



# Swede penalty downs Korea

Reuters | Nizhny Novgorod, Russia

Sweden won an opening World Cup game for the first time since 1958 with a narrow 1-0 victory over South Korea, but they will need to find their shooting boots if they are to match their two other, trickier opponents in Group F.

After dominating the game but missing a string of chances, the Swedes won a 65th-minute penalty when Kim Min-woo brought down Viktor Claesson in the box. Salvadoran referee Joel Aguilar initially waved the Swedes away, before being called to consult the Video Assistant Referee system.

In the second VAR-award-

ed penalty of the World Cup, Sweden's 33-year-old captain Andreas Granqvist swept the ball low and left of impressive goalkeeper Cho Hyun-woo.

"The VAR took a while but we are very pleased they had it ... I was pretty sure," Granqvist said of the wait.

The result brought wild celebrations from hordes of yellow-clad Swedish fans, fearful their team would draw another blank after failing to score in their last three games.

Sweden had not won an opening World Cup game since 1958, when they were the hosts and eventual runners-up.

The Asians began the game brighter, harrying for the first 15 minutes against an initially sluggish-looking Sweden.

But the Scandinavians quickly found their poise, coping comfortably with Korea's attacks

despite the absence of defender Victor Lindelof through illness.

Swedish coach Janne Andersson said the penalty was "crystal-clear", adding: "I felt the wait for VAR was unnecessary."

## Son V Forsberg

In a game short on finesse, several of Sweden's best chances fell to Marcus Berg, who had one close-range side-foot shot spectacularly saved by Cho off his knee in the 21st minute.

"We played the match the way we intended, but I'm a little unhappy with chances we didn't put away," added Andersson.

Both teams' star players provided their creative drive, Son Heung-min trying to drive Korea forward from the left flank but again failing to have the same impact on the international stage as he does in the Premier League. For Sweden, the pacy Emil Forsberg constantly fed the frontmen, and also curled a shot over from outside the box.

Korea's best chances fell to Koo Ja-cheol, who headed just wide in the second half and Hwang Hee-chan who saw his stoppage-time header also just miss during a late, desperate siege.

The Asians' coach Shin

Tae-yong had no complaints about the penalty, and praised his team's battle with Sweden for aerial superiority.

GROUP F								
	MP	W	D	L	GF	GA	+/-	PTS
Sweden	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	3
Mexico	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	3
South Korea	1	0	0	1	0	1	-1	0
Germany	1	0	0	1	0	1	-1	0

## Croatia's Kalinic sent home after refusing sub role



Croatia's Nikola Kalinic

Reuters | Roshchino, Russia

Croatia striker Nikola Kalinic has been sent home from the World Cup after refusing to come on as a substitute in the team's opening game against Nigeria, coach Zlatko Dalic said yesterday.

"During the Nigeria encounter, Kalinic was warming up and was supposed to come on in the second half," Dalic said in a statement.

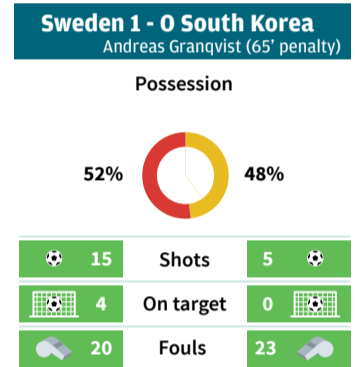
"However, he then stated that he wasn't ready to come on due to a back issue. The same thing happened during the Brazil friendly in England, as well as before the practice session on Sunday.

"I have calmly accepted that, and since I need my players fit and ready to play, I have made this decision," he added.

The Croatian Football Federation (HNS) said that Dalic had taken the decision after consultation with his coaching team.



South Korea's Kim Young-gwon in action with Sweden's Marcus Berg



# Saudi face S. American powerhouse

Reuters | Moscow

After shipping five goals against hosts Russia - the lowest-ranked team in the World Cup, Saudi Arabia could probably do with facing a rival other than South American powerhouse Uruguay and its star forward Luis Suarez.

On Wednesday, the two Group A teams will face off in Rostov-on-Don, with Uruguay hoping to appease some worries after only beating Egypt 1-0.

Bizarrely, two-time World Cup champions Uruguay have never beaten the 'Green Falcons'; Saudi Arabia won a friendly in 2002 while a 2014 friendly ended in a draw.

In another potential source of reassurance for the perennially underachieving Saudis, the



Saudi Arabia's Abdullah Otafy in action with Russia's Aleksandr Golovin

usually ruthless Suarez missed three chances against Egypt on Friday in their opening game.

But Group A favourites Uruguay are still widely expected to

clobber Saudi Arabia, the second-lowest World Cup team in the FIFA rankings at No. 67.

Nevertheless, the South Americans are guarding against

complacency. Asked by a reporter whether beating the Saudis would essentially guarantee passing the group stage, defender Jose Gimenez pushed back.

"Easy, easy. We need to keep a cool head. We know that any game here is very hard, and we need to think of it that way. I think that if Uruguay do things right we have a lot of chances of passing," said Gimenez, who scored the 89th-minute header against Egypt.

Saudi Arabia seem unlikely to emulate the surprisingly strong performances of underdogs Mexico and Switzerland, and the players themselves seem to be preparing the ground for another defeat.



Andreas Granqvist

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