

‘I’M MORE HANDSOME NOW’

Barcelona’s Brazilian defender Dani Alves received a rousing reception on Wednesday after being presented to supporters at the Nou Camp for the second time, joking that “I’m even more handsome now than when I left.” The 38-year-old right back, who wore an amber velvet suit, signed a contract until the end of the current campaign with club president Joan Laporta alongside him, before addressing around 10,000 fans in the stadium. “Once again, I’m here. If you remember the last time that I took this microphone, it was to say that I didn’t know when my dream would end. “But I’m here again, still living the dream. You make me feel special, like one of you. This is something that is never is going to change. Long live Barca, long live Catalunya, long live the mothers who gave birth to you all.” Alves played for Barca from 2008-16, winning six LaLiga titles, three Champions League crowns and three Club World Cups among other major honours.

REUTERS





‘We finally got the reward’

SPORTS REPORTER

 The Bangladeshi archers might not have exceeded expectations in the individual events of the ongoing 22nd Asian Archery Championships but they managed to rise to the occasion in the team events with medal-winning performances at the Army Stadium in Banani yesterday.

The hosts bagged two bronze medals in the Women’s and Men’s Recurve team events and in the process, broke their deadlock in the continental championships. The latest triumph by the Bangladeshi archers makes an illustrious entry to their cabinet, along with

previously achieved medals from bigger stages - Archery World Cup Stage-2 and World Archery Championships.

The women’s team, starring Diya Siddique, Nasrin Akter and Beauty Roy, sealed the day’s first bronze by beating Vietnam 5-3 on set points before the men’s team, comprising Ruman Sana, Hakim Ahmed Rubel and Ram Krishna, defeated Kazakhstan 6-2 on set points.

“We were really confident of winning the medal. We are delighted after doing our jobs successfully because it has been our first-ever medal in Asian Championships,” said an ecstatic Diya, who will pair with Hakim to fight for the gold medal in the Recurve mixed team event on Friday.

“We finally got the reward. We did well because we worked really hard and were very focused in the training for the past year and during the games as well,” Nasrin informed.

One more bronze was up for grabs in the day’s other event, however, Bangladesh men’s compound team lost 223-235 to India.

Country’s star archer Ruman Sana said, “We have been improving day by day even though we are still far from Korea and India. However, every archer lives the dream of winning a medal while participating in any international tournament. And under the guidance of coach Martin Fredrick, we gained plenty of confidence to perform in international competitions.”

‘Deserved to lose’

SPORTS REPORTER

 Conceding late goals has been a bone in the throat for Bangladesh national team over the years even though things had improved a bit after Dutch coach Lodewijk De Kruij took charge in 2013.

However, Kruij’s ad hoc basis work with the national side followed by the guidance from several local and overseas head coaches could not completely heal the national team from their finish-line anxiety.

As Bangladesh’s playing style morphed conservatively under Australian coach Adrew Ord and British coach Jamie Day, who both had prioritised on keeping a compact defence above all else, the rate of conceding goals in the dying minutes had seemingly reduced.

However, since Oscar Bruzon and Mario Lemos assumed interim coaching roles in the SAFF Championship and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa Trophy, respectively, Bangladesh’s characteristic flaw resurfaced and was there for all to see.

An 88th minute penalty against Nepal forced Bangladesh’s exit from last month’s SAFF Championships before the Men in Red and Green also failed to qualify for the final of the four-nation tournament in Sri Lanka, having conceded the decisive spot-

kick at the extra-time of the second half against the hosts .

In retrospect, it always boiled down to players’ ability to concentrate, or lack thereof, and after the 2-1 loss to Sri Lanka, Lemos also pointed at the subpar finishing ability to be the cause of the latest disappointment.

“We got a lot of chances to score but didn’t have the quality to finish. If you can’t finish, the opponents will kill you in one of their counter attacks.

“We have to stop thinking that we are going to win the match. In the dying moments, both Seychelles and Sri Lanka were running and fighting but we did not have that attitude. We were waiting for the game to finish. If that was your attitude and if you lacked concentration to give the opponents a baby penalty, you deserved to lose,” said the Portuguese coach as he cut a frustrated figure.

Nevertheless, poor ground conditions played its part as well but it affected both sides. Lemos ended up praising the Sri Lankan side that battled like lions on the pitch.

“I congratulate Sri Lanka for qualifying to the final. They really played with a lot of heart though it wasn’t easy to play with 10 players. Of course the penalty completely changed the fate of the match but we also missed one.”



Rajshahi, Dhaka Metro win Netherlands leave it late

SPORTS REPORTER

 In Tier-2 encounters on the final day of the fifth round of the 23rd National Cricket League yesterday, Barishal Division defeated Dhaka Metropolis by seven wickets while Rajshahi Division won by 166 runs against Chattogram Division.

Resuming the day on 303 for seven at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium, Dhaka Metro put up 348 runs on the board for the loss of nine wickets before declaring. Md Al Amin Junior made 70 while Lower-middle-order batter Md Sharifullah remained unbeaten on 52.

In reply, Barishal chased down a humble target of 65 in 24.4 overs with seven wickets remaining.

In the other match in Sylhet, Chattogram needed 188 runs on Day Four to win against Rajshahi with three wickets in hand, but Rajshahi restricted their counterparts to 247 in their second innings, winning the match by 166 runs.

Sunzamul Islam scalped four wickets for Rajshahi while Shafiqul Islam and Saklain Sajib scalped three each. Despite the loss, Chattogram remain top of the Tier-2 points table followed by Barishal, Rajshahi and Dhaka Metropolis.

However, in Tier-1 clashes at the BKSP, both matches were drawn as Dhaka Division faced Rangpur Division while Sylhet Division encountered Khulna Division.

Dhaka’s Abdul Mazid and Rony Talukder stitched together a 97-run opening partnership as they went on to score 156 runs for the loss of three wickets at the end of the final day.

Meanwhile, a four-wicket-haul from Khulna’s Al Amin Hossain was impactful in restricting Sylhet to 294 runs. Amite Hasan scored 63 runs for Sylhet. In reply, Khulna gathered 13 runs losing a wicket before the match ended as a draw.

Sylhet Division will be fighting for relegation in the final round on November 21 as they face Tier-1 table-toppers Rangpur while Khulna will face Dhaka.

POINTS TABLE						
Tier - 1						
Teams	M	W	L	D	P	
Rangpur	5	2	0	3	28.89	
Dhaka	5	2	1	2	25.4	
Khulna	5	1	2	2	18.82	
Sylhet	5	1	3	1	17.04	
Tier - 2						
Teams	M	W	L	D	P	
Chattogram	5	2	2	1	28.1	
Barishal	5	2	1	2	26.64	
Rajshahi	5	1	1	3	20.56	
Dhaka Metro	5	0	1	4	15.54	

AFP, Paris

 The Netherlands clinched the final automatic place in European qualifying for the 2022 World Cup as late goals from Steven Bergwijn and Memphis Depay sealed a 2-0 win over Norway on Tuesday, with Turkey and Ukraine grabbing play-off spots.

The Dutch, with injured coach Louis van Gaal watching from the stands in Rotterdam, only needed a point to top Group G and came through a nervy encounter to finish two points clear of second-placed Turkey, who pipped Norway to a play-off spot.

Tottenham winger Bergwijn smashed Arnaut Danjuma’s cross into the top corner with six minutes left at De Kuip.

Barcelona’s Depay then made it two a minute into injury time as he slotted home Bergwijn’s pass to seal the Netherlands a return to the tournament after missing out on Russia in 2018.

The victory was played behind closed doors after a partial lockdown was re-introduced last week due to an increase in cases of Covid-19.

“Of course there are many things that could be improved, but the result was the most important. We are going to Qatar,” Oranje captain Virgil van Dijk told broadcasters NOS.

In Podgorica, Montenegro forward Fatos Beqiraj opened the scoring after just four minutes to put Turkey in danger of missing out on a top-two finish.



The visitors responded on 22 minutes as Galatasary attacker Kerem Akturkoglu finished acrobatically at the back post before Feyenoord youngster Orkun Kokcu added a second to secure a 2-1 win.

In Group D, Finland missed out on the play-offs as Karim Benzema and Kylian Mbappe scored in World Cup holders France’s 2-0 win

in Helsinki.

The pair became the first France players to score in four successive Les Bleus games since David Trezeguet in 2003.

Ukraine took the play-off spot after beating Bosnia and Herzegovina by the same scoreline thanks to Oleksandr Zinchenko and Artem Dovbyk’s second-half efforts in Zenica.



A Bangladesh player cages one during their Bangabandhu 6th South Asian Basketball Championship fixture against Maldives at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Bangladesh won the match by 86-65 points.

Federer to skip Australian Open

REUTERS

Roger Federer will miss the Australian Open in January and is unlikely to return to competition until mid-2022 as he recovers from multiple knee surgeries, the former world number one told Swiss media.

Federer, 40, also said he would be “extremely surprised” if he was able to play at Wimbledon, a Grand Slam he has won a record eight times with his last title coming in 2017.

The 20-times Grand Slam champion said he would be able to resume running in January and return to training on the court in March or April.

“I need to be very patient and give my knee the time to heal. The next few months will be crucial,” Federer said in an interview



carried by several Swiss media outlets.

Federer’s agent did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Federer is tied with Rafa Nadal and Novak Djokovic in the race to be the most successful men’s singles Grand Slam champion of all time.

HIGHLIGHTS

Already Qualified: The nations who have so far qualified for 32 teams Qatar 2022 World Cup: Qatar (hosts), Germany, Denmark, Brazil, Argentina, Belgium, France, Croatia, Spain, Serbia, England, Switzerland, Netherlands.

Into Playoffs: The teams who are in the UEFA

play-offs: Italy, Portugal, Scotland, Russia, Sweden, Poland, Wales, North Macedonia, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Austria, Turkey.

Playoff System: These 12 teams will be drawn into three different paths containing a one-legged semi-final and a final, with the three winners of

the latter games qualifying.

Draws: The World Cup group stage draw is currently scheduled to take place in April 2022, following the completion of the UEFA play-offs in March. The play-offs will take place between March 24 and March 29, 2022.

Scaloni celebrates ‘magnificent’ year

REUTERS, San Juan

Argentina drew 0-0 with Brazil to become the second South America team to qualify for the 2022 World Cup on Tuesday, with coach Lionel Scaloni saluting his players at the end of what he called a “magnificent” year.

The point, combined with results elsewhere, means Argentina join Brazil as the only two of the 10 South American sides to guarantee their place in Qatar with between four and five games still remaining.

The feat came four months after Scaloni led Argentina to the Copa America, their first major trophy in 28 years.

“This was a magnificent year,” the former Lazio, Deportivo La Coruna and West Ham player said. “Winning the Copa, qualifying for the World Cup unbeaten. It was a dream.”

Scaloni had never been a head coach when he was appointed in 2018 but he has turned Argentina into a team that can look ahead to Qatar with optimism.

Lionel Messi at last appears to be enjoying his international football after years of ups and downs in a blue and white shirt and the midfield, anchored by the increasingly influential Rodrigo De Paul, is settled and solid.

Most noticeably, Scaloni has shored up a creaky defence, especially between the posts where Emiliano Martinez is the most reliable goalkeeper they have had in years.

His side have conceded just six goals in their 13 qualifiers, only two more than Brazil.

Tuesday night’s draw against their arch rivals was their 27th match unbeaten, a run that dates back more than two years, and came just days

after they beat another fierce rival, Uruguay, 1-0 in Montevideo.

“We got four points against two very difficult rivals,” Scaloni said after an entertaining match in San Juan. “We all like to win of course but these games help a team to mature. Without a doubt, the balance is positive.”

“Having qualified so far in advance, in a really difficult qualifying section, is something we should be proud of.”

ANGRY BRAZIL COACH HITS OUT AT OFFICIALS

Brazil held Argentina to a 0-0 draw in San Juan on Tuesday but Brazilian coach Tite angrily hit out at what he said was an “inconceivable” decision

taken - or not taken - by officials manning the video assistant referee (VAR).

Tite felt Argentine defender Nicolas Otamendi should have been punished for elbowing winger Raphinha in the first half.

“Cunha [Andres] is an extraordinary referee,” Tite said, his voice rising. “Refereeing demands a team and those who were in the VAR, it’s impossible, and I am going to repeat this, it is impossible not to see Otamendi’s elbow on Raphinha.”

“A high quality VAR official cannot work this way. It’s inconceivable. Inconceivable is not the word I want to use. I am using that word because I am polite.”

