

**25** Federer, Kerber stunned as Nadal powers into Australian Open quarters



**26** Thunder edge Sixers in thriller, Irving, Celtics rally past Hawks



**27** Man City ease past Huddersfield Town to cut Liverpool's lead



DUBAI: Vietnam's midfielder Hung Dung Do (C-L) is marked by Jordan's forward Yaseen Bakheet during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup Round of 16 football match between Jordan and Vietnam at the Al-Maktoum Stadium in Dubai yesterday. —AFP

## China roar back to reach last eight

Shoot-out sees Vietnam beat Jordan, reach Asian Cup quarters

**AL-AIN:** China flirted with disaster before mounting a second-half revival as they fought back from behind to beat Thailand 2-1 and reach the Asian Cup quarter-finals yesterday. The giant nation were all at sea as they fell behind to Supachai Jaided's opener but they hit back after the break through substitute Xiao Zhi and Gao Lin's well-taken penalty.

It meant China live to fight another day under Marcello Lippi, who is expected to step down after the Asian Cup, while Thailand exit with their heads held high. In an open start, Theerathon Bunmathan saw a free kick tipped over and Wu Lei had an attempt smothered by Thai goalkeeper Siwarak Tedsungnoen before Thailand went ahead on 31 minutes. From a corner, in front of Thailand's drumming and singing fans, Thitiphan Puangjan's miscued shot fell to Supachai Jaided, who turned and rammed it past Chinese goalie Yan Junling from close range.

The chances were falling thick and fast for Thailand and the "Thai Messi" Chanathip Songkrasin was adjudged to have fouled Feng Xiaoting as he jinked his way into a scoring opportunity.

China looked distinctly rattled, but they nearly hit back

just before half-time when Yu Dabao flashed his header wide from Hao Junmin's free kick. China's star man Wu Lei, who missed their final group game with a shoulder injury, missed a series of chances after half-time, including one when he embarrassingly sliced an easy shot well wide.

But China were piercing the Thai defence again and again and on the hour mark, only Siwarak's legs preserved Thailand's lead when he parried Yu's goal-bound shot from point-blank range. China finally scored midway through the second half when substitute forward Xiao, three minutes after coming on, headed straight at Siwarak before prodding home the rebound.

The onslaught didn't stop and after Gao was brought down by Chalermpong Kerdkaew, he nervelessly swept the spot-kick high into the net for a 2-1 lead. Thailand weren't going down without a fight and in injury time, Teerasil Dangda wasted a good chance and Pansa Hemviboon had Yan at full stretch with a powerful shot.

But ultimately it was China who joined Vietnam in the last eight, after the Southeast Asian champions stunned Jordan on penalties after a tense 1-1 draw in Dubai.

It ends a rollercoaster tournament for Thailand, who sacked their coach Milovan Rajevac after their 4-1 drubbing by India but recovered to reach the last 16.

Earlier, Vietnam emerged victorious from a penalty shoot-out with Jordan to become the first team to reach the Asian Cup quarter-finals yesterday-after being the last side to scrape into the round of 16. After extra-time finished at 1-1, BT Dung rolled in the decisive spot-kick for a 4-2 penalties win and saluted the crowd after Baha Faisal and Ahmed Samir had missed for Jordan.

The dramatic win upset the odds after Jordan were the first to qualify for the knockouts, and Vietnam only went through because of their disciplinary record after they finished with an identical points and goals record to Lebanon.

However, the Southeast Asian champions came back from a goal down to force extra time, and they were on balance the stronger and more positive team over the 120 minutes.

Vital Borkelmans' Jordan came into the game as the form side and they spurred a number of chances before opening the scoring six minutes from half-time.

Baha Abdel-Rahman, taking a free kick from the right

edge of the penalty area, hit it just right as the ball bent around the wall and flew into the top corner. However, the goal stung Vietnam into action and they nearly hit back when Hung Dung's dipping shot was tipped over by Jordan goalkeeper Amer Shafi.

Vietnam, who won Southeast Asia's Suzuki Cup in December, levelled six minutes after the break, when Cong Phuong showed great technique to steer home a volley from close range. On the hour-mark, Van Duc nearly snatched it for the Vietnamese but his dink over Shafi was hacked off the line by Anas Bani-Yaseen.

And Jordan's Yaseen Bakheet had a great chance to grab the win in the first period of extra time, but from a high ball into the box he ballooned his volley over. Dubai's Al Maktoum Stadium was thick with tension for the spot-kicks and when Faisal hit the bar and Van Lam saved from Salih, Vietnam were very much in the driving seat.

Shafi, diving low, saved Minh Vuong's attempt but it was only delaying defeat as Dung coolly netted the winner, giving a military salute in celebration before being mobbed by his team-mates. —AFP

## Pacquiao batters Broner in lopsided welterweight bout

**LAS VEGAS:** Manny Pacquiao put on a master class in elite boxing Saturday with a 12-round demolition of Adrien Broner, defending his welterweight title in his first fight on US soil in two years—and his first as a 40-year-old.

Pacquiao easily won with an impressive display of superior hand speed and destructive power that landed him a unanimous decision victory over the much younger American at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas.

The Filipino star almost knocked Broner down twice in the seventh and ninth rounds and showed that he can still be a force in the highly-competitive division despite turning 40 last month. "I really don't believe my career is over. I proved it in my last fight against (Lucas) Matthysee," Pacquiao said. "And now I prove it again at the age of 40."

In his 70th fight as a professional, Pacquiao retains the lesser version of the WBA's two welterweight belts and possibly sets the stage for a rematch with Floyd Mayweather, who watched the bout from ringside.

Pacquiao improved to 61-7-2 with 39 knockouts, winning on all three judges' scorecards, including by one tally of 117-111. The other two judges also had it one-sided at 116-112.

Pacquiao started the onslaught in the seventh round by

hitting the 29-year-old Broner with a left hook then immediately doubling it up. Broner went into a shell mode, absorbing more blows but managed to hold on to the end of the round.

Pacquiao landed his best punch in the ninth with a blistering left on the chin that sent Broner back peddling towards the ropes. But Broner showed he can take a punch as he stayed on his feet and survived another punishing round.

Pacquiao is now hoping to avenge his 2015 loss to Mayweather which became the richest one-day sporting event in history. Immediately after the fight Pacquiao called out Mayweather. "Tell him to come back to the ring and we will fight," Pacquiao said. "I am willing to fight again Floyd Mayweather. If he is willing to come back in boxing."

Mayweather, who helped promote Saturday's boxing card, was non-committal when asked if he would get back in the ring with Pacquiao. "Right now I am living the happy life," he said. Mayweather also visited Pacquiao in his dressing room before the fight. "He just said hello. Wished me luck," Pacquiao said.

Pacquiao went to work from the opening bell on executing the fight plan he put together after reuniting with his long-time trainer Freddie Roach. He was the more active of the two boxers and it didn't take long for Broner to get frustrated with Pacquiao's speed as Broner delivered a right forearm shiver to his opponent's jaw at the end of the second round.

Pacquiao did a good job of setting up solid head and body shots with well-timed head fakes and jabs. His most effective punch in the early rounds was a body shot and then a left hook to the face as Broner ducked down to protect his midsection.

Pacquiao had a good sixth round but got caught at the end with an uppercut and left hook on the chin—though even that wasn't enough for Broner to win the round. Pacquiao's best rounds were seven through nine but the only blemish on his night was he couldn't get his second knockout in a row.

"I can still be a greasy fighter and give my best at the age of 40," he said. "I wanted to be more aggressive but (trainer Buboy Fernandez) told me to counter and wait for opportunities." Broner seemed content to simply flail away for most of the fight with a slapping jab that hardly connected.

Broner said after the fight he was pleased with his performance and disagreed with the scoring. "You all know I beat that boy," Broner said. "They trying to get that money again with Pacquiao and Floyd but it's cool. I ain't worrying about that."

Mayweather won the 2015 bout with Pacquiao in a contest that generated \$600 million in revenue and a record 4.6 million pay per view buys but failed to live up to its "Fight of the Century" hype. Pacquiao was hampered after suffering a torn right rotator cuff while training for Mayweather.

Mayweather, who turns 42 next month, recently earned \$9 million for knocking down a Japanese kick boxer three times in the first round of a New Years Eve spectacle in Japan. Pacquiao last fought in July, 2018, when he scored his first knockout in six years with a seventh-round stoppage of Argentina's Matthysee in Kuala Lumpur.

It is his first bout in the US since a unanimous decision win over Jessie Vargas in Las Vegas in November 2016. Since then, Pacquiao's career had followed an uncertain trajectory, with a shock defeat to Australia's Jeff Horn in Brisbane in 2017 followed by a year-long absence from the ring. —AFP



LAS VEGAS: Manny Pacquiao celebrates after defeating Adrien Broner by unanimous decision during the WBA welterweight championship at MGM Grand Garden Arena on Saturday in Las Vegas, Nevada. —AFP