FIFA U-20 WORLD CUP 2015

Giants stumble as Qatar, Myanmar make history

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Qatar became Asian U-19 kings for the first time on Thursday by defeating three-time champions Korea DPR 1-0 in the 2014 AFC U-19 Championship final at the Thuwunna Youth Training Centre Stadium in Yongon, Myanmar. Akram Afif came off the bench to score the match and tournament winning-goal on 50 minutes as the west Asians achieved milestone success.

"I'm very happy for this incredible achievement," an excited coach Felix Sanchez said. "Especially for the players, who have shown a great attitude throughout. What we achieved is amazing. The players did everything to win this championship for themselves and for the country of Qatar.

"We played six difficult games and with each game we faced different tough scenarios, but the team showed hard work and came back each time."

As the Spaniard said, the Qataris pulled off a streak of impressive results as they remained undefeated en route to the tournament finale. In the group opener, Sanchez's side had to fight back to salvage a 3-1 win against Korea DPR. After coming from behind again to draw 1-1 against Iraq, they dispatched Oman 2-0 to set up a quarter-final meeting with 1985 winners China PR.

With a place at next year's FIFA U-20 World Cup New Zealand up for grab, the Qataris, runners-up at Australia 1981, emerged 4-2 winners in an action-filled encounter as they sealed their return to the global showpiece. The next semi-final clash against hosts and tournament surprise packages Myanmar proved tough, with only Serigne Abdou's stoppage-time strike sealing their 3-2 triumph.

Fresh gems unearthed

All the more significant was how the Qataris performed as their young talents dazzled through their deft skills and goals. Striking prodigy Ahmed Al Sadi finished as the tournament top-scorer with five goals, including netting both goals against Oman and the opener against China. The Belgium-based forward raised quite a few eyebrows through his pace, precision and sharp nose for goal.

Akram Afif, meanwhile, made his name as the tournament's super-sub after scoring all his four goals as substitute. And the Qatari fans are aware that they wouldn't have made it thus far without captain Ahmad Moein, who provided drive from midfield and leadership throughout as he earned the tournament's Most Valued Player award.