

# Booters lose again

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh suffered a second consecutive defeat in Yunnan International Football Tournament as the 10-man Red and Greens lost 2-1 against China's Lijiang team yesterday.

The second defeat means Bangladesh are nearly out of the tournament as they sit bottom of the four-team group with zero points while Lijiang and Hebei, the two Chinese teams, are on top with four points each followed by Myanmar, who have three points from two matches.

Bangladesh, however, have an outside chance to move into the next round as the third team from the group, given they win against Hebei with a big margin while Myanmar lose against Lijiang on Tuesday.

Despite a 3-2 defeat against Myanmar in the opening match, Bangladesh coach Fabio Lopez dropped captain Mamunul Islam from the playing eleven while left-back Wali Faisal replaced Abdul Baten Komol after four international matches. Raihan Hasan played as a defensive midfielder in front of a four-man defence marshaled by Nasirul Islam, Kesto Kumar, Tapu Barman and Wali. Nabib Newaj Jibon played as the lone

striker in front of Jamal Bhuiyan, Monaem Khan Raju, Toklish Ahmed and Hemanta Vincent Biswas.

According to the message from the team manager, who talked to this reporter over phone, Bangladesh could not deal with the well-built Chinese players and the situation got a little scrappy when number one goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel left the pitch with a shoulder injury 12 minutes into the game. Though debutant goalkeeper Ashraful Islam Rana played well, but he could not stop Shi Yong from giving the Chinese side a 44th minute lead.

Bangladesh tried to come back into the match but they faced a big blow 10 minutes into the second half with Raju picking up the marching order. Lopez made a number of changes changes, sending Mashuk Miah Jonny and Aminur Rahman Sajib in place of Jamal Bhuiyan and Jibon. Mamunul came off the bench to replace Toklish.

Sajib repaid the faith of the coach by levelling the margin in the 83rd minute from a goal-mouth-melee but the visitors could hold it only one minute before Lijiang restored their lead in the 84th minute through Li Yingjian and left the field with first victory after playing out a 2-2 draw with Hebei on Friday.



Substitute goalkeeper Ashraful Islam Rana (R) grabs the ball during Bangladesh's 2-1 defeat against Lijiang in the ASEAN International Football Tournament in Yunnan, China yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

# Federer waltzes into final

AFP, London



Roger Federer will face Novak Djokovic in the World Tour Final after defeating Swiss compatriot Stan Wawrinka 7-5, 6-3 on Saturday.

Earlier, Serbian world number one Djokovic beat Spain's resurgent Rafael Nadal 6-3, 6-3 in his semifinal to secure his place in Sunday's title match.

Third seed Federer beat Djokovic in straight sets in the group stage.

"A great match, I really enjoyed it," Federer said after his win on the hard court of London's O2 Arena.

"It will be a perfect ending only if I win. Novak should be knocked out by now! No, I am joking. He played a great match against Rafa earlier today and I'm sure it will be a fantastic meeting."

The clash was a repeat of last year's semifinal, which ended in bad blood between the Switzerland team-mates.

In the 2014 semis, they embarked

on one of the most draining matches of the season -- nearly three hours of cut-throat tennis that Federer won 4-6, 7-5, 7-6 (8/6).

On top of that, there was a bust-up -- Wawrinka taking umbrage at what he saw as inappropriate words from Federer's wife Mirka from the players' box at a key point in the third set.

But the pair appeared to patch up their differences, teaming up to win a first Davis Cup for Switzerland.

Federer went into the Wawrinka match with a 17-3 lead in career clashes between the two, including all their matches on a hard court.

He went two of their three matches this year, including their last encounter in the US Open semi-finals, where Federer went on to lose to Djokovic.

At the coin toss, the umpire, like a boxing referee, asked both players for "a clean fight" and "no blows below the belt".

Wawrinka saw off a match point to hold for 5-3, but Federer was cruising by

this point and ended the contest with a straightforward service game. The pair shook hands warmly at the net.

Djokovic said clashes against Federer were always nervy affairs as he prepared to face his rival for a second time this week -- Federer having got the better of the Serb in the group stage.

But Djokovic had a near-perfect performance as he beat Rafael Nadal 6-3, 6-3 in their semifinal clash on Saturday.

"I don't feel unbeatable, but it definitely feels great when I'm playing the way I played," Djokovic said after his dazzling display against Nadal.

"I've lost against Roger three times this year. When he's on, it's hard to play him," said the Serb, who has beaten Federer four times in 2015, all in finals.

"We always play matches with a lot of tension. There is a lot at stake. I know I have to be on top to win against him."

Djokovic could claim \$1,050,000 in prize money if he wins, while Federer would receive \$2,228,000 for winning the title undefeated.



Roger Federer came out on top in the battle of the Swiss as he defeated Stan Wawrinka in the semifinal of the the ATP World Tour Final at the O2 Arena in London yesterday. Undeclared so far, Federer will take on world number one Novak Djokovic in the final.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## LvG wants Ronaldo

AFP, London

Manchester United manager Louis van Gaal confirmed Sunday that he would be interested in bringing Cristiano Ronaldo back to Old Trafford, six years after the superstar left for Real Madrid.

Van Gaal, quoted by several British Sunday newspapers, said: "We are looking at all players, not just Ronaldo. But these players are mostly ungettable."

"With Ronaldo, let's wait and hope. There is no trainer in the world that doesn't like him. He plays on the wings and he is fast, and scores goals."

Ronaldo cost Real Madrid a then world record fee of 80 million pounds when he left England in 2009 but he turns 31 in February and was off the boil in Saturday's 4-0 defeat to Barcelona where he cut a frustrated figure.

## Juve back in the groove

AFP, Turin



Argentina striker Paulo Dybala rescued a sedate Juventus with a well-taken second-half winner as the champions continued their Serie A fightback with a 1-0 win over AC Milan on Saturday.

Milan travelled to Turin hoping to build on a recent purple patch that has seen Sinisa Mihajlovic's men take 10 points from their last four league outings.

But despite causing the Turin giants problems, the Rossoneri had no reply to Dybala's half-volley which beat Milan's towering, teenage goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma on 66 minutes.

Like all top-flight games in Italy this weekend, fans of both clubs were upstanding as the French national anthem, 'La Marseillaise', was played before kick-off to commemorate the victims of last week's terror attacks in Paris.

The French tricolour flag was on display on the pitch and on the big screens at Juventus, showing the faces of French players Patrice Evra, Paul Pogba and, for AC Milan, M'Baye Niang and Philippe Mexes

RESULTS				
Bologna	2	—	2	Roma
Masina 14, Destro 87-pen				Pjanic 52-pen, Dzeko 72-pen
Juventus	1	—	0	AC Milan
Dybala 66				

during an emotional moment which brought applause throughout the stadium.

Days before hosting Manchester City in a Champions League clash that could see Juventus into the last 16 of the competition, the Bianconeri looked nervous throughout a first half of few real chances.

Juve's win lifted them to sixth, one point above Milan and six behind leaders Fiorentina before the rest of the weekend fixtures.

Donnarumma, who made his Serie A debut only last month and has since been tipped as the future successor to Buffon in the Italy team, did well to push Pogba's drive to safety and from the corner the teenager came confidently out to punch

the ball away.

But the 16-year-old could do little when Dybala collected Sandro's ball from the left flank, controlled and fired a half-volley into the far corner of the net to send Juventus Stadium into raptures.

Earlier, Bologna striker Mattia Destro hit a last-gasp leveller from the spot to secure a share of the spoils in a rain-lashed 2-2 draw with former club Roma that the visitors' coach, Rudi Garcia, compared to a game of "water polo with feet".

## JUNIOR ASIA CUP Heavy defeat sees BD end 6th

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh completed their Junior (U-21) Asia Cup hockey campaign with a 0-8 defeat to hosts Malaysia in the place-deciding match at the Wisma Belia Hockey Stadium in Kuantan yesterday.

The defeat at the hands of 2012 champions means Bangladesh had to be content with sixth place, which they had achieved in their previous appearance in 2008 in India as well.

The boys in red and green faced a team which had finished fourth -- highest position among Asian teams -- in the 2013 Junior World Cup. And Mahbub Harun's charges conceded the lead in the second minute and from that point Malaysia did not look back, completing the rout with the eighth goal in the 67th minute.

Muhammad Haziq Samsul struck three goals, Rohul Amin and Najmi Jazlan scored two goals each while Azwar Rahman netted one.

## Halim's new record

SPORTS REPORTER

Abdul Halim is all set to achieve yet another Guinness world record as the lad from Magura travelled on roller skates with a football on his head at the Dhaka Railway Station platform in Kamalapur yesterday.

Halim, who entered Guinness Book of World Records with the record of the greatest distance (15.2 kilometers) travelled with a football balanced on the head in 2011, crossed hundred meters on roller skates with a football on his head in 27.62 seconds at the platform Number 2 yesterday.

Guinness Book of World Records set the yardstick of crossing 100 meters within 30 seconds and Halim took 2.38 seconds less than the previous record. The documents of the attempt will be sent to the Guinness authority immediately to attain the official acknowledgement.



## VARDY OVER THE MOON

"To every person that has supported me and never doubted me... Thank you... I'm still pinching myself," wrote Leicester striker Jamie Vardy on Twitter last night, after his record-equalling run of scoring in 10 successive Premier League games. Vardy equalled Ruud van Nistelrooy's feat in Saturday's 3-0 win at Newcastle. Earlier, Foxes boss Claudio Ranieri stated: "It is fantastic for Vardy. I also had Gabriel Batistuta at Fiorentina and he scored in 11 consecutive matches. I hope Vardy can achieve this."

Vardy will look to break Van Nistelrooy's record at the Dutchman's old club, Manchester



# Benitez, Perez in the firing line

AGENCIES, Madrid



Rafael Benitez was already under pressure prior to the Clasico yesterday and is now in danger of being sacked just 16 games into his tenure. Real Madrid lost 4-0 to Barcelona at the Santiago Bernabeu yesterday and, consequently, Madrid are now believed to be considering Benitez's position, the only issue being whether to pull the plug now or at the end of the season.

Although the call for a sacking is rightfully gaining momentum, a decision has not yet been reached.

According to Madrid daily Marca, the coach no longer has the backing of the Los Blancos following their defeat. Although it's not just Benitez who is under threat; AS reports that Florentino Perez's position as club president could also be under threat. Both the trainer and patron were subjected to resignation chants by their own fans.

However, Benitez apparently has the backing of the Real captain Sergio Ramos.

"Obviously we are standing firmly by the manager. In order to be successful you have to remain united, and that's even more the case when things don't go well. We have faith in our manager and in our teammates," he said.


Rivaldo wrote on Instagram that Real Madrid should appoint Zinedine Zidane as their new coach, while.

**RAMOS ASKS FOR FORGIVENESS**

Real Madrid captain Sergio Ramos was visibly upset throughout the match and asked for "forgiveness" from fans after the rout.

"There's not much to say. Today we have to ask the Madrid fans for forgiveness for our poor performance. We didn't play to the standards of this crest. Hopefully we can put this behind us," said Ramos. "There are things that can go badly, we misplaced a lot of passes and they knew how to capitalise on that," Ramos admitted.

"They scored against us very early on and on top of that we weren't able to convert our chances into goals. There were a lot of circumstances that led to the result and as a team we weren't up to the standard," the Spanish international added.



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