



Brazil's Gabriel Barbosa (2nd from R) celebrates with his teammates after scoring a goal during their 3-1 win against Venezuela in a World Cup qualifying fixture in Caracas on Thursday. (Bottom) Argentina talisman Lionel Messi cuts a forlorn figure during their goalless draw against Paraguay in Asuncion.

PHOTO: REUTERS/AFP

BRAZIL STAY PERFECT

Argentina stutter

AFP, Montevideo



Gabriel Barbosa's penalty five minutes from time maintained Brazil's perfect start to South American World Cup qualifying with a come from behind 3-1 win over Venezuela on Thursday.

It was a ninth win from nine for the Selecao and extended their lead in the single South American qualifying group to eight points over unbeaten Argentina, who drew 0-0 in Paraguay.

Eric Ramirez's early goal gave Venezuela a shock lead in Caracas but Marquinhos equalized with a header before Barbosa's late penalty.

Substitute Antony rubbed salt into unlucky Venezuela's wounds five minutes into injury time to leave the hosts rooted to the bottom of the table.

"It was a tough game, we started off well below our level," admitted Marquinhos.

"It was our second half performance that got us the positive result we wanted."

Shorn of the suspended Neymar, Brazil clearly missed his spark, dominating possession but creating little until their late rally.

Venezuela took a shock lead on 11 minutes when Yeferson Soteldo stood up a cross into the box and Ramirez rose unmarked to head into the far corner as two Brazilian defenders in close attendance slipped.



Brazil were almost level halfway through the first period but Everton Ribeiro's attempted cross deflected off Nathuel Ferraresi and onto the bar, before the defender cleared the ball to safety.

Brazil had the ball in the net on 56 minutes but it was chalked off for a foul by Thiago Silva.

Marquinhos rose to head home debutant substitute Raphinha's corner 19 minutes from time, although Venezuela's goalkeeper Joel Graterol should have done better but seemed to be deceived by the ball bouncing in front of him.

And the turnaround was complete when Oscar Gonzalez tripped Barbosa in the box, with the striker calmly slotting the resulting spot kick down the middle of the goal.

Leeds United's Raphinha rounded off an

impressive debut with a second assist for Antony to tap home from six yards with almost the last kick of the match.

Paraguay kept Lionel Messi quiet in a goalless draw in Asuncion.

A lively start saw chances at both ends but Argentina's Joaquin Correa should have done better when put clean through on goal, only for a heavy touch to allow goalkeeper Antony Silva to smother the danger.

Argentina stopper Emiliano Martinez then made a full stretch save to tip Santiago Arzamendi's piledriver from distance around the post. Argentina were predictably on top as Messi curled a free-kick from the left wide of the far post.

But despite enjoying almost 70 percent of possession and most of the first half chances, Argentina rarely looked like breaking down their organized hosts.

There was a similarly brisk start to the second half as Correa somehow failed to convert Rodrigo De Paul's cross to the back post.

Carlos Gonzalez should have won it two minutes from time for Paraguay but skied his shot from 12 yards out.

"We just lacked a goal from our clear chances," moaned Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni.

"Paraguay had us in difficulty a few times but we dominated."

'New committees after T20 World Cup'

SPORTS REPORTER



While the newly elected board of directors will take charge of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) for the next four years, led by Nazmul Hassan for the fourth consecutive term, the previous 21 working committees are expected to continue their operations until the next board meeting.

Six new faces were elected in the recent BCB elections on Wednesday while 19 directors, who were retained and led various committees, will continue their respective roles keeping the upcoming busy schedule for the Tigers in mind.

"Until the next board meeting, our president Nazmul Hassan has asked the respective committees of the previous term to continue their work. Keeping the busy schedule of the Bangladesh team in mind it is expected that we are going to form the new committees after the T20 World Cup," BCB director and chairman of the media committee of the previous term, Jalal Yunus, told The Daily Star yesterday.

According to Jalal, there could be changes in the new committees of the BCB.

Former Bangladesh captain and chairman of the High-Performance Unit of the previous term, Naimur Rahman, who won the election from Dhaka Division,

informed that he is willing to work for the betterment of cricket in any committee for the new term.

"I have the experience of working from the cricket operations committee to game development and also in the HP unit. I think I have tried to give my best in any role given to me and I think I can say I was successful. I am looking forward to working whichever department I am given the charge of," Naimur told the media yesterday.

"We are doing well in the ODIs and T20s and now we should do well in Tests too. Now is the time for Bangladesh cricket to take the next step. We need to do a lot more than our designated works and this time I will do that," he added.

On the other hand, there have been a lot of talk over the cricket operations committee led by another former captain, Akram Khan, in the previous term. It will be interesting to see whether the new board would see a new face to lead the most important committee.

There have been few interested candidates for the posts, however, none of them are willing to speak on record and informed that the president will ultimately decide everything.

Whatever responsibilities are given to me, I will try to work on that aspect. The president will decide who will get which role," said Akram.



Brotherhood. That is how Mustafizur Rahman described the picture with Shakib Al Hasan, taken during the IPL game between Rajasthan Royals and Kolkata Knight Riders, and published on his social media accounts on Thursday night. The two leading Bangladesh players are done with their IPL stint and will join the national team in the UAE tomorrow. The Tigers, meanwhile, will fly to the UAE today after ending their training camp in Oman where they played a warm-up match against Oman A team last night. Following two official practice matches in the UAE, the team will return to Oman for the Round 1 group stage matches, starting from October 17.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK



'Mbappe has winner's mentality'

AFP, Paris



Hugo Lloris on Thursday hailed Kylian Mbappe's superb performance which pushed France to bounce back from two goals down at half-time to beat Belgium 3-2 and reach the Nations League final.

Theo Hernandez struck the late winner which set-up a clash with Spain at the San Siro on Sunday but it was Mbappe who led the fightback in the second half on his 50th France appearance.

Mbappe, who is the youngest ever player to rack up half a century of Les Bleus caps, provided the pass from which Karim Benzema halved the deficit just after the hour mark and netted the penalty that levelled the scores in the 69th minute.

"Taking that responsibility at that moment of the match was fantastic," Lloris told reporters.

"Yes he has a lot of talent but behind that he has a winner's mentality. We're all happy for him in the dressing room."

Mbappe, 22, had a difficult summer, missing the penalty which knocked world champions France out of Euro 2020 at the last-16 stage and then being at the centre of a transfer saga which saw his desired

move to Real Madrid denied by Paris Saint-Germain.

He also said in a recent interview with L'Equipe that he would have liked more support from the France set-up and his teammates after missing that spot-kick in June.

But France coach Didier Deschamps insisted that he "always tried to be there with him, and right behind him".

"There are a lot of demands and expectations around him, but I have always known that the France team will be stronger with Kylian. I have never doubted that," Deschamps told reporters.

Roberto Martinez, meanwhile, said that Belgium let the weight of expectation get the better of them, saying that the desire for a golden generation to win a trophy held them back in the second half.

"The quality was shown in first half, second half was a question of emotion and feeling responsibility... it became a game that we wanted to finish and wanted to get into the final. At that point we stopped playing," Belgium coach Martinez said.

"We're hurting but 12 months from now we have a major tournament (World Cup). It's a good opportunity to show that we can grow from this experience."

'Tough to play three matches in seven days'

SPORTS REPORTER from Male



Even though Bangladesh's interim coach Oscar Bruzon blamed the fatigue for their defeat against Maldives, the men in red and green were, no doubt, outplayed by the quality of Maldivian footballers, who had been superior in terms of skills, tactics and its execution.

Under the guidance of the Spanish coach, Bangladesh have been trying to play possession football in the ongoing regional football extravaganza and the improvements were evident against Sri Lanka and India, where the charges of Bruzon nicely controlled the midfield while keeping the backline solid.

However, the plan did not work against Maldives, who outshone Bangladesh by their composure of holding the ball and creating goal-scoring opportunities in presence of a familiar home environment.

Ali Ashfaq, Ali Fasih, Hamza Mohamed, Niaz Hassan, Hussain Nihaan and others were exceptional upfront and the Bangladesh defence were made to toil before Hamza put Maldives

ahead with a brilliant overhead kick after which Ashfaq doubled the lead from a penalty.

Bangladesh manager Satyajit Das Rupu seemingly denied that Maldives' players are better than Bangladesh's, rather, pointing at fatigue for the latest off day at the field.

"I think the first 30 to 35 minutes of the match looked even because they could not put any pressure on Bangladesh during that period. Last five to six minutes of the first half, we were a bit under pressure because of the positional mistakes.

"After the break, the coach briefed the players to avoid repeating those mistakes. I think the first goal was an unbelievable strike that gave them a big advantage and Maldives gained the momentum from the lead," opined Rupu.

"We had a bad day yesterday [Thursday] as our players were tired playing three matches in seven days," added the former national player.

Defender Rahmat Mia also believes that it was fatigue, caused by a hectic fixture, that had led his side to underperform.

"Similar to how we performed against Sri Lanka and India, our game plan was to keep the midfield compact first and then

launch attacks but it didn't work well," said Rahmat Mia who played as right-winger against Maldives instead of his usual left-back position.

"I think we lacked energy because it was really tough to play three matches in seven days. It wasn't like the Bangladesh Premier League, where we could somewhat relax in between matches.

"That's why our performance was a bit down against Maldives," said Rahmat who believes they can overcome their fatigue well in a five-day break before the match against Nepal.

"Before the match, we knew that we could confirm our spot in the final through a win. If not possible, then we would look to return with a point at least. But anyway, none of us are morally down for not achieving those targets against Maldives.

Still, we are in with a chance and we believe that if we win against Nepal, then we can reach the final. So we are fully focused solely on that objective," said a confident Rahmat Mia, who has been enjoying a two-day lay-off, except for swimming and gym sessions, along with teammates to recharge for their last group match, virtually a semi-final match for Bangladesh.



Murray back in the good books of Sears

REUTERS

Andy Murray was "back in the good books" with his wife on Thursday after his wedding ring and stinky shoes were returned to him.

Murray said on Twitter that his shoes reeked so badly in his car that he decided to leave them under the vehicle outside his hotel in California overnight to air them out.

When he went back to get the shoes he found they, along with the ring he had strung though their laces, were nowhere to be found, prompting



Murray to ask for help in recovering the missing items.

Murray, who married Kim Sears in 2015, said in a video posted on Instagram that the ring had been returned after he made calls to hotel security.

"Little update for everyone. Would you believe it?" Murray said before taking a big whiff of the footwear.

"They still absolutely stink but the shoes are back, the wedding ring is back, and I'm back in the good books."

Three-time Grand Slam champion Murray faces France's Adrian Mannarino in the first round of the Indian Wells tournament in Southern California on Friday.