



PHOTO: REUTERS

Uruguay striker Luis Suarez (R) uses both hands to stop a Stephen Appiah header from crossing the goalline to keep his side in the match against Ghana in their quarterfinal match at Soccer City stadium in Johannesburg on Friday.

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I'll bounce back, vows Gyan

AFP, Johannesburg

Ghana forward Asamoah Gyan brushed off his last-minute penalty heartache and vowed to bounce back following his side's World Cup quarterfinal elimination by Uruguay on Friday.

Gyan had the chance to win the match, which was poised at 1-1, with the final kick of extra-time after Uruguay forward Luis Suarez had handled Dominic Adiyiah's header on the line, preventing a certain goal.

But Rennes forward Gyan crashed his penalty against the crossbar and although he netted in the ensuing shoot-out, Uruguay goalkeeper Fernando Muslera saved two kicks and the South Americans won 4-2 to move on to face Holland in the last four.

"I'll bounce back, I'm strong mentally," said Gyan. "I had the courage to take the penalty, but that's normal, I'm the penalty taker."

"But that's not the game, now he (Suarez) is the hero in his country, the ball was going in, he stopped it and I missed the penalty. That's

the way it is."

Ghana's Serbian coach Milovan Rajevac said that miss had given Uruguay an advantage in the shoot-out.

"We had this penalty and the chance to reach the semifinals but we didn't get it," he said. "In the shoot-out Uruguay had a psychological advantage."

Gyan would have joined Cameroon legend Roger Milla as Africa's record goalscorer in World Cup finals had he netted the winner but it wasn't to be.

Ghana goalkeeper Richard Kingson revealed he and his teammates had been trying to support their striker.

"We were consoling him (in the dressing rooms), it's a game so we need to forget about it," he said before complaining about Suarez's actions.

"You can see from the

beginning that it's unfair on our side, the referee should have allowed the goal but he gave a penalty.

"It's very unfortunate but it's also part of the game, you have to accept it and correct the mistake next time."

"Many things happen in football but you have to understand that little decisions can change every situation and that happened today."

"If the referee gives a goal we qualify for the semis, but he didn't, he gave a penalty."

"I'm a little bit down but I'm also happy for myself. There's nothing we can do now, we have to take it out of our minds and move forward."

"I'm very proud of the team, it's a young team and even in our country no one expected us to get to this stage."

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The new Hand of God!

AFP, Johannesburg

Uruguay striker Luis Suarez claimed on Saturday that his deliberate extra-time, last-minute handball, which denied Ghana a World Cup semifinal place, was the 2010 version of the "Hand of God".

Suarez was red-carded by Portuguese referee Olegario Benquerena for the illegal goal-line clearance which kept out substitute Dominic Adiyiah's header but resulted in a Ghana penalty.

However, Asamoah Gyan then sent his penalty -- the last kick of the game -- crashing off the crossbar to give the Uruguayans a reprieve which they exploited by prevailing 4-2 in the shoot-out which followed.

"This was the end of the World Cup. I had no choice. I have the 'Hand of God' now," said Suarez.

Diego Maradona famously credited a goal against England at the 1986

World Cup to the "Hand of God" after he scored with his hand.

"I did it so that my teammates could win the penalty shoot-out. When I saw Gyan miss the penalty it was a great joy," added Suarez, who misses the semifinal.

Uruguay coach Oscar Tabarez defended Suarez whose handball allowed the South Americans to claim their first World Cup semifinal appearance since 1970. Tabarez, whose side had battled from a goal down to draw 1-1 at the end of regulation time, said Suarez's desperate act was a reflex action.

"It was instinctive, he instinctively put his hand out to the ball and was red-carded and will miss the next game," Tabarez said.

"He has paid for the consequences of his actions. He wasn't to know that Ghana would miss the resulting penalty. It is not fair to say that we cheated our way to

victory." Two-time champions Uruguay will now play the

And the price he pays

REUTERS, Johannesburg

FIFA's disciplinary committee will meet to decide whether Uruguay striker Luis Suarez should face extra punishment for a deliberate handball on the goalline in their quarterfinal against Ghana.

He will already be banned for one match but a two-game suspension -- if FIFA take that course of action -- could rule him out of the July 11 World Cup final should Uruguay win their semi against Netherlands.

FIFA spokesman Pekka Odriozola said on Saturday that following the direct red card, Suarez would sit out Uruguay's semifinal game against the Dutch in Cape Town on Tuesday.

Netherlands in the semifinals in Cape Town on Tuesday.

Man-of-the-match Diego Forlan, whose equalising free kick kept Uruguay in the match, said: "It's a pity (for Suarez that he will miss the semi), he made a good save today, we'll try to do our best."

"He played his part. He didn't score a goal but he saved one and now we go to the semifinal."

Tabarez said now that his team were in the semifinals, where they face the Dutch who knocked out Brazil earlier Friday, they can be considered as one of the four best sides in the world.

"We didn't play good football tonight but we fought very hard," he said.

"We are amongst the four best teams at this World Cup. This is something we would never have imagined before coming to South Africa."

"My players are very

united. I don't know how far we can go in the tournament. The Netherlands have some great players, but we cannot betray this group of players."

"If there is a glimmer of hope we must hang on. We will certainly not throw in the towel before playing that match."

Uruguay goalkeeper Fernando Muslera, who saved skipper John Mensah and Adiyiah's attempts in the penalty shootout, said he felt calm while making those match-winning saves.

"It was one of my calmest moments. I was lucky I had the right instincts," the Lazio shot-stopper said.

"I felt nothing when Gyan took his extra-time penalty, my mind went blank. Honestly, there was nothing to think about, I was calm, I tried to put him off and luckily he missed."



PHOTO: AFP

A crestfallen Asamoah Gyan is consoled by a team official after Ghana's penalty shootout loss against Paraguay in their quarterfinal at Soccer City stadium in Johannesburg Friday.

Tabarez defends Suarez action

TELEGRAPH

A handball on the goal-line by Luis Suarez prevented Ghana's Dominic Adiyiah from scoring in the last minute and Asamoah Gyan missed the penalty -- with Uruguay triumphing in the shoot-out to make the World Cup semis.

Tabarez claimed the Ajax striker, who was subsequently sent off, had reacted instinctively.

"When there is a handball in the penalty area there is a red card and the player is thrown out of the game," he said.

"Saying we cheated Ghana is too harsh a word to use. We also abide by what the referee did. It could have been a mistake. Yes he stuck his hand out but it's not cheating. I don't think it's fair to say that."

"I think it was instinctive. The player instinctively reacted and was thrown out of the match and he can't play the next match. What else do you want?"

"Is Suarez also to blame for Ghana missing the penalty? We try to be dignified and if we lose a match we look for the reasons for it. You shouldn't look to third parties."

"This is football. There are consequences to that handball and he didn't know that

Ghana was going to miss that penalty."

Former Uruguay and Chelsea midfielder Gus Poyet also believes Suarez should not be labelled as a cheat.

"I was little bit disappointed with some people talking about cheating. I think that is absolute rubbish."

"That is taking one for the team. That is making something happen for the rest of their life. That is helping one country of 3.5 million people to get to the semifinal for the first time in so many years."

"You are telling me the player had to let the ball go in? Is that football? I think you're missing something really important here."

"I think you call it cheating when you try to score a goal with the hand, to take advantage when the referee cannot see that."

"Everybody saw that. The referee saw that. He gave the red card to the player (Suarez)."

"The player (Gyan) had the chance to score the penalty and didn't."

"We are missing something really important. When you are naive, you don't win football games."

"Suarez put himself in front of the whole country and because of that Uruguay is in the semifinals."

'I had no choice'

REUTERS, Johannesburg

Uruguay's Luis Suarez said his conscience was clear after being dismissed for a handball that denied Ghana a last-gasp winner in their World Cup quarterfinal on Friday.

"It was worth being sent off in this way for because at that moment there was no other choice," Suarez told reporters. "I'm very calm."

Uruguay coach Oscar Tabarez rejected assertions that his team had won by cheating.

"Yes, he stuck his hand out but is that cheating?" he asked. "I think it was instinctive. He was thrown out (of the game), he can't play the next match. There are consequences."

"When he handled, he didn't know Ghana would miss the penalty. Is Suarez to blame for Ghana missing the penalty in the shoot-out?"

Forlan, who was named Man of the Match after an indefatigable performance up front, said Suarez had saved the day for the South Americans.

"We knew it was going to be difficult. The way it finished was incredible," Forlan told a post-match news conference.

"It was a pity Suarez was sent off. Instead of scoring, he saved one, he saved the game."

Media mourns Ghana exit

AFP, Lagos

Ghana's painful penalty shootout quarterfinals loss to Uruguay was plastered across the country's media on Saturday which described it as heart-breaking.

The country's biggest selling and state funded newspaper the Daily Graphic had as its frontpage headline "Uruguay end Stars dream" after the two-time champions had beaten the 'Black Stars' 4-2 on penalties after the game ended 1-1 after extra-time.

However, the Ghanaians had a golden opportunity to prevent penalties and win it at the death when Luis Suarez was sent-off for punching the ball away from crossing the line only for Asamoah Gyan to hit the crossbar with the resulting penalty.

The Daily Graphic dedicated its editorial to the performance of the Black Stars saying that although they were "gallant losers", it was just a "heart-breaking" experience as the only remaining title hopes for the African continent was shattered by the penalties defeat.

The Ghanaian Times, another government owned daily had for its banner headline "History slips from the Stars".

"It has been a painful exit. Throughout the world, everybody with African blood in his or her veins was upbeat about the chances of the Black Stars," it said.

"The prayer of this paper is that there would be no finger-pointing. Let there be no blame game. Our boys have gone to a battle and acquitted themselves creditably," the paper said.

owned papers, ran a frontpage headline as "Stars break hearts".

It said it was a heart-breaking end to a hitherto successful campaign that had seen the Ghana squad carry the hopes and aspirations of the entire African continent which is hosting its first World Cup in history.

"Indeed, African leaders including Nelson Mandela, had declared their support for the Black Stars but at the end ... it was the South Americans that snatched victory," it said.

Elsewhere in Africa the media sympathised with the gallant display of the Ghanaians, who had come through a difficult group consisting of Germany, Serbia and Australia and beaten the United States in extra-time of their Last 16 match.

South African journal Weekend Argus headline was "Africa's Agony" with a picture of Suarez's outstretched hands stopping Ghana's would-be goal carrying the caption kicker of "cheat".

"Africa was robbed," the newspaper said in its front page article.

"That was the overwhelming feeling after Uruguay beat Ghana, Africa's last World Cup hope..."

The Citizen front page was headlined "Ghana Gutted: last African team pay the penalty" with a picture of Ghana's midfielder Stephen Appiah kneeling on the pitch, head down, after losing the penalty shoot-out.

"Uruguay played the role of party poopers once again as Ghana's World Cup dream was ended on a dramatic night at Soccer City," the newspaper said inside, showing a picture of Uruguay's celebratory Sebastian Abreu.

"Despite a miss from Max Pereira, Abreu took full advantage to break the hearts of an entire continent," said the newspaper.

The Saturday Star front page carried a side bar headlined "Africa mourns as Ghana pay the penalty".

"They carried the hope of a continent on football's greatest stage but left the throbbing mass of green, yellow and red with heartache," it said.

On the sport pages, one article was headlined: "Going, going, Ghana": "Africa's last remaining hope crushed by penalty lottery".

"Inconsolable and disconsolate, Asamoah Gyan clung on to a teammate at the end of this World Cup quarterfinal fully aware that his finale minute penalty miss had not only cost Ghana dear, but an entire continent".

Another article said "So many 'ifs' and 'should have's' but the African dream has now gone".

The same message was carried by the Zimbabwean press.

"Africa's dream shattered," ran the headline in The Herald which carried a front-page picture of Gyan being consoled by teammates after missing his extra-time penalty -- he was bravely to step up and take the first one in the penalty shootout and convert it.

"It was a cruel end to the game," the newspaper said.

"This was Africa's finest chance to make the last four and the Black Stars -- who fought with the right spirit for the entire match -- came close, yet ended very far from making it."

Rajevac rues bad luck

INTERNET

After Diego Forlan cancelled out Sulley Muntari's opener, the match went into extra-time where Ghana were presented with a big chance to book a semifinal spot against the Netherlands.

But after Luis Suarez handled the ball on the line, Asamoah Gyan's resulting spot-kick smashed against the crossbar, leaving the game to be decided on penalties.

"There are no words to express what we feel. This is sport's injustice but I congratulate Uruguay tonight -- they were the lucky ones," Rajevac said.

"All I can say is that this is football. At the end we had an historic opportunity to reach the semifinal -- we had a penalty but you saw it all."

"The opponents had the psychological advantage in the shoot-out. Everything happened so fast."

"We really had big support and it would have been a fairytale if it ended well for us, but I would like to congratulate Uruguay on reaching the semifinals."

But Rajevac was in a pragmatic mood despite Suarez's intervention and Gyan's heartbreaking miss.

"I'm very proud. We managed to achieve a great result and the whole of Africa supported us. We didn't deserve to lose in such a way and it's difficult to talk about it at the moment. We had bad luck that's all I can say," he added.