

South Korean manager: Iran game tough



Iran football team posing for a team photo

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Sports Desk

South Korean manager Uli Stielike said friendly match against Iran is important since the team is

Asia's number one.

He said, "Iran is Asia's top team so it is a tough away game, but we will do our best to play our attacking football."

South Korea is scheduled to face Iran at Tehran's Azadi Stadium on November 18. The Taegeuk Warriors, South Korea, will also hold a warm-up match against Jordan in Amman on November 14.

"The Asian Cup is an important tournament and these two games are really important," AP quoted Stielike as saying.

"These are the last friendly games before the [2015] Asian Cup," Stielike added.

Stielike also recalled former Arsenal striker Park Chu-young to the national team for friendlies.

Park, released by Arsenal in May and without a club until he joined Saudi Arabia's Al Shabab in September, has not featured for his country since a disappointing 2014 World Cup when the Asian giant collected a solitary point.

With other strikers Kim Shin-wook and Lee Dong-gook out injured, the friendlies provide Park with the opportunity to show what he can do.

German-born Stielike, appointed in September, is aiming to bring the continental trophy to South Korea for the first time since 1960.

In his first two games in October, the former Real Madrid midfielder steered South Korea to a 2-0 defeat over Paraguay and then a 3-1 loss to Costa Rica.

The three-time champion Iran is gearing up to show a good performance in the upcoming Asian Cup in Australia.

Steered by Carlos Queiroz, Iran is drawn with the UAE, Bahrain and Qatar, in Group C.

South Korea is in Group A of the event along with the host, Kuwait and Oman.

The Asian champion will qualify for the 2017 FIFA Confederations Cup in Russia.

It is the first time that the Asian tournament is hosted out of the continent.

Iran-Iraq classic rivalry

Like many nations that share a border, Iran and Iraq have a shared history that stretches back decades, and it is through football that this rivalry finds its purest expression.

This great West Asian football rivalry kicked off with three matches held in the 1960s. The first two matches in 1962 were held in Tehran as international friendlies, with the first match drawn 1-1 and the second won by Iraq 2-1. In 1969, in a Friendship Cup that included Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Russian club Spartak Moscow and Turkish club Mersin Idman Yurdu, Iran defeated Iraq 2-1, afasiancup.com wrote.

The two nations first met in an Asian Cup in 1972, with Iran winning 3-0 thanks to a hat trick from star striker Hossein Kalani. The great Iranian side, filled with players from Esteghlal, Persepolis and Pas Tehran, was the defending champion of Asia from 1968. Placed in a group with rivals Iraq and host nation Thailand, Iran would go on to win the tournament, with Kalani finishing as the Golden Boot winner.

In all four matches played between the two nations during the 1970s, Iraq couldn't manage a single victory over Iran, only

scoring one solitary goal in a 1-1 draw in a Olympic Games qualifier in 1975. In 1976 Iran won its third straight Asian Cup, and victory was made sweeter by defeating Iraq in the Group Stage. In 1996 and 2000, Iran and Iraq were again drawn in the same group, and they shared the spoils with one win each. Iranian great Ali Daei scored in both matches.

Perhaps the biggest game between the two nations, however, came in 2002 in a World Cup qualifier. For the first time in decades the match was not held at a neutral venue, and 100,000 people packed into Azadi Stadium in Tehran to cheer. In a tense match, "the wizard of Tehran" Ali Karimi netted the winning goal, sending tens of thousands of Iranian fans to celebrate a famous victory.

The last time these two sides met in the 2011 Asian Cup, Iran won 2-1. In the 2015 Asian Cup, Iran and Iraq could meet as early as the quarterfinals in either Sydney or Canberra. With a host of international players, Iran might be considered favorites, although Iraq has a squad brimming with young talent. If it does meet, expect fireworks from one of football's great rivalries.

Dani Sordo signs new Hyundai deal

Hyundai has re-signed Dani Sordo for an expanded World Rally Championship program in 2015 and '16. The 31-year-old Spaniard's exact campaign for next year has not been confirmed but he will tackle at least

driver Thierry Neuville.

"I am delighted to be continuing my partnership with Hyundai Motorsport following a very successful debut season working together," said Sordo.

"It is a great team of dedicated, passionate individuals and I look forward to continuing our learning curve in the competitive world of rallying."

Neuville, who is already committed to a long-term



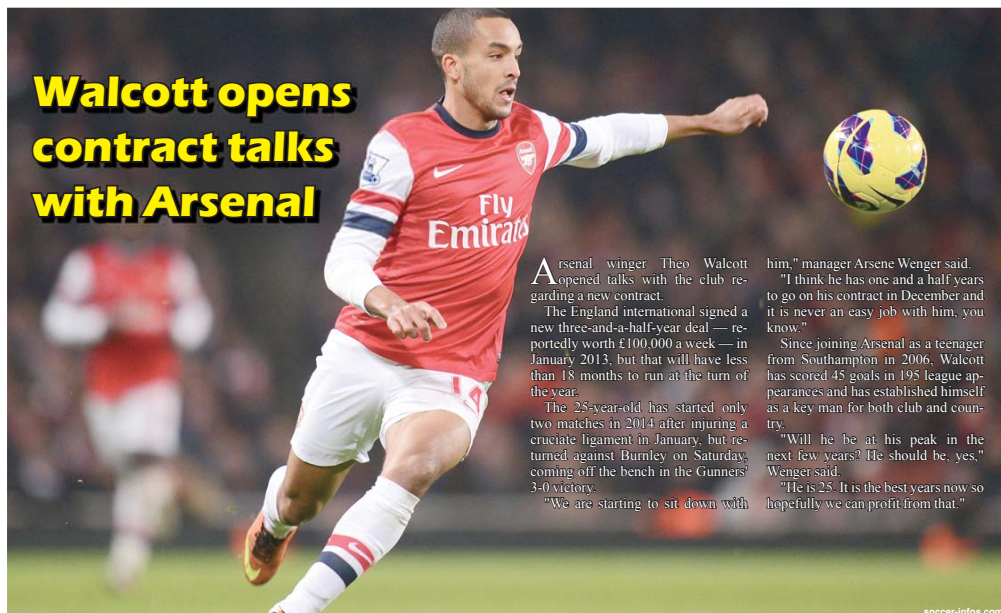
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10 rallies, most likely the European round before contesting the full 2016 campaign, autosport.com reported. Sordo, who has done six WRC rounds with Hyundai this year, will partner the Korean team's number one

"We have shown great promise with the Hyundai i20 WRC this year and we will never forget the one-two result at Rallye Deutschland, which was a truly special moment.

Hyundai deal, has been the team's only full-time driver in 2014, with Sordo, Juho Hanninen, Hayden Paddon, Chris Atkinson and Bryan Bouffier all making appearances in the second and third i20s.

Walcott opens contract talks with Arsenal



Arsenal winger Theo Walcott opened talks with the club regarding a new contract.

The England international signed a new three-and-a-half-year deal — reportedly worth £100,000 a week — in January 2013, but that will have less than 18 months to run at the turn of the year.

The 25-year-old has started only two matches in 2014 after injuring a cruciate ligament in January, but returned against Burnley on Saturday, coming off the bench in the Gunners' 3-0 victory.

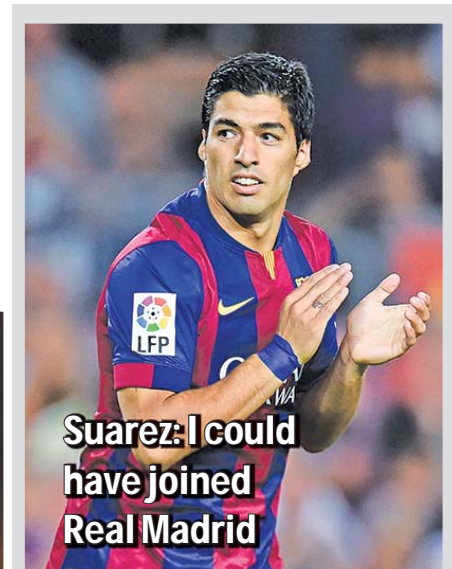
"We are starting to sit down with

him," manager Arsene Wenger said. "I think he has one and a half years to go on his contract in December and it is never an easy job with him, you know."

Since joining Arsenal as a teenager from Southampton in 2006, Walcott has scored 45 goals in 195 league appearances and has established himself as a key man for both club and country.

"Will he be at his peak in the next few years? He should be, yes," Wenger said.

"He is 25. It is the best years now so hopefully we can profit from that."



Suarez: I could have joined Real Madrid

metrouk2.files.wordpress.com

Luis Suarez has admitted that he could have signed for Real Madrid before his big money move to Barcelona this summer.

In an interview with RAC 1's 'Primer Toc' program, the Uruguayan also revealed that he felt his move to Barca from Liverpool was in danger of collapsing following his four-month ban for biting Italy defender Giorgio Chiellini at the World Cup, football-espana.net reported.

"There were conversations with Real Madrid, although at no point did I ever feel close to joining them," said the 27-year-old.

"However, when my agent Pere Guardiola rang to tell me the Barca deal was done I began to cry, be-

cause after what happened with Chiellini I thought it was all going to fall through.

"So I will always be grateful to Barcelona for their confidence in me and it's something I'll appreciate in every game.

"I was very emotional when they signed me and I felt overjoyed."

Suarez has seen his first two games for the Blaugrana end in defeat — against Real Madrid and Celta Vigo — yet acknowledges the criticism Luis Enrique's team have received is something to be expected.

"We all know the demands of a big club and it's normal we get criticized after two defeats, but we can turn things around."

Iran to host Sweden football team next year

The Swedish Football Association announced that Iran will host Sweden in Tehran on March 31, 2015.

Sweden manager Lars Rict said, "Iran is a good team that played the World Cup this summer, and we believe in a good match with a lot of audience," svenskfotboll.se wrote.

Meanwhile, Iran and Zimbabwe football federations reached an agreement to play a friendly match.

Mehdi Mohammad Nabi, the Secretary-General of Iran Football Federation (IFF), said that Zimbabwe accepted to come to Tehran to play a friendly with Iran.

Iran was supposed to play Kenya in Tehran's Azadi Stadium on November 14 but the match was cancelled after the African team demanded \$50,000 in cash and travel costs associated with the trip to Tehran.