

Manchester Utd, Arsenal move into last 16

AFP, London

Manchester United failed to usurp Real Sociedad at the top of Europa League Group E despite a 1-0 win in San Sebastian, as Arsenal did secure their place in the last 16 on Thursday.

United now face a tricky playoff against one of the sides dropping down to the Europa League from the Champions League in February with Barcelona and Juventus potential opponents.

Alejandro Garnacho scored the only goal of the night at the Reale Arena after just 17 minutes to surpass George Best as United's youngest ever non-English scorer in Europe at 18.

But the Red Devils were left to rue their defeat to the Spaniards at Old Trafford on matchday one as they missed out on topping the group on goal difference.

"You don't always get what you deserve - that's football," said United manager Erik Ten Hag.

"We win today but of course we are disappointed we didn't score two goals because that is what we needed."

Arsenal did not make the same mistake as a 1-0 win over FC Zurich was enough to hold off PSV Eindhoven to win Group A.

But Mikel Arteta's men were made to work for the three points after Kieran Tierney's early strike put them in front.

Arteta was forced to turn to his bench in the second half with Bukayo Saka and Thomas Partey risked despite a trip to Chelsea on Sunday for the Premier League leaders.

And the Gunners had a close escape when Adrian



Mohammedan's local players pose for a group photograph with a club flag flying in the background ahead of team's transfer registration in Motijheel yesterday. (Inset) Some of the locals and foreign recruits of the team enjoyed a horse carriage ride to the BFF House.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Newcastle wanted 'help', says Howe

AFP, London

Eddie Howe revealed on Friday that he walked into a Newcastle dressing room that "wanted help" when he launched his rescue mission as he prepares to mark 12 months in charge at St James' Park.

Howe, who took over as manager from Steve Bruce on November 8 last year, has lifted the club from the Premier League relegation mire to a position as unlikely top four contenders ahead of Sunday's trip to Southampton.

He said the struggling squad he inherited, since boosted by big-money signings, was better than it was given credit for.

"I had that belief internally that we'd got some really good players," said the former Bournemouth boss.

"I think my first impressions were genuine, a really willing group that wanted to be coached, that wanted help, so I felt that was a really good starting point."

Defender Fabian Schaer and midfielder Joelinton have played big roles in Newcastle's revival.

Mohammedan attempt to revive former glory

ANISUR RAHMAN

For nearly a decade until this season, Mohammedan Sporting Club have been devoid of any silverware at the top flight football and apparently the Black and Whites have not shown the necessary drive to negate their long miserable journey, though such apathy from the club was unthinkable up to late 1990s.

Back then, the footballers and officials were heavily pressured by Mohammedan supporters whenever results went against their beloved outfit, but that supporters' passion appears to have faded beyond repair following non-stop failures - a stark contrast considering how they usually roared almost every season by winning one or two titles.

Recent success amounts to Mohammedan SC sealing the trophy of the country's newest tournament - Super Cup - twice in 2011 and 2013, respectively, but the Motijheel-based outfit could not win the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) in 13 attempts as the BPL remains the only silverware missing from their cabinet.

Following the introduction of BPL in 2007 and except for its second and third editions, Mohammedan was no match to challenge their arch-rivals Abahani or revamped Muktijoddha Sangsad or newly formed Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club and Bashundhara

Kings - with the latter two even went on to share the professional league honours six times.

Since Sheikh Jamal tore apart Mohammedan in their debut season of 2010-11 after luring in more than dozen players from the Black and White outfits in the season prior - involving big names like Jahid Hasan Emily, Zahid Hossain, Aminul Haque, Rezaul Karim, and many others - the Mohammedan management never pushed to rope in recognised players, having cited financial constraints, and instead they kept settling for mediocre squads.

The Mohammedan management, however, have adopted a contrasting policy this time, though a couple of well-known players - national defender Riyadul Hasan Rafi, Rahmat Mia and goalkeeper Mohammad Nayeem - reportedly slipped from their radar despite the club handing them token money for the forthcoming season.

Still, Mohammedan showed their will for a turnaround by confirming the services of two current national players - Sazzad Hossain and Shahriar Emon - and five national discarded players - Jafar Iqbal, Mahbubur Rahman Sufil, Manik Mollah, Mehdi Hasan, and Alamgir Kabir Rana.

Apart from retaining the services of 13 old guns, including foreign recruit Souleymane Diabate of Mali, the Black and Whites also signed

19 new players, most notably four foreigners - midfielder Muzaffar Muzaffarov from Uzbekistan, forward Daniel Ricardo Febles from Venezuela, defensive midfielder Meysam Shahmakvand Zadeh from Iran, and defender Roger from Brazil - during their players' registration formalities at the BFF House in presence of the BFF president Kazi Salahuddin yesterday.

"If Mohammedan can bring back its past glory, the country's football will be developed further, I believe," said Salahuddin, who also played for Mohammedan during his illustrious career.

"Last season we hardly got any time to make a good squad because the board of directors had just taken over the responsibility of club," said Engineer Golam Mohammad Alamgir, the committee chairman and director of Mohammedan.

"However, we had enough time to consult and form a strong team this time," he concluded with optimism.

Meanwhile, Shafiqul Islam Manik, Mohammedan head coach and former national footballer, reckons his side can challenge the title contenders despite being inferior on paper, and he even revealed the objective of bagging two out of eight trophies this season.

"Quality players, a coaching panel and visionary club management is needed to become champions and this time all elements are in place for Mohammedan," said Manik.



Guerrero fired home for the Swiss champions only to be flagged offside.

Roma won their showdown with Ludogorets Razgrad to progress to the playoff round thanks to a second half fightback in the Italian capital.

The inaugural Europa Conference League winners were heading back to that competition when the Bulgarians led 1-0 at half-time.

But two Lorenzo Pellegrini penalties and a late goal from Nicolò Zaniolo took Jose Mourinho's men through.

Feyenoord and Midtjylland progressed from an incredibly tight Group F that saw all four sides end on eight points.

The Dutch giants beat Lazio 1-0 in Rotterdam thanks to Santiago Gimenez's goal.

Midtjylland beat Sturm Graz 2-0 courtesy of Anders Dreyer's double.

Union Berlin, Nantes and Monaco also won to secure progress to the playoffs.

Arsenal and Sociedad will be joined by Fenerbahce, Real Betis, Union Saint Gilloise, Feyenoord, Freiburg and Ferencváros in progressing directly to the last 16.

In the Europa Conference League Anderlecht, Lech Poznan, Nice, Partizan Belgrade, Gent and Cluj secured their places in the knockout phase.

West Ham rounded off a perfect group stage of six wins from six despite fielding a young side in a 3-0 win away to FCSB in Bucharest.



A Monarch Padma player tries in vain to stop Metro Express Barishal's Mamunur Rahman Chayan from scoring a goal from a penalty corner during their Hockey Champions Trophy fixture at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium yesterday. Barishal won the match 4-1. PHOTO: STAR

Japan banking on Minamino to rediscover sparkle

REUTERS

If Asian giants Japan are to finally make their mark at the World Cup in their seventh successive tournament they will need the myriad talents of Takumi Minamino in the toughest group.

The Samurai Blue are eyeing a quarter-final berth for the first time and will need all the firepower they can muster when they take on former world champions Germany and Spain.

Minamino has scored 17 goals in 43 appearances for Japan, cementing his place in 2018 during an impressive run of form in Austria with Salzburg. He has since earned a reputation as a dynamic midfielder with elegant dribbling, and a knack of shaking off opponents and creating chances from nothing.

His dazzling display at Anfield in the Champions League in 2019 put him on the radar of Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp, who lauded Minamino's talent and described him as "classy" before bringing him to England three months later.

His two years at Anfield saw mixed results, however, and though his scoring prowess in cup competitions won over many Liverpool fans, his



Premier League appearances came mostly off the bench and he failed to win a regular starting place.

Minamino's 10 Liverpool goals in 24 appearances in all competitions last season attracted a lot of interest, prompting a move to Monaco that came with a glowing reference from Klopp.

"An amazing professional. Super, talented player. As a person, he is full of warmth and makes everyone feel positive. A manager's dream, to be honest," Klopp said.

"Perfect attitude, winner's mentality."

But Minamino's form going into the World Cup has been dismal and his lack of goals and substitutions at Monaco saw him named top of L'Espresso's list of French league "flops".

Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu will need Minamino to set that aside, rediscover his sparkle and keep delivering for Japan.

He helped them advance with a game remaining in Asian qualifying after a run of six straight wins and in the previous qualifying round scored in seven successive matches.

In that round Minamino netted nine of Japan's staggering tally of 46 goals from eight matches, making him the second highest scorer in the competition.

He needs to find his form when it matters most in Qatar.

Meanwhile, full-back Yuta Nakayama will miss the World Cup after suffering a season-ending Achilles injury while playing for English side Huddersfield Town, the club said.

Nakayama was named in Japan's 26-man squad for Qatar on Tuesday and was expected to start in their Group E games.

Huddersfield said the 25-year-old will require surgery that will rule him out for the rest of the Championship season.

Australian club fined over Nazi salutes

AFP, Sydney

Football bosses said Friday they have fined semi-professional club Sydney United 58 and ordered their staff to undergo anti-racism training after fans made Nazi salutes at last month's Australia Cup final.

During the October 1 game against Macarthur FC, some Sydney United fans were shown on television making fascist salutes and shouting over a welcome speech by an Indigenous representative.

The fans also chanted far-right Croatian songs during the game at CommBank Stadium in Sydney, Australian media reported.

Football Australia said it had issued Sydney United - formerly known as Sydney Croatia - with an Aus\$15,000 fine.