

2018 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers: Iraq 1-1 Japan



IRAQ EARN ENCOURAGING DRAW WITH JAPAN THANKS TO MAHDI KAMIL GOAL

Basim Qasim's Iraq scored a second half equaliser through midfielder Mahdi Kamil to secure a deserved point against Asian giants and group leaders Japan on Tuesday.

Iraq started the game in a 4-5-1 formation, with Swedish Cup winner Brwa Nouri finally getting a start in midfield alongside Saad Abdul-Amir, with Mahdi Kamil and Ahmed Yasin on the wings to support Alaa Abdul-Zahra and Mohanad Abdul-Raheem up top. It was the strongest possible lineup given the injuries to Dhurgham Ismail and Ali Husni, and there were no complaints from Iraqi fans on that front.

But they were complaining for another reason within ten minutes as Iraq went 1-0 down from a Yuya Osako header - it was déjà vu for Iraqi supporters as the Lions of Mesopotamia have been conceding headers from set pieces for years, including in their last home qualifying game against Australia.

Iraq responded well though, and could have equalised in the first half but Mahdi Kamil's header sailed way over the bar. Iraq dominated possession in

the second half and finally broke through the Japanese defence in clumsy fashion on 73 minutes. Alaa Abdul-Zahra wriggled his way through the box but the ball seemed to be rolling comfortably into the arms of the Japanese 'keeper; Mohanad Abdul-Raheem's persistence ensured that didn't happen though as the ball eventually fell to the feet of Al-Shorta playmaker Mahdi Kamil who duly planted it into the back of the net.

Iraq survived a scare in injury time when Keisuke Honda received the ball inside Iraq's penalty area but his shot was too close to Iraqi goalie Mohammed Gassid who did well to gather it. The result is an encouraging one for a growing Iraqi side who recently defeated Iran and drew with Australia and South Korea, and their remaining two qualifying games against Thailand and UAE will hopefully see Iraq gain more points to boost morale ahead of the 2017 Gulf Cup.

[Click here](#) to see the highlights of the game.