



German starlets Bastian Schweinsteiger (L) and two-goal hero Lukas Podolski celebrate the former's strike in their Euro 2008 qualifying encounter against Slovakia in Bratislava on Wednesday.

## Poldi keeps his word

AFP, Bratislava

Lukas Podolski redeemed himself in ideal fashion after being sent-off in a friendly last week end by scoring a brace as Germany continued their perfect start to the Euro 2008 qualifying campaign with a resounding 4-1 Group D win over Slovakia here on Wednesday.

Slovakia had crushed Wales 5-1 in their last qualifier but Germany, third at this summer's World Cup, scored twice in the first 25 minutes to silence the home crowd as they stroled to victory.

Germany have a maximum nine points and lie second in the group behind the Czech Republic, who drew 1-1 with the Republic of Ireland on Wednesday, having played one game less.

Podolski was sent off for violent conduct in Saturday's 2-0 friendly win over Georgia but he made amends with his double taking his goals tally to 23 in 38 internationals.

"We have continued where we left off at the World Cup," said Podolski. "Slovakia are a tough team to play on their own turf but we started so well and took the game to them. We were clinical in front of goal and I was glad to grab a couple of goals."

The 21-year-old Podolski opened the scoring on 13 minutes side-footing in after a fantastic cut-back from strike partner Miroslav Klose.

Klose was one of four regulars rested against Georgia and their freshness showed in an energetic opening.

Germany captain Michael Ballack doubled the lead on 25 minutes meeting Philipp Lahm's centre with a diving header.

"It is so much fun playing in this team. We have won our first three games and things look very good," explained Ballack.

"If we can keep our focus we should have no problems qualifying."

Bastian Schweinsteiger added a third in the 36th minute after some woeful goalkeeping to wrap up the points before half-time.

Slovakia, who had also thrashed Cyprus 6-1, looked devoid of ideas and FC Nuremberg midfielder Marek Mintal, top-scorer of the Bundesliga in 2005, was starved of service.

The hosts did not have a meaningful opening until the start of the second half when Robert Vittek fired over the crossbar from an acute angle.

However giant defender Stanislav Varga pulled one back for Slovakia on 58 minutes - the first goal Germany had conceded under

new manager Joachim Loew.

But Podolski struck again in the 71st minute rolling into an empty net after Klose had again done all the hard work for him.

"Germany turned in a great performance and showed why they finished third at the World Cup," said Slovakia coach Dusan Galis.

"I said before that Germany and the Czechs were the favourites in this group and I stand by that -- but we have to keep believing."

In truth it could have been worse for Slovakia who had beaten Jurgen Klinsmann's Germany 2-0 at this venue 13 months ago.

Low, who took over from Klinsmann after the World Cup, has won his first five matches in charge and hopes to make it six in the next qualifier against Cyprus on November 15.

## Smolarek stuns Portugal

REUTERS, Chorzow

A first half double by striker Ebi Smolarek gave Poland a shock 2-1 win over Group A favourites Portugal in their Euro 2008 qualifier on Wednesday.

The victory was Poland's first against Portugal since Smolarek's father Wlodzimierz scored the only goal in a group stage clash at the 1986 World Cup finals in Mexico and was also revenge for a 4-0 drubbing in the 2002 finals in Korea.

The win gives the Poles seven points from four games and fourth place in Group A behind Serbia, Finland and Belgium on goal difference. Portugal have four points from three games.

"...we have made a step forward. Compared to the games against Finland and Serbia we played much better," said Poland coach Leo Beenhakker.

"The tactics were to stop the Portuguese from playing in the middle. The team carried out the strategy 100 per cent."

A revitalised Poland, under fire after taking just one point from games against Serbia and Finland, defended well from the start, breaking up Portugal's passing game and breaking forward at speed with every opportunity.

Smolarek opened the scoring in the 10th minute, firing the ball high into the net from a tight angle after Portuguese goalkeeper Ricardo failed to hold a Mariusz Lewandowski drive.

He added a second seven minutes later, driving the ball past

Ricardo from 15 metres after striker Grzegorz Rasiak had taken advantage of a defensive mix-up deep in the Portuguese half.

Nuno Gomes gave the Portuguese a consolation strike a minute into injury time at the end of the second half.

"The Poles were very well prepared physically," said Portugal coach Luiz Felipe Scolari. "They showed amazing hunger. And we made mistakes in marking".

Beenhakker said before the game that he would take inspiration from Scotland's defensive performance in their 1-0 win over France at the weekend. But, roared on by a capacity crowd, it was the Poles who had most of the chances.

Before the interval Maciej Zurawski drove against the post from 18 metres with Ricardo stranded and more free-flowing attacking in the

second half saw winger Jakub Blaszczykowski, Lewandowski and Smolarek all go close.

Portugal had more possession but the Polish defence dealt easily with crosses delivered by wingers Simao and Cristiano Ronaldo and the visitors looked bereft of ideas for most of the second half.

Their only clear chances came in the last 10 minutes of the game, with Ronaldo pushing the ball wide of the post from inside the box before Nuno Gomes got them on the scoresheet.

"The only problem I have is that now the players go away to their clubs and I have no guarantee how they will look in five weeks when we play Belgium," Beenhakker said.

"(But) we have shown that they have the same ability that others have."

## Ireland hold Czechs

REUTERS, Dublin

Struggling Ireland pulled off a 1-1 home draw against Group D leaders Czech Republic in their Euro 2008 qualifier on Wednesday, helping to answer criticism of their dismal performance against Cyprus.

Following calls for the resignation of manager Steve Staunton after Ireland's humiliating 5-2 defeat in Nicosia on Saturday, an injury-hit and relatively inexperienced Ireland side put on a com-

posed display in defence to keep their opponents in check and were energetic up front.

Both sides had a handful of chances in the first half, with one of Ireland's best coming from Jonathan Douglas whose low shot at goal inside the area was kicked away by goalkeeper Peter Cech for a corner.

A Milan Baros corner tested third-choice Irish goalkeeper Wayne Henderson close to the break but he reacted quickly to keep the ball out, leaving the score goalless at halftime.

Ireland's efforts were

rewarded in the second half when winger Damien Duff made a strong run down the right and crossed low for Kevin Kilbane whose strike found the top corner to give the home side the lead.

A delighted home crowd erupted but they had little time to celebrate.

Czech striker Jan Koller picked up a quick free kick less than two minutes later and beat fullback Paul McShane, making his debut for Ireland, for a low strike that whipped past Henderson.

McShane, named man of the

match, said he was delighted with Ireland's committed performance.

"They've come out today and they've given it their all and that's what Irish teams are known for," he said.

The draw gives Ireland, who lost 1-0 to Germany in their opening qualifier, their first points in the group, while the Czechs stay top with 10 points from four matches.

## Petrov walks out on team

AFP, Sofia

Bulgarian captain Stilian Petrov has walked out on the team after its lacklustre 1-0 win over Luxembourg in a Euro 2008 qualifier, Bulgarian radio station Gong reported Thursday.

The Aston Villa midfielder left for England after Wednesday's match and will not be flying back to Sofia with the team later Thursday, the radio station said.

The 27-year-old midfielder, who has scored seven goals in 66 appearances for Bulgaria and has been captain since April 2003, is expected to officially announce his decision to quit international football on Saturday.

## Super Sukur squashes Moldova

REUTERS, Frankfurt

Hakan Sukur scored four times -- including a hattrick in eight minutes -- to take his international goal tally to 50 as Turkey crushed Moldova 5-0 in their Euro 2008 Group C qualifier on Wednesday.

The Turks maintained their 100 per cent start to the campaign with their third successive win in the group.

The match, played behind closed doors in Frankfurt as part of UEFA's punishment for trouble in a World Cup qualifier against Switzerland last year, was totally one-sided and left Moldova bottom of the group after Malta's stunning 2-1 upset win over Hungary lifted them out of last place.

After dominating the opening stages, Turkey finally made their breakthrough when Sukur headed in Sabri Sarioglu's cross from close range after 34 minutes.

He added a second two minutes later from the penalty spot after Arda Turan was brought down in the box by Alexandru Epureanu.

He completed his hattrick six minutes later with another header that flew in off the underside of the crossbar as Turkey wrapped up all three points.

Tuncay Sanli headed the fourth after 68 minutes and Sukur scored his fourth goal after 73 minutes after pouncing on a ball from Marcus Aurelio to score.

Moldova came close to scoring twice in the second half but it was far too little too late against a totally dominant Turkish side.

## PSG sack Dhorasoo

AFP, Paris

Former France international midfielder Vikash Dhorasoo has been sacked by his club Paris Saint Germain, his lawyer said in a statement on Wednesday a day after his 33rd birthday.

Dhorasoo is the first player to be sacked in France since the Professional Footballers Charter was set up in 1973 as a consequence of a players' strike.

"He received today (Wednesday) by registered post a letter telling him that his contract -- which ran till June 30 2007 -- had been terminated with immediate effect," said the statement.

The statement also listed the reasons for the former AC Milan midfielder's firing as: "His refusal to play for the reserves, his lack of loyalty, also his insubordination, disobedience and his permanent air of provocation."

However the lawyers said that Dhorasoo -- a member of France's World Cup runners-up squad -- would contest it.

"He will appeal these reasons and the sacking. The player has instructed his lawyer Olivier Martin to start legal proceedings to clear him of this serious prejudice against him personally and professionally which he has suffered with the abrupt termination of his contract," read the statement.

PSG later confirmed that the 18-times capped Dhorasoo, who got into hot water with his French teammates by secretly filming them during their World Cup finals campaign, had indeed been shown the door.

"We can confirm that PSG has indeed terminated Vikash Dhorasoo's contract," said their communications director Jean-Philippe D'Hallivillee.

The last player in French football to have had such troubles with his club was the fiery Eric Cantona who in 1991 tore up his contract with Nimes.

## Lacklustre Dutch win

REUTERS, Amsterdam

Netherlands hung on to beat Albania 2-1 and regain the lead in Euro 2008 qualifying Group G on Wednesday after fading badly in the second half.

Robin van Persie opened the scoring after 13 minutes, while his cross four minutes before the break was netted by Albania's Nevil Dede to double the lead.

But Marco van Basten's team, having made a good start after their convincing display in a 1-1 draw in Bulgaria on Saturday, slipped to a worrying level.

Albania fought back with

Debatik Curri on target midway through the second half.

"We started well, created some chances and scored a fine goal" Van Basten told reporters.

"But as we failed to convert more chances my team got restless."

"I tried to make some chances in the midfield in the second half to build in some more security."

"Some of my players had a poor performance tonight and that is a fact," he said.

Netherlands, with Van Persie as central striker in the absence of the injured Dirk Kuyt and Klaas-Jan Huntelaar, made a fine start with dominating, offensive football.

Arjen Robben created the first danger in the second minute when he outplayed two markers but his curved shot missed the target.

Van Persie opened the scoring

12 minutes later when he netted from 10 metres after a defence-splitting combination by Joris Mathijsen and Ryan Babel.

After 30 minutes of pressure, the Dutch lost their concentration and gave Albania the opportunity to create their first chance when Edvin Bogdani almost surprised Edwin van der Sar.

Dede's own goal gave the Dutch a comfortable 2-0 lead at halftime. The Albanian defender unfortunately turned a Van Persie cross behind his own goalkeeper four minutes before the break.

Curri gave the home side a serious warning shortly after the interval when his fierce shot hit the post and midway through the second half he had more luck and pulled one back.

## France fleece Faroes

AFP, Sochaux

France rebounded from their deserved 1-0 defeat by Scotland last Saturday with a dominant 5-0 win over Scandinavian minnows the Faroe Islands here Wednesday.

Manchester United's Louis Saha continued his rise up his coach Raymond Domenech's striking hierarchy by hitting the net after just 36 seconds to claim his fourth goal in 17 games.

Goals from Thierry Henry and second half substitutes Nicolas Anelka and David Trezeguet (two) then sealed a win that will provide a crumb of comfort for Domenech after their shock 1-0 defeat to Scotland.

"They controlled the game from start to finish, we couldn't do anything."

Despite the resounding result France failed to move ahead of Scotland in group B, despite having a superior goals difference but behind them on head to head.

Domenech sent out second choice goalkeeper Mickael Landreau knowing he would be a more than capable replacement for the injured Gregory Coupet.

Chelsea defender Claude Makelele was also sidelined, officially because of an ankle injury picked up on Tuesday.

With the 1-0 defeat in Glasgow still fresh in their minds France went out with purpose, and the effect was immediate.

An early cross by defender Willy Sagnol found Henry, whose cross to the far post was easily tapped in by Saha.

The only consolation for the visitors was that his goal on 36 seconds was two seconds slower than the French record strike of Franck Sauzee who took just 34 seconds to open against Albania in March 1991.

The Faroes were soon on the back foot, and Henry added to their workload when he pounced at the far post to hit their second just after 20 minutes.

France dominated the first half



France forward Thierry Henry (R) slaps high fives with right-back Willy Sagnol after scoring against Faroe Islands in their Euro 2008 qualifying match in Sochaux on Wednesday.

### CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
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**ACROSS**

12 Wellington  
15 ingredient  
5 Ready  
9 Partner of green eggs  
12 Sandwich cookie  
13 Mason City is there  
14 Raw rock  
15 Ungraceful dive  
17 Appomattox VIP  
18 Biographer's writup  
19 One-person boat  
21 Element  
24 Vocalize  
25 Acknowledge  
26 1952 dance number  
30 Hair-salon gunk  
31 Refuge  
32 Eggs

**DOWN**

1 Bing's buddy  
2 Prior to  
3 Silithery creature  
4 Ensur  
5 Quarrel  
6 Goller's target  
7 - Jima  
8 Serviettes  
9 Trinity member  
10 Vicinity  
11 Earth's heirs?  
16 Yang counter-part  
20 Whatever number  
21 Satchels  
22 It takes the cake  
23 Spinning directories  
24 Wild shears  
26 Taverns  
27 GI entertain-ment grp.  
28 Finished  
29 El --, Texas  
31 Long journey  
34 Had been  
35 Gender-neutral  
37 Passbook abbr.  
38 Farm implement  
39 Hindu royal  
40 Early period  
41 Vexes  
44 Hasten  
45 Lid for a lad  
46 Man-mouse link  
47 Third thought? (Abbr.)

**Solution time: 21 mins.**

HOBO ESI PRIM  
ACADEMIC EASE  
SANDWICH STILL  
JET OPENED  
ACTOR MOOT  
DABB SANDALS  
ERN OIZES OHO  
SANDLER DOUR  
ADDIS MATTIE  
ALISTAIR GAT  
TITOL SANDBURIO  
TOLLE TRADESIN  
DEED SEW DAMP

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
12					13				14		
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42					43	44			45	46	47
48					49				50		
51									53		

**CRYPTOQUIP**

X U H K P O X N B V H Z Z O X D A L

S H A S G X D K J L B H O N H D Y

S L D K V B N , S L P Z Y O L P S H Z Z

G X J H D V V Z X D K U H D ?

Yesterday's Cryptiquip: WHEN PIANIST LISZT WENT AROUND PLAYING CONCERTS, I FIGURE THEY CALLED IT THE TOUR DE FRANZ.

Today's Cryptiquip Clue: Z equals L

The Cryptiquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.