

# Shiotani screamer guides Japan

Oman reach Asian Cup last 16 to end Palestine's qualification hopes

● **Japan beat Uzbekistan to secure top spot in Group F**

AFP | Al-Ain

**T**akasa Shiotani thumped home a sizzling second-half winner as Japan changed 10 players but still beat Uzbekistan 2-1 to finish top of their group at the Asian Cup yesterday.

The unfamiliar line-up briefly trailed after Eldor Shomurodov scored for the Uzbeks, but Newcastle United forward Yoshinori Muto's header and Shiotani's thunderbolt gave Japan their third win in Group F.

Japan had smashed a total of 12 goals past Uzbekistan in their previous two Asian Cup encounters and with only one loss in their last 30 games in the tournament, excluding penalty shoot-outs, confidence was high.

Only Shimizu S-Pulse striker Koya Kitagawa survived from the team that beat Oman but the Blue Samurai still looked sharp with Junya Ito swinging in dangerous crosses from the right.

As Uzbekistan's fans drummed along samba-style, Shomurodov scooped a decent chance over and Japan's Takashi Inui worked veteran goalkeeper Ignaty Nesterov with a powerful volley.



Yoshinori Muto of Japan scores his side's first goal

Nesterov also tipped over Kitagawa's turn and shot before Shomurodov opened the scoring with a fine piece of work, nudging the ball between two defenders and stabbing home for his fourth goal of the tournament.

But the Uzbek lead lasted only three minutes before defender Sei Muroya's cross from the byline was met by a solid header from Newcastle's Muto, arriving at the back post.

A spell of Japanese pressure

early in the second half resulted in a thunderous goal from Shiotani, who plays his club football with Al Ain and unfurled a rippling strike just before the hour-mark.

It knocked the stuffing out of Uzbekistan and when they finally started to press forward again in the final 15 minutes, Japan nearly caught them on the break when Kitagawa blazed over.

With four minutes to go, Davronbek Khashimov caught a shot

flush from outside the area and the ball was rocketing towards the top corner before the diving Daniel Schmidt gloved it away.

However, there was to be no late equaliser for the Uzbeks,

## Asian Cup

Japan	2	-	1	Uzbekistan
Oman	3	-	1	Turkmenistan
Lebanon	4	-	1	North Korea
Saudi Arabia	0	-	2	Qatar



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who will now face defending champions Australia in the last 16.

Elsewhere, Muhsen Al Ghasani and Mohammed Al-Musallami fired late goals as Oman beat Turkmenistan 3-1 in Abu Dhabi to progress in third place from the same group.

The Gulf side took the lead after 20 minutes thanks to an Ahmed Al Mahaijri free-kick, before Altymyrat Annadurdyev slammed home the equaliser shortly before half-time.

But Al Ghassani pounced from close range with six minutes left and Al-Musallami added a stoppage-time header to give Oman their first points of the tournament.

**India must keep the pressure on Australia openers, says Dhawan**

Reuters | Melbourne

**I**ndia will continue to target Australia's under-pressure openers Alex Carey and Aaron Finch as they seek to add a one-day series win to their first ever test series victory in the third and final match in Melbourne today.

Carey and Finch's best opening partnership in the first two matches of the series is the 20 runs they achieved in Adelaide on Tuesday.

Carey, the team's vice-captain, has scored a total of 42 runs while captain Finch has tallied just 12 and been bowled by Bhuvneshwar Kumar in both games of the series, which is locked at 1-1.

Finch was also dropped from the test squad after he struggled in the that series and India have concentrated on the 32-year-old, who has 11 one-day international centuries and two in Twenty20 internationals.

"We respect that Finch is a great player ... we make sure our guard is up always," Indian opening batsman Shikhar Dhawan told reporters yesterday.

"The boys must have seen his weakness and they are implementing their plans quite nicely. They're not giving him singles that easily or even boundary options.

## Son Heung-min boosts South Korea's Asian Cup hopes as Spurs sweat

AFP | Abu Dhabi

**S**purs manager Mauricio Pochettino will be like a nervous parent for the next two weeks as Son Heung-min tries to help South Korea end 59 years of Asian Cup hurt.

The mercurial Tottenham forward, who played in the London club's defeat by Manchester United three days earlier, had a hand in both goals as the Koreans beat China 2-0 on Wednesday to reach the last 16 as Group C winners.

But Pochettino will be more concerned that Son not only

started the game in Abu Dhabi, but completed 87 minutes -- long enough for China's rugged defenders to leave their mark on South Korea's talismanic captain.

"Of course I didn't expect to play for so long," Son told AFP. "I'm a bit tired, but that's normal. It was my dream to play football when I was a kid and still it's my dream. I love to play for my country."

The 26-year-old has just come off a punishing run of fixtures with Spurs, playing in 13 matches since the beginning of December.

But there were few signs of fatigue against China, as Son won the first-half penalty converted by Hwang Ui-jo and whipped in the corner for Kim Min-jae to head home just after the break.

"I think we deserved to win the game," said Son.

"We dominated from the start to the end. It was my first game this tournament -- clean sheet, 2-0, it's a happy afternoon."

Over the past year, Son has played for his country at the World Cup in Russia and the Asian Games in Jakarta, where he led them to gold, earning him an exemption from South Korea's military service.

### Injury fear

"It's an honour to wear this

red shirt and play for the national team," he said.

"Not everyone gets the chance, and if it's possible I try my best on the pitch always."

South Korea, who have failed to win the Asian Cup since 1960, beat the Philippines and Kyrgyzstan 1-0 in their opening two matches in the United Arab Emirates.

But the addition of Son has energised the 2015 runners-up, who suddenly look a very different proposition.

It will not have done Pochettino's blood pressure any good, however, to see some of the industrial tackles dished out on his Korean star.

Son went down clutching his ankle after a particularly meaty challenge late on, which earned tattooed China defender Zhang Linpeng a yellow card.

Title-chasing Spurs can ill afford another injury blow, having just lost England striker Harry Kane until March with ankle ligament damage.



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SON HEUNG-MIN

## Chelsea agree Higuain loan from Juventus

Reuters | London

**C**helsea have agreed a deal to sign striker Gonzalo Higuain on loan from Juventus until the end of the season, according to reports in the British media.

The Argentina international joined the Italian champions in 2016 but was loaned to AC Milan at the start of the current season where he has scored

eight goals in 22 appearances this term.

Chelsea manager Maurizio Sarri is keen to strengthen his options in attack after dropping misfiring Spain forward Alvaro Morata to the bench and being forced to deploy playmaker Eden Hazard as a 'false nine' in recent games.

Sarri worked with Higuain when he was manager at Napoli and it was under the Italian that the striker scored 36 goals to equal Serie A record for most goals in a season in 2015-16.

Sky Sports reported on Wednesday that the loan deal for Higuain could be extended for another 12 months subject to certain conditions.



Gonzalo Higuain

## ISB storm into school cricket final

TDT | Manama

**T**he Indian School beat Pakistan Urdu School by 5 wickets and stormed in to the final of the CBA - BOC Under 16 School Cricket Championship at the National Stadium ground on Saturday.

Batting first Pakistan Urdu School were restricted to 110 runs for 9 wickets in 20 overs. Abdullah Iqbal top scored for Urdu School with 30 runs. The highlights of the innings were a superb bowling performance by Srivatsav Murali who took a fine hat trick (3 for 22) and

an unbeaten 29 by all rounder Aravind Rajeev. Young Aryan Pande gave a very good bowling support to Srivatsav Murali with 2-19 in 4 overs.

Chasing the target of 111 for victory, Captain Govind Bingly (27) and Anirudh.S.Nair (21) gave a very good start for the Indian School and added 39 runs for the opening wicket. The Indian School has won all the matches in this tournament.

Pakistan School upset Rest of the School by 6 wickets in the other semi final. Batting first Rest of the School could score only 118 for 7 wickets in 20 overs. Open-

er Gautham Chabar top scored with 36 runs and Limon Raton gave a good support with a fine 23 runs. Abdullah Rasheed was the outstanding bowler who took 2 for 9 in 4 overs.

In reply, the Pakistan school reached the target 119 for the loss of 4 wickets in the last over. Zulfiqar Hussain top scored with 38 and Yaseer Mehmood scored a polished 28 runs.

The Indian School will face Pakistan School in the final of the CBA - BOC Under 16 School Cricket championship on Saturday at the Bahrain National Stadium ground at 1 pm.

Son Heung-min