

12 Bellinger and Dodgers beat D-backs 3-1 to return to NLCS



13 Five-wicket Perera stars in Sri Lanka series victory



15 More history for Iceland, Serbia clinch World Cup spot



SYDNEY: Australia's Aaron Mooy, second left, is surrounded by Syrian defenders during their Soccer World Cup qualifying match in Sydney, Australia, yesterday. — AP

Cahill's winner dashes Syria dreams

Australia progress 3-2 on aggregate after extra time

SYDNEY: Tim Cahill scored an extra-time winner to keep Australia's World Cup hopes alive with a 2-1 win in the Asian qualifying playoff yesterday which dashed war-torn Syria's fairytale bid to reach the finals for the first time.

Syria fought right until the end of the 120-minute match and Omar Al Somah could have secured their passage on the away goals rule at the death, only for his brilliantly struck free kick to hit Mat Ryan's right post and bounce away.

The 3-2 aggregate victory sends the Socceroos into an intercontinental playoff in November against the fourth-placed team in North and Central America and Caribbean (CONCACAF) qualifying with a World Cup spot on the line.

The United States, Panama and Honduras, the three teams who could provide the opposition, play their final qualifiers later. The Syrians had battled the odds to even get into the playoff, having been forced to play all their "home" matches in Malaysia because of the civil war in their own nation.

Without five first-choice players through injury or suspension, they also had to play most of extra time with 10 men after midfielder Mahmoud Al Mawas was dismissed for two yellow cards. "I think (it might have been different) if we had stayed with 11 players and hadn't had that red card and not hit the post at the end," Syria coach Ayman Hakeem told reporters. "I am very proud of my boys with what they have achieved so far and that's going to be continuing moving forward as well." Cahill scored Australia's opener in the 13th minute but it was not until 96 minutes later that he notched up his 50th international goal to keep alive his country's hopes of a fourth successive appearance at the World Cup finals.

“ I am very proud of my boys ”

It made for another nervous night for Australian fans as the Socceroos once again failed to find a way to get the scoreboard to reflect their dominance. "We always find a difficult way to do things ... but we got through, I think we deserved to get through," Australia coach Ange Postecoglou said. "Timmy was Timmy, that's why he's the greatest ever." The Syrians made the perfect start in the sixth minute to cancel out Australia's away goal advantage from the 1-1 first-leg draw. Tamer Haj Mohamad dispossessed Mark Milligan in midfield and he fed Al Somah, who outpaced the Australian defence and planted the ball high into the net with his left foot. The Asian champions were back on terms in 13th

minute when Mathew Leckie broke down the right and delivered a pinpoint cross that 37-year-old Cahill headed home. Australia dominated the remainder of the first half, with Syrian skipper Zaher Medani blocking a Cahill shot and goalkeeper Ibrahim Alma denying James Troisi and Leckie.

DROPPED MIDFIELDER

Alma again had to be at his best to stop a fierce Rogic strike from the edge of the box after 70 minutes and the Celtic midfielder curled a shot just wide of the far post from the ensuing corner. Once Al Mawas was sent off for a second foul on Aaron Mooy four minutes into the first period of extra time, it appeared only a matter of time before the Australians would break down the already weary visitors.

Robbie Kruse finally carved out the decisive chance in the 109th minute when his perfectly weighted cross to the far post found Cahill, who headed the ball into the top left-hand corner of the net to the delight of the majority of the 42,000 crowd. — Reuters

Behrendorff helps Australia level Twenty20 series

GUWAHATI: Fast bowler Jason Behrendorff led an inspired bowling effort to help Australia down India by eight wickets in the second Twenty20 international and level the series in Guwahati yesterday. Behrendorff, playing his second match after making his debut in Ranchi last week, claimed four wickets to bowl out India for 118 before the visitors chased down the total with 27 balls to spare.

Moises Henriques, who hit 62 after being promoted to number three, and Travis Head, who made 48, put together an unbeaten 109-run partnership to keep the three-match series alive. Australia lost two early wickets including skipper David Warner, but the 119-run target proved too little for the Indian bowlers to put pressure on the new batsmen. The right-left batting combination of Henriques and Head

played sensible cricket to deny the hosts any further chance of creating trouble.

Henriques hit four fours and four sixes during his 46-ball knock while Head also attacked the Indian wrist spinners with some good footwork. Pacemen Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Jasprit Bumrah took a wicket each while left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav went wicketless for his 46 runs.

But it was Behrendorff's left-arm pace that set up the match for Australia after the lanky bowler returned impressive figures of 4-21.

The 27-year-old Behrendorff rattled the Indian top-order, reducing them to 27-4 after getting opener Rohit Sharma and skipper Virat Kohli, for nought, in the first over of the innings.

Kedar Jadhav and Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who made 13, then tried to stem the rot during their 33-run partnership but leg-spinner Adam Zampa broke through the duo's defences. Zampa got Dhoni stumped on a classic leg-spinner and then bowled Jadhav with the googly.

Hardik Pandya hit a 23-ball 25 to take India across the 100-run mark, which had seemed tough at 70-7, but the batsman's dismissal saw the innings fold on the last ball. Pacemen Nathan Coulter-Nile, Andre Tye and Marcus Stoinis took a wicket each. The final game will be played in Hyderabad on Friday. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

GUWAHATI, India: Final scoreboard of the second Twenty20 international between India and Australia in Guwahati yesterday:

India	Bowling: Behrendorff 4-0-21-4, Coulter-Nile 4-0-23-1 (w2), Tye 4-0-30-1 (nb1), Zampa 4-0-19-2 (w1), Stoinis 4-0-20-1 (w1)
R. Sharma lbw b Behrendorff	8
S. Dhawan c Warner b Behrendorff	2
V. Kohli c & b Behrendorff	0
M. Pandey c Paine b Behrendorff	6
K. Jadhav b Zampa	27
M.S. Dhoni st Paine b Zampa	13
H. Pandya c Christian (sub) b Stoinis	25
B. Kumar c Henriques b Coulter-Nile	1
K. Yadav c Paine b Tye	16
J. Bumrah run out (Paine)	7
Y. Chahal not out	3
Extras (lb5, nb1, w4)	10
Total (all out; 20 overs)	118
Fall of wickets: 1-8 (Sharma), 2-8 (Kohli), 3-16 (Pandey), 4-27 (Dhawan), 5-60 (Dhoni), 6-67 (Jadhav), 7-70 (Kumar), 8-103 (Pandya), 9-115 (Bumrah), 10-118 (Yadav)	
Australia (target 119)	
A. Finch c Kohli b Kumar	8
D. Warner c Kohli b Bumrah	2
M. Henriques not out	62
T. Head not out	48
Extras (w2)	2
Total (2 wickets, 15.3 overs)	122
Fall of wickets: 1-11 (Warner), 2-13 (Finch)	
Did not bat: G. Maxwell, M. Stoinis, T. Paine, N. Coulter-Nile, A. Tye, A. Zampa, J. Behrendorff.	
Bowling: Kumar 3-0-9-1 (w1), Bumrah 3-0-25-1, Pandya 2-0-13-0, Yadav 4-0-46-0, Chahal 3-0-29-0.	
Result: Australia beat India by 8 wickets.	