



PHOTO: AFP

Britain's Mark Cavendish (L) celebrates on the finish line after winning ahead of Norway's Edvald Boasson Hagen (R) the fifth stage of the Tour de France between Epervain, Eastern France, and Montargis, center France, yesterday.

Orange flags sell like hot cakes

AFP, The Hague

Flags prematurely declaring Holland the 2010 football World Cup champions are flying off the shelves with other orange paraphernalia as the Dutch kit themselves out for Sunday's final against Spain.

"The wish is father to the thought," general manager Paul de Jager of Shipmate flags told AFP on Thursday of the company's plans to produce 2010 special edition flags with the words: "Holland Wereldkampioen 2010 (Holland World Champion 2010).

Nearly 1,000 flags of one metre (3.28 feet) by 1.5 metres have been sold since marketing started on Wednesday, the day after the Netherlands beat Uruguay 3-2 to reach a World Cup final for the third time in history -- its first in 32 years.

"Yes, we took a bit of a risk, but our trust (in the team) is big!" said De Jager, whose company is based near the western port city of Rotterdam.

Next to the wording, on an orange background, the flag is adorned with a lion composed of the names of the players of the Oranje Elftal (Orange Eleven) as the team is nicknamed, the coaches and the stadiums where they played.

It costs 18.50 euros (about 23.40 dollars), and a second edition may be issued depending on demand, said De Jager.

Another company, in the north of the country, has produced 12,000 of its own champion's flag since Monday, and has sold 9,000 to date.

"Everyone is optimistic, everyone believes (in victory). The team is good, the spirit is good ... that is why we believe," Elizabeth Visser, a spokeswoman for flag producer Dokkumer Vlaggen Centrale told AFP.

"It is nice for people to have the flag ready, at home, even before the final," she said.

Dokkumer started production of the flag on Monday, following the Netherlands' 2-1 quarter-final victory over Brazil last Friday.

"We took a risk." If the team had lost against Uruguay, "we would have had to recycle a thousand flags".

At a cost of 15 euros, the flag on an orange background with a lion's head and the red, white and blue colours of the Dutch flag, sports the words: "2010 Holland kampioen" (2010 Holland champion).

Visser said orders for the flag kept streaming in, and the company hoped to sell

another 5,000 by Sunday. Dokkumer normally receives about 50 orders a day for its flag products.

"The Dutch believe in the power of thought," said Yvonne Fernhout, spokeswoman for the Dutch retailers' federation.

"If everyone believes that the Netherlands will be the champion, they will be the champion!"

Other products in high demand in the run-up to Sunday's final include television sets and barbecue sets and all sorts of adornments, "Everything that is orange," said Fernhout.

The federation had predicted that retailers would make an extra 200 million euros during the World Cup, "but I think it will be even more," she said.

Orange flags have taken over city streets as what is colloquially known as Orange Fever increased in line with the team's progress through the tournament.

Some people have covered their homes with plastic sheets in the national colour, others put orange adornments on themselves, their children, pets, cars and bicycles.

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MSC lesson for Ajax

SPORTS REPORTER

Title contenders Mohammedan kept their goal fest going in the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League as they handed a massive 8-0 defeat to Ajax Sporting Club at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The star-studded Mohammedan line-up led the first half 2-0 with strikes from forward Musa Mia and defender Mamunur Rahman Chayan and came hard on the opponents in the second half to score six more goals, posting their eighth straight victory in as many matches.

After resumption, Musa and Chayan found the target once again while Mohammedan Saqlain, Rasel Mahmud Jimmy, Mohammad Atiq and Zahidul Islam Rajon chipped in with one goal each to join leaders Abahani in the points table. Mohammedan have now scored eight or more goals in five out of their eight league games so far.

Fakirerpool keep lead

SPORTS REPORTER

Youngmen's Club Fakirerpool consolidated their lead in the Bashundhara Senior Division Football League with a 2-1 win over Victoria Sporting Club at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Sepoy Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

Fakirerpool took only six minutes to open their account as Jhontuput the leaders ahead before Wahed doubled the advantage in the 20th minute.

After the break, Doulat pulled one back for Victoria, but the forward could not avert their fifth defeat in 10 matches.

Fakirerpool now have 25 points from ten matches while Victoria was stuck on 15 points also from 10 outings.

Beautiful

FROM PAGE 17

Arjen Robben said the whole Dutch squad were delighted for their skipper: "It was super, and great for him. He was playing the last two matches of his career and now the very last one is the final of the World Cup. It's fantastic."

Van Bronckhorst's 35-yard strike sailed into the top corner off the post to leave the Dutch bench open-mouthed. Holland assistant coach Frank de Boer said: "It was incredibly beautiful, it was really a perfect shot. To strike a ball like that happens maybe once in a lifetime."

Van Bronckhorst made his Holland debut in 1996 and passed the 100-cap mark in the opening match of the World Cup against Denmark. The final will be his 106th match for the national side. Among outfield players only De Boer, with 112, has made more appearances.

WC eases xenophobia

AFP, Pretoria

As South Africans savoured the final days of the World Cup, their government on Thursday sought to reassure immigrants that they would remain welcome after the foreign fans leave.

The nation rallied around fellow African teams in the tournament and celebrated with foreign fans, but government is concerned at fears among poor immigrant communities of xenophobic violence.

Anti-foreigner attacks left 62 people dead across South Africa in May 2008, and community groups say tensions have risen again.

The police ministry, the ruling African National Congress, and even Nelson Mandela's foundation have all made forceful statements against xenophobia.

After top government officials met to look into the concerns, police minister Nathi Mthethwa said government would work with churches, businesses and local leaders to ease tensions in immigrant communities.

"South Africans are not xenophobic. They have shown this over the month that we have hosted the World Cup," he told reporters.

"We will ensure this is dealt with. We are involving stakeholders in various sectors of society like politics, religion and business -- as we have with the World Cup -- to help address this issue."

No incidents have been reported, but community groups say they want to mitigate the tensions, which researchers say stem from competition for political posts and business opportunities.

"We can't simply ignore these threats as just rumours and yet we cannot give them too much credit," said Nkosikhulule Nyembezi, an advocate at human rights

group BlackSash.

"We are meeting with communities trying to verify the authenticity of the allegations and put prevention measures in place," he said.

President Jacob Zuma has repeatedly praised South Africans for uniting behind the World Cup, as fans of all races have celebrated together in stadiums.

This week outside Cape Town, dozens of Zimbabweans were seen along a highway trying to hitch-hike to Johannesburg and then catch a bus home, saying they feared attacks.

Mthethwa, however, said the Zimbabweans on the move were seasonal workers leaving the area after the harvest to search for new work.

The Mandela Foundation urged South Africans to keep up the inclusive spirit that has marked the World Cup.

"We have seen South Africans unite around a common support for African teams during the 2010 FIFA World Cup," it said.

"We hope that this will lead to greater appreciation by South Africans of our place on this continent and that we will show greater solidarity with non-nationals," it added.

Only two matches are left in the World Cup, with Saturday's competition for the third place spot in Port Elizabeth and Sunday's final in Johannesburg between the Netherlands and Spain.

Aviation authorities were embarrassed Friday after a logjam in landing bays caused delays for 700 fans trying to see Spain's 1-0 victory over Germany.

The delays for five planes caused some fans to miss the game, said Bongani Maseko, operations director at Durban's airport.

Other fans were late for the match, but given special buses to bring them to the stadium.

The final match has sold out, and FIFA says overall attendance at all World Cup matches has topped three million, only the third tournament to do so.

'Africa can be proud'

AFP, Johannesburg

FIFA president Sepp Blatter said Thursday that "Africa can be proud of having organised the World Cup" as the four-week tournament entered its final few days.

"Africa can be proud, South Africa even more so and African football can also be proud," Blatter told a news conference.

Spain and Holland, who have never won the World Cup, meet in the final on Sunday at Johannesburg's Soccer City.

Good start

FROM PAGE 17

Anderson to Eoin Morgan at extra cover, but in between whiles, Junaed produced a handful of shots of real authority, including a firm pull through backward square to further dent Broad's figures.

Rokibul Hasan, who "retired" in a fit of pique on the eve of the Chittagong Test in March, returned to the side after Jahurul Islam was ruled out through illness, and announced his intentions with a sweetly timed sweep off Graeme Swann's off-spinning understudy, James Tredwell.

He had moved onto 26 from 31 at the halfway mark, having worked Luke Wright's medium pace for consecutive fours through the backward-point and third-man arc.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH: 127 for 2 in 25 overs (Junaed 48 not out, Rokibul 26 not out, Tamim 28)

ENGLAND: Strauss, Kieswetter, Bell, Collingwood, Morgan, Yardy, Wright, Bresnan, Tredwell, Broad, Anderson

Meeting

FROM PAGE 17

against Brazil and in the semi-final defeat of Uruguay that they have the determination and a greater mental resilience to cause Spain problems.

"Germany were perhaps less strong than we expected because our team did a great job. Holland play excellent football and have been trying to become world champions for many years and have an excellent record," Del Bosque said.

Central defender Gerard Pique said of the Dutch: "They have a lot of good players - Robben, (Robin) Van Persie, Sneijder. We have to try to stop them but at the same time we need to play our game, to keep the ball and score goals."

Barcelona's Xavi meanwhile forecast "a mind game." "They have a great team with great players in midfield and up front. We have to impose our personality and if we play the way today we have a good chance."

Lula loses interest

AFP, Brasilia

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has lost interest in the World Cup and has little desire to watch the final with his country having gone out to Holland in the quarters, media reports on Thursday.

Asked about his thoughts on the final, where the Dutch will take on Spain, and whether he was planning on watching it with the five-time champions "Selecao" not involved, Lula said "neither I nor you" want to watch it.

Paraguay captain's complaint

GUARDIAN

Paraguay captain Justo Villar has lashed out at FIFA for giving the World Cup to South Africa, claiming the country was not prepared to host the tournament.

South Africa has generally garnered praise for its hosting of football's showpiece event as many pre-tournament fears failed to materialise. However, Villar -- who was playing in his third World Cup -- insists that behind the scenes it was a very different story.

"I think South Africa weren't prepared to host the World Cup," the Valladolid goalkeeper told Teleturco.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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Solution time: 25 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Y K V N E I P I A O Y Q Q S Q F F N F K .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: AFTER CUTTING MY VERY FIRST TREE, THE LOGGING COMPANY'S FOREMAN GAVE ME HIS STUMP OF APPROVAL.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals H