



REUTERS

South Korea knock out Italy with golden goal winner

By Gideon Long

TAEJON, South Korea, June 18 (Reuters) - Ahn Jung-hwan headed a golden goal winner to put co-hosts South Korea into the quarter-finals of the World Cup with a 2-1 win over 10-man Italy Tuesday after one of the most dramatic matches of the tournament.

With a penalty shootout looming, Ahn, who had missed a penalty after five minutes of normal time, leapt high to glance in the 116th minute winner after Italy had looked likely winners for much of the match.

Two minutes from normal time, the raucous crowd of 39,000 had been sent into raptures when Seol Ki-hyeon latched on to a Christian Panucci error to rap the ball into the right-hand bottom corner for an equalizer.

"I'm very, very happy, I'm very satisfied," said Korean coach Guus Hiddink. "They are one of the superpowers of football. I think this is unique what the Korean players have done so far."

Italian coach Giovanni Trapattoni said: "The winners should have been Italy. We had many more chances -- but everybody saw what happened."

Before this tournament, Korea had not won a game in five previous World Cups and this shock victory mirrors the 1-0 win by North Korea over Italy in the 1966 tournament in England.

The defeat was pure agony for Italy who had Francesco Totti controversially sent off for diving in extra time as they chased a final eighth berth and a clash with Spain.

The Italians lost the European Championship final two years ago to France on a golden goal also after a late equalizer in normal time. They have also been knocked

out of their last three World Cups including the 1994 final against Brazil on penalties.

A simple 18th minute headed goal from Christian Vieri looked to have put three-times champions Italy through when he met a corner from the left at the near post to net.

Korea were rueing a missed fifth-minute penalty kick by Ahn -- Korea's only Italian-based player, with Perugia -- whose drive was saved by keeper Gianluigi Buffon diving to his right. Italy failed to quiet the partisan crowd but they seemed to have drawn the sting of Korea until Seol pounced in the area as Panucci fluffed a clearance with a quarter-final meeting with Spain beckoning for his country.

A minute later, Vieri had the chance to snatch the victory for Italy but he skied high from a couple of meters out as Korea were caught on the break.

In extra time dominated by Korea, Francesco Totti went tumbling in the area under a challenge but instead of awarding a penalty as the Italians hoped, the referee booked him for a second time and he was controversially dismissed.

Korea had been desperately hoping to reach the last eight and trump co-hosts and arch rivals Japan who lost 1-0 to Turkey earlier in the day.

But they had largely failed to recreate the quicksilver soccer which had brought them through the group stage of the tournament but were given the opportunity for a flying start.

Ecuadorian referee Byron Moreno judged Panucci to have tugged Seol to the ground as they jostled for position at a corner kick.

Ahn hit his spotkick low and hard to Buffon's right but the big goalkeeper got down well and parried the ball to safety.

Vieri made them pay 13 minutes later, escaping his marker to find the net with a trademark goal-poacher's header at the near post. His goal takes his World Cup finals tally to nine, equaling an Italian record.

The penalty miss, and the Italian goal, appeared to take the wind out of the Koreans, although it did little to stem the incessant chanting and drumming from almost 40,000 red-shirted fans in Taejon's World Cup stadium.

Italy captain Paolo Maldini marshalled the Italian back line superbly and Giovanni Trapattoni's team hardly seemed to miss the absence of the injured Alessandro

Nesta and suspended Fabio Cannavaro.

Korea's best chance came early in the second half when Ahn skewed a shot over the freekick after the Koreans had surprised the Italian centerbacks with a quick freekick.

Italian leftback Francesco Coco played most of the match with a bandaged head after receiving a nasty gash above his left eye just before the break. Coco was accidentally elbowed in the face by team mate Damiano Tomassi as the two players went up to defend a corner.

© Reuters 2002