

Araujo rescues Uruguay with late equaliser against Saudi Arabia



Uruguay's Maxi Araujo celebrates after scoring the equaliser

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Uruguay were forced to settle for a 1-1 draw against Saudi Arabia in their opening Group H match of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, with Maxi Araujo's late equaliser cancelling out Abdulrahman Al Amri's first-half strike in Miami.

After Spain and Cape Verde played out a surprise goalless draw earlier in the day, both sides knew a victory would

have sent them to the top of the group. Instead, the result leaves all four teams level on one point after the opening round of matches.

Uruguay began brightly and almost took an early lead inside five minutes when Araujo struck from the edge of the area, forcing Saudi goalkeeper Mohammed Al Owais into a sharp save.

Saudi Arabia gradually settled into the contest and looked dangerous on the counterattack. Salem Al Dawsari fired wide af-

ter cutting in from the left, while Al Owais remained busy at the other end, producing another important stop to deny Federico Vinas' diving header.

The breakthrough arrived four minutes before halftime. Musab Al Juwayr's corner found Mohamed Kanno, whose header was saved by Fernando Muslera, but defender Abdulrahman Al Amri reacted quickest to bundle home the rebound and give the Green Falcons a shock 1-0 lead.

The goal was a historic one for



Abdulrahman Al-Amri #4 of Saudi Arabia scores his team's first goal past Fernando Muslera #23 of Uruguay

Saudi Arabia, marking the first time they had scored the opening goal in a World Cup match since defeating Belgium in 1994.

Uruguay coach Marcelo Bielsa responded with two halftime substitutions and saw an immediate improvement from his side after the restart.

Vinas twice went close with headers, while Manuel Ugarte rattled the post from long range as Uruguay increased the pressure. Federico Valverde also became more influential, forcing

Al Owais into another save from a free-kick.

Saudi Arabia defended resolutely but eventually conceded with 10 minutes remaining. Al Owais produced yet another save from a Vinas header, but Araujo reacted fastest to the loose ball and fired home from close range to level the scores.

Uruguay pushed for a winner in the closing stages, with Brian Rodriguez narrowly missing the target before Al Owais produced perhaps his finest save of the

evening, stretching out a hand to keep out a powerful Valverde effort in stoppage time.

The Saudi goalkeeper finished as one of the standout performers of the match, preserving a valuable point with a series of crucial interventions.

Uruguay will remain in Miami for their next Group H fixture against Cape Verde on June 22 at Iam, while Saudi Arabia travel to Atlanta a day earlier to take on Spain at 7pm. All times are Bahrain.

Bahrain competes at Asian Open Water Swimming Championships



Robert Bonsall greets a tournament official during the championship in Bali

Bahrain was represented at the 12th Asian Open Water Swimming Championships in Jimbaran Bay, Bali, Indonesia, with swimmer Robert Bonsall competing in both the 5-kilometre and 10-kilometre races against some of Asia's leading athletes.

Bonsall took part in the men's 5km event on June 13 before returning to compete in the 10km race on June 15, as the championship brought together 78 swimmers from 18 countries across the continent.

The Bahraini delegation was headed by Bahrain Aquatics Federation board member Yousif Ahmed, while William

Bonsall served as coach. In the men's 5km race, China's Tianchen Lan claimed the gold medal, while Vietnam's Huy Hoang Nguyen and Tran Tuan Anh Mai secured silver and bronze respectively.

Lan went on to complete a dominant championship by also winning gold in the men's 10km event, finishing in a time of 1 hour, 53 minutes and 21.1 seconds.

Bahrain's participation formed part of the federation's continued efforts to provide its swimmers with exposure to elite continental competition and strengthen the Kingdom's presence on the Asian stage.

Iran begin fraught World Cup with 2-2 New Zealand draw

AFP | Los Angeles

Iran twice battled back for a 2-2 draw with New Zealand on Monday in their frenetic opening match of a World Cup campaign that has been utterly overshadowed by war, politics and protests.

The Iranian team's very presence at the Los Angeles Stadium had long felt uncertain, after months of military conflict between their nation and the United States.

At last able to focus on the football, the Iran players twice found themselves trailing to the tournament's lowest-ranked team, thanks to goals from New Zealand striker Elijah Just.

But with a vocally pro-Iran crowd drowning out planned protests by anti-government demonstrators, equalizers from Ramin Rezaeian and Mohammad Mohebi spared Team Melli any further blushes.

The Iran team have dealt with a gamut of obstacles before even arriving at this World Cup, from delayed and refused US visas, to moving their training camp to Mexico at the last minute.

Hundreds of protesters against Iran's ruling regime demonstrated outside the venue Monday, saying the team does not represent their people.

Many inside the stadium sported anti-government emblems, nonchalantly flouting



New Zealand's forward #11 Elijah Just celebrates scoring his team's second goal

FIFA rules against political messaging, and the Iran anthem received boos and cheers.

Iran coach Amir Ghalenoei had insisted on the eve of the game his players would not "pay attention to any of the hype."

But his side was stunned by an early New Zealand goal on the counter created by veteran striker Chris Wood.

Collecting a long pass in the seventh minute, the Nottingham Forest target man expertly held up the ball, turned and played in the onrushing Elijah Just.

After a sharp exchange of passes with Sarpreet Singh and Wood, Just leapt and smashed a volley into the net.

Iran's star forward Mehdi Taremi nearly levelled in the 23rd minute, the former Inter Milan man's long-range effort

ricocheting off the right post.

They came close again as Kiwi keeper Max Crocombe was tackled outside his box, only able to watch as a lobbed effort at his open goal faded wide.

Iran's equalizer did come in the 32nd minute with a poacher's finish from wingback Rezaeian.

Rezaeian latched onto a rebound following Saman Ghoddos' smart pass into Shahriyar Moghanlou, whose shot on the turn was blocked by the outstretched leg of Finn Surman.

Iran defender Ali Nemat thought he had scored in first-half stoppage time, but his header from a free kick was comfortably offside.

New Zealand retook the lead in the 55th minute. Motherwell striker Just bagged a brace via a

YOU KNOW WHAT

Despite FIFA rules strictly banning political messaging, many fans inside the stadium nonchalantly displayed anti-government emblems and heavily booed the Iranian national anthem

crisp one-two with Wood, after Liberato Cacace had stolen the ball on the halfway line.

But they were again pegged back nine minutes later, as Mohebi's leaping header from Rezaeian's superb cross glanced off the inside post.

The game's final half hour saw Iran on the front foot, but unable to grab a winner due to a combination of sloppy finishing and dogged New Zealand defending.

The draw dents Iran's hopes of progressing to the knockouts for the first time, though fellow Group G contenders Egypt and Belgium also drew Monday.

Meanwhile, New Zealand's wait for a first World Cup win goes on.