



AFC U23 Asian Cup/ Japan Defeat China

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Doha, April 16 (QNA)–Japan started their AFC U23 Asian Cup Qatar 2024 campaign with a 1-0 win over China at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium in Group B on Tuesday.

Japan played most of the game with 10 men following Ryuya Nishio's early sending off.

Kuryu Matsui gave Go Oiwa's side an eighth minute lead only for Nishio to see red nine minutes later for violent conduct, but a stand-out performance in goal from Leo Kokubo ensured the 2016 champions started the tournament with a win, the AFC website reported.

Victory gives the Japanese the perfect start to their challenge for a second title and a place at a eighth consecutive Olympic Games in a challenging group that also features Korea Republic and the United Arab Emirates.

Oiwa's side had dominated the early exchanges, with Matsuki finding space in the fifth minute to

meet Hiroki Sekine's ball with his chest and attempt to flick a shot goalward from inside the six yard box that was easy for Huang Zihao to collect.

Three minutes later, though, the FC Tokyo midfielder made no mistake from similar range. The Japanese stroked the ball around with Sekine bursting into the box before laying off for Fuki Yamada to deliver the centre from which Matsuki gave his side the lead with a volleyed finish. Japan were comfortably in control when, in the 16th minute, referee Casey Reibelt was called to the pitch side monitor by VAR officials following a clash between Nishio and Jia Feifan. Replays showed the Cerezo Osaka central defender swung his arm towards Jia after the Chinese midfielder had pushed him in the back and Reibelt had little hesitation in showing Nishio the red card.

The expulsion gave the Chinese a boost, with Baihelmai Abuduwalili directing Tao Qianglong's cross from the right over the bar with his thigh before Tao crashed a 20-yard shot against Kokubo's crossbar.

Kokubo then saved Abuduwalili's 43rd minute header at full stretch to his left before going the other way three minutes later to keep out Zhu Yue's effort from distance as China PR finished the half on top.

The goalkeeper rescued his team again less than two minutes after the restart, denying substitute

Xie Wenning at close range as he latched onto Du Yuezheng's perfectly weighted through ball.

Since going down to 10 men the Japanese struggled to impose themselves on the game, with only

Matsuki threatening with a 72nd minute free kick from distance that Huang shovelled wide for a

corner.

Xie shot high over the bar as the end of regulation time approached as China PR searched in vain

for an equaliser that never came. (QNA)