

England midfielder Shaun Wright-Phillips (L) is slide-tackled by Germany midfielder Simon Rolfes during their international friendly in Berlin on Wednesday.

Mourinho's EPL medal sold at auction

AFP, London

Former Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho's Premier League winners' medal sold for 21,600 pounds (25,000 euros) at an auction in England on Wednesday.

Mourinho threw the medal into the stands at Stamford Bridge after Chelsea beat Manchester United 3-0 to win the 2005-06 title.

It was caught by a fan and sold to an unnamed telephone bidder at a sporting memorabilia sale at Bonhams Auctioneers in Chester.

At the same auction, a winner's medal from the 1930 World Cup was sold for 28,800 pounds (34,362 euros).

The gold medal was awarded to Uruguay captain Jose Nasazzi after his side defeated Argentina 4-2 to become the first World champions.

Terry-ific England

Football

AFP, Berlin

Germany coach Joachim Loew admitted England were simply better than his side as John Terry's late header sealed a 2-1 win for Fabio Capello's side.

"The Englishmen were better over the entire game," said Loew, who guided Germany to the runners-up spot at Euro 2008 in June after they lost the final to Spain in Vienna.

"We had a bad day at the office and earned the defeat. Only in the second half did we find our feet, in what was our best phase of the game, but we had big problems in terms of organisation and structure.

"You could see England getting stronger and we didn't take our chances when we had them."

England's 7,000 fans at the Olympic Stadium were in good voice as the away side

had a virtual monopoly on possession in the early stages.

Without captain Michael Ballack and veteran Torsten Frings in midfield, the German's middle men repeatedly played second-fiddle to their English counterparts.

"We did not produce our best today, but England also tactically played very well," said Bayern Munich midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger.

"We were simply not good enough."

West Ham defender Matthew Upson scored England's first goal before Bayer Leverkusen striker Patrick Helmes came off the bench to poach an equaliser, but England captain Terry headed the winner six minutes from time.

"It was great to score the goal, but we lost the game, so it's pretty hard to come away from the game with much to smile about," said Helmes.

And it was also a sweet-bitter evening for Hoffenheim

Theo out for 3 months

AFP, London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger confirmed that Theo Walcott will be sidelined for at least three months after the England winger had surgery on his dislocated shoulder on Thursday.

Walcott was injured when he slipped on the rain-soaked pitch in Berlin during a training session with Fabio Capello's squad on Tuesday.

Wenger admitted he could not blame the English Football Association for the accident so the club are unlikely to pursue compensation for the loss of a key asset.

"I'm disappointed because he is an important part of the squad, but that could have happened in training here," Wenger said. "It was an accident that could have happened anywhere."

"I do not blame the FA for that. It was accidental in training and I accept that."

"In a moment like that you do not think about compensation you think about how you can replace the player."

It is the fourth time Walcott has suffered a shoulder injury as he struggles with a hereditary condition inherited from his father Don.

Walcott had surgery on an identical injury on his left shoulder in 2006 and had only just returned from a shoulder problem suffered at Stoke earlier this season.

Brazilliance!

Football

INTERNET, undated

Brazil gave beleaguered coach Dunga some respite on Wednesday by thumping Portugal 6-2 in a friendly, helped by a hat-trick from striker Luis Fabiano in Brasilia.

The five-times world champions had been held to 0-0 draws in their last three home games, against Argentina, Bolivia and Colombia, and had not scored in front of their own fans since last November.

Dunga was jeered by the crowd and seemed to be in for a long night when Zenit St. Petersburg star Danny opened the scoring for the visitors in dazzling style by back-healing home Bruno Alves's cross after four minutes.

But Luis Fabiano levelled four minutes later following a break down the left by Robinho and put Brazil ahead in the 25th minute with a shot on the turn from Kaka's pass.

The second half produced four goals in a 10-minute spell.

Macon scored with an angled shot for Brazil in the 55th minute and Luis Fabiano completed his hat-trick with an opportunist goal two minutes later.

Simao Sabrosa pulled one back for the visitors, only for Elano to rifle home Brazil's fifth from another chance created by Kaka.

Adriano headed Brazil's sixth in stoppage-time as Brazil completed their first win over Portugal since 1989.

Fabiano insisted the victory should silence

the national team's critics.

"I think that from now on all Brazilians have to forget the critics and support this team," he said.

"Today we played very good football. This is the right way. They scored their with their first chance but we showed that we had the capacity to fight back."

Coach Dunga, meanwhile, paid tribute to the home crowd.

"Brazil have very good players that play in the best clubs in the world and when people support them like they did today, they play this way," he said.

"The fans forgot for a while all the doubts and cheered the players and they need that. They responded with a superb performance."

Keeper Julio Cesar echoed his coach's comments.

"We were indebted to our supporters because we haven't played well in our recent home games," he said.

"Therefore this victory is for them and also helped us to finish the year well."

Portugal coach Carlos Queiroz took responsibility for the defeat.

"I'm the man responsible for this situation," he admitted.

"All the squad are very frustrated by this result. But we are very united and we know we can recover."

"I think we allowed too much space and Brazil took advantage of that. Some of the goals we let in were very poor."

"We lost the concentration after Brazil scored their first two goals."



Brazil striker Luis Fabiano (L) celebrates with teammate Kaka after scoring the second goal against Portugal during their international friendly at the Bezerro Stadium in Brasilia on Wednesday. Fabiano scored a hat-trick to lead Brazil to a 6-2 thrashing of Portugal.

Ballack likely to stay on

AFP, London

Chelsea chief executive Peter Kenyon is confident Germany midfielder Michael Ballack will commit his long-term future to the Premier League leaders.

"Of course, I am very happy to have played from the start, but to make my debut in a defeat is naturally very disappointing."

"It was a good performance and the youngsters in the team have really given the manager some problems," said Terry whose goal inflicted Germany's first defeat in Berlin since 1973.

The skipper also took the blame for Germany's equaliser which came after an embarrassing mix-up between him and substitute goalkeeper Scott Carson.

"I hold my hands up. I should have cleared it up. It wasn't Scotty's fault."

Capello admitted he was delighted with the result.

"It was a very good performance. We made lots of chances. I liked the attitude, confidence and personality," said the Italian.

Spain at the zenith

Football

AFP, Villarreal

European champions Spain beat Chile 3-0 at the Madrigal stadium in an international friendly here on Wednesday to finish a marvellous year with yet another victory.

A David Villa first half penalty, then goals after the break from Fernando Torres and Santiago Cazorla completed an emphatic win to cap a fantastic 2008 when they won the European title 44 years after their previous triumph in the competition.

Spain, without injured players David Silva and Andres Iniesta, also extended

their unbeaten record to 28 against a tough Chilean side which had beaten Argentina 1-0 in World Cup qualifying in their previous match.

Chile, who played attractively in the second half, had not lost for more than two years. Their previous defeat came against Romania on November 15, 2006 in Cadix.

Spain, who have won their first four 2010 World Cup qualifiers and play their next one against Turkey in March, have shown no sign of weakening since their summer triumph in Switzerland and Austria.

Spain coach Vicente del Bosque lined up his best possible team against the side coached by Marcelo Bielsa,

with the same defence which won Euro 2008 except that Raul Albiol came in for Carlos Marchena.

Liverpool winger Albert Riera however replaced striker and clubmate Torres, though he came on in the second half.

The rest of the team was their classic, first-choice side with Xavi Hernandez, Marcos Senna, Xabi Alonso and Cesc Fabregas in midfield supporting lone striker Villa.

Villa scored in the 37th minute, his fifth goal in Spain's last five matches and his 24th in 21 appearances. Torres then got the second after good work from Xavi in the 66th minute. Then Villarreal's Cazorla got the third with four minutes to go.

Socceroos leave it late

AFP, Manama

Australia kept their 100 per cent World Cup qualifying record intact with a last-gasp 1-0 win over Bahrain on Wednesday while Group One rivals Japan secured a crucial 3-0 victory in Qatar.

The result left the Soceroos with nine points from three wins out of three and Japan in second two points adrift, with Qatar on four points after four games. Bahrain and Uzbekistan remain locked at the bottom on one point.

In Group Two, Iran were left frustrated after coming away with just a point after drawing 1-1 against the United Arab Emirates, but South Korea were left happy after posting a 2-0 away win over Saudi Arabia.

The South Koreans moved to top spot in the group on seven points from three matches, Iran in second on five, and North Korea and Saudi Arabia locked for third spot on four points. The UAE remain winless in fifth and final place.

The top two teams in each group in the Asian qualifiers will claim automatic berths for the 2010 World Cup, while the third-placed teams will play each other home-and-away with the winner advancing to the inter-confederation play-off with New Zealand.

In Manama, Australia left it late against Bahrain, the all-important goal coming three minutes into injury time, and against the run of play, when Palermo midfielder Marco Bresciano beat a couple of defenders to shoot past goal-

keeper Sayed Jaffer.

"Bahrain played very well and we didn't but we were lucky to get these three points. We did not deserve it. We would have been happy with one point," said Australia's Dutch coach Pim Verbeek.

"It was a top game but we never really had any control over this game. I tried to change a few things in the second-half as we were running backwards in the first."

A rejuvenated Japan outclassed Qatar in Doha with Tatsuya Tanaka, Kieji Tamada and Tullio Tanaka scoring for a comprehensive 3-0 win to energise their campaign after a lacklustre 1-1 home draw with Uzbekistan earlier had prompted calls from some critics for coach Takeshi Okada's sacking.

"We always expected to win

but we thought it would be a close match," Okada said.

Bruno Metsu, under whom Qatar have now conceded seven goals in two World Cup qualifying games, admitted his players were outclassed.

"We didn't play well at all," the Frenchman said. "We didn't create many chances, nor did we defend properly."

In Group Two, Iran's plans of getting full points against hosts UAE were dashed when they were held to a 1-1 draw.

The visitors were completely dominated at the Al Maktoum Stadium and it was only a late goal against the run of play which fetched them a point.

They also had goalkeeper Seyyed Rahmati to thank for several magical saves.

The UAE, who lost two key

players, Ali Abbas and Subait Khater, even before the match began when they were penalised for breaking the team curfew, took the lead in the 19th minute through their captain Abdurrahman Jumaa.

Fittingly, it was Iran captain Karim Bagheri who restored parity for his side in the 80th minute.

"We knew this would be a difficult match for us," Bagheri said. "We would have wanted to take full three points from this match, but will now have to beat South Korea to make sure we are on track for South Africa."

The South Koreans took advantage of Saudi Arabia losing Naif Hazazi, who was red-carded for diving, to secure a vital 2-0 win in Riyadh.

Honduras defeated Mexico 1-0 with the help of an own goal on a waterlogged field Wednesday to advance in 2010 South Africa World Cup qualifying at the expense of Jamaica.

Jamaica defeated Canada 3-0 but it wasn't enough to put them through to the next round of qualifying in the North, Central America and Caribbean Zone.

Mexico also advanced to the final round despite the loss to Honduras who were battling for one of the three spots up for grabs on Wednesday.

The United States, Costa Rica and El Salvador had already clinched their berths.

"We showed our quality tonight," said Honduras' David Suazo. "We proved that Honduras belongs at this level and in the final round."

"Now I think it's time for the Mexican team to speak well of Honduran football. I think they would be able to talk all week about it."

Trinidad and Tobago grabbed the final spot Wednesday with a 3-0 blanking of Cuba to vault past Guatemala who lost 2-0 to the US and finished second in Group 1.

Mexico went down 1-0 Wednesday when Ricardo Osorio knocked a cross from Amado Guevara into his own net in a game played under a steady rain.

Despite earning just a single point in their past three games, Mexico still advanced.

Tempers flared in the final minutes as Mexico's Gerardo Torrado and Carlos Vela were ejected after hard fouls on Honduran players.

Costa Rica kept their perfect record intact with a 3-1 win over El Salvador at the Cuscatlan in San Salvador. The Salvadorans join them in the next round as section runners-up.

Haiti and Suriname played to a 1-1 draw in Paramaribo.

S Africa edge Cameroon

Football

AFP, Rustenburg

South Africa claimed a record-equalling fourth consecutive international victory Wednesday by edging Cameroon 3-2 in a Nelson Mandela Challenge thriller.

It was the fourth time the 2009 FIFA Confederations Cup and 2010 World Cup hosts have achieved the feat and brought a happy ending to a disappointing year for Bafana Bafana (The Boys).

Substitute striker Bernard Parker snatched the winner eight minutes from full-time after two goals from midfielder Teko Modise have got South Africa off to a great start only for Cameroon to draw level before half-time.

Outstanding midfielder Daniel Kome reduced arrears and striker Somen Tchoyi levelled for the Indomitable Lions who lacked several key players, including three-time African Footballer of the Year Samuel Eto'o.

He was to be the star attraction at Olympia Park in this north-west town and other notable absentees from the annual fixture which honours former president Mandela were defender Rigobert Song and midfielder Geremi Njitap.

The victory ended a run of three losses in the annual match by Bafana Bafana against the United States, Egypt and Senegal and was a timely boost ahead of the Confederations Cup draw in Johannesburg Saturday.

Star South Africa striker Benni McCarthy lined up just days after attending the Cape Town funeral of his father and played a key role in the second goal before being booked for a cynical foul on Jean Makoun and later replaced.

A high-tempo match produced lots of goalmouth action for the near-capacity crowd on a wet evening and offered hope that Bafana are turning the corner after their shock elimination from the 2010 African Nations Cup qualifiers.

Modise raised his international goal haul to seven after seven minutes as he pounced on a fluffed clearance to hammer a low shot past goalkeeper Carlos Kameni.

A superb McCarthy back heel set Modise clear after 24 minutes and he used his weaker left foot to slam the ball across Kameni into the far corner of the net.

However, old South Africa defensive failings at set pieces came back to haunt them soon after when Kome lifted a free kick over a wall standing too far back and the ball floated above goalkeeper Itumeleng Khune into the net.

Spain-bossed Kome was creating havoc with his dribbling and shooting and set up the 36th-minute equaliser with a free kick to the far post where unmarked Tchoyi nodded home.

As an action-packed second half drew to a close, Parker pounced when Kameni could not hold a stinging shot and he stroked the ball across the goal and into the net.

Modise from leading South African club Orlando Pirates was fouled of a hat-trick in the final minute when his penalty was pushed away by captain Kameni.

Van Persie steers Holland

AFP, Amsterdam

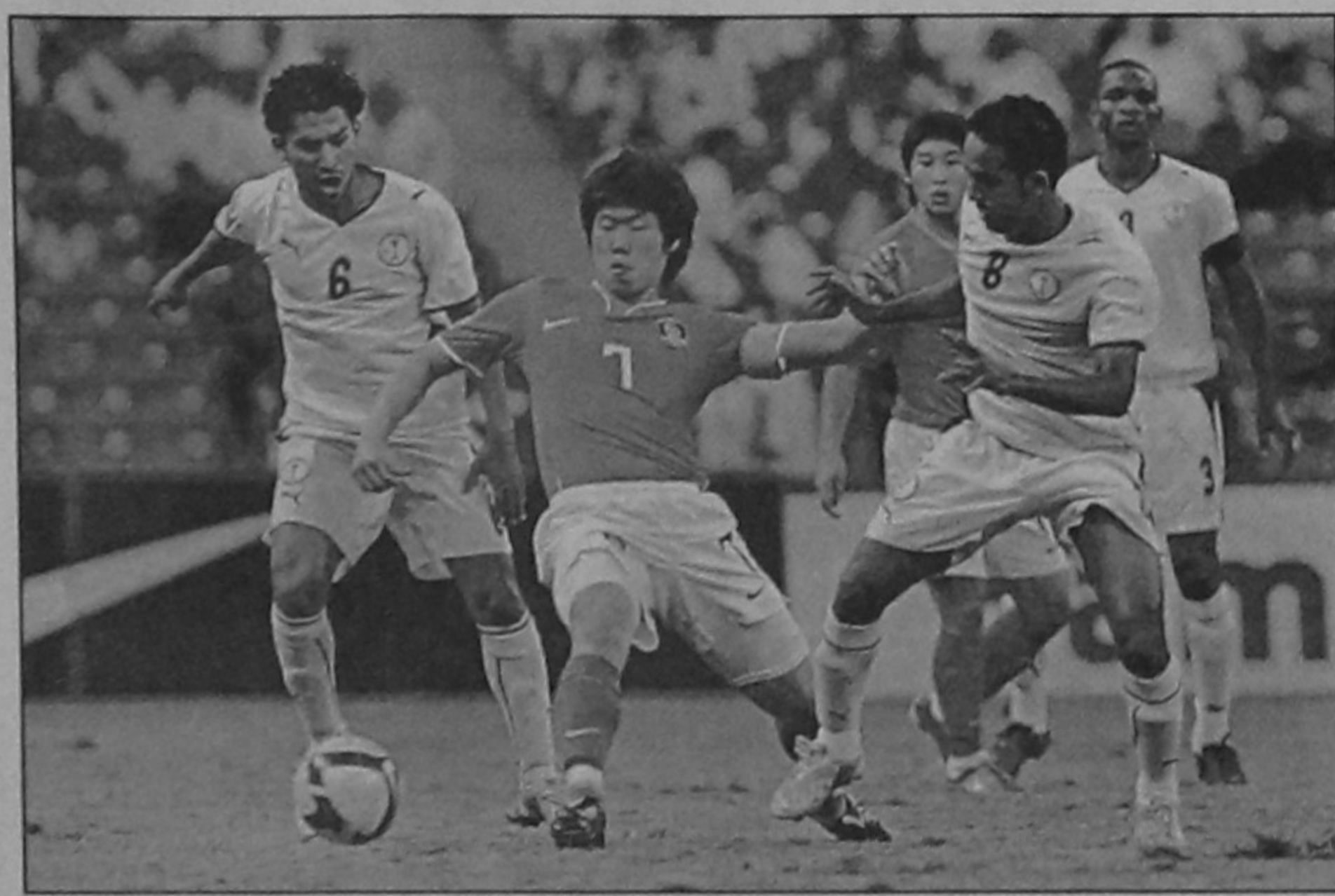
Arsenal star Robin van Persie scored twice as Holland beat Sweden 3-1 in a friendly international here on Wednesday.

Bert van Marwijk's side dominated from the outset with Dirk Kuyt (14), van Persie (16) and Mark van Bommel (27) all coming close before the home side broke the deadlock when Wesley Sneijder's 32nd-minute cross was headed in by van Persie.

Both sides made changes at the interval but the Dutch weren't thrown out of their confident stride and three minutes into the second half, van Persie scored from van der Vaart's perfect cross.

Kim Kallstrom pulled one back for the Swedes after 49 minutes, scoring past debutant goalkeeper Michel Vorm, but the visitors struggled to make further inroads and were clearly missing the cutting edge of the rested Zlatan Ibrahimovic.

Liverpool striker Kuyt headed in the third goal for the Dutch in the second minute of injury time.



South Korea star Park Ji-Sung (C) fights for the ball with Saudi players Ahmed Atfi (L) and Abdu Atfi (R) during their 2010 World Cup qualifying match in Riyadh on November Wednesday. South Korea won 2-0.