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SPORT

PREVIEW

South Korea determined to spoil Jordan's historic bid

Jordan are playing in their first semi-final, Korea are looking to advance and end a 64-year trophy drought

By **Sahan Bidappa**
Doha

A team that refuses to die will clash against a team that is determined to make history. South Korea and Jordan will lock horns in the Asian Cup semi-final today at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, aiming to take one step closer to that elusive title.

For the first time semi-finalist Jordan, who have been the surprise element of the tournament, it's a chance to write history. For South Korea, it's time to banish the bitter memories of six decades of pain of not winning the Asian crown jewel. Without an iota of doubt it will be Jurgen Klinsmann's men, who will be under immense pressure against the lowest-ranked team left in the competition Jordan, who have risen to the occasion under Hussein Ammouta. South Korea, despite carrying a team with proven stars in the European leagues led by captain Son Heung-min, have failed to fire so far.

They finished second behind Jordan in the group stage, and had to stage late fightbacks to win against fellow Asian powers Saudi Arabia and Australia in the knockout matches, which has been dubbed "zombie football" by their fans for the way they keep coming back from the dead.

It's a moniker coach Klinsmann is happy with, but the former German forward will be hoping that his players can win the match inside 90 minutes and seal a spot in the final for the first time since 2015. Yesterday, Klinsmann - who has faced severe criticism from the South Korean media and fans - said his team is determined to prove the doubters wrong and urged them to 'relax' in today's semi-final.

"We are very excited for this semi-final match, a huge compliment to Jordan. We emerged from the same group, which only highlights our strong team dynamics. However, our hunger for success drives us to go further. We are fit, optimistic and eagerly looking forward to advancing all the way to the final. The mood within the team is very positive," said Klinsmann, who won the 1990 World Cup as a player for Germany.

"The team needs to stay relaxed, focus on the upcoming challenge and eliminate distractions that are



Jordan are the lowest-ranked team left at the Asian Cup Qatar.



Hussein Ammouta's Jordan reached the semi-finals with wins over Iraq and debutants Tajikistan in the knockout stages.

not important right now. I believe this group of players are experienced and our goal is to reach the final and we are entering the match against a very strong Jordan team fully prepared to play 120 minutes and even face a penalty shootout if needed," added the 59-year-old.

South Korea and Jordan drew 2-2 in the group phase with the Koreans salvaging a point with an injury-time own goal. Today, the Taeguk Warriors will be favourites to beat Jordan and reach Saturday's final, with Iran or holders

Qatar awaiting them. Klinsmann believes that his team has matured throughout the tournament. "The expectations and pressure at the beginning are always challenging for every nation but as things progress, you build confidence, and now, being in the last-four, it boosts that confidence. Similar to how Argentina overcame their defeat against Saudi Arabia in their 2022 FIFA World Cup opener, they faced pressure in their subsequent game against Mexico.



South Korea's midfielder Lee Kang-in (left) trains with teammates in Lusail yesterday, on the eve of their AFC Asian Cup semi-final match against Jordan. (AFP)

"Once you get the first couple of games out of the way and the confidence builds after navigating through all the challenging matches, having the whole nation behind you becomes a positive factor. A team needs plenty of mental strength to play in a tournament and you have to be prepared for the marathon. Now, we just have to finish strong and secure that gold."

South Korea's bid for second final in three editions, however, will have to be attained without Kim Min-jae, with the Bayern Munich centre-back suspended for the semi-final. Jordan will miss key players too with Ali Olwan and Salem al-Ajalin ruled out of the semi-final through suspension.

However, Ammouta sounded upbeat about his team's chances against South Korean and is confident he has enough quality in his squad to compensate for the absence of the suspended players. "It's going to be a very challenging match for both teams. It will be tough for us as we will be missing two key players. This match will be more difficult than the ones we had in the group stage. But we are placing plenty of emphasis on our preparation," said the 54-year-old Ammouta.

The Jordan coach believes he has to get his tactics right to strength-

en his team's chances of advancing into the final.

"Everyone in this competition is mentally prepared, and that's why we have to focus on improving the tactical aspects of our game. We need to make improvements when playing at this stage of the tournament and the tactical aspects should be well covered. Making tactical decisions involves avoiding or pressuring strong teams and ensuring that every player gets what they deserve. Each team needs thorough preparation, both mentally and physically, to endure playing for 120 minutes."

Ammouta said his side they must be prepared to fight to the end given their opponents' ability to stay alive in matches. "The focus has to be big, it is going to be tiring," said the Moroccan, whose team beat debutants Tajikistan 1-0 in the quarter-finals to reach the semi-finals for the first time. "We have to struggle and fight until the very last minutes."



Poles apart
While this will be South Korea's eighth AFC Asian Cup semi-final, Jordan will be playing at this stage for the first time.

Last four stage regulars
This will be South Korea's fifth AFC Asian Cup semi-final in seven editions, but they only advanced to the final once from their previous four appearances at this stage - in 2015.

Elusive title
South Korea lost the 2015 final, as they did in 1972, 1980 and 1988, having emerged champions in 1956 and 1960. Jordan's previous best was reaching the quarter-finals of the 2004 and 2011 editions.

Jordan vs South Korea: Facts & Figures

Exalted company
Jordan are the 16th team to reach semi-finals of the Asian Cup, the first new side at this stage since Australia and Uzbekistan did so in 2011.

Hard to separate
The semi-final will be the third time the two sides will meet, with their previous encounters ending in stalemates - their most recent being a 2-2 draw in the group stage in Qatar.

Odds against Taeguk Warriors?
South Korea have faced the same opponents twice in a single edition three times previously, losing two finals (1980 v Kuwait; 2015 v Australia) and win-

ning a third-place match (2000 v China).

Comeback kings
South Korea have been in a losing position in four of their five matches in Qatar 2023, as many as in their previous 23 games from 2007 to 2019. They have won just one of eight games in which they trailed - needing extra-time to defeat Australia 2-1 in the ongoing tournament.

New record
Jordan have won three games in a single edition of AFC Asian Cup for the first time. Also, they have scored 10 goals in a single edition for the first time, one more than they did in the previous

two tournaments combined (2015-2019 with seven games).

Costly cards
Jordan's Ali Olwan and Salem al-Ajalin will miss the semi-final through suspension, as will South Korea's Kim Min-Jae. The East Asian side accumulated 11 yellow cards en route to last four stage, with Jordan one ahead.

Goal machine
South Korea's Son Heung-min has scored seven AFC Asian Cup goals since making his tournament debut in 2011. Only two players have scored more in the period - Qatar's Almoez Ali (10) and UAE's Ali Mabkhout.

South Korea's German coach Klinsmann says his team is determined to prove the doubters wrong and urged them to 'relax' in today's semi-final.



FOCUS

Bumrah stars as India down England to level Test series

‘HE’S A CHAMPION PLAYER FOR US, HE HAS DONE THE JOB FOR US FOR A WHILE’



India's Jasprit Bumrah celebrates with captain Rohit Sharma and teammates after taking the wicket of England's Tom Hartley to win the second Test in Visakhapatnam yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP
Visakhapatnam, India

Fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah took a match haul of nine wickets to lead India's 106-run win over England in the second Test yesterday and level the five-match series.

Chasing a record 399 for victory, England were bowled out for 292 in the second session on day four in Visakhapatnam, despite an attacking start and Zak Crawley's 73. Bumrah and spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, who ended the match on 499 Test wickets, took three each in the final innings and the pace spearhead bowled Tom Hartley to seal the win.

Shubman Gill set up the comeback victory for the hosts with his 104 on day three to set England, who won the opening Test,

a daunting target. Yashasvi Jaiswal had made an impact with his 209 in India's first innings of 396 after they elected to bat. England came out swinging with their "Bazball" brand of cricket, Crawley and company hitting boundaries despite losing wickets.

"The way we have gone about taking on challenges like that is what we are about," said skipper Ben Stokes.

"In moments like that, when you have scoreboard pressure, that is when we get the best out of ourselves as individuals.

"The way we applied ourselves and put India under pressure was great, unfortunately we didn't end up on the right side of the result."

He said a virus had hit the team Monday morning with a couple of players waking up sick but did not offer that as an "excuse" for the loss.

India's left-arm spinner Axar Patel got a key breakthrough when he trapped Rehan Ahmed lbw for 23 after the nightwatchman hit five fours in his 31-ball knock.

Ollie Pope hammered five boundaries in his brief stay at the wicket before Ashwin had him caught at slip on 23.

Joe Root showed no signs of the finger injury that kept him out of the field for much of Sunday as he reverse-swept for two fours.

But he fell for 16 while attempting a slog off Ashwin, who remains one away from entering the 500-wicket club.

'CHAMPION PLAYER'

The chase soon lost steam with two wickets in five balls before lunch, including Crawley out lbw off left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav.

The lbw appeal was turned down by the on-field umpire but

India successfully reviewed the call. Jonny Bairstow followed just four balls later, with England at 194-6.

Stokes attempted to get the chase back on track after lunch but a direct hit by Shreyas Iyer had the left-hander run out on 11 while eyeing a quick single.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Ben Foakes (36) and the left-handed Hartley (also 36) put on a stubborn stand of 55 but Bumrah, named player of the match, broke through to get Foakes caught and bowled.

The Three Lions nevertheless stuck to their fearless style, which has got them 14 wins in 20 matches under coach Brendon McCullum, nicknamed "Baz", and Stokes.

Bumrah played a key role with his six wickets in England's first innings total of 253 as the tourists conceded a crucial lead of 143.

"He's a champion player for

Dravid lauds 'young group' in India's comeback win

India coach Rahul Dravid said yesterday he was pleased with his team's young players in delivering a comeback win in the second Test against England in a "tough series".

Star batsman Virat Kohli opted out of the first two Tests due to personal reasons and India were also without injured batsman K L Rahul and all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja in Visakhapatnam.

Yashasvi Jaiswal, 22, hit 209 in India's first innings and 24-year-old Shubman Gill made 104 to help the hosts set England a daunting victory target of 399.

"It's nice for the young group to be able to respond like that," Dravid told reporters. "I probably can't say it was the most pleasing (from previous wins), but certainly nice considering that we went behind, and we were put under pressure at various stages, and we responded really well."

India are expected to announce their squad for the remaining three Tests in the next two days but Dravid remained non-committal on Kohli's comeback.

"I think it's best to ask for selectors once the team will be selected for the next three games," Dravid said of Kohli's availability for the rest of the five-match

series. England, led by Ben Stokes, won the opener to hand India just their fourth loss at home in Tests since 2013 but the hosts bounced back to win the second Test by 106 runs. The Indians bowled out the opposition for 292 on day four but England offered tough resistance all through with their attacking brand of cricket dubbed "Bazball".

The style of play devised under coach Brendon McCullum and Stokes has won England 14 matches in 20 outings and Dravid remains impressed. "I have always known that is going to be a tough series," the batting great said.

"They have lot of experienced players. It has been tough. We would like to be 2-0 but, considering the cricket being played on both sides, 1-1 is fair position to be in."

On tackling the fast-paced "Bazball", Dravid said: "I know it's just a term - I'm not sure how happy they are about it, but they are playing really good cricket."

"I think it's not like wild slogging. They are actually showing some very good skills. They know how to find that balance, and we know we're up against the challenge and we're looking forward to it," he said. The third Test starts February 15 in Rajkot.

us, he has done the job for us for a while," said Indian skipper Rohit Sharma. "When you win a game like that you have to look at the overall performance. We know that winning a Test match in these conditions is not going to be easy, the bowlers stepped up."

Veteran England pace bowler James Anderson finished with a match haul of five wickets to take his tally to 695 in a glittering Test career, which began in 2003.

The third Test starts February 15 in Rajkot and the teams will take a break beforehand, with England expected to fly to the United Arab Emirates for the week.

SCOREBOARD

India 1st innings 396
England 1st innings 253
India 2nd innings 255
England 2nd innings (target 399 - overnight 67-1)

Z. Crawley *lbw b Kuldeep* 73
B. Duckett *c Bharat b Ashwin* 28
R. Ahmed *lbw b Patel* 23
O. Pope *c Rohit b Ashwin* 23
J. Root *c Patel b Ashwin* 16
J. Bairstow *lbw b Bumrah* 26
B. Stokes *run out (Iyer)* 11
B. Foakes *c and b Bumrah* 36
T. Hartley *b Bumrah* 36
S. Bashir *c Bharat b Kumar* 0
J. Anderson *not out* 5

Extras (b8, lb5, nb2) 15
Total (all out, 69.2 overs) 292

Fall of wickets: 1-50 (Duckett), 2-95 (Ahmed), 3-132 (Pope), 4-154 (Root), 5-194 (Crawley), 6-194 (Bairstow), 7-220 (Stokes), 8-275 (Foakes), 9-281 (Bashir), 10-292 (Hartley)

Bowling: Bumrah 17.2-4-46-3 (nb1), Kumar 5-1-26-1 (nb1), Yadav 15-0-60-1, Ashwin 18-2-72-3, Axar 14-1-75-1

Result: India won by 106 runs
Series: 5-match series level at 1-1.

FIRST TEST

Ravindra double ton has New Zealand in control

AFP
Mount Maunganui, New Zealand

Rachin Ravindra struck a majestic double century before South Africa's top order collapsed yesterday, leaving New Zealand in command of the first Test in Mount Maunganui.

Ravindra crafted a career-best 240 as the home side were dismissed for 511, before the tourists' inexperience was exposed as they were reduced to 80-4 at stumps on day two.

A Proteas team featuring six players new to international cricket will resume today facing a deficit of 431 runs, after four wickets tumbled in the space of 14 overs late at Bay Oval. Seamer Kyle Jamieson took 2-21 and could have had a third if Matt Henry had held a chance in the outfield to remove David Bedingham.

Instead, Bedingham was unbeaten on 29 at stumps, alongside Keegan Petersen on two.

The pair are the only members of South Africa's tour squad who played in the drawn home Test series against India a month ago, with the bulk of their first-choice players having committed to play in the country's domestic Twenty20 league.

Opener and captain Neil Brand was Jamieson's first victim, caught behind for four, before fellow-debutant Raynard van Tonder departed in the same over, trapped leg before wicket for a two-ball



New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra celebrates after reaching his double century during the first Test against South Africa in Mount Maunganui yesterday. (AFP)

duck. Edward Moore (23) ballooned a Henry bouncer to a close fielder before Zubayr Hamza (22) edged a ball from spinner Mitchell Santner into his stumps.

Earlier, New Zealand's last five wickets fell for 38 as they pushed for quick runs.

One of them was Ravindra, whose 366-ball knock was a dramatic turnaround in the longest format, having never scored more than 18 in six previous Test innings. He had been selected as an all-rounder in his three Tests and said he felt more comfortable as a specialist batsman coming in at number four.

The left-hander, who began the day on 118, struck 26 fours and

three sixes, with stroke-making reminiscent of his prolific efforts at last year's 50-over World Cup in India.

Ravindra was bowled trying to pull left-arm spinner Brand, who went on to claim figures of 6-119. Brand became the first South African spinner to take six wickets on Test debut and his figures are the fourth best by a Proteas captain.

His most spectacular effort was a sharp caught-and-bowled to remove Daryl Mitchell for 34 and end a 103-run partnership with Ravindra for the fourth wicket.

That followed a stand of 232 between Ravindra and Kane Williamson, who was caught on 118

trying for a big hit off Ruan de Swardt.

SCOREBOARD

New Zealand 1st innings (overnight 258-2)
T. Latham *c Fortuin b Paterson* 20
D. Conway *lbw b Moreki* 1
K. Williamson *c Moreki b de Swardt* 118

R. Ravindra *b Brand* 240
D. Mitchell *c and b Brand* 34
T. Blundell *c Hamza b de Swardt* 11
G. Phillips *c de Swardt b Brand* 39
M. Santner *b Brand* 2
K. Jamieson *not out* 8
M. Henry *c de Swardt b Brand* 27
T. Southee *b Brand* 0

Extras (b2, lb2, nb4, w3) 11
Total (all out, 144 overs) 511

Fall of wickets: 1-2 (Conway), 2-39 (Latham), 3-271 (Williamson), 4-374 (Mitchell), 5-391 (Blundell), 6-473 (Phillips), 7-474 (Ravindra), 8-479 (Santner), 9-511 (Henry), 10-511 (Southee)

Bowling: Olivier 30-3-119-0 (w1, nb2), Moreki 27-2-110-1 (w1, nb2), Paterson 32-5-98-1, de Swardt 29-7-61-2, Brand 26-1-119-6 (w1)

South Africa 1st innings
E. Moore *c Conway b Henry* 23

N. Brand *c Blundell b Jamieson* 4
R. van Tonder *lbw b Jamieson* 0
Z. Hamza *b Santner* 22
D. Bedingham *not out* 29
K. Petersen *not out* 2

Extras 0
Total (for 4 wickets, 28 overs) 80

Fall of wickets: 1-26, 2-26, 3-30, 4-74

Bowling: Southee 8-2-31-0, Henry 7-3-15-1, Jamieson 8-2-21-2, Santner 5-1-13-1.

SPOTLIGHT

Sri Lanka complete 10-wicket victory

AFP
Colombo

Sri Lanka won their one-off Test match against Afghanistan by 10 wickets with a day to spare, with their opening batsmen chasing down an easy target of 56 in Colombo yesterday.

Afghanistan were bowled out for 296 in their second innings, setting Sri Lanka the low goal, with Dimuth Karunaratne (32 not out) and Nishan Madushka (22 not out) finishing the job within 7.2 overs. Afghanistan were playing catch-up after conceding a lead of 241 runs in the first innings, but fought back well in their second dig with Ibrahim Zadrán leading the way with a maiden Test hundred. Rahmat Shah backed up the opening batter with a half-century but once the pair were dismissed, Afghanistan folded quickly.

Sri Lanka skipper Dhananjaya de Silva said Afghanistan did well on day two with the ball but his team stuck to their plan.

"When both Angelo (Mathews) and I got dismissed, it might not seem that bad but that was the point that Afghanistan felt they were back in the game," he said. "I think that was the crucial moment of the match. But our bowlers stuck to the plan all day (day 3), not giving runs away and keeping it tight."

Prabath Jayasuriya finished with his seventh five-wicket haul in Test cricket. Afghanistan were looking good to stretch the game to the final day when they

resumed on day four at 199 for one in their second innings.

SCOREBOARD

Afghanistan 1st innings 198 all out

Sri Lanka 1st innings 439 all out

Afghanistan 2nd innings
I. Zadrán *b Jayasuriya* 114

Noor Ali *lbw b A. Fernando* 47
R. Shah *c Samarawickrama b Rajitha* 54

H. Shahidi *c Samarawickrama b Jayasuriya* 18

N. Jamal *not out* 41

I. Alikhil *c Mendis b A. Fernando* 1

Q. Ahmad *c de Silva b Jayasuriya* 1

Z. Rehman *b Jayasuriya* 0

N. Zadrán *b Jayasuriya* 4

N. Masood *c Samarawickrama b Rajitha* 0

M. Saleem *c de Silva b A. Fernando* 2

Extras (b 1, lb 6, w 6, nb 1) 14

Total (all out in 112.3 overs) 296

Fall of wickets: 1-106 (N. Ali), 2-214 (R. Shah), 3-237 (Ibrahim), 4-246 (Shahidi), 5-247 (Alikhil), 6-248 (Q. Ahmad), 7-250 (Ziaur-Rehman), 8-271 (N. Zadrán), 9-284 (N. Masood), 10-296 (M. Saleem)

Bowling: V. Fernando 14-3-37-0, A. Fernando 21.3-2-63-3 (w 6), K. Rajitha 20-5-59-2 (nb 1), P. Jayasuriya 47-10-107-5, D. de Silva 10-1-23-0.

Sri Lanka 2nd innings
D. Karunaratne *not out* 32

N. Madushka *not out* 22

Extras (lb 1, nb 1) 2
Total: (for no wicket, 7.2 overs) 56

Bowling: Rehman 3-0-12-0, Zadrán 3-0-30-0 (nb 1), Masood 1-0-5-0, Ahmad 0.2-0-8-0.

LA LIGA

Llorente snatches Atletico late draw at Real Madrid

‘The team has to be calm, we’re leaders with a two-point advantage’

AFF
Madrid

Marcos Llorente headed home in the 93rd minute to snatch Atletico Madrid a 1-1 draw at La Liga leaders and bitter rivals Real Madrid on Sunday.

The Spain midfielder rescued a point to keep Atletico’s faint title hopes alive and stop Los Blancos opening up a wider lead on second-placed Girona.

Brahim Diaz, who replaced the hurt Vinicius Junior just before the game, opened the scoring for Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Llorente’s leveller means Madrid are two points clear of Girona, who drew against Real Sociedad on Saturday, and 10 points above Atletico in fourth.

Catalan minnows Girona visit Real Madrid next weekend in a title showdown made even juicier by Llorente’s vital contribution.

“The team has to be calm, we’re leaders with a two-point advantage,” said Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti. “We have another chance to make a statement win next Saturday.”

Llorente was happy to snatch his team a draw and above all, deny Madrid victory.

“We worked so hard during the whole game and at the end took this prize, a point, and stopped them from getting more, just one,” Llorente told Movistar.

“It doesn’t feel like a win, as we don’t get three points, but for how the game was, and the situation, we take a very valiant point from here.”

This was the third of three hotly-competed Madrid derby clashes in under a month.

Real Madrid won the first, beating Atletico on the way to winning the Spanish Super Cup, while Diego Simeone’s side ousted Los Blancos from the Copa del Rey a week later.

Atletico also beat Real in La Liga in September and are the only team to beat them this season in



Atletico Madrid’s midfielder Marcos Llorente (centre) celebrates with teammates after scoring his team’s first goal during the La Liga match against Real Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid. (AFP)

any competition, but could not complete their hat-trick.

Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti pulled Vinicius out of the starting line-up after he suffered neck discomfort before the game and deployed Diaz in his stead.

“After the warm-up (Vinicius) was not comfortable,” said Ancelotti.

“The two options were Brahim and Joselu, and Brahim let us keep the same defensive system.”

The coach also lined up with full-back Dani Carvajal in the centre of defence as Antonio Rudiger was not fit to start and both Eder Militao and David Alaba are injured.

Former Manchester City playmaker Diaz struck in the 20th minute after Atletico’s defence failed to clear.

– ‘I’m always ready’ – Diaz has

proven a reliable option for Ancelotti to turn to this season during Vinicius’ previous spells out injured and he notched his fourth goal of the league campaign.

“Vini had a little problem, they told me it was me starting and I’m always ready,” said Diaz.

Madrid goalkeeper Andriy Lunin made a good save to deny Axel Witsel and Savic nodded narrowly over as Atletico hunted for the equaliser.

The Rojiblancos thought they had it early in the second half when Savic headed Antoine Griezmann’s corner home but the goal was disallowed for a controversial offside.

At the moment Savic headed the ball, Saul Niguez was offside in front of Lunin.

Madrid’s top goalscorer Jude Bellingham appealed for a penalty

at the other end as he tangled with Savic but the referee waved his appeal away. Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak made a solid stop from Rodrygo at the near post, with Ancelotti throwing out an arm in frustration.

Diaz nutmegged Mario Hermoso brilliantly and bent a shot wide of the far post moments before he was replaced by Joselu.

Madrid looked to have closed the game out but Atletico refused to give in and finally found the equaliser through Llorente.

It was the first time Carvajal and centre-back partner Nacho Fernandez had put a foot wrong, failing to react to Memphis Depay’s flick-on, and Llorente charged in to head past Lunin.

“(Atletico) are taller and they took advantage of that,” noted Ancelotti.

SERIE A

Inter beat Juve to take control of title tussle

AFF
Milan

Inter Milan took firm control of the Serie A title race by winning Sunday’s highly-anticipated clash with Juventus 1-0 and moving four points clear of their closest rivals for the Scudetto.

Simone Inzaghi’s side prevailed in a tense but eventful clash at the San Siro thanks to Federico Gatti’s own goal eight minutes before half-time.

Home fans who packed the stands for the biggest match of the season roared in delight as leaders Inter put daylight between themselves and second-placed Juve with their sixth straight win in all competitions.

“It’s a step in a long journey because there are lots of games to go and Juve won’t give up, but it was a great night in front of a great crowd,” said Inzaghi to DAZN.

“It’s hard to find a weakness tonight... we’ve won 18 matches from 22 which is great but we’re only four points ahead of Juve. Napoli were much further ahead at this stage last season.”

Inter also have a game in hand – at home against Atalanta at the end of the month – a big advantage just as they head into a run of tough fixtures featuring their Champions League last-16 tie with Atletico Madrid.

They also travelled to Riyadh last month to win the Italian Super Cup.

Juventus, who on Sunday suffered their second defeat of the season and their first since September, have no European distractions. Serie A’s two leading goalscorers Lautaro Martinez

and Dusan Vlahovic were on the San Siro pitch but it was the unfortunate Gatti who provided the decisive touch.

Inter made most of the running but bumped up against a black and white wall as Juve set up to frustrate the hosts and hit them on the break.

Marcus Thuram thought he was about to put Inter ahead midway through the first half but just as he prepared to sweep home Federico Dimarco’s low cross, Bremer nipped in to take the ball from his toes.

Juve rarely ventured outside their own half in the opening period but Vlahovic could have put them ahead just after the half hour had he not miscontrolled the ball after Weston McKennie’s powerful burst up-field.

But Inter got the stroke of luck they needed in the 37th minute when Nicolò Barella’s cross missed both Benjamin Pavard and Thuram before deflecting over the line off Gatti.

The second half was played at a much faster pace and both teams exchanged half chances until Wojciech Szczesny’s brilliant reaction stop denied Barella from close range in the 69th minute.

The Juventus goalie pulled off another miracle with four minutes remaining when he stopped Marko Arnautovic tucking home Denzel Dumfries’ perfect low cross, but Inter had done enough for a huge win.

“Everyone has negative moments during a season, and it was our turn tonight,” Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri told DAZN.

“We just need to get past this and focus on our next game with Udinese.”



FROM LEFT: Inter Milan’s Denzel Dumfries, Marko Arnautovic, Lautaro Martinez, Benjamin Pavard and Alessandro Bastoni celebrate after their team’s victory against Juventus in Milan. (AFP)

HORSE SHOW

Global Champions Arabians Tour wraps up with an extraordinary finale

The Global Champions Arabians Tour concluded yesterday. This esteemed event, held with the gracious patronage of His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, the Amir of Qatar, beautifully showcased the regal beauty of Arabian horses from across the globe.

Orchestrated by the Cultural Village Foundation, Katara, in collaboration with the Qatar Equestrian Federation and the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club, the tour unfurled amidst opulent surroundings, casting a spell-binding spectacle of equine magnificence.

D Nafayes, exhibiting unparalleled grace and skill, clinched the gold in the Yearling Fillies Championship (Classes 1A, 1B, 1C). The silver went to Sultana al-Thamer while Teha Al Shaqab earned bronze.

In the Yearling Colts Championship (Classes 4A, 4B), Afreen Al Shaqab emerged as the gold medalist. D Borkan claimed the silver, closely followed by Mushwash Al Shaqab.

The Junior Fillies Championship (Classes 2A, 2B, 3A, 3B) saw Shahaleh Al Shaqab took gold. D Najlah secured the silver, while Shahbrys HVP claimed the Bronze.

The Junior Colts Championship (Classes 5A, 5B, 6A, 6B) witnessed Bandar Aljassimya’s triumphant gold win. BAZ Aljassimya secured the silver and D Shakhar claimed the Bronze.

In the Mares Championship (Classes 7A, 7B, 8A, 8B, 9), AJ Kayya’s stellar performance earned her the gold. D Shihanah captured the Silver and Emarella earned the bronze



The connections of Yearling Colts Championship winner Afreen Al Shaqab pose with the trophy.



D Nafayes clinched the gold in the Yearling Fillies Championship (Classes 1A, 1B, 1C) at the Global Champions Arabians Tour in Katara.

The Stallions Championship (Classes 10A, 10B, 11A, 11B, 12) brought the grand finale, with E.S.

Harir clinching the gold, D Seraj securing the Silver and Rhan Al Shahania claiming the bronze.

SPOTLIGHT

Inaugural Jestate Youth Chess Festival concludes successfully



The inaugural Jestate Youth Chess Festival 2024 organised by the Qatar Chess Association (QCA) in collaboration with Jestate at the QCA Training Center in Madinat Khalifa concluded successfully on Saturday with exciting contests and results in five categories including rapid and Classical FIDE-Rated Tournament.

The three-day Jestate Youth Chess Festival was an initiative geared towards developing the community through sport as part of company social responsibility. Organised in collaboration with QCA, it is aimed at nurturing and sustaining the interest and passion of young chess enthusiasts in the community.

Applauding the performance of youth chess players, Mohamed al-Mudahka, President of the Qatar Chess Association, who also gave away the prizes with Hamad al-Kubaisi, Owner of Hookies Cookies, said: “We have been happy to witness the encouraging participation of young chess players in the tournament and the levels of their competitive skills. There were many close

and fascinating boards especially in the finals and we wish all of them more success in the future as well.”

The QCA president also thanked Jestate for the collaboration and also other sponsors Hookies Cookies and Nomad Coffee for their support.

Jestate said: “The idea to have the tournament was to help create a meaningful impact on our young chess players and to provide them with a chance to achieving world rating. We are glad that the chess festival helped achieve that aim.”

Tanvish Reddy Tiruvalluru and Erfan Mohamed Firdaus (Best Qatari category) emerged as winners of the U-18 Classical FIDA-Rated tournament while Umesh Ganesan and Ghanem al-Hazaa topped the Under-16 category. Ishaan Shashank and Mohamed al-Qahtani claimed the top honours in the U-12 category while Alexander Rorchinsky and Hamad al-Thani excelled in the Under-10 section. The Under-8 category was won by Neavin Raghunathan and Abdulrahman Ahmed respectively.

Special trophies and gifts were

awarded to all the winners.
RESULTS: U-8: 1. Neavin Raghunathan, 2. Fadhil Farooque, 3. Mohamed AlFatih Khan, 3rd Place tie: Zaid Ahmad Awad; Best Qatari: 1. Abdulrahman Ahmed, 2. Fahad Adnan al-Sayed, 3. Amna al-Emadi.
U-10: 1. Alexander Rorchinsky, 2. Ankit Arun, 3. Joel Arun, 3rd Place tie: Ohm Hari Asha, Yash Suvarna, Yiduo Wang; Best Qatari: 1. Hamad al-Thani, 2. Nasser al-Thani, 3. Rashid AlFahad.
U-12: 1. Ishaan Shashank, 2. Reina Daoud, 3. Emmanel Mathew, 3rd Place tie: Lamees Ede, Omar Ahmad Awad, Unmukta Rai; Best Qatari: 1. Mohamed al-Qahtani, 2. Aisha al-Khulaifi, 3. Haya al-Hussain.
U-16: 1. Umesh Ganesan, 2. Srijan Dhanaraja, 3. Mohamed Wael Hammad, 3rd Place tie: Mohamed Hassan Fard, Mohamed Masafa Hussan; Best Qatari: 1. Ghanem al-Hazaa, 2. Abdulla al-Harami, 3. Ali al-Zeyara.
U-18 Classical FIDA-Rated: 1. Tanvish Reddy Tiruvalluru, 2. Albin Sajani, 3. Johan Jobsey; Best Qatari: 1. Erfan Mohamed Firdaus, 2. Al Jamaat Khaled, 3. Al Janahi Ibrahim.

Sheikh Joaan honours Qatar's handball team for Asian triumph



Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) President HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani honoured Qatar handball team for winning the Asian Handball Championship for the sixth consecutive time in the 21st edition of the event, which was held in Bahrain last month. In the final, Qatar beat Japan 30-24. With their resounding victory, Qatar, along with Japan, Bahrain, and Kuwait, also cemented their places in the upcoming 2025 IHF Men's Handball World Championship.

Mohebbi hails Taremi's guidance after Iran's win over Japan

Doha: Mohamed Mohebbi praised the role Mehdi Taremi played in Iran's 2-1 AFC Asian Cup quarter-final win against Japan on Saturday despite the striker being suspended. Iran will play Qatar in the semi-finals tomorrow.

The 26-year-old Mohebbi was picked to replace Taremi in the starting line-up, scoring the equaliser that sparked Iran's comeback win at the Education City Stadium, with the FC Rostov player eager to share how his teammate motivated him.

"I want to thank Mehdi Taremi, who is not only one of the best in Iran but one of the best in Asia," said Mohebbi. "He talked with me for about half an hour because he wanted to help bring out my best qualities. This showed the union that we have within this national team."

"Special thank you to (head coach) Amir (Ghalenoei) and the staff for giving confidence and belief to me. Also the medical and masseuse team for the recovery that enabled us to perform this well after the short time from the win over Syria."

Mohebbi came off the bench in Iran's earlier four matches but Taremi's red card against Syria meant a start for him against four-time champions Japan.

His goal in the 55th minute, off a smart pass from Sardar Azmoun, was not significant only for the match but also because it was the first goal Iran have ever scored against Japan at the AFC Asian Cup, with Team Melli unable to find a way through in four previous meetings at the continental showpiece.

"I'm very happy for the win and the performance. This match highlights the high quality within Asian football. I want to thank my teammates, everyone in the stadium and everyone back home. Hopefully we can continue this form to become champions of Asia so that we can make all Iranian fans proud and happy."

Head coach Amir Ghalenoei believes Iran's 2-1 victory over Japan in can be a turning point for the nation's football. "Asian football should be happy with this match, and we should be proud of the performance of our players who gave everything for the fans," said Ghalenoei, who had led Iran to the quarter-finals of the 2007 edition.

"I want to say thank you to everyone who supported us along the way, thanks to my family for everything they endured in these years. This match can be a turning point for Iranian football, not just for the senior national team, but also for the U23s, U19s and the whole football setup," he added.

WORLD AQUATICS CHAMPIONSHIPS DOHA

Chinese twins regain artistic swimming title

Olympic champion Hongchan clinches women's 10m platform diving gold

Agencies
Doha

Twins Liuyi and Qianyi Wang reclaimed the women's technical duet title at the World Aquatics Championships Doha yesterday. The 27-year-old sisters first took the crown in Budapest in 2022 but just missed the podium in the discipline last year in Fukuoka, Japan.

They scored 266.0484 points. Britons Kate Shortman and Isabelle Thorpe took silver with 259.5601 and Spaniards Alisa Ozhogina and Iris Tio Casas repeated last year's bronze with 258.0333 pts. Japan's Moe Higa and Mashiyo Yasunaga, who were crowned champions in 2023, withdrew just before qualifying started, one of the two swimmers being unwell.

Meanwhile, Olympic champion Quan Hongchan clinched her first individual world title with victory in the women's 10m platform diving. The Chinese star, 16, laid down an early statement of intent in the final with a forward dive with 3.5 somersaults in pike worth 76.50 to top the round 1 leaderboard.

Nineteen-year-old Andrea Spendolini-Sirieix of Britain, fresh from winning the mixed team event title, continued her good form with a round 2 inward 3.5 somersault tuck worth 81.60 that was met with gasps around the Hamad Aquatics Complex to take top spot.

But the joy was short lived, as the superlative Quan responded with an almost perfect 91.20 to retake the lead, while her compatriot, 10m synchro Olympic champion Chen Yuxi, slipped into second with an 86.40.

A consistent display over the first three rounds from Kim Mi Rae saw the Democratic People's Republic of Korea diver complete a top four that had all secured at least 220 points overall at the halfway stage.

The fourth round saw Quan step things up again with the dive of the day, a back 3.5 somersaults in tuck that was awarded four perfect 10s and a total of 97.35. Another spectacular final round saw the Chinese prodigy secure the gold medal with a score of 86.40, to give her an overall total of 436.25. Chen Yuxi secured silver with 427.80, while Spendolini-Sirieix took her second medal of the event, a podium in



China's twins Liuyi and Qianyi Wang compete in the final of the women's duet technical artistic swimming event during the 2024 World Aquatics Championships Doha at Aspire Dome in Doha yesterday. (AFP)

bronze with 377.10.

China finished on top in men's artistic swimming event as well with Yang Shuncheng taking gold in men's solo technical. The 16-year-old Yang earned gold with the final swim of the men's event, totalling 246.4766 points. He edged Italy's Giorgio Minisini (245.3166), with the bronze going to Colombia's Gustavo Sanchez (231.0000).

Artistic swimming is split into 11 medal-winning opportunities at the world championships. There are only two events on the Olympic programme, duet and team. Men have competed in artistic swimming at the world championships since 2015, when the sport was still known as synchronised swimming. They are eligible for the Olympics for the first time in Paris.



Men's solo technical artistic swimming gold medalist China's Yang Shuncheng (centre), silver medalist Italy's Giorgio Minisini (left) and bronze medalist Colombia's Gustavo Sanchez pose during the medal ceremony at Aspire Dome in Doha yesterday. (AFP)

AFC ASIAN CUP

Pressure a motivating factor for South Korea, says Hwang



Hwang In-beom feels the pressure on South Korea ahead of their AFC Asian Cup semi-final clash with Jordan will only serve as extra motivation for the team. Having beaten Saudi Arabia and Australia to reach the last four and with 44 places separating Korea and Jordan in the FIFA World Ranking, expectations have heightened that a first Asian Cup title since 1960 awaits the Taegeuk Warriors.

"History is there to be changed," said the midfielder. "If you say Korea can't win this tournament because we conceded early goals, we will prove you wrong. Yes, we conceded a lot of goals but don't forget that we also scored a lot. Pressure is always on, not just for this tournament. For a professional footballer, we have to live with pressure. But it's a privilege to live with

pressure, something only pro athletes go through.

"We have to trust the players, the staff and the coach. We have to trust the fans. We have to believe that we can do it. We want to enjoy the pressure and move closer to our goal."

Hwang has been an ever-present figure in Jurgen Klinsmann's selection, starting in every single match and with one goal and one assist so far. However, the 27-year-old - who plays his club football in Serbia with FK Crvena Zvezda - was culpable for the mistake that led to Australia taking their lead in their quarter-final on Friday at the Al Janoub Stadium.

"What I feel the most thankful for is that I don't play individual sports. Anyone can make mistakes and I'm thankful to have my teammates. Without them I won't be here today and not

be able to go through the tournament. Sometimes when you make a mistake, you don't see it because of your teammates and their support. Tomorrow, some of the boys might make mistakes or an off day, then it's my turn to help my teammates. Hopefully, this drama that we're writing at the moment, we can have a happy ending."

SAADEH READY TO HELP JORDAN CREATE MORE HISTORY

Meanwhile, Ibrahim Saadeh believes it will be a confident Jordan team that will take to the pitch against South Korea Republic today.

Having reached a historic first semi-final at the continental showpiece, the 23-year-old is adamant that Jordan's amazing journey will not end despite the huge task of facing a South Korea side determined to end a long wait for

a third Asian Cup title.

"We are extremely happy to be in the semi-finals," said Saadeh. "It is such a pride for us to have come this far. It does put some pressure on us but we're well-trained and prepared to reach the final. Maybe many did not expect our team to reach this far but we believed that we can go far in this competition. Of course it puts pressure on us but we're ready to rewrite history."

Playing his club football with Al Khor in the Qatar Stars League, Saadeh is in familiar surroundings and ready to play his role - whether in the starting XI or from off the bench.

One of his three appearances as a substitute came against the Koreans in their Group E match, and the midfielder is ready to accept the challenge should head coach Hussein Ammouta call upon him.

