

India crush UAE in Asia Cup opener

Kuldeep Yadav takes 4-7 as holders bowl out UAE for 57 in 13.1 overs

● Shivam Dube claims three early wickets

● India chase target in 4.3 overs

● Abhishek Sharma smashes 30 off 16 balls

AFP | Dubai

Kuldeep Yadav returned figures of 4-7 to lead holders India to a crushing nine-wicket win over hosts United Arab Emirates in their opening match of the Asia Cup yesterday.

Kuldeep struck three times in one over with his left-arm wrist spin as tournament favourites India skittled UAE for a paltry 57 in 13.1 overs after they elected to field first in the T20 in Dubai.

India romped home to victory in 4.3 overs after left-handed opener Abhishek Sharma hit 30 off 16 balls and vice-captain Shubman Gill stood unbeaten



India's players celebrate after the dismissal of UAE's Harshit Kaushik (3R)



Kuldeep's second over changed the game entirely – three wickets including UAE skipper Muhammad Waseem – collapsing the batting order and leaving India to complete one of their quickest T20I chases

on 20.

But it was the bowlers who set up victory for the reigning T20 World Cup champions as medium-pacer Shivam Dube claimed three before Kuldeep wrapped up the innings.

Put in to bat, UAE opener Alis-han Sharafu started briskly with boundaries before falling to pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah for 22 off

17 balls.

Skipper Muhammad Waseem struck 19 to be the only other batsman to make double figures in an otherwise shambolic show by the rest of the team.

Kuldeep's three wickets, including Waseem, in his second over rattled the opposition batting which soon fell apart.

In reply, Sharma came out attacking as he smashed left-arm spinner Junaid Siddique for a six and a four.

He hit two more sixes in his blitz before being caught out off pace bowler Junaid Siddique.

Gill finished off the chase with a boundary as skipper Suryakumar Yadav, unbeaten on seven, looked on from the other end.

India won the previous Asia Cup, which was played in a 50-over format in 2023, when they beat hosts Sri Lanka in the final in Colombo.

India will next face Pakistan on Sunday in the most highly-anticipated match of the T20 tournament, which serves as a build-up competition for next year's T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka.

Bolivia down Brazil to grab World Cup play-off spot



Bolivia's Miguel Terceros celebrates after scoring

AFP | El Alto

Bolivia kept their 2026 World Cup dream alive by snatching a play-off place with a 1-0 victory over Brazil in El Alto on Tuesday, taking advantage of Venezuela's home defeat to Colombia.

Miguel Terceros's penalty on the stroke of half-time proved to be the difference for Bolivia against the five-time world champions, in a match played 4,150 metres above sea level.

The victory dragged Bolivia above Venezuela into seventh place in the final standings of South American qualifying, earning them a berth in next year's continental play-offs for the tournament in the United States, Mexico and Canada.

Venezuela, who were hoping to qualify for the World Cup for the first time, held a one-point lead over Bolivia heading into the last round of matches, but were beaten 6-3 at home by Colombia.

"We're very happy, but we need to keep our feet on the ground, knowing that we have to keep fighting," said Bolivian coach Oscar Villegas.

Two nations will qualify for the World Cup from the six-team play-off tournament to be held next March, reportedly in Mexico.

Bolivia are hoping to reach the World Cup finals for the first time since a group-stage exit from the 1994 edition in the USA.

Their victory on Tuesday sparked wild celebrations on the streets of the major city of La Paz, which neighbours El Alto.

Reigning champions Argentina, Ecuador, Colombia, Uruguay, Brazil and Paraguay had all already secured automatic tickets to the World Cup.

Elsewhere in the final round of games, Argentina lost 1-0 in Ecuador, Paraguay beat Peru 1-0 in Lima, while Chile and Uruguay played out a goalless draw.

Hjulmand has nothing to 'prove' at Leverkusen despite Mainz flop

AFP | Berlin

New Bayer Leverkusen coach Kasper Hjulmand yesterday said that he did not take the job to "prove anything" after an underwhelming experience when he last coached in German football.

Hjulmand returns to Germany after a less than successful spell in charge of Bundesliga club Mainz in 2014-15, where he was let go after a run of one win in 13 games.

And his last match as a coach was in charge of Denmark at Euro 2024, when his side lost 2-0 to hosts Germany in the last 16.

At his official unveiling, the 53-year-old Dane told reporters: "I don't go into this job, or any job, to prove anything.

"I do it because I love the game and the passion behind it. I love the Bundesliga."

The former Denmark coach was named Leverkusen manager on Monday, replacing the



Bayer Leverkusen coach Kasper Hjulmand

sacked Erik ten Hag, with the ex-Manchester United boss sensationally fired after just two Bundesliga matches.

Ten Hag took over from Xabi Alonso, who oversaw the most successful period in the club's history with a league and cup double in 2023-24, before moving to Real Madrid in the summer.

It has been a turbulent off-season and start to the current campaign in Leverkusen.

Several title-winners, including Florian Wirtz, Granit Xhaka, Jonathan Tah, Jeremie Frimpong, Victor Boniface, Piero Hincapie and Lukas Hradecky, followed Alonso out of the door.

Hjulmand acknowledged that taking over the club in such circumstances was "hectic", especially having not had a pre-season to work with his new players.

But Hjulmand said that his



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BAYER LEVERKUSEN

experience coaching a national team -- he took Denmark to the semi-finals of the Euros in 2021, where they lost narrowly to England, before stepping down in mid-2024 -- would stand him in good stead.

"With the national team you don't have many training sessions, you don't have a pre-season," he told reporters.

"You have to be very precise with your minutes on the pitch -- we'll learn from game to game."

Leverkusen host Eintracht Frankfurt on Friday having taken a single point from their opening two matches.

Pellizzari takes Vuelta stage 17 honours

AFP | London

Italy's Giulio Pellizzari upstaged the big guns in yesterday's Vuelta a Espana 17th stage as Jonas Vingegaard retained the leader's red jersey.

The 21-year-old celebrated the biggest day of his career, crossing the Alto de El Morredero summit finish 16sec clear of Briton Tom Pidcock.

Pellizzari's Australian Red Bull Bora teammate Jai Hindley took third ahead of Vingegaard.

Danish race favourite Vingegaard goes into Thursday's time-trial with a 50sec



Team Bora's Giulio Pellizzari celebrates as he crosses the finish line

cushion in the general classification over Joao Almeida, who finished the stage in fifth.

The leaders cancelled each other out on the scorched slopes of Alto de El Morredero after a gruelling 143.2km ride from El Barco de Valdeorras, with Pellizzari seizing his chance.

Thursday's 18th stage is a 27.2km individual time-trial around Valladolid with the race finishing on Sunday in Madrid amid heightened security after disruption to one of cycling's big three races by pro-Palestinian protests.