

BD fail to retain title

Lose 2-0 against Oman in final

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh failed to defend their Asian Games Qualifiers title with a 2-0 defeat against hosts Oman at the Sultan Qaboos Complex in Muscat yesterday.

Bangladesh, who came into the tournament as the defending champions and qualified for the Asian Games after making the semifinals, were up against a much stronger side who had beaten them quite a few times in recent past.

A 28th-minute penalty corner converted by Al Fazari Rashad and a penalty stroke dispatched by Rajab Basim Khatar three minutes later settled the final in favour of the hosts, who are two places above Bangladesh, according to the latest FIH rankings.

While Mahbub Harun's men had beaten Oman 6-1 in the previous edition of qualifiers four years ago, this time they were up against a much stronger Oman side.

Bangladesh had moved into the semifinals on the back of three convincing victories, but they had to come from behind twice to beat Sri Lanka 3-2 in the semifinals. On the other hand, Oman brushed aside Thailand 8-0 in the semifinals after three comfortable wins in group stages.

The match started in a cagey fashion as neither side managed to assert their control over the game and the first quarter ended goalless. The second quarter seemed headed for the same direction before the hosts made perfect use of one of the penalty corners, with Rashad beating Bangladesh's first-choice keeper Asim Gope.

The hosts did not give the men in red and green any time to regroup and recover from the shock as they earned a penalty stroke two minutes after the restart. Basim Khatar made no mistake from the spot to give his side stranglehold on the game.

Bangladesh coach Harun made a string of substitutions thereafter, including replacing Gope with Abu Sayeed Nippon, but while they did not concede any further goals, they could not mount a fightback either.

Earlier in the day, Sri Lanka beat Thailand 4-1 to secure the third position.



Tottenham Hotspur midfielder Christian Eriksen (L) celebrates one of his two goals against Swansea yesterday. The Dane's double propelled Tottenham into the semifinals of the FA Cup after a 3-0 win.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



Brazil superstar Neymar posted this picture of his dreadlocks on his Instagram, perhaps showing off the hairstyle we can expect to see from him at the World Cup.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Ord happy with Qatar camp, but strikers?

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh national football team is currently undergoing a long-term training camp. They have just returned from a two-week camp in Qatar, which was one of the three phases of this training, and will be off to Thailand on Tuesday before they head to Laos to play a FIFA friendly against the hosts.

The two-week camp in Qatar was a tactical one following a two-week fitness camp at home. Now after two matches against Thai clubs next week, Bangladesh will play against Laos on March 27.

Head coach Andrew Ord feels that the two phases of the camp have so far benefited his side and prepared them for Laos, who have had continuous game time in the meanwhile.

"It was critical as they would have had nothing to motivate them otherwise," Ord said in an e-mail interview with The

Daily Star recently. "The Laos league has been going for four games so their national players have played 90 minutes each week. This is a big advantage but by having an intense training camp and pushing the players as hard as possible we aim to be ready to be competitive physically," Ord added.

Like he said before their departure for Qatar, the Australian coach has already done some chopping and changing to the 24-man squad that went to Qatar, excluding four young players while adding eight Abahani, players, who were not previously part of the camp due to their AFC Cup engagements. He is expected to trim the squad to 23 members before flying to Thailand.

"Eight players [from Abahani] will join us for two days' training in Dhaka before we will decide who travels after assessing them," Ord said.

The coach watched footage of Abahani's game against Bengaluru FC last week, and was satisfied with the

performance.

"There were a few things I was pleased about with the Abahani game. The players did not make any silly mistakes that gave a goal away and that is something that is going to be really important for us. Also they tried to defend as a team and made it difficult for Bengaluru," the coach opined.

However, as always, scoring goals remains a concern for the coaching staff. The local strikers, like in domestic competitions, fail to find their feet when playing international matches, either for the clubs or country. So the coach will be focusing more on defending his own goal than going for goals from the start.

"The big test will be in the final third as most of the attackers are either substitutes for their clubs or play in totally different positions due to coaches playing foreigners as strikers. If we can become more dangerous in attack and stop the mistakes at the back then we will have a good chance," Ord added.

VAR approved for World Cup

AFP, Bogota



Video assistant referee technology (VAR) will make its debut at the World Cup in Russia this summer despite lingering opposition from within and outside football, FIFA president Gianni Infantino said Friday.

"We are going to have in 2018, for the first time, a World Cup with VAR," said Infantino after a meeting of the FIFA Council which, as expected, rubber-stamped the go-ahead given by the rule-making International Football Association Board (IFAB) in Zurich two weeks ago. "This has been approved and we are really very happy with this decision."

The World Cup will see VAR used to judge whether or not a goal has been scored, analyse whether a penalty should be awarded, decide on red cards and rectify if a player has been mistakenly sanctioned.

"What we want is to help and to give the referee the possibility to have help when he has to make important decisions, and in a World Cup we make very important decisions," added Infantino. "It cannot be possible that in 2018 everybody, in the stadium or at home, knows in a few seconds if the referee has made a mistake but not the referee himself -- not because he doesn't want to know about it but because we forbid him to know. The VAR is helping the referee and we are going to have a more transparent and fairer game, and that's what we want."

Alonsos join select group

Star Sport Desk

The Alonso family have entered a select group of families that have seen three consecutive generations be selected for its national team's squad after Chelsea defender Marcos Alonso was called up to Spain's squad for the friendlies against Germany and Argentina later this month.

Julen Lopetegui's decision to call up Marcos Alonso this week saw him follow in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, both supremely talented players. Marcos Alonso Imaz, the most senior of the trio, made his national debut in March 1955 before his son Marcos Alonso Pena received his first cap for Spain in 1981.

Marcos began his career at Real Madrid, where his grandfather forged a legacy. Imaz won five league titles with Los Blancos and was part of that all-conquering side which won five back-to-back European Cups from 1955-56. Marcos's father, Pena, won just one league title, but notably played for Barcelona and Atletico



Spanish daily Marca featured Marcos Alonso and covers from when his father, Marcos Alonso Pena (R), and grandfather, Marcos Alonso Imaz, were called-up.

Madrid.

There are very few cases like this in the football world, including the Forlans of Uruguay. Diego Forlan's father Pablo and maternal grand-

father Juan Carlos Corazzo both won the Copa America. Another example is that of Javier Hernandez, whose father and maternal grandfather played for Mexico.

However, both those instances are not direct continuations (father-son-grandson) due to the inclusion of the maternal grandfather. Direct continuations feature lesser known families such as Slovakia's Vladimir Weiss and family, Northern Ireland's Feeney family, Egypt's Emam family and the Salvinu's of Malta.

There will perhaps be more in future. The Malidinis were touted as the next direct continuation. Cesare captured AC Milan's first European Cup as captain in 1963 and his son Paolo won seven league titles and five European Cups/Champions League titles with Milan also. However, at 21 years of age, Christian Maldini is plying his trade for Serie C side RC Fondi.

Another interesting case is that of Sergio Aguero's nine-year-old son, Benjamin Aguero. Benjamin also happens to be the grandson of none other than Diego Maradona.

I'm less selfish now: Messi

AGENCIES, Madrid



Lionel Messi's form keeps dazzling fans around the world, and has continued to do that for over a decade thanks to some changes in his style of play.

After restricting himself to a new diet and adding some necessary down time, Messi has now changed the way in which he contributes to his team's success, even if that means he will not shine individually.

In an interview excerpt released by America TV's show La Cornisa, Messi explains how he works for the benefit of the entire team rather than pursuing indi-

vidual goals.

"I used to pick up the ball and play by myself. Today, I try to be a team player. I'd rather distribute the ball than being the one that scores. Added to that, I try not to be selfish when playing defense. I try to make what's best for the team in most places of the pitch," Messi stated.

Messi's assists tally supports his words, as he has consistently set up his team-mates in the past seasons while increasing his goalscoring stats as well.

The player added that this new approach to the game doesn't mean he needs to run more than he did in previous seasons.

"I still put up the same amount of effort, but I think I distribute it in all of the pitch," Messi added.

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Osaka ousts Halep in semis

AFP, Indian Wells

Japanese dynamo Naomi Osaka punched her ticket to the Indian Wells final on Friday, routing world No. 1 Simona Halep to set up a title clash with Daria Kasatkina.

World No. 44 Osaka stormed past the top seeded Halep in stunning fashion with a 6-3, 6-0 win, while Russian juggernaut Kasatkina wore down 37-year-old seven-time Grand Slam winner Venus Williams in three sets 4-6, 6-4, 7-5.

The 26-year-old former champion Halep dropped to 18-2 on the season as she lasted just 64 minutes on the court with Osaka.

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For more information and registration, please call 01730 72 72 72 by 22 March 2018. Email: enquiries_bangladesh@raffleshospital.com

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885 North Bridge Road | Raffles Hospital | Singapore 188770 | Tel: 0311 1111 | enquiries@raffleshospital.com | www.raffleshospital.com

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