



Spanish forwards Fernando Torres (L) and David Villa hold up a national flag after they won the Euro 2008 final against Germany on Sunday at Ernst-Happel Stadium in Vienna.

Spain goes berserk

AFP, Madrid

Spain's celebratory party at landing their first football title in 44 years was marred by a death and police making 52 arrests for acts of vandalism or public disorder in Madrid.

A man was found dead in a pool of blood after apparently falling over drunk and hitting his head.

Spaniards partied through the night in a nationwide fiesta to celebrate their Euro 2008 success, hailed by the press on Monday as the start of a "new era" for the sport's perennial underachievers.

Emergency services said a man was also taken to hospital with a fractured skull, among some 90 people treated by medics, mostly for fainting and minor injuries.

Traffic came to a standstill in the centre of the capital during the night as tens of thousands of exuberant and intoxicated fans, many wrapped in the red and gold national flag and swigging from beer bottles, celebrated.

Police said 65,000 people watched the match live on giant television screens in the central Plaza Colon, where chants of "Viva Espana" and "Champions" erupted amid a cacophony of klaxons, firecrackers and car horns at the final whistle.

Others piled into bars or gathered at home, with a record 17.69 million viewers watching when Liverpool striker Fernando Torres scored the only goal, according to the television channel Cuatro.

There were similar scenes in many other Spanish cities. In Barcelona, thousands of supporters took over the Ramblas avenue in the city centre.

"Finally!" screamed the Catalan daily Publico in a massive double-page headline.

"We are champions!" headlined sports daily Marca.

"You are the best" said Catalan sports daily Sport.

"Spain conquers Europe and opens a new era in Spanish football," said rival Catalan sports daily Mundo Deportivo.

"The best team won and with a more beautiful style of football than any other," AS said.

Both AS and Marca almost doubled their print runs.

The centre-right daily El Mundo carried a giant photo of Torres over the headline "Spanish glory".

"Spain conquers Europe," said the top-selling daily El Pais.

Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, who attended the match along with King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia, said the team "deserved to win".

"But this is only the beginning. The best is yet to come. We have to go for the World Cup now," he said.

'Triumph for football'

AFP, London

Spain's triumph at Euro 2008 is a "triumph" for football, Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson said on Monday.

Ferguson said that Luis Aragones' side fully deserved their 1-0 win over Germany in the tournament's final in Vienna on Sunday night.

"When a team plays that type of football it's a triumph for the game," Ferguson said.

"I was pleased for them, it was a really good performance last night."

"Spain were a far, far better team (than Germany) and I think they have been the best team."

It's the best: Casillas

AFP, Vienna

Spanish goalkeeper and captain Iker Casillas basked in the glory on Monday of having won Euro 2008 and reflected on the ghosts Spain laid to rest by winning their first title for 44 years.

A first-half goal from Liverpool's Fernando Torres was enough to seal a 1-0 win over Germany in Sunday's final in Vienna to give the Spanish their first European Championship win since 1964.

On route to the final, Spain beat Italy for the first time in a competitive match in the quarterfinals and in doing so broke their June 22 curse having lost three times on penalties on that date in major tournaments.

Having so often been the bridesmaid, but never been the bride, Casillas' side then swept past Russia 3-0 in the semifinals before beating Germany in Sunday's final to lift the Henri Delaunay trophy in style.

"We've broken a lot of hoodoo - above all the quarterfinal jinx," said Real Madrid shot-stopper Casillas.

"It's not comparable to a European Cup -- this is much more. This is all of Spain, all of the country."

Real Madrid fans, Barcelona, Valencia, everyone. It's the best."

Having become the oldest man to guide a team to European

success, Spain coach Luis Aragones pieced together a glorious campaign from the wreck of a 3-2 qualifying-stage defeat by Northern Ireland in September 2006.

"Luis Aragones had to suffer a lot but at the end he's got the reward," said Casillas, with the 69-year-old set to stand down.

"What he had to suffer was incredible."

"He was very emotional. I'd like him to stay on but I don't think he will."

"Lots of people have looked at this Spain as a model of how football should be played," Aragones said after the game, his last in charge before stepping down.

"It is a happy day for Spain because we've won the Euro in brilliant fashion."

Few football fans would -- or could -- argue with him.

And Liverpool midfielder Xabi Alonso said Spain are worthy winners having won all three group games and had been the most consistent team of the tournament.

"I think we deserved to be champions, we played well all the way through," said the 26-year-old, who won the Champions League with Liverpool in 2005.

"The key for me was the quarterfinals against Italy."

"We had a lot of pressure in that game but once we went through

we had so much confidence."

And having finally won some silverware, Alonso says the Spaniards have overcome a key mental barrier.

"This changes things. It shows you can do it. Winning a trophy gives you confidence."

He also paid tribute to his Liverpool teammate Torres who slipped his marker Philipp Lahm on 33 minutes to flick his shot past Germany's ex-Arsenal goalkeeper Jens Lehmann.

"Fernando was fantastic," said Alonso.

"He's a great striker. He's the kind of man who performs great on the big nights and what can I say about him, he's amazing."

And having scored the crucial penalty which sealed Liverpool's fightback from 3-0 down against AC Milan in the 2005 Champions League final in Istanbul, Alonso said the Euro 2008 win is special - now he wants league success.

"It's different," he said.

"You are sharing a moment with a club and not with another group with a national team."

"Both are special."

"I was as excited to win the Champions League as I am now but this is very, very special."

"I'm absolutely delighted to win both trophies - now I would like a league somewhere."

Ready to die if...

AFP, Paris

Some of the things they said at Euro 2008:

"The team is ready to die on the field if they have to."

Spain coach Luis Aragones - who also said a few other things:

"If Gattuso is a great player, then I'm a priest."

The controversial Aragones, nicknamed the Wise Man of Hortaleza, comes over all religious about injured Italian Gennaro Gattuso, not, for him, a patch on fellow Italy star Andrea Pirlo.

"It's as important what I say as the way they understand it."

At least Senor Aragones made no mention of Thierry Henry - just in case it could be misunderstood. Or not.

"I want lots of goals, a draw, extra time and then Germany to win on penalties, of course!"

German eminence grise "Kaiser" Franz Beckenbauer tries to put Die Mannschaft on the spot.

"We have broken the hoodoo."

Spanish King Juan Carlos after Spain ended their quarterfinal mental block against Italy.

"All those that love football want to see it played that way."

Aragones doesn't always have to be controversial.

"We are aware that our overall capacity and skills have certainly not reached the level that we expected."

Italy Football Federation (FIGC) president Giancarlo Abete, failing to back coach Roberto Donadoni after his team's Euro 2008 quarterfinal defeat on penalties against Spain.

"He told me he has a problem with his best friend and asked me for help with his best friend."

Germany striker Miroslav Klose gets a curious text message from Bayern Munich teammate and misfiring Italy striker Luca Toni, who clearly fell out of love with his shooting boots.

"We are fully aware we haven't always played to the best of our abilities."

German coach Joachim Loew, in the knowledge that this matters little -- provided you play for Germany.

"Coach Frings would play Player Frings in the starting line-up."

German midfielder and rib fracture victim Torsten Frings makes an unshapable plea to start the final.

"I have a simple message hanging on my wall: Nothing is impossible, but miracles take time."

Turkey coach Fatih Terim's men pulled off the seemingly impossible against the Czechs and the Croatians -- but even Lazarus couldn't have come back after Germany's third goal in the semis.

"I want to be the traitor of the year in Holland, because if I am the traitor of the year back home, it will have meant we won the game."

Game over for Holland meant traitor status for Russia's Dutch coach Guus Hiddink.

"I have only one plan at the moment, it is to marry Estelle, and it is only this evening that I ask for her hand in marriage."

Lovestruck French coach Raymond Domenech has stars in his eyes as he proposes to girlfriend Estelle Denis moments after Les Bleus make an ignominious exit following defeat by Italy.

"Yes, that's one of the reasons." Luiz Felipe Scolari says the money Chelsea dangled in his direction was one reason he decided to quit Portugal for Stamford Bridge.

"Italy's Luca Toni made Emile Heskey look like Geoff Hurst."

Britain's Sunday Times notes even the much-maligned Emile scored once in a while - maybe England would have reached the finals had the veteran been fit for more of the qualifiers.

In shadows no more

AFP, Vienna

Fernando Torres showed that anything his fellow striker David Villa can do he can do too with the precious goal that gave Spain victory over Germany in Sunday's Euro 2008 final.

Villa had stolen most of the limelight away from the Liverpool forward at Euro 2008 up to Sunday night with his four goal harvest making him the competition's leading scorer.

But injury in the first half of the Spaniard's semifinal success over Russia left the big stage clear for the Premier League star.

Torres was deployed by coach Luis Aragones as a lone striker served by a five man midfield featuring his Premier League rival Cesc Fabregas.

And after a hesitant start he made himself known to the German defence in the 20th minute with a looping header which went high.

Two minutes later he had the best chance of the opening exchanges, his downward header hitting Jens Lehmann's far post.

Then on 33 minutes his

moment of glory came.

Xavi was the instigator of the move that will have set the hearts of 44 million Spaniards beating at 100 miles an hour.

The Barcelona midfielder slid a perfect pass through to Torres who used his muscle and skill to see off German defender Phillip Lahm, lifting his shot over Lehmann and into the far corner.

"For me, it's a dream come true," said Torres.

"Victory in a Euro, is almost as big as a World Cup. I think that we have played very good football throughout the tournament and it was justice done when we won the final."

His 74th minute booking for a foul on Christoph Metzelder will hardly have ruined his evening and he was eventually replaced by Dani Guiza four minutes later, his work done.

The blonde-haired forward who had a sensational debut season at Liverpool with 33 goals opened his account at this Euro against Sweden in the second match, but had up to now been largely overshadowed by Villa.

Torres, for whom this was his 17 international goals in his 53rd cap,

had developed a forceful partnership with Villa -- a major factor in Spain's waltz through the group stages.

Villa paid tribute to his strike partner after his opening hat-trick against Russia, saying: "People don't really notice the work he does in terms of creating chances."

"Two of my goals were due entirely to his huge amount of work in the lead up to them."

Torres won best player and top scorer prizes at the Under-16 and Under-19 world championships in 2001 and 2002, and scored three goals at the 2006 World Cup in which Spain went out in the second round.

Quick and lethal in front of goal Torres, who joined Liverpool for a reported 30 million Euro fee, was given the nickname 'El Nino' when appointed Atletico Madrid captain at 19.

Now aged 24 'the kid' showed flashes of brilliance in last Thursday's semifinal and put in a man's performance here Sunday.

It's not hard to see why Liverpool have put a 'not for sale at any price' sign on his head after rumours that Chelsea are about to mount a bid.

Ballack's miseries on

AFP, Berlin

Having lost May's Champions League final with Chelsea, Michael Ballack again suffered silverware heartbreak on Sunday as Germany lost the Euro 2008 final 1-0 to Spain.

After the Blues missed out to Manchester United in Moscow, German captain Ballack tasted bitter defeat for the second time in as many months in Vienna as a first-half strike by Liverpool's Fernando Torres broke German hearts.

"It is very sad to lose when one has come such a long way," said the 31-year-old.

"All the team battled away. This tournament has come at the end of the season and physically it has been tough. However, we have made too many errors."

Losing in a final is a feeling the Chelsea midfielder is intimately acquainted with, having lost May's Champions League final to Manchester United and February's Europa Cup decider to Tottenham Hotspur.

And nor it is the first time that defeat for the him has been at the hands of the Spanish, having lost to Real Madrid in the 2002 Champions League final when he played for Bayer Leverkusen.

For the 2002 World Cup final defeat to Brazil he was suspended. He had missed ten games for his country due to injury as his side became the first to qualify for Euro 2008 without him, but he made up for it in the tournament's finals playing a key role in getting Germany to the Vienna final.

He showed how little his calf

muscle was bothering him as early as the eighth minute when he outstripped the Spanish defence, but no one was there to meet his cross and had a shot at goal blocked on 25 minutes.

When his side's defence was broken by Torres' first-half goal, Ballack was left bloodied and needed stitches for an eye gash just after the half hour mark and picked up a yellow card for a heavy challenge on Cesc Fabregas.

He had Germany's best chance of the game when his shot grazed Casillas' nearest post.

This could be Ballack's last chance to win a major international tournament, but there has been no talk from the big man with his Chelsea contract set to expire in June 2009.

"Of course we are disappointed after coming so far, after so many weeks of hard work, and the qualification too," Ballack said. "And then to get to the final and to lose, that is always bitter to lose a final, for sure."

He also said that Germany's strong performance in Euro 2008 -- notably their emphatic 3-2 quarterfinal victory over Portugal -- was in large part down to the huge numbers of fans that travelled to Austria and Switzerland to cheer them on.

"For practically every game the home supporters were always in the majority. And that is important for our team," he said.

"It is still a young team and it is very, very important that particularly in difficult phases of the game to have the support, and in many, many games that was fantastic."

Coach Joachim Loew, meanwhile, predicted on Monday next time they will beat the Spanish as he and the team were given a heroes' welcome in Berlin.

"The Spanish were a very good team all through the championship. We have to recognise their quality ... Should the Spanish come up again in a championship we will beat them," Loew said to cheers from a crowd of 100,000 people gathered around the Brandenburg Gate.

"Yesterday we were crazy with disappointment and sadness, but I think that coming second was a great achievement for us. The team has performed amazingly in the last two years and we can all be proud that we were in the final," he said.

Loew, 48, also confidently predicted that Germany would qualify for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

"I said to the players they must not let their head hang," said Loew. "We made it to the final, that is something really special."

"The defeat is a stimulus to work hard in the coming two years, to take things forward and improve."

"We start qualification for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa this September, we want to play just as good a role there as we did at Euro 2008."

"We will analyse things in peace once the dust has settled and look at where we need to improve."

"We did not always play with the same high quality in the final tournament which we had shown in the previous two years."

XAVI PLAYER-OF-THE-MEET

No place for Ronaldo

AFP, REUTERS, Vienna

Victorious Spain's open, attacking play at Euro 2008 was hailed by UEFA on Monday with midfielder Xavi reserved for special praise.

Xavi was named player of the tournament while technically gifted Spain had nine players in the squad of the tournament selected by European soccer's governing body.

"We have chosen Xavi because we think he epitomises the Spanish style of play," said Andy Roxburgh, the head of UEFA's technical delegation.

"He was extremely influential in the whole possession, passing, penetrating kind of game that Spain played."

The 28-year-old Barcelona dynamo who has scored eight goals in 63 internationals -- was judged to be at the heart of Spain's triumphant campaign. Xavi scored once in the tournament and also created the goal for Fernando Torres in the final.

However, Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo missed out on making UEFA's squad of the Euro 2008 tournament.

Nine Spaniards make the 23-player squad but UEFA technical director Andy Roxburgh insisted nothing should be read into the absence of Ronaldo from the list and it had nothing to do with his reputation as a prima donna.

"If Portugal had gone further (they lost 3-2 to Germany in the quarterfinals), he (Ronaldo) and

Deco would have been in our squad," said the former Scotland coach.

"We don't pick them on reputation. He is a fantastic player. In any case one of the better matches I saw was between the Portugal A and Portugal B sides."

Two of Ronaldo's teammates did make it in defenders Jose Bosingwa and Pepe.

Roxburgh said that the selection of the best player had been a close



XAVI

run thing.

"(Iker) Casillas, the Spanish goalkeeper, came very close in the voting (which is decided on by 9 technical experts)," he said.

"Obviously the winning team provides the best players."

"The Spanish team haven't tried to be someone else. They have maintained their philosophy. They can keep the ball under immense pressure," Roxburgh added.

"To sum up Spanish football -- they carry the ball close to their hearts. They love the ball, they love working with the basics. Because they love the ball they don't like to give it away. They have personal talent and collective ability."

Luis Aragones' side dominated UEFA's squad of the tournament and Roxburgh said his delegation could have named more Spaniards.

Clearly, there was a number of players that were outstanding," he added, naming Spain goalkeeper Iker Casillas and defender Carles Puyol as especially impressive.

"The first comment our group made was that we should just pick the Spanish team. We could almost have put 13 or 14 Spanish players in here and not have blinked."

EURO 2008 SQUAD
Goalkeepers: Gianluigi Buffon (Italy), Iker Casillas (Spain), Edwin van der Sar (Holland).

Defenders: Jose Bosingwa (Portugal), Philipp Lahm (Germany), Carlos Marchena (Spain), Pepe (Portugal), Carles Puyol (Spain), Yuri Zhirkov (Russia).

Midfielders: Hamit Altintop (Turkey), Luka Modric (Croatia), Marcos Senna (Spain), Xavi (Spain), Konstantin Zyryanov (Russia), Michael Ballack (Germany), Cesc Fabregas (Spain), Andres Iniesta (Spain), Lukas Podolski (Germany), Wesley Sneijder (Holland).

Forwards: Andrei Arshavin (Russia), Roman Pavlyuchenko (Russia), Fernando Torres (Spain), David Villa (Spain).



German midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger (front) and captain Michael Ballack lie on the pitch after their defeat to Spain in Sunday's Euro 2008 final at Ernst-Happel Stadium in Vienna.