

Colombian superstar Shakira said Saturday that following the World Cup has made her "a football fanatic".
"I really never in my life imagined that I would go straight to the sports section in the newspaper. I've become a football fanatic."
Shakira, who is supporting Spain, will play at the closing ceremony ahead of the title match between the

Star
SPORT

SHAKIRA SUNDAY, 11, 2010, E-MAIL: sports@nokia.com



A final for the purists

REUTERS, Johannesburg

The big-name players have fallen by the wayside, leaving the Netherlands and Spain, tactically, technically and temperamentally the teams of the tournament, to face off in a World Cup final that should be one for the soccer cognoscenti.

It is entirely fitting that Sunday's climax to a tournament that has seen Cristiano Ronaldo, Kaka and co fail to live up to their stratospheric reputations should showcase the value of teamwork over individual brilliance.

Spain, inching their way back to the levels of technical perfection that took them to victory at Euro 2008, will start as slim favourites at Soccer City in their first World Cup final.

Even Paul the Octopus, the tentacled tipster who has provided the great silly story of this World Cup by correctly predicting all Germany's results, is pointing to a win for the Furia Roja (Red Fury).

"The important thing is that we keep our calm and maintain our spirit," coach Vicente del Bosque told reporters. "We know that's the road to follow."

Whatever happens, we will have a first-time

World Cup winner at the first tournament in Africa, with the Dutch playing their third final after defeats in 1974 and 1978.

It will also be a first World Cup win for a European side playing on another continent Bert van Marwijk's team, who have exuded

ROAD TO FINAL

NETHERLANDS	SPAIN
Netherlands 2 Denmark 0	Spain 0 Switzerland 1
Netherlands 1 Japan 0	Spain 2 Honduras 0
Cameron 1 Netherlands 2	Chile 1 Spain 2
Netherlands 2 Slovakia 1	Spain 1 Portugal 0
Netherlands 2 Brazil 1	Paraguay 0 Spain 1
Uruguay 2 Netherlands 3	Germany 0 Spain 1

an air of harmony and commitment in contrast to previous Dutch sides that have possessed at least as much talent but also a reputation for internal squabbling, have persuasive arguments that it will be third time lucky for the Oranje.

In Wesley Sneijder they possess one of the few creative midfielders who can match Spain's Xavi and Andres Iniesta for skill and the ability to influence a match and they have a

THE KNOWLEDGE

Netherlands can equal the record of the 1970 Brazilian team, who lifted the trophy after winning their entire World Cup qualifying and finals matches. Spain can become the first side to win the World Cup after losing their opening match in the tournament.

PAST RECORD

YEAR	SPAIN	NETHERLANDS
1930	Did not qualify	Did not enter
1934	Quarterfinals	First round
1938	Did not enter	First round
1950	Fourth	Did not enter
1954	Did not qualify	Did not enter
1958	Did not qualify	Did not qualify
1962	Group stage	Did not qualify
1966	Group stage	Did not qualify
1970	Did not qualify	Did not qualify
1974	Did not qualify	Runners-up
1978	First group stage	Runners-up
1982	Second group stage	Did not qualify
1986	Quarterfinals	Did not qualify
1990	Second round	Second round
1994	Quarterfinals	Quarterfinals
1998	Group stage	Fourth
2002	Quarterfinals	Did not qualify
2006	Second round	Second round

front four with the gifts to give the Spanish defence their first real test.

The two teams have a similar commitment to keeping the ball -- hardly a surprise given that this Spain team is built on the Barcelona model, which in turn has had a major Dutch influence since the days of Johan Cruyff who coached the Spanish club.

The game may turn on which side can find the more ruthless touch in front of goal.

With Fernando Torres still lacking his customary touch -- he was dropped for the semi-final against Germany and came on as a late sub -- Spain's problem all tournament has been in scoring goals.

They have managed just seven in total in their six matches to date, five of them from David Villa, and they are likely to line up again with Pedro alongside their customary match winner, with Torres on the bench.

The Dutch have found scoring goals easier, 12 in all, but they have found it tough to finish off their opponents.

After falling behind against Brazil they came back to dominate the match and could have put much more of a gloss on what turned

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NETHERLANDS

SPAIN

FINAL

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Paul the octopus swims past a football at the Sea Life Aquarium in German city of Oberhausen on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

World Cup 2010: Paul-The Psychic Octopus

Paul has become one of the stars of the tournament and put the TV pundits to shame, thanks to an amazing run of correct World Cup predictions. Here's 5 things you didn't know about the tentacled tipster.

- Although he now resides at the Aquarium Sea Life Centre in Oberhausen, Germany, Paul was actually born in Weymouth and moved from the town's Sea Life Park in 2006.
- Paul has become an international celebrity after picking the winner in each of Germany's World Cup games in South Africa, including the surprise defeat against Serbia in the group stage and the loss to Spain in the semi-final.
- Paul's predictions have gained so much popularity that German news channel NTV has started to broadcast his predictions live, with two reporters situated next to his tank so they can bring their viewers all the latest goings on.
- He has become an online phenomenon over recent weeks and is now one of the most talked about topics on the web. The phrases "Paul the Octopus" and "Pulpo", the Spanish word for octopus, are both currently in the top 10 global trends on Twitter.
- This psychic octopus has now predicted Spain will beat Holland and win World Cup 2010!

Source: Internet

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