



Spain feel violated

REUTERS, Madrid

Millions of Spaniards let out a collective groan of despair as they saw their World Cup dreams dashed in a nerve-racking penalty shootout defeat by South Korea on Saturday, and said it wasn't fair. Across the country, distraught fans blamed bad luck but above all bad refereeing for their quarter-final exit against a fiercely determined Korean side.

"It is always the same story. We never manage to get beyond the quarter-finals," said Jesus Aguado in Madrid, whose usually bustling streets were near-deserted during the game.

Marco Ortega, red-faced after two hours shouting at the television and drinking aniseed liqueur in a Seville bar, cursed the linesmen and Egyptian referee.

"I feel terrible. Spain dominated the game but they disallowed two goals," said the sales manager, aged 34.

South Korea edged to a 5-3 victory on penalties after the game was deadlocked 0-0 following 120 minutes of absorbing football.

Eduardo, a 22-year-old finance student, also railed against the linesman who wrongly, in Spanish eyes, ruled the ball out just before Spain's Fernando Morientes shot it into the goal.

"Hit the linesman with the corner flag," the student shouted at the end of the match which he watched in the same spit and sawdust bar in the southern Spanish city.

"It's the referee's fault," he added. "He was biased in favour of the Koreans."

Before the match, optimism had been running high with the opinion on the streets that the more experienced Spaniards would find it tough going against the hard-running South Koreans, but eventually emerge victorious.

Spaniards broke their usual late-night weekend routine and set their alarms to watch the 0830 a.m. kick-off and cheer their side as it tried to make the semifinals for the first time in 52 years.

Many watched in the comfort of their own homes, but excited early risers made their way to local bars where they stayed glued to big screens, anxiously sipping coffee or something stronger as the game reached its climax.

As the match wore on, frustration began to set in.

A disallowed goal early in the second half and the decisive penalty miss by young Real Betis winger Joaquin sparked reactions of disbelief from both the radio and television.

"Spain were superior to Korea, but sometimes there seems to be no justice in football," said a commentator on national radio station Onda Cero.

Manuel, the Seville bartender, joined the chorus of complaint.

"This really gets me down. Spain

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LET'S GO ALL THE WAY! Ecstatic South Korean players join hands as they run together to celebrate their semi-final berth at Gwangju yesterday.

Wild Red Sea

REUTERS, Seoul

Millions of South Korean soccer fans screamed, cried and roared themselves hoarse on Saturday after their team's nail-biting World Cup quarter-final victory over Spain.

Fans dressed in red and pumped up from a high-octane party even before kick-off sang victory chants and screamed "Dae Han Min Kuk" (Republic of Korea) in the heart of Seoul as they celebrated their side beating Spain on penalties to become the first Asian team to reach the World Cup semi-finals.

Police said some 4.5 million about 10 percent of the country's 48 million population clogged the country's streets to watch Dutch-born coach Guus Hiddink's team slay another soccer giant and rewrite history for the second time in five days.

"There is nothing better than this feeling. We'll party all night long," said Noh Yu-sook, a 38-year-old Seoul woman.

Multi-coloured fireworks whizzed into the air, confetti fluttered from office blocks and a giant banner of Hiddink was unfurled from one building in central Seoul amid wild scenes.

"Let's go to Yokohama!" read the wording on the giant banner, which showed Hiddink in silhouette executing his trademark upercut celebratory punch. Yokohama is the city in co-host Japan where the final will be played on June 30.

Pumping pop music accompanied 1.9 million people in the capital's central Kwanghwamoon area. Fans, almost all in red team T-shirts, hugged each other and danced the conga. Many people were sending text messages or phoning friends on mobile phones, a ubiquitous feature of life in tech-savvy South Korea.

"I feel like I'm dreaming," said Suh Sung-won, 34. "I bet we will go to the final. The Korean team is invincible."

"Hiddink, I love you!" screamed college student Eun Eun-hee.

South Korea beat Spain 5-3 on penalties after the match ended goalless at the end of extra time.

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Ronaldo doubtful

REUTERS, Saitama

Brazil striker Ronaldo could miss Wednesday's World Cup semi-final against Senegal or Turkey because of an injury to his left thigh, team doctor Jose Luis Runco has said.

"At times these injuries take longer than you expect. If it doesn't improve with treatment then he will not be released for the game on Wednesday," he said.

"He is still a doubt. Just time will tell but he hasn't got a serious injury."

Ronaldo was substituted in the second half of the 2-1 quarter-final win over England on Friday complaining of a pain in his thigh muscle.

Runco said the injury had nothing to do with any of the two knee operations that disrupted his career for two years and were followed by a serious of nagging muscular injuries.

"Since March 9 we have said that

Ronaldo is in the same state as any other athlete. This is a common (injury) problem which could affect any other footballer."

He will have physiotherapy on Sunday and do light running in the afternoon, but no training with the ball.

"Normally in 72 hours the problem will clear up," Runco said. "I believe we have time to get him better by Wednesday and even more so by Sunday (June 30)."

The World Cup final takes place on June 30 in Yokohama.

Scolari, who will also be missing attacking midfielder Ronaldinho because of suspension on Wednesday, confirmed that Luizao - who has so far only appeared at the World Cup in the last few minutes of the 2-1 win over Turkey --

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EVEN PHENOMENONS HAVE TO CARRY THEIR OWN BAGGAGE! Superstar Ronaldo leaves the Grand Hotel in Hamamatsu yesterday on way to Saitama.

Other side of Korea

REUTERS, Seoul

North Korea's parallel universe expanded on Saturday when it announced -- on the day South Korea reached the World Cup semi-finals -- that it would extend a lavish festival glorifying the communist state.

The North Korean media kept silent about South Korea taking Asian soccer into another dimension by becoming the first team from the continent to reach the last four with its astonishing World Cup quarter-final penalty shootout win against Spain.

Among the news items in the North on Saturday was a message from Pyongyang to the Grand Duke of Luxembourg and a gift for North Korean leader Kim Jong-il from a visiting Russian folk troupe.

Topping the bill was a report Kim had extended to the end of June his country's "Anirang" festival, a frothy concoction of dancing, gymnastics and mass card flipping that was supposed, unofficially, to rival the World Cup as a tourist magnet.

KCNA news agency said nearly two million people had seen the show in the capital, Pyongyang, since it opened on April 29.

"The number of people wishing

to see it is on a steady increase," the official agency said.

South Korean newspapers say few outsiders have made the trip to the North, which outside the capital is in darkness most nights and has serious food shortages. The North looks set to allow South Koreans in to drum up more hard currency.

Just an hour's drive south from the Demilitarised Zone that bisects the Korean peninsula, but in a different world, millions of exuberant South Koreans fanned out into the neon-lit bar districts across the capital, Seoul, to celebrate into the night.

South Korea's victory means they now play Germany in the semi-finals on Tuesday in Seoul. Until now, North Korea's "Red Mosquitoes" had been the most successful Asian soccer team after reaching the quarter-finals in 1966 in England.

They did not even enter the qualifying tournament for this year's finals, which are being hosted by South Korea and Japan -- both ideological rivals of the North.

North and South Korea have been split since the Korean war, which began on June 25, 1950, and lasted three bitter years.

Fingers crossed

REUTERS, Yokohama

Brazil's Ronaldinho will learn on Sunday whether he has a chance of playing in the World Cup final if his country get there after being sent off in his team's 2-1 quarter-final defeat of England.

Ronaldinho, who scored the winner in Friday's game but was sent off seven minutes later for a foul on England defender Danny Mills, is automatically suspended for Brazil's semi-final on Wednesday against either Senegal or Turkey. But world governing body FIFA

said on Saturday that its disciplinary committee would meet on Sunday to discuss the sending-off, which was a harsh decision in what was generally a clean game.

"Whether it is extended or not will be discussed tomorrow when the disciplinary committee meets," FIFA communications director Keith Cooper told a news conference.

Ronaldinho was only the fourth player in the history of the World Cup finals to score a goal and be sent off in the same match.

Guus in heaven

AFP, Gwangju

South Korea's Dutch coach Guus Hiddink moved a step nearer sporting immortality after his team proved the pundits wrong once again by reaching the World Cup semi-finals here Saturday with a 5-3 penalty shootout win over Spain.

The South Koreans held their nerve in a white-hot atmosphere to complete an unlikely win after Spain had two goals disallowed, thereby becoming the first Asian side ever to reach the last four.

A real hero then had to step

forward - and skipper Hong Myung-Bo was the man as he fired past keeper Iker Casillas after Spain's Joaquin had failed to tie the score at 4-4.

Now 'all' Hiddink has to do is conjure a win over Germany in Seoul next Tuesday and his Red Devil warriors will be in the final in Yokohama, Japan, on June 30.

But Hiddink, who is in the World Cup semi-finals for the second straight time having taken Holland to the last four in France, isn't looking so far ahead.

"I am so happy for the boys who fought to the end," said Hiddink, who

was admirably keeping his calm despite the huge outpouring of emotion in the stadium before, during and after the win.

"I can't describe how I'm feeling. I think now it's a complete dream."

Even though the Germans will pose a massive obstacle nobody could deny Hiddink his post-match tittle.

"More dreams have come true. If you don't mind we will have a little glass of champagne now and celebrate and then concentrate on the

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CUP CORNER

AFP, Istanbul

Turkish First Division club Gaziantep have announced they have agreed terms with in-demand Senegal coach Bruno Metsu, according to Turkish press agency Anatolie.

"We spoke this morning and came to agreement on all points," said the club president Celal Dogan.

The financial details of the reported deal have not yet been released.

Frenchman Metsu has been one of the talking points of the World Cup, having taken Senegal to a quarter-final clash against Turkey.

According to Dogan, Metsu is due to arrive at the club "in the near future". Gaziantep finished sixth in the Turkish first division last season.

FEYENOORD AFTER INAMOTO

REUTERS, Osaka

Feyenoord are looking to take Junichi Inamoto to the Dutch First Division

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NO MATCHES TODAY

Semifinals start from June 25



IF AGONY HAD A NAME: Spain striker Fernando Morientes (C) breaks down totally after the tie-breaker loss to South Korea at Gwangju yesterday.