

India, Kuwait split points

SAFF Championship

BENGALURU, June 27: Sunil Chhetri worked his magic but India had to split points with Kuwait after an acrimonious 1-1 draw in their last group match in the SAFF Championship here on Tuesday.

Chhetri had put India on the road to victory with an injury-time strike in the first half but an own goal by Anwar Ali in the added time of the second half spoiled the home side's march. This was also the first goal India conceded in nine matches.

The result meant that India and Kuwait ended up on seven points but the latter topped Group A on a better goal average.

India will play Lebanon in the semi-final while Kuwait will take on either Bangladesh or Maldives.

Already qualified for the semi-final, both India and Kuwait pressed forward from the whistle, giving some entertaining moments.

India organised their attacks through both the wings while Kuwait mainly relied on sorties through the left flank during that passage.

The Blue Tigers nearly went ahead in the sixth minute but Chhetri failed to connect with a cross from Akash Mishra



Sunil Chhetri celebrates his goal during SAFF Championship 2023 match between India and Kuwait at Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru, on Tuesday. (AIFF)

by a whisker. Kuwait too had their own chance when Shadab Al Khaldi's ripper of a shot from just outside the box went inches over the bar in the 20th minute.

But, slowly but surely, India snatched the control of the match and they could have netted the first goal in the 35th

minute but Anwar's header off an Anirudh Thapa corner lacked the desired direction.

India's persistent tries bore fruit in the injury time. Thapa took a rather low flag kick from the right side and Chhetri effected a classy, tumbling volley to beat Kuwait goalkeeper Abdul Rahman, whose desperate dive went in vain.

It was Chhetri's fifth goal of this tournament from three matches and overall 24th goal in 26 SAFF championship matches.

Armed with a 1-0 lead, India went ahead in full steam in the second half but saw their head coach Igor Stimac being sent off with a red card, second time in this tournament.

Stimac engaged in an animated argument with match officials and was eventually flashed a red card in the 81st minute. The Croatian was earlier given marching orders in the match against Pakistan for interrupting their player from taking a throw-in.

But the harsh moments did not end there as India's Rahim Ali and Kuwait's Al Qallaf were sent off.

The melee ensued after Qallaf pushed down India's Sahal Abdul Samad in the 84th minute and Rahim, in turn, pushed the Kuwait player to the ground. After that there was not enough time for either side to force a result. (PTI)

Nepal beat Pak 1-0 to end campaign with win

BENGALURU, June 27: A persistent Nepal ended their SAFF Championship campaign on a bright note, beating Pakistan 1-0 in a Group A match here on Tuesday.

Nepal's Aashish Chaudhary (80th minute) broke the deadlock and ensured that Pakistan went back home winless. Nepal and Pakistan were already out of contention for a semi-final berth

after losing their earlier matches.

The first half was rather tepid with both the teams struggling a bit to find their range and rhythm, although Nepal enjoyed superior possession. The pace picked up in the second half as Nepal and Pakistan went for the jugular. The first clear chance came Nepal's way as a cross from the right wing

found Nawayug Shrestha unmarked but his header sailed over the bar. Nepal intensified their sorties and came close to scoring a goal in the 60th minute. Manish Dangi just had to slot the ball past Yousuf Ijaz Butt but a weak shot was parried away by the Pakistan goalkeeper.

Eight minutes later, Shrestha took a lovely free-kick that curled into the Pakistan goal

but the woodwork denied the Nepal midfielder.

Just as it appeared that the match was heading for a goalless draw, Sanish Shrestha found Aashish inside the box with a through pass. Aashish cleverly pushed the ball under a diving Yousuf to give Nepal a 1-0 lead. Nepal had a few more chances to double the lead but could not find the goal. (PTI)

No timeline yet on Bumrah's return

BENGALURU, June 27: When is Jasprit Bumrah returning to the Indian team? Neither the injured pacer nor the ones working on him have a definitive answer to that.

But the good news is that Bumrah has bowled seven overs in a day at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) nets, a development that will bring smile to the Indian fans looking forward to the 2023 World Cup with optimism.

The schedule for the mega event was released in Mumbai on Tuesday.

Bumrah had undergone surgery for a recurring back niggle in New Zealand in March and since then he has been on the recovery path.

Bumrah has last played for India during the home T20I series against Australia in September, 2022.

So, will he be able to make a comeback during the T20I series against Ireland or in the Asia Cup?

"For an injury of this nature, it is not wise to set any timeline as constant monitoring is necessary. But it can be said that Bumrah is recovering well and he has bowled seven overs at NCA nets. It is a steady increase in his workload from the light workouts and bowling sessions of the initial period.

"He will play a few practice matches (at NCA) next

month, and there will be a close assessment of his fitness then," a source tracking the development said.

Ramji Srinivasan, former strength and conditioning coach of Team India, said extreme care should be taken while bringing back Bumrah.

"He (Bumrah) should not be hurried. Playing practice matches at the NCA is a good step as it will help tune his body to the demands of a match. But he should be made to play in some actual (domestic) matches before bringing him to top level cricket.

"The demands of international cricket are different and the body should be absolutely ready to take that amount of workload. Recovering from stress fracture is a delicate exercise and Bumrah should be allowed maximum recovery time," Ramji further added.

KL Rahul and Shreyas Iyer, who have also been recuperating at NCA, are also progressing as expected, though no specific timeline has been set for their return as well.

Rahul had undergone a thigh surgery in London while Shreyas too went under the knife in London after being troubled by a bulging disc on his lower back. (PTI)

ICC announces World Cup schedule

Ahmedabad to host marquee India-Pakistan game and WC final; Mumbai and Kolkata get semi-finals

MUMBAI, June 27: The world's largest cricket stadium will play host to the big-ticket World Cup group match between India and Pakistan on October 15 and the gargantuan venue in Ahmedabad, which is the largest in the world with a seating capacity of 1,32,000 spectators - 32,000 more than the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG).

The two semi-finals of the

mega event will be played at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium and the Eden Gardens in Kolkata - both iconic venues with a rich legacy - on November 15 and 16 respectively, as per the schedule.

Ringling in the 100-day countdown to the ODI showpiece, the ICC said hosts India will begin their campaign with a mouth-watering clash against Australia on October 8 in Chennai.

With Guwahati among 12 venues picked to host the matches including warm-up games, it's the first time the World Cup is entering the northeast India.

There will be a total of 10 venues - Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Dharamsala, Delhi, Chennai, Lucknow,

Pune, Bengaluru, Mumbai and Kolkata - hosting the matches during the tournament proper.

Guwahati and Thiruvananthapuram in addition to Hyderabad will host the warm-up games from September 29 to October 3.

Twelve hosting associations were called in Mumbai on Monday to discuss the details and finalise the venues before Tuesday's official announcement.

Pakistan had earlier asked for their match against India to be shifted to either Chennai, Bengaluru or Kolkata, but the BCCI and ICC rejected the offer.

There will be 10 teams at this year's World Cup. As hosts, India have qualified

directly, as have Afghanistan, Australia, England, Bangladesh, New Zealand, Pakistan, and South Africa through the 2020-2023 ICC Cricket World Cup Super League.

Two other teams will make it to the World Cup through the World Cup Qualifiers, which is being currently played in Zimbabwe.

Apart from former champions Sri Lanka and the West Indies, the Qualifiers also feature Ireland, Nepal, the Netherlands, Oman, Scotland, the UAE, the USA, and hosts Zimbabwe.

At the World Cup in India, the 10 teams will play each other once in a round-robin league featuring 45 matches. (PTI)

ICC MEN'S CRICKET WORLD CUP INDIA 2023				
FIXTURES				
5 OCTOBER - 19 NOVEMBER 2023				
Thursday, 5 October	ENGLAND	NEW ZEALAND		Ahmedabad
Friday, 6 October	PAKISTAN	QUALIFIER 1		Hyderabad
Saturday, 7 October	BANGLADESH	AFGHANISTAN		Dharamsala
Saturday, 7 October	SOUTH AFRICA	QUALIFIER 2		Delhi
Sunday, 8 October	INDIA	AUSTRALIA		Chennai
Monday, 9 October	NEW ZEALAND	QUALIFIER 1		Hyderabad
Tuesday, 10 October	ENGLAND	BANGLADESH		Dharamsala
Wednesday, 11 October	INDIA	AFGHANISTAN		Delhi
Thursday, 12 October	PAKISTAN	QUALIFIER 2		Hyderabad
Friday, 13 October	AUSTRALIA	SOUTH AFRICA		Lucknow
Saturday, 14 October	ENGLAND	AFGHANISTAN		Delhi
Saturday, 14 October	NEW ZEALAND	BANGLADESH		Chennai
Sunday, 15 October	INDIA	PAKISTAN		Ahmedabad
Monday, 16 October	AUSTRALIA	QUALIFIER 2		Lucknow
Tuesday, 17 October	SOUTH AFRICA	QUALIFIER 1		Dharamsala
Wednesday, 18 October	NEW ZEALAND	AFGHANISTAN		Chennai
Thursday, 19 October	INDIA	BANGLADESH		Pune
Friday, 20 October	AUSTRALIA	PAKISTAN		Bengaluru
Saturday, 21 October	ENGLAND	SOUTH AFRICA		Mumbai
Saturday, 21 October	QUALIFIER 1	QUALIFIER 2		Lucknow
Sunday, 22 October	INDIA	NEW ZEALAND		Dharamsala
Monday, 23 October	PAKISTAN	AFGHANISTAN		Chennai
Tuesday, 24 October	SOUTH AFRICA	BANGLADESH		Mumbai
Wednesday, 25 October	AUSTRALIA	QUALIFIER 1		Delhi
Thursday, 26 October	ENGLAND	QUALIFIER 2		Bengaluru
Friday, 27 October	PAKISTAN	SOUTH AFRICA		Chennai
Saturday, 28 October	QUALIFIER 1	BANGLADESH		Kolkata
Saturday, 28 October	AUSTRALIA	NEW ZEALAND		Dharamsala
Sunday, 29 October	INDIA	ENGLAND		Lucknow
Monday, 30 October	AFGHANISTAN	QUALIFIER 2		Pune
Tuesday, 31 October	PAKISTAN	BANGLADESH		Kolkata
Wednesday, 1 November	NEW ZEALAND	SOUTH AFRICA		Pune
Thursday, 2 November	INDIA	QUALIFIER 2		Mumbai
Friday, 3 November	QUALIFIER 1	AFGHANISTAN		Lucknow
Saturday, 4 November	ENGLAND	AUSTRALIA		Ahmedabad
Saturday, 4 November	NEW ZEALAND	PAKISTAN		Bengaluru
Sunday, 5 November	INDIA	SOUTH AFRICA		Kolkata
Monday, 6 November	BANGLADESH	QUALIFIER 2		Delhi
Tuesday, 7 November	AUSTRALIA	AFGHANISTAN		Mumbai
Wednesday, 8 November	ENGLAND	QUALIFIER 1		Pune
Thursday, 9 November	NEW ZEALAND	QUALIFIER 2		Bengaluru
Friday, 10 November	SOUTH AFRICA	AFGHANISTAN		Ahmedabad
Saturday, 11 November	INDIA	QUALIFIER 1		Bengaluru
Sunday, 12 November	ENGLAND	PAKISTAN		Kolkata
Sunday, 12 November	AUSTRALIA	BANGLADESH		Pune
Wednesday, 15 November	SEMI FINAL 1			Mumbai
Thursday, 16 November	SEMI FINAL 2			Kolkata
SUNDAY, 19 NOVEMBER	FINAL			AHMEDABAD

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