

Belgium beat Kazakhstan to maintain 100 pc record



Michy Batshuayi forward of Belgium celebrates scoring a goal

Reuters | Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan

Belgium kept up their 100 percent record in Euro 2020 qualifiers, as Roberto Martinez's side, who have already booked their spot at the tournament finals, scored a goal in each half to beat hosts Kazakhstan 2-0 yesterday.

Michy Batshuayi and Thomas Meunier found the net at the Astana Arena as leaders Belgium registered an eighth straight win in Group I.

The top-ranked Belgians were the first team to book a place in next year's 24-team final tournament when they trounced San Marino 9-0 at home on Thursday.

Batshuayi opened the scoring in the 21st minute with an easy back-post finish after Dennis Praet's curled pass around the back of the home defence.

The second goal came from a sumptuous crossfield pass from captain Eden Hazard, hit from just inside the Ka-

30
goals have been scored by Belgium while conceding just one on their way to winning all eight of their qualifying matches

kazakhstan half, over to Meunier, who was steaming down the right wing.

His first touch was sublime and his finish inch-perfect to double the score after 53 minutes.

It was the 30th goal of the qualifying campaign for Belgium, who have conceded only one.

Dries Mertens had a chance to make it 3-0 but headed over the top after 65 minutes before providing a square pass just minutes later that a stretching Batshuayi could only steer wide of goal.

Kazakhstan stayed in fourth place in the group with seven points from eight games.

Bottas triumphs in Japan

Valtteri Bottas has sealed a sixth consecutive constructors' world championship for Mercedes

● Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel holds off Lewis Hamilton for second

● Bottas now only man who can catch Hamilton for drivers' title

AFP | Suzuka

Valtteri Bottas jumped from third to first with an electric start to win the Japanese Grand Prix yesterday ahead of Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel and the Finn's Mercedes teammate Lewis Hamilton.

Charles Leclerc finished sixth in the second Ferrari, and with only Bottas now able to overtake Hamilton in the standings, that means Mercedes clinched an unprecedented sixth successive drivers'-constructors' world championship double.

"I'm happy, very happy," said the flying Finn Bottas, who ended a six-month wait for his third victory of 2019 after winning the season-opener in Australia and the Azerbaijan race in April.

"Starting third isn't easy. I had a really nice start, managed to get the lead and then the pace was super good, I could really control the race," he added.

"I'm really proud to be part of the team. A sixth title is really impressive."

"Firstly congratulations to the team," said Hamilton, who now leads the drivers' standings by 64 points from Bottas. "That's the main point. I just wanted to bring home good points for the team."

Ferrari had enjoyed a front row lock-out in a rare morning qualifying session caused by Typhoon Hagibis but their race unravelled right at the start.

Vettel twitched before the lights went out and his hesitation enabled the fast starting



Valtteri Bottas celebrates victory in the Japan F1 Grand Prix

Bottas to leapfrog from third into the lead.

"It was my mistake," admitted Vettel. "It was worse than a poor start, it was a really poor start. With the lack of pace today, second place today was probably the maximum."

Max Verstappen enjoyed a bullet start from fifth in the Red Bull and was overtaking Leclerc on the outside of turn two when the Monegasque drove into the flying Dutchman, causing him to spin.

"He just drove into the side of my car," complained an unhappy Verstappen, who retired on lap 15.

Leclerc's front wing was damaged and he was forced to pit for a new nose at the start of lap four.

'What do I have to do'

Vettel was left sandwiched between the two Mercedes and made the first strategic move when he dived in the pits for a new set of soft tyres on lap 17.



The day had been dubbed "Super Sunday" with qualifying and the race taking place back-to-back because of the track having been safely locked down Saturday as Typhoon Hagibis roared past

Bottas followed on the next lap. Hamilton was now in the lead and Mercedes tried to leave him out on a one-stop strategy. But on lap 22 Hamilton reported his front tyres were "dead" and was brought in.

Hamilton began to close on Vettel who pitted for his final change to medium tyres on lap

32, rejoining in third.

Bottas took on fresh soft tyres five laps later leaving Hamilton again in the lead.

"Tell me what I have to do to win this race," pleaded Hamilton over team radio, convinced his tyres would not last the distance.

He came in again on lap 43, allowing Vettel back into second, but proceeded to close the gap by setting a new lap record on lap 45.

Hamilton swarmed all over Vettel towards the end but was unable to get past and make it a Mercedes one-two.

Earlier Vettel had produced a perfect lap in the delayed qualifying session to outqualify his teammate for the first time in 10 races.

The day had been dubbed "Super Sunday" with qualifying and the race taking place back-to-back because of the track having been safely locked down Saturday as Typhoon Hagibis roared past.

Neymar limps off as Brazil draw with Nigeria

AFP | Singapore

Neymar's return to Champions League action may be delayed after the Paris Saint-Germain forward limped off after just 12 minutes of Brazil's friendly against Nigeria yesterday.

The 27-year-old, who played the full 90 minutes against Senegal on Thursday, clutched his hamstring after eight minutes and was replaced by Philippe Coutinho shortly after.

Neymar, who was playing his 101st international, is now a doubt for PSG's Champions League meeting with Club Brugge on October 22. He has missed the first two rounds because of a UEFA suspension.

He was injured while on national duty back in June when he hurt an ankle in a friendly against Qatar. It ruled him out of the Copa America which Brazil went on to win.

India record 11th-straight Test series win

AFP | Pune

Umesh Yadav led an inspired bowling display as India thrashed South Africa by an innings and 137 runs in the second Test to clinch a record 11th-straight series triumph at home yesterday.

The tourists were dismissed for 189 after following-on in the final session of day four in Pune, as India took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

Vernon Philander, who made 37, and Keshav Maharaj, who scored 22, put up a brief resistance during their 56-run eighth-wicket stand, but Yadav broke through with the wicket of Philander.

He took his third wicket after sending back Kagiso Rabada for four and spinner Ravindra Jadeja trapped Maharaj lbw to wrap up the game as India went past Australia's 10-series wins on home turf. Jadeja returned figures of 3-52.

The win also consolidated India's number-one position in the world Test championship with



India's players celebrate their innings victory

200 points.

Skipper Virat Kohli set up the win with his unbeaten 254 -- a record seventh double-century for the star batsman -- in India's 601 for five declared.

Ravichandran Ashwin struck twice in the morning session after the tourists started their

second innings trailing by 326.

Ashwin had du Plessis -- who promoted himself to number four in the batting order -- caught behind for five with wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha holding on to a juggling catch.

The off-spinner soon got opening batsman Dean Elgar

caught for 48 as South Africa slipped further.

Paceman Ishant Sharma struck with his second ball of the day to trap Aiden Markram lbw for nought.

Markram had a long discussion with Elgar over whether to review the on-field call but

walked, only for the replays to suggest the ball would have gone over the stumps.

The Proteas were dismissed for 275 at the end of day three in response to India's 601-5 declared, 127 short of the follow-on.

South Africa put up some resistance in their first innings with Maharaj, who made 72, and Philander, 44 not out, putting on 109 runs for the ninth wicket to frustrate the Indian bowlers.

Ashwin broke the stand with Maharaj's wicket and then got last man Rabada to return figures of 4-69.

The match will also be remembered for his Kohli's marathon knock as he surpassed Don Bradman's tally of 6,996 runs. Kohli, who now has 7,054 runs from 81 Tests, put together crucial partnerships including a 225-run fifth-wicket stand with Jadeja, who made 91, to extend India's dominance.

Opener Mayank Agarwal also contributed with a century.

The two teams now head to Ranchi for the final match starting October 19.