

Arambagh in final

SPORTS REPORTER



Arambagh Krira Sangha moved into the final of the Walton Federation Cup for the first time in 15 years as they came from behind and defeated Team BJMC 3-1 in the first semifinal at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Nigerian marksman Kester Akon struck a brace while Jafar Iqbal netted the other as Arambagh reached the final for the third time, after making previous appearances in 1997 and 2001.

Before the game, there was no clear favourite and it was evidenced by the way both teams entertained hundreds of spectators with fast-paced attacking football. Arambagh started on the side of caution with a packed defense, but they gained a foothold as the match progressed.

BJMC went ahead against the run of play with a strike from Jakir Hossain Ziku, who made no mistake in cashing in on the 2011 Federation Cup finalists' shaky defense. After taking a deft touch to control Akon's free-kick in the penalty area, he turned and rolled the ball into the net in the 38th minute.

After resumption, Arambagh came out all-guns-blazing as they pressed hard for the equaliser and their pressure told in the 64th minute when referee Azad Rahman awarded them a penalty following Shankar Das's foul on Akon, who converted from the spot to level the game.

| | | |
|--------------------|---|----------|
| ARAMBAGH KS | - | 3 |
| TEAM BJMC | - | 1 |

The goal rejuvenated Arambagh, who had a mixture of experience and youth in their side, as they

took the lead five minutes later. Once again, it was Akon who left the back of the net bulging. The Nigerian delicately kicked the ball over onrushing BJMC goalkeeper Arifuzzaman Himel after cutting in from the left flank and breaking into the box.

Team BJMC were soon forced into a change and they sent on veteran midfielder Abudullah Parvez and the former midfielder immediately made an impact with his pinpoint passing and crossing. With BJMC controlling the ball, Arambagh began to make mistakes trying to reclaim possession and it all went awry for them as Monsur Amin brought down Eleta Kingsley inside the box in the 75th minute.

However, Nigerian hitman Samuel Adams struck the ensuing spot-kick straight at the post and squandered the golden opportunity to level proceedings. It would not be his last miss of the game either, as he headed a Parvez corner wide from close range in the 89th minute.

With BJMC getting more and more desperate for the equaliser, Arambagh adopted a counterattacking approach, a shift in tactics which helped the seal the game in stoppage time. Jafar, a third division player, picked up the ball on the left flank and twisted and turned his way into the box before firing past Himel at the near-post from the edge of the six-yard box to send the fans into raptures and Arambagh into the final.

Chile storm thru'

AFP, Chicago



Chile stormed into the Copa America final here Wednesday, beating Colombia 2-0 in a weather-disrupted semi-final that took more than four hours to complete.

The defending champions advanced to a repeat of last year's final against Argentina on Sunday after a whirlwind start left Colombia chasing the game.

Chile, who had destroyed Mexico 7-0 in the quarter-finals on Saturday, picked up where they left off, scoring twice in the opening 11 minutes to take a grip on the contest.

Bayer Leverkusen midfielder Charles Aranguiz opened the scoring in the seventh minute before Jose Pedro Fuenzalida made it 2-0 after 11 minutes.

"It's a good feeling to be back in the final again after overcoming difficult opponents," Chile coach Juan Antonio Pizzi said.

"We got off to a good start, played aggressively and had a lot of anticipation. That helped us score the goals."

Chile's explosive start to the contest was overshadowed by the intervention of Mother Nature at half-time, as a powerful electrical thunderstorm rolled into downtown Chicago and halted play.

Tens of thousands of spectators were ordered to take shelter inside the stadium.



Ecstatic Arambagh Krira Sangha players celebrate after qualifying for the final of the Walton Federation Cup for the first time in 15 years by slaying Team BJMC 3-1 in the semifinal at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Ranjit Biswas passes away

SPORTS REPORTER

Ranjit Kumar Bishwas, the former senior secretary for Cultural Affairs and a prominent sports writer, passed away in Chittagong yesterday. He was 60.

He was found dead in his hotel room at the Chittagong Circuit House at about 5:30. He went to the port city to attend a family programme. Ranjit is survived by his wife and daughter.

After finishing his studies from Chittagong University he joined the Bangladesh Civil Service and served the Bangladesh government for many years before retiring as the senior secretary of Cultural Affairs two years ago.

He had a keen interest in sports writing since the 70s and wrote his first sports based write-up in the Daily Ittefaq named headlined -- "Triple Centuries in Test Cricket."

From 1977, he was a regular contributor in the fortnightly magazine Krirajagat on various issues. He wrote three books on Bengali literature and a number of essays and articles on cricket. In recognition, he received several awards such as the lifetime achievement award from the Bangladesh Sports Press Association, Palok Sahitya Puroshkar and monthly Mohammedan Sports Award.

Shilton, Diego trade barbs

AFP, Buenos Aires



Diego Maradona and former England goalkeeper Peter Shilton reignited their long-running feud, on the 30th anniversary of the Argentine's infamous "Hand of God" World Cup goal.

Maradona, one of the finest footballers to play the game, scored twice in Argentina's 2-1 victory over England in front of 115,000 fans on June 22, 1986 in Mexico.

The game will be forever remembered for two moments: when Maradona rose above Shilton to punch the ball into the net and then minutes later when he dribbled past half the England team before slotting the ball beyond Shilton.

It may be three decades on, but what particularly irks the goalkeeper even now is how his nemesis "celebrated the first as if it was legitimate".

"I do not see how I could forgive him," Shilton, now 66, who was one of the finest goalkeepers in the game at the time, said in a column in the Argentine sports daily Ole.

"He never apologised. He is the best player I went up against, but I would never be a fan of his. I would never shake his hand."

Shilton added: "Maradona makes me sick." And Shilton even hinted at darker forces that saw England go out the tournament at the quarter-finals, while Argentina won it.

"The whole world talks about the 'Hand of God'... but we had the impression that no matter how well we played, things were arranged in advance," he said.

Maradona, a fiercely proud Argentine whose brilliant career was soiled by off-field indiscretions including run-ins with the law, mocked Shilton in return.

"But who would want to go out with you, Shilton?" he asked in the same publication.

"Would I go out for a drink with a great goalkeeper? No, no."

Back in 1986, in the post-match press conference, Maradona had teased reporters with his version of what had happened in the first goal, attributing it to "a little with the head of Maradona and a little with the hand of God".

Revisiting one of the most controversial incidents in World Cup history, the diminutive Maradona said that it was God who propelled him to the ball with his hand -- what he called a "tremendous goal".

"With my size, I had no chance with my head against Shilton," he added.

Italy hopeful of hurting Spain

AFP, Lille



Italy coach Antonio Conte believes his team can thrive as the underdogs when they face Spain in the first knockout round at Euro 2016 next Monday.

The Azzurri's reward for finishing top of Group E is a meeting with the reigning champions in a repeat of the Euro 2012 final, when Spain outclassed the Italians 4-0 in Kiev.

Given that Conte's side were written off in some quarters before the tournament began, just reaching the knockout phase could be considered a success in itself.

But the coach said his players could take inspiration from their performance in beating much-fancied Belgium 2-0 in their opening game at the tournament last week when they head to the Stade de France.

"The players are doing everything they have to. They are working very hard and we have to keep grafting. We must not have any anxiety," said Conte after a much-changed Italian side, with top spot in their group already assured, lost 1-0 to the Republic of Ireland on Wednesday.

"The first aim was to get into the last 16. Now we have a match against one of the favourites but let's not forget where we started from."

"We mustn't get above our station. A last-16 match against Spain should excite us and we need to play like we did against Belgium, against a side who are supposedly superior."

Italy's wins against the Belgians and Sweden allowed Conte to rotate his squad against Ireland in Lille, where he made eight changes to his starting line-up.

But winning the group has done little to help Italy, who find themselves on the wrong side of what now has the look of an extremely uneven draw.

'Don't come back without Copa'

AFP, Buenos Aires

Argentina football legend Diego Maradona told his national team not to bother coming back home if they don't win the Copa America Centenario on Sunday.

"We will certainly win on Sunday... and if we don't win, they shouldn't come back," Maradona, 55, told Argentina television channel CSN.

The retired star was interviewed on the 30th anniversary of his two most famous goals, against England in the 1986 World Cup.

He spoke ahead of the match on Wednesday that decided which team would face favorites Argentina.

Chile eventually stormed through to the final by beating Colombia 2-0.

Argentina under their superstar captain Lionel Messi reached the final of the Americas' top international tournament by beating the United States 4-0 on Tuesday.

| LAST 16 FIXTURES | |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Saturday | Match 1: Switzerland v Poland |
| | Match 2: Wales v Northern Ireland |
| | Match 3: Croatia v Portugal |
| Sunday | Match 4: France v Republic of Ireland |
| | Match 5: Germany v Slovakia |
| | Match 6: Hungary v Belgium |
| Monday | Match 7: Italy v Spain |
| | Match 8: England v Iceland |

If the Azzurri do manage to beat Spain their reward could be a quarter-final against world champions Germany. Hosts France or England could come in the semi-finals.

"There is a crazy imbalance in the draw for the second round, but those are the rules and we have to respect them," Conte said.

Paris Saint-Germain's Brazil-born midfielder Thiago Motta was one of those who came into the Italy side at the Stade Pierre-Mauroy.

Motta, 33, is likely to drop out of the team again come Monday to make way for Roma's Daniele De Rossi for a match he says Italy can win.

"We know that Italy are not as good a side as Spain or Germany but we know we can win by playing to our strengths," said Motta, who appeared as a substitute in the 2012 final.

"Nobody believed in us before the tournament and then after two matches we were already through."

Italy had looked set for a tie against Croatia before Ante Cacic's team claimed a surprise 2-1 victory over Spain to leave the reigning champions second in Group D and on a collision course with the Azzurri.

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