







With the fans cheering, Bangladesh players celebrate their aggregate win over Laos following a goalless draw in the second leg of the World Cup Pre-qualifiers at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

# Tonight is for the boys to enjoy'

ANISUR RAHMAN



Having confirmed the 2022 World Cup Qualifiers berth last night, Bangladesh coach Jamie Day allowed his charges to celebrate the night

to enjoy the moment they achieved following hard work in the last two weeks.

"It is a fantastic moment for Bangladesh to qualify for the World Cup Qualifying Group stage," Day said at the post-match press conference after his team advanced into the main qualifiers with an aggregate 1-0 against Laos.

"I don't want to blame anyone for squandering scoring chances. Tonight is for the boys to enjoy the moment as we just qualified for the World Cup group stage. Before the qualifiers, everyone was in doubt whether Bangladesh could cross the hurdle, but I wasn't because I trained the boys in last one year and changed the training, changed their attitude. Every time we worked hard and I never thought of not qualifying for the next stage," said the 39-year-old coach, further questioning the instance when Bangladesh remained unbeaten for three consecutive matches.

The English coach, however, felt that his team should have scored in the home match.

"We had four scoring chances but could not take those. The boys were a bit nervous but we encouraged them, they understood and kept cleansheet in the last two weeks. Performancewise, we focused on our goal

and we achieved it," said day, who felt striker Nabib Newaj Jibon should have scored from the chances he got.

Captain Jamal Bhuiyan, however, admitted that they could not perform well even though he is happy with qualifying for the group stage, a platform which ensures them of at least eight more international matches over the next one year.

"It was a good match even though we could not play well. But we got the result, which is very important because people want result," said Jamal.

Explaining the reason behind the performance, Jamal said, "It is a different match and different tactic. Sometimes you play good football, sometimes you defend because you can't play same style in every match. Today we did not allow Laos to attack us, so we played as per the game

"If we play tiki-taka football and get no result, what is the consequence of playing tiki-taka football?" said Jamal when asked about the disorgansied performance.

Laos coach Sundaram Moorthy said that they were unlucky not to get goals despite enjoying better ball possession in front of the Bangladesh fans.

"We dominated over the hosts but were unlucky not to score in the match and it was lack of composure and decisionmaking in the attacking third," said Moorthy, who later said that they created half chances which his players could not cash in on.

# Bangladesh through

Hold Laos to goalless draw for 1-0 aggregate win

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh advanced into the second round (group stages) of the joint qualifiers for 2022 FIFA World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup with a

1-0 aggregate win over Laos following a goalless draw in the second leg of the first round at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The aggregate win earned them a place in the 40-team second round of qualification, ensuring at least eight more international matches over next one year and brushing aside fears of exile from the FIFA/AFC sanctioned competition for the next three years.

A draw was good enough for Bangladesh to seal their progression, but they could have left the field with another win against Laos, who provided the hosts with some nervous moments in the latter part of the game.

Jaime Day brought two changes from the first leg, drafting in midfielders Mamunul Islam and Rabiul Hasan in place of Matin Mia and Arifur Rahman, but the men in red and green looked a little nervous in the beginning before gradually

gaining confidence in front of some 10,000-strong home crowd at big bowl.

Laos, trailing 1-0 from the first leg, pressed hard with better ball possession early, but they could not trouble the Bangladesh defence, marshalled by Yeasin Khan, Tutul Hossain Badsha, Rahmat Mia and Bishwanath Ghosh, who held firm and conceded as few set-pieces from danger zone as possible.

Bangladesh created a couple of scoring chances in the first half but the forwards could not capiatlise on those chances.

It was Bangladesh who launched the first attack in the 17th minute when holding midfielder Mashuk Mia Jonny put a forward pass to Nabib Newaj Jibon, who however mustered a feeble attempt at the near post, only to be gathered easily by Laos by goalkeeper Xaysavath.

Six minutes later, Bangladesh looked in trouble when Yeasin's intended back-pass to goalkeeper Ashraful Islam Rana was a slow one, but Rana hared off the line to make a timely clearance. In the next minute, Jibon came close to breaking the deadlock, but the Laos goalkeeper

was equal to the task.

Bangladesh started to control possession in midfield and Rabiul put a nice lob inside the box in the 38th minute for Jibon, who saw his chip over the advancing goalkeeper miss the target by a few yards.

After resumption, Bangladesh coach sent Mohammad Ibrahim in place of Biplo Ahmed on the right side and the winger released a well-judged cross in the 53rd minute for Jibon with the goalkeeper to beat, but the Abahani striker headed wide as the easiest chance of the match went begging.

Laos showed more intent in search of the lead in a bid to push the match into extra-time, but the Bangladesh defence held firm despite conceding a few setpieces including two corner-kicks.

Shrugging off the pressure, Bangladesh once again came close to taking the lead but substitute Mahbubur Rahman Sufil could not connect to a low cross from Jibon in the 78th minute before Mohammad Ibrahim failed to connect to a cross from Sohel Rana two minutes from time. The missed chances did not come back to haunt the hosts though as they held on to a goalless draw for earning a monumental aggregate win. WORLD ARCHERY CHAMPIONSHIPS

## Bangladesh advance to pre-quarterfinals

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh archers are one step away from their tickets to the Tokyo Olympic Games as the men in red and green moved into the

pre-quarterfinals of the men's recurve team event in the Hyundai World Archery Championships in 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands yesterday.

The 16th-ranked Bangladesh men's recurve team, comprised of Ruman Sana, Hakim Ahmed Rubel and Tamimul Islam, handed a 5-3 defeat to Spain, ranked 17th, in the first round to set up a prequarterfinal clash against the top-ranked South Korea.

Bangladesh, who participated in the Archery World Cup semifinals in Shanghai in March, now need to create a bit of history against the giants of the archery World, South Korea, tomorrow to ensure a quarterfinal berth as well as a quota spot for the 2020 summer Olympics.

The Bangladesh recurve mixed team, featuring Ruman Sana and Beauty Roy,

also advanced to the pre-quarterfinals with a come from behind 5-3 win over the 10th-ranked Russia. They will now face the 7th-ranked Japan tomorrow.

In the men's recurve individual event, Bangladesh's top archer, Ruman, won his first two matches to move into the third round. However, Rubel and Tamimul were eliminated from the first round. Ruman, ranked 20th, first defeated

Switzerland's Thomas Rufer 7-1 in the first round before handing Mexico's Angel David Alvarado Santin, ranked 45th, a 6-2 loss in the second round. Ruman will now face Australia's Ryan Tyack, ranked 61st, in a third round match slated for tomorrow. Meanwhile, Rubel and Tamimul

frustratingly lost to the 54th-ranked Alexander Wise of England and 46thranked Steve Wijler of Netherlands respectively by an identical 2-6 set points.

In the women's section, Beauty lost to England's Naomi Folkard in tiebreakers in the first round of the recurve individual event following 5-5 set point draws in the five regulation sets.

### Roma appoint Fonseca

AFP, Rome

Paulo Fonseca was named new Roma coach on Tuesday, as the Serie A club look to bounce back from a traumatic season that saw them go through two managers and fail to qualify for the Champions League.

In a statement, Roma said that former Shakhtar Donetsk coach Fonseca joins on an initial two-year contract with the option to extend for a further year.

"I am excited and motivated by the task ahead of us. I cannot wait to move to Rome, meet our fans and get started," the 46-year-old Portuguese was quoted as saying by the club's Twitter account.

#### WHAT TO WATCH

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## Can Messi break Argentina jinx?



With Neymar sidelined by an ankle injury, Lionel Messi heads into the Copa America this weekend as the competition's main attraction but one with a desperate need to end more than a decade

of hurt with Argentina. The five-time Ballon d'Or winner has one of the most impressive trophy hauls in football history but there is a glaring void

when it comes to national team accolades.

Four Champions League crowns and 10 La Liga titles with Barcelona are not matched by Argentina success.

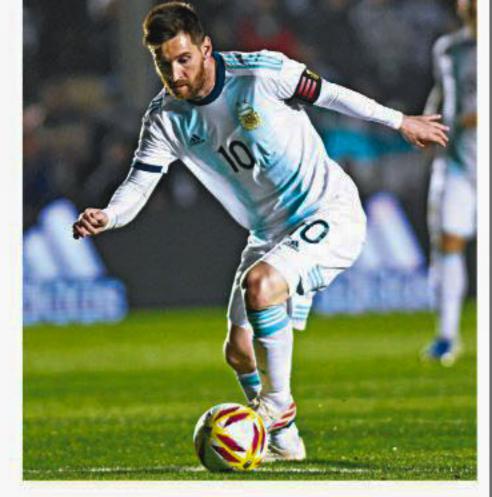
And the 31-year-old knows he's running out of time to rectify that anomaly. "I want to end my career having won

something with the national team, or at least try to do so as many times as possible," he told Fox Sports last week. Four finals played with Argentina, four defeats, including the last two Copa finals

on penalties against Chile. But the most painful was the 2014 World Cup final to Germany at the iconic Maracana, where Messi will hope to return

on July 7 for the Copa title decider. That Germany defeat began a run of losing finals in three successive years and after the last of those, a bitterly disappointed Messi announced his

international retirement. He and his teammates came in for a torrent of abuse and criticism.



His retirement lasted just six weeks, though, and it was his hattrick in Argentina's final qualifier that secured a 3-1 win in Ecuador that sent the team to the World Cup in Russia last year.

But, as so many times before, Messi was unable to recapture his Barca form while on international duty and dejection followed as the Albiceleste were sent home in the second round after a 4-3 defeat to eventual winners France.

Messi has long been talisman for club and country but he will be even more so in Brazil with a rejuvenated squad full of inexperienced campaigners. But that hasn't dampened expectation either within the group or the country as a whole.

### Draxler sees future at PSG

AFP, Berlin

Germany midfielder Julian Draxler has played down rumours linking him to Tottenham Hotspur and said he wants to stay at Paris Saint-Germain.

"I feel very happy here, I am playing for a great coach at a great club," Draxler, 25, told Kicker

magazine on Tuesday. Draxler, who earned his 50th cap in Germany's 2-0 win over Belarus last Saturday, has been in and out of the PSG first eleven since joining the club in 2017. He has recently been linked with Bayern Munich, Bayer Leverkusen and Tottenham Hotspur, but the midfielder told Kicker that he was keen to extend his contract in Paris, which runs until 2021.

"PSG is a crazy club in a positive way, things can happen from one day to the next, but I don't think anybody is looking to kick me out here," he said.

"I will prepare for next season just like the last, and if I am offered a new contract, I will listen."

Asked directly about rumours of a move, Draxler told Bild newspaper that he had "no intention" of leaving PSG.

### Spain cruise past Sweden

AFP, Paris



Sergio Ramos and Alvaro Morata both scored penalties as Spain got the better of Sweden on Monday, while the Republic of

Ireland and Poland continued their strong starts in qualifying for Euro 2020.

Three-time European champions Spain ran out 3-0 winners in their Group F encounter with the Swedes at the Santiago Bernabeu in Madrid, recovering from the early frustration of seeing a Rodrigo Moreno effort wrongly disallowed for offside.

They won a penalty just after the hour when Sebastian Larsson blocked a Marco Asensio cross with his arm, and captain Ramos converted the spot-kick. It was the Real Madrid defender's 20th goal for his country, his seventh in his last eight matches.

Morata, who had come on as a second-half substitute, won another penalty late on when he was brought down in the box by Filip Helander, and he duly netted from 12 yards too.

Real Sociedad striker Mikel Oyarzabal, also on from the bench, wrapped up the win with three minutes left.

The result means Luis Enrique's side have the maximum 12 points from four matches and are five points ahead of Sweden and Romania at the top of the six-team section. The top two teams in each group qualify for the finals.



Spain captain Sergio Ramos celebrates his opening goal from a penalty during their Euro 2020 group F qualifier against Sweden at the Bernabeu on Monday. PHOTO: AFP

"These matches are more difficult than the result makes them look," Morata told Spanish media. "We played well, defended well and we are very happy."

Romania, who host Spain next in September, eased to a 4-0 win in Malta. Norway, whose only appearance at the Euros so far came in 2000, got their first win of the campaign as they beat the Faroe Islands 2-0 away thanks to a brace

from US-born forward Bjorn Johnsen. Ireland are top of Group D with 10 points from four games after again doing the minimum to get the better of minnows Gibraltar. Mick McCarthy's team won 1-0

on the rock in March and won 2-0 against the same opponents this time.

They went ahead in Dublin when David McGoldrick's wayward shot went in thanks to a wicked deflection off Joseph Chipolina. Robbie Brady then wrapped up the victory at the death.

"If the remit for me was to get 10 points, which I'm sure it was, that job's done," McCarthy told Sky Sports.