

Palestine give South Korea scare in World Cup qualifying stalemate

AFP –Palestine gave South Korea a major scare in an entertaining 0-0 away draw on Thursday as they attempt to reach the World Cup for the first time.

Making their debut in the third stage of Asian qualifying and 96 in FIFA's rankings to South Korea's 23, Palestine refused to be overawed for much of an open contest in Seoul.

Palestine play their home matches abroad, usually in the Middle East, because of the war in Gaza.

The local league has been suspended and many of the players are without a club.

Despite those obstacles, they thought they had taken the lead in the 22nd minute at the 66,000-capacity Seoul World Cup Stadium, only for the goal to be correctly ruled out for off-side.

The hosts, under their fourth coach this year with Hong Myung-bo, looked shaky at the back and were struggling to get their talisman and skipper Son Heung-min into the game.

Their best chance of an even first half fell to [Lee Kang-in](#), but Palestinian goalkeeper [Rami Hamadeh](#) just about kept out the Paris Saint-Germain player's well-struck close-range effort.

The Palestinians appeared to tire in the second half and were restricted to rare breakaways.

Lee was again guilty of missing a glorious chance when he shot wildly, then was denied with a 74th-minute freekick that Hamadeh tipped over the bar.

[Oday Dabbagh](#) then went close for the visitors on the break, before [Spurs](#) star Son rattled the outside of the post in the dying minutes.

But Palestine held on for a precious point and were good value for the draw.

Under their Tunisian coach Makram Daboub the Palestinian team have reached new heights this year.

At this year's Asian Cup, they won a game for the first time in the history of the competition, defeating Hong Kong 3-0.

That put them into the knockout rounds of the tournament, another first, before going down 2-1 to hosts and eventual champions [Qatar](#).

The squad trained in Malaysia for the South Korea game and will return there to prepare for their next qualifier, against Jordan in Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday, in what is nominally a home match.

They reached this stage of qualifying for the World Cup for the first time by coming second behind [Australia](#) in their group, winning two, losing two and drawing two of their six matches.

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