



## Singapore Young Lions U19 Bow Out Of ASEAN Championship In Medan – Lessons For The Road Ahead

### Description

Singapore's Under-19 national team returned from Medan, Indonesia, having completed a valuable education at the ASEAN U19 Boys Bank Sumut Championship 2026. Three matches, three points, third place in Group B. The results alone tell one story; the performances behind them tell quite another.

Head Coach Syed Azmir oversaw a squad notable for its youth. Nine of the 23 players selected were aged 17 or below, and 16-year-old goalkeeper Ilhan Rezal started the opening match against Malaysia. This was, by design, a developmental tournament. The lessons learned at the Teladan Stadium in Medan will shape the next chapter of Singapore's age-group football journey.



Singapore's U19s faced Malaysia, Thailand and Brunei in Group B in Medan. Image: Football Association of Singapore

## Match By Match: Singapore's Campaign

## **Malaysia 3-0 Singapore (2 June)**

The campaign opened against Causeway rivals Malaysia – a stern test, but one where Singapore acquitted themselves far better than the final scoreline suggested. The U19s matched their opponents for long periods, defended compactly and restricted Malaysia’s opportunities through disciplined organisation. The deadlock was broken on 21 minutes via a corner-kick header that deflected past 16-year-old Ilhan Rezal, a moment of misfortune rather than defensive collapse.

Singapore responded positively, regained control of several phases, and remained competitive heading towards half-time before conceding a second set-piece goal. The third came in the second half amid controversy – a studs-up challenge on midfielder Prince Rio went unpunished by the referee, with Malaysia adding a goal from the resulting free kick in their favour. Despite the defeat, there was enough to encourage.

## **Singapore 0-4 Thailand (5 June)**

Facing five-time regional champions Thailand was always going to be the toughest assignment, and Singapore needed a result to keep their semifinal hopes alive. The U19s produced a disciplined first-half display and frustrated Thailand for long stretches through a well-structured tactical approach. Thailand broke through on 30 minutes before doubling their lead before the interval.

The match changed decisively early in the second half when captain Andy Reefqy’s deputy, vice-captain Luth Harith, received a red card – reducing Singapore to ten men. Even at a numerical disadvantage, the U19s defended resolutely and committed to their structure. Two late goals gave Thailand a 4-0 win that was flattering but, given the red card, unsurprising. The resilience shown by Singapore’s young players against a superior opponent on a difficult afternoon was a genuine positive.

## **Singapore 4-0 Brunei Darussalam (8 June)**

Determined to end the tournament on a high, Singapore delivered their best performance of the campaign. The U19s controlled possession, moved with confidence and were consistently threatening against Brunei. The opening goal came from Rae Peh in the 42nd minute – a composed left-footed finish – and Uchenna Eziakor doubled the lead just two minutes later to send Singapore into half-time in full control.

Captain Andy Reefqy added a third with authority before Liska Haaziq completed the scoring in the 64th minute. The 4-0 result was clinical, professional and gave the squad – and staff – the confidence boost they needed to carry home from Indonesia.

## **What Syed Azmir Took Away**



Head Coach Syed Azmir reflected on the tournament's lessons for Singapore's U19 development. Image: Football Association of Singapore

Head Coach Syed Azmir was measured but clear-eyed in his assessment. "This tournament showed us the level of intensity, physicality and consistency required to compete in international football," he said. "Tactically, there were many moments where the players were able to execute what we asked

of them. But international football is also about adapting to different moments within a game, and that is something we need to continue developing.â?•

Azmir was candid about the significance of the experience for a largely inexperienced group: â??For many of these boys, this was a valuable experience. We brought a young team to this tournament and they were exposed to a different level of competition. These are lessons that cannot be replicated elsewhere.â?•

Looking ahead, the mental dimension of international competition was also on Azmirâ??s mind. â??Beyond the football side, we need to prepare the players mentally as well. They need to believe in themselves and rise to the occasion when those moments come.â?•

## The Road Ahead: AFC Qualifiers And Bigger Goals

Singaporeâ??s next age-group challenge arrives later this year in the form of the AFC U20 Asian Cup China 2027 Qualifiers. The step up in quality will be significant â?? Asian football at qualification level is as competitive as it gets â?? but the lessons from Medan will have their role to play in shaping how Singapore approach that challenge.

The tournament itself was won by Australia, who edged Thailand 1-0 in the final on 13 June, with Cambodia also surprising many by reaching the last four. The standard in ASEAN age-group football is rising, and for Singapore to compete consistently at the sharp end, the development pathway must accelerate.

The senior national team has been making strides under Gavin Lee â?? [Hariss Harunâ??s milestone in Singaporeâ??s 4-0 win over Mongolia](#) earlier this month underlined that the Lions are building momentum in their own right. [The Lions are also competing in the ASEAN Hyundai Cup](#), a campaign that gives the senior squad meaningful competitive minutes ahead of more important fixtures to come. The U19sâ?? experience in Medan feeds into that same pipeline â?? giving the next generation a taste of what is required at the highest level.

For now, the young players return from Medan with three points, a 4-0 win, a red card to learn from, and a head coach who is clear about the work still required. In Singapore football terms, that is a realistic and honest foundation for what comes next.

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