

No neighbourly love

PREVIEW

AFP, Cape Town

Spain coach Vicente Del Bosque takes no pleasure in avoiding Brazil in the World Cup second round...

After a rocky start to the tournament, Spain pulled themselves together to top Group H with Brazil doing the same in Group G.

To many it was a relief, with the top two teams in the world meeting in the round of 16 seen as an anti-climax when that is the match long tipped by pundits as a potential final.



Spanish striker David Villa leads his teammates on a warm-down after a training session yesterday, ahead of their knockout tie against neighbours Portugal today.

THE KNOWLEDGE

Portugal have won only five of their previous 32 meetings with Spain in all competition.

Spanish winger Jesus Navas attempted 40 crosses from open play; 18 more than any other player.

Del Bosque though said Portugal was as much of a challenge.

"We've seen how they



Ellis Park in Johannesburg, a tempting fixture as both Spain and Portugal look to win the World Cup for the first time in their history.

The Portuguese finished second in their group after goalless draws with Ivory Coast and Brazil and a 7-0 rout of North Korea.

They successfully blunted Brazil's natural flair with Duda, Bruno Alves, Ricardo Carvalho and Ricardo Costa holding a solid line at the back.

Portugal have now kept a clean sheet in 22 of their last 26 internationals and these tactics are likely to be used again to counter the threat of Fernando Torres and the in-form David Villa, who has already scored three goals.

Coach Carlos Queiroz warned though that statistics meant little in knockout football.

"We can't go into the round of 16 simply on reputation or statistics. The players now have to deliver the goods," he said.

Winger Simao knows his side will be facing one of the best teams in the world, but insists they have no fear.

"Without showing them a lack of respect, we're not scared at all," said the Atletico Madrid star.

"We've got a great team too. And to become better, we have to beat Spain. They're champions of Europe, but we have our own qualities."

will be more optimistic in every sense of the word and I'm sure that optimism will be seen on the pitch."

They go into the match with Real Madrid midfielder Xabi Alonso still uncertain after spraining his right ankle in the Chile match on Friday.

Centre-back Raul Albiol is also a doubt with a shin injury.

Portugal have their own injury worries with striker Danny set to miss the game with a badly bruised leg, but playmaker Deco returns after sitting out the 0-0 draw with Brazil.

At stake for both teams is a quarterfinal berth against either Paraguay or Japan at

Ramos determined to stop Ronaldo

INTERNET

Spain defender Sergio Ramos is confident ahead of their second round clash with Portugal, but conceded

that to stop their rivals they must stop Cristiano Ronaldo.

Tournament favorites Spain will face the 2006 semifinalists on Tuesday evening in Cape Town. Ramos is confident about the Spanish squad despite losing the first group match to Switzerland.

"We hope the trouble we had in the group stage will make Spain a stronger team," Ramos said. "We are pleased with our performances so far and happy to have finished top in the group after the start we had."

"Portugal are a great team and they are in top form. I am looking forward to playing against teammates and friends Cristiano Ronaldo and Pepe. Let's see if we can make it to the quarterfinals," said the 24-year-old Real Madrid side-back.

Ramos, who will confront with Ronaldo, believed that the key to beating Portugal lay in how well he can deal with the world most expensive footballer.

"Cristiano is very fast, strong and a speedster with the ball at his feet. I have to prevent him from receiving the ball and we must stop him from having a lot of room to work with," said a determined Ramos.

Aragones not very optimistic

INTERNET

Former Spain manager Luis Aragones said that he was "not optimistic" about Spain's World Cup second round clash against neighbours Portugal.

Aragones told Portuguese television channel SIC that "Spain has not been at a good level at the start of the tournament. They have been short of speed in moving the ball."

He added that "if Portugal knows how to take the ball off Spain then they are going to have options to win comfortably. I am not optimistic about the game because I see that Portugal has a great team."

Aragones, 71, was manager of Spain from 2004 to 2008 and led La Roja to triumph at Euro 2008, before leaving for Turkish giants Fenerbahce. He has been very critical of his successor Vicente del Bosque throughout the World Cup.

He told SIC that "Portugal is almost perfect defensively. In attack maybe they are short of something. It is a team that should be taken into consideration."

When asked about Portugal's star Cristiano Ronaldo, Aragones replied: "He is doing fairly well. He is player who can win any match in one or two moves thanks to his quality."

Journalists take up the flag

INTERNET

Journalists at the World Cup are to be given the chance to be linesmen in a FIFA initiative in Pretoria on Tuesday.

Football's governing body organised a referees open-day before the controversial events of Sunday when mistakes from match officials influenced the results of last-16 matches between England and Germany, and Argentina and Mexico.

Referees are not allowed to discuss the events of games after matches but in an invitation sent to journalists covering the World Cup FIFA said: "Interested media are to try for themselves the implementation of the off-side law and the challenge that referee's assistants face."

FIFA today refused to comment on Uruguayan referee Jorge Larrionda ruling out Frank Lampard's goal and Italian match official Roberto Rosetti allowing Carlos Tevez's offside goal against Mexico.

Capello decision in two weeks

TELEGRAPH

Fabio Capello's future was thrown into doubt after England's lacklustre display at the World Cup, culminating in a 4-1 defeat to second round opponents Germany.

"I spoke with Sir David Richards and in the next two weeks we will decide. I said I can be the manager of England next season but we have to decide. I absolutely want to stay," said Capello.

"I am happy with the meeting with Sir David Richards. I have refused a lot of opportunities because I want to stay here, I like this job.

Capello said the World Cup had been a valuable learning experience for him in the England job.

"I understand a lot after this tournament, because the performance was not what we wanted. We were very tired."

"We need a winter break. Germany always arrive in second half of season very well [because they have a winter break]. But it's not my job to decide that."

"When I chose the players, I followed them all for a long time. I took the best players for a job."

When asked further about the reason for England's capitulation in South Africa Capello expressed great concern for the condition of his players.

"I think you can decide on a different style to 4-4-2, but it always depends on the players. We beat Germany in Germany playing 4-4-2 but not here. I think it is down to the physical situation of the players why we lost, not the formation."

"We are not happy. Lampard's goal was okay. When you get back to 2-2 the motivation is completely different but the third goal for Germany was crucial."

"Wayne Rooney played well some games, but you can't speak about one player. All the players were not as good as I know, they didn't play as fast or as quick as they can. In games against Mexico, Japan, the game here, USA, Algeria and Germany we played well but not as fast as we can."

Maradona's plea to protect Messi

AFP, Johannesburg

Diego Maradona shrugged off the latest World Cup referee blunder on Sunday to demand more protection for Lionel Messi, Argentina's prize asset and key to the country's title hopes.

Argentina saw off Mexico 3-1 to book a quarterfinal clash against Germany but the Mexicans were angry that Carlos Tevez's opening goal was allowed to stand despite the Manchester City striker being offside.

When quizzed about the goal, Maradona instead took the opportunity to defend Messi, who was fouled five times while Rafael Marquez was yellow carded for a bruising challenge on the star after 28 minutes.

When asked to appreciate Mexico coach Javier Aguirre's fury over Tevez's goal, Maradona went on the attack.

"He would have felt the same way I do when Messi is playing and he gets kicked around, but the referee doesn't act," fumed Maradona.

"(The goal) looks like it was absolutely nor-

mal. Listen, today we just had [Mexico players receiving] cautions, but I know what it is like to be a good player like Messi and when you try to get the ball, you get kicked."

"As soon as Messi gets the ball, they want to kick him, it is a scandal."

"Against England, Germany played well, because nobody was trying to kick them."

"I just want Messi to be respected, there is a limit to everything."

Maradona is confident his side will now beat Germany, who crushed England 4-1, at Cape Town on Saturday in their quarterfinal showdown.

"We will take stock of our situation, then we will try and put together the best team to showcase our talents against Germany," said Maradona.

"It will be the team to give us the guarantee to overcome Germany. We know Germany are a different team to the side we faced in Mexico."

"They are stronger, but we will field the right players to beat them."



PHOTO: REUTERS

THE GOAL IS THAT WAY: Portugal teammates point the way for superstar Cristiano Ronaldo ahead of today's crunch second round tie against Spain.

The Daily Star RANGS TOSHIBA World Cup QUIZ 2010 advertisement. Includes a Toshiba refrigerator image and promotional text.

ROUND 5, DRAW IN SYLHET ON JULY 06 advertisement. Includes prize lists for grabs and bumper round, and a quiz schedule table.

World Cup fever! advertisement for watching matches live on BTv. Includes match times for Paraguay vs Japan and Spain vs Portugal.

PHILIPS AROMATIC Soap FREE advertisement featuring a Philips lightbulb and a soap box.

The Daily Star - RANGS TOSHIBA World Cup Quiz, Round 5 Ends July 02, 2010 advertisement. Includes a tick the correct answers quiz and contact information.