



# Nuno is golden

AFP, Lisbon

The journey took four years and much heartache, but Portugal striker Nuno Gomes finally achieved sporting redemption on Sunday as he produced the goal which fired his country into the quarter-finals at Euro 2004.

The Benfica striker's 21st goal in his 42nd international - giving Portugal a 1-0 victory over Spain - was worth its weight in gold for the host nation, which is still traumatised in footballing terms by its semi-final loss to France in 2000.

Nuno Gomes was not thinking about that in the immediate aftermath of Sunday night's win.

"When I scored I felt deliriously happy. I want to dedicate this win to my daughter Laura Sofia.

"This win is our riposte to all the criticism we had after losing to Greece," the 27-year-old said.

Four years ago, Nuno Gomes was one of several Portuguese stars to protest violently to Austrian

referee Gunter Benko and his assistant after Benko awarded a decisive penalty when Portugal defender Abel Xavier handled a shot from substitute Sylvain Wiltord.

Nuno Gomes was sent off for pushing the referee and earned a seven-month international ban from UEFA.

Such ill-starred events made it look to this proud country of just nine and a half million people as if the "golden generation" led by skipper Luis Figo are simply destined never to achieve greatness.

It still has yet to do so, but Nuno Gomes's goal on 58 minutes to see off neighbouring Spain was a potentially giant leap for the Portuguese.

Figo was involved as he played his heart out in the midfield engine room, feeding Nuno Gomes, who turned inside the box to send a right-footed effort unerringly low past Spanish keeper Iker Casillas and bring cheer to the Portuguese half of the 55,000 capacity crowd.

Nuno Gomes started out with northern side Boavista and then spent three years with Benfica before a 19 million dollar move to fallen Italian giants Fiorentina in 2000, the year he hit four goals in Portugal's exciting run to the semis which would end under a dark cloud.

On Sunday he shone brightly once again to send Portugal into the last eight and could have had another two goals, but for a tremendous intervention on the line by Raul Bravo and a smart intervention by Casillas.

Nuno Gomes admitted after the Portuguese flopped in their opening match to Greece that the squad were nervous, but the tension - and his goal - appeared to liberate the hosts on Sunday as they scored their first ever competitive win over Spain.

"I'm going to savour the moment," he shouted over his shoulder as he ran the gauntlet of hordes of journalists afterwards.



SEE YOU AT THE BACK OF THE NET! Portuguese striker Nuno Gomes delivers the killer punch against Spain on June 20.

PHOTO: INTERNET SOURCE

## PREVIEW DENMARK v SWEDEN

# Focus on attack

REUTERS, Oporto

Denmark's fine wing play and Sweden's gifted strikers should determine the result of the Euro 2004 Group C decider on Tuesday being played in the rarefied atmosphere of Italian-generated conspiracy theories.

The Swedes fear Denmark's unusual style for a Scandinavian team with Jesper Gronkjaer and Martin Joergensen switching wings, and surprise plays at set pieces.

But they believe strongly in the capacity for a surprise of their own from pedigree striker Henrik Larsson and the unpredictable genius of Zlatan Ibrahimovic, who scored a brilliant late equaliser against Italy on Friday.

Sweden's 1-1 draw with the Italians left them and Denmark, who beat Bulgaria 2-0, top of the group with four points each. Italy have two and Bulgaria none.

Italians are worried that Denmark and Sweden could end up with a draw of 2-2 or more that, assuming Italy beat Bulgaria, would leave all three on five points and knock Italy out on goals scored. Denmark drew 0-0 with Italy on Monday.

The Swedes called the idea of a Scandinavian conspiracy Machiavellian.

"We're just going to go out there to try and do our best to win," Larsson said on Sunday.

Sweden's scout Benny Lennartsson, a key associate of joint coaches Lars Lagerback and Tommy Soderberg, thinks Denmark are the best team in the group.

"The Danes are very dangerous coming inside with Gronkjaer and Joergensen. We are wary of their switch play which is not typical of the Nordic countries," he said.

"I can't see any better wing play in the tournament apart perhaps from Spain with Vicente and (Joseba) Etxeberria."

Ibrahimovic, however, can do

the unexpected.

"Zlatan scores like (Netherlands striker Ruud) Van Nistelrooy, out of nothing. I don't see the Danes scoring out of nothing."

Sweden are still without injured right back Teddy Lucic so midfielder Mikael Nilsson will probably continue in defence with Christian Wilhelmsson remaining on the right of midfield.

Midfielder Tobias Linderoth is suspended and Kim Kallstrom, who came on against Bulgaria and Italy, is the likely replacement. Otherwise, they will probably start with the team that took the field against the Italians.

Denmark could use Gronkjaer from the start for Dennis Rommedahl. Gronkjaer, just back with the squad after the death of his mother and short of practice, had to come on sooner than planned against Bulgaria because Rommedahl was injured but stayed the pace and scored a good stoppage-time goal.

Live on Star Sports at 12:40 am (Wednesday)

### PROBABLE TEAMS

**DENMARK: (4-3-3)** 1-Thomas Sorensen; 6-Thomas Helveg, 4-Martin Laursen, 3-Rene Henriksen, 5-Niclas Jensen; 7-Thomas Gravesen, 9-Niclas Dahl Tomasson, 15-Daniel Jensen; 8-Jesper Gronkjaer, 11-Ebbe Sand, 10-Martin Joergensen

**SWEDEN: (4-4-2)** 1-Andreas Isaksson; 7-Mikael Nilsson, 3-Olof Mellberg, 15-Andreas Jakobsson, 5-Erik Edman; 21-Christian Wilhelmsson, 16-Kim Kallstrom, 8-Anders Svensson, 9-Fredrik Ljungberg; 10-Zlatan Ibrahimovic, 11-Henrik Larsson

**Referee:** Markus Merk (Germany)  
**Linesmen:** Christian Schraer (Germany), Jan-Hendrik Salver (Germany).

## KICKIN' AROUND

AFP, Lisbon

David Beckham has revealed that winning Euro 2004 with England would mean more to him than any of his individual or club honours, including the treble of League, Cup and Champions League titles he won with Manchester United in 1999.

Beckham was due to lead England into their final group B match against Croatia on Monday evening knowing a point would be enough to put England into the quarter-finals and leave Sven-Goran Eriksson's squad just three wins away from claiming their first major trophy in 38 years.

At 29, Beckham knows he will not have too many more opportunities to claim the major tournament winner's medal he craves and he admits to having suffered pangs of jealousy when England's rugby squad returned from Australia last year with the World Cup.

"I've won the treble and that will always be an unbelievable memory in my career," the Real Madrid midfielder said at England's training camp on the outskirts of the Portuguese capital.

"It will be hard to top that, but to win something with England would definitely maybe top that. The euphoria after England won the rugby World Cup, that was amazing. To see what would happen if the football team won something, it would be a lot more than that."

"I feel we deserve it as a nation and our fans deserve it."

"The support we get in games is incredible. You never see that anywhere else in the world. I'd love to win it just to see the adulation and the atmosphere in going back to London afterwards and seeing all the crowds."

### FRENCH NOT WILLING!

COIMBRA: The UEFA official in charge of media for the Switzerland v France Group A showdown on Monday was amazed that France were the only team at Euro 2004 without anyone on their staff able to translate the words of coach Jacques Santini and his players into English. "The 15 other teams at the Euro have someone who can translate into English," said Andre Francioli. "Only France haven't been able to resolve this problem which is really not that hard to sort out with a little bit of willing," he added.

# Press roasts 'em

AFP, Madrid

Spain's press turned on the nation's footballers on Monday accusing them of cowardice and mediocrity following their elimination from Euro 2004 at the hands of bitter rivals Portugal.

"Another failure." Defeat as normal," and "Nightmare of the cowards," screamed the front pages after a nation with one of the strongest domestic leagues in the world once again made a premature exit from a major tournament on Sunday.

"Spain have failed again and this time without an ounce of glory or even dignity," said the As sports daily.

"There is nothing good to take from this tournament. They didn't play well, they can't blame a difficult draw or the referee and there were no heroes," it added.

Spain's exit at the group stages was all the more bitter because Portugal beat them for the first time

in a competitive match thanks to Nuno Gomes' goal in Lisbon which secured a 1-0 victory.

"Portugal kick us out," said Madrid sports paper Marca.

"Coach Inaki Saez piled up the strikers but failed to avoid elimination," said El Mundo, highlighting the lack of success of the much-vaunted Spanish attackers who only scored two goals in their three matches, meaning Spain missed out on qualification because Greece had scored more goals in the tournament.

Real Madrid star Raul did not score a single goal but Saez had persisted with him despite calls for his replacement.

El Pais summed up the national mood by saying "a new date and a new place will enter the traumatic history of the Spain team in major tournaments."

Spain have not won a major trophy since taking the European title in 1964.

# Daddy Gattuso gets a break

REUTERS, Lisbon

Italy midfielder Gennaro Gattuso has been allowed to fly home after his wife gave birth to their daughter on Sunday.

Gabriela, the couple's first child, was born in a clinic in the northern Italian town of Gallarate and the midfielder, who is suspended for Italy's Euro 2004 Group C match against Bulgaria on Tuesday, was given permission to go home.

Gattuso will probably return to Portugal on Monday night, an Italian Football Federation official said.

The AC Milan player picked up his second yellow card of the tournament in Friday's 1-1 draw against Sweden and has to serve a one-match ban.

# RAI's eyes on Scandinavians

REUTERS, Rome

Italian state broadcaster RAI plans to use extra television cameras to ensure fair play rules in Tuesday's Euro 2004 match between Denmark and Sweden.

Italians fear the Danes and Swedes will secretly agree to draw 2-2, thereby eliminating Italy from the tournament.

"Our intention was to add seven cameras but there wasn't space to set them up," the director of RAISport, Fabrizio Maffei, was quoted as saying in La Gazzetta dello Sport on Monday.

"We have, however, gained two extra camera positions and we'll be setting them up directly behind each goal."

The Italian national side has

already fallen foul of television cameras in the tournament. Playmaker Francesco Totti picked up a three-match ban after being filmed spitting at Denmark's Christian Poulsen during Italy's opening game.

Totti's teammate Gennaro Gattuso last week said he would like to have 50 television cameras focussed on Denmark versus Sweden, "then we'll see how they behave themselves."

Sweden and Denmark are top of Group C with four points each. Italy have two and Bulgaria none.

Italians are worried Denmark and Sweden could end up with a draw of 2-2 or more that, assuming Italy beat Bulgaria, would leave all three on five points and knock Italy out on goals scored.

# Not so fast Frei

AFP, Lisbon

UEFA are set to re-open an investigation into whether Swiss striker Alexander Frei spat on England midfielder Steven Gerrard in their Euro 2004 group match after new TV pictures came to light on Monday.

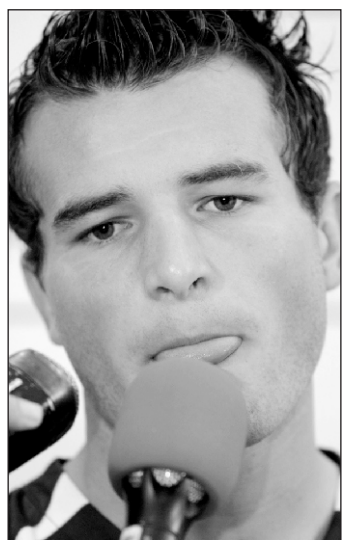
The pictures from Swiss German broadcaster SF DRS showed Frei spitting at Gerrard while the English player's back was turned during England's 3-0 Group B win on Thursday.

UEFA's Control and Disciplinary Body on Sunday cleared Frei of spitting after examining pictures supplied by a German broadcaster and taking statements from the players involved, along with England captain David Beckham.

But European football's governing body announced on Monday it was appealing against its disciplinary panel's decision and has asked that Frei be "suspended provisionally" for Switzerland's final group match against France later in the day.

The Swiss must win the match if they are to have a chance of reaching the quarter-finals.

Frei has denied spitting.



ALEXANDER FREI

Italy's key midfielder Francesco Totti was suspended for three matches of the tournament after Danish television showed him spitting in the face of Denmark player Christian Poulsen in their Euro 2004 opener.

Totti can only play again if Italy reach the semi-finals.

# Scolari breathes easy

AFP, Lisbon

Portugal's Brazilian coach Luiz Felipe Scolari saluted his team for their nailbiting but historic 1-0 win over Spain which took the Euro 2004 hosts into the quarter-finals.

On a hiding to nothing after flanking their opening group game against Greece, Portugal finally came good and sent their neighbours spiralling out of the competition after Nuno Gomes rifled home the only goal of a tense encounter just before the hour mark.

"This win results from a good deal of hard graft by a united group of players and also the huge support of the fans, who carried us along with their enthusiasm," said the man who has the experience of landing the ultimate prize having taken Brazil to the 2002 World Cup.

Spain, defeated by their small neighbour for the first time ever in a competitive international, went into the game seemingly set fair for the quarter-finals themselves, yet professing concern that Swedish referee Anders Frisk, might act as 12th man for the home side.

In the event, Frisk was cool efficiency personified in a white hot atmosphere, and the "extra"

men came from elsewhere for the Portuguese.

"The Portuguese people were not only the 12th man but the 13th and the 14th as well," acknowledged a grateful Scolari, whose tactic of allowing Cristiano Ronaldo free rein to run at the Spanish with Deco in the middle paid dividends.

His substitution of the booked and hence now suspended Pauleta from the fulcrum of the attack also looked inspired as the man who replaced him, Nuno Gomes, smacked home a neat winner after 57 minutes.

Whereas Portugal had been a bag of nerves against Greece against the Spanish Portugal thrived on the pressure bearing down on them.

"It was a nervy match and my players were grimly determined," Scolari indicated, adding they could not help but be inspired by the occasion and the crowd.

"There was a marvellous atmosphere as soon as we left our training centre for the stadium."

"The opening match was the key as that showed us just how much we had to improve and that's

what we did in beating Russia.

"The support of the fans was contagious. We had a very competitive spirit and that was just what we required."

Scolari said landing Portugal's first win of substance over Spain was incidental.

"Getting through the first phase was the important thing, not making history."

But Scolari said he was only too well aware that his side must improve even further if they are to see off either France or England in their next match - or potentially Croatia.

"Physically we are fine but technically and tactically we have room to improve."

A thick-skinned individual after his Brazilian experiences, Scolari said criticism from outside was water off a duck's back.

"Some criticism is constructive, other criticism is absurd," he said, pinning much of the blame on "the newspaper sellers."

"There are some journalists who are not journalists and who know nothing about football," he said dismissively.

# Guilty as charged

AFP, Lisbon

Raul blamed another big tournament disappointment for Spain on fate - but the reality was their lack of goals especially his failure to score a single goal at Euro 2004 killed off their chances.

It was reflected in the deciding factor in Group A as previously unheralded Greece progressed courtesy of having scored four goals to Spain's two in their three matches.

To add salt to the wound Portugal's 1-0 defeat of Spain on Sunday was their first in a competitive match between the two sides.

Hard to credit before the tournament started that a frontline of Raul, Fernando Morientes and the youthful promise of Fernando Torres would fail to convert the unmet chances in their first two matches created by their tricky wingers Vicente, Joseba Etxeberria and Joaquin.

Raul's waning scoring skills were reflected as he failed to add to his poor return of five goals all year and his hash of a header when unmarked in the Greek penalty area was an apt way to sum up his annus horribilis. If

successful, it would have put them 2-0 up but instead they were to be pegged back to 1-1 in a draw which was to prove so costly.

However the 27-year-old Real Madrid marksman still thought Spain should be credited with play-



RAUL

tournament.

"However we lacked sharpness in front of goal. Fate delivered us a bad card," added Raul.

Morientes at least scored a goal - nicely set up by Raul against Greece - while Torres looked sharper when he had a full head of hair and he may reflect that having shorn his locks for the Portuguese clash he was, like Samson, drained of his strength.

However the man who will attract the most criticism will be coach Inaki Saez, who refused to bow to pressure to drop Raul and play Juan Carlos Valeron more often especially as he scored with his first touch when he came on against Russia.

Saez, who took over after the 2002 World Cup finals, refused to comment on his future in the immediate aftermath of their exit but he was forced to concede that his strikers had let him down.

"Our only problem is that we did not score enough goals," he said. "Not only in this match but in the tournament."

That will probably serve as his epitaph as it certainly will for yet another Spanish misadventure.

ing nice football, though that will be of little consolation to the supporters back home and is unlikely to sit well with the febrile Spanish media.

"I think we played well during the

# Greece make history

AFP, Faro

Greece progressed to the quarter-finals of the European championships for the first time in their history despite losing 2-1 to Russia here on Sunday.

When the draw for Group A was made for the European championships Portugal and Spain were favourites to progress but Greece defied their poor record in major finals - they had never won a match before the opening 2-1 win over Portugal - to reach the last eight.

Hosts Portugal defeated Spain 1-0 in high drama in Lisbon to top the group with Greece finishing above Spain, who also have four points, by virtue of a greater number of goals scored.

Countless Greek fans will be dancing around the Acropolis singing the name of their German coach Otto Rehhagel who has guided the country to their biggest sporting achievement since winning the 1987 basketball European championships.

Finalists in 1988, Russia had

already exited the competition after two successive defeats but gave their followers a leaving present with a memorable win at the Algarve Stadium.

Russia had not scored in the opening two games in Portugal but took just two minutes to open their account with the Greek backline half asleep.

Dmitri Kirichenko pounced on some hesitant defending outside the penalty area and rifled home the quickest goal in European championships history.

Russia were running Olympic rings around Greece in the first 20 minutes and doubled their lead through Dmitri Bulykin's bullet header from a Rolan Gusev corner.

The Greek defence that was watertight in qualifying was all at sea and on 24 minutes Andrei Karyaka should have made it 3-0 but somehow blazed over from the penalty spot.

It was one of the worst misses of the tournament but another contender came sixty seconds later when Werder Bremen's Greek striker Angelos

Charisteas lashed his shot over the bar from six metres out.

Greece then pulled a goal back through Zisis Vryzas on 43 minutes with the marksman turning neatly in the box and chipping the ball over Vacheslav Malafeev in the Russian goal.

At half-time Russia led 2-1 but in truth it could have been 7-4 such was the extent of missed chances at both ends of the pitch.

Greece started the brighter in the second period, clearly fired up after a stern team-talk from Rehhagel, but on the hour mark Russian substitute Dmitri Sychev almost extended their advantage with his swerving shot drawing a fine save from Greek custodian Antonios Nikopolidis.

Substitute Vasilios Tsiartas almost levelled for Greece in the 80th minute with his ferocious free-kick forcing a fine save from Malafeev.

But despite the loss, the Greek players linked arms to celebrate wildly on the pitch.



PROUD TO BE GREEK: Greece's custodian Antonios Nikopolidis kisses his girlfriend after the match against Russia at the Faro stadium.

PHOTO: AFP