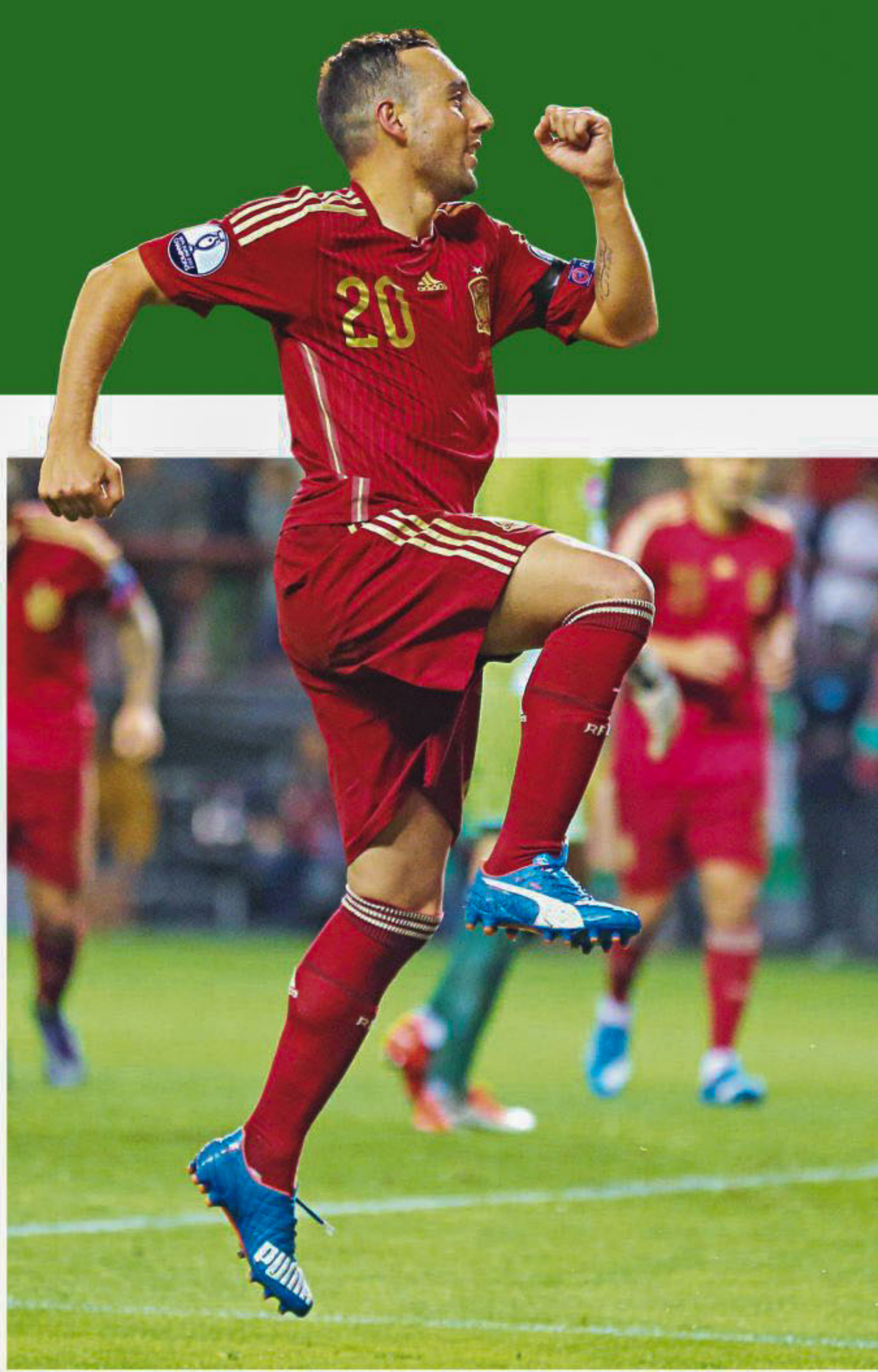
AFP, Madrid

Barcelona defender Gerard Pique has stressed his commitment to the Spain after he was again jeered by the home fans as La Roja sealed their place at Euro 2016 with a 4-0 win over Luxembourg.

Pique has been targeted by sections of the Spanish support since he mocked Real Madrid during Barcelona's treble-winning celebrations at the end of last season.

Despite Spain coach Vicente del Bosque and his teammates' pleas for the unjust treatment to stop, the former Manchester United man was roundly whistled at the start of the match before some began to applaud him as the match developed.

Pique, 28, is a huge personality in Spain as he has two sons with Colombian pop superstar Shakira and has campaigned in favour of a referendum to decide on Catalan independence.



Spain midfielder Santi Cazorla celebrates one of his two goals against Luxembourg during their Euro 2016 qualifier in Logrono on Friday.

Silva, Morata ruled out of Ukraine tie

AFP, Madrid

David Silva and Alvaro Morata have been ruled out of Spain's visit to Ukraine on Monday after being forced off in the European champions 4-0 win over Luxembourg on Friday.

Both players were substituted within the first half hour before two goals each from Santi Cazorla and Paco Alcacer mathematically sealed Spain's place in next year's European Championships in France.

"David Silva has been ruled out of the squad due to a severe sprain in the lateral collateral ligament of his right ankle," the Spanish football federation said in a statement on their website.

"Alvaro Morata will also not travel to Ukraine after suffering an unintentional knock to his right leg."

The Spanish federation added that they had been in contact with Juventus and Silva's Manchester City.

PHOTO: AFP

FIFA control delights Hayatou

AFP, Yaounde

Issa Hayatou says he is "delighted" to step up to become acting FIFA president following Sepp Blatter's suspension.

The 69-year-old Cameroonian head of the Confederation of African Football has taken temporary charge of the sport's world governing body as it wrestles with mounting sleaze allegations after Blatter's 90-day ban from FIFA's ethics committee.

"I'm really very delighted to have this responsibility," Hayatou told Cameroon television during a visit to Yaounde on Friday.

"I know what's expected of me because I know FIFA. I will do everything to be able to live up to the confidence that the (FIFA) regulations have given me."

"It's up to the president to ensure everything runs correctly, but one person isn't able to do this enormous task, we are 209 associations around the world, so I can't say I'm going to do everything, one has to be modest, and rely on the existing structures."

Hayatou took command of FIFA on Thursday after Blatter was suspended for 90 days as Swiss prosecutors investigate him for criminal mismanagement.

Marquez not retiring yet

AFP, Pasadena

Mexico captain Rafa Marquez brushed off retirement talk here Friday as he prepared for the latest test of his glittering international career with a show-down against arch rivals the United States.

The 36-year-old veteran of four World Cups said he was content to see out the remainder of his international career on a game-by-game basis as he readied himself for Saturday's Confederations Cup play-off in Pasadena.

The former Barcelona defender said he had learned after the 2010 World Cup in South Africa -- when he initially planned to retire -- not to set deadlines on his career.

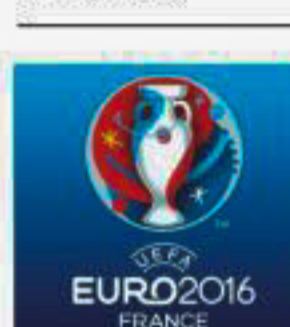
"In the World Cup in South Africa I thought maybe I would retire," Marquez told reporters.

"But the level of football keeps me here.

"I'm conscious that at some point my level will drop. So really I'm just going to enjoy doing what I can, while I can. Tomorrow is just another game."

Spain, Switzerland qualify

AFP, Paris



Spain and Switzerland racked up 11 goals between them to qualify for Euro 2016 on Friday as England maintained their 100 percent record.

Champions in 2008 and 2012, Spain beat Luxembourg 4-0 in Group C thanks to a brace each from Arsenal playmaker Santi Cazorla and Valencia striker Paco Alcacer.

The result saw Spain win the group outright after rivals Slovakia, who had been breathing down their necks, went down 1-0 at home to Belarus and drop to third.

Vicente del Bosque's men are five points clear of Slovakia and Ukraine, who won 2-0 at Macedonia. Ukraine host Spain in their final qualifier in Kiev on Monday.

On the down side, Spain suffered a double injury blow losing David Silva to a twisted ankle before Alvaro Morata was stretchered off with a calf injury.

Cazorla opened the scoring five minutes before half-time as he swept home a rebound after Jonathan Joubert had made a smart save from Pedro Rodriguez.

Alcacer slotted home a neat through ball from Cesc Fabregas on his 99th international appearance 23 minutes from time.

Jordi Alba's cut-back was then tapped into an empty net by Alcacer for his sixth international goal in nine appearances.

And Cazorla rounded off the scor-

ing with the best goal of the night when he thundered in a shot from the edge of the box to seal Spain's ticket to France in style.

The Swiss stormed to a 7-0 win over San Marino converting three spot-kicks on the way to join England as the two direct qualifiers from Group E.

Having co-hosted the 2008 Euros with Austria, Switzerland missed the 2012 edition.

On Friday, seven different players got the goals to ensure they did not miss out this time.

Defender Michael Lang got the opener on 17 minutes with Gokhan Inler, Admir Mehmedi, Johan Djourou, Pajtim Kasami, Breel Embolo and Eren Derdiyok completing the rout after the break.

Roy Hodgson's England maintained their 100 per cent record in the qualifiers with a ninth straight win, 2-0 over Estonia at Wembley, with Theo Walcott and Raheem Sterling delivering the goals late in each half.

With record goal-scorer Wayne Rooney injured, Harry Kane led the line for England, but it was Walcott who opened the scoring in a drab game before Sterling struck a second goal late on.

In Group G, Russia, Sweden and Montenegro had been locked in a desperate battle for qualification behind runaway leaders Austria.

Austria won again, coming from behind to win 3-2 in Montenegro and have 25 points from nine games.

But Russia's 2-1 win in Moldova leaves them needing only a win at home over Montenegro on Monday to

qualify in second place after full back Sergei Ignashevich and forward Arsen Dzyuba got Friday's goals.

Russia coach Leonid Slutsky, who took over from the sacked Fabio Capello in August, has won three games since taking the hot seat for the 2018 World Cup hosts.

Sweden can still overhaul Russia after Zlatan Ibrahimovic made up for missing a penalty by scoring the second goal in his side's 2-0 win in Liechtenstein.

The Paris Saint Germain striker thereby stretched his national goalscoring record to 58.

RESULTS			
Macedonia	0 - 2	Ukraine	(Seleznyov 59-pen, Kravets 87)
Slovakia	0 - 1	Belarus	(Dragun 34)
Spain	4 - 0	Luxembourg	(Cazorla 42, 85, Paco Alcacer 67, 80)
England	2 - 0	Estonia	(Walcott 45, Sterling 65)
Slovenia	1 - 1	Lithuania	(Birsas 45+1-pen)
Switzerland	7 - 0	San Marino	(M. Lang 17, Inler 55-pen, Mehmedi 65, Djourou 72-pen, Kasami 75, Embolo 80, Derdiyok 89)
Liechtenstein	0 - 2	Sweden	(Berg 18, Ibrahimovic 55)
Moldova	1 - 2	Russia	(Ignashevich 58, Dzyuba 78)
Montenegro	2 - 3	Austria	(Janko 55, Arnautovic 81, Sabitzer 90+2)

Germany seek tonic

AFP, Leipzig



Under-fire Germany want to finish their qualifying campaign with a win over Georgia on Sunday to secure qualification to Euro 2016 and bounce back from their shock defeat to Ireland.

The world champions remain top of Group D despite suffering a 1-0 defeat to the Irish on Dublin, which kept Martin O'Neill's side in contention to qualify directly.

Germany need only a draw at home to minnows Georgia to ensure their ticket to France next year and even if they lost, only a draw between Poland and Ireland in Warsaw would condemn them to a play-off spot.

A draw in Dublin would have been enough for Joachim Loew's side but substitute Shane Long made sure Irish eyes were smiling with the winning second-half goal after outpacing Mats Hummels and Jerome Boateng before beating Manuel Neuer in the German goal on Thursday.

The top two sides go through from the group, but Germany, on 19 points are just one ahead of Poland and Ireland.

Finishing third in the group could put Germany in the unthinkable position of needing to win a two-legged play-off to reach Euro 2016.

But Loew is more concerned with simply bouncing back from a rare and surprising defeat by returning to winning ways.

"The situation is clear, but we have things in our own hands and we want to win against Georgia to qualify directly," said Loew.

Loew will also have to do without a couple of key components from his World Cup winning team as forward Mario Goetze is definitely out with a hamstring tear while captain Bastian Schweinsteiger is doubtful after injuring a hamstring in the warm-up in Dublin.

"Mario will not be there for sure. We'll have to wait to see how Schweinsteiger is, but his chances are very small," said Loew.

Georgia are second from bottom with just three wins in their nine matches and Germany have won all four meetings between the teams.

Germany have not lost in 21 home qualifiers since a 3-0 defeat by the Czech Republic in October 2007, including 17 wins and four draws.

In contrast, Georgia have won just one of their last 23 competitive away matches and their single victory was a 3-0 win against minnows Gibraltar.

Georgia, coached by former Eintracht Frankfurt player Kakhaber Tskhadadze, will be without injured playmaker Giorgi Chanturia, who plays for Duisburg in Germany's second division, but the visitors will be looking to follow Ireland's example.

"There is no bigger stage for our boys than a game against the world champions," said former Hertha Berlin defender Levan Kobiasvili, who is now president of the Georgian FA.

"This is a dream."

But a third defeat in their Euro qualifying campaign would be a nightmare for Germany, having already lost to Poland and now the Irish, on their rocky road to the European championships in France.

England honour Rooney

AFP, London

England captain Wayne Rooney was presented with a golden boot for breaking the national scoring record prior to his side's 2016 European Championship qualifier against Estonia at Wembley on Friday.

The Manchester United striker was handed the boot by 77-year-old Bobby Charlton, star of England's 1966 World Cup-winning team, whose record of 49 goals Rooney surpassed with a penalty in last month's 2-0 win over Switzerland.

The boot, mounted on a plinth, was carried to the side of the pitch by a British serviceman before Charlton presented it to a smiling Rooney as chants of "Rooney!" echoed around the stadium.

Rooney, 29, was present at Wembley despite an ankle injury having ruled him out of the game, as well as England's final qualifier away to Lithuania on Monday. England have already qualified for the tournament.

Italy seal Euro spot

AFP, Baku



New-look Italy secured qualification to Euro 2016 with a game to spare on Saturday after a stirring 3-1 win away to Group H rivals Azerbaijan.

Sampdoria striker Eder opened Italy's account inside the quarter hour and although Azerbaijan levelled through Dmitri Nazarov on the half hour, Monaco forward Stephan El Shaarawy restored Italy's advantage just before half-time.

Manchester United defender Matteo Darmian gave Italy some breathing space with a superb strike on 65 minutes.

Italy were rarely troubled in the remainder of the game and might have added a further goal had Badavi Huseynov not hauled second-half substitute Sebastian Giovinco off the ball as the Toronto striker

was in a scoring position.

Huseynov saw red, leaving Azerbaijan with 10 men for the final two minutes but the match was already beyond all doubt.

Italy, beaten finalists at Euro 2012, remain top of Group H on 21 points from nine qualifiers, two ahead of Norway ahead of the sides' clash in Rome on Tuesday.

Italy had required a win from either of their final two qualifiers to qualify for next summer's showpiece in France.

But coach Antonio Conte called for his side to put his mind at ease and Italy, despite a few jitters at a stadium that has recently been kind to Robert Prosinecki's side, duly obliged.

It took only 11 minutes for the Paris Saint Germain midfielder to produce an instant of magic, finding Eder in space with a first-timer from just over the half-way line for the Brazil-born forward to run in unchallenged to beat Kamran Agayev down low.

High Profile Vacancy ANNOUNCEMENT

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Competencies:

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- Ability to develop and implement banking operations, risk management and governance strategies to meet organizational goals and establish a high quality performance standard.
- Must be well connected having effective network in the banking and business sector.
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- Thorough knowledge about budgeting, planning and financial administration.
- Sound knowledge of regulatory requirements including Basel II & Basel III.
- High degree of leadership qualities and management skills to drive a cross functional team to deliver results.

Requirements:

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Only short-listed candidates will be called for the interview.



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