



2006 World Cup Special



South Korea edge out 10-man Togo

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South Korea were given an almighty scare by Togo yesterday before a second-half revival earned them a 2-1 victory to launch their World Cup campaign.

Substitute Ahn Jung-hwan rifled home the winner in the 72nd minute after debutants Togo had been reduced to 10 men in their Group G clash at the Waldstadion.

Togo's preparations for their first World Cup had bordered on a soap opera, with globetrotting coach Otto Pfister quitting on Friday over a squad pay row before making a U-turn on Monday.

Confusion still reigned about who was coaching the African side in the hours leading up to kickoff and the sense of farce continued inside the stadium when the Korean anthem was played twice before Togo's was heard before the start.

Colourful contingent

Togo's colourful contingent of fans might have feared the worst but instead their team went for the Koreans in lively fashion.

Mohamed Kader Coubadja shot over from a narrow angle after 11 minutes and the French-based forward caused panic in the Korean defence every time he got the ball.

It was no surprise when he broke the deadlock after 31 minutes. Taking a pass neatly on his thigh, he sped into the right side of the penalty area, steadied himself, then fired a low shot into the corner of the net.

Curling free kick

Togo almost went further in front four minutes before halftime when Yao Senaya's curling free kick was tipped over the bar by Lee Woon-jae.

Korea coach Dick Advocaat sent on forward Ahn at the start of the second half, although it was Togo who continued to impress as Coubadja forced another fine save from Lee.

Ahn sliced a shot wildly over the bar after 50 minutes as the Koreans finally began to gather some momentum.

The match swung in South Korea's favour within the space of two minutes, though.

Delightful free kick

In the 53rd minute Togo skipper Jean-Paul Yaovi Abalo Dosseh was shown a red card for bringing down Park Ji-sung on the edge of the area and from the resulting free kick Lee Chun-soo curled a delightful free kick past Kossi Agassa.

The goal sparked a wave of Korean pressure, with Park at last displaying the dazzling runs that made him so popular at Manchester United last season.

Togo gallantly went for the win despite being a man down, but they were sunk when Ahn picked up a loose ball and advanced to fire an unstoppable shot past Agassa.

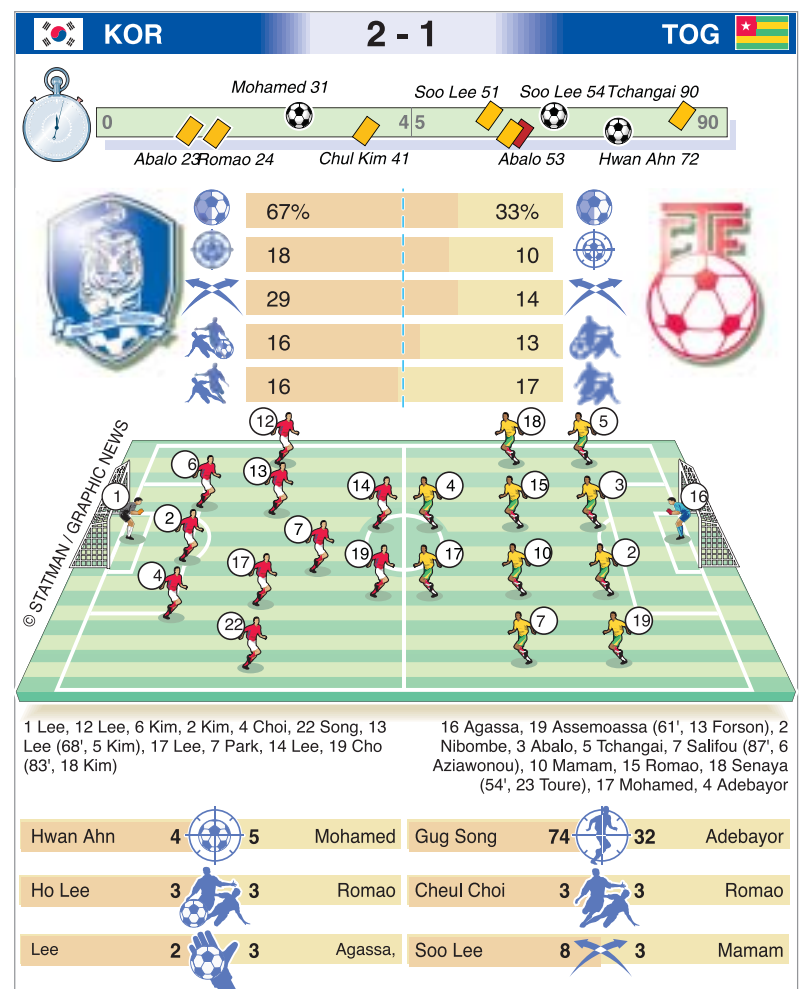
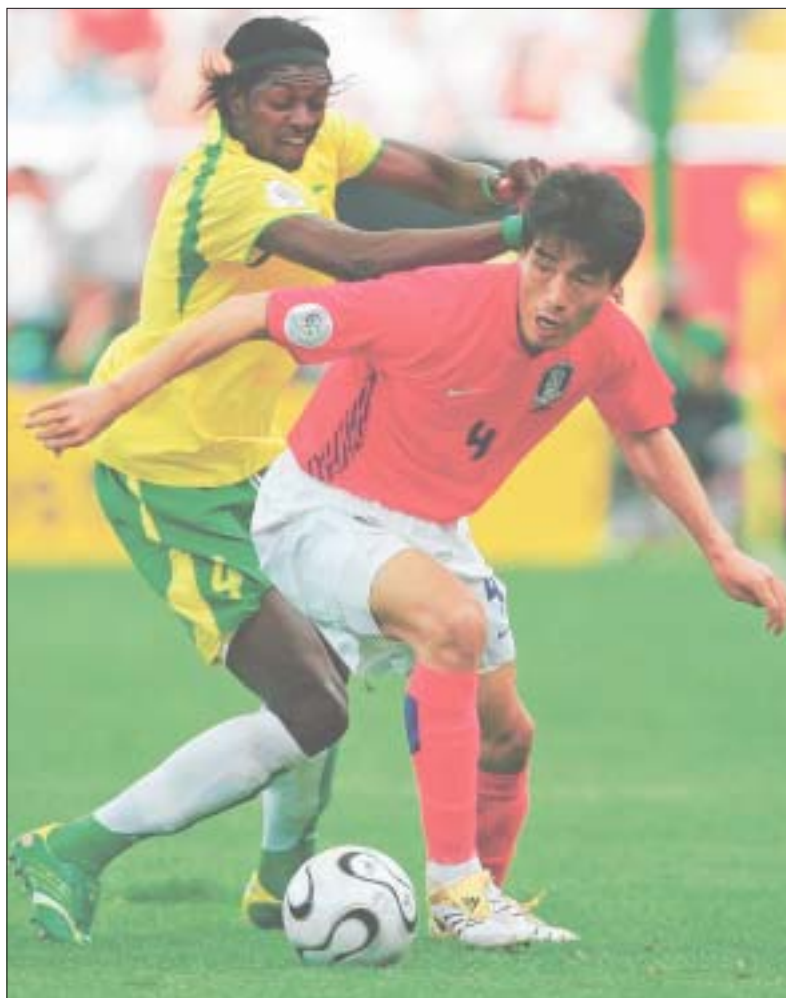
Togo's defeat means all four African debutants at the World Cup have lost their opening matches.

— Reuters



Photo/Reuters

Togo players celebrate the goal by Mohamed Kader Coubadja against South Korea during their Group G match in Frankfurt yesterday. Below: Togo's Emmanuel Adebayor (left) battles for the ball with South Korea's Choi Jin-cheul during yesterday's game. South Korea won 2-1.



Pfister on bench in Frankfurt match to stabilise bizarre coaching situation

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Otto Pfister was on the bench for Togo's 2-1 loss to South Korea yesterday, temporarily stabilising the West African team's bizarre coaching situation. Pfister was dressed in jeans and a blue shirt rather than the red and white uniform of

team officials, but the 68-year-old German was clearly in charge, jumping from his seat on the bench to give instructions in the opening minutes of Togo's World Cup debut. The Togo soccer federation announced on Monday that Pfister, who quit over the weekend in disgust at a pay dispute between players and the federation, had agreed to return. But

the situation became tenuous on Monday when Pfister failed to arrive at the team's hotel at the time he was expected. It wasn't even known who would coach the team against South Korea until Pfister appeared on the sideline. Togo's first time on soccer's grandest stage has been bizarre. The team's off-field distractions have included the

country's prime minister traveling to Germany in an attempt to broker a compromise in the dispute between the players and the soccer federation, and Pfister storming out of the team's hotel early on Saturday morning. The team announced on Monday that he was coming back, but when he didn't show up at Togo's hotel on time Monday night the situa-

tion again became unsettled. The team then appointed assistant coach Mawuena Kodjovi as the interim coach, and talked on Sunday with former Cameroon coach Winfried Schaefer, who said he would only take over if the disagreement with the players was worked out.

— Associated Press