

Sports

Qatar's Al Sadd book Asian Champions League last 16

Welliton treble boosts Sharjah's hopes

DOHA: Qatar's Al Sadd made the last 16 of the Asian Champions League after Group D rivals Sepahan and Al Ain could only manage a goalless draw. A 1-1 draw for Xavi's side against Al Nassr made no difference to their qualification, but was a more muted display in front of goal after scoring seven goals in two matches since the tournament resumed last week following a seven-month break because of the coronavirus pandemic. Al Sadd, who won the tournament in 2011, had a great chance to go ahead as early as the fifth minute but Baghdad Bounedjah, who was the beneficiary of a measured pass from South Korea international Nam Tae-he, fired wide from close range.

Goalkeeper Brad Jones then came to Al Nassr's rescue later with a fine save to foil Al Sadd captain Hassan al-Haydos after Akram Afif had done most of the spade-work on the left. A few minutes later, Al Nassr's Abdulfattah Adam challenged Al Sadd goalkeeper Saad al-Sheeb with a stinging shot but the latter was equal to the task and cleared the danger. Al-Sheeb however displayed a lack of technique in the 22nd minute when Khalid al-Ghannam drilled the ball through his legs from a tight angle to give Al Nassr the lead.

After a few more chances were fluffed by both teams, Al Sadd finally found the net three minutes from time, with Bounedjah firing home after receiving the ball via Afif and Nam. "It was a tough game. We were not good enough in the first half, and in the second half we were better," said Xavi. "Today,

we showed two faces of the team in the two halves. I'm angry with the first half, and happy with the second. "I told the players that we had to change our values, the rhythm and the mentality, and this happened in the second half. We scored the goal and we got a good point against a strong team."

Welliton boots Al Taawoun

Elsewhere Brazilian striker Welliton scored a hat-trick as the UAE's Sharjah thrashed Saudi Arabia's Al Taawoun 6-0. Sharjah, who were languishing at the bottom of Group C with just four points from as many matches, climbed to third spot, while Qatar's Al Duhail are on top with nine after beating Iran's Persepolis 1-0 in an earlier match on Monday. Sharjah and Persepolis are on seven points and Al Taawoun are on six, leaving Group C wide open with all four teams still capable of making the cut.

Sharjah scored five of their goals in the second half after Saif Rashid had given them the lead in the first minute of first-half stoppage time. Welliton netted in the 49th, 57th and 61st minutes while Mohamed Abdulbasit and Ciao each scored to complete Sharjah's victory. In the early Group C match, Almoez Ali scored for Al Duhail from the spot in the 60th minute after Shojae Khalizadeh's foul on Edmilson resulted in a penalty. Isa al-Kasir missed the chance to level when he fired wide in front of an open goal after Al Duhail goalkeeper Mohamed al-Bakri spill the ball into his path off a Bashar Resan shot.—AFP



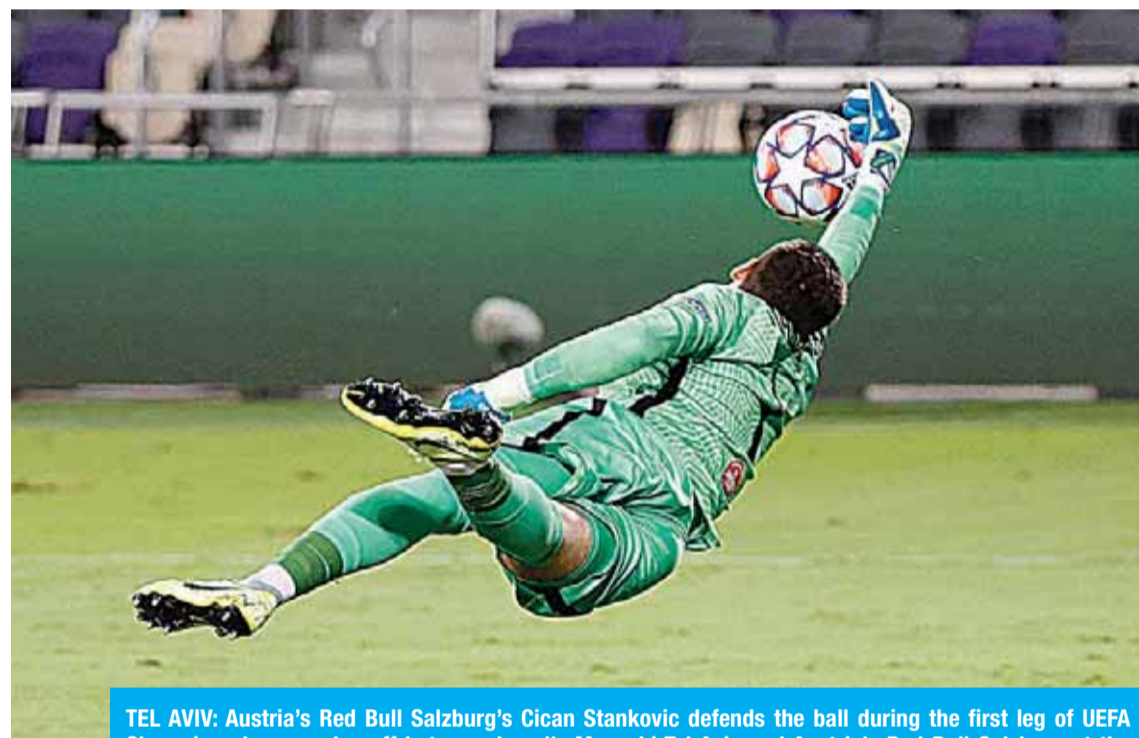
DOHA: Sadd's forward Baghdad Bounedjah celebrates after scoring during the AFC Champions League group D match between Qatar's Al-Sadd and Saudi's Al-Nassr at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium in the Qatari capital Doha. —AFP

Krasnodar, Salzburg edge closer to group stage

KRASNODAR: Krasnodar and Salzburg closed in on berths in the Champions League (CL) group stage after 2-1 wins in the first leg of the competition's playoff round while Slavia Prague were held to a 0-0 home draw by Danes Midtjylland on Tuesday. Russian side Krasnodar ground out a comeback home win over Greeks PAOK Salonika, who missed a penalty, and Salzburg also came from behind to beat Maccabi Tel Aviv away after falling behind in the early stages.

Krasnodar goalkeeper Matvey Safonov saved a poor seventh-minute penalty from Dimitrios Pelkas but the PAOK forward made amends in the 32nd, steering in a low Andrija Zivkovic cross with a deft touch from close range. The home side levelled seven minutes later after Frenchman Remy Cabella was fouled by Dimitrios Giannoulis in the area and Swede Viktor Claesson drove his penalty past goalkeeper Zivko Zivkovic. PAOK missed a gilt-edged chance midway through the second half when Omar El Kaddouri hit the post and were punished in the 70th minute, as Cabella swept the ball into an empty net from three metres after a fine assist by Marcus Berg.

Winger Dan Biton fired Maccabi ahead in the ninth minute with a sublime finish and the home side were then forced to defend resolutely against dominant Salzburg. Relentless pressure from the visitors paid off in the second half as Hungary midfielder Dominik Szoboszlai equalized with a 49th-minute



TEL AVIV: Austria's Red Bull Salzburg's Cican Stankovic defends the ball during the first leg of UEFA Champions League play-off between Israel's Maccabi Tel Aviv and Austria's Red Bull Salzburg at the Bloomfield Stadium on September 22, 2020. —AFP

penalty and had a hand in Salzburg's winner netted by Masaya Okugawa eight minutes later.

Midtjylland matched more fancied Slavia in every department and always looked the more likely winners, with Sory Kaba missing their best chance when keeper Ondrej Kolar saved the striker's close-range header. The home side were fortunate not to

concede an own-goal with the last kick of the game, as David Hovorka's mis-kicked clearance struck Kolar in the head. In yesterday's action, Hungarian champions Ferencvaros visited Norway's Molde, Belgian side Gent were at home to Dynamo Kyiv and Olympiakos Piraeus entertained Cypriots Omonoia Nicosia. —Reuters

Cycling thrown into fresh turmoil with Tour doping probe

PARIS: Cycling has been thrown into fresh turmoil after French judicial authorities opened a preliminary investigation into potential doping at Nairo Quintana's team Arkea-Samsic, a day after the Tour de France ended in Paris. Two people had been taken into custody, Marseille prosecutor Dominique Laurens said, adding that the probe was targeting a "small part of the team" and that those in custody were part of the "close entourage of the main rider", without naming him. Laurens added on Tuesday that the two were still being held for questioning and that a decision on whether they would be formally charged would be made on Wednesday.

Arkea-Samsic's leader on the Tour was Colombian Quintana, twice a runner-up and also a Vuelta and Giro d'Italia champion. He finished 17th overall on this year's Tour. The French team confirmed that their hotel in Meribel was searched by the OCLAESP, the Central Office for the Fight against Environmental and Public Health Damage, after last Wednesday's 17th stage. Laurens said the search had resulted in the "discovery of many health products, including drugs and especially a method that can be qualified as doping". A source with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters that a "saline solution" and "injection material" were found. "The elements gathered during the search will need further investigation and analysis," Laurens said in a statement on Tuesday. Injection material can only be in possession of doctors as per the 'no needle policy' in place in cycling since 2011. Arkea-Samsic team manager Emmanuel Hubert said on Monday that the investigation did "not target the team or its staff directly".



CHAMPS-ELYSEES: The pack rides on the Champs Elysees avenue with the Arc de Triomphe in the background during the 21st and last stage of the 107th edition of the Tour de France cycling race. —AFP

Quintana, who was allowed to continue working with his own doctor when he signed a three-year deal with Arkea-Samsic this year, later denied using any banned substances and said he had voluntarily answered investigators' questions with "a clear conscience". "I want to tell my fans and followers of cycling that never in my career as a junior, under-23 or professional have I used illegal substances that improve my performance or betray the principles of the sport," he said in a statement posted on his Twitter account. Quintana said only "perfectly legal vitamin supplements" had been found in the search last week. This year's Tour was won by Slovenian Tadej Pogacar, who produced one of

the most stunning performances in recent history in the final time trial last Saturday. The 22-year-old is with Team UAE Emirates, which is managed by Mauro Gianetti and Matxin Fernandez, sports directors at Saunier Duval in 2008 when the team left the Tour in the wake of Ricardo Ricco's failed doping test.

The duo were also managing the Geox-TMC team when Spaniard Juan Jose Cobo won the Vuelta in 2011, only to be stripped of the title because of a "violation of the anti-doping rules (use of a banned substance) based on irregularities found in his Athlete Biological Passport in 2009 and 2011". —Reuters

Fans warned as Bayern head to COVID-19 risk zone for Super Cup

BERLIN: Bayern Munich can lift yet more silverware when they face Sevilla today for the UEFA Super Cup, but travelling German fans have been warned to think again before flying to Budapest and head coach Hansi Flick has questioned

whether the match should go ahead amid the coronavirus pandemic. The Champions League winners head to Hungary on a 22-match winning streak, stretching back to February, which has seen them sweep up Champions League, Bundesliga and German Cup titles.

Bayern opened the new Bundesliga season last Friday with an 8-0 hammering of Schalke with Germany winger Leroy Sane scoring on his Munich debut and declaring the "whole team showed how hungry we are". Their appetite for more silverware can be sated with two trophies up for grabs in the coming week as they also face

Dortmund for the German Super Cup on September 30. However COVID-19 has cast a shadow over today's showdown as Budapest has been declared a risk zone by the German government due to a high infection rate.

'Think again'

Flick admits he "does not quite understand" why UEFA insist on the match still taking place there, "but we are not the ones who make the decision". On Tuesday, Markus Soeder, state premier of Bavaria, announced tighter rules, "which particularly affect the Super Cup" for travelling Bayern

News in brief

Judo Tokyo Grand Slam axed

TOKYO: Judo's Tokyo Grand Slam scheduled for December has been cancelled this year, the International Judo Federation said, citing "continued uncertainty" over the coronavirus pandemic. "In light of the continued uncertainty still existing around the Covid-19 pandemic, along with considering the fact that Japan is the hosting country of the Olympic Games, the IJF needs to be extra cautious when planning events in Japan," the body said in a statement released late Tuesday. "Given that there are already several IJF events, as well as many national competitions, which will take place from the beginning of 2021, it was agreed to cancel this Grand Slam, not postpone." The IJF said the Budapest Grand Slam scheduled for late October is still on the calendar, though a final decision will be taken early next month by the Hungarian government. —AFP

Donovan named new coach

LOS ANGELES: The Chicago Bulls named Billy Donovan as the team's new head coach on Tuesday, replacing Jim Boylen who was fired last month after the franchise's latest failure to make the playoffs. Donovan, 55, joins the Bulls after parting company with the Oklahoma City Thunder by mutual agreement earlier this month after his team were eliminated from the postseason. "We are very pleased to welcome Billy and his family to the Chicago Bulls," Chicago Bulls executive vice president of basketball operations Arturas Karnisovas said in a statement. "The success that he has sustained over the course of his coaching career puts him on a different level. We feel his ability to help his players reach their potential, both individually and collectively, will mesh well with our roster. "Whether as a player or as a coach, he has won everywhere his career has taken him, and we hope that will continue here in Chicago." —AFP

Juventus sign Atletico's Morata

MADRID: Juventus have signed Spain striker Alvaro Morata on a one-season loan from Atletico Madrid for 10 million euros (\$11.71 million), the Italian champions said on Tuesday. The agreement also gives Juve an option to buy the 27-year-old at the end of the season for 45 million euros to be paid over three years, the Turin club added. They could otherwise take him on loan again for the 2021-22 season for another 10 million euro fee and then buy him outright in 2022 at a reduced cost of 35 million euros. Morata returns to the club where he spent two seasons between 2014 and 2016, including scoring in the Champions League final loss to Barcelona in Berlin in 2015. He spent just one season with Atleti, who had initially loaned him from Chelsea but then bought him outright in July last year at a reported fee of 65 million euros. Morata moved to Juve originally from Real Madrid and netted 27 goals in 93 games over two seasons. —Reuters

fans. "Everyone should think again about whether it is sensible to travel," added Soeder. Supporters must either be tested for Covid-19 before and after the trip to Budapest or quarantine for two weeks. "This is how we want to prevent there being a possible risk of infection," explained Soeder.

Only 500 Sevilla and 1300 Bayern fans are expected to watch the match at Budapest's Puskas Arena. Both clubs have set up test centres in their respective cities in a bid to reduce the risk of today's match becoming a 'super spreader' event. On Monday, Soeder had already expressed doubt whether the game in Budapest should go ahead. —AFP