

SPORTS

Italy hammer Liechtenstein

Italy stays perfect in Euro 2020 qualification with 5-0 win in Liechtenstein

● **Andrea Belotti scored twice for Italy**

AFP | Rome

Andrea Belotti scored a second-half brace as already-qualified Italy overran Liechtenstein 5-0 on Tuesday to stretch their perfect run in Euro 2020 qualifying to eight games and match an 80-year Italian record.

Roberto Mancini's side were assured of top spot in Group J after a 2-0 win over Greece in Rome on Saturday.

Federico Bernardeschi gave Italy the lead after just two minutes in Vaduz but it was not until the last 20 minutes that the 'Azzurri' hammered home their domination with four late goals.

Belotti headed in twice for a second-half brace with Alessio Romagnoli and substitute Stephan El Shaarawy also scoring near the end.

Mancini celebrated his ninth win in a row as Italy manager to draw level with the record run of legendary Vittorio Pozzo back in 1938-1939.

Pozzo won the first two of Italy's four World Cup titles in 1934 and 1938 and gold in the 1936 Berlin Olympics

"I'm more interested in his record of two World Cups and the Olympics, but even just winning Euro 2020 would be enough," said Mancini.

The 54-year-old former Inter Milan and Manchester City manager took over in May 2018 after Italy's failure to qualify for the World Cup.

Liechtenstein are already eliminated from the European tournament and they also lost 6-0 to Italy in Parma last March.

With qualification already in the bag, Mancini rang the



Italy's forward Andrea Belotti scores a goal



Italy have won all eight games in Group J and now have nine consecutive wins

changes with Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Marco Verratti the only survivor from the Greece game.

The 26-year-old took the captain's armband with Leonardo Bonnucci rested, as Napoli defender Giovanni Di Lorenzo got his senior Italian debut aged 26, with winger Vincenzo Grifo, also 26, getting his first start.

Roma midfielder Nicolò Zaniolo, 20, made his first senior start having come off the bench in his three previous appear-

ances.

Brescia midfielder Sandro Tonali, 19, was also given his first international debut in the second half.

"We struggled a bit because we didn't find the second goal right away, but with so many changes it was inevitable to spend a little time finding the right chemistry," said Mancini.

"The important thing is that all the kids are really involved.

"And the truth is that in June, I will be forced to make choices and some good players will have to stay out."

'Italy back'

With only pride to play, for the hosts threatened early with Dennis Salanovic testing Salvatore Sirigu after just one minute.

A minute later Italy were ahead with Belotti setting up Cristiano Biraghi who connected with Bernardeschi to finish off for his second goal in a row after Greece last weekend.

Belotti broke through for the second with 20 minutes to go

getting his head to the end of Freiburg winger Grifo's corner.

El Shaarawy, who plays for Shanghai Shenhua, came on for Zaniolo after the hour mark, and set up Romagnoli for the third before scoring himself with eight minutes to go.

Belotti completed the rout when he dived to meet a Di Lorenzo cross for his second goal on the night as Liechtenstein fell to their sixth defeat in eight games, having held Greece and Armenia to draws.

"Liechtenstein brings me luck, especially here as I got a brace last time too," said Belotti, with five of his eight Italy goals against the team.

"We're a completely different team from the one that lost the World Cup play-offs to Sweden two years ago.

"It's right that Italy are back where we belong."

Italy next play Bosnia and Herzegovina on November 15 with Liechtenstein travelling to second-placed Finland Liechtenstein.

Bahrain1Racing driver clinches Pro Mod title in NHRA series



Bahrain1Racing driver Stevie Jackson celebrates with his trophy

TDT | Manama

Bahrain1Racing driver Stevie Jackson was crowned World Champion of the 2019 E3 Spark Plugs NHRA Pro Mod Series in the United States of America.

Behind the wheel of Bahrain1Racing's supercharged Camaro, Jackson clinched the title on Monday at the zMAX Dragway in North Carolina after winning his Pro Mod final against fellow-American Steven Whiteley.

Jackson, who is fondly nicknamed "Stevie Fast", was able to wrap up the championship battle with one round still remaining in the 2019 season. It is his first title in the Pro Mod category of the prestigious National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) series.

BIC lauds the efforts of the entire Bahrain1Racing Team, led by HH Shaikh Abdullah, and in particular the determination and skill of Jackson, who has once again proven that he is one of the top drag racers in the world.

BIC Chief Executive Shaikh Salman bin Isa Al Khalifa commented: "I congratulate HH Shaikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al

Khalifa on winning the World title and for leading Bahrain1Racing to the highest levels of international motor racing."

"Bahrain1Racing is an inspiration to the drag racing community not only in the Kingdom of Bahrain but also in the entire region, as one of the most competitive outfits globally in the sport."

"The team's success would not have been possible without the considerable efforts and dedication of His Highness Shaikh Abdulla. It is also a testament to the vibrant motorsport culture we enjoy in the Kingdom of Bahrain, which has been growing exponentially year after year."

On his title victory, an emotional Jackson was quoted as saying: "This shows that anyone who works hard can be a champion."

"This all started in a hospital bed in 2018 after I crashed here [in another race]. HH Shaikh Abdulla said we were going to put together a team to go after the championship and that's what we've done."

Jackson will be back in action for Bahrain1Racing at the 2019 NHRA season finale in Las Vegas at the end of the month.

Switzerland beat Ireland to keep automatic Euro hopes alive

AFP | Geneva

Haris Seferovic's early effort and Shane Duffy's late own goal kept Switzerland's hopes of automatic qualification for Euro 2020 alive with a 2-0 victory over the Republic of Ireland on Tuesday.

Although Vladimir Petkovic's side have already guaranteed a play-off spot via the Nations League, the win means they are just a point behind Group D leaders Republic and Denmark with two matches remaining in their campaign.

They also have the better of the head-to-head record with the Irish as the two teams drew 1-1 in September.

Ireland's destiny will come down to their final game of the campaign against Denmark, a match they need to win to qualify.

"They were dominant in the first half but we had a second half we can be proud of," man-



Switzerland's forward Haris Seferovic (L) scores his team's first goal

ager Mick McCarthy told broadcasters Sky Sports.

"It's a cup final. Beat Denmark to reach Euro 2020. I would have taken that at the start and

I'll take it now," he added.

Captain Duffy and right-back Seamus Coleman will both miss the fixture in Dublin after picking up yellow and red cards re-

spectively.

McCarthy, in his second spell as Republic coach, made three changes from Saturday's draw at Georgia, handing 19-year-old

striker Aaron Connolly his first international start.

Petkovic kept faith in the starting lineup which lost 1-0 to Denmark at the weekend.

The hosts claimed an early lead as Benfica's Seferovic scored his first international goal since last November after a quarter of an hour.

McCarthy's side's could have equalised with four minutes of the first half to play but Shane Duffy fired his header straight at goalkeeper Yann Sommer.

Defender Ricardo Rodriguez missed a chance to make sure of all three points when his 77th minute penalty was saved superbly by Darren Randolph.

Everton right-back Seamus Coleman was shown a red card for a hand ball which resulted in the spot kick.

The home side's second goal came as Duffy deflected an effort from Edimilson Fernandes in injury time into an empty net.

Sanchez may require surgery for ankle injury - Inter

Reuters | Milan

Chile striker Alexis Sanchez may need surgery on his ankle after picking up an injury in their 0-0 draw with Colombia last week, his club side Inter Milan have said.

Sanchez injured tendons in his left ankle when he was fouled towards the end of the match and missed Tuesday's friendly win over Guinea.

Chile coach Reinaldo Rueda had said after the Colombia game that Sanchez could be out of action for two to three months if the injury required surgery.

"Alexis Sanchez underwent medical tests... Results revealed a joint dislocation in his left ankle which has caused damage to the peroneus longus tendon," Inter said in a statement.