

## **The Times of India**

**Title : ISL-2 - ATK, Goa share spoils**

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### **Sahni Sent Off For Headbutting Arnolin As Dramatic Tie Ends 1-1**

When FC Goa play Atletico de Kolkata, can it be just another game?

The second edition of the Indian Super League (ISL) saw its first red card, a seven-minute hold-up, a head-butt and two Indians on the scoresheet at either end as the teams played out a 1-1 draw at Nehru Stadium in Fatorda on Wednesday .

ATK did well to snatch a 14thminute lead through Izumi Arata, which they managed to hold on to till half-time. The script turned horribly wrong for the visitors when Baljit Sahni was sent off for headbutting Gregory Arnolin.

Sahni had just been booked by the referee for a foul on the French defender. Common sense suggests that you should be careful after going into the referee's book, but Sahni, while walking back, lost his cool and headbutted Arnolin. The latter made the most of what appeared to be minimal contact and fell to the ground, leaving the referee -after consulting his assistant -with no choice in the 62nd minute.

Buoyed by the numerical advantage and the home crowd, Goa pounced on their chance.

Chief coach Zico swung into action and made a double change, introducing an Indian goalkeeper (Laxmikant Kattimani replacing Elinton Andrade) for an extra foreign midfielder (Jonatan Lucca for Denson Devdas).

There was drama and plenty of confusion when the assistant referee put up the substitution board. It were not the changes Goa intended to make and by the time the conundrum was solved, seven minutes had already elapsed.

When play resumed, Goa had their tails up. They pressed more men forward, hunted for an opening and Joffre Gonzalez -easily the best player on view -tried all that he had learnt at Barcelona.Nothing worked as Atletico de Kolkata defended resolutely with two lines of four.

Then, in the 81st minute, Goa got the equaliser. A cross from the left by Mandar Rao Desai saw striker Reinaldo Oliveira's at tempted header towards goal move in the opposite direction where, just outside the box, Keenan Almeida took a chance with his right foot and beat Amrinder Singh with a powerful grounder.

There was still some time for Goa to get the winner. Mandar, Leo Moura, Reinaldo and Joffre all tried their luck from a distance and close range but Amrinder, young and confident, measured up to the challenge.

In the opening 45 minutes, Goa controlled the pace of the game but apart from a snap shot from captain Lucio, had nothing to show for. Instead, it was Arata -the first Japanese to obtain an Indian passport and play for India -who stole the thunder from right under everyone's nose. A long throwin from Denzil Franco, playing his first competitive match after being injured a year ago at the same venue, saw Javier Lara flick it just outside the box where Arata darted in and finished with a brilliant volley.

As you would expect from such a volatile clash, there were skirmishes all around. Eight yellow cards were flashed by referee Santosh Kumar. But, fortunately for everyone, it all ended with rival coaches Zico and

Antonio Habas shaking hands.



ATK's Borja Fernandez heads the ball out of harm's way during the tie against FC Goa in Fatorda on Wednesday