France falls 1-0 to Tunisia but wins Group D, Australia qualifies for second place

France-Tunisia

Doha, November 30 (RHC) - The French national soccer team suffered an unexpected 1-0 loss to Tunisia but finished on top of Group D, while Australia, who narrowly beat Denmark, also made it into the round of 16 as runner-up to the reigning world champions.

Tunisia, who needed to beat France and hope Denmark did not lose to Australia to advance, took the field to challenge a disjointed French team, made up of nine substitutes and only two regular starters. The European side had already sealed their place in the next round on the previous matchday.

The African team, which showed good play and attacking ambition throughout the match, made its sixth World Cup appearance without getting past the opening round. Tunisia won the match thanks to a goal by Wahbi Khazri in the 58th minute.

Khazri scored his third win in 18 World Cup matches after a great individual move that he finished with a touch over substitute goalkeeper Steve Mandanda, who at 37 is the oldest Frenchman to play in a World Cup match.

Tunisia's victory also ended France's six-game winning streak at the World Cup.

The hostility in the stands was palpable from the start, with a section of Tunisian supporters in the Education City stadium whistling the French national anthem when it was played before kickoff, repeating what they had done in a 2008 friendly in Paris between France and their former colony.

In a tactic designed to rest his stars for the Round of 16, France coach Didier Deschamps brought on players who usually play very little.

After the Tunisian goal, Deschamps brought on stars like Kylian Mbappé and Antoine Griezmann to bolster a previously tepid attack.

Mbappé and Griezmann turned France's image around, helped by the fact that Tunisia had retreated in the hope of holding on for the win.

On the Tunisian bench, the substitutes and staff had their eyes on the other game instead of watching the action in their own match.

In the end France came close to equalizing, but Griezmann's stoppage-time goal was disallowed for offside.

In the other match in the zone, Australia beat Denmark with a goal by Mathew Leckie to reach the Round of 16 for the first time in 16 years.

After a scoreless first half, in which Denmark had more possession of the ball, Australia scored on the counter in the 60th minute when Leckie beat the Danish defense and scored what would be the qualifying goal.

With these results, France and Australia closed the zone with six points each, but the European team finished first on goal difference. Tunisia was third with four points and Denmark last with one.

In the round of 16, France and Australia will face the second and first of Group C, respectively.

Group C will be decided later on Wednesday with the Poland-Argentina and Mexico-Saudi Arabia clashes.

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