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Spain outclass Russia

Reach first final in 24 years

AFP, Vienna



Spain one of the pre-tournament title favourites ensured they made the Euro 2008 final with a 3-0 demolition of Russia here on Thursday.

Xavi, Daniel Guiza and David Silva scored the goals as Spain brought Russia quickly back down to earth following their surprise win over Holland in the quarterfinals and gave them their first place in a final for 24 years, where they lost to hosts France in the Euro 1984 final.

Guus Hiddink's team failed to spark here with the much-hyped Andrei Arshavin a huge let-down.

Spain were always the more controlled and measured and when they let their passing game flow in the second half they proved too irresistible for their inexperienced opponents.

The result matched the 4-1

the post.

The Iberians suffered a blow on 34 minutes as striker Villa limped out with a leg injury but coach Luis Aragones curiously chose to replace him with midfielder Cesc Fabregas rather than striker Guiza.

Spain had the first chance as David Villa cleverly played in Fernando Torres in the sixth minute but goalkeeper Igor Akinfeev kicked away his snap-shot.

Spain then tried his luck from distance with a vicious shot that Akinfeev palmed to safety.

Arshavin was largely anonymous throughout although his strike partner Roman Pavlyuchenko proved an occasional menace and lashed a free-kick over the bar on 16 minutes.

Spain had the last chance of the half with a piece of great skill from Torres who took down Fabregas' pass and turned onto his left foot only to scuff his shot straight at Akinfeev.

And they had the first chance after the break, taking the lead on 50 minutes as Xavi, who up until then had had a quiet game, arrived late in the box to convert Iniesta's driven cross, poking out a foot to prod the ball between Akinfeev's legs.

The game had needed a goal and that opened it up with Torres curling a shot over the bar moments later.

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PHOTO: AFP

Forward Daniel Guiza (R) sends the ball past Russia goalkeeper Igor Akinfeev to score the second of Spain's three goals in the second semifinal of Euro 2008 championship at the Ernst-Happel Stadium in Vienna yesterday.

SCORE AGAINST DANDRUFF WITH CONFIDENCE

Ash defends decision

TIGERCRICKET.COM, Lahore



The Bangladeshi team, beaten handily by Sri Lanka on Wednesday in their last Pool A match, head off to Karachi today afternoon for the second phase of the Asia Cup.

More than the margin of defeat (131 runs), it was the choice of bowling first on a wicket that has 'flat', and 'runs' written all over it, that became the talking point in the match but Tigers skipper Mohammad Ashraful said Tuesday's game against the UAE had prompted his decision after winning the second toss in a row.

"Obviously it was my decision



Did U Know?

At the Wimbledon Tennis Championships, the referee can decide whether the players are dressed appropriately.

What to WATCH

ESPN
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm
STAR Sports
Wimbledon Championships
Third Round
Live from 4:30pm
TEN Sports
West Indies v Australia
2nd One-Day International
Live from 7:30pm



Graeme Smith

(South Africa cricket captain)
"I think it's great... but they're going to have to manage the change rooms pretty well!"
Foreseeing a logistical problem ahead of next year's joint World Twenty20 Championships for men and women.

as I thought getting a few early wickets, maybe two or three, would put them in trouble as they were playing with just six specialist batsmen. The ball had swung until the first 15 overs when we batted against UAE and there was movement available in the wicket. The bowlers however, were disappointing and could not bowl the line we needed," said Ashraful.

Bangladesh were never in contention after Sri Lanka had made 357 for 9 but Ashraful thought the Tigers allowed them to get on top. Sanath Jayasuriya and Kumar Sangakkara put on 114 inside 15 overs and Bangladesh were always used to get something players had to get used to.

"It was very, very hot and it takes a lot out of you. But as professional players we have to be prepared for everything. The first target when we came here was obviously to beat UAE and ensure that we qualify for the next round in Karachi. That was a wicket where you would fancy chasing 270. It was a superb track

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Mendis mesmerises UAE

one-day, had a previous best of 3-39 against the West Indies at Port-of-Spain earlier this year.

Sri Lanka, who also beat Bangladesh by 131 runs on Wednesday, topped Group A and qualified for the next stage of Super Four. Bangladesh, who beat the UAE by 96 runs on Tuesday also qualified for the next phase.

Earlier Sri Lanka rode on half-centuries from Mahela Jayawardene against a career-best 5-22 to help Sri Lanka overcome a fighting United Arab Emirates by 142 runs in the final Group A match of the Asia Cup at the Gaddafi Stadium here on Thursday.

Mendis triggered a collapse in the UAE batting ranks as the qualifiers lost eight wickets for 41 runs to slump from a threatening 107-2 to be bowled out for 148 in 36.3 overs chasing Sri Lanka's 290-9.

For the UAE left-handed opener Arjmd Ali topscored with a brilliant 79-ball 77 but once the Lahore-born batsman fell, wickets tumbled like nine pins with Mendis running through the middle and lower order with his beguiling action.

Amjad hit 13 boundaries and added 70 for the second wicket with Indika Batuwitarachchi who made just 14.

Mendis, playing in only his fifth

match of the Super League phase on Saturday.

All four teams play each other once in the Super League stage to decide the July 6 finalists.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the Asia Cup Group A match between Sri Lanka and United Arab Emirates at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Thursday:

SRI LANKA

Sangakkara lbw b Shah	0
Udawatte c Tauqir b Alhashmi	67
Jayawardene run out	61
Kapugedera c Amjad b Tauqir	11
Silva c Batuwitarachchi b Tauqir	6
Dilshan c Amjad b Alhashmi	24
Weeraratne c Batuwitarachchi b Saqib	40
Thusharac c Amjad b Shah	10
Kulasekara c Khurram b Shah	38
Fernando not out	15
Mendis not out	0
Extras: (b-1, lb-6, w-1)	18
Total: (For 9 wkts in 50 overs)	290
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-114, 3-131, 4-142, 5-180, 6-189, 7-209, 8-262, 9-286	

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match of the Super League phase on Saturday.

All four teams play each other once in the Super League stage to decide the July 6 finalists.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the Asia Cup Group B match between Pakistan and India at the National Stadium in Karachi on Thursday:

Pakistan

Butt c Raina b Chawla	35
Malik retired hurt	125
Yousuf run out	59
Misbah not out	31
Afridi c Dhoni b RP Singh	9
Tanveer not out	3
Extras: (b-1, lb-1, w-5)	7
Total: (For 4 wkts in 50 overs)	299
Did not bat: Alam, Sarfraz, Gul, Iftikhar	
Fall of wickets: 1-90, 2-223, 3-261, 4-290	
Bowler O M R W	
Kumar 10 0 56 0	
RP Singh 10 2 44 1	
Sharma 10 0 69 0	
Chawla 7 0 52 1	
Yusuf 9 0 52 1	
Yuvraj 4 0 24 0	
INDIA	
Gambhir c Misbah b Iftikhar	9
Sehwag c Younis b Afridi	119
Raina c Alam b Iftikhar	84
Yuvraj c Butt b Tanveer	48

Fed Cup starts on July 31

SPORTS REPORTER

Exactly one year after conclusion of the inaugural B. League, domestic football returns to the ground with the Federation Cup on July 31.

The professional football league ended on August 1 last year and there had been no top-notch competition in the country since. The B. League committee also announced after its first meeting yesterday that they will launch the second edition of the B. League in August.

There will be no representative from north-Bengal as the league committee rejected Diganta Prasars appeal to join the professional league. The Rajshahi club, although getting the nod earlier, failed to form a team by June 20 but sought the permission of the federation to register after the transfer deadline.

"We had decided to spread football in other divisions and include clubs from Rajshahi, Sylhet

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Fall of wickets: 1-90, 2-223, 3-261, 4-290	
Bowler O M R W	
Kumar 10 0 56 0	
RP Singh 10 2 44 1	
Sharma 10 0 69 0	
Chawla 7 0 52 1	
Yusuf 9 0 52 1	
Yuvraj 4 0 24 0	
INDIA	
Gambhir c Misbah b Iftikhar	9
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Topsy-turvy Day Four

AFP, London



Golden girl Maria Sharapova and Andy Roddick, the all-American poster boy of men's tennis, suffered their worst Wimbledon defeats on Thursday, the fourth day of the championships.

Sharapova endured the darkest moment of her sparkling career when world number 154, and Russian compatriot, Alla Kudryavtseva, who now plays China's Peng Shuai, then added insult to injury by revealing the frosty relationship between Sharapova and many of the other Russian women on tour.

"I don't know her well. I think she's a good player. I'm quite sure no one on the tour knows Maria well because she's not a very talkative girl and not very outgoing," said Nadal, who has been runner-up to Federer in the last two years.

Roddick, the runner-up in 2004 and 2005 to Roger Federer, slumped to his worst defeat in nine visits.

Tipsarevic, now faces Russia's Dmitry Tursunov for a place in the last 16.

Roddick only returned to the tour Queen's last week after a shoulder injury kept him out of the French Open and his lack of sharpness told in a three-hour match where he failed to convert any of his eight break points. The American also had three set points in the fourth set.

Spanish second seed Rafael Nadal, bidding to become only the third man to win the French and Wimbledon in the same season, saw off 19-year-old Latvian Ernest Gulbis 5-7, 6-2, 7-6, 6-3.

He will tackle experienced German Nicolas Kiefer for a place in the last 16.

"I knew beforehand that it would be a very difficult match. He's a tough player who will be at the top very soon," said Nadal who has been runner-up to Federer in the last two years.

Lindsay Davenport, the 32-year-old American who was champion in 1999 and runner-up on her last appearance in 2005, handed

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Solace for Abahani

