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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.

Gus 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

Group D drubbing the Spaniards had dealt Russia in their opening game of the competition and they will now meet Germany - who beat Turkey 3-2 in Wednesday's other semifinal - in Sunday's trophy match.

Russia began with a lot of energy, although their final ball more often than not was poor.

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.

Villa 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 min.

Spain midfielder Andres Iniesta was holding his head in shame just before the half hour mark as he swiped at thin air after latching onto a ball over the top and on 31 min Pavlyuchenko forced Iker Casillas to tip a curling shot around

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.

Almost immediately Pavlyuchenko should have scored as he took down the ball on his chest only to have his heel clipped as he went to shoot, failing to make good contact and flicking the ball wide.

Spain had the last chance of the half with a piece of great skill from Torres who took down Fabregas's 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.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



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.

## Ash defends decision

TIGERCRIKET.COM, Lahore

The Bangladesh team, beaten handsomely 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

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 playing catch-up since.

Jayasuriya (72 off 47 balls) and Sangakkara (101 off 91 balls) played brilliantly but we also bowled poorly at them and they took the game away from us. This was a wicket where you would fancy chasing 270. It was a superb track

and I thought I really missed out," said Ashraful who was adjudged caught behind for 8 although television replays suggested that the ball had brushed his trousers on way to the keeper.

Lahore has seen temperatures reaching up to 46 degrees Celsius during both match days and for teams playing on consecutive days is a real test of physical and mental fitness. The searing heat has even discouraged the usual spectators from venturing out and matches have been played in front of empty stands. Ashraful said the format was 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 we

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

**SCORE AGAINST DANDRUFF WITH CONFIDENCE**

**CLEAR men**

**NO DANDRUFF**

**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

**TALK TURKEY**

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



## Mendis mesmerises UAE

AFP, Lahore

Unorthodox spinner Ajantha Mendis took 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 Amjad 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

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 Udawatte and Mahela Jayawardene against a disciplined UAE bowling.

Udawatte hit 67 while skipper Jayawardene made 61 during their 114-run second wicket stand after Sri Lanka won the toss and decided to bat in the day-night match.

But once the duo left, the UAE bowlers took four wickets in the space of 75 runs before Kaushal Weeraratne (40) and Nuwan Kulasekera (38) added 53 invaluable runs for the eighth wicket to give impetus to the innings.

Pakistan and India also qualified for the Super League. India take on Bangladesh in the first

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:

<b>SRI LANKA</b>		
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	
Thushara c Amjad b Shah	10	
Kulasekera c Khuram b Shah	38	
Fernando not out	15	
Mendis not out	0	
Extras: (b-1, lb-6, w-11)	18	
Total: (For 9 wks 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		

SEE PAGE 18 COL 3

## 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 Prasari's 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

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

## INDIA-PAKISTAN SCOREBOARD

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

<b>PAKISTAN</b>		
Butt c Raina b Chawla	35	
Malik retired hurt	125	
Younis c Raina b Yusuf	59	
Yousuf run out	30	
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 wks in 50 overs)	299	
Did not bat: Alam, Sarfraz, Gul, Iftikhar		
Fall of wickets: 1-90, 2-223, 3-261, 4-290		
<b>INDIA</b>		
Gambhir c Misbah b Iftikhar	9	
Sehwag c Younis b Afridi	119	
Raina c Alam b Iftikhar	84	
Yuvraj c Butt b Tanveer	48	

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

## 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 sent her spinning out in the second round.

Sharapova, the 2004 champion, became the latest marquee name to crash out at the All England Club in successive days following men's third seed Novak Djokovic's defeat to Marat Safin.

Sixth seed Roddick then joined the scrapheap when he lost 6-7, 7-5, 6-4, 7-6 to Serbia's Janko

Tipsarevic. Also exiting the tournament on a day of major shocks were men's ninth seed James Blake and women's 10th seed Daniela Hantuchova.

"She played better, served and returned better and on grass they are the important elements," admitted Sharapova after slumping to her worst defeat in six visits.

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 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 Kudryavtseva.

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 at 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 Open and Wimbledon in the same season, saw off 19-year-old Latvian Ernests 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

SEE PAGE 18 COL 3

## Solace for Abahani



SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani ended their AFC President's Cup campaign with a consolation 1-0 win over Pakistan WAPDA in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Striker Zahid Hassan Emily separated the two sides six minutes from time in the Group A match at the MPPJ Stadium although Abahani should have won by a bigger margin.

The win meant nothing for the Bangladesh professional league champions, who had crashed out of contention for a place in the semifinals following 4-0 and 2-1 defeats to Nepal Police Club and Regar TadAZ respectively, but the result ensured Nepal Police enter the last four as the best runners-up team of three groups.

Police Cub, who led their match against Regar 2-1 later yesterday at

the same venue until 90 minutes, shared a 2-2 draw after conceding an injury time equaliser. But it was enough for them to edge Group C runners-up Kanbawza to join the three group winners -- defending two-time champions Dordoi-Dynamo of Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan champions Ashgabad and Regar -- for the September 19-21 semifinals and the final in Kyrgyzstan.

Regar finished atop Group A with seven points while Nepal Police bagged five.

Myanmar's Kanbawza earned six points but as the result against the last teams of all groups are not to be accounted, the men from the

Himalayans, with four points against the first and third teams, nipped Kanbawza whose collection stood three points.

Abahani returned to 4-4-2 and fielded centre-back Sony and holding midfielder Pranotosh for the first time in the tournament for suspended Ghanaian defender Samad Yussif and central defender Pradeep Poddar.

The sky-blues rushed early blood but midfielder Mamunul Islam fired the ball straight to WAPDA goalie Abdul Aziz on a one-on-one in the second minute.

Emily hit woodwork from a freekick while Ibrahim fluffed a

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4

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