

ATK ready for NUFC

Our SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

Guwahati: NorthEast United FC (NUFC) will look to return to winning ways when they lock horns with first season's champions Atletico de Kolkata (ATK) in their fourth home match of the Indian Super League (ISL) III at Indira Gandhi Stadium here on Friday.

Following a much-needed break of one week, NUFC will be in a favourable condition against the Calcutta franchise, who have had a rather hectic schedule. ATK played Delhi Dynamos and Mumbai City FC at home on October 22 and Tuesday, respectively, before travelling for the encounter with NUFC.

ATK, at third place, are a point behind NUFC in the table. They have nine points. ATK won both their matches against NUFC in the first season, but lost both last year.

The visitors will also miss the services of their Spanish coach Jose Molina, who has been slapped with a one-match suspension for violating the code of conduct in their last match against Mumbai City FC. He was asked to leave the technical area by the referee

in the first minute of added time, for repeatedly showing dissent against the referee's decisions.

ATK lost the match by a solitary goal. With Javi Lara and Sameegh Doutie on the wings, ATK will have an advantage, though.

On the other hand, the hosts have their share of injury woes with Argentine forward Nicolas Velez, Ivorian midfielder Romaric, Brazilian stopper Mailson Alves and goalkeeper Rehenesh TP not joining the training sessions till Thursday.

ATK's Portuguese marquee Helder Postiga — if he returns to the pitch after his injury layoff — and Canadian striker Iain Hume will be the men the NUFC defence line will have to be cautious about.

Another man in the midfield who will have to be marked carefully will be skipper Borja Fernandez.

Spaniard Lara's stunning dashes with the ball through the flanks have often proved troublesome for the opponents.

The visitors' defence lineup of Arnab Mondal, Robert Lalithlamana, Pritam Kotal and Prabir Das will also be no pushover for NUFC.