

Chicago Blackhawks defenseman Seth Jones, (right), fights for control of the puck with Colorado Avalanche center Alex Newhook in the first period of an NHL hockey game, on Oct. 13, in Denver. (AP) - See Page 15

# Sports

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## Weah, Dest spark US to win over Costa Rica in qualifier



Canada's Tajon Buchanan gets shot away despite pressure from Panama's Harold Cummings during the second half of a soccer World Cup qualifying match, on Oct 13, in Toronto. (AP)

### Canada top Panama

**COLUMBUS, Ohio, Oct. 14, (AP):** Sixty seconds in, Costa Rica was celebrating and the U.S. World Cup campaign was spinning out of control.

Sergio Dest and Tim Weah, two young Americans unscarred by the failure of four years ago, got them back on track.

Shoelaces untied, Dest curled an 18-yard, left-footed shot past Keylor Navas in the 25th minute. Weah's shot for the go-ahead goal deflected off the near post and then off backup goalkeeper Leonel Moreira in the 66th, and the U.S. exhaled with a 2-1 victory that eased pressure as qualifying neared the halfway point.

#### SOCCER

"We can't lose again," the 20-year-old Dest said. "We needed it really bad."

Goalkeeper Zack Steffen, one of nine new starters inserted following Sunday's dismal 1-0 loss at Panama, made a costly headed clearance that led to Keysher Fuller's goal 60 seconds in, the fastest goal conceded by the U.S. in 23 years.

Dest ended a streak of eight straight first halves without an American goal following a pass from Yunus Musah on the right flank after Weah had switched the ball from the opposite side. Dest cut toward the center and curled the ball just beyond Navas' outstretched right hand into the upper corner.

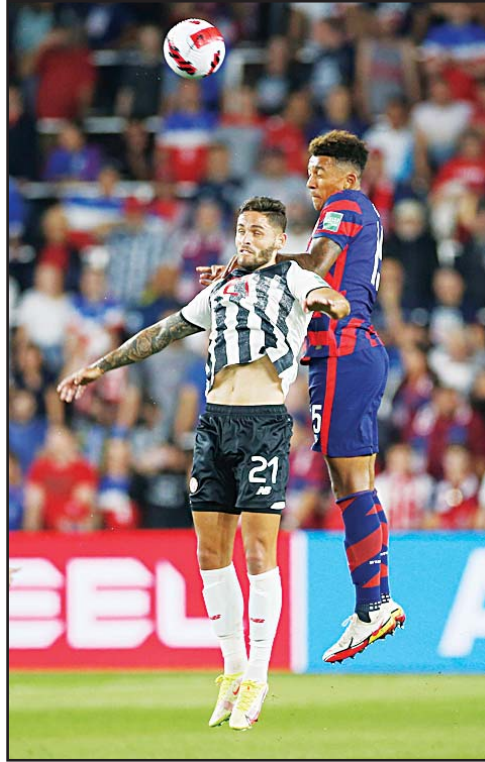
Navas left at halftime because of a strained adductor muscle.

Weah, a 21-year-old son of Liberia President and former FIFA Player of the Year George Weah, joined the lineup about five minutes before kickoff after Paul Arriola injured his right groin during warmups.

"Everything was kind of a rush. I had to warm up, get ready quick," Weah said.

With Matthew Hoppe on the touchline about to replace Weah, Weston McKennie passed to Dest, who dished to Weah. His 10-yard shot from an angle hit the post and ricocheted off a diving Moreira and in.

"It just so happened that the ball came out wide to



Costa Rica's Jonathan Moya, (left), and United States' Chris Richards jump for a header during the first half of a World Cup qualifying soccer match, on Oct. 13, in Columbus, Ohio. (AP)

Serge, and I saw the run," Weah said. "I just hit it one time, and it happened to go in."

Weah originally was credited with a goal, but it was changed to an own goal by Moreira.

"We'll talk to FIFA about that," U.S. coach Gregg Berhalter said.

Mexico leads with 14 points after a 2-0 win at El Salvador, and the U.S. has 11 after six of 14 matches going into its Nov. 12 meeting with El Tri at Cincinnati.

Canada has 10 after a 4-1 win over Panama, which has eight. The top three teams qualify for next year's World Cup, and the fourth-place team advances to a playoff.

#### SOCCER

"We do not have violent fans. We do not have a history of problematic fans. On the contrary, the excellent behavior and support of our fans during the matches and outside are an object of pride for us."

Next May, Albania's Air Stadium will host the Europa Conference League final. The association pledged to work with the local authorities "to raise our organizational capacities."

Costa Rica (six), Jamaica and El Salvador (five each) and Honduras (three) trail.

Berhalter was criticized for resting many frontline players in Panama, wanting fresh legs against the Ticos. Teams that win their home games usually qualify.

Steffen, a former Columbus keeper getting his first start in qualifying over Matt Turner, got in trouble when he headed a clearance over Dest in the first minute.

Bryan Ruiz kept the ball in with a backheel pass to Ronald de Boer on Feb. 21, 1998. Just outside the 6-yard box, Fuller volleyed with his right foot, and the ball went in on two bounces inside the far post for his second international goal.

"I felt like the guy was in front of me and I thought he was offside," Steffen said.

Fuller scored the fastest goal against the U.S. since the Netherlands' Ronald de Boer on Feb. 21, 1998.

"My initial thought was: 'Here we go. We got to respond,'" Berhalter said. "We challenged the guys to respond after a poor performance in Panama and this was going to be another element that we needed to respond to. It was early enough in the game that if we stayed calm and stuck to the game plan, I thought we'd be OK."

Before a pro-American crowd of 20,165 at the first international match in \$300 million-plus Lower.com Field, Costa Rica's starting lineup averaged more than 30 years old. Ticos coach Luis Fernando Suarez retained nine starters from Sunday's 2-1 win at El Salvador.

Berhalter fielded the youngest U.S. qualifying lineup at an average of 22 years, 229 days. He retained only 18-year-old Musah and Weah from Sunday's starters and gave 21-year-old defender Chris Richards his first competitive start.

Hoppe, 20, entered in the 73rd and 19-year-old Gianluca Busio five minutes later. They joined Steffen and Richards to increase U.S. qualifying debuts to 25 in this cycle, trailing only 1998 (29), and 2006 and 2010 (26 each).

Sprightly muscles overcame the inexperience.

"All of World Cup qualifying is difficult. All of World Cup qualifying is challenging, and sometimes I feel like people forgot that," Berhalter said. "People think it's a cakewalk, and we're going to play the youngest team in the history of U.S. soccer in a game and we're just going to breeze through these games. It's not realistic."

## Albanian FA deplores violence of fans, 'blames' Polish supporters

**TIRANA, Albania, Oct. 14, (AP):** The Albanian soccer federation on Thursday deplored the violent behavior of its fans and blamed visiting Polish supporters for provocation during a World Cup qualifying match this week.

Albania lost to Poland 1-0 in Tirana on Tuesday. The game was suspended for about 20 minutes after Karol widerski had just scored for Poland in the 77th minute and Albanian fans hurled water bottles at the celebrating Poles. Poland's players walked off but returned to the field and held on to win.

A day later, FIFA opened disciplinary proceedings against both the Albanian and Polish federations without specifying the specific offenses.

The Albanian soccer association acknowledged the "incidents do not honor at all us, Albania and its wonderful fans," adding "we had 22,000 excellent fans and only some scores

of individuals spoiled all the good things done from the team."

The statement by the association, however, blamed Polish fans for a "continuous provocation and a very aggressive behavior," adding "the Polish fans repeatedly for about two hours hurled objects at our fans in two areas of the stadium."

#### SOCCER

## SKorea star Hwang starring in EPL after hard time in Germany

**LONDON, Oct. 14, (AP):** It was a game that propelled Erling Haaland further into soccer's wider consciousness, earned Takumi Minamino a dream move to the English Premier League, and made American coach Jesse Marsch go viral with an animated, expletive-laden halftime speech.

Salzburg's comeback against Liverpool in an epic Champions League match two years ago also stood out for another reason - finally making Liverpool's seemingly unflappable center back, Virgil van Dijk, look human.

Hwang Hee-chan is the latest South Korean player to become a hit in the Premier League because of his successful start to life on loan at Wolverhampton this season. Yet he had already made himself known to English audiences by the way he left Van Dijk flailing and sprawling on the turf with a turn and shot into the far corner that sparked Salzburg's recovery from 3-0 down to 3-3 at Anfield in October 2019.

Living up to his nickname of "The



South Korea's Hwang Ui Jo, left, plays the ball followed by Iran's Saeid Ezatolahi during the final round of the Asian zone qualifying soccer match for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 at Azadi Stadium in Tehran, Iran, on Oct. 12. (AP)

Bull," Hwang scored that superb individual goal and then set up one for Minamino - now a Liverpool player - to leave Jurgen Klopp awestruck with his energy and direct running. According to Hwang, Liverpool's manager came up to him after the match and called him a "machine."

#### SOCCER

Wolves are starting to realize just what all the fuss is about.

Shrugging off a forgettable past season in Germany with Leipzig, the 25-year-old Hwang is ensuring the millions of South Korean eyeballs trained on England's popular top division aren't just focused on the country's most famous player - Son Heung-min - this season.

Hwang scored the winner off the bench on his debut for Wolves, netted two more in the team's victory over Newcastle before the international break, and has struck up an impressive

partnership with Raul Jimenez to cure Wolves' bluntness from the opening weeks of the season.

"They are fantastic - Raul's hold-up play and Chan moving off him, it is working really well at the moment," Wolves defender Max Kilman told local media this week. "It's been good to watch."

Wolves have the option to make Hwang's move permanent for a reported 13 million pounds (\$17.8 million). The way his loan spell has started, the team from central England is unlikely to pass that up.

How different everything seems for Hwang, who is a regular on the wing for South Korea and played against Syria and Iran in World Cup qualifiers over the past week, compared to last season when his first year at Leipzig was ruined by contracting the coronavirus.

### Laporta faces important hurdle

## Barcelona start 3-game home stint for Koeman

**BARCELONA, Spain, Oct. 14, (AP):** Ronald Koeman got a reprieve. Now he needs to make it last.

A visit from Valencia on Sunday kicks off a three-game home stint that the Barcelona coach said must mark a turnaround for his beleaguered team.

After facing Valencia, Barcelona will host Dynamo Kyiv and Real Madrid within a week.

The run of games at Camp Nou comes after an international break that gave Koeman a chance to re-group following a tumultuous period for a team struggling to win without Lionel Messi.



Laporta

Two weeks ago, Koeman's job was considered in serious jeopardy after Barcelona had lost both of its Champions League games by an identical 3-0 score. Barcelona headed to the Spanish capital to play Atlético Madrid amid widespread reports that the club leadership was scouting for a replacement for its coach.

However, instead of firing him, club president Joan Laporta ended days of silence by reaffirming Koeman as coach, asking fans to be patient as the club tries to repair its hard-hit finances that have made it difficult to retain its top stars. The public backing of Koeman came hours before another painful loss: a 2-0 defeat at Atlético that left Barcelona with only three wins in seven Spanish league games this season.

Koeman has pleaded for more time so he can get back injured players to help an attack that is struggling to produce goals without Messi and Antoine Griezmann.

Forwards Ousmane Dembélé, Martin Braithwaite and Sergio Agüero are all sidelined with injuries. Ansu Fati and Philippe Coutinho have recently returned from long injury layoffs.

Agüero appears ready to make his debut for Barcelona since leaving Manchester City this offseason as a free agent.

He had been sidelined with a right thigh problem until he played a

friendly with Barcelona on Wednesday.

But Koeman also acknowledged that any Barcelona coach must produce results and pointed to this week's tripleheader as key.

Next weekend's match against Madrid will certainly be critical for Koeman, whose team lost both "clásicos" last season. But before that, his team faces a must-win game against Dynamo on Wednesday. Barcelona is last in its Champions League group and at risk of failing to reach the knockout rounds for the first time in two decades.

#### SOCCER

Valencia should also offer a difficult test. The team that had struggled to find its identity ever since the exit of coach Marcelino García in 2019 has only lost twice in eight games under José Bordalás. Bordalás earned a reputation as a defensive mastermind at Getafe, where he forged a competitive team despite its limited individual talents.

Barcelona enters the match in ninth place, albeit with a game in hand, right behind Valencia in eighth.

Laporta will also face an important hurdle on Sunday when his board will submit its budget, and its plan to seek financing for a remodeling of Camp Nou, to a vote by delegates of the member-owned club.

Real Madrid and defending champion Atlético Madrid both had their matches scheduled for this weekend postponed to give players on international duty with South American nations more rest time.

Madrid's game against Athletic Bilbao and Atlético's match against Granada will be played at dates to be determined.

The postponed matches give Real Sociedad the chance to take the league lead with a draw or win against Mallorca. The team from San Sebastián is in third place, level on points with leader Madrid and second-place Atlético.

Forward Mikel Oyarzabal leads Sociedad with six goals, second in the league behind Madrid's Karim Benzema with nine.



Mexico's Carlos Alberto Rodriguez, (left), and El Salvador's Isaac Portillo battle for the ball during a qualifying soccer match for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 at Cuscatlan Stadium in San Salvador, El Salvador, on Oct. 13. (AP)