

Late winner as Aussies down Syria to go through

A credible draw with Jordan and a late Australia goal against Syria kept Palestine in the Asian Cup for the time being

● An injury time long range effort from Tom Rogic was enough to seal Australia's place in the Round of 16 and eliminate Syria

AFP | Al-Ain

Tom Rogic's injury-time thunderbolt settled an Asian Cup thriller yesterday as defending champions Australia beat Syria 3-2 to reach the last 16 and knock out their war-torn rivals.

The result meant the holders finished second in Group B behind Jordan, whose simultaneous 0-0 draw with Palestine gave the Palestinians hope of qualifying as one of the best third-placed teams.

Syria, vocally backed by thousands of their fans in Al Ain, twice fought back from a goal behind before Rogic slammed home the winner in the third minute of injury time.

Injury-hit Australia, with only six outfield players on the bench, needed just a draw to go through as they kicked off at the same time as Jordan against Palestine.

Syria looked an early threat before Australia started to get a grip on the game and Hibernian striker Jamie Maclaren flashed a header just wide.

There was drama on the half-hour when a Syrian free-kick bounced through a packed penalty area and into the net, but the goal was ruled out for a foul



Syria's midfielder Zaher Midani jumps for the ball against Australia's defender Mark Milligan (C-face)

on Mark Milligan.

But Australia were getting close and Awer Mabil, after seeing one raking shot blocked, unleashed a fabulous effort which curled into the top corner four minutes before half-time.

However, the lead lasted just two minutes as Mouaiad Alajaan's cross picked out Omar Khrbin, who on his 25th birthday saw his header saved by Mat Ryan but then gobbled up the rebound.

On 54 minutes, Chris Ikonomidis's shot was hooked away by Omro Al Midani -- but the ball was judged to have crossed the line by the additional assis-

tant referee, who was surrounded by Syrian players.

Syria penalty

The incident silenced the massed ranks of Syrian fans but there was uproar around the stadium shortly afterwards when their team vehemently claimed a penalty for a Milligan handball.

Australia looked firmly in control and they could have had a third goal when substitute Apostolos Giannou saw a

low shot cannon off the base of the upright.

But Mexican referee Cesar Ramos threw Syria a lifeline when he gave them a penalty after Omar Al Soma went down in the box -- and the striker stroked them level once more with 10 minutes to go.

It looked like Syria would escape with a vital point before Celtic's Rogic, playing the tournament with a broken hand, belted Australia's third from distance.

English FA Cup

Palestine	0	-	0	Jordan
Australia	3	-	2	Syria

BIC announces last two weeks of discount for F1 tickets



F1 cars during a race at BIC (file photo)

TDT | Manama

Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) announced that the fantastic Early Bird discount currently being offered on tickets to the Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix 2019 will end on January 31. With the most popular tickets already selling fast, fans are urged to book soon to avoid disappointment.

In the current offer, ticket prices are reduced by up to

15 per cent for the highly anticipated Formula 1 weekend, which takes place over four exciting days from March 28 to 31 in Sakhir.

The Bahrain Grand Prix is set to be the second of 21 races on the 2019 FIA Formula 1 World Championship, and it will be the 999th World Championship race in the history of Formula 1.

It is being held as part of the landmark 15th season of BIC, and it will also be the sixth time it is taking place under BIC's state-of-the-art floodlights as a night race, making it one of the most captivating and visually exciting events of the entire Formula 1 season.

These Early Bird discounts give fans the best value for money with so much on offer both with on-the-track action and off-the-track entertainment all weekend long.

999th

World Championship race in the history of Formula 1 is to be held in Bahrain

Man City striker Jesus vows no let-up in Liverpool title chase

AFP | Manchester

Manchester. In the current offer, ticket prices are reduced by up to 15 per cent for the highly anticipated Formula 1 weekend, which takes place over four exciting days from March 28 to 31 in Sakhir.

Manchester City will not let up in their pursuit of Premier

League leaders Liverpool.

The Brazil striker scored another two, taking his tally to seven in three appearances, as City beat Wolves 3-0 on Monday to cut Liverpool's lead back to four points.

The 21-year-old, who has now 14 goals for the season, said: "I am feeling good and my confidence is better for scoring goals."

Indian footballers win hearts despite Asian Cup exit



India's defender Sandesh Jhingan (L) protects India's goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu

AFP | New Delhi

Football fans and pundits were full of praise for India yesterday even as an injury-time penalty cost the Blue Tigers an unlikely spot in the Asian Cup knockout stages and prompted the coach to resign.

Despite its giant population India is a footballing minnow at a lowly 97th in FIFA's world rankings, and its players are used to being overshadowed by the nation's glamorous millionaire cricketers.

They did not even qualify for the last Asian Cup, but dared to dream of glory after stunning Thailand 4-1 in their open-

ing match in the United Arab Emirates.

Having lost to the hosts in their second match, the 0-0 scoreline going into injury time in their final match Monday against Bahrain would have been sufficient to see India through.

But a rash foul by skipper Pronay Halder gave Bahrain a penalty, converted coolly by Jamal Rashed.

The Hindu daily said India had "won hearts aplenty" with their performances, earning plaudits as they "threw their bodies at the ball, and put up a fearless display."

S Korea seek to lift 'curse of the fake gold'

AFP | Seoul

South Korean football officials have presented the children of four dead players with gold medals in what is being seen as an attempt to lift a supposed curse on the team at the Asian Cup.

The Taeguk Warriors are an Asian footballing powerhouse, making nine consecutive appearances at the World Cup since 1986, reaching the semi-finals in 2002, and taking bronze at the 2012 London Olympics.

But they have not lifted the Asian Cup since winning its first two editions in 1956 and 1960.

They have qualified from the group stage at the current tournament in Qatar, and face China on Wednesday to decide who will top Group C, boosted by the arrival of talismanic Tottenham Hotspurs striker Son Heung-min.

Among some superstitious South Koreans, the title drought is blamed on fake gold medals the Korean Football Association handed their players to celebrate the 1960 victory.

The decorations turned out to be gold-plated lead -- many believe a corrupt official pocket-



A day before the current tournament opened, relatives of four more deceased 1960 players were presented with pure gold medals at the KFA headquarters in Seoul

eted the money earmarked for the precious metal -- and South Korea's hopes of winning the tournament have gone down like a lead balloon ever since.

"The gold medals we received were fake," Park Kyung-hwa, a former footballer with the 1960 national team, told Yonhap news agency.

"They were coated with cheap gold, and the coating peeled off easily," he added.

The outraged players returned the fake medals and demanded the KFA present them real ones, but have had to wait for more than 50 years to re-

ceive them.

In 2014, the KFA finally made pure gold medals for the 1960 team, but could only contact three surviving footballers and family members of three more who had died. The following year the national team reached the Asian Cup final for the first time since 1988, but lost 2-1 to Australia in extra time.

"Giving back six gold medals wasn't apparently powerful enough to fully break the curse," Yonhap said, adding the KFA was "hoping" for "more power" to lift the spell.

Despite living in one of the

world's most technologically advanced countries, many Koreans remain superstitious and consult shamans for medical reasons, divination or just personal advice.

Widely held beliefs include associating the number four with death and that writing your name in red ink will bring bad luck, while a dream featuring pigs will invoke wealth.

A day before the current tournament opened, relatives of four more deceased 1960 players were presented with pure gold medals at the KFA headquarters in Seoul.