

Bahrain lining up May friendly matches

Senior men's national team hoping to add third tune-up game in eight days next month as part of preparations for remaining joint-qualifiers for FIFA World Cup 2022 and AFC Asian Cup 2023

● Bahrainis are currently set to play Ukraine in Kiev on May 23, and then against Malaysia at home on May 28

● Kingdom's senior men's national team to gather for training in May to gear up for June joint-qualifiers

TDT | Manama

Bahrain is looking to play an international friendly match on May 20, which will be their third in a span of less than 10 days next month as they gear up for their remaining joint-qualifiers for the FIFA World Cup 2022 and AFC Asian Cup 2023.

This was confirmed last night by an official with the Kingdom's senior men's national team, who are set to face their counterparts from Ukraine on May 23 in Kiev before playing against Malaysia



Bahrain's senior men's national football team in their friendly match against Jordan last month (file photo)

at home on May 28.

The official explained that the Bahrain Football Association is currently searching for a national team opponent for the May 20 tune-up but none are presently available on that date. He added

that a game could therefore be scheduled against a local Ukrainian club, to be part of their brief overseas training camp in Kiev that will include the friendlies.

The Bahrainis, coached by Portuguese tactician Helio Souza,

recently completed a local training camp last month that included two friendly matches, the first of which they won against Syria 3-1 before suffering a tough

1-2 loss to Jordan the same week. Bahrain's three remaining



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joint-qualifiers are slated to be held in June. They will be played in the Kingdom after the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) named Bahrain as the centralised venue for Group C, which also includes Iraq, Iran, Cambodia and Hong Kong.

Bahrain are set to go against Cambodia on June 3, Iran on June 7 and then Hong Kong on June 15.

Bahrain are currently second in their division with nine points, having won two matches and drawn thrice. Iraq are the leaders with 11 points after winning three games and drawing two other times.

Iran are third with six points but have played just three matches so far and have two wins and two losses. Hong Kong and Cambodia completed the Group C table with five points and one point, respectively.

There are eight groups in all in this round of qualifiers, with five nations in each group. The other centralised venues selected by the AFC are China for Group A, Kuwait for Group B, Saudi Arabia for Group D, Qatar for Group E, Japan for Group F, the UAE for Group G and South Korea for Group H.

At the end of this stage of qualification, the eight group winners and the four best runners-up advance to the third round of World Cup qualifying, and also secure their berths in the Asian Cup. The next best 24 teams will compete in a separate competition for the remaining 12 slots in the Asian Cup.

Moyes, Lingard relieved to avoid Arsenal collapse deja vu



West Ham United's manager David Moyes (L) congratulates Jesse Lingard

AFP | London

West Ham United manager David Moyes and midfielder Jesse Lingard were relieved they were able to avoid squandering a three-goal lead for the second time in quick succession after holding on to a 3-2 win at Wolverhampton Wanderers.

The Hammers were held to a 3-3 home draw by Arsenal on March 21 in the previous round of matches before the international break and the visit to Wolves almost produced a blueprint copy.

"It felt like deja vu," Moyes told Sky Sports after his side were forced to hang on in the closing stages.

"We didn't manage it too well. We were going to try and make it four instead of settling for 3-0 at halftime. Some of our play in the first half was scintillating.

"Jesse was fantastic. Michail Antonio played as well as he has for a long while for 30 minutes. We're not sure on the injury. We will assess it tomorrow. It looks like he's felt his hamstring."

Lingard added: "I thought

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DAVID MOYES

it would be another Arsenal, conceding just before halftime. But the lads kept their focus. We came out in the second half a bit better. It was about managing the game."

Lingard, Pablo Fornals and Jarrod Bowen, who replaced Antonio, fired West Ham ahead before Leander Dendoncker pulled one back in the closing stages of the first half and Fabio Silva set up a tense finish with a 68th-minute goal.

The result lifted West Ham three places up to fourth with eight games remaining and Moyes was confident his side would stay in contention for a Champions League berth in the home straight.

German FA says Loew to remain Germany boss at Euro 2020

AFP | Berlin

Joachim Loew will remain Germany coach at Euro 2020 despite last week's latest humiliating defeat, the president of the German FA (DFB) said in an interview yesterday.

Loew is under pressure after Germany crashed to a 2-1 home loss to North Macedonia in a World Cup qualifier, four months after a 6-0 drubbing by Spain in the Nations League.

The latest defeat was Germany's first loss in World Cup qualifying for 20 years.

Germany have struggled for consistent form since finishing bottom of their group at the 2018 World Cup under Loew,



Germany's coach Joachim Loew reacts from the sidelines during the match against North Macedonia (file photo)

when they were defending champions.

"The disappointing game (against North Macedonia) has not changed anything with regards to our plans. 'Jogi' Loew and his team will analyse everything and draw the right conclusions to be successful at the European championships"

DFB PRESIDENT FRITZ KELLER

The 61-year-old is set to step down after 15 years in charge

following the delayed European Championship from June 11-July 11.

"The disappointing game (against North Macedonia) has not changed anything with regards to our plans," DFB president Fritz Keller told daily Bild.

"'Jogi' Loew and his team will analyse everything and draw the right conclusions to be successful at the European championships."

The defeat left Germany third in their World Cup qualifying group, trailing leaders Armenia by three points and behind North Macedonia on goal difference and led to calls for Loew to be replaced before the Euros.

Chelsea's Tuchel praises 'courage' of Rudiger and Kepa to make amends after bust-up

AFP | London

Chelsea boss Thomas Tuchel yesterday hailed Antonio Rudiger and Kepa Arrizabalaga for showing "courage" to make amends after a training ground bust-up.

The manager confirmed that Germany defender Rudiger and Spain goalkeeper Kepa had clashed -- but insisted the matter was finished.

Chelsea were thumped 5-2 by West Brom on Saturday, paying a hefty price for Thiago Silva's red card and eventually slipping out of the Premier League's top four.

The Blues face Porto in Seville in Wednesday's Champions League quarter-final first leg, with Tuchel adamant the Cobham training-ground incident was behind them.

"It was nothing to do with the defeat, it was just an incident in training. It got heated up between Toni and Kepa," said Tuchel. "So we calmed the situation down immediately.

"I don't want to play it down with any-



Antonio Rudiger and Kepa Arrizabalaga interact during a match (file photo)

thing artificial, these are things we don't want to accept. It was unusual but they can happen.

"They are all competitors and want to win training matches. We needed to interfere in the situation, so that was serious. But the way the guys handled the situation, that was impressive, and showed a lot of courage."

Tuchel said the two players "cleared the

"We spoke about the issue and then it was solved. This was the main part. They sorted it out straight after training in a very honest, humble and very direct way"

THOMAS TUCHEL

air immediately" after the incident.

"We spoke about the issue and then it was solved," he said. "This was the main part. They sorted it out straight after training in a very honest, humble and very direct way.

"That showed me they have very good character. Toni sorted it out directly, and it was a strong and brave thing to do."

The chastening defeat at Stamford Bridge on Saturday was Chelsea's first under Tuchel, who replaced Frank Lampard in January.