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S. Korea opens World Cup with a bang

Koreans win first Cup game in six tries, Japan settles for tie

YOKOHAMA, Japan (AP) — South Korea was the biggest star on Asia's biggest day at the World Cup.

Playing in its sixth Cup finals, the co-host won for the first time Tuesday when it beat Poland 2-0 in Busan, South Korea.

In a stadium awash in red and ringing with the chants and cheers of their fans, the Korean players put on a soccer display worthy of the world's powerhouses.

Striker Hwang Sun-hong, playing in his fourth World Cup, opened the scoring and Yoo Sang-chul provided the clincher for the team that now poses a major threat to keep the United States from advancing to the second round.

"We struggled for this and finally made it," defender Hong Myung-bo said. "Until today, we had one aim, to win the game against Poland. We set another aim here, to prepare perfectly for the game against the United States. As we have some time from now, we will scrutinize the U.S. and beat them."

The Americans get started Wednesday night (Wednesday morning EDT) against Portugal, although key players Clint Mathis (sore knee) and Claudio Reyna (strained quadriceps) were uncertain participants.

Malls and public squares around South Korea were packed with fans watching the game on giant TV screens. The government ordered a special train to ensure ticketholders from the capital of Seoul did not miss out after flights to Busan were canceled due to fog and high winds in this southern port city.

In Busan, the noise and chanting continued inside and outside Asiad Stadium more than an hour after the Korean squad completed a victory lap. The bulk of the crowd was decked in the "Red Devils" shirts of the national team.

Tuesday wasn't quite as successful for the other co-host, although the Japanese were satisfied with their first World Cup point. They went 0-3 in 1998, but got a thrilling 2-2 tie with Belgium at Saitama.

Japan fell behind 1-0 when Marc Wilmots scored on a scissors kick in the 57th minute. But only two minutes later, the crowd of 55,256 erupted in a leaping sea of blue as Takayuki Suzuki tied it.

When Januchi Inamoto's solo effort in the 67th minute gave the home team the lead, the cheers in Saitama Stadium rose even louder.

Japanese fans banged drums, clapped and chanted "Nippon, Nippon." The national flag, the Hinomaru, was visible in every corner of the ground and huge banners, including one reading, "Welcome to Blue Heaven," fluttered over one stand.

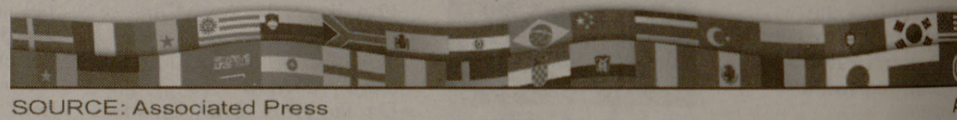
But in the 75th minute, Peter Van Der Heyden escaped his defender on the left side to chip in a shot from the edge of the penalty area.

"We can consider this point as a historic one, because it's the first point Japan have gained in a World Cup," said Japan's coach,

2002 WORLD CUP STANDINGS

Next games - Wednesday, June 5
 Russia vs. Tunisia in Kobe, Japan
 United States vs. Portugal in Suwon, South Korea
 Germany vs. Ireland in Ibaraki, Japan

Group A	W	L	T	GF	GA	Pts	Group E	W	L	T	GF	GA	Pts
Denmark	1	0	0	2	1	3	Germany	1	0	0	8	0	3
Senegal	1	0	0	1	0	3	Cameroon	0	0	1	1	1	1
Uruguay	0	1	0	1	2	0	Ireland	0	0	1	1	1	1
France	0	1	0	0	1	0	Saudi Arabia	0	1	0	0	8	0
Group B	W	L	T	GF	GA	Pts	Group F	W	L	T	GF	GA	Pts
Spain	1	0	0	3	1	3	Argentina	1	0	0	1	0	3
Paraguay	0	0	1	2	2	1	England	0	0	1	1	1	1
South Africa	0	0	1	2	2	1	Sweden	0	0	1	1	1	1
Slovenia	0	1	0	1	3	0	Nigeria	0	1	0	0	1	0
Group C	W	L	T	GF	GA	Pts	Group G	W	L	T	GF	GA	Pts
Costa Rica	1	0	0	2	0	3	Italy	1	0	0	2	0	3
Brazil	1	0	0	2	1	3	Mexico	1	0	0	1	0	3
Turkey	0	1	0	1	2	0	Croatia	0	1	0	0	1	0
China	0	1	0	0	2	0	Ecuador	0	1	0	0	2	0
Group D	W	L	T	GF	GA	Pts	Group H	W	L	T	GF	GA	Pts
South Korea	1	0	0	2	0	3	Belgium	0	0	1	2	2	1
Portugal	0	0	0	0	0	0	Japan	0	0	1	2	2	1
United States	0	0	0	0	0	0	Russia	0	0	0	0	0	0
Poland	0	1	0	0	2	0	Tunisia	0	0	0	0	0	0



SOURCE: Associated Press

Philippe Troussier. "I'm satisfied, because everything is still possible in the next two matches and I think we have a strong chance (to advance)."

China, making its World Cup debut under ex-U.S. coach Bora Milutinovic, lost 2-0 to another of his former teams, Costa Rica. Ronald Gomez and Mauricio Wright scored second-half goals in Gwangju, South Korea.

Costa Rican coach Alexandre Guimarães, who played for Milutinovic in the 1990 World Cup, said it was an honor to coach against his onetime boss.

"I have very strong feelings," Guimarães said. "He's a coach that I admire so much and I learned so much about his feelings about the game. And today I was very happy to play against him."

The Chinese were overmatched, because Milutinovic — who led Mexico (1986), Costa Rica, the United States (1994) and Nigeria (1998) to at least the second round of the World Cup — was not dismayed.

"My players put forth a tremendous effort," he said. "But it wasn't enough."

Asia's fourth team, Saudi Arabia, was routed 8-0 by Germany on Saturday.

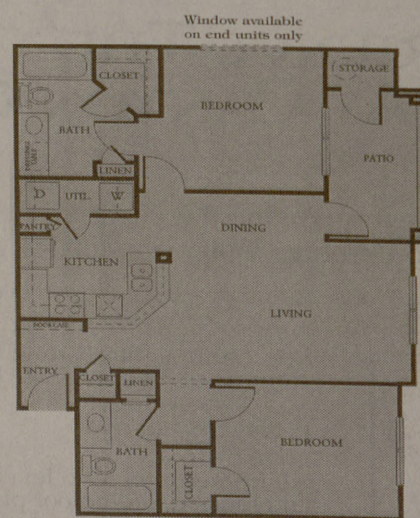
FIFA said Tuesday that Brazil's Rivaldo could face disciplinary action if it is ruled he faked an injury late in the Brazil-Turkey game.

Near the end, Turkey's Hakan Unsal kicked the ball at Rivaldo as the Brazilian star prepared to take a corner kick. The ball struck him in the thigh, but he collapsed holding his leg — and Unsal was issued his second yellow card of the match and ejected.

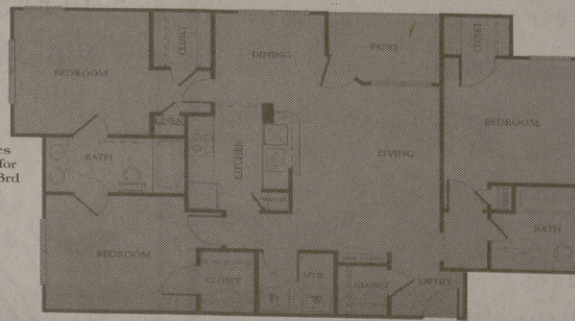
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Curse

Continued from page 3

began to vision a 40-win season and hosting a regional. Three months later, it is clear that the dream was far from reality. This year's team continued the downward spiral of offense for the Aggies, who could not hit the ocean from the beach. A&M finished the season ranked ninth in conference of 10 teams in hitting with a .286 batting average and an anemic 47 home runs.

Outfielder Neal Stephenson led the team in home runs with 12 and was the only player to reach double digits. Compare these numbers to 1999, when six players reached double digits in the HR category.

That kind of production is not going to get the job done in the Big 12, much less in Omaha. On the other hand, The University of Texas was among the league leaders this year, hitting 59 long balls and batting .303 as a team. The Longhorns have nine players batting above .300 while the Aggies have only four.

The class of 2003 may have yet another characteristic to add to their list of "I've nevers" next spring: "I've never seen a bonfire. I've never seen a Big 12 Championship in one of the three major sports, I've never seen Aggie Alley and I've never seen A&M in a regional."

Not making the NCAA playoffs for the third consecutive year is something that head coach Mark Johnson said would be "unacceptable" prior to the season.

What did those words mean? What kind of changes are in store for the 2003 squad? How accepting will Aggie fans be if the curse goes on another year?

While the rest of the Big 12 is passing up the Aggies in numerous categories, one can only wonder if the Gods of Olsen Field are angry at the loss of their beloved Aggie Alley, because they sure have not provided any "Olsen Magic" lately.

Dallas Shipp is a senior journalism major.