

China punish Philippines

Two goals for Wu Lei helped the Asian giants through to the knockout round of the Asian Cup in Abu Dhabi

● Sven cancels dinner as China beat Philippines

● Australia beat Palestine to bounce back from Jordan defeat in Asian Cup

AFP | Abu Dhabi

Swede Sven-Goran Eriksson scrapped dinner plans with old foe Marcello Lippi after China thrashed his Philippines side 3-0 yesterday to reach the last 16 of the Asian Cup.

China's star striker Wu Lei fired a brilliant double against the Filipino 'Street Dogs' in Abu Dhabi as Lippi emerged victorious in a heavyweight coaching clash.

As is custom between the two elder statesmen of the game, the loser buys the other dinner, washed down with a vintage bottle of wine.

But Eriksson had little stomach for the old pals' act when the septuagenarians embraced after the match.

"No, no dinner plans," snapped the former England manager. "I was not in a very good mood for a long discussion. I just wished (Lippi) good luck for the future."

"We forgot about Wu Lei



No, no dinner plans. I was not in a very good mood for a long discussion. I just wished (Lippi) good luck for the future. We forgot about Wu Lei -- twice

SVEN-GORAN ERIKSSON



Philippines' goalkeeper Michael Falckesgaard (C) attempts to save a shot

-- twice," grimaced Eriksson, who previously coached the match-winner at Chinese club Shanghai SIPG.

"If you do that he will punish you and he did with two great goals. We paid a heavy price but we are not home yet. We still have hope -- but small hope, probably."

China, runners-up in 1984 and 2004, top Group C with a perfect six points from two games -- ahead of South Korea on goal difference -- after beating Kyrgyzstan 2-1 in their opening game.

But they looked far sharper against the Philippines, like the former Soviet republic also appearing in their first Asian Cup.

"I'm very proud of my players," said Lippi, who led his native Italy to World Cup victory in 2006.

"They were aggressive, focused and showed a lot of quality. If we can continue to play like that we have nothing to fear from any team at this Asian Cup."

Wu magic

Lippi's side should have led after 32 minutes when Wu Xi headed wastefully wide from point-blank range.

But Wu Lei provided the spark five minutes before half-time, turning on the edge of the box and whipping a right-foot shot into the far corner.

His second was even better as he swivelled to slam a Hao Junmin free kick past goalkeeper Michael Falckesgaard on the volley after 66 minutes to effectively finish the tie.

Substitute Yu Dabao added a third 10 minutes from time for China, who are looking to improve on their quarter-final finish in Australia four years ago.

Lippi waxed lyrical about the prolific Wu Lei, China's most

coveted player and Shanghai's record goalscorer, who has been linked with a move to English Premier League side Wolves.

"He looked very sharp and scored two goals of fantastic quality," said the Italian.

"But we are used to seeing that quality from him. It is no wonder teams in Europe are interested in him."

Pulverised 8-1 the last time the teams met in 2017, the Philippines gave China more of a fight this time, having lost 1-0 to South Korea earlier this week.

Kevin Ingreso forced a fingertip save from China goalkeeper Yan Junling in first-half stoppage time, but Eriksson's players faded badly after the break.

South Korea beat Kyrgyzstan 1-0 in a late kickoff in Al Ain to advance to the knockout stage.

Asian Cup

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|-------------|---|---|---|-------------|
| Palestine | 0 | - | 3 | Australia |
| Philippines | 0 | - | 3 | China |
| Kyrgyzstan | 0 | - | 1 | South Korea |

Red-hot Barty, Seppi storm into Sydney finals

AFP | Sydney

Australia's Ashleigh Barty claimed another top 10 scalp to power into the Sydney International final yesterday, while veteran Andreas Seppi upset third seed Diego Schwartzman to reach the men's decider.

The 22-year-old Barty is on a hot run, stretching her unbeaten streak to seven matches dating back to her career's biggest title at the WTA Elite Trophy in Zhuhai.

She is one of the form players heading into the Australian Open next week, but had to dig deep to scramble past world number nine and seventh seed Kiki Bertens (6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 7-5).

Her reward is a clash with 2015 champion Petra Kvitova who defeated Belarusian qualifier Aliaksandra Sasnovich, in another semi-final yesterday.

"It's amazing. It really has been a phenomenal week of tennis," said the 15th ranked Barty, who also made the final last year.

"I feel like I've played great all week and have had tough opponents every single round and I'm really excited to have another shot at the title."

Barty had already accounted for world number one Simona Halep and former French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko before beating 10th



Seppi had made three previous semi-finals in Sydney but he had never gone further

seeded Belgian Elise Mertens in the quarter-finals.

She came into the match with the advantage of having twice beaten Dutch star Bertens previously, including as recently as last August in Montreal.

Seppi edged past Schwartzman 7-6 (7/3), 6-4, a day after derailing the hopes of top seed Stefanos Tsitsipas, proving he still has what it takes at age 34.

The Italian, seeded eight, had made three previous semi-finals in Sydney -- the first way back in 2006. But he had never gone further and was delighted to get a crack at another ATP title to add to three he already owns.

"It was never easy, he is a great fighter and makes you play a lot of balls and you have to run a lot," said Seppi of the Argentinian. "But I played a good match today and was happy to close it out."



Australia's Ashleigh Barty hits a return to Kiki Bertens of the Netherlands

Pakistan bowlers fight back to defy South Africa

AFP | Johannesburg, South Africa

Pakistan's bowlers changed the course of the third and final Test against South Africa when they engineered a dramatic collapse on the first day of the third and final Test yesterday.

From being in control on 226 for three at tea, South Africa were bowled out for 262 at the Wanderers Stadium.

Vernon Philander struck back for South Africa, taking two wickets off successive balls as Pakistan reached 17 for two at the close.

A polished innings of 90 by Aiden Markram, coupled with some wayward bowling by Pakistan, laid the foundation for some attacking batting by South Africa, who collectively hit 37 fours and a six before tea on what looked the best batting pitch of a series already won by the hosts.

But the runs dried up after the interval as South Africa were able to add only 36 for the loss of seven wickets in 19.4 overs, hitting only four more boundaries.

Mohammad Amir and Mo-



Dean Elgar walks off as Pakistan celebrate his wicket

hammad Abbas set the tone after tea, taking two and one wickets respectively. Both bowlers gained reverse swing and tightened up their lines to make run-scoring difficult.

Ashraf turns the screw

Amir left the field four balls into his 16th over after falling in his delivery stride and appearing to twist his left ankle but

Hasan Ali and Faheem Ashraf continued to put pressure on the batsmen.

Ashraf finished with three for 57, while Amir, Abbas and Hasan took two wickets each.

Markram hit 16 boundaries off 124 balls in an innings marked by crisply-struck drives and firm clips to leg.

It was the third time in his 15-Test career that he had been dismissed in the nineties.

Markram, who had to pass a fitness test after suffering a badly bruised right thigh while fielding in the second Test in Cape Town, looked set for his fifth Test century until he glanced a ball from the medium-paced Faheem and wicketkeeper Sarfraz Ahmed dived to his left to take a good catch.

Hashim Amla (41) helped Markram put on 126 for the second wicket after stand-in captain Dean Elgar was caught behind off Mohammad Abbas for five in the second over.

Theunis de Bruyn (49) and new cap Zubayr Hamza (41) both batted brightly in a fourth wicket stand which was worth 72 off 92 balls at tea.

But De Bruyn was out in the third over after tea and Hamza, who scored 38 off 46 balls before tea, could add only three more

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| South Africa, first innings | |
| A. Markram c S Ahmed b F Ashraf | 90 |
| D. Elgar c SAhmed b M Abbas | 5 |
| H. Amla c Asad Shafiq b S Khan | 41 |
| T. de Bruyn lbw b M Abbas | 49 |
| Zubayr Hamza c S Ahmed b M Amir | 41 |
| T. Bavuma c S Ahmed b M Amir | 8 |
| Q. de Kock c M Abbas b F Ashraf | 18 |
| V. Philander lbw b Hasan Ali | 1 |
| K. Rabada c S Ahmed b Hasan Ali | 0 |
| D. Steyn not out | 2 |
| D. Olivier c M Abbas b F Ashraf | 0 |
| Extras (lb2, nb4, w1) | 7 |
| Total (77.4 overs) | 262 |
| Pakistan, first innings | |
| Imam-ul-Haq not out | 10 |
| Shan Masood c De Kock b Philander | 2 |
| Azhar Ali c De Kock b Philander | 0 |
| Mohammad Abbas not out | 0 |
| Extras (lb5) | 5 |
| Total (2 wkts, 9 overs) | 17 |

runs off 22 deliveries before he was caught behind off Amir.

Left to negotiate a tricky 40 minutes before the close, Pakistan lost Shan Masood, their top scorer in the series, for two when a successful review by South Africa showed he had got a faint edge to a ball angled across him.