

EURO 2020 HIGHLIGHTS



'THE BEST IS YET TO COME'

AFP, Rome

Roberto Mancini has turned the clock back for Italy, recapturing the atmosphere of the 1990 World Cup the country hosted, with a 1-0 win over Wales capping a perfect Euro 2020 group-stage run.

Three years after taking over following Italy's failure to qualify for the World Cup for the first time in 60 years, Mancini has lead the Azzurri back to centre stage in emphatic fashion.

All Italy's group matches have been played in Rome's Stadio Olimpico.

And the song "Notti magiche" (Magical Nights) popularised during their home World Cup 31 years ago when Italy reached the semifinals rang out among the thousands of fans who were both delighted to rediscover their all-conquering national side and return to the stands after over a year away because of the pandemic.

After a perfect European qualifying run, Italy have continued that form in the group stage, beating Turkey and Switzerland, both with a 3-0 scoreline, before the victory over the Welsh sealed

top spot in Group A. It was an 11th consecutive victory without conceding a goal.

"It was nice to hear the Stadio Olimpico singing 'Notti magiche' (Magical Nights)," said 56-year-old Mancini.

"It brought us back a few years when we were all younger and we felt an extraordinary love for the national team."

Matteo Pessina's goal before half-time means Italy will play the runner-up from Group C, either Austria or Ukraine, at Wembley, where the semifinals and final will also be hosted.

Italy extended their unbeaten run to 30 games -- 25 wins and five draws -- a feat last achieved under two-time World Cup winning coach Vittorio Pozzo between 1935 and 1939.

"I'd like to resemble one of the coaches who won the World Cup," said Mancini, who has been in charge of four-time world champions Italy for 35 games.

"Pozzo won many other important things. We are still behind."

Another record beckons -- a 12th consecutive victory. That was achieved by Ferruccio Valcareggi, who led Italy to

their only European title in 1968, and a runners-up spot in the World Cup two years later.

Mancini brought in fresh legs against the Welsh, with eight changes from the Swiss game, but the outcome was the same as a side with an average age of 27 again dominated their rivals.

Marco Verratti returned to midfield from injury and proved decisive, setting up 24-year-old Pessina for his first competitive international goal in his seventh appearance for Italy, having scored two others in friendlies.

Midfielder Federico Chiesa also got his first start in this Euro 2020 and earned the man of the match award.

"We are ready to dream big. We've all the options in hand," said the 23-year-old Juventus player.

"The best is yet to come. It's great to play at Wembley. But our goal is to return to London after the last 16."

Shaqiri 'proud' despite waiting game

AFP, Baku

Switzerland goalscorer Xherdan Shaqiri said he was "proud" of his side's performance in Sunday's 3-1 Euro 2020 win over Turkey as they finished third in Group A.

Despite the victory the Swiss will have to wait on results in other groups to see if they qualify for the next round as one of the four best third-placed teams.

Switzerland drew their opening game of the tournament with Wales before Wednesday's 3-0 loss in Italy.

"It was important to show a reaction as a team, as a unit, and that's what we've done," Shaqiri said.

"I'm proud of the team that they really showed a good reaction.

"We'll wait and see what the other teams play. The main thing today was to win and now we're waiting," he added.

Shaqiri's double included a sublime first-half effort from outside the box.

The Liverpool playmaker took his goal tally for his country up to 25 after playing just 22 club games last season.

"The first one with my right foot that was really good," he said.

"We played like a unit and that was crucial today against this team and we knew that if we're good, we're going to create a lot of chances today

"We could score maybe one or two more but at the end of the day it's the game and we did that."

Switzerland had 23 attempts on goal but Turkey threatened to fight back when scored in the second half.



Foden's 'blond bet'

REUTERS

England's Phil Foden said his teammates have agreed to copy his dyed blond hairstyle if they win the European Championship.

Foden caused a stir on social media before the tournament when he shared a picture of him dyeing his short black hair, just as former England great Paul Gascoigne did for Euro '96.



The 21-year-old said he had persuaded his teammates to copy the hairstyle if they capture their first major trophy in 55 years.

"If we win it, I told the team they had to get the same haircut as me!" Foden told TalkSport.

"They all agreed so hopefully, if we win it, you will see everyone with the same haircut."

"I think Romania did it where they all had the same haircut so if we win it, I would make everyone get the same haircut."

England face Czech Republic in Tuesday's final Group D match at Wembley. A draw would be enough to send them through to the knockout stages.

Up to 10,000 fans allowed at Tokyo 2020 venues

AFP, Tokyo

Up to 10,000 fans will be allowed at Tokyo Olympic events, organisers said Monday, warning competition could move behind closed doors if infections surge.

The decision, just weeks before the opening ceremony, ends months of speculation about whether domestic spectators would be able to attend the pandemic-postponed Games. Overseas fans were banned in March.

A lottery will determine which existing ticket-holders can attend a



Games that will be unlike any other, with cheering banned, masks mandatory, and fans told to go straight home after the competition.

"In light of the government's restrictions on public events, the spectator limit for the Olympic Games will be set at 50 percent of venue capacity, up to a maximum of 10,000 people in all venues," organisers said in a statement.

A decision on spectators at the Paralympics will be delayed until July 16, a week before the Olympics open.

And officials left open the possibility of a reversal if the virus rebounds. Tokyo was under a coronavirus state of emergency until Sunday.



Abahani's last batting pair shake hands with Gazi Group Cricketers players after scoring the winning runs off the penultimate delivery of the innings in a Super League match of the BDPL at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Abahani's nail-biting win

SPORTS REPORTER



High voltage drama with a nail-biting last over finish was witnessed, and then there was the second hundred of the league which eventually went in vain as the super league stage of the Bangabandhu Dhaka Premier League T20 started to step towards the tournament's climax.

Mushfiqur Rahim's Abahani registered a hard fought one-wicket win over Mahmudullah Riyad's Gazi Group Cricketers in an eventful encounter in the day's second fixture at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Gazi were bundled out for 130 in 19.1 overs but the bowlers bounced back well as Abahani needed nine runs off the last over with two wickets in hand.

In the final over delivered by left arm spinner Nasum Ahmed, Tanzim Ahmed took a single off the first ball after which Mehedi Hasan Rana struck a boundary. Rana was then run-out in the next ball while trying to take a double followed by Arafat Sunny returning the strike to Tanzim immediately.

Needing two off the last two balls, the youngster Tanzim hit the winning strike, with a mishit towards extra cover region resulting in two runs, and thus Abahani registered a thrilling win in the end.

Left hander Najmul Hossain Shanto's fifty and Liton Das's 22 helped set the tone at chasing a modest target but Abahani kept losing wickets at regular intervals.

Gazi's pacer Mukidul Islam picked up three wickets while Mahmudullah and Mahedi took two each but the poor fielding contributed to their misery.

Earlier, after being sent to

bat, Soumya Sarkar top-scored with thirty for Gazi while on the other side, Mohammad Saifuddin remained instrumental and picked up four wickets, conceding a miserly 18 from his four overs.

In the day's relegation fixture, Hasanuzzaman's century was not enough for Partex Sporting to avoid the 23-run defeat over Old DOHS who posted 199 for 3 by riding on Rakin Ahmed's blistering unbeaten 92 off 58 balls.

Right-hander Hasanuzzaman was dismissed on 105 off 52 balls as Partex were restricted on 178 for 8 in 20 overs.

In the other super league encounter, Prime Doleshwar registered a comfortable six-wicket win over Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, courtesy of Saif Hasan's fifty. Sheikh Jamal managed to score 123 for 9 in 20 overs after being sent to bat where seamer Rejaur Rahman bagged three wickets for Doleshwar.

Diya to feature in Tokyo

SPORTS REPORTER



The promising archer Diya Siddique made it through to the Olympics despite having missed out at the direct quota place after going down in an even fight with third-ranked Ana Umer of Slovenia in the final qualification tournament for Tokyo 2020 in Paris yesterday.

Later in the day, Diya was selected to participate as a wild card entry, as announced by the Olympic Games Tripartite Commission.

Top five finishers from women's individual recurve event were supposed to get the direct tickets for Tokyo Olympics while four wild or invitation cards were to be given to players from developing countries. Thus, Bangladesh were one of the stronger candidates to gain the invitation ticket for women participants, having already had earned a direct quota through Ruman Sana.

"We have a good possibility to get a wild card in women's individual event," hoped Bangladesh Archery Federation general

secretary Kazi Razib Uddin Ahmed Chapa earlier in the day prior to announcement, hinting at Diya.

Diya, who along with Sana bagged a silver medal in World Cup (Stage-2) last month in Switzerland, gave her superior opponent and third-ranked Umer a run for her money in the third round yesterday before going down in tiebreaker despite scoring equal eight points.

The BKSP student lost the first two sets 25-26, 25-27 to Umer before bouncing back to level the set points by winning third and fourth sets 27-26, 28-26. The match was thus forced to roll into the deciding fifth set which saw Umer and Diya tied with 23-23, equalling 5-5 on set points.

To break the tie, both of them stepped up to shoot a single arrow each, but only to end up being level on 8-8. Umer eventually was declared the winner because her arrow, compared to Diya's, was closer to the centre of the target.

Diya had earlier beaten Argentina's Florencia Leithold in 6-0 set points in the second round while her teammates Beauty Roy and Mahanaz Akhter Moneera got defeated in their respective matches.



Legendary sprinter Usain Bolt and his partner Kasi Bennett announced Sunday the birth of twin boys, who have been named Thunder Bolt and Saint Leo Bolt. Bolt revealed the news on Instagram with a Father's Day family photo, showing a lightning bolt emoji next to each of his children's names in the caption, without stating when the twins were born.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM