

Former Dutch superstar Johan Cruyff on Monday slammed the style of play of his compatriots during Sunday's World Cup final against Spain as "dirty" and "ugly". Cruyff, a losing finalist at the 1974 World Cup, wrote in the Catalan daily El Periodico that the Dutch showed themselves to be particularly aggressive on the pitch and played "appallingly and sadly in a very dirty manner".



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Heroes return home

AFP, Madrid

Spain gave its football team a heroes' welcome Monday as their World Cup triumph over the Netherlands inspired a red and gold fiesta after years of dashed hopes.

As the South African hosts prided themselves for defying pessimistic predictions, up to a million people were expected to line the streets of Madrid for an evening victory parade to cap off their sporting fairytale.

A huge cheer erupted from a crowd gathered at Madrid airport when keeper Iker Casillas emerged from the squad's plane with coach Vicente del Bosque and held aloft the golden trophy.

The team were to meet Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero before taking an open top bus through the capital in a moment of pure joy for a country hit by spiralling unemployment and a stuttering economy.

The party had begun immediately after Barcelona's Andres Iniesta scored the final's only goal late on Sunday, three minutes before the end of extra time after a match watched by an estimated 700 million people worldwide.

"Iniesta Presidente! Iniesta Presidente!" chanted one group of fans as they marched along the centre of the Gran

Via, Madrid's main thoroughfare in the early hours.

Others imitated bullfighters and waved Spanish flags over passing cars while chanting "Ole!" to celebrate Spain's first win World Cup triumph, garnering record Spanish viewing figures.

Zapatero said he had "suffered like never before" as he watched the game in Johannesburg's Soccer City stadium.

The victory came exactly a week after Spain's Rafael Nadal lifted the Wimbledon tennis trophy and caps a series of major sporting achievements, including a European title for the nation's basketball team.

The victories have brought

a sliver of happiness to a country where around 20 percent of the active population is jobless and the economy is forecast to contract by 0.3 percent over 2010 as a whole.

While Zapatero's Socialist administration is keeping its fingers crossed that the feel-good factor will linger, the South African government is also hoping the tournament will bring long-term benefits.

Meanwhile, the Dutch won over few neutrals on Sunday with their sometimes brutal approach towards their opponents. Centreback Johnny Heitinga was sent off and seven other players booked by English referee Howard Webb.

The team however will be given a warm welcome on

their return home with a parade along the canals of Amsterdam planned for Tuesday and a reception with Queen Beatrix.

"We have to be very proud of the team. They had us in raptures for a month," Crown Prince Willem-Alexander told Dutch television.

"They will get the tribute next Tuesday that they deserve (in Amsterdam), and we will all see that it is also quite special to have come second here in South Africa."

The end of the tournament was marred meanwhile by bomb attacks on crowds watching the World Cup final at two restaurants in the Ugandan capital Kampala which killed 74 people.

KEY STATS	
Netherlands	Spain
Shots (on target)	13(5) 19(6)
Corners	6 8
Possession	43% 57%
Yellow Cards	8 5

SCORE BOARD	
NETHERLANDS 0 - 1 SPAIN	INIESTA 116
Netherlands (4-2-3-1): Maarten Stekelenburg - Gregory van der Wiel, John Heitinga, Joris Mathijsen, Giovanni van Bronckhorst (cap) (Edson Braafheid 105) - Mark van Bommel, Nigel de Jong (Rafael van der Vaart 99) - Arjen Robben, Wesley Sneijder, Dirk Kuyt (Eljero Elia 71) - Robin van Persie	
Spain (4-2-3-1): Iker Casillas (cap) - Sergio Ramos, Carles Puyol, Gerard Pique, Joan Capdevila - Sergio Busquets, Xabi Alonso (Francisc Fabregas 87) - Andres Iniesta, Xavi, Pedro (Jesus Navas 60) - David Villa (Fernando Torres 106)	
Red card: John Heitinga 109	
Venue: Soccer City stadium, Johannesburg	

ROLL OF HONOUR

YEAR	WINNERS	RUNNERS-UP
1930	Uruguay	Argentina
1934	Italy	Czechoslovakia
1938	Italy	Hungary
1950	Uruguay	Brazil
1954	West Germany	Hungary
1958	Brazil	Sweden
1962	Brazil	Czechoslovakia
1966	England	West Germany
1970	Brazil	Italy
1974	West Germany	Netherlands
1978	Argentina	Netherlands
1982	Italy	West Germany
1986	Argentina	West Germany
1990	West Germany	Argentina
1994	Brazil	Italy
1998	France	Brazil
2002	Brazil	Germany
2006	Italy	France
2010	Spain	Netherlands

AWARDS

Golden Ball	Diego Forlan (Uruguay)
Golden Shoe	Thomas Mueller (Germany)
Golden Glove	Iker Casillas (Spain)
Fair Play	Spain
Best Young Player	Thomas Mueller (Germany)

AHOO! Spain captain Iker Casillas (R) shows the glittering piece of glory while the man who masterminded the success coach Vicente del Bosque acknowledges the crowd's applause as they disembark from a plane at Barajas airport in Madrid yesterday, a day after winning the World Cup for the first time.

Spain reach destiny

MOHAMMAD ISAM

In what was arguably worst World Cup final in its 80-year history, Spain reached their footballing destiny after decades of underachievement. With less than five minutes of extra-time left to play, Cesc Fabregas slotted it through to Andres Iniesta and after one touch to control it, his second was a crisp volley past substitute Rafael Van der Vaart and the flying hand of Maarten Stekelenburg, placing himself into Spanish folklore. Spain defeated an out-of-control Netherlands and became the first team from Europe to win the trophy outside of its continent and also the first side to win the World Cup after losing their opening match.

The unassuming Iniesta was one of the few players on the pitch at Soccer City on

Sunday night who played proper football, though he reacted angrily just once after suffering a spate of cynical stamps from Mark van Bommel throughout the match. The Spanish made their way into the extra 30 minutes thanks to captain fantastic Iker Casillas whose trailing right leg shifted the ball away from goal after Arjen Robben had only the Spanish goalkeeper at his mercy late in the second half of normal time. Casillas repeated minutes later when Robben found himself in a similar one-on-one situation but was tugged back by Carles Puyol, which also could have been a red card.

The sell-out 84,000 crowd

that included celebrities and 16 heads of states were snubbed as there was hardly a game of football going on. The 14 yellow cards handed out in the match by referee Howard Webb is the record for most ever in a World Cup final. That John Heitinga received the only red card of the match in the 20th minute of extra time was a shocker in itself after Nigel De Jong performed 'chest surgery' on Xabi Alonso.

The English referee had his hands full from the 15th minute with Robin Van Persie opening the Dutch yellow card account with a careless tackle and what followed for the next 120 minutes can only be termed as anti-football. Dirk

Van Marwijk admitted that this was not how the Dutch play the game but in all probability, this was their only ploy to stop the Spanish juggernaut. Though it did affect the passing system of Xavi and co, it ultimately blunted Wesley Sneijder.

The introduction of Fabregas injected some much-needed freshness into Vicente del Bosque's side and the winning goal was just reward for the team that unquestionably played the better football.

But without doubt, Spain were the worthy champions though critics would always point out their lack of goals (eight in total) as a slight on their successful campaign.

But with none of the other big teams, barring Germany, having so little impact on the tournament, it was apt that one of the favourites for the trophy ultimately lifted it.



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Spain midfielder Andres Iniesta (L) shoots the all-important goal as Netherlands' midfielder Rafael van der Vaart tries to defend during their World Cup final in Johannesburg on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Curtains to Waka Waka, on Road to Brazil

World Cup Football 2010 South Africa has ended. The world has embraced a new champion, Spain. The football fanatics have new poster stars in David Villa, Diego Forlan and Mueller. The vuvuzela horns will slowly fade away in the setting sun and the samba tunes will start beating.

The final battle at Soccer City, Johannesburg was an intensity of midfield supremacy. And as the world knows today, Iker Casillas held the coveted trophy for the first time in Spanish football history. The ground's design is inspired by the iconic African pot known as the calabash, and its aesthetic appeal when lit at night, was witness to a duel of the first timers in the final. With Iniesta scoring the winning goal, the stadium saw waves of red and Spanish towns were painted red. The Matador has vetamed all the bulls.

Going forward, it is all about "Inspiration". The theme behind the logo of World Cup Football Brazil 2014 was unveiled few days back. Created by Brazilian agency Africa, the design stems from an iconic photograph of three victorious hands together raising the world's most famous trophy. It also depicts the humanitarian notion of hands interlinking in green and yellow, warmly welcoming the world to their country.

Traditional giants bowed out, Asian powerhouses continued their progress, South American sparks pleased fans in bursts yet deceived when it mattered most and the European football emerged victorious. Adieu fans. The count down to Rio has begun.

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