

Sports

Vettel breaks Ferrari's F1 drought with win at Aussie GP



Lyon roars for Australia in fourth India Test with 4 wkts



MONDAY, MARCH 27, 2017

SENIOR SERVICE AS GAULTIER WINS BRITISH OPEN TITLE Page 18

DEFOE MARKS COMEBACK AS ENGLAND TOIL TO WIN

LONDON: Jermain Defoe adorned his international comeback with a goal as England toiled to a 2-0 victory over Lithuania in a forgettable World Cup qualifier at Wembley yesterday.

Defoe, 34, was making his first England appearance since November 2013, having been recalled by manager Gareth Southgate, and he marked his return with the opening goal midway through the second half. Substitute Jamie Vardy added a second goal as England tightened their grip on first place in UEFA qualifying Group F in Southgate's first home game as permanent manager.

"We'd have liked a bit more, but I think really only one team came to win the game and it's always difficult to break down a packed defence," said Southgate.

"I'm pleased for the two lads who have got the goals—a great story for Jermain and I felt Jamie added something to us." England are now the last team in European qualifying yet to have conceded a goal. Defoe's strike, the Sunderland veteran's 20th in 56 caps, was an obvious high point and second-half substitute Marcus Rashford delivered an impressive cameo.

But the stubbornly unadventurous nature of Lithuania's approach to the game, which made for a soporific match, meant there was little to shout about from an England perspective.

The game was preceded by the laying of wreaths and a minute's silence in honour of the four people killed and over 50 injured in Wednesday's terror attack in London.

Having tested out a 3-4-2-1 system in the midweek 1-0 friendly defeat in Germany, Southgate reverted to a back four and his side were quickly on the front foot, with Adam Lallana prominent.

The Liverpool midfielder saw a deflected shot caught by Ernestas Setkus and then produced a clever pass down the inside-right channel for Defoe, whose shot was blocked by the Lithuania goalkeeper.

Defoe's penalty-box cunning was one of the reasons Southgate picked him over Vardy and he vindicated his manager's call by putting England ahead in the 22nd minute.

VALSKIS LET-OFF

Raheem Sterling slipped past Egidijus Vaitkusnas on the left before rolling in a cross that Defoe plant-



LONDON: England's Jamie Vardy, left, and Lithuania's Tadas Kijanskas challenge for the ball during the World Cup Group F qualifying soccer match between England and Lithuania at the Wembley Stadium in London, Great Britain, yesterday. — AP

ed into the net for his first international goal since March 2013.

He threatened to notch a 21st England goal moments later, thudding a shot wide from range.

Joe Hart, captain for the day, had been a virtual bystander, but the England goalkeeper was almost embarrassed in first-half stoppage time.

The assistant referee's flag stayed down despite Nerijus Valskis appearing to be blatantly offside and the Lithuanian forward managed to head the ball past Hart, obliging John Stones to hack clear.

As England continued to labour in the second half, they were given another let-off when Vyintas Slivka was unable to find a way past Hart with a free shot from just inside the box.

Short of an Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain curler that Setkus parried, England were offering little in attack and in the 59th minute Southgate turned to his bench, sending on Vardy and Rashford.

Vardy took just seven minutes to find the net, steering a shot between Setkus and his left-hand post after Lallana delicately flicked Kyle Walker's

pass into his path. England continued to dominate, but could not add to their lead despite Rashford's best efforts.

Vardy lobbed over from Rashford's pass and Eric Dier headed wide from a Rashford corner, before the Manchester United forward embarked on a sinewy run that culminated in a sprawling save by Setkus. "I'm very proud of my team because we've been tested by a tremendously strong team, probably the strongest team we've faced until now," said beaten manager Edgaras Jankauskas. —APF

GERMANY STAYS PERFECT WITH 4-1 WIN AGAINST AZERBAIJAN

BAKU: Defending champion Germany stayed perfect in World Cup qualifying despite conceding its first goal in Group C with a 4-1 win in Azerbaijan yesterday. Little-used forward Andre Schuerrle scored two and set up another. Germany coach Joachim Loew had expressed his faith in Schuerrle before the game, despite him making seven of his 15 Bundesliga appearances and five of his six Champions League games as a substitute for Borussia Dortmund this season.

Loew gave Schuerrle his first Germany start for 1 1/2 years and the 26-year-old broke the deadlock in the 19th minute at the Tofiq Bahramov Stadium. Julian Draxler spotted Jonas Hector free to his left and passed for the defender to send it straight back for Schuerrle, who finished from close range.

Just as it seemed the visitors were completely in control, Dimitrij Nazarov equalized in the 31st with a perfectly placed shot inside the far post after four Germany defenders failed to stop Afran Ismaylov from picking him out. It was the first goal Germany had conceded in qualifiers for the 2018 tournament.

Thomas Mueller restored the lead minutes later, running into Schuerrle's pass, taking it past the goalkeeper with his right foot and finishing into the empty net with his left. Joshua Kimmich crossed for Mario Gomez to make it 3-1 with a header before the break. The home side started the second half with renewed vigor, though without troubling Bernd Leno, playing instead of the injured Manuel Neuer in the Germany goal. —AP



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