

German coach Joachim Loew will be obliged to wear his cashmere sweater in the semifinal against Spain on Wednesday. The 50-year-old's backroom staff have demanded he do so as every time he has donned the garment at the finals Germany have scored four goals. Loew has worn it in the opening 4-0 humbling of Australia, the 4-1 destruction of old foes England and then the impressive 4-0 dismantling

Star
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DHAKA TUESDAY JULY 6, 2010, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net



The weight of shadows

PREVIEW

REUTERS, Cape Town

The World Cup's history men face the competition's nearly men when inaugural hosts and twice winners Uruguay take on double runners-up Netherlands in Cape Town on Tuesday fighting it out for a place in the final.

Not just Uruguayan soccer but the country's whole national identity draws heavily on their victories of 1930 and 1950.

Semifinals in 1954 and 1970 showed that those early successes were not a flash in the pan but it has been meagre pickings since then before this year's surprise march.

"I don't know what would happen if we were to achieve what that team achieved back in 1950," said coach Oscar Tabarez. "We still hold those champions as idols."

Every Dutch player also operates under long shadows: in their case those cast by the likes of Johan Cruyff, Johan Neeskens and Johnny Rep and the "Total Football" of the 1970s.

In 1974 and 1978 the Dutch were cast as chief bridesmaid -- they might have been prettier than the bride on both occasions but at the end of the ceremony it was still West Germany and Argentina who signed the register.

The 1988 European championship-winning side of Marco Van Basten, Ruud Gullit and Frank Rijkaard could not transfer their success to the world stage while a shoot-out defeat to Brazil in the 1998 semifinals was another frustrating near-miss.

All that will count for nothing in Cape Town however, as both sides will be looking very much to the future, to July 11 and a Johannesburg appointment with Germany or Spain.

Everything points to the Netherlands advancing to set up a second-successive all-European final, leaving egg on the face of those writing off the continent only a week ago.

The Dutch are on a phenomenal run. Having won all their qualifying matches to get to South Africa they won all three group games here and two knockout matches.

The last of them, 2-1 against Brazil after weathering an early onslaught, has left them buzzing and fearing nobody.

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THE KNOWLEDGE

Diego Forlan's father Pablo played in the two countries' only World Cup meeting in 1974.

Netherlands are the only team at the tournament to have won all of their matches.



RESULTS SO FAR

Quarterfinal
July 2
Netherlands 2 Brazil 1

Second round
June 28
Netherlands 2 Slovakia 1

Group E
June 24
Cameroon 1 Netherlands 2
June 19
Netherlands 1 Japan 0
June 14
Netherlands 2 Denmark 0



RESULTS SO FAR

Quarterfinal
July 2
Uruguay 1(4) Ghana 1(2)

Second round
June 26
Uruguay 2 South Korea 1

Group A
June 22
Mexico 0 Uruguay 1
June 16
South Africa 0 Uruguay 3
June 11
Uruguay 0 France 0



NETHERLANDS TACTICS

DEFENCE
Heitinga's partnership with Joris Mathijssen was a concern before the tournament started but has turned out to be one of the Dutch team's strong points. They have conceded only one goal from open play and two

penalties so far.

MIDFIELD

The game is likely to turn on how well Uruguay's midfield handle the Dutch attacking midfield trio of Robben, Kuyt and Sneijder, who undid Brazil in the second half of their 2-1 quarterfinal win.

ATTACK

Van Persie is the lone Dutch striker. He has not had a great World Cup although even when he does not play well he has an important role as a distraction to defenders who also have to deal with the Kuyt-Sneijder-Robben trio just behind him.



URUGUAY TACTICS

DEFENCE
Uruguay's defence has given away only two goals in four games. But, already likely to be short of Lugano, the suspension of Jorge Fucile, excellent at left back, is another blow.

MIDFIELD
Uruguay's midfield is not the team's strongest point. Their most inspirational player, youngster Nicolas Lodeiro, has not had a happy tournament, having been sent off against France in their opening match and now suffering an injury.

ATTACK

Forlan poses the biggest threat to the Netherlands defence. His pace, work rate and skill, not to mention deadly long-range shooting, have made him one of the top players at the World Cup and he already has three goals at this tournament.

Tabarez wary of Robben Cavani confident

INTERNET

Oscar Tabarez has already spoken to his players about how to stop Holland's Arjen Robben when the countries meet in the World Cup semifinal.

Uruguay forward Sebastian Abreu has revealed his manager has already been talking about how to handle Holland's star man in their World Cup semifinal. The nations go head to head on Tuesday evening for a place in the World Cup final.

Abreu, who scored his side's winning penalty kick in the shootout with Ghana in the quarterfinal on Friday, admitted it was not always easy to follow a plan against talented players.

Robben has been coming in to form since

returning from a hamstring injury.

"Tabarez has been talking to us about Robben and how to stop a player like him," Abreu said. "But it's always different when you are on the field."

"So we know how to do it but whether the actual execution actually comes off is another thing."

The Uruguayan coaching team appear to have taken note of the comments made by Slovakia manager Vladimir Weiss following his team's elimination by Holland in the last 16.

"We were preparing for three days for Robben, for his way of playing, but he is a total genius," Weiss admitted. "When I saw him in the line-up I knew he would make the Dutch 50% stronger - and I was correct."

INTERNET

Uruguay striker Edson Cavani believes they can beat Holland and reach the World Cup Final this week.

The 23-year-old has played an important part in his country's success in South Africa this summer. Speaking to La Gazzetta dello Sport, Cavani was asked if Uruguay could be the World Cup's surprise team.

"We can be," he said. "But if one looks at our 23 and where they play then there is less surprise."

"The vast majority plays in Serie A, La Liga, the Dutch, Portuguese and Argentinian leagues. There is experience, quality and youth."

"It's the high point of my career. Playing in a World Cup semi-final aged 23 is a great satisfaction."

"I believe that right now we mustn't think about the past, but look to the future. Things have changed since then. I think that

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FIRST SEMIFINAL
Uruguay v Netherlands Time: 12.30am (Wednesday) Cape Town

TODAY'S MATCH

Fair & Lovely MAX Fairness for MAX Impression

MAX Skin Lightening
MAX Spot Reduction
MAX Sun Protection

WORLD CUP POLL

Should Maradona continue as Argentina coach?

Yes 58.9%
No 41.1%

TOTAL VOTES: 168

TODAY'S POLL

Which superstar has been the biggest upset at this World Cup?

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

Follow The Daily Star Sport on **twitter**
www.twitter.com/dssport

NOKIA N900

South African artists perform traditional music during the world's biggest football, record-breaking attempt at the Emperor's Palace in Johannesburg yesterday. The event took place one day before the start of the semifinal stage of the World Cup. PHOTO: AFP

Football Festivity at Cape Town and Durban

Battles have been fought. Some have gone back whimpering, some went back with heads high and some has gone back with the experience of playing in the big scene. And the shining gladiators are sharpening their armory for the semifinal showdowns.

Cape Town is famous for its harbour as well as its natural setting in the Cape floral kingdom, including such well-known landmarks as Table Mountain and Cape Point. Cape Town is Africa's most popular destination for tourism. And this is where, Uruguay play against Netherlands. It is a duel of determined effort and strategic football. Uruguay will miss Luis Suarez infinitely, who coupled with Diego Forlan has been one of the most potent strike force of the tournament. Suarez saw the red but became the hero of Montevideo when he deliberately saved his team from elimination. While the Dutch, who plays savior to Germany with potent counter attack and rock solid defense will have an edge.

Next we travel to a town called Durban, where the ravishing Germans are up against the Spanish fiestas. Little is known of the history of the first residents, as there is no written history of the area until it was sighted by Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama, who sailed parallel to the KwaZulu-Natal coast at Christmaside in 1497 while searching for a route from Europe to India. He named the area "Natal", or Christmas in Portuguese.

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