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EAST RUTHERFORD: Mexico's goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa (13) stops a shot on goal by Costa Rica's Joel Campbell (12) during the extra time period of a CONCACAF Gold Cup soccer match. —AP

MEXICO, PANAMA IN GOLD CUP SEMIS

EAST RUTHERFORD: Mexico and Panama advanced to a Gold Cup semi-final showdown with triumphs Sunday, one thanks to a dramatic save and the other on a penalty kick after a controversial call.

Mexican captain Andres Guardado scored the lone goal from the spot in the 124th minute to lift Mexico over Costa Rica 1-0 while Panama goalkeeper Jaime Penedo denied Lester Peltier in the ninth round of penalty kicks as the Canaleros advanced 6-5 over Trinidad and Tobago after a 1-1 draw.

"I feel real joy because today was a real blessing to be able to advance to the next round," Penedo said. After losing 2-1 to Panama in last year's semi-finals, six-time champion Mexico will seek revenge and an eighth trip to the finals of the biennial North

American regional football championship when they meet again on Wednesday in Atlanta.

That winner earns a berth in next Sunday's final at Philadelphia against the winner of Wednesday's other semi-final between Jamaica and holders United States.

After more than two hours of goal-less football, Guatemalan referee Walter Lopez whistled a hotly contested foul on Costa Rica's Roy Miller following Mexican striker Oribe Peralta hurling himself onto the ground trying to reach a crossing pass.

"I'm happy with the effort of the players," Mexican coach Miguel Herrera said. "We were superior. We made an important step."

The phantom foul brought Guardado to the spot and he blasted the ball into the left side of the net for the victory, delivering the only loss of the

event for Costa Rica, which reached the World Cup quarter-finals last year in Brazil.

Costa Rica coach Paulo Wanchope said he did not feel as if his job was in jeopardy after the defeat. "I do not feel out of the team by being eliminated," he said. "My players should be proud of how they played. Some of them were exhausted."

Panama and Trinidad and Tobago were even at 1-1 through extra time, Luis Tejada giving Panama the lead in the 37th minute but Trinidad and Tobago equalizing on a Kenwyne Jones header in the 54th minute. And while Panama advanced, it took a save-or-lose situation in the seventh round of penalty kicks for them to escape.

Each team missed two of its first three penalties. Armando Cooper and Harold Cummings each scored for Panama to open rounds but Kenwyne

Jones and Radanfah Abu Bakr answered to keep Trinidad and Tobago going.

Marvin Phillip saved the seventh-round shot of Alberto Quintero to put the Canaleros on the edge of elimination but Trinidad and Tobago's Daneil Cyrus booted his next shot over the crossbar to extend the drama. "The key moment was when (Cyrus) took his kick and if they made it they win," Penedo said. "The referee told me that and I thought 'Ugh,' but then he missed and we went on to win and now we can all smile."

Penedo, the 33-year-old Los Angeles Galaxy netminder who was voted 2005 and 2013 Gold Cup Goalkeeper of the Tournament, made two saves in the penalties session, the decisive one set up by teammate Valentin Pimentel's goal to start the ninth round.

Penedo then went back inside the woodwork and dove to his left on Peltier's shot. Penedo lifted his right hand and deflected the ball off the crossbar and out, dooming the Soca Warriors' dreams of matching their Cup-best run by reaching the 2000 last four.

"Every moment has its sensation and own emotion," Penedo said. "Each one is divine in the moment."

Panama advanced to a third consecutive semi-final, having lost to the United States in 2011 before beating Mexico in 2013, only to fall to the Americans in the final.

Sunday marked the fourth match in a row in which Panama took the lead only to surrender the equalizer in the second half, having advanced from the group stage on three 1-1 draws. —AFP

JONES READY TO FIGHT FOR PLACE AT UNITED

SAN JOSE: Manchester United defender Phil Jones is relishing the prospect of having to fight for his starting place after a wave of high-calibre new signings at Old Trafford and the possibility of more to follow. The England international believes the arrival of Matteo Darmian, Memphis Depay, Bastian Schweinsteiger and Morgan Schneiderlin has left United poised to challenge for silverware after a two-year trophy drought.

But the recent additions to Louis van Gaal's squad have effectively narrowed Jones's options as the 23-year-old aims to cement his place in United's new-look starting line-up.

Darmian's signing has shunted him down the pecking order at right-back while the glut of midfield options means he is unlikely to have any future as a holding player in front of the back four. It means Jones has only one realistic position to aim for—the right side of central defence—and even that could be in jeopardy if United's reported pursuit of Real Madrid's Sergio Ramos comes off. Nevertheless, Jones is adamant that he welcomes the internal jostling for a starting berth. "It's great," Jones said.

"That's what you relish as a footballer. You want to test yourself against the best players you can play with. We've got that this year and I look forward to it."

"Competition's healthy, it's good for players. If one player's doing well it makes the other person want to do well. That's exactly what you need, especially at a club like Manchester United."

"We're always going to sign top players because we're a top club." Jones lined up alongside Dutch international Daley Blind in United's back four in the opening game of their four-match US tour on Friday in Seattle, with van Gaal later explaining he would seek a centre-back pairing a right-sided player and a left-



SEATTLE: Manchester United's Adnan Januzaj (left) is fouled by Club America's Erik Pimentel (center) and Javier Guemez during the second half of a match in Seattle. Manchester United won the match 1-0. —AFP

sided player. Jones would not be drawn on possible partnerships United could field this season. "Listen, it's up to the manager who plays week in, week out," he said. "I'm just going to try and do my best and hopefully that'll be good enough." Jones meanwhile enthused about the

immediate impact of United's new signings, and warned the squad was confident of challenging for the title.

"They look bright, they look sharp, they're great lads and fantastic additions to the squad," Jones said. Asked about targeting the Premier

League, he added: "That's the aim. We've got the squad now to be able to do that and there's no reason why we can't."

United play the second match of their tour against the San Jose Earthquakes at San Jose's Avaya Stadium today. —AFP

WOMEN'S ASHES STILL EXCITE SKIPPER EDWARDS

LONDON: England captain Charlotte Edwards believes the 2015 Women's Ashes is the most "eagerly anticipated" series of her near 20-year international career.

The 35-year-old made her England debut when the players were amateur, paid for their own kit and took the field wearing skirts. However, the women's game has changed significantly since Edwards first played for England in 1996 and when they face Australia in the first one-day international at Taunton, south-west England, for the start of the multi-format Ashes, it will be the first time the two sides have met as fully professional sides. "The 2015 Women's Ashes is possibly the most eagerly anticipated series that I have ever been involved with during my international playing career," said Edwards.

"The excitement throughout the England squad is tangible—we have been preparing hard for this for a long time now, and everyone is ready for the action to get under way in Taunton."

"Australia are currently Women's World Cup and World T20 champions, but we have won the Women's Ashes back-to-back in 2013 and 2014, so the series is sure to be closely contested, and we will be doing everything we can to make it three in a row." The format has been changed from the last Ashes, with the points for winning the lone Test match reduced from six to four, with all the limited-overs games providing two points for victory. Australia, in common with their men's team, have not won a series in England since 2001, and captain Meg Lanning said: "Cricket contests between Australia and England have a special place in the hearts and minds of the players and public and we, like the Australian men's team, hope that we can inspire the next generation of players and fans and do our nation proud in our respective Ashes series. "England are our fiercest rivals and we anticipate a competitive series that will go down to the wire."

The three one-day internationals during the series will also count towards the ICC Women's Championship, which provides the qualifying framework for the 2017 World Cup in England. —AFP