Demolition Dutch style



Ruud van Nistelrooy helped himself to a hat-trick as Holland crushed Scotland's dream of a trip to next year's Euro 2004 finals with a ruthless reminder of where the two countries really stand in Europe's football hierarchy.

It finished 6-0, but the painful reality for the Scots, who had travelled in the hope of hanging on to the advantage gained from a memorable 1-0 lead from the first leg, was that it could easily have been even worse.

Van Nistelroov ensured he took the headlines but 19-year-old Ajax midfielder Wesley Sneiider, one of four changes made by Dick Advocaat from the team beaten in Glasgow, was every bit as much the architect of victory.

After settling nerves with a superbly struck shot for Holland's 15th minute opener, the teenager went on to deliver two perfect free-kicks which Andre Ooijer and van Nistelrooy finished to ensure the Dutch could start booking $their ticket for Portugal\, by \, half-time.$

A header from Frank de Boer and two more from van Nistelroov completed the rout after the break and left Scotland

Scotland coach Berti Vogts insisted there was no shame in the crushing defeat.

"The Dutch played very, very good football - and we must learn from the big nations," Vogts said.

"The Dutch were so strong and they

2004, with the French and maybe the

"This was a learning experience for

us and we have to learn from it. Now we start preparation for the

World Cup qualifiers. Having held out so resolutely on Saturday, the limitations of Scotland's defenders were cruelly exposed in the absence of the protective shield that had been provided by the suspended Christian Dailly in Glasgow, as Vogts

"We missed Dailly in the midfield he works so hard.'

A niggly open ten minutes, in which Slovakian referee Lubos Michel dished out three yellow cards, soon gave way to a period of sustained Dutch pressure.

In the space of three minutes, Rafael van der Vart headed Andy van der Meyde's chip narrowly wide of the upright, a Marc Overmars shot was blocked by Steven Pressley's lunge and van Nistelrooy tested Rab Douglas with a low drive.

Still gasping for breath after that onslaught, the Scots defence was caught lying too deep to defend the move that led to Holland's opening goal.

Taking possession in the centre circle, Sneijder turned effortlessly away from Neil McCann's challenge to find nothing between him and the Scots

The Ajax teenager did not decline the invitation, advancing to within 25 yards of goal before unleashing an impeccable right-foot drive that skidded into the bottom corner of the net.

Holland's tempo briefly eased in the

might have been able to make a match of it if Lee Wilkie had been able to make more of the Darren Fletcher free-kick that found him unmarked beyond the back post in the 25th minute.

As it was, the Dundee defender could only hit the side-netting and seven minutes later Holland claimed the second goal they needed to get them to Portugal.

Jackie McNamara's block on Marc Overmars gave the Dutch a free-kick on the left of the penalty area and Sneiider's whipped delivery was flicked past Rab Douglas by PSV Eindhoven defender

Sneijder very nearly claimed a second goal for himself two minutes later before helping to extinguish Scotland's lingering hopes with an identical free-kick. This time it was van Nistelrooy who provided the necessary touch past Douglas as Scotland's central defenders floundered.

A Wilkie header forced Edwin van der Sar into a good save five minutes before the break.

That was to prove the Dutch goalkeeper's last serious bit of business of the evening as a weary Scotland side subsided into submission Van Nistelrooy's second came with a

deft chip over Douglas six minutes after the restart. Frank de Boer made it five with a

near post header van der Meyde's 65th minute corner and van Nistelroov completed his hat-trick two minutes Van der Meyde was the instigator

once more, breaking clear on the right

Nistelrooy to sweep home from close to the penalty spot.

Van Nistelrooy's departure a quarter of an hour from the end deprived him of the chance to add to his tally of 14 goals in 29 international appearances.

But Sneijder very nearly capped a stunning performance ten minutes from time with a curled shot that struck the angle of post and bar. Advocaat, who had said he would

quit if his side failed to get past the Scots, was delighted with his side's perfor-"Today you saw the way the Dutch

team should have played last Saturday," he said. "We were fantastic, we put them under pressure from the start and eventually we won 6-0. "On Saturday the players did not do

what I asked them to do, today they did and that is what made the difference." Advocaat paid tribute to the way

Sneijder had injected real urgency into his side's performance. "Wesley Sneijder is able to move the game very quickly. His supply to the

strikers is fantastic," Advocaat said. The Dutch players refused to speak to the press after the match in a protest over stories that 10 of them had gone to an all-night rave party after Saturday's

Advocaat said he understood their reaction. "They all have families at home. If you look at the stories that were spread about them going out after Saturday's match, they had a lot to explain at home and I can understand why they don't want to talk to the



Dutch goal-machine Ruud van Nistelrooy (front) is ecstatic after scoring one of his three goals against Scotland in Amsterdam on November 19.

Time to party

The Baltic state of Latvia held morning after celebrations Thursday for their national soccer team whose 2-2 draw against Turkey in Istanbul secured the country's first appearance in the European Championships final next year in Portugal.

Television stations in the chilly nation of 2.3 million inhabitants continued to replay the match, while some 500 fans, cheering "Win, Latvia, Latvia" stayed up to greet the returing team at dawn.

Latvia, who went into the second leg play-off as underdogs, came from two goals behind to force a draw, winning 3-2 on aggregate, and shocking Turkey who $had\,been\,tipped\,to\,reverse\,the\,visitors\,1\text{-}0$ first leg lead

The success drew glowing tributes from the country's leaders, with president Vaira Vike-Freiberga hailing the "golden boys" and promising a reception $in their honour at the presidential \, palace. \\$

Latvian Soccer Federation president Guntis Indiksons said that the win would help put the country on the map, 13 years after restoring independence from the

"Am I happy? Oh, I am so surprised," he said. "We cannot buy these positive emotions and a contribution for Latvia's image in the world for any money. But ours boys gave it to us with their performance!"

But as Latvians celebrated their ticket to the Euro 2004 finals, some fans feared they could lose star scorer Maris Verpakovskis, who has been elevated to the status of national hero, after clinching the crucial goals.

"I'm afraid that Verpakovskis will not continue to play for Latvia next year. Every football club wants to have him after these matches," Janis Kalnins, a 27-

Hosts, France, Czechs, Sweden top draws

REUTERS, London

Holders France, Sweden and the Czech Republic are the top seeds along with hosts Portugal for the Euro 2004 draw next week, UEFA said on Thursday.

Big guns Italy, Germany, Spain and England are in a second tier of seeds, European soccer's governing body said after the last five qualifiers emerged $from Wednesday's \, playoffs.$

The top seeds will be placed in Pot A, one of four groups of four teams, in the draw scheduled for Lisbon on November 30. The second group will be in Pot B with the third, Pot C, comprising the Netherlands, Denmark, Croatia

Pot D is made up of the supposedly weaker teams, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Greece and tournament newcomers Latvia, the surprise qualifiers who upset World Cup semi-finalists Turkey in the

UEFA said the seeding was based on the record of the 15 teams -- not including Portugal -- in qualifying for the 2002 World Cup and 2004 European Championship.

SEEDINGS Pot A: Portugal (hosts), France, Sweden,

Czech Republic Pot B: Italy, Spain, England, Germany

Pot C: Netherlands, Croatia, Russia Denmark Pot D: Bulgaria, Switzerland, Greece,

Welsh dream shattered

Tiny Latvia become big



Wales saw their status as second class European football citizens ruthlessly confirmed on Wednesday as their dreams of making it to the finals of Euro

the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff with the majority hoping to see Wales reach the finals of a major championship for the first time since the 1958 World Cup.

But their dream was shattered in the 22nd minute when Vadim Evseev, who was booed by the home crowd after his horror tackle on Ryan Giggs in the first leg, rose unchallenged to head home a

deserve to be going to the finals," said

In Istanbul, Latvia came from two goals behind to force a 2-2 draw with last year's World Cup semi-finalists Turkey and clinch their first appearance in the European Championship finals with a 3-2 victory on aggregate.

Turkey, trailing 1-0 from the first



UNFORGETTABLE MOMENT: Latvia players celebrate their Euro 2004 qualifying victory against Turkey at the Riga stadium on November 19.

2004 were shattered.

Having battled to a 0-0 draw in Moscow, they threw away that advantage by losing 1-0 to Russia in Cardiff.

Elsewhere, Spain beat Norway 3-0 in Oslo to qualify for the finals in Portugal on a 5-1 aggregate, little Latvia drew 2-2 against World Cup semi-finalists Turkey to make it through 3-2, while Croatia beat Slovenia 1-0 for a 2-1 victory over

Over 73,000 people crammed into

Giggs had Wales' best chance but when his first half drive came off the post, he knew it would not be his coun-

Raul, Vicente Rodriguez and Joseba Etxeberria guaranteed 1964 European champions Spain a place in the 16nation finals with a 3-0 win in Norway.

"We're really happy. We didn't quite make it via the group (where Spain lost out to Greece) but overall we think we

leg, opened up a 2-0 lead on the night through Ilhan Mansiz and Hakan

Juris Laizans pulled one back before Maris Verpakovskis, who scored the winner on Saturday, grabbed the second with 13 minutes

Dado Prso led Croatia into the finals when he scored the only goal in a second leg victory over Slovenia to complete a 2-1 victory over two legs.

Turkey blasts shake UEFA

AFP, London

English Premiership club Chelsea were waiting to hear from European football's governing body UEFA if they would have to play their Champions League match against Besiktas next month in Istanbul.

UEFA said Thrusday they were urgently reviewing security in Turkey following Thursday's blasts in Istanbul to decide if two matches will be played next week.

Galatasaray are due to play

Italian champions Juventus in Istanbul on Tuesday and Israeli side Maccabi Haifa are scheduled to play Spanish club Valencia in a UEFA Cup match in Izmir on Thursday. The match was moved to Turkey because of security concerns in

Israel. At least 25 people were killed and 390 injured by suicide bombers targetting British interests in Istanbul on Thursday. UEFA said they were investigat-

ing the situation and would issue a statement later Thursday. They were expected to postpone

the December 9 match or order it to be played at a neutral venue. Chelsea had already advised fans not to travel before Thursday's

terrorist attacks. The club had not yet decided whether to take up their ticket allocation and had asked UEFA to liaise with government and football

authorities on their behalf.

"Proposed local security arrangements around this fixture for travelling Chelsea fans do not, at present, satisfy the club's conditions for ensuring an enjoyable and secure football experience," read a Chelsea statement issued on Wednesday.

Two years ago six Chelsea players refused to travel to Tel Aviv for a UEFA Cup tie with Hapoel because of security fears.

A weakened side lost the first leg 2-0 before being knocked out in a 1-1 second leg draw at Stamford

Ronaldo denies Uruguay

DEUTSCHLAND

REUTERS, Curitiba

An 87th-minute equalizer by Ronaldo helped Brazil salvage a 3-3 draw at home to Uruguay after throwing away a two-goal lead in Wednesday's World Cup qualifier. The five-time world champions

ripped Uruguay to shreds in the first half, going 2-0 up after 29 minutes through Kaka and Ronaldo and also missing a hatful of chances. Uruguay, apparently down and out, hit back to lead 3-2 as Manchester United

striker Diego Forlan scored twice and Arsenal's Gilberto Silva headed a bizarre But the home team were saved from their first-ever home defeat in a World Cup qualifier when Ze Roberto set Ronaldo free

second goal of the game with an angled shot from the edge of the penalty area. Chelsea striker Hernan Crespo saved Argentina who drew 1-1 in Colombia against a side who had lost their three

and the Real Madrid striker scored his

Crespo pounced after a howler by Colombia goalkeeper Oscar Cordoba but Aston Villa's Juan Pablo Angel hit back for His goal changed Francisco

previous matches.

Maturana's mind. The Colombia boss had been ready to call it quits if his side had lost In the other match of the day, Ecuador

and Peru played out a goalless draw in Argentina with eight points are second in the table, a point behind leaders

Paraguay who won 1-0 at Chile on Tuesday Brazil (eight points) are third on goal

"We were a bit apathetic after

difference with Uruguay fourth (seven

halftime," Brazil captain Cafu said. "We could have won by a big score in the first

Uruguay coach Juan Ramon Carrasco stunned his compatriots by making five changes to the team that beat Chile 2-1 on

His other surprises included picking three strikers and dropping top scorer Javier Chevanton. After half an hour, it At Barranquilla, Colombia picked up seemed that Carrasco's gamble had backfired. Ronaldo, Rivaldo and Kaka produced dazzling form as Brazil sliced through the Uruguay defense almost at

Brazil went ahead after 20 minutes. mix-up in the home defence. Kaka bundling the ball home from a Ronaldo cross. Ronaldo, who had earlier hit the post, added the second goal nine minutes later. He latched on to a Ze Roberto pass, flicked the ball past goalkeeper Gustavo Munua with his shoulder The Chelsea striker, on the edge of the and scored into the empty net for his 50th

international strike. The match changed when Uruguay inspiration Alvaro Recoba, who has been troubled by a hamstring problem, came on in the second half along with Chevanton. The visitors reduced the arrears in the 57th minute when Roque Junior's clearance hit Chevanton and rebounded at the feet of Forlan, who volleved home.

Forlan took advantage of slack defending when he equalized with a close-range header in the 76th minute. Three minutes later, Gilberto Silva, under no pressure, deflected a harmless Recoba free kick into

Arsenal midfielder Silva tried to explain

"I tried to cut out the ball, then I heard (goalkeeper) Dida saying it was his but the ball struck my head and deflected past him," hesaid.

The defending World Cup champion no longer automatically qualifies for the next finals

their first point in the qualifiers despite gifting the visitors a first-halflead. The home team could not believe their bad luck when Crespo put Argentina ahead in the 28th minute following an unusual

Turkish-based goalkeeper Oscar Cordoba attempted to take a quick goal kick but his clearance struck a team mate on the back of the head and rebounded straight to

penalty area, put the ball into the net with Cordoba desperately trying to regain his

Angel, though, equalised for Colombia when he flicked in a David Montova corner three minutes into the second half.

Argentina coach Marcelo Bielsa surprisingly left midfielders Juan Sebastian Veron and Andres D'Alessandro on the bench at the start but both players joined the fray in the second half.

Colombia's equaliser led to a hotlycontested second period with several flying tackles and bad-tempered

STANDINGS

South American Zone 4th Round qualifying standings Wednesday for the 2006 World Cup (Played-won-drawn-lost-goals for-goals against-points):

Paraguay	4	3	0	1	8	6	9
Argentina	4	2	2	0	9	3	8
Brazil	4	2	2	0	7	5	8
Uruguay	4	2	1	1	11	8	7
Venezuela	4	2	0	2	3	6	6
Peru	4	1	2	1	6	4	5
Chile	4	1	1	2	5	6	4
Ecuador	4	1	1	2	3	3	4
Bolivia	4	1	0	3	5	10	3
Colombia	1	Λ	1	3	2	Q	1

5th Round (March 30-31)

At Montevideo: Uruguay v Venezuela, At Asuncion : Paraguay v Brazi, At La Paz: Bolivia v

Chile, At Buenos Aires: Argentina v Ecuador, At Lima: Peru v Colombia

Watch out world!

Football

REUTERS, New York

Freddy Adu, the 14-year-old American prodigy, set his sights on spearheading the United States's Olympic Games and World Cup teams after signing for Major League Soccer (MLS) club D.C. United

Wednesday. Adu, who has completed a six-year deal with MLS, the U.S. professional league, could become the youngest American athlete to play professional team sport in more than 100 years if he debuts for United next season.

But the teen-ager said he was already thinking about cementing his growing reputation on the world stage by earning a place in coach Bruce Arena's senior national U.S. squad.

"I'd like to think I have a good chance to be on the team," said Adu of his prospects of playing in the 2004 Olympics in Athens and the 2006 World Cup in

"Of course, I have to earn the right to be on the team... Hopefully I will do some things on the field that make (Arena) think about bringing me in.'

However, hours before a scheduled

appearance on the David Letterman chat show in New York, he played down the kind of hype that has portrayed him as the 'savior' of soccer in the U.S and compared him to Brazilian icon Pele "When I'm on the field I'm not think-

ing about what other people are saying about me," he told reporters. Adu, the Ghana-born forward who migrated to Maryland with his family in

1997, will become the highest paid player

in the MLS, with media reports saying he is

set to receive up to \$500,000 a year. However, he turned down more lucrative moves to English premier league champions Manchester United and other

European clubs to commit to the MLS. His contract is an initial four-year agreement with the option of a further two years. "Manchester United, Chelsea and PSV Eindhoven had a great deal of interest," his

agent, Richard Motzkin, told reporters. Big-spending west London club Chelsea are owned by Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich, while PSV are Dutch

"We talked to other European clubs, including others in England. But it was in the best interests of his development as a player and a person that he chose to join MLS," said Motzkin. Adu added: "I have faith in the MLS to

New FIFA regulations prevent young players appearing in a European club's first team before they are 18 and Adu realized that if he had joined a European team he could have faced four years of

training and, at best, reserve team action. However, he had insisted that he wanted to remain close to his mother's home in Maryland for the foreseeable Asked if he would join a European

team in the coming years, he added: "You

Adu's mother, Emelia, said: "We wanted to allow Freddy to pursue his

dreams and develop his God-given talents. Having the opportunity to stay at home and play at the top level was the top priority in the decision-making process." Adu became a U.S. citizen in February

match-winning performances as the U.S. team reached the quarter-finals of the under-17 world championships in Adu, who trains and lives with the under-17s in Bradenton, Florida, will

graduate from high school in March next The new MLS season begins for D.C. United on April 3 and if Adu makes his debut he will still be 60 days short of his

15th birthday on June 2.

He is likely to become the youngest player in the history of MLS and the youngest American professional team athlete since baseball's Fred Chapman. who made his debut in 1887 as a 14-year-



Brazil superstar Ronaldo going past Uruguay goalkeeper Gustavo Munua (R) before scoring his first goal at the Pinheirao Stadium in Curitiba, Brazil on November 19.