



AFC
U23
CHAMPIONSHIP
THAILAND 2020

TECHNICAL REPORT



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THAILAND 2020

FOREWORD FROM AFC PRESIDENT

Dear friends

I am pleased to present the AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020 Technical Report which provided the platform, not only for the stars of the future, but also the gateway to the Olympic Games which are scheduled for Tokyo in 2021 following the postponement caused by the global Covid-19 pandemic.

This tournament, as always, delivered some outstanding performances and some unexpected heroes - as well as a first-time winner in Korea Republic. They join hosts Japan, runners-up Saudi Arabia and third-placed Australia in qualifying for Tokyo.

During the tournament, there were many moments to remember, and the technical aspects have been captured in this report by our Technical Study Group. There is also a reflection on the exceptional contribution of the match officials - both on the field and in the VAR control centre.

Once again, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) embraced the advanced technology as the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) system was successfully employed at this tournament - following its introduction from the Quarter-Final stage of the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019.

It is another example of how the AFC is developing its competitions each year and that they now stand proudly among the best in world football. Our ambition was to deliver top class competitions and we do that on an annual basis.

Our thanks go to the Football Association of Thailand (FA Thailand) for providing four top-class stadiums that allowed the Continent's best young players to demonstrate their skills. The FA Thailand has been a consistently generous host to the AFC's tournaments.

And finally, a big thank you to all the AFC's commercial partners, broadcasters, media and, of course, the valued spectators who support Asian football so loyally and in ever-growing numbers. This tournament once again set new levels of engagement.

I congratulate all those who have contributed to this comprehensive report and I am sure it will be useful as our teams prepare for not only Tokyo but also future U23 events.



Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa
AFC President



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TOURNAMENT OVERVIEW



GROUP STAGE



GROUP A



Australia's win over Thailand ultimately helped the Olyroos finish first in Group A ahead of the host nation. The duo edged out Iraq - who recorded three successive draws - for a place in the Quarter-finals, while Bahrain finished fourth.

Group A burst into life on Matchday One when a brace apiece from Suphanat Mueanta and substitute Jaroensak Wonggorn saw Thailand breeze to a morale-boosting 5-0 win over Bahrain.

Australia, meanwhile, began their campaign with a 1-1 draw against Iraq, before going on to beat Thailand at Bangkok's iconic Rajamangala Stadium. After falling behind due to Anon Amornlerdsak's 24th-minute effort, the Australians bounced back in style with two goals from Perth Glory forward Nicholas D'Agostino to secure a vital 2-1 success.

Iraq's Matchday Two encounter with Bahrain proved no less dramatic, with the West Asian nations being forced to settle for a share of the spoils following a pulsating 2-2 draw at Thammasat Stadium.

Ahead through Hashim Sayed Isa's effort on the stroke of half-time, Bahrain were pegged back by Amir Al Ammari's equaliser before Mohamed Marhoon struck with four minutes remaining to seemingly hand the Bahrainis a hard-fought victory. However, Mohammed Qasim found the target two minutes into stoppage time to earn Iraq a point.

All four teams arrived for Matchday Three's simultaneous kick-offs harbouring realistic ambitions of progressing to the knockout phase, although it was to be Thailand who would steal a march on their group rivals when Jaroensak fired home from the spot to give his side an early lead against Iraq.

Needing a win to guarantee their progress, Iraq responded four minutes into the second half courtesy of Qasim's strike from close-range, but it was to no avail as Thailand duly held on to record a 1-1 draw and secure the point they needed to qualify for the next round.

Elsewhere, Australia had gone into the final round of fixtures occupying top spot and only needing to avoid defeat to ensure their place in the last eight. Graham Arnold's charges duly delivered, and a Ramy Najjarine goal in a 1-1 draw with Bahrain proved enough for them to go through.



GROUP B



When the draw for the AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020 was conducted, Group B - containing former champions Japan alongside Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Syria - looked certain to be among the most dramatic and keenly contested of the tournament. It didn't disappoint.

Saudi Arabia, winners of the most recent edition of the AFC U-19 Championship in Indonesia in 2018 and runners-up in the edition before, opened their campaign against a Japanese side that, while shorn of most of the country's Europe-based stars, still bristled with talent.

Ayman Al Khulaif gave Saad Al Shehri's side the lead only for Ryotaro Meshino's deflected effort to level the scores, but the Saudis took the points thanks to Abdulrahman Ghareeb's late penalty.

Qatar's 2-2 draw with Syria - secured thanks to a dramatic injury time equaliser from Syria's Alaa Aldin Dali - meant the group was already taking shape after the opening round of matches, and in the second phase the first shock of the tournament occurred as Japan were bundled out.

Needing to pick up at least a point to stay alive in the competition against Syria following that opening day defeat, another late goal from Dali - this time in the 88th minute - condemned the Japanese to a second straight defeat.

That reverse, coupled with the scoreless draw between Qatar and Saudi Arabia in the day's other game, meant the 2016 champions had no way of securing a place in the knockout rounds and were already booking their tickets back to Tokyo.

In the final round of matches, Qatar needed to find a way past the already-eliminated Japanese to secure their place in the Quarter-finals, while Saudi Arabia had to avoid defeat against the Syrians.

Félix Sánchez's side could only pick up a point with a 1-1 draw against a Japanese side that played the second half with 10 men following Ao Tanaka's sending off in the first-half of injury time.

And that meant both Saudi Arabia and Syria advanced to the next phase despite Al Shehri's side securing a 1-0 win in their meeting at Thammasat Stadium thanks to Feras Al Birakan's solitary goal 10 minutes from time.

GROUP C



Korea Republic won all three matches to advance to the Knockout Stage in style, while Uzbekistan and Islamic Republic of Iran's battle for second place went all the way to the wire in Group C.

Uzbekistan ultimately joined the Koreans in the last eight on goal difference, but only after a nail-biting Matchday Three kept the identity of the group runners-up a mystery.

Featuring defending champions Uzbekistan, consistent Olympic qualifiers Korea Republic and two of Asia's major footballing nations - IR Iran and China PR - the group was labelled one of the competition's toughest when the draw was announced.

It lived up to its billing, producing a competitive intensity that stood in stark contrast to the laid-back location of Songkhla, which served as the group's home for five of six matches.

Uzbekistan took a half-time lead before holding off a wasteful IR Iran as the group's opening match finished in an entertaining 1-1 draw, before Korea Republic took pole position with a 1-0 win over China PR, thanks to substitute Lee Dong-jun's last-gasp goal.

The events of Matchday One would set the tone for the matches to follow, with a number of early habits continuing throughout the life of the group.

For Korea Republic, that meant becoming habitual winners, prevailing 2-1 against IR Iran

to seal their place in the Quarter-finals a game early.

Lightning also struck twice for Uzbekistan, with central defender and team captain Islom Kobilov putting them ahead from the penalty spot for the second consecutive match, as a Chinese side blunted by a tournament-ending injury to star striker Zhang Yuning fell out of contention with a 2-0 defeat.

Those results set the stage for a gripping final day of action, as Uzbekistan and IR Iran fought to keep their Olympic dream alive in simultaneous fixtures played on opposite sides of the country.

Uzbekistan needed only a draw against Korea Republic to confirm their place in the Knockout Stage, but a 2-1 defeat left them sweating on news from Songkhla, where IR Iran required a convincing win against China PR.

While Hamid Estili's side produced enough chances to achieve precisely that, Omid Noorafkan's 87th-minute penalty kick was IR Iran's only goal from 25 shots, leaving Team Melli Omid eliminated by a single-goal margin, and extending an Olympic qualification drought dating back to 1976.

GROUP D



The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Jordan strolled to the Quarter-finals unbeaten, sealing first and second places in Group D respectively. Meanwhile, 2018 runners-up Vietnam finished bottom of the group after failing to register any wins, and DPR Korea had already been eliminated by the time they got their sole win to finish third.

With the runners-up tag from the previous edition and a generation of talented players led by Nguyen Quang Hai and Nguyen Tien Linh, Vietnam went into the 2020 tournament as one of the title contenders, but by the time their third group game arrived, their fate was already out of their hands.

There were glimpses of quality from Park Hang-seo's men as they were held to a goalless draw on the opening matchday of the group, but it was Jordan who scored the first goal and win in Buriram, defeating DPR Korea 2-1 with goals from Mohammed Bani Atieh and Omar Hani. The Koreans got a late consolation from Ryang Hyon Ju.

The UAE recorded a second consecutive clean sheet and got off the mark on Matchday Two. First-half goals from Al Jazira duo Khalifa Al Hammadi and Zayed Al Ameri meant the Quarter-finals were a step closer for coach Maciej Skorza's men and early elimination for DPR Korea.

Meanwhile, Vietnam's attacking woes continued as they failed to score for a second

time in a row, settling for a 0-0 draw against Jordan. The combination of results left UAE and Jordan in need of a score draw when they faced each other on the last matchday of the group to progress together to the next round.

After a 196-minute drought, Tien Linh finally broke Vietnam's duck, but his early strike was rendered meaningless as goalkeeper Bui Tien Dung failed to deal with Kang Kuk Chol's free-kick, sending the ball into his own net, and Ri Chung Gyu converted from the spot in the 90th minute to earn DPR Korea a 2-1 victory and send the pre-tournament favourites packing.

Simultaneously at Buriram Stadium, Al Ameri tapped-in from point-blank following a corner-kick for his second goal of the campaign and looked like earning the UAE the three points, but left-back Ihab Ali snuck behind the Emirati defence and slotted home a late equaliser, confirming both sides' progression to the last eight.

QUARTER-FINALS



QUARTER-FINALS



AUSTRALIA 1-0 SYRIA

(After extra time)

Substitute Al Hassan Toure's goal in the 101st minute of a closely-fought encounter saw Australia qualify for the Semi-finals - and ensure the nation's best-ever finish at the tournament - on a night when the Olyroos dug deep to overcome a valiant Syrian side.

After a bright and breezy start, Australia's Ramy Najjarine curled a third-minute effort narrowly wide of the target, before Syria's first genuine foray into opposition territory resulted in Mohamad Al Barri having his shot blocked by the right leg of onrushing Australia goalkeeper Tom Glover.

By way of contrast to the relative cut and thrust of the first period, chances were few and far between after the break, Glover's save from a fierce Barakat strike the only noteworthy action as the game inextricably moved towards extra-time.

After Mohamad Yazan Ourabi reacted superbly to repel Trent Buhagiar's close-range effort, Australia took the lead. Aiden O'Neill's pinpoint pass found Toure, who expertly prodded the ball beyond Ourabi and into the net to send Graham Arnold's charges through to the Semi-finals.



QUARTER-FINALS



SAUDI ARABIA 1-0 THAILAND

Hosts Thailand finally saw their run at the AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020 come to an end as Saudi Arabia squeezed past Akira Nishino's side to advance to the Semi-finals.

Thailand went into the game at Thammasat Stadium having taken the runners-up spot in Group A to make it into the knockout rounds of the competition for the first time ever, and there was no sense that the War Elephants were out of their depth.

Suphanat Mueanta hit the post with a wicked curling shot that gave Saudi Arabia goalkeeper Mohammed Al Yami no chance as the Thais made a strong start. However, as the game wore on, the Saudis grew into the game.

Nothing separated the teams until the 70th minute, when, after Abdullah Al Hamdan was fouled just inside the area, the Al Shabab striker stepped up to stroke his penalty home and take Saad Al Shehri's side through, simultaneously breaking Thai hearts.



QUARTER-FINALS



KOREA REPUBLIC 2-1 JORDAN

Korea Republic registered a fourth successive victory at Thailand 2020 thanks to a dramatic 2-1 win over Jordan that propelled them into the Semi-finals.

Despite a late Jordan rally, Lee Dong-gyeong's last gasp free-kick helped the Koreans move to within touching distance of what would be a first-ever Continental title at this level.

Korea Republic's early dominance was rewarded on 16 minutes when, following a neatly worked free-kick, Cho Gue-sung headed home.

Kim Dae-won's stinging drive nearly made it two for the East Asians moments later, as half-time approached, before Cho inexplicably fired over the bar from only six yards.

Jordan adopted a more positive approach immediately after the break, but it was Korea Republic who continued to look the most threatening with Kim Jin-gyu's 52nd minute free-kick crashing against an upright.

Remarkably though, Jordan pulled themselves level with 15 minutes remaining when Yazan Al Naimat unleashed a terrific drive into the far corner.

However, Korea Republic substitute Lee duly stepped up to seal his side's victory with the very last kick of the game.



QUARTER-FINALS



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
1-5
UZBEKISTAN

The UAE made a flying start to their Quarter-final meeting with Uzbekistan at Rajamangala Stadium, but in the end, it was Ljubinko Drulovic's side who came out on top and with a place in the last four.

Zayed Alameri gave Maciej Skorza's side the lead after 13 minutes after Uzbek goalkeeper Abduvakhid Nematov had already denied Khalfan Alhammedi, although the UAE were only able to hold on to their advantage for three minutes.

Ilkhom Alijanov's long range strike levelled the scores before captain Islom Kobilov scored from the penalty spot to give the Central Asians the lead for the first time, with just 26 minutes on the clock.

Oybek Bozorov's dipping, curling effort from long range doubled Uzbekistan's lead four minutes before half time as Drulovic's side went into the break in total control.

And while the UAE tried to summon up the energy to fight back, Jasurbek Yakhshiboev's goal five minutes from time killed the game before Nurillo Tukhtasinov's injury-time effort put an emphatic seal on a dominant display from the defending champions.



SEMI-FINALS



SEMI-FINALS

SAUDI ARABIA 1-0 UZBEKISTAN

On a night of high drama at Bangkok's Rajamangala Stadium, Nasser Al Omran's deflected shot helped Saudi Arabia beat Uzbekistan 1-0 to claim a place in the Final, and, in the process, assure their participation at the Tokyo Olympic Games.

Despite their eventual capitulation, defending champions Uzbekistan were quickly into their stride as they looked the more threatening of the two sides in the opening moments.

Indeed, Bobir Abdixolikov squandered a glorious chance to hand Uzbekistan the lead on 12 minutes, as the forward miscued his attempt with only Mohammed Al Yami to beat.

Moments later, Al Hamdan dragged a shot wide, before Abdixolikov somehow failed to convert from close range following a defensive lapse between Al Yami and defender Saud Abdulhamid.

Despite the high stakes, both teams continued to adopt a positive approach after the break, with midfielder Abdulrahman Ghareeb blazing over when well-placed and Al Yami saving superbly to deny Abdixolikov.

With caution replacing the initial verve, Ali Al Hassan's drilled effort from distance proved a rare highlight as, with neither nation willing to give an inch, the match moved inextricably towards 30 additional minutes.

However, with three minutes remaining, Saudi Arabia went ahead. Substitute Al Omran unleashed a powerful effort that deflected off Al Hamdan and into the net, securing his side's place in the Final.



SEMI-FINALS

AUSTRALIA 0-2 KOREA REPUBLIC

Second-half goals from Kim Dae-won and Lee Dong-gyeong secured Korea Republic a place in the AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020 Final and a berth at the Tokyo Olympic Games as Kim Hak-bum's side handed Australia a 2-0 defeat.

The Koreans put on a dominant display to outplay the Olyroos and ensure the country continued their remarkable run of qualification for the Olympic Games, which remains unbroken since Seoul hosted the event in 1988.

The win was no less than the Koreans deserved against an Australian side that was rarely granted a sight of goal throughout the 90 minutes.

Um Won-sang had fired wide and Kang Yoon-seong could only find the arms of Thomas Glover in the first quarter of the game before Oh Se-hun finally beat the goalkeeper, dropping off the defence to unleash a shot on the turn that crashed against the post.

Korea Republic cranked up the pressure after the interval, with Jeong Tae-wook hitting the woodwork with his header as Kim Hak-bum's side edged closer and closer to a breakthrough.

The opening goal finally came as a neat one-two, with Lee Dong-jun allowing Lee You-hyeon to find the space to hit a drive that again came back off the woodwork but, with Glover stranded, Kim Dae-won stroked the ball home to give Korea Republic the lead.

Twenty minutes later, the Taeguk Warriors doubled their lead when Lee Dong-gyeong picked up possession on the edge of the area after a commanding header by Won Du-jae and his strike beat Glover, crossing the line via the inside of the post.



3rd / 4th PLACE PLAY-OFF





AUSTRALIA 1-0 UZBEKISTAN

Australia claimed third place at the AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020 and the final berth at the Tokyo Olympic Games as Nicholas D'Agostino's solo effort two minutes into the second half earned the Olyroos a 1-0 win over 10-man Uzbekistan.

D'Agostino's strike at the end of a slaloming run gave Australia the lead, and the nation's first appearance at the Olympics since 2008 was effectively confirmed when Oybek Bozorov was sent off with little over half an hour remaining.

Australia had struggled to make an impression in the opening 45 minutes of the game and it was the Uzbeks who fashioned the more likely opportunities in the first half.

Jasurbek Yakhshiboev squandered a pair of chances to put his side in front, heading at Thomas Glover from eight yards before failing to put enough bend on his shot from the edge

of the area following a break that left the Australian defence chasing back. Nurillo Tukhtasinov also shot high over the bar from close range.

Uzbekistan were to rue those misses as D'Agostino showed off his ability to put Australia in front. Picking the ball up 35 yards from goal, the forward drove past two opposing defenders before giving himself room to side foot the ball into the bottom corner.

Uzbekistan's hopes of finding a way back into the game were dealt a decisive blow just before the hour mark when, six minutes after coming off the bench, substitute Bozorov was shown a straight red card by referee Mohammed Hassan for a dangerous challenge on Zachary Duncan.





TOURNAMENT OVERVIEW

CHAMPIONSHIP AND 2020

THE FINAL

KOREA REPUBLIC **1-0** SAUDI ARABIA

Korea Republic claimed the AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020 title following a dramatic 1-0 extra-time win over Saudi Arabia.

Jeong Tae-wook's goal in the 113th minute of a closely-fought encounter helped Korea Republic seal their first-ever Continental crown at this level, one that comes four years after they dramatically lost to Japan in the Final of the competition's 2016 edition.

For Saudi Arabia, however, the result brought late heartbreak following a campaign in which they had excelled.

Having already assured their places at the Tokyo Olympic Games, both sides adopted a positive approach at the start of the encounter. However, there was to be little in the way of goalmouth action until Jeong Woo-yeong's 20th minute effort was superbly saved by Mohammed Al Yami.

TOURNAMENT OVERVIEW

After Abdullah Al Hamdan had briefly threatened to open the scoring at the other end, the Koreans went close once again, this time Oh Se-hun exchanging passes with Kim Jin-gyu before firing narrowly past the post from the edge of the area.

As half-time approached, Jeong Woo-yeong spurned a glorious opportunity to put his side ahead, the midfielder blasting Kim Jin-ya's cross over the bar when well-placed to leave the teams level at the break.

Following the restart, and with Saudi Arabia defending resolutely, Korea Republic continued to push for the opener, as first substitute Lee Dong-jun was denied by Al Yami's outstretched right arm and then Kim Jin-ya dragged his shot wide of the target on 62 minutes.

In truth, genuine chances were few and far between after those near misses, with Al Yami's excellent reflex stop from Lee Dong-jun and Abdulrahman Ghareeb's late drive from distance the last noteworthy moments as the game moved towards 30 minutes of additional time.

After Oh had headed over from a corner and a tame Lee Dong-gyeong effort was easily gathered by Al Yami, Korea Republic went ahead, Lee Dong-gyeong's pinpoint free-kick finding Jeong Tae-wook who headed home.

Try as they may, Saudi Arabia were unable to find an equaliser in what precious little time remained, leaving Korea Republic to celebrate at the final whistle.



TECHNICAL TOPICS

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AN UNDERScoreD MESSAGE

“Sometimes in football you have to score goals.” The comment was made, tongue-in-cheek one would imagine, by Thierry Henry – a player who ran in 335 goals for his clubs and the senior team in France. The wisdom of his remark, however, was underscored by a tournament that served as an excuse to blow the dust off old clichés about ‘football being all about scoring goals’. The pattern of goalscoring in Thailand is reviewed elsewhere in this report. But, rather than how the goals were scored, it was the topic of why they were not scored that provoked debate among the AFC technical observers at the tournament.

Firstly, the facts. The 32 matches in Thailand produced 69 goals at an average of 2.16 per game. Two fixtures (Thailand 5 Bahrain 0; UAE 1 Uzbekistan 5) accounted for 11 of the total. The other 30 averaged 1.93. Overall, the tournament yielded one goal per 43 minutes of play.

This signified a 16% decline in comparison with the 2018 tournament – from 82 to 69. And, if anybody at the debating table suggests “with Olympic places at stake, there were more motives for caution”, remind them that the finals in Doha in 2016, with Rio 2016 Olympic Games’ places at stake, produced 103. The tournament in Thailand registered a significant 33% downturn on that figure.

For the sake of comparison, the AFC Asian Cup 2019 produced an average of 2.55 per

game; the 2018 FIFA World Cup 2.64; the 2019 AFC Champions League 2.81; the European equivalent 2.93; and, if we turn to age-limit competitions, it might be worth mentioning the 3.71 at Europe’s U-21 finals in 2019. The exceptionally meagre harvest in Thailand encouraged the technical observers to discuss a number of inter-related topics.

THE GLASS IS HALF-FULL

Those who are determined to focus on positives would immediately see the goal drought as a symptom of good defending.

“You need to have a good defence rather than a good attack,” said Saudi Arabia coach

Saad Al Shehri. “It’s important to have good defensive organisation.”

His team certainly highlighted both sides of this particular coin. On the attacking side, the silver medallists scored five goals in their six matches – two of them penalties and one a somewhat bizarre deflection. But their defensive mechanisms were so finely tuned that they conceded only two goals in their 570 minutes on the field of play. Korea Republic coach Kim Hak-Bum admitted after the Final: “We anticipated that Saudi Arabia would take us all the way to penalties because they had a perfect defence.”

The Saudi defence was based on a solid, disciplined back four marshalled by Al



Tambakti, who, in the words of László Szalai, captaining the team of technical observers, was “practically impossible to get past”. The line was protected by a twin screen of Al-Hassan and Ali, while the team’s fast, skilful, indefatigable wide midfielders were ready to sprint back and exert reverse pressing. The side was prepared to hold a high line and press early with a group of five or six players prepared to press the ball, tackle aggressively and sometimes use the referee’s whistle to buy time. If the advanced pressure was unsuccessful, there was rapid retreat into a deeper block.

“They and the other successful teams such as Korea Republic and Uzbekistan had been efficiently drilled in when to press the ball and when it was the right moment to drop collectively behind the ball and be adept in positioning themselves for the interception. Late transitions to the defensive block, shortage or mistiming of cover and pressure on the flanks and leaving unmarked spaces between lines were among the main reasons for teams departing early,” Morteza Mohases commented.

With high temperatures and humidity erecting a barrier to sustained collective high pressing, the common denominator in Thailand was pressure on the ball-carrier to buy time for retreat into a midfield defensive block.

“I would not over-emphasise the quality of defending,” Narayanan Sivaji added, “because we had many instances of defenders rushing in and either being beaten or giving away needless fouls. Poor decision-making comes into play when you see careless tackles on opponents who are not in a position to cause immediate danger.”

This frequently applied to situations where opponents were being strongly pressed in wide areas but were allowed to get out of jail by untimely fouls.

TRIOS AND QUARTETS

One of the salient features among defensive mechanisms was the continuing trend towards three centre-backs. At the 2016 tournament, all the contestants operated with a back line of four. In 2018, four teams opted for three. And, in Thailand, this was increased to five, with DPR Korea, Japan, Jordan, Qatar and Vietnam adopting this structure as their default setting. Four of this quintet departed after the Group Stage. Saudi Arabia mirrored Japan’s three-at-the-back structure when the teams met in Group B.

For the record, five of the other teams opted for 1-4-2-3-1, one for 1-4-1-4-1 and Korea Republic played 1-4-3-3, while the remaining four operated variations on 1-4-4-2.

“We could see that teams playing three central defenders found it easier to exploit the wide areas,” Seung-bum Choi remarked. “But the athletic qualities of the wing-backs become fundamental, as any shortfall in fitness gives space to the other team.”

In theory, the observers noted, advanced wing-backs provide additional cover against counterattacks following loss of possession. But, in conditions less than conducive to high collective pressing, this numerical advantage was rarely made to tell.



“Three of the four teams in Group D adopted variations on the back three,” Mohases added, “to create numerical advantages in midfield. On the other hand, the weak point was often the unguarded space in the wide areas and coverage of the vital space between the goalkeeper and the back three. Opponents were usually intelligent enough to position attackers in the wide areas to stretch the defence. I’m sure DPR Korea, for example, addressed this issue when they analysed their games against UAE and Jordan.”

From a development perspective, the technical observers stressed the importance of coaching centre-backs in the art of 1v1 defending - and establishing how high the line of three should operate. They also led into another area for discussion with the opinion that “playing with three at the back gives more opportunities for small, tricky attackers”.

STRIKING THE RIGHT NOTE?

“We seem to be developing similar types of attackers.”

The point of view expressed during one of the technical observers’ meetings sparked debate about the attackers on view.

“On the positive side,” Szalai commented, “we’ve seen a high number of fast, mobile forwards, yet a low number of accomplished finishers. Thailand were a good example because they had clever, streetwise and skilful attackers.”

Sentences like “the need for a goal-scorer was obvious” or “the lack of a prolific scorer stood out

like a sore thumb” frequently appeared in the observers’ notebooks. The scoring chart in Thailand underpinned this thesis. At the head of it, a quintet with a modest tally of three. UAE’s Al Ameri was a central attacker, as was Iraq’s Nassif (who made only one start). Thailand’s Jaroensak played wide on the right; Australia’s D’Agostino usually operated in the wake of the target man. And Uzbekistan defender Kobilov joined those four on the basis of three converted penalties. Saudi Arabia, Korea Republic, Thailand and Uzbekistan were among the teams whose central attackers caught the eye – but struggled to hit the net.

“Scoring tended to be shared around the team,” mused Sivaji. “There was no reliance on specialist goal-scorers.”

Is this positive?

One striking statistic is that Saudi Arabia reached the final on the back of 17 on-target goal attempts in the previous five matches – and added only one to that total during the 120 minutes against Korea Republic to finish with an average of three per match. The question is to what extent poor finishing accounted for the shortage of goals. The



tournament produced 782 goal attempts, of which 250 were on target. In other words, less than one in three (32% to be precise). As this was a constant percentage throughout the Group Stage and Knockout rounds, it was a general problem from which the top teams were not exempt. What can be done to improve standards of finishing?

MIND GAMES

“Another factor behind the shortage of goals is that so many teams struggled to find solutions for breaking down a deep, strong defence.”

Games are easy to play from the touchline. But the observers (and the coaches, one would imagine) were frequently frustrated by poor decision-making in the final third – mostly in terms of unmarked team-mates remaining unnoticed or unused. Or in terms of choosing the right moment to try a shot at goal.

The accuracy of passing in the attacking third is not an infallible guide, as the risky creative pass is to be applauded. In other words, the statistics can be regarded as no more than an indicator. What’s more, the averages can be misleading. The hosts, for example, registered a final-third success rate of 79% against Iraq but only 51% against Saudi Arabia. The figures, by the way, emphasise the silver-medallists’ compactness in their defensive third. They restricted Uzbekistan to 59%; Qatar to 57%, Syria to 41% and, in the final, Korea Republic to 63%. The glaring exception came in their opening game when they started with three at the back and allowed Japan a success rate of 77% (and conceded their only goal until extra-time in the Final).

The percentages in the table relate to the number of passes in the final third successfully received by a team-mate.

CROSS REFERENCES

The number of goals derived from crosses and cut-backs is reviewed elsewhere in this report. But one of the debating points for the technical observers was the quality of deliveries from the wide areas. A 100% success rate in terms of finding a team-mate is, admittedly, mission impossible.

Team	Success
Japan	76%
Korea Republic	68%
Saudi Arabia	68%
United Arab Emirates	68%
Uzbekistan	68%
Australia	67%
Thailand	66%
Vietnam	66%
Iraq	63%
IR Iran	61%
Qatar	61%
Bahrain	59%
Jordan	59%
DPR Korea	55%
China PR	49%
Syria	47%

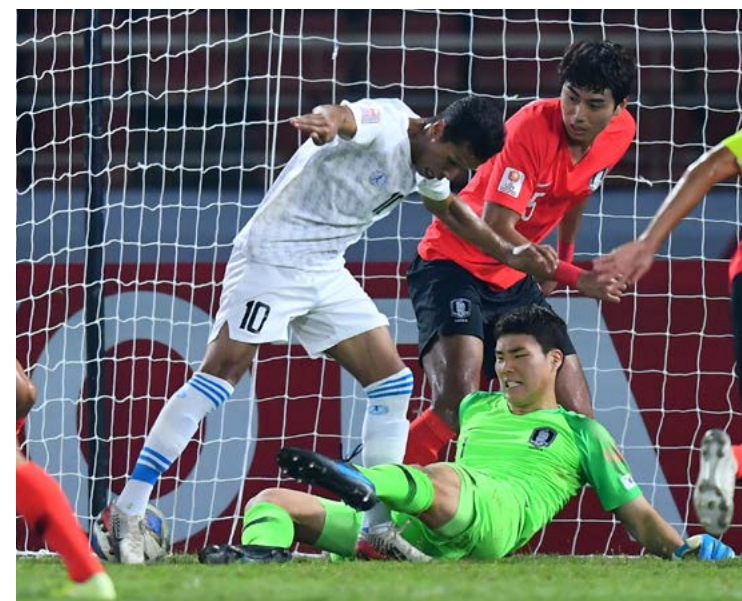
But the observers remarked on the number of deliveries – and this also applied to corners – that failed to clear the first defender or simply ran out of play.

The pattern of wing play travelled further along the pathway towards change-footed wingers, such as Uzbekistan’s incisive left-footed right-winger Yakshiboev, with the result that crosses despatched with their preferred foot tended to curl nicely into goalkeepers’ gloves. The trend towards reliance on full-backs (or wing-backs in five-defender formations) to deliver crosses was accentuated during the tournament in Thailand.

From the defensive angle, Australia illustrated acumen in defending against crosses by restricting Bahrain and Thailand to one success apiece (from 12 and 19 attempts respectively), while only two of Syria’s 25 crosses reached a team-mate during the Quarter-final. Saudi Arabia’s defensive expertise was again illustrated by the fact that, on the run to the Final, they intercepted all but five of their opponents’ 51 crosses. Korea Republic fared better against Al-Shehri’s team: in the Final, seven of their 15 crosses reached a team-mate.

The debating point was whether a success rate of around one in four is acceptable – or whether more training-ground work is indicated with a view to increasing the productivity of wide players (especially full-backs) when it comes to supplying crosses.

Team	Crosses per game	Success
IR Iran	29	29%
Japan	19	28%
Korea Republic	17	27%
DPR Korea	20	25%
Jordan	17	24%
United Arab Emirates	9	24%
Vietnam	14	24%
Australia	13	23%
Saudi Arabia	14	23%
Uzbekistan	15	23%
Iraq	26	22%
Syria	18	20%
Bahrain	16	19%
Qatar	9	18%
China PR	10	17%
Thailand	14	15%



A SAFE PAIR OF FEET?

Venturing off the line to deal with high crosses required sound decision-making by goalkeepers who, by and large, responded to the challenge.

“Goalkeepers generally showed good shot-stopping and cross-handling capabilities,” Sivaji commented. “They were also ready and alert to deal with balls played over defences which played with high lines in midfield and high press situations. However, in the area of involvement in build-up play, not many showed expertise.”

Korea Republic keeper Song was selected by the technical observers for the Best Goalkeeper on the basis of expertise in all areas – his ability to initiate construction illustrated by the fact

that 27 of his 31 passes against Uzbekistan were accurately played to a team-mate. Saudi Arabia’s Al Yami exhibited some excellent shot-stopping (spreading himself well and making crucial blocks with his feet). On the other hand, his long distribution frequently signified work for the ball-boys. Thai keeper Nareechan was given credit for his 1v1 defending – refusing to commit early and transferring the pressure to the oncoming attacker. Australia’s Glover, as Szalai commented, “displayed good positioning and competent handling. In general, his distribution was also very accurate.” In other words, the tournament showcased some excellent goalkeeping qualities but raised questions about the development of commanding, confidence-inspiring personalities and about whether the keepers are, in general, being fully exploited as team members.

A WINNING COMBINATION?

Glover’s preference for playing long to bypass Uzbekistan’s high pressing during the bronze-medal match signified a departure from Australia’s habitual patient, possession game. One of the talking points to emerge from the Group Stage focused on the demise of teams playing an attractive combination game, such as UAE or, most notably, Japan, who, in their three matches, had 66% of the ball against Saudi Arabia, 70% against Syria and 55% against Qatar, whilst playing more passes than any other team in the tournament.

“Teams like Japan, IR Iran and Thailand,” Mohases remarked, “displayed skill and resilience under pressure. They were comfortable delivering short and long passes with pace and accuracy in neat triangular or square moves. But sleek passing was not enough – and they paid the price for defensive lapses.”

“This was true of Thailand,” Sivaji concurred. “The hosts showed us some excellent attacking play based on good skills under pressure and a willingness to make high-speed runs behind defences. But we did see good combination football rewarded. Korea Republic and Uzbekistan, for example, displayed exciting qualities in attack with good combinations, willingness to make skilful solo runs – and some memorable goals.”

The tournament statistics reveal that, of the 21 matches that produced a result (the other 11 were draws) nine were won by the team with a lesser share of possession. Some of the data was striking: Japan losing to Saudi Arabia and Syria despite 66% and 70% respectively. The tournament offered a rich weave of combination play and direct attacking, with the technical observers’ notebooks containing comments such as “direct forward play from goalkeeper or defenders to target striker”; “long balls to front players with limited success, as team-mates were not close enough to support”; or “long balls to strikers and emphasis on competing for the second ball”.

As an indicator of playing styles, the table (right) shows each team’s average percentage of long passes with, significantly maybe, the top teams among those who used the long pass with lesser frequency.

SMALL CHANGE?

Kim Hak-Bum maintained: “I knew decisive moments would come from substitutions”, and players who emerged from the Korea Republic bench accounted for three of the champions’ crucial goals. Curiously, he made one change during half-time in four of his team’s six matches – all in middle-to-front positions.

Team	Long
China PR	24.3%
Syria	21.8%
IR Iran	19.7%
Jordan	19.4%
Qatar	17.5%
Iraq	17.4%
Bahrain	17.1%
DPR Korea	15.2%
Saudi Arabia	14.2%
Korea Republic	13.8%
United Arab Emirates	13.7%
Uzbekistan	12.7%
Thailand	12.2%
Vietnam	11.8%
Australia	11.6%
Japan	9.4%

“But, in general,” commented Choi, “substitutions were made through injuries, fatigue or to break up play during the closing moments. We didn’t see that many tactical changes.”

“There were no hard and fast rules,” added Mohases, “but coaches used their subs to give an extra burst of energy, to protect their star players from fatigue and, possibly, surprise the opposition.”

“We saw a lot of same-for-same substitutions,” remarked Sivaji, “but it was sometimes a case of changing the qualities of the players rather than the team structure. I would cite Australia’s Quarter-final against Syria as an example. Graham Arnold sent on Duncan, a central midfielder with a more defensive perspective to retain possession. When O’Neill came on, he started to make more probing passes, taking more risks – and it was his through pass that created the goal. Then Buhagiar came on to make more penetrating runs, with and without the ball, always looking to get in behind the opponents. They were not structural changes but they changed the personality of the team and posed problems to the opposition.”

The final balance of the tournament in Thailand reveals that 25% of the goals were scored by substitutes. But it was a high percentage of a low total ...



GOALSCORING ANALYSIS



AN ELUSIVE PRIZE

The balance sheet after the final tournament in 2018 revealed that the price of goals had increased radically since the previous edition in Qatar. The 32 matches played in Thailand in the 2020 edition demonstrated that goals had become even more expensive - to the extent that the shortage of goals features prominently in the Technical Topics section of this report.

An average of 2.16 goals per game at a rate of one per 43 minutes of play provides ample food for thought. So does the fact that it required 11.33 goal attempts to conjure up a goal, compared with 8.96 at senior level during the AFC Asian Cup in 2019. The difference may not look important, but, expressed as a percentage, the efficiency rate is 22% poorer. If we add in the fact that no individual scored more than three goals, there are motives to repeat the talking point that was raised in 2018: can the shortage of goals at U23 level be linked to elite club football, where goals frequently talk various languages? Are young Asian players being given enough chances to develop their goal-scoring talents?

SET PLAYS

The fact that 28% of the goals in Thailand stemmed from dead-ball situations seems, on the face of it, to signal middle ground between the 32% at the AFC Asian Cup and the 26% in the 2019 AFC Champions League. But, with the introduction of VAR making a noticeable impact, penalties accounted for 11 of the 19 set-play goals (a massive 58% compared with 37% at the AFC Asian Cup). Of the 82 goals scored at the U23 tournament in 2018, only four had been spot-kicks. In Thailand, penalties accounted for 16% of the modest goal harvest.

Although free-kick successes were few and far between, they provided some of the tournament's decisive moments - including the indirect free-kick on their left which allowed Korea Republic defender Jeong Tae-wook to head the extra-time goal that decided the title. Or the spectacular 90+5 direct strike by Lee Dong-gyeong that decided their Quarter-final against Jordan. Equally striking was Reno Piscopo's direct free-kick that put Australia 1-0 ahead in the opening 1-1 draw

against Iraq. When defending against free-kicks, there was a clear trend towards holding the defensive line as high as possible, allowing the keeper freedom to come off his line and gather.

However, the eyebrow-raising statistic to emerge from Thailand was that only two goals were directly derived from corners: DPR Korea's corner on the left (+ two headers) that gave them their consolation goal against Jordan, and a corner on the right (again against Jordan) that allowed UAE to take the lead in their 1-1 draw. It represented an astonishing success rate of one goal per 144 corners.

Being charitable, it might be claimed that Thailand's early penalty against Iraq resulted from a corner. Or that IR Iran's goal in the 2-1 defeat by Korea Republic came from a cross on the left that could be traced back to a short corner. Even such generosity, however, fails to mask a success rate far removed from 1:40 at the AFC Asian Cup or 1:34 in the AFC Champions League.





There are, evidently, two sides to the coin. The technical observers noted that deliveries fell short of excellence, often failing to clear the first defender.

“In attack,” commented Morteza Mohases, “the most notable trend was to assemble a tightly-grouped line of four or five players who then aggressively attacked the ball. In defence, the clear tendency was to utilise a mix of individual and zonal marking. But there was great diversity in terms of stationing men on the posts, in blocking positions or leaving players upfield as targets for counterattacks.”

Two goals from 288 corners raises obvious questions about the amount of training-ground time profitably dedicated to this speciality.

OPEN PLAY

The low scoring in Thailand means that almost all categories of open-play goals (which accounted for 72% of the total) registered a downturn in comparison with the previous two tournaments – among them, combination moves that accounted for a minimal quota. Wing play yielded 30% of the goals scored in open play, but, as mentioned in the Technical Topics section of this report, represented an unspectacular dividend from 1,016 crosses.

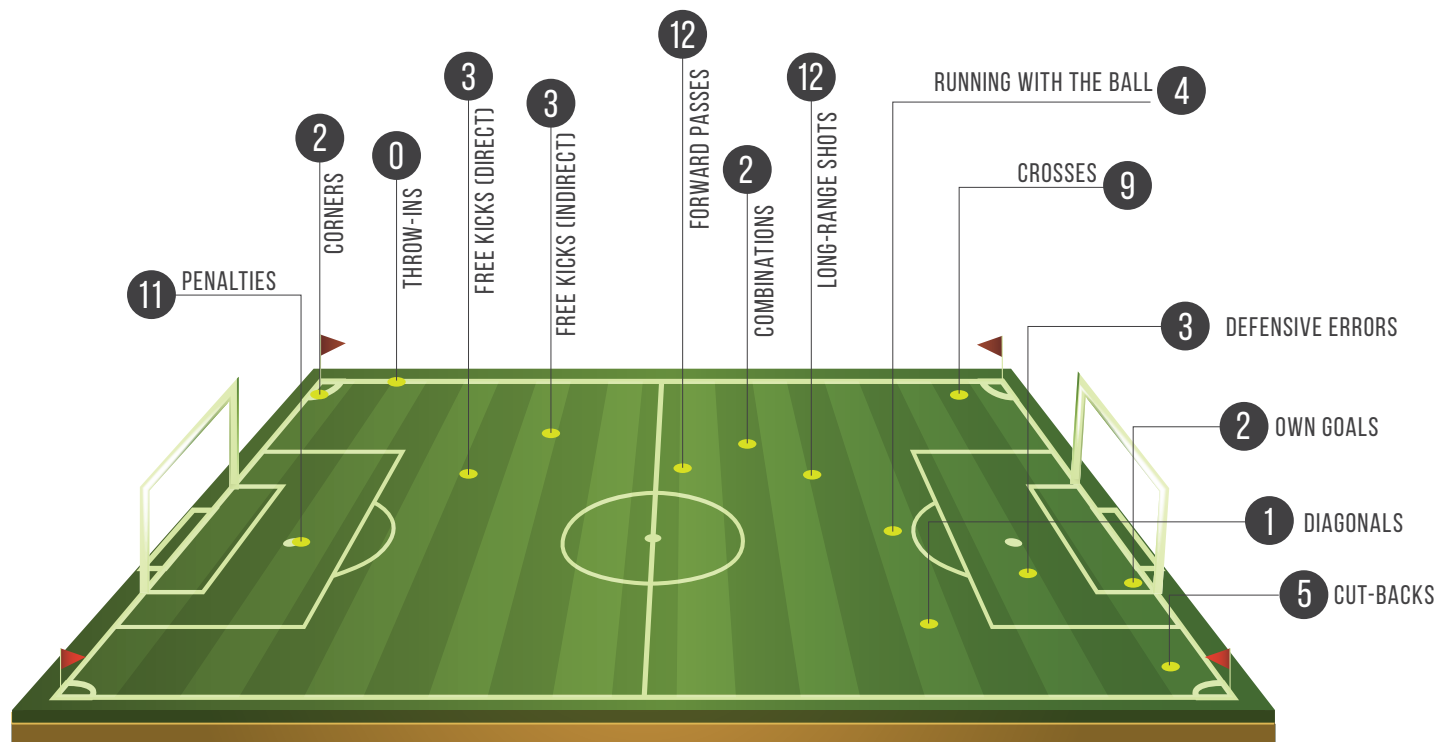
At the AFC Asian Cup, wing play generated 40% of the goals; in the AFC Champions League, 44%. Through balls (forward passes) emerged as co-leader in productivity, albeit eight goals down on the figure posted in 2018. The other joint leader was the statistical surprise package. The 12 successes

from long range represented the only category to register an upward turn on the 2018 figures. Many of them were spectacular – none more so than the left-footed bullet fired by Korea Republic’s Cho Gue-sung to put his team 2-0 up during the group fixture against IR Iran.

The upward surge of goals scored from long range interlocks with the rarity of combination goals, with many teams preferring to try their luck from distance rather than trying to penetrate compact defensive blocks. The other factor was that, against an established, constructed attack, defending was so deep and penalty areas so crowded that the search for space provided an inducement to play the ball back into the area outside the box – Uzbekistan’s first and third goals in the Quarter-final against UAE providing prime examples.

The density of defensive blocks also restricted successes from solo runs – though one striking run from deep by Nicholas D’Agostino provided the crucial goal that beat Uzbekistan in the bronze-medal match and earned Australia a place at the Tokyo Olympic Games.

At a defence-dominated tournament, successful counterattacks were also in short supply. Many teams immediately applied fierce pressure on the ball after losses of possession, buying time for rapid transitions into defensive shape. Saudi Arabia, well-drilled in countering counters and adept at breaking up play, provided a prime example of well-oiled mechanisms designed to minimise vulnerability when attacking moves broke down. As a result, counterattacks produced only five goals – 10% of the open-play total, compared with 30% at the previous U23 tournament. Three of the successes were collective counters; one, the swift reaction to advanced ball-winning; and the other a solo effort. Paying tribute to the efficacy of counter-the-counter mechanisms, no goals were scored via classic counterattacks from deep positions.



GOALS FROM SET PLAY

ACTION	GUIDELINES	GOALS
Corners	Direct from / following a corner	2
Free kicks (direct)	Direct from a free kick	3
Free kicks (indirect)	Following a free kick	3
Penalties	Spot kick (or follow-up from a penalty)	11
Throw-ins	Following a throw-in	0

GOALS FROM OPEN PLAY

ACTION	GUIDELINES	GOALS
Combinations	Wall pass / combination move	2
Crosses	Cross from the wing	9
Cut-backs	Pass back from the bye-line	5
Diagonals	Diagonal pass into the penalty box	1
Running with the ball	Dribble and close-range shot / dribble and pass	4
Long-range shots	Direct shot / shot and rebound	12
Forward passes	Through pass or pass over the defence	12
Defensive Errors	Bad back-pass / mistake by the goalkeeper	3
Own Goals	Goal by the opponent	2

TOTAL GOALS SCORED : 69

TALKING POINTS



A PICTURE THAT'S HARD TO SCAN?

Among the enchantments of talking football is that you can build from the back and, some time later, find the ball out on the left wing without being able to remember exactly how it got there. This was the case when the technical observers sat down to debate a seemingly simple question: what were the pros and cons of having the senior national team coach in charge of the U23s?

The question was inspired by the presence of Graham Arnold, Hajime Moriyasu, Félix Sánchez, Akira Nishino and Park Hang-seo on the benches of Australia, Japan, Qatar, Thailand and Vietnam. In the credit column, the observers highlighted the advantages in terms of connectivity, tactical cohesion and awareness of the coach's demands, plus, as Morteza Mohases put it, "a huge boost of motivational factors for the younger players".

In the debit column, there were only faintly-pencilled hints at greater reliance on the backroom staff for in-depth knowledge of opposing teams at U23 level.

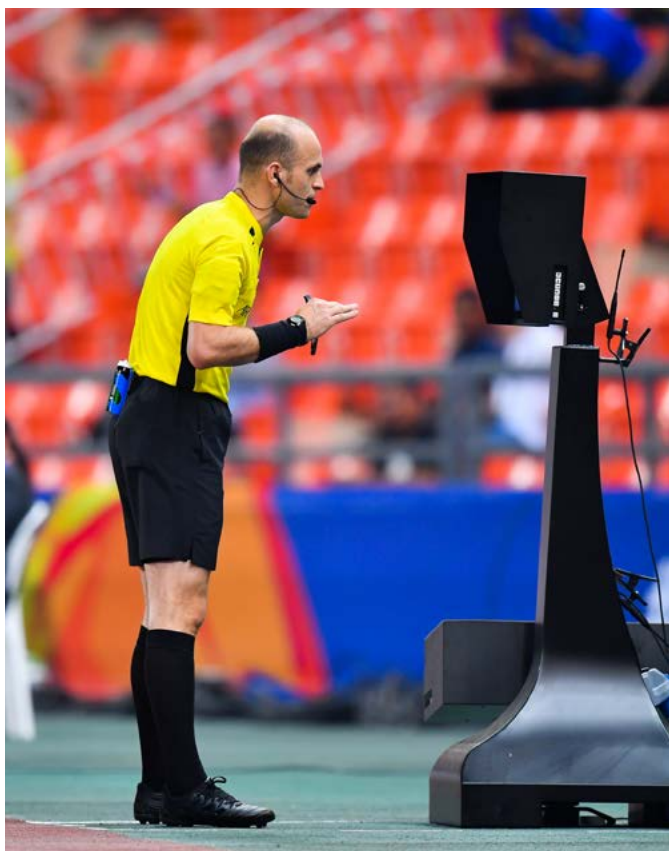
But discussion veered off towards the scenarios the coaches in Thailand were required to contend with. The player lists featured Mo'Ath Al Ammouri (Jordan), Jassem Abdulsallam



(Qatar) and Suphanat Mueanta (Thailand). The first was unused; the second played 190 minutes; and the latter contributed 314 minutes and two goals. All three were born in 2002 and their presence meant that the tournament embraced a six-year time-span starting with the 162 players born in 1997. For the record, there were 96 from 1998, 59 from 1999, 38 from 2000 and 10 from 2001. The tournament therefore mirrored the realities of senior team - or club - dressing-rooms where as much as a decade (or even more) can separate the squad members' ages. From a coaching perspective, it meant that the U23 competition was far removed from 'development

tournaments' such as the U-16s or U-19s, where the focus is on a much tighter age-bracket.

Talking of the U-19s, the observers were surprised that squad lists featured no more than a handful of names from the 2018 final tournament in Indonesia - and wondered about the current development status in international football for the players who fall into the gap between the U-19 and U23 levels. A subsidiary question was whether the youngest players at the tournament in Thailand would experience motivation challenges when 'stepping back down' to the U-19s.



All of which led back to the original question: is the U23 job best done by the coach of the senior team?

SO VAR SO GOOD?

The implementation of VAR technology at the 32 matches played in Thailand represented a major innovation that added emotional value to several matches - including the Final, when the huge contingent of Korea Republic fans had to endure heart-wrenching moments while the goal that won the title was being reviewed for a possible 'handball in attack', as the giant screens at the Rajamangala Stadium informed them. The technical observers awarded high marks to the system, which, in their view, had generally implemented the 'maximum benefit; minimum interference' philosophy - though they emphasised "the duration of each intervention should be kept as short as possible".

AFC had ensured that teams received VAR briefings prior to the tournament and the observers debated whether "generally good behaviour was influenced by the knowledge that more than four match officials were monitoring the proceedings". Was it a coincidence that the number of goals scored from the penalty spot shot up from four in China in 2018 to 11 in Thailand? The difference would have been even more striking had Bahrain and Saudi Arabia not missed two other spot kicks during the group phase.

MORE COMPETITION?

Discussion in Thailand was fuelled by the constant search for improvement allied with concerns that failure to qualify for a final tournament sometimes signifies an abrupt end to fixture lists and a consequent lack of opportunities for players to acquire international experience. So the talking point was whether the competition should echo the AFC Asian Cup with an extension to 24 teams? Opinions were

divided. One view was "if there's a lack of quality facilities and competition in some countries, 24 teams would at least give a chance to improve undeniably talented players".

On the other side of the debating table: "it might help development of players but more matches at the final tournament means that significant additional expenses would have to be factored in. There's also a risk that more teams might dilute the quality of the tournament, although this didn't prove to be the case at the AFC Asian Cup. But high-scoring lopsided games are no guarantee of player development." What do you think?



At the same time, assessing the players' potential to make the jump into the senior team entails giving them opportunities. Although Korea Republic, for example, used 19 players on the first two matchdays and there was extensive rotation in line-ups, 40 outfield players (only Syria used more than one goalkeeper) remained unused and a further 39 played 45 minutes or less. Does the fact that 25% of outfielders were short of match action suggest that the coaches' answer to the results v development dilemma was a vote for the former?

WINNING COACH



KIM HAK-BUM

KEEP CALM AND WIN TITLES

While the Saudi Arabia coach Saad Al Shehri was out, on his haunches, at the edge of the technical area gesturing his players into position, Kim Hak-bum remained impassive on the Korea Republic bench, with arms folded across his chest, leaving his assistants to play a more visible role in the technical area. It wasn't until the 82nd minute of the Final that, with the opposition's defensive acumen frustrating his team, he could be seen issuing instructions on the touchline. His demeanour could be summarised by a comment that he had made after the Semi-final against Australia: "I had to stay calm and composed in order to instil confidence in my players."

The Final illustrated the modus operandi that had served him well throughout the tournament. For example, Lee Dong-jun, the attacker short-listed by AFC's technical observers for the Player of the Tournament award, started on the bench. When he appeared after the interval, it was to replace SC Freiburg's Jeong Woo-yeong, whose penetrating runs from the left had created the clearest chances of the first half. It was Kim Hak-bum's style. In Thailand, the only player to start all six games was goalkeeper Song Bum-keun. All 20 outfielders were used with constant permutations from match to match. It made his team hard to read. As IR Iran head coach Hamid Estili remarked, "we have a good team of scouts and analysts, but we just couldn't predict ..."

Kim Hak-bum commented, "Our preparations for the tournament took into consideration the weather in Thailand and the fatigue levels we could expect. We had some issues regarding drops in our levels of performance during matches, but the rotation system worked really well and I think that was the reason why we won the tournament."



WINNING COACH

The former defender at Henan, Gangwon and Seongnam had been recruited in 2018 by a national association convinced that he was the right man for the job - not least on account of his reputation as a motivator.

"I made a list of problems to address and I started to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each individual player." The immediate reward was a gold medal at the 2018 Asian Games, thanks to a 2-1 extra-time victory over Japan. The same principles were applied to the tournament in Thailand.

"My coaching staff and I planned to give every player opportunities to prove themselves and to become better players," he explained. "But, apart from developing individuals, we also had to think about results. So, I wanted my players to compete for places so that I knew that anyone could go on

to the pitch and deliver. And I wanted to show that I had firm faith in my players. And my belief in them was the key for me to make a successful journey as head coach."

Shrewd substitutions certainly paid off. Three crucial goals were scored by players who came off the bench, including the 90+3 winner against China PR. "I felt that decisive moments would come from substitutions," he acknowledged. "Those were tactical choices that we discussed and made. There was a lot of pressure on us, but I think we made the right choices. In the Final, we anticipated that we might go to penalties because Saudi Arabia had a perfect defence and were capable of taking the game right through to the end. We stressed that if we went to extra-time or penalties we had to stay as calm as possible. Even though we didn't play as well as we could throughout the match, I told them the key was to be calm ..."



“ AND MY BELIEF IN THEM WAS THE KEY FOR ME TO MAKE A SUCCESSFUL JOURNEY AS HEAD COACH. ”

TEAM PROFILES



AUSTRALIA



COACH

GRAHAM ARNOLD

NATIONALITY
AUSTRALIA



STATISTICS



Best Player(s)

11 PISCOPO
15 D'AGOSTINO
3 GERSBACH



Total goals

5

15 D'AGOSTINO (3)
11 PISCOPO (1)
9 TOURE (1)

SQUAD DATE OF BIRTH

GOALKEEPER

1	THOMAS GLOVER	24/12/1997
12	JORDAN HOLMES	08/05/1997
18	DANIEL MARGUSH	28/11/1997

DEFENDER

2	GABRIEL CLEUR	31/01/1998
3	ALEX GERSBACH	08/05/1997
4	DYLAN RYAN	10/06/2000
5	JOSHUA LAWS	26/02/1998
6	TASS MOURDOUKOUTAS	03/03/1999
14	THOMAS DENG	27/03/1997
20	CONNOR O'TOOLE	04/07/1997

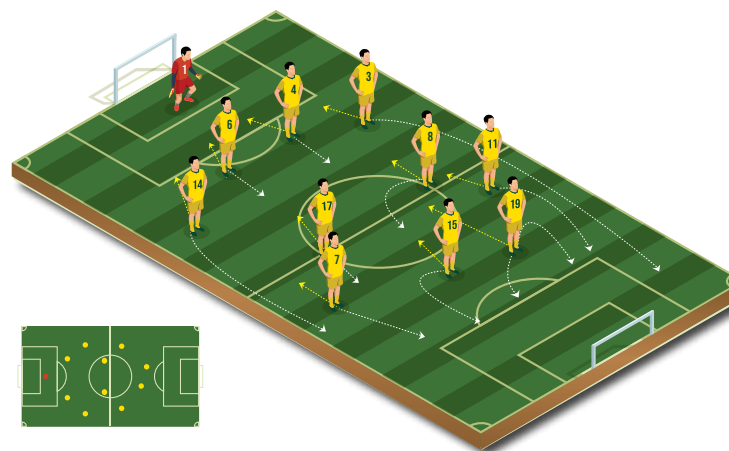
MIDFIELDER

8	ZACH DUNCAN	31/05/2000
10	DENIS GENREAU	21/05/1999
13	AIDEN O'NEILL	04/07/1998
17	KEANU BACCUS	07/06/1998
23	CONNOR METCALFE	05/11/1999

FORWARD

7	RAMY NAJJARINE	23/04/2000
9	AL HASSAN TOURE	30/05/2000
11	RENO PISCOPO	27/05/1998
15	NICHOLAS D'AGOSTINO	25/02/1998
16	TRENT BUHAGIAR	27/02/1998
19	DANIEL BOUMAN	02/07/1998
21	JACOB ITALIANO	30/07/2000
22	BEN FOLAMI	08/06/1999

TEAM SHAPES



ATTACKING
1-2-4-4

DEFENDING
1-4-4-2

KEY FEATURES

- Compact 1-4-4-2 in attack and defence; keeper alert to ball over the top
- Well organised, disciplined, aggressive defence, mainly in mid third and own half
- Possession game with patient short passing build up + diagonals to flanks
- Wingers cut in to create space for full backs, notably No 3 Gersbach on left
- Solo skills by No 11 Piscopo, No 15 D'Agostino provided attacking spark
- No 1 Glover inspired confidence; sound goalkeeping, excellent distribution
- Powerful, hard working players with winning spirit, great mental strength

BAHRAIN



COACH

SAMIR CHAMMAM



NATIONALITY
TUNISIA

STATISTICS



Best Player(s)

8 MARHOON

6 ABBAS



Total goals

3

8 MESHINO (**2**)

16 SAYED (**1**)

SQUAD DATE OF BIRTH

GOALKEEPER

1	ANWAR AHMED	19/09/1997
21	YUSUF HABIB	09/01/1998
23	AMMAR MOHAMED	10/02/1999

DEFENDER

2	SAYED AMEEN	07/03/1999
3	AHMED BUGHAMMAR	30/12/1997
4	HUSAIN JAMEEL	03/10/1997
5	HAMAD AL SHAMSAN	29/09/1997
12	AHMED AL ZAIMOOR	26/07/1997
15	HASAN AL KARRANI	27/11/1997
20	SALEM ADEL HASAN	03/07/1997

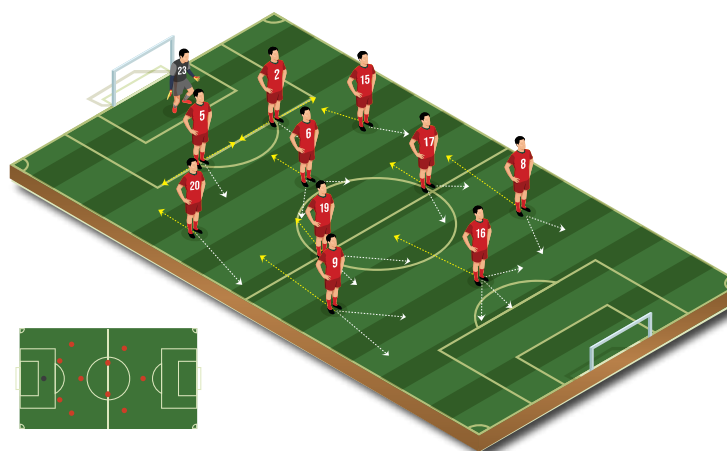
MIDFIELDER

6	ABBAS AL ASFOOR	02/03/1999
7	AHMED AL SHEROOQI	22/05/2000
8	MOHAMED MARHOON	12/02/1998
9	AHMED SALEH	11/01/1998
10	MOHAMMED AL HARDAN	06/10/1997
11	ABDULAZIZ KHALID	17/03/1997
14	HAMZA AL JUBAN	17/04/2000
17	JASIM AL SALAMA	22/02/1998
18	ADNAN FAWAZ	30/10/1999
19	ABDULRAHMAN AHMEDI	16/04/1998
22	ALI HASAN	29/11/1997

FORWARD

13	FAISAL AL ISA	28/03/1998
16	HASHIM SAYED ISA	03/04/1998

TEAM SHAPES



ATTACKING

1-2-1-4-3

DEFENDING

1-4-1-4-1

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-1-4-1 or 1-4-2-3-1 with single or twin screening midfielders
- No 6 Al Asfoor the key linking element as holding midfielder in 1-2-1-4-3 attacking
- Attack used combination play on wings and penetrating passes behind lines
- Strong defending with solid, compact block with minimal gaps between the lines
- Immediate pressure on the ball carrier after losing possession in high areas
- Quick deliveries to striker No 9 Saleh after regains in own half
- Fast support from wide midfielders; good dribbling skills from No 8 Marhoon on the right

CHINA PR



COACH

HAO WEI

NATIONALITY
CHINA PR



STATISTICS



Best Player(s)

12 CHEN WEI
5 ZHU CHENJIE
10 HU JINGHANG



Total goals

0

CONCEDED (4)

SQUAD DATE OF BIRTH

GOALKEEPER

1	LI GUANXI	25/09/1998
12	CHEN WEI	14/02/1998
22	ZHANG YAN	30/03/1997

DEFENDER

2	TONG LEI	16/12/1997
4	WEI ZHEN	02/12/1997
5	ZHU CHENJIE	23/08/2000
6	HUANG CONG	01/06/1997
14	ZHAO JIANFEI	21/01/1999
15	FENG BOXUAN	18/03/1997
16	YANG SHUAI	28/01/1997
18	JIANG SHENGLONG	24/12/2000
20	DILMURAT	08/04/1998

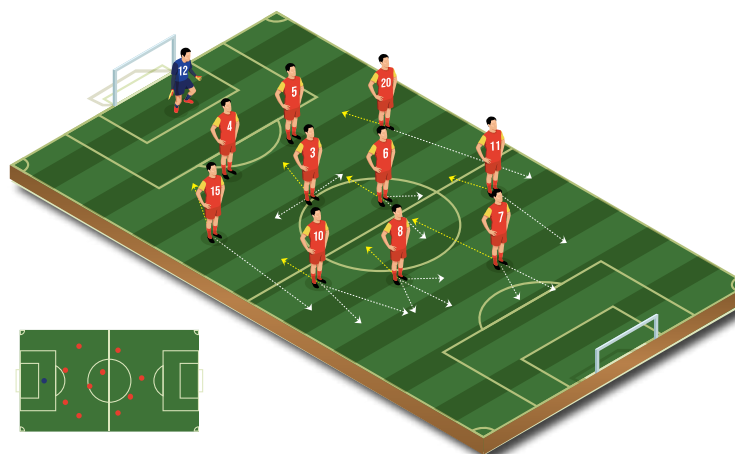
MIDFIELDER

3	HUANG ZHENGYU	24/01/1997
8	DUAN LIUYU	24/07/1998
10	HU JINGHANG	23/03/1997
11	CHEN BINBIN	06/10/1998
21	ZHANG LINGFENG	28/02/1997

FORWARD

7	YANG LIYU	13/02/1997
9	ZHANG YUNING	01/05/1997
13	ZHOU JUNCHEN	23/03/2000
17	LIU RUOFAN	21/08/1999
19	TIAN XIN	29/03/1998
23	CHEN PU	15/01/1997

TEAM SHAPES



ATTACKING

1-2-4-4

DEFENDING

1-4-5-1

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-4-2 / 1-4-4-1-1 in first two matches; 1-4-3-3 in the final game v Iran in final game
- Strong defending from midfield to deep; compact block with aerial power
- Fast transitions to defence; applied pressure on the ball while buying time to form a defensive block
- Attacks and counters used long passes to strikers and looked to gain possession of the second ball
- Emphasis on wing play with wingers and full backs delivering crosses
- Good shot stopping by goalkeeper; occasionally built from the back via centre backs
- Athletic, hard-working team handicapped by loss of target striker through injury

DPR KOREA



COACH

RI YU-IL

NATIONALITY
DPR KOREA



STATISTICS



Best Player(s)

17 YONG-GWON
22 KUK-JIN



Total goals

1

15 HYON-JU (1)
7 CHUNG-GYU (1)

SQUAD DATE OF BIRTH

GOALKEEPER

1	KANG JU-HYOK	31/05/1997
18	KIM JU-SONG	13/11/1999
21	RI CHOL-SONG	13/03/1998

DEFENDER

2	PAK CHOL-JU	01/01/1999
3	PAK KWANG-CHON	12/01/1999
5	JANG SONG-IL	21/03/1998
6	CHOE JIN-NAM	20/11/1998
8	JONG KUM-SONG	24/01/1997
14	CHOE OK-CHOL	11/11/1998
19	KIM KYONG-SOK	19/02/2000

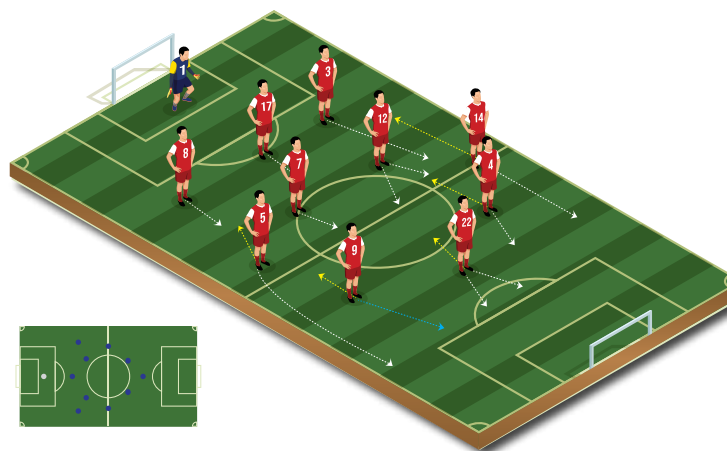
MIDFIELDER

4	SO JONG-GIL	09/03/1998
7	RI CHUNG-GYU	30/09/1998
10	KIM KUM-CHOL	07/04/1997
12	KANG KUK-CHOL	29/09/1999
15	RYANG HYON-JU	31/05/1998
16	MUN IN-JU	22/08/1999
17	RI YONG-GWON	03/03/1998

FORWARD

9	KIM KWANG-HYOK	24/03/1997
11	PAK KWANG-HUN	18/04/1997
13	SIM JU-IL	23/02/2000
22	KIM KUK-JIN	11/10/2000
23	KIM HWI-HWANG	25/01/2000

TEAM SHAPES



ATTACKING
1-3-4-3

DEFENDING
1-5-4-1

KEY FEATURES

- 1-3-4-3 with fast transitions to compact, disciplined 1-5-4-1 defence
- Mix of quick, short passing through thirds and direct supply to front players
- Overlapping wing backs dribbling, delivering crosses; quick to defend wide areas
- Excellent off the ball movement in attack; mobile striker created spaces
- Good individual technique; comfortable in possession under pressure
- Pressure on the ball and short passing options; then fast counters through middle
- Agile, athletic, focused players able to sustain high tempo game

 **IR IRAN**



COACH

HAMID ESTILI



NATIONALITY
IR IRAN

STATISTICS



Best Player(s)

10 SHEKARI
21 NOR AFKAN



Total goals

3

21 NOR AFKAN (1)
15 DEGHANI (1)
10 SHEKARI (1)

SQUAD DATE OF BIRTH

GOALKEEPER

1	HABIB FAR ABBASI	04/09/1997
12	MERAJ ESMAEILI	13/01/2000
22	MEHDI NOROLLAHI	03/04/1997

DEFENDER

2	HOSSEIN SAKI	10/05/1997
3	MEHRAN DERAKHSHAN MEHR	10/08/1998
4	MOJTABA NAJARIAN	25/01/1998
5	SHAHIN TAHERKHANI	07/01/1997
19	MATIN KARIMZADEH	30/06/1998
21	OMID NOR AFKAN	09/04/1997
23	AREF AGHASI	02/01/1997

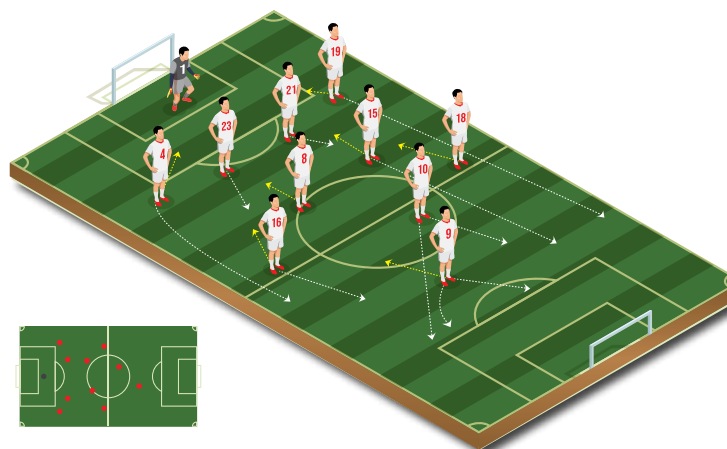
MIDFIELDER

6	SINA ZAMEHRAN	10/03/1997
8	MEHDI MEHDIKHANI	28/07/1997
10	REZA SHEKARI	31/05/1998
13	AMIRHOSSEIN HOSSEINZADEH	30/10/2000
15	REZA DEGHANI	07/01/1998
16	MOHAMMAD MOHEBBI	20/12/1998
17	JAFAR SALMANI	12/01/1997
20	MOHAMMAD KHODABANDEHLO	07/09/1999

FORWARD

7	AMIR ROUSTAEI	05/08/1997
9	ALLAHYAR SAYYADMANESH	29/06/2001
11	MEHDI GHAEDI	05/12/1998
14	REZA JABIREH	07/07/1997
18	ALI SHOJAEI	27/01/1997

TEAM SHAPES



ATTACKING
1-2-4-4

DEFENDING
1-4-5-1

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-4-1-1/1-4-2-3-1, switching to 1-4-3-3 in final game v China PR
- Excellent distribution + defending by No 21 Nor Afkan when switched to midfield
- Aggressive, industrious defending from midfield with strength and aerial power
- Immediate pressure after losing possession, allowing team to retreat to defensive shape
- Direct attacks and counters: long pass to strikers, second ball winning, or solo runs
- Built from back with composed possession play when using 1-4-3-3 structure
- Early crosses, dangerous long throws by left back No 19 Karimzadeh



IRAQ



COACH

ABDULGHANI SHAHAD



NATIONALITY
IRAQ

STATISTICS



Best Player(s)

- 4 SHWAN**
- 9 NASSIF**
- 14 JABBAR**



Total goals

- 4**
- 9 NASSIF (**3**)
- 6 AMMARI (**1**)

SQUAD DATE OF BIRTH

GOALKEEPER

1	ARIAN SEVOK	01/07/1997
12	ALI KADHIM	24/10/1997
22	HUSAM MAHDI	06/01/1997

DEFENDER

2	MUSTAFA MOHAMMED JEBUR	14/01/1998
3	MUSTAFA MOHAMMED AL EZAIREJ	15/01/1997
4	NAJM SHWAN	09/07/1997
13	IHAB JARIR	11/01/1997
15	ALAA RAAD	20/02/1998
17	HASAN RAED	23/09/2000
19	MUNTADHER KHIKANI	03/12/2000
21	MUNTADHER SATTAR	04/01/1997

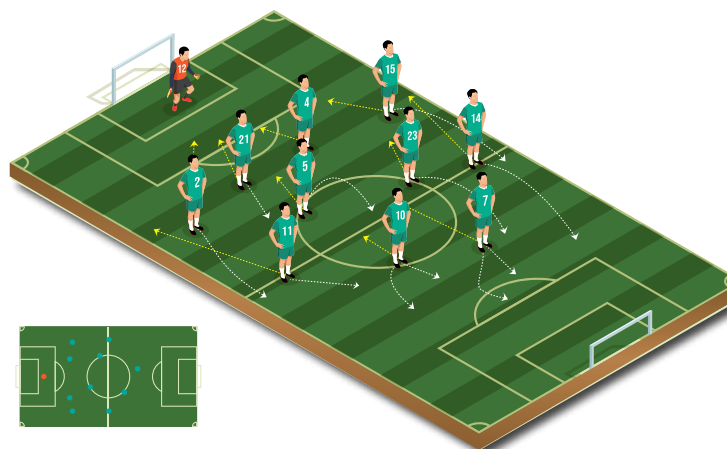
MIDFIELDER

5	ABDULABBAS AYAD	18/03/2000
6	AMIR AL AMMARI	27/07/1997
8	ALI QASIM	17/02/1997
10	MOHAMMED RIDHA	17/02/2000
11	OMER ASSI	03/01/1998
14	HUSSEIN JABBAR	09/03/1998
16	AL HASAN SAAD	20/02/2000
20	SADEQ ZAMIL	15/07/1999
23	MOHAMMED MEZHER	24/03/1998

FORWARD

7	MURAD SUBEH	01/04/1997
9	MOHAMMED QASIM	25/08/1997
18	MUEEN AHMED	01/01/1997

TEAM SHAPES



ATTACKING
1-2-3-2-3

DEFENDING
1-5-4-1

KEY FEATURES

- Generally 1-4-4-1 set up with fast transitions to 1-5-4-1 deep defending
- Emphasis on long passes to attackers by centre backs or goalkeeper
- Immediate pressing applied after losing possession; intense pressure from midfield
- Compact, aggressive, strong defending; aerial power used in set plays at both ends
- Good 1v1 skills in middle to front areas; finishing from solo runs or long range
- No 23 Mezher the attacking catalyst; forward runs, good individual technique
- Well organised unit; powerful, hard working players with experience, composure

JAPAN



COACH

HAJIME MORIYASU

NATIONALITY
JAPAN



STATISTICS

Best Player(s)
10 MESHINO
16 SOMA
8 TANAKA

Total goals
3
16 SOMA (1)
10 MESHINO (1)
8 TANAKA (1)

SQUAD DATE OF BIRTH

GOALKEEPER

1 RYOSUKE KOJIMA	30/01/1997
12 KEISUKE OSAKO	28/07/1999
23 KOSEI TANI	22/11/2000

DEFENDER

2 YUGO TATSUTA	21/06/1998
3 TSUYOSHI WATANABE	05/02/1997
5 DAIKI SUGIOKA	08/09/1998
15 MAKOTO OKAZAKI	10/10/1998
17 KOKI MACHIDA	25/08/1997
20 TAIYO KOGA	28/10/1998

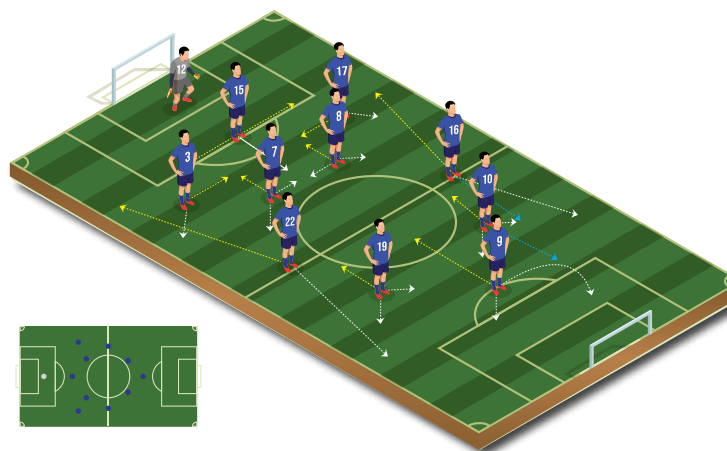
MIDFIELDER

4 DAIKI SUGA	10/09/1998
6 MITSUKI SAITO	10/01/1999
7 SHUNTA TANAKA	26/05/1997
8 AO TANAKA	10/09/1998
10 RYOTARO MESHINO	18/06/1998
11 KEITA ENDO	22/11/1997
14 TSUKASA MORISHIMA	25/05/1997
16 YUKI SOMA	25/02/1997
21 TAISHI MATSUMOTO	22/08/1998
22 DAIKI HASHIOKA	17/05/1999

FORWARD

9 KOKI OGAWA	08/08/1997
13 AYASE UEDA	28/08/1998
18 KYOSUKE TAGAWA	11/02/1999
19 REO HATATE	21/11/1997

TEAM SHAPES



ATTACKING
1-3-2-5

DEFENDING
1-5-2-3

KEY FEATURES

- 1-3-4-3 with fast transitions between 1-5-2-3 defence, 1-3-2-5 attack
- Passing game; neat high tempo combinations on the flanks, with wing backs pushing forward
- Dynamic movement with good 1v1 skills in all departments
- Fast transitions to solid, compact defending with emphasis on high pressing
- Central midfielders No 7 Shunta and No 8 Ao Tanaka the creative playmakers
- Extensive squad rotation with player development priorities
- Fast, athletic, disciplined team with tactical understanding, strong work ethic

JORDAN



COACH

AHMED ABU ISMAIL



NATIONALITY
JORDAN

STATISTICS



Best Player(s)

- 8 AL-DEEN**
- 4 AHMAD**
- 2 IHAB**
- 19 YAZAN**



Total goals

4

- 19 YAZAN (1)
- 9 ZIAD (1)
- 7 OMAR (1)
- 2 IHAB (1)

SQUAD DATE OF BIRTH

GOALKEEPER

1	ABDALLAH RA'ED ALFAKHORI	22/01/2000
12	AHMAD MOHANNAD JUAIDI	09/04/2001
22	RAFAT KHALDOON ALRABIE	31/07/1997

DEFENDER

2	IHAB MOHAMMAD ALI AL	11/3/1997
3	YAZAN MAHMOUD ABDELAAL	07/01/1999
5	HADI OMAR AHMED	14/04/2000
6	DANIAL AHMED AFANEH	24/03/2001
13	SHOQI GHASSAN AL QUZ'A	14/01/1999
15	SAED AHMAD ALROSAN	01/02/1997

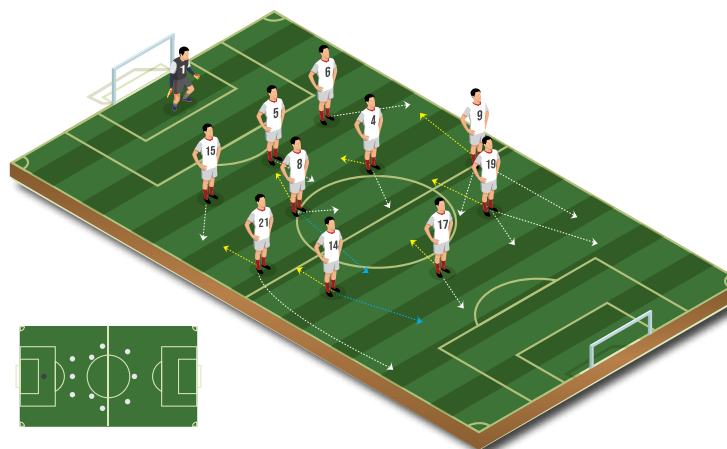
MIDFIELDER

4	AHMAD THA'ER HAIKAL	02/04/1997
7	OMAR HANI ALZEBDIEH	27/06/1999
8	NOOR AL-DEEN AL RAWABDEH	24/02/1997
9	MOHAMMAD ZIAD ATIEH	13/02/1999
10	MOUSA MOHAMMAD SULEIMAN	10/06/1997
11	MOHAMMAD ISAM MASHEH	30/01/1997
16	NIZAR MAHMOUD AL RASHDAN	23/03/1999
18	IBRAHIM MOHAMMAD SAMI	27/04/2000
21	WARD HELAL ALBARRI	29/06/1997

FORWARD

14	ALI IYAD OLWAN	26/03/2000
17	MOHAMMAD ABDEL-MOTALIB ABURIZIQ	01/02/1999
19	YAZAN ABDALLAH ALNAIMAT	04/06/1999
20	MOHAMMAD WA'EL ALZU'BI	15/04/1999
23	MOHANNAD JEHAD SEMREEN	08/01/2002

TEAM SHAPES



ATTACKING
1-3-4-3

DEFENDING
1-5-4-1

KEY FEATURES

- 1-3-4-3; quick to drop into midfield, held high line in 1-5-4-1 defending
- Good individual technique; ability to retain possession under pressure
- Effective combination play; varied attacking options on both flanks or through the middle
- Aggressive pressing from midfield; fast counters after regaining possession
- Skilful, mobile striker No 19 Yazan the focal point of attacking play
- Screening midfielders No 8 Al-Deen, No 4 Ahmad talented playmakers
- Good switches of play, changes of tempo; excellent team spirit, work ethic



KOREA REPUBLIC



SQUAD DATE OF BIRTH

GOALKEEPER

1	SONG BUM-KEUN	15/10/1997
21	AN CHAN-GI	06/04/1998
23	AHN JOON-SOO	28/01/1998

DEFENDER

2	LEE YOU-HYEON	08/02/1997
3	KANG YOON-SEONG	01/07/1997
4	LEE SANG-MIN	01/01/1998
5	JEONG TAE-WOOK	16/05/1997
12	KIM JAE-WOO	06/02/1998
13	KIM JIN-YA	30/06/1998
15	KIM TAE-HYEON	17/09/2000
22	YOON JONG-GYU	20/03/1998

MIDFIELDER

6	KIM DONG-HYUN	11/06/1997
8	KIM JIN-GYU	24/02/1997
10	LEE DONG-GYEONG	20/09/1997
16	JEONG SEUNG-WON	27/02/1997
19	MAEONG SEONG-UNG	04/02/1998
20	WON DU-JAE	18/11/1997

FORWARD

7	JEONG WOO-YEONG	20/09/1999
9	CHO GUE-SUNG	25/01/1998
11	LEE DONG-JUN	01/02/1997
14	KIM DAE-WON	10/02/1997
17	UM WON-SANG	06/01/1999
18	OH SE-HUN	15/01/1999

COACH

KIM HAK-BUM

NATIONALITY
KOREA REPUBLIC



STATISTICS



Best Player(s)

- 11 DONG-JUN**
- 4 SANG-MIN**
- 1 BUM-KEUN**
- 18 SE-HUN**

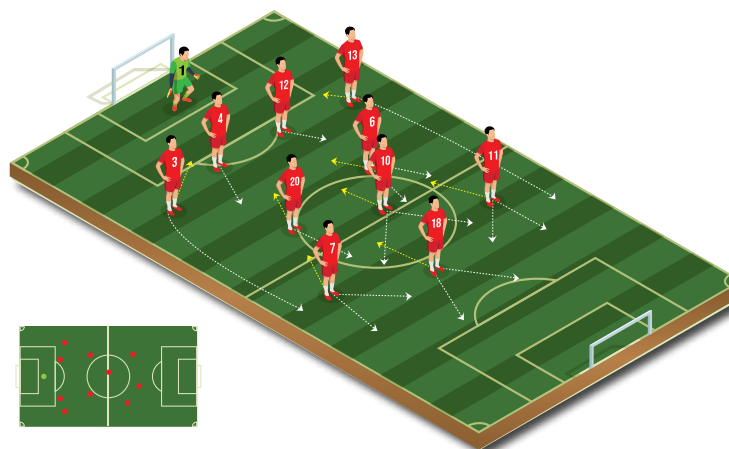


Total goals

9

- 11 DONG-JUN (2)
- 9 GUE-SONG (2)
- 18 SE-HUN (2)
- 10 DONG-GYEON (2)
- 14 DAE-WON (1)

TEAM SHAPES



ATTACKING
1-2-4-4

DEFENDING
1-4-5-1

KEY FEATURES

- Constant player rotation within 1-4-3-3 structure; 1-4-5-1 defence
- Emphasis on building from the back with goalkeeper an active participant
- Positional interchanges by midfielders, wingers; full backs attacking at every opportunity
- Effective quick passing combinations on flanks, through the middle with close support
- Frequent use of deep one touch passes, runs from deep, in attacking third
- High pressure, high line, keeper alert to balls over defence; strong centre backs
- No 20 Won Du-Jae the influential distributor in screening midfield role

QATAR



COACH

FELIX SANCHEZ



NATIONALITY
SPAIN

STATISTICS



Best Player(s)

7 Y. ABDURISAG
10 AL AHRAK

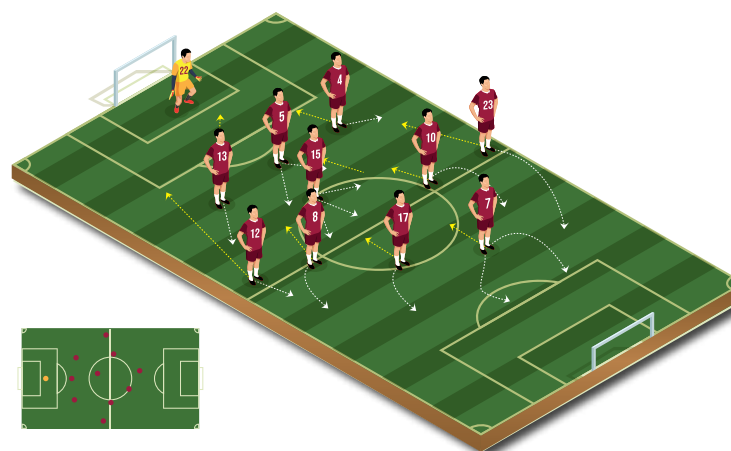


Total goals

2

7 Y. ABDURISAG (1)
10 AL AHRAK (1)
OWN GOAL (SYRIA)

TEAM SHAPES



ATTACKING
1-3-2-5

DEFENDING
1-5-3-2

SQUAD DATE OF BIRTH

GOALKEEPER

1	MESHAAL BARSHAM	14/02/1998
21	YAZAN NAIM	05/06/1997
22	MOHAMMED AL BAKRI	28/03/1997

DEFENDER

3	ALI KARAMI	26/02/1999
4	TAREK SALMAN	05/12/1997
5	AHMED ALHAMAWENDE	08/02/1999
12	KHALIFA KHALAF	02/03/1998
13	MOHAMED EMAD AIASH	27/02/2001
18	AHMED AL MINHALI	05/05/1999

MIDFIELDER

2	ABDULLAH SAEI	17/03/1999
6	MOHAMMED JADOUA	18/09/1999
10	ABDULLAH AL AHRAK	10/05/1997
14	ADEL BADER	17/01/1997
15	JASSEM ABDULSALLAM	20/02/2002
17	ABDELRAHMAN MOUSTAFA	05/04/1997
19	ABDULRASHEED UMARU	12/08/1999

FORWARD

7	YUSUF ABDURISAG YUSUF	06/08/1999
8	NASSER ALAHRAK	05/01/1999
9	HASSAN PALANG	02/04/1998
11	AMRO SURAG	08/04/1998
16	HASHIM ALI	17/08/2000
20	KHALID MAZEED	24/02/1998
23	HOMAM AHMED	25/08/1999

KEY FEATURES

- 1-3-5-2 set up with five up front in attacking moves; 1-5-3-2 defending
- Frequent use of long ball for striker No 7 Y. Abdurisag to lay off to supporting midfielders
- Otherwise, emphasis on patient, low tempo construction through thirds
- Immediate high pressure after ball loss; compact defence with high line
- Players with good solo skills; comfortable in possession when under pressure
- Good use of positional interchanging in middle to front areas
- Attacks opened to wing backs with long diagonal switches of play

SAUDI ARABIA



COACH

SAAD ALI ALSHEHRI



NATIONALITY
SAUDI ARABIA

STATISTICS



Best Player(s)

- 7 GHAREEB**
- 9 ALHAMDDAN**
- 4 TAMBAKTI**



Total goals

5

- 10 KHULAIF (1)
- 7 GHAREEB (1)
- 19 ALBRIKAN (1)
- 9 ALHAMDDAN (1)
- 8 OMRAN (1)

SQUAD DATE OF BIRTH

GOALKEEPER

1	AMIN BUKHARI	02/05/1997
21	SALEH AL OHAYMID	21/05/1998
22	MOHAMMED AL YAMI	

DEFENDER

2	ABDULLAH TARMIN	19/03/1997
3	ABDULBASIT HINDI	02/02/1997
4	HASSAN ALTAMBAKTI	09/02/1999
5	ABDULELAH AL AMRI	15/01/1997
13	KHALID DUBAYSH	27/11/1998
23	SAUD ABDULHAMID	18/07/1999

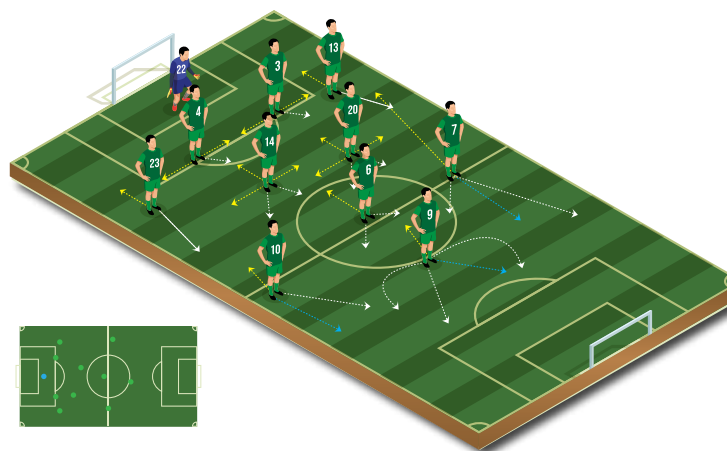
MIDFIELDER

6	SAMI AL NAJEI	07/02/1997
7	ABDULRAHMAN GHAREEB	31/03/1997
8	NASSER AL OMRAN	13/07/1997
10	AYMAN AL KHULAIF	22/05/1997
12	AYMAN YAHYA	14/05/2001
14	ALI AL HASSAN	04/03/1997
15	HUSSAIN ALESSA	29/12/2000
16	YUSEF AL HARBI	16/03/1997
17	SAAD ALSALULI	25/05/1998
18	KHALID AL GHANNAM	08/11/2000
20	MUKHTAR ALI	30/10/1997

FORWARD

9	ABDULLAH ALHAMDDAN	13/09/1999
11	ABDULRAHMAN AL YAMI	19/06/1997
19	FERAS ALBRIKAN	14/05/2000

TEAM SHAPES



ATTACKING
1-2-4-4

DEFENDING
1-4-2-3-1

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-2-3-1; narrow, compact, disciplined 1-4-5-1 defence holding high line
- Power play with fast forward passing and incessant pressure on opponents
- No 7 Ghareeb the free spirit in middle to front play; solo skills, creative passing
- No 4 Tambakti the pillar of strong back line; fine shot stopping by No 22 Yami
- Central midfielders No 14 Hassan, No 20 Ali the focal points in build up play
- Extremely fast, mobile, skilful players in wide areas; good switches of play
- Very well organised unit with great physicality, concentration, work ethic

SYRIA



COACH

AYMAN ALHAKEEM



NATIONALITY
SYRIA

STATISTICS



Best Player(s)

5 FARES ARNAOUT



Total goals

4

9 RAHMAN (**2**)

21 DALI (**2**)

SQUAD DATE OF BIRTH

GOALKEEPER

1	WILLIAM GHANNAM	01/01/1998
22	MHD YAZAN OURABI	30/01/1997
23	NABIL KORO	10/01/2000

DEFENDER

2	MUSTAFA SAFRANI	01/01/2001
3	YOUSSEF ALHAMWI	01/02/1997
4	YOSIEF MOHAMMAD	01/01/1999
5	MHD FARES ARNAOUT	01/01/1997
7	KHALED KURDAGHLI	01/01/1997

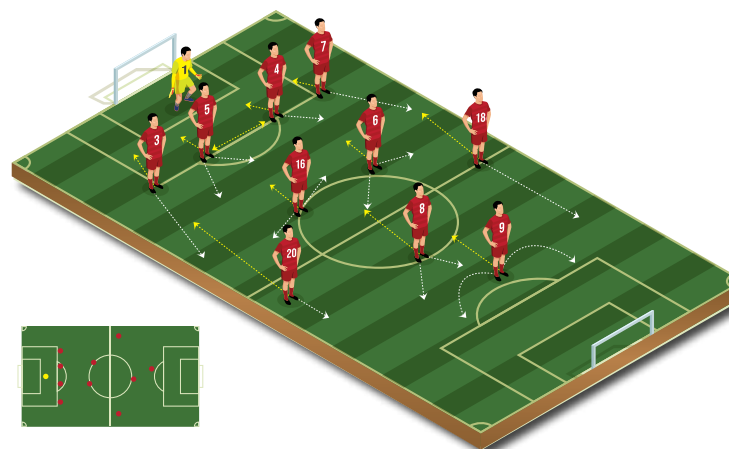
MIDFIELDER

6	KAMEL HMEISHEH	01/01/1998
8	ABDUL KADER ADI	08/01/1998
13	MOHAMAD AL BARRI	
14	MOHAMAD ZEID GHRIR	10/01/1998
15	SIMON AMIN	
16	KHALIL IBRAHIM	21/01/1997
17	MOHAMMAD RIHANIEH	
20	ZAKRIA HANNAN	21/08/1997

FORWARD

9	ABDUL RAHMAN BARAKAT	01/01/1998
10	MOHAMMED KAMEL KOAEH	01/01/1998
11	ANAS ALAJI	07/01/1998
12	MILAD HAMAD	01/01/1997
18	MOHAMMAD ALHALLAK	01/01/1999
19	ABDULHADI SHALHA	19/01/1999
21	ALA'A ALDIN DALI	01/01/1997

TEAM SHAPES



ATTACKING

1-2-4-3-1

DEFENDING

1-4-5-1

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-2-3-1 or 1-4-4-2 with fast transitions to deep 1-4-5-1 defensive block
- Strong, compact back line coordinated by leadership qualities of No 5 Arnaout
- Deep ball winning the cue for fast counters on wings; 3 or 4 players bursting forward
- Technically equipped to build through thirds with quick ball circulation
- Also direct attacking with supply from keeper to striker No 9 Rahman
- Good diagonal switches of play; high crosses to exploit aerial power
- Well organised unit with strong team spirit and work ethic

THAILAND



COACH

AKIRA NISHINO



NATIONALITY
JAPAN

STATISTICS



Best Player(s)

- 11 ANON**
- 17 SUPHANAT**
- 1 KORRAPHAT**
- 10 SUPACHOK**



Total goals

7

- 13 JAROENSAK (3)
- 17 SUPHANAT (2)
- 11 ANON (1)
- 10 SUPACHOK (1)

SQUAD DATE OF BIRTH

GOALKEEPER

1 KORRAPHAT NAREECHAN	10/07/1997
20 KIADTISAK CHAODON	19/07/1999
23 SUPAWAT YOKAKUL	10/02/2000

DEFENDER

2 THITAWEE AKSORNSRI	08/11/1997
3 THITATHORN AKSORNSRI	08/11/1997
4 CHATCHAI SAENGDAO	01/11/1997
5 SHINNAPHAT LEEAOH	02/02/1997
12 MEECHOK MARHASARANU	12/12/1997
14 PEERAWAT AKKRATUM	03/12/1998
15 SARINGKAN PROMSUPA	29/03/1997

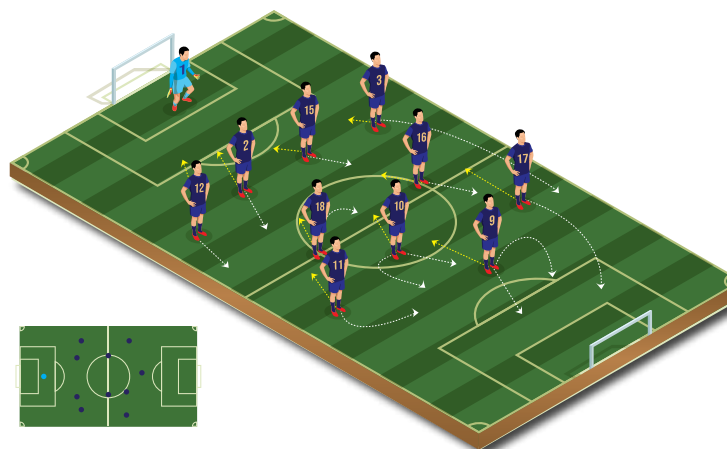
MIDFIELDER

6 AIRFAN DOLOH	26/01/2001
7 WISARUT IMURA	18/10/1997
8 WORACHIT KANITSRIBUMPHEN	24/08/1997
10 SUPACHOK SARACHAT	22/05/1998
11 ANON AMORNLETSAK	06/11/1997
13 JAROENSAK WONGGORN	18/05/1997
16 SORAWIT PANTHONG	20/02/1997
18 KRITSADA KAMAN	18/03/1999
21 KANNARIN THAWORNSAK	27/05/1997
22 BEN DAVIES	24/11/2000

FORWARD

9 SUPACHAI CHAIDED	01/12/1998
17 SUPHANAT MUEANTA	02/08/2002
19 NANTHAWAT SUANKAEO	12/08/1998

TEAM SHAPES



ATTACKING
1-2-4-4

DEFENDING
1-4-5-1

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-2-3-1 or 1-4-4-2; 1-4-5-1 defence; sometimes 1-5-3-2 with midfielder back
- Fast attacking with forward runs, penetrating passes, combinations in final third
- Wingers cut backs in to attack goal or delivering low crosses/cut backs from wide
- Fast transitions to defence; pressure on ball + retreat into compact block
- Well organised back line; centre backs opening play with long diagonals
- No 1 Korrraphat influential keeper; crucial saves, active in build up
- Team with high levels of pace, dribbling skills, winning mentality



COACH

MACIEJ SKORZA



NATIONALITY
POLAND

STATISTICS



Best Player(s)

7 ZAYED
10 JASSIM
13 ABDALLA



Total goals

4

5 KHALIFA (1)
7 ZAYED (3)

SQUAD DATE OF BIRTH

GOALKEEPER

1	MOHAMED HASAN ALSHAMSI	4/1/1997
17	KHALID ABDULRAHMAN	18/04/1997
22	ABDULLRAHMAN ALAMERI	30/04/1998

DEFENDER

2	HAMDAN NASIR ALBAROUD	24/04/1997
5	KHALIFA MUBARAK ALHAMMADI	7/11/1998
3	MOHAMMED ALI ALMAHRI	27/04/1997
12	KHALED EBRAHEIM ALDHANHANI	17/01/1997
14	ABDELRAHMAN SALEH KHAMIS	3/6/1999
23	SAEED ALI SUWAIDAN	19/05/1997

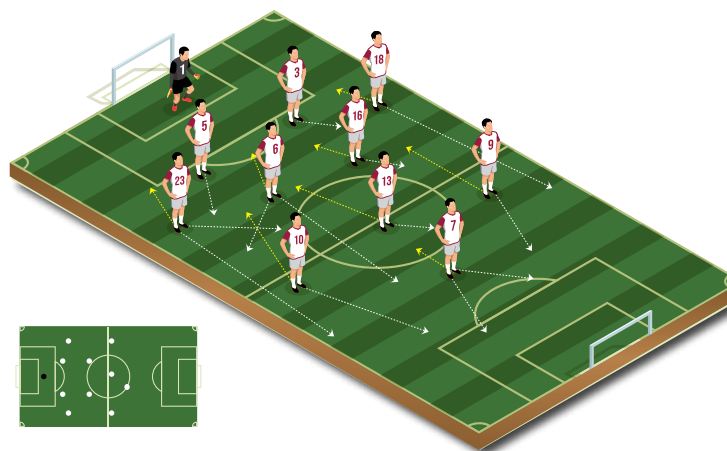
MIDFIELDER

4	MOHAMAD OMAR ALATTAS	5/8/1997
6	MAJID IBRAHIM SALIM	14/10/1997
8	TAHNOON HAMDAN ALZAABI	10/4/1999
9	ALI SALEH	22/01/2000
10	JASSIM YAQOOB ALBALOOSHI	16/03/1997
13	ABDALLA RAMADAN BEKHEET	7/3/1998
15	KHALFAN HASSAN AL HAMADI	7/1/1999
16	YAHIA NADER ELSHARIF	11/9/1998
18	MAJID RASHID ALMEHRZI	16/05/2000
20	YAHYA ALI ALGHASSANI	18/04/1998
21	EID KHAMIS ALNUAIMI	20/05/1999

FORWARD

7	ZAYED ABDULLA ALAMERI	14/01/1997
11	MOHAMED RASHID ALHAMMADI	11/5/1997
19	ALI EID	1/3/1998

TEAM SHAPES



ATTACKING
1-3-4-3

DEFENDING
1-5-4-1

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-2-3-1; pressure on ball during retreat into 1-4-5-1 defensive block
- Good individual technique, composed of short passing combination game
- Ability to change tempo suddenly, switch play with long diagonals
- Rapid defence to attack transitions; good off the ball movements, passing options
- Compact defending, closing down spaces; two dominant centre backs
- Attacking full backs; No 7 Alameri a skilful, mobile central attacker
- Composure, good positioning, leadership by goalkeeper No 1 Alshamsi

UZBEKISTAN



COACH

LJUBINKO DRULOVIC



NATIONALITY
SERBIA

STATISTICS



Best Player(s)

- 23 BOZOROV**
- 6 GANIEV**
- 3 KHOJIAKBAR**
- 19 ILKHOMJON**



Total goals

9

- 2 KOBILOV (3)
- 8 TUKHTASINOV (2)
- 10 ABDIXOLIKOV (1)
- 19 ALIJANOV (1)
- 23 BOZOROV (1)
- 9 YAKHSHIBOEV (1)

SQUAD DATE OF BIRTH

GOALKEEPER

1	ABDUVAKHID NEMATOV	20/03/2001
12	MASHKURJON MUKHAMMADJONOV	21/02/1999
21	NIZOMIDDIN ZIYAVUTDINOV	25/04/1998

DEFENDER

2	ISLONJON KOBILOV	01/06/1997
3	KHOJIAKBAR ALIJONOV	19/04/1997
5	DILSHOD SAITOV	02/02/1999
7	SHAROF MUKHITDINOV	14/07/1997
9	JASURBEK YAKHSHIBOEV	24/06/1999
13	SHERZOD NASRULLAEV	23/07/1998
15	OYBEK RUSTAMOV	02/04/1997
19	ILKHOMJON ALIJANOV	03/05/1998
20	KHUSNIDDIN ALIKULOV	04/04/1999

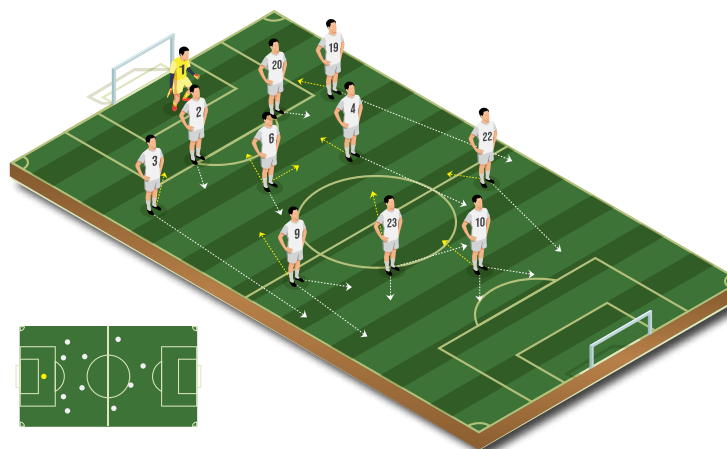
MIDFIELDER

4	ABDULLA ABDULLAEV	01/09/1997
6	AZIZ GANIEV	22/02/1998
8	NURILLO TUKHTASINOV	19/02/1997
14	ABRORBEK ISMOILOV	08/01/1998
17	ISLONJON KENJABAEV	01/09/1999
18	DOSTON IBRAGIMOV	23/01/1997
22	SANJAR KODIRKULOV	27/05/1997
23	OYBEK BOZOROV	07/08/1997

FORWARD

10	BOBIR ABDIXOLIKOV	23/04/1997
11	MIRJAKHON MIRAKHMADOV	15/07/1997
16	AMONOV AZIZBEK	30/10/1997

TEAM SHAPES



ATTACKING

1-2-4-4

DEFENDING

1-4-5-1

KEY FEATURES

- 1-4-2-3-1 with genuine wingers; fast transition to solid 1-4-4-1-1 defending
- Possession game with composed passing, with excellent link up play between lines
- No 4 Abdullaev, No 6 Ganiev controlled tempo, switching play from flank to flank
- No 23 Bozorov the attacking catalyst with pace and solo skills as shadow striker
- Full backs No 3 Alijonov, No 19 Alijanov over/underlapped with power and guile
- Dangerous solo runs, cut backs by wingers No 9 Yakhshiboev, No 22 Kodirkulov
- Immediate press on the ball carrier after losing possession; quick counters often with solo runs

VIETNAM



COACH

PARK HANG-SEO

NATIONALITY
KOREA REPUBLIC



STATISTICS



Best Player(s)

22 TIEN LINH
19 QUANG HAI



Total goals

1

22 TIEN LINH
(1)

SQUAD DATE OF BIRTH

GOALKEEPER

1	B TIEN DUNG	28/02/1997
18	NGUYEN VAN TOAN	26/11/1999
23	Y ELI NIE	08/01/2001

DEFENDER

2	DO THANH THINH	18/08/1998
3	HUYNH TAN SINH	04/06/1998
4	HO TAN TAI	06/11/1997
6	LE NGOC BAO	29/03/1998
16	NGUYEN THANH CHUNG	08/09/1997
20	BUI HOANG VIET ANH	01/01/1999
21	TRAN DINH TRONG	25/04/1997

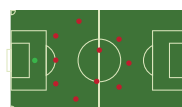
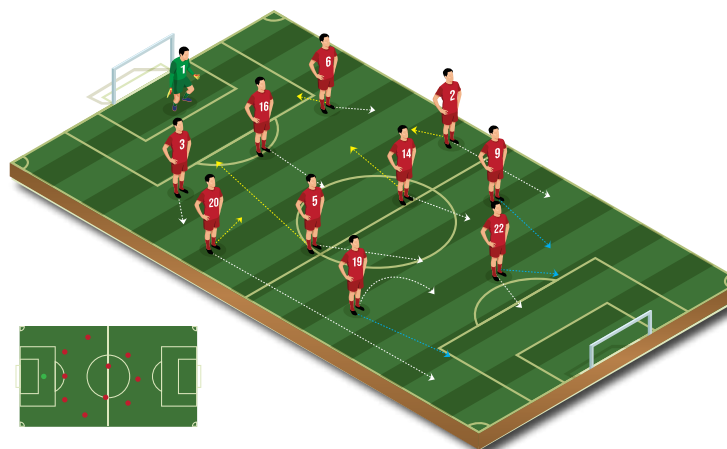
MIDFIELDER

5	NGUYEN DUC CHIEN	24/08/1998
7	TRIEU VIET HUNG	19/01/1997
8	TRAN THANH SON	30/12/1997
10	NGUYEN HUU THANG	19/05/2000
11	NGUYEN TRONG HUNG	03/10/1997
12	TRUONG VAN THAI QUY	22/08/1997
14	NGUYEN HOANG DUC	11/01/1998
15	BUI DUNG	23/11/1998
19	NGUYEN QUANG HAI	12/04/1997

FORWARD

9	HA DUC CHINH	22/09/1997
13	MANH DUNG NHAM	12/04/2000
17	TRAN BAO TOAN	14/07/2000
22	NGUYEN TIEN LINH	20/10/1997

TEAM SHAPES



ATTACKING
1-3-4-3

DEFENDING
1-5-4-1

KEY FEATURES

- 1-3-4-3 with fast transitions to 1-5-4-1 defence; fierce pressure on ball carrier
- Fluent construction through thirds with assured combination play
- Also fast collective counters with as many as six players pushing forward
- Strong defending with front three the first line of compact, disciplined unit
- High level of individual skill; good passing, switches of play, long range shooting
- Wing backs active in supporting attacks, delivering crosses
- Excellent fitness; fluid movement, intensity, determination, mental strength



STAR SELECTION



GOALKEEPER



SONG BEOM-KEUN (KOR)

DEFENDER



HASSAN AL-TAMBAKTI (KSA)

MIDFIELDER



AZIZJON GANIEV (UZB)



WON DU-JAE (KOR)

FORWARD



SUPHANAT MUENTA (THA)



RENO PISCOPO (AUS)



LEE DONG-JAE (KOR)

TOURNAMENT RESULTS



TOURNAMENT RESULTS

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
AUSTRALIA	3	1	2	0	4	3	1	5
THAILAND	3	1	1	1	7	3	4	4
IRAQ	3	0	3	0	4	4	0	3
BAHRAIN	3	0	2	1	3	8	-5	2

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
08/01/2020	IRAQ	1-1 (0-0)	AUSTRALIA
08/01/2020	THAILAND	5-0 (1-0)	BAHRAIN
11/01/2020	BAHRAIN	2-2 (1-0)	IRAQ
11/01/2020	AUSTRALIA	2-1 (1-1)	THAILAND
14/01/2020	THAILAND	1-1 (1-0)	IRAQ
14/01/2020	AUSTRALIA	1-1 (1-1)	BAHRAIN

GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
KOREA REPUBLIC	3	3	0	0	5	2	3	9
UZBEKISTAN	3	1	1	1	4	3	1	4
IR IRAN	3	1	1	1	3	3	0	4
CHINA PR	3	0	0	3	0	4	-4	0

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
09/01/2020	UZBEKISTAN	1-1 (1-0)	IR IRAN
09/01/2020	KOREA REPUBLIC	1-0 (0-0)	CHINA PR
12/01/2020	IR IRAN	1-2 (0-2)	KOREA REPUBLIC
12/01/2020	CHINA PR	0-2 (0-1)	UZBEKISTAN
15/01/2020	UZBEKISTAN	1-2 (1-1)	KOREA REPUBLIC
15/01/2020	CHINA PR	0-1 (0-0)	IR IRAN

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
SAUDI ARABIA	3	2	1	0	3	1	2	7
SYRIA	3	1	1	1	4	4	0	4
QATAR	3	0	3	0	3	3	0	3
JAPAN	3	0	1	2	3	5	-2	1

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
09/01/2020	QATAR	2-2 (2-1)	SYRIA
09/01/2020	JAPAN	1-2 (0-0)	SAUDI ARABIA
12/01/2020	SAUDI ARABIA	0-0 (0-0)	QATAR
12/01/2020	SYRIA	2-1 (1-1)	JAPAN
15/01/2020	QATAR	1-1 (0-0)	JAPAN
15/01/2020	SAUDI ARABIA	1-0 (0-0)	SYRIA

GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
UAE	3	1	2	0	3	1	2	5
JORDAN	3	1	2	0	3	2	1	5
DPR KOREA	3	1	0	2	3	5	-2	3
VIETNAM	3	0	2	1	1	2	-1	2

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
09/01/2020	VIETNAM	0-0 (0-0)	UAE
09/01/2020	DPR KOREA	1-2 (0-1)	JORDAN
12/01/2020	UAE	2-0 (2-0)	DPR KOREA
12/01/2020	JORDAN	0-0 (0-0)	VIETNAM
15/01/2020	VIETNAM	1-2 (1-1)	DPR KOREA
15/01/2020	JORDAN	1-1 (0-1)	UAE

QUARTER-FINALS

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
18/01/2020	SAUDI ARABIA	1-0 (0-0)	THAILAND
18/01/2020	AUSTRALIA	1-0 a.e.t. (0-0,0-0)	SYRIA
19/01/2020	KOREA REPUBLIC	2-1 (1-0)	JORDAN
19/01/2020	UAE	1-5 (1-3)	UZBEKISTAN

SEMI-FINALS

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
22/01/2020	SAUDI ARABIA	1-0 (0-0)	UZBEKISTAN
22/01/2020	AUSTRALIA	0-2 (0-0)	KOREA REPUBLIC

3rd / 4th PLACING

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
25/01/2020	AUSTRALIA	1-0 (0-0)	UZBEKISTAN

FINAL

Date	Team A	Score	Team B
26/01/2020	KOREA REPUBLIC	1-0 a.e.t. (0-0,0-0)	SAUDI ARABIA

REFEREES



AFC MATCH OFFICIALS

REFEREES

Christopher Beath	AUS
Shaun Evans	AUS
Nawaf Abdulla Ghayyath Shukralla	BHR
Fu Ming	CHN
Ma Ning	CHN
Liu Kwok Man	HKG
Alireza Faghani	IRN
Ali Sabeh Adday Al-Qaysi	IRQ
Mohanad Qasim Eesee Sarray	IRQ
Adham Mohammad Tumah Makhadmeh	JOR
Ahmed Faisal Mohammad Alali	JOR
Iida Jumpei	JPN
Kimura Hiroyuki	JPN
Sato Ryuji	JPN
Tojo Minoru	JPN
Kim Hee Gon	KOR
Kim Jong Hyeok	KOR
Ko Hyung Jin	KOR
Turki Mohammed A Alkudhayr	KSA
Mohd Amirul Izwan Bin Yaacob	MAS
Ahmed Abu Bakar Said Al Kaf	OMA
Abdulla Ali A A Al-Marri	QAT
Abdulrahman Ibrahim Y J Al-Jassim	QAT
Khamis Mohamed K A Al-Kuwari	QAT
Khamis Mohammed S A Al-Marri	QAT
Muhammad Taqi Aljaafari Bin Jahari	SIN
Hettikankanamge Crishantha Dilan Perera	SRI
Hanna Hattab	SYR
Sivakorn Pu-Udom	THA
Ammar Ali Abdulla Jumaa Aljneibi	UAE
Mohammed Abdulla Hassan Mohamed	UAE
Omar Mohamed Ahmed Hassan Alali	UAE
Valentin Kovalenko	UZB
Ilgiz Tantashev	UZB

ASSISTANT REFEREES

Anton Shchetinin	AUS
Ashley Warwick Beecham	AUS
Mohamed Jaafar Mohamed Salman	BHR
Abdulla Saleh Abdulla Mohsen Alrowaimi	BHR
Cao Yi	CHN
Shi Xiang	CHN
Abolfazli Mohammadreza	IRN
Mohammad Reza Mansouri	IRN
Ahmad Moannes Nadi Alroalle	JOR
Mohammad Mustafa Hassan Alkalaf	JOR
Mihara Jun	JPN
Yamauchi Hiroshi	JPN
Park Sangjun	KOR
Yoon Kwangyeol	KOR
Alabakry, Mohammed Maki A	KSA
Alshammari Khalaf Zaid M	KSA
Al-Amri Abu Bakar Salim Mahad	OMA
Rashid Hamed Ali Al Ghaithi	OMA
Saoud Ahmed S A Almaqaleh	QAT
Taleb Salem H A Al-Marri	QAT
Ronnie Koh Min Kiat (Ronnie Gu Minjie)	SIN
Deniye Gedara Palitha Parakkrama Hemethunga	SRI
Hasan Mohamed Hasan Abdulla Almahri	UAE
Mohamed Ahmed Yousef Abdulla Alhammadi	UAE
Timur Gaynullin	UZB
Andrey Tsapenko	UZB

STAND-BY ASSISTANT REFEREES

Mohd Yusri Bin Muhamad	MAS
Rawut Nakarit	THA



A total of 62 Match Officials from the AFC Elite Panel were appointed for the AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020, including two stand-by Assistant Referees.

The pool included 34 VAR-licensed Referees from 19 Member Associations who were selected to support the system's full implementation for the first time in an AFC competition.

Additionally, nine Referee Instructors and Assessors were appointed alongside three Fitness Instructors to provide the Match Officials with the best training and preparation.

REFEREE INSTRUCTORS

REFEREE INSTRUCTORS AND ASSESSORS

1	Hakan Anaz	AUS
2	Cheung Yim Yau	HKG
3	Ismail Adnan Ismail Alhafi	JOR
4	Kamikawa Toru	JPN
5	Saad K M Alfadhli	KUW
6	Subkhiddin Bin Mohd Salleh	MAS
7	Abdulrahman Mohammed A M Hussain	QAT
8	Chia Eng Wah John	SIN
9	Farkhad Abdullaev	UZB

REFEREE FITNESS INSTRUCTORS

1	Ganesan s/o Maniam	SIN
2	Banjar Mohammed B J Al-Dosari	QAT
3	Ravichandran Chappanimutu	MAS

SUPPORT TEAM

- Local Organisers' team: a team from The Football Association of Thailand (FAT) supported the coordination of all logistical requirements
- Players' Team: local teams took part in short matches for the Referees' practical training sessions
- Masseurs: massage therapists were on hand to provide massages to assist the Match Officials with their recovery and injury prevention strategies
- Medical Team: medical staff and an ambulance were stationed at the training venue daily to facilitate emergency and first aid treatment when required.

PRE-COMPETITION

MATCH OFFICIALS' SELECTION PROCESS

AFC ensured the highest level of officials by selecting the Continent's best Referees and Assistant Referees. Each Match Official was selected based on their:

- Technical knowledge
- Management skills
- Physical fitness
- Experience at top-level competitions (FIFA/AFC)
- Consistent high-level performances
- VAR training and experience.

PREPARATORY COURSE

The Referees and Assistant Referees participated in a five-day preparatory course from 3 to 7 January, consisting of theoretical sessions, fitness and practical training.

MATCH OFFICIALS' PREPARATION OVERVIEW



FITNESS CHECK

In addition to the official fitness tests conducted in November 2019, all Match Officials were declared physically qualified to cope with the match demands upon the successful completion of:

- Yo-Yo Intermittent Test for Referees (target: 18-8)
- Assistant Referee Intermittent Endurance Test (ARIET) for Assistant Referees (target: 15-5.6).

PRACTICAL SESSIONS

Preparatory practical sessions took place daily at the Referees' training pitch. Two teams assisted to simulate match incidents based on the instructors' training plan. Among other topics, the sessions focused on:

- VAR protocol
- Positioning and movement
- Foul recognition
- Offside recognition
- Delaying the flag.

Offside and delay flag training were further supported by a multi-angle instant feedback replay system. This four-camera system, in addition to the VAR equipment, allowed the Match Officials to review the incidents and their actions immediately, enabling them to apply the advice of the instructors in subsequent exercises.

THEORETICAL SESSIONS

Theoretical sessions were designed to further enhance the technical knowledge of the Match Officials and optimise the level of consistency in their application of the Laws of the Game.

Videos of different match situations were shown. Referees were encouraged to participate in discussion and analysis of each incident with the technical instructors to identify any ambiguity and reach a consensus.

Technical subjects were supplemented with presentations on competition administration and fitness matters ensuring that Referees were prepared for every eventuality. Topics covered throughout the course included:

TECHNICAL

- Penalty Area Incidents
- Challenges
- Handball
- Tactical Fouls
- Offside
- Offside - Delay Flag Technique (VAR)

ADMINISTRATION

- Accommodation and logistics
- Championship overview
- Match procedures
- Communication system and flags

FITNESS

- Fitness check
- Weight control
- Nutrition
- Recovery strategies
- Injury prevention

OTHER

- Integrity
- Technical Study Group



DURING COMPETITION

TEAM ARRIVAL MEETINGS

Refereeing matters were brought to the attention of teams by the Referee Technical Instructors who attended the Team Arrival Meetings (TAM) on behalf of the Referees Delegation.

The objective of the TAMs was to inform teams and team officials on all refereeing matters including players' equipment, technical area and implementation of the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) system.

PRACTICAL SESSIONS

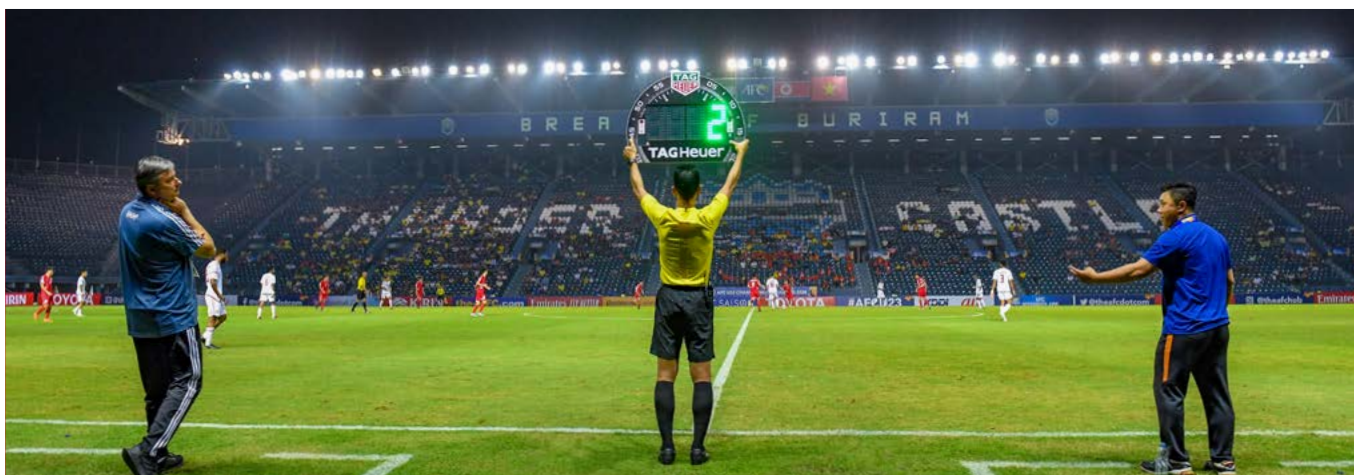
Throughout the competition, Referees took part in daily sessions. Each day consisted of fitness training, with the level of intensity varying depending on each Referee's match schedule allowing each Referee to undergo customised pre and post-match training to complement their fitness conditioning and maintenance.

Gymnasium and pool recovery sessions were also conducted to ensure the Referees stayed in top physical condition.

MATCH ASSESSMENT

A Referee assessor was appointed to each match to observe the officials' performance live at each venue. The Referee team's decisions and abilities were monitored throughout the match, allowing the assessor to provide first-hand feedback.

Additionally, a Video Referee Assessor was also assigned to analyse each match at the Referees' Match Analysis room at the official hotel. Key match incidents and potential teaching materials were identified, allowing clips to be produced post-match for the group and individual debriefing sessions the following day.



DEBRIEFING

Debriefing sessions were held after each Matchday, allowing feedback to be provided to all Referees and Assistant Referees. Any important incidents from the previous day's matches were discussed and analysed and any areas for improvement were highlighted by the Referee instructors to ensure consistency and uniformity in foul recognition and Laws of the Game interpretation.

Referees who were on assignment at different venues were able to join the session via Skype to ensure all Match Officials were provided with the necessary advice and preparation throughout the competition.

Prior to the Knockout Stage, a general debriefing took place allowing Referees to look back and discuss their performance during the Group Stage and to emphasise any areas to be focused on in the coming matches.

Furthermore, individual sessions with the assigned Referee Assessor were conducted prior to and after each match. The Assessor was able to go more in-depth with each Referee team and offer more personal advice and expertise to the officials.

TECHNICAL STUDY GROUP SESSION

On completion of the Quarter-final stage, AFC Deputy Technical Director László Szalai, representing the competition's Technical Study Group, shared technical information and tactical observations of the remaining teams.

Referees were provided with a valuable insight into what to expect in the upcoming matches such as teams' tactical approach and individual players' style and behaviour, which aided the Match Officials' preparation.

VIDEO ASSISTANT REFEREE (VAR) SYSTEM

Having made its successful debut from the Quarter-final stage of the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 in January, the AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020 was the first AFC competition to implement the VAR system in all 32 matches.

MATCH OFFICIALS' PREPARATION

All Match Officials appointed to support the implementation of the VAR were trained to the stringent standards and requirements put in place by the International Football Association Board (IFAB). VAR-licensed Referees also have a wealth of experience, ranging from the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™ to the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019, as well as at the Member Association level.

Throughout 2019, AFC Match Officials gained extensive VAR training and experience at two specialised courses in Kuala Lumpur. Held in April and July 2019, the two sessions were organised following the successful introduction of VAR from the Quarter-final stage of the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019. The aim of the courses was to:

- Expand the pool of licensed VAR Match Officials
- Train Match Officials on the protocol and practicalities of VAR
- Test Match Officials' knowledge and understanding of the VAR system.

This was achieved through the use of:

- Back-to-back practical sessions where Referees and Assistant Referees assessed live match incidents on a mobile VAR station
- Simulator sessions conducted off the pitch involving analysis of match video clips from worldwide competitions
- Video tests to prove the Match Officials' understanding of the VAR system and lessons learned from the course.

The quality of AFC VARs was also recognised globally in 2019 with fully-licensed Referees hand-picked to officiate at the following FIFA competitions:

- FIFA Women's World Cup France 2019
- FIFA U-20 World Cup Poland 2019
- FIFA U-17 World Cup Brazil 2019

This provided an opportunity for a number of Referees to gain invaluable VAR experience on the world stage.

Appointed VAR Match Officials took part in VAR-specific training during the preparatory course from from 3 to 7 January in anticipation of the opening match of the competition.

The training involved three main areas:

<p>MOBILE VAR (MVAR) TRAINING</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match scenarios staged with 22 players and a full team of Match Officials • Simulation of check and review process for the correct application of VAR protocol • Application and refinement of communication between Referee and VOR • Rotation of the various roles (Referee, VAR, AVAR) • Instant feedback by the VAR instructors
<p>VAR SIMULATOR SESSIONS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor VAR system involving staging real-life match scenarios as-live • Allowed the procedures and principles learned in theoretical sessions to be instantly put into practice • Discussion after each simulation by all participants and observers • Rotation of the various roles (Referee, VAR, AVAR) • Instant feedback by the VAR instructors
<p>THEORETICAL SESSIONS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VAR protocol – Principles, practicalities and procedures • Discussion and dialogue between Referees and Instructors

TECHNICAL SETUP

A decentralised system was implemented for the duration of the competition meaning that a Video Operations Room (VOR) was located at each venue. The VOR was positioned next to the broadcast compound at the stadium allowing for all camera feeds to be connected locally to the VAR system.

Video Operation Room

- Located at each stadium
- Reception of all camera feeds from the stadium broadcast
- Branded with official competition graphics
- Personnel setup:
 1. VAR, AVAR 1, AVAR 2
 2. Two Replay Operators
 3. One VAR Quality Control Manager

Referee Review Area

- Pyramid monitor
- Located next to the fourth official bench
- Displays VAR output screen for Referees to review incidents

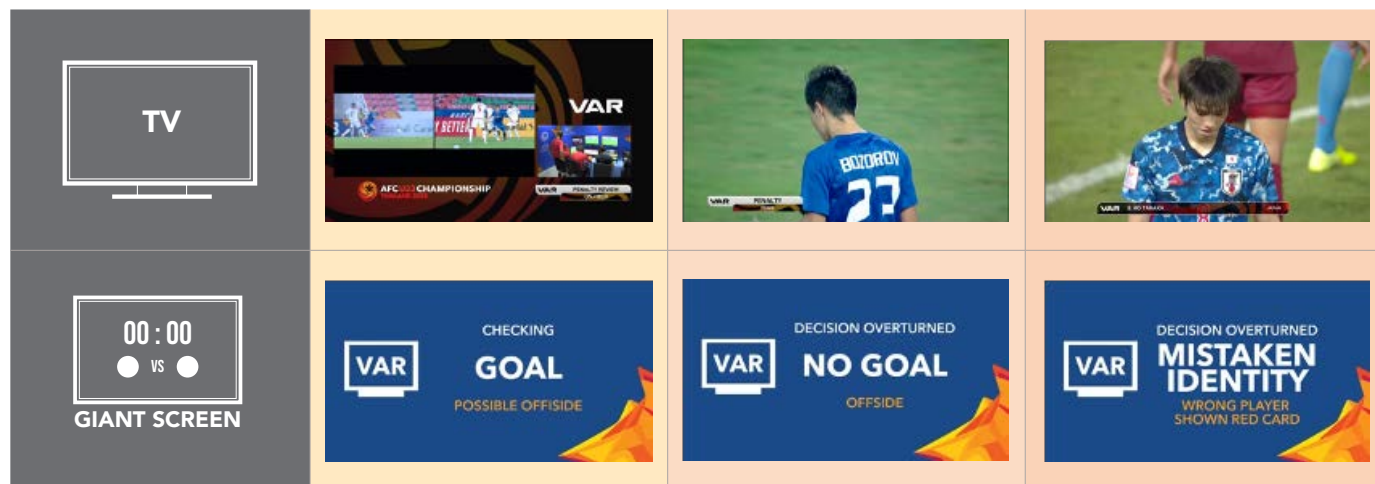
Technology Provider

- Hawk-Eye Innovations (Video & Audio)
Hawk-Eye Innovations were chosen to supply the VAR and Referee Communication systems for the AFC U23 Championship 2020. They are the leading supplier for VAR and goal-line technology solutions worldwide. Major partners include FIFA (FIFA World Cup Russia 2018, FIFA Women's World Cup 2019, FIFA U-20 World Cup Poland 2019, FIFA Club World Cup Qatar 2019) as well as domestic leagues in Australia, China PR, England, France, and Germany.

COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Various communication channels were put in place to facilitate the smooth operation of the VAR system between stakeholders.

Situated in each VOR, a CIS tablet was operated by the AFC Quality Control Manager. The tablet allowed information on the status of any VAR reviews to be instantly shared with broadcast and infotainment teams. The relevant graphics were then displayed on the stadium giant screen and on the tv broadcast to relay the information to spectators.



VAR IMPLEMENTATION STATISTICS

There was a total of 179 checks in 32 matches, an average of 5.6 checks per match:

- 41% consisted of goal/offences leading up to a goal
- 30% consisted of penalty area incidents
- 29% consisted of challenges/tackles

VAR CHECKS	
Total penalty area incidents	54
Total goals	73
Total challenges/tackles	52
Total mistaken identity situations	0
TOTAL CHECKS	179
Average checks per match	5.59



There was a total of 10 reviews in 32 matches, an average 0.3 reviews per match/1 review every 3.2 matches:

- 7 on-field reviews (OFR): 6 decisions changed, 1 confirmed
- 3 only VAR reviews (OVAR): 3 decisions changed

VAR REVIEWS	TOTAL	DECISIONS CHANGED	DECISIONS CONFIRMED
TOTAL REVIEWS	10	9	1
On Field Reviews	7	6	1
Only VAR Reviews	3	3	/
Penalty area incidents reviewed	7	6	1
Goals reviewed	1	1	0
Encroachment by GK in PK reviewed	0	0	/
Potential red card incidents reviewed	2	2	0
Mistaken identity situations reviewed	0	0	/
1 Review every # matches	3.20		
MATCHES PLAYED	32		

A total of 12 penalty kicks were awarded (11 scored, 1 missed):

- 54 penalty area incidents were checked, 7 were reviewed. 6 decisions were changed, 1 confirmed
- 5 penalty kicks were awarded after a VAR review, while 7 were originally awarded by the Referee
- 1 penalty kick was cancelled after a VAR review (the incident occurred outside the penalty area)

PENALTY AREA INCIDENTS SUMMARY			
Number of Penalty Kicks Awarded	12		
	TOTAL	DECISIONS CHANGED	DECISIONS CONFIRMED
Penalty area incidents reviewed	7	6	1
Penalties awarded after VAR review	5		
Penalties awarded by the Referee (with and without confirmation after OFR)	7	Confirmed after OFR	1
		No VAR review	6
Penalties cancelled after VAR review	1		
No penalty decision confirmed after VAR review	0		
Penalty missed but not given due to attacking offence in APP	0		

A total of 69 goals were scored and 4 goals were disallowed:

- 69 goals were checked and confirmed by the VAR
- 1 goal was disallowed after a VAR review (offside), while 3 were originally disallowed by the Referee

A total of 4 red cards were issued (2 direct red cards, 2 after 2nd yellow):

- 52 challenges/tackles were checked
- 1 red card was issued after a VAR review

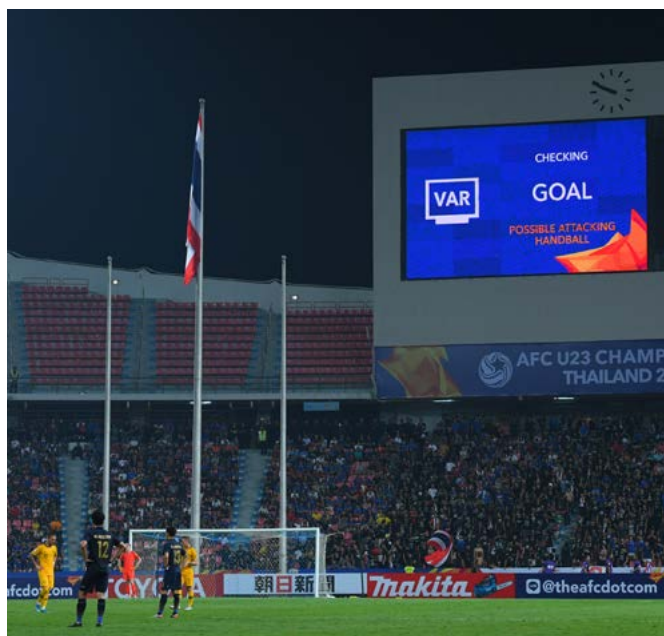
GOALS SCORED	69
Goals checked	73
Goals checked and confirmed	69
Goals reviewed and confirmed	0
Goals awarded but disallowed by VAR	1
Goals originally disallowed but awarded by VAR	0
Goals disallowed without VAR	3

10 VAR INTERVENTIONS	
7 on-field reviews	3 only VAR reviews (factual)

AVERAGE VAR INTERVENTIONS
1 every 3.2 matches

9 MAJOR DECISIONS CHANGED DUE TO VAR INTERVENTION	
Penalty kicks awarded	4 OFR, 1 OVAR
Penalty kicks cancelled	1 OVAR (outside penalty area)
Goals disallowed	1 OVAR (offside)
Red cards shown	1 OFR

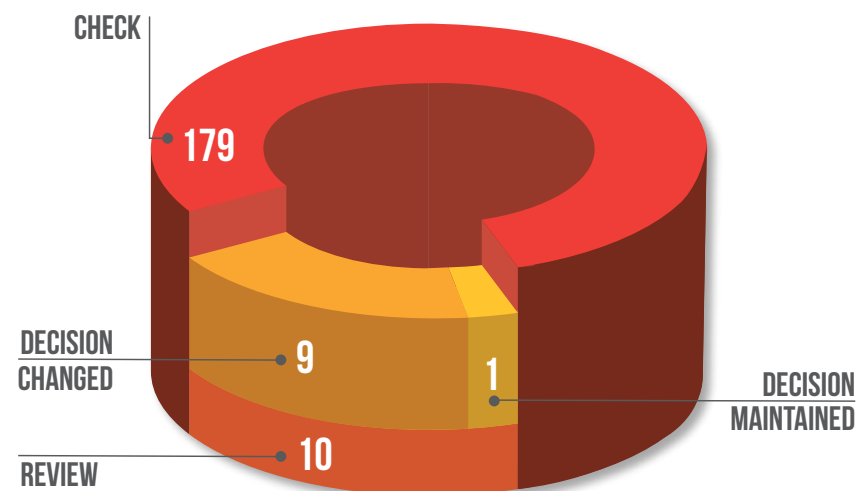
DECISION-MAKING ACCURACY		TIME LOST DUE TO VAR INTERVENTION (*)
With VAR intervention	98.84%	63 seconds
Without VAR intervention	94.22%	



(*) Time for VAR review is calculated from the moment the Referee delays the restart of play until the moment the Referee shows the final decision

VAR INTERVENTIONS BY MATCH/REFEREE

Match	Match Officials	Review	Incident
M4 - JPN vs KSA	REF: Christopher Beath (AUS) VAR: Shaun Evans (AUS)	OFR	Penalty Kick Confirmed
M7 - VIE vs UAE	REF: Muhammad Taqi (SIN) VAR: Fu Ming (CHN)	OVAR	Penalty Kick Cancelled
M11 - SYR vs JPN	REF: Ali Sabah Al-Qaysi (IRQ) VAR: Christopher Beath (AUS)	OFR	Penalty Kick Awarded
M14 - CHN vs UZB	REF: Abdulrahman Al-Jassim (QAT) VAR: Abdulla Ali A A Al-Marri (QAT)	OFR	Penalty Kick Awarded
M17 - THA vs IRQ	REF: Adham Makhadmeh (JOR) VAR: Muhammad Taqi (SIN)	OFR	Penalty Kick Awarded
M20 - KSA vs SYR	REF: Crishantha Dilan Perera (SRI) VAR: Fu Ming (CHN)	OFR	Yellow Card Issued
M19 - QAT vs JPN	REF: Muhammad Taqi (SIN) VAR: Ma Ning (CHN)	OFR	Red Card Issued
M26 - KSA vs THA	REF: Ahmed Al Kaf (OMA) VAR: Christopher Beath (AUS)	OVAR	Penalty Kick Awarded
M28 - UAE vs UZB	REF: Fu Ming (CHN) VAR: Shaun Evans (AUS)	OFR	Penalty Kick Awarded
M30 - KSA vs UZB	REF: Sato Ryuji (JPN) VAR: Kimura Hiroyuki (JPN)	OVAR	Goal Disallowed



TECHNICAL SUMMARY

GENERAL PERFORMANCE

The Referee Assessors and Instructors' team, through their match reports and close monitoring, rated the Match Officials' performance as good (between 8.0 and 8.4) or above in 89.6% of the cases. With VAR intervention, this number increased to 96.9%.

The continuous training, match debriefings and other resources provided for the Referees contributed significantly to the high standard of refereeing throughout the tournament.

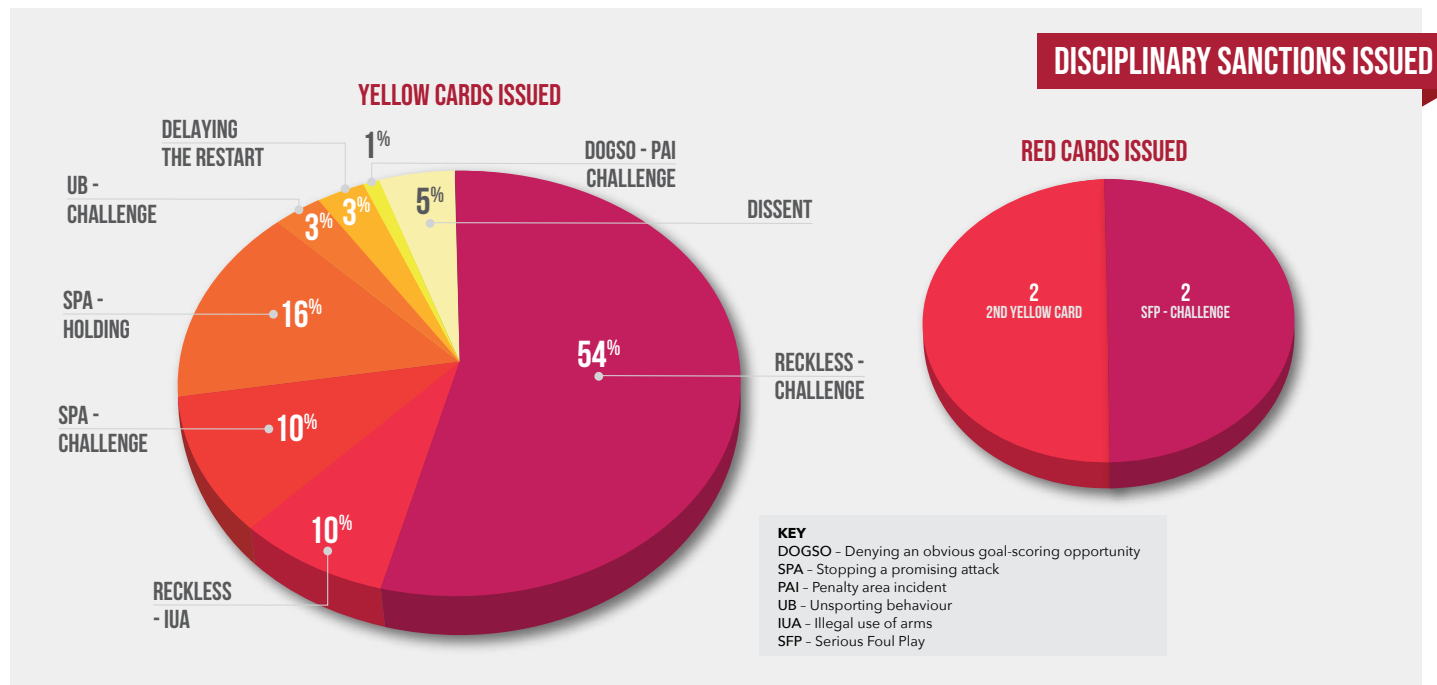
The main highlight was the successful implementation of the VAR system in every match of the competition.



GENERAL MANAGEMENT

A total of 102 disciplinary sanctions were issued at the AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020, of which 98 were yellow cards. Two direct red cards were shown while a further two red cards were given after a second caution.

There was a match average of 3.06 yellow cards and 0.125 red cards. There was an overall reduction of average cautions and expulsions per match, compared to both the 2018 and 2016 editions.





EXTRA-TIME

DIGITAL STATISTICS



IMPRESSIONS

2020: 17.9 MIL
2018: 10.4 MIL

NEW FOLLOWERS

2020: 4,187
2018: 6,289

VIEWS

2020: 12.5 MIL
2018: 11.46 MIL

MINUTES WATCHED

2020: 19.89 MIL
2018: 38.53 MIL

TOTAL ENGAGEMENTS

2020: 875K
2018: 572K

NEW SUBSCRIBERS

2020: 24.1K
2018: 29.8K

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REACH
2020: 30.7 MIL
2018: 61 MIL

REACH (THAI)
2020: 1.82 MIL
2018: -

IMPRESSIONS
2020: 52.8 MIL
2018: 17.8 MIL

NEW FOLLOWERS
2020: 17,350
2018: 8,663

VIDEO VIEWS
2020: 2.4 MIL
2018: 16.9 MIL

ENGAGEMENTS
2020: 3.75 MIL
2018: 19,740

POST LIKES
2020: 3.52 MIL
2018: 1.28 MIL

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PAGEVIEWS
2020: 5.81 MIL
2018: 3.8 MIL

COMPETITIONS COMMITTEE

NAME	POSITION	COUNTRY
DR TRAN QUOC TUAN	CHAIRPERSON	VIETNAM
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MAJ. GEN. KHIEV SAMETH	MEMBER	CAMBODIA
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WITHAYA LAOHAKUL	MEMBER	THAILAND
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NAME	POSITION	COUNTRY
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CHARLES CHEUNG YIM YAU	MEMBER	HONG KONG
RAVISHANKAR JAYARAMAN	MEMBER	INDIA
HEDAYAT MOMBINI	MEMBER	IR IRAN
YOSHIMI OGAWA	MEMBER	JAPAN
EUN AH HONG	MEMBER	KOREA REPUBLIC
SAAD AL FADHLI	MEMBER	KUWAIT
MAHMOUD EL RABAHAH	MEMBER	LEBANON
MARAI ALAWAJI	MEMBER	SAUDI ARABIA
JOHN CHIA	MEMBER	SINGAPORE
ALI HAMAD AL BEDWAWI	MEMBER	UAE
RAVSHAN IRMATOV	MEMBER	UZBEKISTAN
GEN. FAROUK BOUZO	MEMBER	SYRIA

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