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Ton-up Khawaja forces draw in first Test match **PAGE 14**



THE BIG ONE
 FOOTBALL FRIENDLY
 QATAR VS ECUADOR 6.30PM

HE Sheikh Joaan with IOC President in Buenos Aires



Qatar Olympic Committee President His Excellency Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al Thani with International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach and other officials during a meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina for supporting the participation of a refugee team in the Olympic Games. In the 2016 Rio Olympics also, a similar team had competed. The IOC has identified about 50 athletes and would support them to contest in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.



Qatar play host to Ecuador in friendly today at 6:30pm

VAR technology will be used for the match; Felix Sanchez expects a tough encounter against the South Americans

IKOLI VICTOR
 DOHA

WITH less than three months to go for the Asian Cup 2019, 2022 World Cup hosts Qatar are hoping a string of upcoming friendlies will show they're on the right path to a successful campaign in the continent's premier competition for national teams.

Qatar face Ecuador on Friday at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium and travel to Tashkent to take on Uzbekistan on Tuesday.

According to coach Felix Sanchez, "We are working on our plans to be ready for the 2019 AFC Asian Cup. We know we have to have a strong side for that tournament, the Spaniard said.

"We are aware of the importance of our match against Ecuador, we know it will be a very tough and difficult match. The Ecuadorians are dangerous and they are working at the highest level because their intention is to return to the World Cup, which we will celebrate precisely in Qatar."

"They have very good players, some of them play in teams in Europe and Ecuador are a demanding opponent both in individualities and in football as a whole," Sanchez added.

Sanchez has selected 26-players to prosecute the two friendlies, with Hassan Haydos expected to captain Al Annabi. The likes of Akram Afif, Almooz Ali, Pedro Miguel, Abdelkarim Hassan, Boualem Khouaki are part of the Qatar team.

The match against Ecuador will be the third meeting between the two sides. Qatar held the South Americans to a 1-1 draw at Al Sadd stadium on 18 February 1996. A week after the first fixture, Ecuador edged Qa-



Qatar coach Felix Sanchez at a training session with players at the Aspire Academy in Doha on Thursday.



Ecuador coach Hernan Dario Gomez with his players at Al Azizia Hotel in Doha on Thursday.

"We are aware of the importance of our match against Ecuador, we know it will be a very tough and difficult match. The Ecuadorians are dangerous and they are working at the highest level because their intention is to return to the World Cup, which we will celebrate precisely in Qatar," Sanchez said.

tar 2-1. Qatar are riding on the back of some good recent results as they won 3-0 against Palestine in their last match, while Ecuador beat Guatemala 2-0. The South American nation missed out in qualification to Russia 2018 World Cup with their last competitive game against Argentina, falling 3-1 to a Lionel Messi hat-trick.

The Video Assistant Ref-

eree (VAR) will be implemented, "as part of the tests that the Organising Committee of the Qatar World Cup 2022 develops", as reported by Ecuafutbol.

The Ecuadorian team, under Prof. Hernán Darío Gómez, welcomed Joao Plata Cotera on Wednesday, player of the Real Salt Lake in the Major League Soccer of the United States.

Steven Plaza Castillo, the 19-year-old attacker of Independiente del Valle and one of the new faces of the national team is aware of the great responsibility of wearing the tricolor, says he is committed and motivated with a space in the team that will represent Ecuador in the qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup and the Copa America 2019.

Qatar will wear their traditional maroon jersey, while Ecuador will wear blue shirts and blue pants. Adnan Mohammed, a 31-year-old Jordanian is a referee for the match and his assistants are Ahmed Faisal Al Ali and Mohammed Alkalaf.

Al Gharafa hold Al Duhail with late goal in QSL Cup

Muneer heads home the equaliser in stoppage time

IKOLI VICTOR
 DOHA

ABDULGHANI Muneer struck in added time to salvage a point for Al Gharafa as they held Al Duhail to a 1-1 draw in a QSL Cup group match at the Qatar Sports Club Stadium on Thursday.

In the other group matches, Al Kharaitiyat defeated Al Arabi 2-0 with the goals from Majed Aman and Valentin Lazar and Qatar Sports Club and Umm Salal played out a goalless draw to complete the Group A fixtures.

Al Duhail and Umm Salal are level on four points but the league champions stay on top of the standings with a better goals difference.

Pahad Waad had given Duhail the lead in the 17th minute with Youssef El Arabi unselfishly squaring the ball for the 19-year-old Iraqi player to slot in the net. It was a match that was evenly contested as both teams created some chances but failed to utilise them. In the fifth minute of added time, defender Nurad Najji bizarrely chested the ball for a back pass to his goalkeeper but a chasing Diogo Amado headed the ball to rock the crossbar and Abdulghani was in the right place to nod the ball into the empty goal.

Al Kharaitiyat are in third place after picking up their



Youssef El Arabi of Al Duhail vies for the ball with Hassan Waleed of Al Gharafa in a QSL Cup match on Thursday.

first win in scintillating fashion at the Grand Hanad Stadium. Majed's opening goal in the 37th minute was a beauty to watch as the 24-year-old midfielder unleashed a right-footer from 26 yards out to beat goalkeeper Satna Abdul al Abbasi. Three minutes later, the Thunders doubled their lead from the boots of Romanian striker Lazar.

On Saturday, it will be Al Ahli vs Al Saliya (17:35) at the Qatar SC Stadium, Al Sadd vs Al Rayyan (17:35) at Al Duhail Stadium and Al Shahania vs Al Khor (19:45) at Al Arabi Stadium.

Al Sadd and Al Rayyan are the first and second-placed teams, respectively, in Group B. And they lock horns against each other in Saturday's first match that has a simultaneous kick-off with the Al Ahli-Al Saliya fixture.

Al Sadd had defeated Al Shahania 3-0, while Al Rayyan got the better of Al Ahli by the same margin in Round 1.

The last match between Al Shahania and Al Khor is also sure to be fought keenly.

Al Khor are third in the Group B table with three points as they had beaten Al Saliya 2-1 in their opener.

French league boss sees positives in PSG domination in Ligue 1

LONDON: Paris St Germain's domestic dominance has had no negative effect on the business side of French soccer, which is only growing in popularity, the head of the country's professional soccer association said on Thursday. PSG, with Brazilian forward Neymar and French World Cup winner Kylian Mbappe in an expensively-assembled lineup, are already eight points clear of second-placed Lille after nine games. Champions five times in the last six years, the Qatar-owned club have won every match so far with 32 goals for and just six conceded in what now looks like one of the most one-sided leagues in Europe. "PSG is the shop display of our champion-

ship for international development. And also to increase the audience," LFP chief executive Didier Quillot told Reuters at the Leaders Sport Business Summit at Chelsea's Stamford Bridge on Thursday.

"The economic impact of PSG on Ligue 1 is huge in terms of revenue creation and Ligue 1 brand exposure," added the Frenchman.

Quillot saw PSG's pre-eminence as part of a wider European phenomenon and said only England could truly boast a league where fans did not know from the start who would emerge as champions. "In Germany, you know it's going to be Bayern (Munich), Italy, you know from day one it's going to be Juventus.

Spain, it's going to be either Real or Barca. France, PSG," he said. Quillot said television audiences for Ligue 1 were up 25 percent last year and attendances up seven percent.

He said that was "because people like the show, they like star players. PSG is a constellation of stars which people like to see. As of today, PSG's domination does not affect negatively at all my economic matrix."

France's triumph at the World Cup in Russia this year had also boosted the reputation of French football and made it a good time to get involved, added Quillot.

"We do consider that Ligue 1 is the next place to invest for many reasons," he said. (AFP)

Over 100 participants to contest in QSAA Cup

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK
DOHA

MORE than 100 shooters and archers are expected to contest in the Qatar Shooting and Archery Association Cup, which began at the Losail Ranges on Thursday with a pre-event training in 25m Rapid Fire Pistol.

The championship will run through to October 27.

The Qatar Shooting and Archery Association has formed a committee, headed by Secretary-General Majid al Nuaimi, to ensure a smooth organization of the championship.

Other members of the committee are Tournament Director Ali Saeed al Mannai.

Majid al Nuaimi expressed hope that the all the participants are ready for another battle of patience, poise and precision at the Losail Ranges. "Since many of our shooters have been involved in the international events like the Asian Games and World Championships in the recent past, I feel they are in their best shapes and would make the championship a special one through their stellar efforts."



A shooter during training at the Losail Ranges.

"The Losail Ranges are ready and all the preparations have been done in coordination with the technical and training staff to attract a huge turn-out of participants in this annual event," he added.

Nuaimi also stressed on getting some new talent

through the championships, which will prove an ideal platform for the upcoming Arab shooting championships. "The event is likely to unearth some new talent besides helping the shooters get into higher gear ahead of the Arab Championships."

Qatar Manateq Baja to resume with third round action

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK
DOHA

WITH the weather changing fast, the Qatar Manateq Baja series is all set to resume this weekend with the third round.

The championship, organized by the Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF), has attracted 11 drivers in various classes. With the entries closing on Thursday, this number may potentially go up.

In April, the series had two rounds before taking a break. Adel Hussain, who just now ensured a second-place finish in his T2 class in World Cup for Cross-Country Rallies managing a gritty third place in the Rally of Morocco, has been leading the overall classification with 40 points.

Hussain (Nissan Patrol), who won the opening round but was third in the next, was being chased by Ahmed al Shegawi, the new T2 World Cup champion from Saudi Arabia. With two consistent finishes as runner-up, the Nissan Patrol driver was four points ahead of the Qatari driver.

Omani driver Abdullah



QMMF President Abdulrahman al Mannai and other officials with drivers ahead of the second round of Qatar Manateq Baja earlier this year.

Zubair, who won the second round, is in the third spot having collected 25 points in Jeep Wrangler.

Qatar's rally veteran Sheikh Hamad al Thani, has 20 points, getting fifth place in the first two matches against West Indies, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said on Thursday.

The six-leg series will have two rounds in November and December before coming to an end in January 2019.

On Friday, the administrative checks will be carried out at the QMMF headquarters, followed by scrutineering in the evening. On Saturday at 8 am, the ceremonial start will take place and one and a half

hours later, the rally action will start. The prize distribution is scheduled at 6:30 pm.

- Qatar Manateq Baja standings**
1. Adel Hussain (Qatar) 40 points
 2. Ahmed al Shegawi (Saudi Arabia) 36
 3. Abdullah al Zubair (Oman) 25
 4. Sheikh Hamad al Thani (Qatar) 20
 5. Mohammed al Meer (Qatar) 15 pts



Australia's Usman Khawaja defends a ball during the fifth and final day of the first Test cricket match against Pakistan at the Dubai International Stadium in Dubai on Thursday. (AFP)

Ton-up Khawaja forces draw in first Test match

The opener slams his seventh Test hundred, comes out on top in testing situation in Dubai

AFP
DUBAI

OPENER Usman Khawaja hit a fighting hundred to foil Pakistan and help Australia escape with a draw in the first Test in Dubai on Thursday.

The left-hander hit a solid 141 for his seventh Test hundred, while skipper Tim Paine (61 not out) and Travis Head (72) also hit half centuries as Australia finished at 362-8 late in the day with lights coming on at Dubai stadium.

After Khawaja was dismissed with 143 overs left and Yasir Shah quickly removed Mitchell Starc (one) and Peter Siddle (nought), Paine and number ten Nathan Lyon (five not out) survived 12 overs.

Both had some anxious moments before players shook hands with one ball to go in leg-spinner Yasir's final over.

Yasir had shaken the Australian innings with 4-114 but Australia clung on. They have now won two and drawn two of their 16 Tests in Asia since 2012.

Pakistan captain Sarfraz Ahmed was full of praise for Khawaja.

"We hoped to roll them out but we have to give credit to Khawaja," said Sarfraz. "We had an idea that he would understand our tactics but it wasn't easy to bat and despite that he soldiered on, we must give him credit."

Paine admitted it was hard work to save the Test. "It was an extremely tough Test match," said Paine, after his second Test as captain.

"Pakistan played very well but I am proud of our comeback. There was a bit of a collapse but the guys have been working hard over the last few months and I'm happy everything's gone to plan."

Australia's hero was Khawaja, who started the day on 50 not out as Australia resumed on 136-2.

Khawaja and Head added 79 before lunch as Pakistan failed to take a wicket in the first session. The pair eventually put on an invaluable 132 runs for the fourth wicket.

Khawaja, who was born in Pakistan but moved to Australia as a child, batted for eight hours 44 minutes and faced 302 balls before he was sixth man out in the final session. He was trapped leg-before sweeping Yasir.

Khawaja, who hit 11 boundaries, had a top score of 26 in five previous Tests in Asia.

His innings was the second longest in the fourth innings of a Test, behind England's Michael Atherton's 145 minute vig in scoring 165 not out against South Africa in Johannesburg in 1995. It was the highest fourth-innings score by any visiting batsman in Asia, beating New Zealand's Daniel Vettori's 140 made at Colombo against Sri Lanka nine years ago.

Pakistan started the day needing seven wickets to win but nothing worked for Sarfraz, despite multiple bowling changes.

Pakistan could have had Head leg-before off leg-spinner Yasir on 44, but Sarfraz did not review umpire Richard Kettleborough's not out decision. Replays showed the ball was hitting the stumps.

Pakistan were only rewarded when they took the second new ball as soon as it was due and Hafeez trapped Head leg-before with the first ball. Australia wobbled but Khawaja and Paine, who batted for 3 hours and 39 minutes, ensured a draw.

The second Test starts in Abu Dhabi from October 16.

Pakistan opener Imam-ul-Haq will miss the match after he suffered a fractured finger fielding on Thursday.

SCOREBOARD

Pakistan (1st innings):	482	N. Lyon not out:	5
Australia (1st innings):	202	Edwards (b 13, b 4, no 3):	20
Pakistan (2nd innings):	181-6 declared	Total (five eight wickets: 139.5 overs):	382
Australia (2nd innings):	181-6 declared	Wicket and bowler:	1 (S. Marsh)
Australia (1st innings):	49	Fall of wickets:	1-87 (Finch), 2-87 (S. Marsh), 3-87 (M. Marsh), 4-119 (Head), 5-222 (Lalonde/Sarfraz), 6-231 (Khawaja), 7-251 (Starc), 8-333 (Siddle)
Australia (2nd innings):	49	Bowling:	Yasir: 27-56.3, Hafeez: 60-29.1, Starc: 63-14.4, Head: 103-24.6 (no ball), Ashraf: 37-8-9-0.
M. Marsh bow to Abbas:	72	Umpires:	Neil and S. J. Davis
M. Starc bow to Yasir:	13	Referee:	Dean Dalton
Paine not out:	61	Scorekeeper:	Sean Pickett
M. Starc bow to Lyon:	1		
P. Siddle bow to Starc:	1		

Pant gets ODI call-up against West Indies

Kohli returns as skipper

REUTERS
HYDERABAD (INDIA)

WICKETKEEPER-BATSMAN Rishabh Pant could make his one-day international debut for India after he was picked in their 14-man squad for the first two matches against West Indies, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said on Thursday.

INDIA SQUAD

Virat Kohli (captain), Rohit Sharma (vice-captain), Shikhar Dhawan, KL Rahul, Ambati Rayudu, Manish Pandey, Mahendra Singh Dhoni (wicketkeeper), Rishabh Pant, Ravindra Jadeja, Yuvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Shami, Khaleel Ahmed, Shardul Thakur



Rishabh Pant of India: Rewarded for his fine knocks in Test matches

Pant, who has impressed with 114 and 92 in his previous two Test appearances, has replaced an inconsistent Dinesh Karthik as cover for first-choice keeper Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

Karthik could not convert starts into big scores at the Asia Cup and finished with a total of 146 in six matches, missing the opportunity to secure the number four spot India have been looking to fill ahead of the 50-over World Cup next year.

Captain Virat Kohli has returned to the squad after missing the Asia Cup, but quick bowlers Bhuvneshwar Kumar

and Jasprit Bumrah were rested.

After proving his fitness in test matches against England and West Indies, fast bowler Mohammed Shami was added to the one-day squad to bolster the pace attack.

Fast bowlers Deepak Chahar and Siddarth Kaul, who featured in one match each at the Asia Cup, were left out while left-arm quick Khaleel

Ahmed kept his place in the squad.

The five-match ODI series kicks off in Guwahati on October 21 before moving to Visakhapatnam on October 24. Pune, Mumbai and Thiruvananthapuram will host the other three matches.

India lead the test series 1-0 ahead of the second and final match in Hyderabad, which begins on Friday.

Tickets sale of Qatar LGCT finale begins

TRIBUNE NEWS NETWORK
DOHA

QATAR will host the thrilling finale to the season is hosted at Al Shaqab, a world-class equestrian facility and part of the Qatar Foundation. The circuit has consistently seen the highest calibre show jumping in spectacular destinations including Mexico City, Miami Beach, Paris, London, Her Highness Sheikhia Moza bin Nasser, together with children from the Al Shaqab Riding

Academy, presented both the coveted LGCT Championship trophy to Harrie Smolders and also the winning medal to Qatar rider Bassem Hassan Mohammed. His Excellency Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al Thani was also in attendance along with diplomats from around the world.

The impressive, cutting edge venue of Al Shaqab will be a fitting stage for the final adrenaline-fuelled individual and team series battles of 2018. Horse lovers and sports fans

Fans may want to Al Shaqab entrance or visit Q-tickets website <https://www.q-tickets.com/events-for-tickets>.

Local fans will be able to support home city GCL team Doha Fursan Qatar, as well as watch 2017 LGCT Grand Prix of Doha winner Bassem Hassan Mohammed (QAT) fight to take a second consecutive win on home turf. Last year, Her Highness Sheikhia Moza bin Nasser, together with children from the Al Shaqab Riding

Academy, presented both the coveted LGCT Championship trophy to Harrie Smolders and also the winning medal to Qatar rider Bassem Hassan Mohammed. His Excellency Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al Thani was also in attendance along with diplomats from around the world.

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Ticket prices are as follows
Adults - QR 35
Children (7-12 years) - QR15
Children (6 years and below) - FREE

News
in briefReal Madrid says it will sue over
Ronaldo 'rape' saga report

MADRID: Real Madrid said on Thursday it had filed a lawsuit against a Portuguese newspaper that wrote the Spanish giants pushed Cristiano Ronaldo to hush up an alleged rape case. Real said it had taken legal action against Correio da Manhã after the paper reported Wednesday that "Real Madrid pressured him to sign" a non-disclosure accord and pay compensation to his accuser, Kathryn Mayorga.

Hazard says may need Spain move
to win Ballon d'Or

BRUSSELS: Chelsea's Eden Hazard believes he may need to join a Spanish club in order to be crowned the world's best player, but he ruled out a move in the January transfer window. The Belgium international's contract with Chelsea runs until June 2020 and the London club want him to renew his deal. Hazard, however, has said it is his dream to play for Real Madrid.

AC Milan confirm Paqueta deal,
Ibrahimovic a possibility

MILAN: AC Milan have reached agreement to sign rising Brazilian star Lucas Paqueta with Swedish veteran Zlatan Ibrahimovic a possibility to return to Italy, club sporting director Leonardo said on Thursday. The Serie A giants are reported to have agreed a 35 million euro deal with Flamengo in what would be the most expensive signing of a Brazilian player by an Italian club.

Rape allegations based on 'fabricated'
documents, says Ronaldo lawyerJuventus star Ronaldo insists sex
was 'completely consensual'DPA
BERLIN

CRISTIANO Ronaldo's lawyer has said documents concerning rape allegations made against the footballer have been "altered and/or completely fabricated." In a statement posted late on Wednesday in the United States, lawyer Peter S. Christiansen said: "To absolve any doubt, Mr Ronaldo has always maintained, as he does today, that what occurred in 2009 in Las Vegas was consensual in nature."

Kathryn Mayorga, 34, alleges she was raped by the Portuguese player at a Las Vegas hotel in 2009. Her lawyer, Leslie Stovall, is pursuing civil proceedings through a Las Vegas court.

While Ronaldo does not deny making a "mutual agreement and release" with Mayorga in 2010, Christiansen said "his motivations for agreeing to that resolution have been twisted to say the least."

"Far from any admission of guilt or any ulterior motive, Mr Ronaldo was advised to privately resolve the allegations against him in order to avoid the inevitable attempts that are now being made to destroy a reputation that has been built upon hard work, athleticism and honour."



Juventus' striker Cristiano Ronaldo

Christiansen claimed that "in 2010, dozens of entities [including law firms] across many different industries throughout Europe were hacked and their electronic data was stolen and captured by a cybercriminal. "This hacker attempted to

sell this data, and one media outlet has now irresponsibly published the stolen documents," significant portions of which were altered and/or completely fabricated.

Ronaldo dismissed the claim allegation reported in Germany's Spiegel magazine and his representatives threatened the weekly with legal action. He also denied the allegation on Twitter, saying: "My clear conscious [sic] will therefore allow me to await with tranquillity the results of any and all investigations."

Juventus forward Ronaldo, 33, has not been called up to the Portugal squad for Thursday's Nations League fixture away to Poland and Saturday's friendly with Scotland in Glasgow.

Referees, executive charged
in Belgium football scandalAFP
BRUSSELS

A top football referee and a club executive were on Thursday among the first suspects charged in a massive fraud and match-fixing scandal that has engulfed Belgium's elite league. Prosecutors said more than 20 suspects were being investigated a day after hundreds of police carried out 44 house searches across Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Cyprus, Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia. A total of 28 people were arrested on Wednesday in Belgium and another suspect was detained on Thursday morning, the federal prosecutor said.

The judge in charge of the case has also issued European arrest warrants to seek the ex-

tradition of suspects detained abroad, a spokeswoman for the federal prosecutor's office told reporters in Brussels.

The investigation is focused on some of Belgium's best known football agents, including Mogi Bayat, the former manager of Sporting Charleroi, who was arrested in his home on suspected links to crooked transfer deals.

Another agent, Dejan Veljkovic, is suspected of both fraud and match-fixing.

Suspicious of match-fixing emerged during the fraud investigation, with a focus on matches played in the 2017-18 season, prosecutors said.

Veljkovic is alleged to have engineered a match-fixing scheme with a Belgian referee in a failed effort to save club KV

Mechelen from relegation. The Mechelen financial director, Thierry Steemans, has been detained and charged in the match-fixing case, prosecutors said. The searches were carried out at the headquarters of nine football clubs, including Mechelen, Anderlecht, Club Brugge, Genk and Standard Liege.

Club Brugge coach Ivan Leko, whose team is playing in the Champions League this season, was released after questioning on Thursday and charged.

"There is discussion about a part of his salary from a number of years ago and whether that has been correctly reported to the tax authorities," his lawyer Walter Van Steenbrugge told AFP.

Alcacer makes
his point as Spain
crush WalesAFP
CARDIFF, UNITED KINGDOM

PACO Alcacer made his case for a regular place in the Spain team as the on-loan Borussia Dortmund forward struck twice in his country's 4-1 rout of Wales on Thursday.

With Diego Costa injured and Rodrigo on the bench, Alcacer seized his chance to impress Spain boss Luis Enrique in his first international appearance since March 2016.

The 25-year-old maintained his blistering club form to leave the Wales defence in tatters in a one-sided friendly at the Principality Stadium.

Alcacer netted twice in the first half to make it eight goals in 14 Spain appearances, while Sergio Ramos and Marc Bartra were also on target for the visitors. Alcacer has hit seven goals in four matches for Dortmund since joining on loan from Barcelona, where he struggled to break into the team and was rarely picked by Enrique during his time in charge at the Camp Nou.

Enrique might be having a change of heart after this predatory display from Alcacer on an emotional night for Spain, who stood before kick-off for a minute's silence in memory of the victims of the Majorca flooding which has killed 12 people.

The former world and European champions endured a disappointing World Cup, stunningly knocked out in the last 16 by hosts Russia after sacking manager Julen Lopetegui on the eve of the tournament.

But Enrique has won all three of his games since taking charge after the World Cup and this emphatic success was the ideal preparation for Spain before they resume their Nations League campaign against England in Seville on Monday.

Spain beat England 2-1 at Wembley in Enrique's first match, then hammered World Cup finalists Croatia 6-0.

Wales were without Gareth Bale due to a groin injury and the Real Madrid forward's absence rendered them toothless. Burnley's Sam Vokes got a late consolation for Wales, who have lost three of their six matches since Manchester

United legend Ryan Giggs took over as manager.

This was the first meeting between the countries since 1985 when Wales enjoyed a famous victory in a World Cup qualifier.

To mark the occasion, the match was held at the Principality Stadium, which tradition-

Rare chance
to impress

● Alcacer seized his chance to impress Spain boss Luis Enrique in his first international appearance since March 2016. The 25-year-old scored a brace in the one-sided friendly.

ally serves as the home of Welsh rugby, for the first Wales football fixture there since 2011.

Yet it took just eight minutes for Spain to silence over 50,000 Welsh fans.

Wayne Hennessey punched clear to the edge of the area, Jose Gaya quickly worked back it back to Alcacer and he rifled a fine finish into the roof of the net. Moving the ball around with speed and precision, Enrique's team doubled their lead in the 19th minute.

After all their slick approach play, Spain's second goal was actually a prosaic affair as poor marking from Suso's free-kick left Ramos unmarked to loop his header past Hennessey.

It was the perfect response to the Welsh fans who jeered the much-maligned Spain and Real Madrid defender.

With Wales unable to stem the Spanish tide, it was only a matter of time until the relentless visitors increased their lead.

Once again it was Alcacer who did the damage, punishing more sloppy Wales defending as the hosts twice failed to clear before the forward fired home in the 29th minute.

Ramos, David De Gea and Saul Niguez came off at half-time, but Spain were still far superior. Bartra made it four in the 74th minute as the substitute guided his header past the flat-footed Hennessey.



Spain's Paco Alcacer (left) celebrates after scoring a goal during the international friendly against Wales in Cardiff on Thursday. (AFP)

Shanghai Masters



Novak Djokovic celebrates after defeating Marco Cecchinato in their men's singles third round match at the Shanghai Masters tennis tournament on Thursday. (AFP)

Djokovic avenges loss to
Cecchinato, enters last 8

Federer squeezes into the quarter-finals after defeating 28th-ranked Roberto Bautista Agut

DPA
LONDON

NOVAK Djokovic earned a revenge win over Italy's Marco Cecchinato to enter the Shanghai Masters quarter-finals with an eventual 6-4, 6-0 victory in China on Thursday.

The 14-time grand slam champion, who won the Wimbledon and US Open titles this year, had his French Open run stopped by Cecchinato in a shock quarter-final defeat in June.

Meanwhile, defending champion and top seed Roger Federer survived another three-set test after he prevailed 6-3, 2-6, 6-4 against Spain's Roberto Bautista-Agut.

Djokovic is now unbeaten in his last 15 contests and has won 28 of 29 matches since his Roland Garros exit.

But the 31-year-old Serb, who has lifted the Shanghai title three times, did not have an easy start to the rematch.

He threw down his racket in frustration after he missed three chances to break in the third game, before he was pushed behind the baseline by Cecchinato and forced to save two break points to remain level at 2-2.



Roger Federer during the men's singles third round match at the Shanghai Masters tennis tournament on Thursday. (AFP)

Cecchinato eventually wilted with a netted backhand in game seven to fall behind 4-2 and Djokovic's early unsettlement began to ease as he served out the first set after a 45-minute battle.

Djokovic broke Cecchinato twice in the second set, as

a tough three-set match against Daniil Medvedev on Wednesday, broke first to lead 3-1 after Bautista-Agut fired a forehand wide.

The 37-year-old Swiss looked in complete control and ended the first set with a swift serve and volley on the half-hour mark.

However, Bautista-Agut, ranked 28th in the world, battled back in the fourth game of the second set as the 30-year-old disrupted Federer's service to gain a 4-1 lead.

The Spaniard earned a break point after a narrow Hawk-eye decision went his way. He then claimed his first ever set against the 20-time grand slam champion as an error from Federer led to a deuce.

But the Swiss broke through again late in the third set to set up a match-winning serve with a ferocious forehand winner brushing the baseline.

An overwhelling delivery from the world number two wrapped up the victory in one hour and 51 minutes.

Djokovic will meet Kevin Anderson next in another grand slam rematch after he defeated the South African

world number eight in July's Wimbledon final.

Anderson out-played Greek 20-year-old Stefanos Tsitsipas in a 6-4, 7-6 (7-1) result for a place in his 13th Masters Series quarter-final.

Federer goes up against Japan's Kei Nishikori in the last eight after the world number 12 dismissed American Sam Querrey 7-6 (9-7), 6-4.

Earlier, Germany's world number five Alexander Zverev cruised through to the last eight with a comfortable 6-1, 6-4 win over 19-year-old Australian Alex de Minaur.

Zverev will face Britain's Kyle Edmund after the 11th seed conquered Chile's Nicolas Jarry 7-6 (7-5), 6-3 to advance.

Australia's Matthew Ebden will propel himself into the world's top-40 for the first time in his 12-year career after the 30-year-old downed German Peter Gojowczyk 6-2, 6-3.

Ebden, currently ranked at 51, plays Croatia's Borna Coric in Friday's quarter-finals.

World number four Juan Martin del Potro, who has been suffering from flu in China, retired and conceded defeat after Coric won the first set 7-5.