

Another nightmare loss to ROK

CHINA CHOKES IN FRONT OF HUGE CROWD OF HOMETEAM SUPPORTERS

By QIU QUANLIN
CHINA DAILY

GUANGZHOU — China's nightmare of losing to its perennial rival, the Republic of Korea, continued on Monday as the host nation's U-21 men's soccer team was blanked 3-0 by the ROK at the Asian Games.

The loss, in front of 43,000 fans at Tianhe Stadium, has already triggered calls from some media to fire the national squad.

But head coach Sun Wei said "it is not the right time" to dismiss the squad, even though his future depends on the team's success.

"From my understanding, fans are not calling to dismiss the team. They are encouraging the boys to play better," said Sun.

"The loss is of great importance to helping them grow up more quickly in their soccer careers.

"Personally, the tournament in the Asian Games, whether we win or lose, is just part of my coaching career. It (the possibility of leaving) cannot be decided by me, but by the soccer authorities," the coach added.

Sun said that China had a "relatively huge gap in strength" against the ROK.

"We made some very simple mistakes in the field, especially in passing the ball. Otherwise, the result should not be such a big margin," Sun said.

China has won only one game against the ROK in the East Asian Championship since 1978.

In reply to China Daily's question about differences between the current Chinese team and previous ones, ROK head coach Hong Myung-bo said China has improved a lot over the past years.

"I can only say the Chinese team has been refined a lot, but my boys played better to win today's game," Hong said.

Kim Jung-woo opened the scoring for the ROK in the first half when AS Monaco's Park Chu-young curved a free kick into the net in the 49th minute.

Cho Young-cheol came on with an easy goal at the 59th minute when he converted a pass from the left sideline.

The loss to the ROK disappointed former national team player Peng Weiguo, who helped China win the silver



YANG SHIZHONG / CHINA DAILY

Forward Park Chu-young of the Republic of Korea goes up for a header against a Chinese player in the round of 16 of the men's soccer tournament at the 16th Asian Games on Monday.

medal in men's soccer tournament at the Hiroshima Asiad in 1994.

"I hope China can win, but I am not so confident," Peng said before the game started.

Peng said the current U-21

team has improved its form after three group matches at the Guangzhou Asiad.

"They have little experience of playing in such an international tournament; that's why they had a poor performance against Japan

in the group opener," Peng told China Daily.

The squad was branded the worst national team in China's soccer history after losing 3-0 to Japan, then rebounding to beat Kyrgyzstan 2-1 and Malaysia 3-0.

Asian shooting landscape undergoing dramatic changes

By TANG ZHE
CHINA DAILY

GUANGZHOU — Wang Yifu, head coach of Chinese shooting team, said the team's blank sheet in Sunday's matches had sounded alarming bells in the squad.

"We reflected on our losses last evening, and realized there is still a considerable gap to be made up in some events at the world-class level," Wang said.

"The Asian Games are just a mid-term examination, and discovering problems through this exam will be helpful for the 2012 London Olympics."

Though Chinese shooters rebounded to win five of eight gold medals in Monday's action, Wang admitted the shooting landscape in Asia had changed dramatically, and there are no longer easy golds up for grabs.

"The shooters from the Republic of Korea (ROK) performed quite well" said 50-year-old Wang. "The

two countries have some similarities, but we also need to learn from each other."

ROK shooters continued their fine form by grabbing three gold medals at the Aoti Shooting Range on Monday, for a total of eight, only two behind the host.

Kim Hak-man, with compatriots Kim Jong-hyun and Han Jin-seop, broke the previous Asian record (1,782 points) by three points in Monday's first event, the men's 50m rifle prone.

China finished with 1,774 points

for silver and Kazakhstan won bronze (1,771).

Kim later claimed gold in the individual 50m prone with 698.3 points to boost the ROK's shooting gold tally to seven, which tied the country's best shooting record at an Asiad.

"Normally, all of our athletes can shoot bull's eyes in training," said ROK deputy coach Byun Kyung-soo. "Shooters with stronger minds perform better in competition. Therefore, we have attached great importance to strengthening their psychological qualities."

However, champ Kim's explanation was simple.

"The biggest reason for our successful performance here is because of the time difference between the ROK and Guangzhou is only one hour," said Kim. "We didn't have any difficulties in adjusting to the time difference."

Kim said shooting was not a popular sport in the ROK.

"We have about 3,000 shooters (in the whole country), but those who have the capacity to win international medals are only about 20," said Kim.