

25 George's season high 3-pointer and 36 points lead Thunder past Bucks

26 King Kohli bows out with India undefeated in New Zealand

27 Ronaldo late winner pulls Juventus 11 points clear



Japan stun Iran to reach Asian Cup final

Queiroz stands down as Iran coach after semi-final defeat



ABU DHABI: Japan's goalkeeper Shuichi Gonda (2nd-R) catches the ball during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup semi-final football match between Iran and Japan at the Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday. — AFP

AL AIN: Werder Bremen striker Yuya Osako scored twice in 11 second-half minutes to help four-times champions Japan into the final of the Asian Cup with a 3-0 victory over tournament favourites Iran yesterday.

Osako headed the first home in the 56th minute and added his second from the penalty spot to help set up a date with either hosts the United Arab Emirates or Qatar in Friday's final in Abu Dhabi.

Genki Haraguchi put a gloss to the scoreline with a powerful run and shot in stoppage time at the end of the match but the contest was already long decided. Iran had been the form team of the tournament but their dreams of a ending a 43-year wait for a fourth continental title were left in tatters by the clinical Samurai Blue.

Carlos Queiroz announced in the post-match news conference that his nearly eight-year run as Iran coach, which took in two World Cups, was over. "I think the simplest thing to do is to copy the old song: 'and now, the end is here'," the Portuguese said, misquoting the song Frank Sinatra made famous.

"I'm happy and proud to say I did it my way." Roared on by a noisy majority of the crowd, the Iranians had enjoyed the better of a competitive, if goalless, first half but were completely deflated by Osako's twin strikes and never looked like fighting their way back into the match.

"We knew it was going to be tough but the players showed great fighting spirit," said Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu. "I'm happy the players showed that fighting spirit and really went for the win." While Iran

might have had a case that Morteza Pournazeri's arm blocked Takumi Minamino's cross accidentally for the penalty, the opening goal was down to the sort of lapse of concentration that Queiroz has warned his team against.

Minamino had made a break down the left and crumpled to the floor on the edge of the area looking for a free kick or penalty. None was forthcoming but while defender Ehsan Hajsafi was asking the referee to book the striker for a dive, Minamino raced to retrieve the ball and crossed it from the corner flag for Osako to head home unchallenged.

"It was very competitive, quite balanced game, until one error by my team, a naive error. We were all expecting action from the referee over the simulation," said Queiroz. "It was an emotional breakdown from my players and after that there was only one team on the pitch."

It was the first goal Iran had conceded in six games at the tournament but winger Alireza Jahanbakhsh came close to equalising five minutes later with a free kick that forced a good save out of Shuichi Gonda.

The second blow landed soon afterwards when the referee pointed to the spot after the ball had struck Pournazeri on the arm, confirming his decision following a look at the TV pictures on the sideline.

Osako sent goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand the wrong way from the spot and a fifth final in the last eight versions of the continental championship look assured, Haraguchi helping to wrap up their first win by a margin of more than one goal at the tournament. —Reuters

Kuwait SC wins HH Crown Prince Football Cup



KUWAIT: Kuwait SC players celebrate their victory after winning His Highness the Crown Prince Football Cup in Kuwait yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al Zayyat

KUWAIT: Kuwait SC won His Highness the Crown Prince Football Cup after beating rival Qadsia SC 1-0 yesterday. Faisal Zayed scored Kuwait's sole goal to give the club's seventh Crown Prince Football Cup title. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attended the final match. The first half witnessed moder-

ate performance by both teams but Zayed's goal broke the silence of the fans. The first half ended with Kuwait leading by one goal. Qadsia put on a better show in the second half but was unable to level the score sheet. The final match was attended by FIFA President Gianni Infantino and top official. Qadsia reached the finals after beating Al-

Arabi SC 2-1, while Kuwait's difficult 2-1 win over Al-Nasr took the team to yesterday's clash. His Highness the Crown Prince Football Cup was first held in season 1993-94. Qadsia SC has nine titles under its belt, followed by Al-Arabi and Kuwait with seven each. Salmiya SC won the Cup twice and Kazma once. — KUNA