

France must make the right fouls at the right time to avoid being booked by pernickety World Cup referees, defender Eric Abidal said. "Referees pay more attention to detail during the first few matches and will put their hands to their pockets more easily," Abidal told reporters at France's base in Knysna, Western Cape. "It's up to us to be more intelligent and to make the right fouls when we need to."

Star SPORT

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Netherlands stars Dirk Kuyt (L), Wesley Sneijder (No. 10) and Robin van Persie celebrate after a Danish own-goal broke the deadlock in their keenly-contested Group E match at the Soccer City stadium in Johannesburg yesterday. The Dutch were slow to start, but ran out 2-0 winners.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Rusty Dutch still good enough

REUTERS, Johannesburg

Netherlands rarely moved out of first gear but still had far too much in the tank to leave Denmark trailing as they secured a 2-0 victory in their opening World Cup Group E match at Soccer City on Monday.

The Dutch, among the favourites to win the trophy after a perfect qualifying campaign and excellent form in their warm-up matches needed an own goal by Simon Poulsen just after halftime and a tap-in from Dirk Kuyt in the 85th minute to triumph.

The Danes, who surprisingly included Nicklas

Bendtnier in attack after he looked set to miss the match with a groin injury, rarely threatened and in the end only the woodwork and some desperate defending saved them from a heavier defeat.

"In the second half we started with a lucky goal, so it was up to Denmark to come out but they didn't have the conviction or the force to," said Netherlands coach Bert van Marwijk.

"Then we scored the second and then you could see how well we can play. We could have had another one or two goals."

The Dutch, even with-out inspirational winger

SCORE BOARD

NETHERLANDS 2 - 0 DENMARK

POULSEN(OG) 46

KUYT 85

Netherlands (4-2-3-1): Maarten Stekelenburg, van der Wiel, Johnny Heitinga, Joris Mathijsen, Gio van Bronckhorst, Mark van Bommel, Nigel de Jong (Demy de Zeeuw, 88), Wesley Sneijder, Rafael van der Vaart (Eljero Elia, 67), Dirk Kuyt, Robin van Persie (Ibrahim Afellay, 77)

Denmark (4-4-2): Thomas Sorensen, Simon Kjaer, Daniel Agger, Lars Jacobsen, Christian Poulsen, Martin Jorgensen, Thomas Kahlenberg (Christian Eriksen, 73), Simon Poulsen, Dennis Rommedahl, Thomas Enevoldsen (Jesper Gronkjaer, 56), Nicklas Bendtnier (Mikkel Beckmann, 62)

Venue: Soccer City Stadium, Johannesburg

Arjen Robben, who is expected to return for their second match against Japan after a hamstring

injury, were just too strong for the Danes whose fabled "dynamite" play never exploded into life.

"It was a deserved win for the Dutch," said Denmark coach Morten Olsen. "It could have been different if the (own goal) hadn't happened... but this happens in football. After that the Dutch were in a position they liked."

Netherlands did not play particularly well but with skipper Giovanni Van Bronckhorst commanding in his 100th international at the back, and Mark Van Bommel working tirelessly in midfield, they always looked sharper and quicker than the opposition.

Wesley Sneijder, Rafael van der Vaart and Robin van Persie, three of their so-

KEY STATS	
Netherlands	Denmark
Shots (on target)	
19(6)	11(3)
Corners	
6	2
Possession	
66%	34%
Yellow Cards	
2	1

called "Big Four" attackers in the absence of Robben, did just about enough

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

A new Germany

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

Three red cards, six goals, the first African triumph and a debut win were only to show for until the World Cup finally exploded to life on Sunday.

Three-time champions Germany rescued a flagging World Cup in terms of goals as they hammered four past a hapless Australia side who had Tim Cahill sent off. Serbia and Algeria concurred as they too had men sent off, while crashing to single goal defeats to Ghana and Slovenia respectively.

But on Sunday, it was the Germans who finally set the blue litmus paper alight with a daring display of skill, precision and creativity that completely destroyed the Socceroos.

As far as clichés go, Germany are never renowned as a side attractive to the neutrals, but a new brand of stars threaten to rip apart the stereotype with a showcase of football that was, at the risk of being stereotypical, more Latin than Teutonic. Mesut Oezil, the creative heartbeat of the team, ran the Aussies ragged with insightful passing

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New Zealand v Slovakia Time: 5.30pm Rustenburg

Ivory Coast v Portugal Time: 8.00pm Port Elizabeth

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TODAY'S MATCHES

WORLD CUP POLL

Do you think England should drop Robert Green?

Don't care 54.4%

Yes forever 29.4%

No, let him play 16.2%

TOTAL VOTES: 68

TODAY'S POLL

Which team from Asia will go the farthest in this WC?

Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast your vote

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Japan's Yuki Abe (L) fights for possession with Cameroon's Enoh Eyong during their World Cup Group E match at Free State stadium in Bloemfontein yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

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