Qatar face Bahrain in opener, aim for maiden Arab Cup title

‘THE ARAB CUP IS AN IMPORTANT PREPARATION FOR THE TEAM AHEAD OF THE WORLD CUP’

Qatar coach Felix Sanchez said captain Hamad of Muharraq at a press conference in Doha yesterday.

By Salim Alikhan

With just a year to go for their World Cup debut at home, the Qatar team is undertaking a crucial journey towards the World Cup by taking part in the FIFA Arab Cup – 2021, which begins today. The tournament, which is being held in Qatar for the first time, is seen as a golden opportunity for the team to fine-tune its footballing style, build on its recent Asian Cup triumph and to start preparing very well for the World Cup, which comes at the tail end of a year’s time, and what better than a tournament that brings all Arabs together, “No doubt, it is an opportunity to do it than a tournament of this sort which will give Sanchez enough time to mould the team and improve as a team. But tomorrow the approach each group stage match like it was the first, we have to take one step at a time. We respect the Bahrain team, they are a strong team and have been Gold Cup before in Korea and has some quality players in its ranks. We will give our best to make our fans happy and we are looking forward to take both sides in the tournament,” Sanchez said.

In Europe, Qatar has faced some difficult teams but are able to play against the best over the past few years that they are struggling for form. These matches are part of a concerted effort to prepare the team, and comes at the tail end of a year’s time, and what better than a tournament of this sort which will give Sanchez enough time to mould the team and improve as a team. But tomorrow the approach each group stage match like it was the first, we have to take one step at a time. We respect the Bahrain team, they are a strong team and have been Gold Cup before in Korea and has some quality players in its ranks. We will give our best to make our fans happy and we are looking forward to take both sides in the tournament,” Sanchez said.

Sports

Qatar players during a training session at Aspire Zone yesterday, on the eve of their Arab Cup opener against Bahrain.

Qatar has been drawn in Group A at the FIFA Arab Cup against Gulf rivals Oman and former Asian champions Iraq. The Qatar will kick off their campaign today against Bahrain at the Al Bayt Stadium.

“The tournament is seen as a golden opportunity for the team to fine-tune its footballing style, build on its recent Asian Cup triumph and to start preparing very well for the World Cup,” Sanchez said.

For me, the Arab Cup is not only a great opportunity for Qatar players to prove themselves and competitive footballers, but it will also be an important milestone for all of us as a group of players to improve our preparations to welcome the entire world in just under a year’s time,” Sanchez added.

He said: “Our national team has been preparing very well for the World Cup, and this tournament will be proved that our Asian championship run was a sign of great things to come. We will be facing some difficult teams but Qatar’s attacking style of football will be the hallmark for us on the world stage,” Sanchez said.

Qatar has been drawn in Group A at the FIFA Arab Cup against Gulf rivals Oman and current Asian Gulf-champions Iraq and former Asian champions Iraq. The Qatar will kick off their campaign today against Bahrain at the Al Bayt Stadium.

“With this, there is a tremendous selection of players that have proven over the past few years that they are able to play against the best in the world,” Sanchez added. “These matches are part of a concerted effort to prepare the team, and comes at the tail end of a year’s time, and what better than a tournament of this sort which will give Sanchez enough time to mould the team and improve as a team. But tomorrow the approach each group stage match like it was the first, we have to take one step at a time. We respect the Bahrain team, they are a strong team and have been Gold Cup before in Korea and has some quality players in its ranks. We will give our best to make our fans happy and we are looking forward to take both sides in the tournament,” Sanchez said.

FIFA ARAB CUP 2021

Qatar coach Felix Sanchez fields the team, captain Hassan of Al Rayyan at a press conference in Doha yesterday.

Qatar has participated in the highest events – the Gold Cup, Copa America and FIFA World Cup qualifiers. They are an experienced team and have been exposed to playing different styles of football from all continents. These matches have improved as a team, but tomorrow the approach each group stage match like it was the first, we have to take one step at a time. We respect the Bahrain team, they are a strong team and have been Gold Cup before in Korea and has some quality players in its ranks. We will give our best to make our fans happy and we are looking forward to take both sides in the tournament,” Sanchez said.

Meanwhile, Bahrain coach Sousa is under no illusions about the task that lies ahead but is confident his team can beat the hosts. “The Qatar team will be difficult to play at home and in front of their fans. They have been preparing for Qatari players to go out there and play to their fans. They have been preparing for Qatari players to go out there and play, and come at the tail end of a year’s time, and what better than a tournament of this sort which will give Sanchez enough time to mould the team and improve as a team. But tomorrow the approach each group stage match like it was the first, we have to take one step at a time. We respect the Bahrain team, they are a strong team and have been Gold Cup before in Korea and has some quality players in its ranks. We will give our best to make our fans happy and we are looking forward to take both sides in the tournament,” Sanchez said.

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Focus

Qatari legends optimistic about the nation’s team’s chances at Arab Cup

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Patel faced relentless spin from both ends at Park Stadium. 155-9 with at least eight overs to go and the tourists have just one more Test to force a draw in the World Test Championship final in June.

The onus was on Williamson to save the day. He was unbeaten on 61 in 109 deliveries with four fours and a six. Karunaratne was dismissed for 42 when he played the ball into the off-stump.

The wicket is already offering assistance to spin bowlers, and spinner Permaul, replacing Shannon Gabriel and Roach, the eighth highest wicket-taker for the West Indies, will return for the second and final Test which starts in Chittagong yesterday. England skipper Root plans talks with Rafiq after pacer Afridi picks up 5 wickets

Focus

Pakistan eye win after pacer Afridi picks up 5 wickets

Pakistan's fast bowler Shaheen Afridi claimed 5-31 in his Test debut in the second Test against Bangladesh in Chittagong yesterday, setting the visitors on course for a 43-run victory. Australia, playing on the north day and night, were left on 119-6 with 65 overs to go in their first innings, after they were bowled out for 244 in their first innings. Each hit unbeaten fifty-run stand with Tabish Khan, who was given out when he reached 99, and 82 for Abdullah Shafique and Faheem Ashraf.

New Zealand's bowlers had to settle for a draw against Bangladesh in their second Test match at the Green Park Stadium in Kanpur yesterday. They were all out for 165 in their first innings and the tourists had reached 234-7 in their second innings, needing 11 runs to win. New Zealand's retired left-arm seamer Henry Nicholls led the way with 55, while Liton Das made 53.

England skipper Root plans talks with Rafiq after pacer Afridi picks up 5 wickets

Oceans ahead: All and Afridi each took four wickets, Afridi's a commanding performance in the second Test against Bangladesh in Chittagong yesterday, setting the visitors on course for a 43-run victory. Australia, playing on the north day and night, were left on 119-6 with 65 overs to go in their first innings, after they were bowled out for 244 in their first innings. Each hit unbeaten fifty-run stand with Tabish Khan, who was given out when he reached 99, and 82 for Abdullah Shafique and Faheem Ashraf.
HE Hassan Al-Thawadi outlines the legacy he wants the first FIFA World Cup in the Middle East and Arab world to deliver

HEINZ ALBERNữ Secretary-General of the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, spoke at the Leaders West conference.

“T he power of hosting the first FIFA World Cup in the Middle East and Arab world will be felt across all sectors of society, for the benefit of the region and the world,” he said.

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Iraq, who face Oman today in their opening match, have won the Arab Cup four times.

**By Sports Reporter**

Iraq - the most successful team in the Arab Cup - is back under the new coach Zeljko Petkovic, who took the job this week, after the national team under coach Tarek Alkabri resigned after failing to secure a single win in his three months in charge, made an interesting call by saying his team is not at Qatar on holidays.

“Everyone knows in which circumstances I have taken charge of the team and that we have been without the top players for the last two years. We are not at Qatar on holidays, we are in a transitional period as those players are away on club duty. As such, I have to prepare for the World Cup,”Petkovic said yesterday, while addressing the media persons on the eve of their first group match against Oman at the Al Janoub Stadium.

The Iraqi team played a total of four matches in the tournament, of which they won two, lost one and one drew. The Iraqi players, coaches and management were happy to retain the cup.

Iraq coach Zeljko Petkovic and midfielders Amar Afif and Hadi Al-Hosani during a press conference yesterday.

**SQUADS**

Iraq: Abdurrahman Nazmi; Ali Abbas; Mohsin al-Khaldi; Mohsin al-Khaldi; Ali; Sherko Kareem; Ibrahim Bayesh; Ayham; Muntadher Mohamed; Mohamed Maytham Jabbar; Amjed Attwan; Ahmed Farhan; Ahmed Alaa Abbas; Ali Yaseen; Sajjad Jasim; Alaa Abbas; Ali Yaseen; Sajjad Jasim; Fazari; Mohamed al-Ghafri. 

SQUADS

Oman: Malik al-Ahmar; Ali Yaseen; Amjad Alnasir; Ahmed Farhan; Ahmed Farhan; Ahmad al-Khalidi; Maytham Jabbar; Aamir; Hadi al-Hosani; Fahmi Durbin; Arshad al-Alawi; al-Hajri; Mataz Saleh; Issam al-Sabhi; Juma al-Habsi; Ahmed al-Khamisi; Khalid al-Braiki; Amjad Fawaz; Khalid al-Braiki; Fazari; Mohamed al-Ghafri.

**FOCUS**

Qatar Airways named airline partner of FIFA Arab Cup

The first all-Arab tournament, which will be held in Qatar this January, has attracted a host of other action-packed events, all of which will be running out at Salt Lake City Stadium. Among them, they will be hoping for further entertainment from the fans who will be watching in the days ahead.

The age difference between the oldest players and the youngest will be in 25 years. Tariq Salman, who was the youngest player in the 1998 Arab Cup, was only 21 years old then, while they will be hoping for further entertainment from the fans who will be watching in the days ahead.

Football fans in the Arab world are looking forward to the FIF A Arab Cup, which is set to contest the opening round of the tournament. The first all-Arab tournament, which will be held in Qatar this January, has attracted a host of other action-packed events, all of which will be running out at Salt Lake City Stadium.

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By Sports Reporter

Iraq today began their Arab Cup campaign with a 2-0 win over Oman, thanks to goals from Raahim as well as skipper Alaa Abdul-Zahra.

Iraq is in a transitional phase, younger players need to be added, the Iraqi coach says.