



By QIU QUANLIN
CHINA DAILY

SHENZHEN — Two late goals from Japan's Akito Kawamoto helped his soccer side beat host China in the quarterfinals and advance to the last four at the Shenzhen Universiade last night.

More than 32,000 home fans were on hand to cheer the local side at the Shenzhen Bao'an stadium, but its efforts were ultimately in vain.

"I am sorry today. The 3-2 victory disappointed the Chinese fans," said Japanese head coach Masaki Ohira.

However, Ohira also regarded the win as the best of his coaching career.

"I will never forget tonight's match. My boys worked in unison throughout. That's why we won the game," he said.

"This is the best Japanese team in Universiade history, given that we have players on the national Olympic team and some are playing in the Japanese league."

Japan topped Group D with seven points, averaged three goals a game and had eight different goal scorers in its three matches — the most impressive group-stage record.

Japan was held to a 2-2 draw with Ghana in its opening Group D match, thrashed Canada 6-1 then snuck past Britain 1-0.

The team has started every match with a different captain, which points to its strength and depth.

The current Japanese team also includes players like Maski Miyasaka, who helped the East Asian side win gold at last year's Asian Games in Guangzhou.

Japan's skipper on the night, Yuji Senuma, opened the scoring after a misunderstanding between Chinese goalkeeper Liu Tianxin and



Japan ends host's dream in quarters

CUI MENG / CHINA DAILY

Guo Yuantong (9) of China fights for the ball with a Japanese player in the men's quarterfinals at the Universiade last night.

defender Liu Lijia just a minute after the match started.

Chinese midfielder Yang Yang came up with a superb solo effort two minutes after Fan Zhiqiang's equalizer in the 21st minute to spark the home fans into a frenzy.

But Japanese substitute Akito Kawamoto scored two goals in the second half, snuffing out China's

hopes of continuing in the tournament.

Jin Zhiyang, head coach of China, attributed the loss to the country's sluggish soccer development at colleges.

"Japan developed its soccer in schools 30 years ago. You can see this current Chinese Universiade team is the only team consisting of

college students. We had no chance to select other players before we came to Shenzhen," Jin said.

The current Chinese squad has 20 players from the Beijing Institute of Technology, which is China's only college team competing in the second-tier league.

After a 1-1 draw with Namibia, a 3-0 victory over Colombia and

a scoreless draw with traditional rival South Korea, China completed its initial target of advancing to the quarterfinals.

"I am thankful for the boys' performance at the Universiade. We may see wins over South Korea or Japan in 10 years' time if we start promoting soccer education in schools from now," Jin said.

Super sub steals the show with late strikes

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SHENZHEN — In head coach Masaki Ohira's eyes, Akito Kawamoto can rarely make Japan's starting lineup.

In the team's Group D matches in the men's soccer competition at the Universiade, the midfielder was used as substitute. He also started on the bench in the quarterfinal clash against China last night.

But Kawamoto proved to be a super substitute, with his two late goals in the second half helping Japan defeat China 3-2.

"He is not my favorite for the starting lineup. He is not as clever as the other boys in my team," coach Ohira said.

"But today he gave us a big surprise. I have never seen such a wonderful performance from him."

Kawamoto, 21, who is majoring in sports and health at a Japanese

college, also could not believe his performance against China.

"It's the first time I've participated in a Universiade," he said.

He was a regular substitute in Japan's previous three matches, but the midfielder had not scored a goal before last night's game.

"When I was summoned by the coach to go onto the pitch, I told myself to try my best to score since we were one goal behind," Kawamoto said.

For the second half, Ohira told

him to play the way he felt.

"So I was just doing what the coach told me to do," he said.

In college, Kawamoto usually studies in the morning then plays and trains in the afternoon.

"Studies have helped refresh my understanding of soccer," said Kawamoto, adding he will graduate next year.

"I don't have plans after graduation. Right now, the most important thing is to play the next match, the semifinal," he said.



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Akito Kawamoto (left) celebrates after scoring last night.