



A dejected Argentina star Lionel Messi (L) leaves the pitch at the end of their 2014 World Cup qualifier against Venezuela at the Jose Antonio Anzoategui Olympic Stadium in Puerto La Cruz on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP



The euphoria of Argentina's opening World Cup qualifying win over Chile vanished at a stroke on Tuesday as the two-time world champions slumped to an historic 1-0 loss to Venezuela.

Fernando Amorebieta bagged the only goal to stun Alejandro Sabella's side and send them back to square one, just when it seemed Friday's 4-1 thrashing of Chile had exorcised demons of a summer Copa America failure on home soil.

After the Chile game, Sabella, who replaced Sergio Batista in the wake of a Copa quarterfinal loss to eventual champions Uruguay, had ventured that the team had laid to rest an "apparent collective psychosis" regarding how Lionel Messi fits into the national team.

Last Friday, Barcelona wizard Messi had shone as brightly as ever in the national shirt, scoring one and laying on another for Real Madrid's Gonzalo Higuain.

But that was Buenos Aires.

On Tuesday it was a hot and sticky Puerto La Cruz in the Venezuelan Caribbean, which saw Argentina fail to kick on from last week's promising showing.

Amorebieta's powerful header from a corner on the hour settled the contest at the Jose Antonio Anzoategui, where the visitors huffed and puffed but proved unable to blow the Venezuelans' house down, making Argentina's home date with Bolivia on

November 11 a must-win affair. The hosts had also come into the qualifiers determined to prove themselves and desperate to show that their first ever run to the Copa semifinals was no fluke, after an opening qualifying loss in Ecuador.

Messi and Higuain sought in vain to impose their experience on the encounter as Venezuela stuck doggedly to their task.

In desperation, Sabella threw on Paris Saint-Germain's budding star Javier Pastore for Angel Di Maria, but to no avail.

Argentina now trail Uruguay, who conceded a late equaliser in a 1-1 draw against Paraguay, the side they defeated 3-0 in the

Copa final.

Veteran Uruguay forward Diego Forlan netted his 32nd goal in the national shirt midway through the second half to move beyond the mark he previously shared with 1920s hero Hector Scarone.

But in a dramatic finale, Richard Ortiz snatched the equaliser with seconds of injury time remaining.

Elsewhere on Tuesday, Colombia edged out Bolivia 2-1 in La Paz courtesy of a late goal from Atletico Madrid's Radamel Falcao, who had only come on 12 minutes earlier in place of Teofilo Gutierrez.

Bolivia generally fare well at 3,600 metres altitude at their Hernando Siles stadium but this time were outfoxed.

In the other game, Chile beat Peru 4-2 in an entertaining encounter, with Waldo Ponce, Eduardo Vargas, Gary Medel and Humberto Suazo on target for Chile, while Claudio Pizarro and Jefferson netted consolations for Peru.

RESULTS

Venezuela 1	(Amorebieta 62)
Argentina 0	
Bolivia 1	(Flores 84)
Colombia 2	(Pabon 48, Falcao 90+2)
Paraguay 1	(Ortiz 90+2)
Uruguay 1	(Forlan 68)
Chile 4	(Ponce 2, Vargas 17, Medel 47)

L'pool want
bigger slice

AFP, London

Liverpool managing director Ian Ayre has called for top Premier League clubs to be allowed to sell overseas television rights individually, it was reported on Wednesday.

The world's richest football league currently sells its international television rights as a joint package worth £3.2 billion (\$5bn) for the period 2010-13, with the proceeds shared equally across all 20 clubs.

However, Ayre said Liverpool were willing to challenge the structure of the deal, arguing that higher profile teams should be given a bigger slice of the proceeds as they generate more interest in regions such as Asia.

Ayre believes clubs such as Liverpool, Chelsea, Manchester United and Arsenal should be free to sell rights to their matches individually, following the model used in Spain by Real Madrid and Barcelona.

SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

Do you think Bangladesh can win the ODI series against the West Indies?

Visit the sports page of www.thendaystar.net to cast your vote

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What to WATCH

BTV

Bangladesh v West Indies

First ODI (D/N)

Live from 1:30pm

STAR Sports

Shanghai Masters

Round of 16

Live from 12:00pm

ESPN

Sportscentre India

Sports News

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh v West Indies

First ODI (D/N)

Time: 1:30pm

Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National

Brazil leave it late

Football

AP, Torreon

Brazil overcame a first-half red card to score two late goals and beat Mexico 2-1 in a friendly on Tuesday.

Mexico went ahead in the 10th minute when Brazil defender David Luiz put the ball into his own net, and the hosts' chances were boosted further when Dani Alves gave away a penalty and was sent off in the process for a foul on Javier Hernandez late in the first half.

However Andres Guardado failed to convert the penalty.

Ronaldinho equalized for Brazil with a trademark freekick into the top right corner of the net in the 80th minute, and Marcelo scored the winner four minutes later.

The defeat was the first for Mexico coach Jose Manuel de la Torre in 15 games in charge of the national team.

In a fast paced game, the opening goal came when Pablo Barrera broke free down the right and put in a low cross, which Luiz tried to clear but only deflected the ball into the net.

Neymar broke free inside the penalty area

for Brazil in the 17th but shot over the bar with only goalkeeper Oswaldo Sanchez to beat.

Barcelona fullback Alves received a second yellow card for shoving Manchester United striker Hernandez to the ground inside the penalty box as the ball was sailing harmlessly through to the goalkeeper.

Keeper Jefferson saved low to his right from Guardado's resulting penalty.

Hernandez had Mexico's best chance of the second half but his close-range header was saved by Jefferson.

Ronaldinho scored from 20 yards in the 80th and the winner was scored when Marcelo drove into the penalty area and hit a fierce shot past Sanchez, who won his 100th cap in the game.

The game took place with a heavy security presence in the northern city of Torreon after recent violence, including the suspension of a Mexican first division game on Aug. 20 due to a gunfight close to the stadium.

For Brazil, the match was the latest in a series of friendly games, as it automatically qualifies for the 2014 World Cup as host and therefore is not participating in the current South American qualifiers.

Cassano plans to quit

Football

AFP, Pescara

Furious Italy star Antonio Cassano blasted his detractors and vowed Tuesday to retire following the next World Cup.

The AC Milan forward scored a brace in the 3-0 Euro 2012 Group C qualifying victory against Northern Ireland but then dropped a bombshell about his future.

"I'm 29 and I've been in the national team for 10 years but I've only got 25 caps," he said.

"I'm always in and out, I'm stressed. I want to have a good Euros, a good World Cup and then I'll retire."

"I'll stop at 33, I want to quit when I'm still good."

"I'm stressed, for the last 13 years whatever I say is wrong. So at 33 I'll leave football and enjoy my family."

"I hope to have two or three children (he currently has one)."

"Football has been the best thing in the world for me but now I'm a bit tired."

"I'm tired of the routine, I want to have three more good years and then that's it."

Cassano also admitted, perhaps ironically, that he hadn't deserved much success and that's why he hasn't had much, although he was part of AC Milan's title winning side last season.

"If someone wins little they deserve that and if they win a lot they deserve that," he told Rai Sport.

"If Gigi (Gianluigi Buffon) has won a lot it's because he deserved it, I've not given a lot so I haven't won much."

"Even so I must thank (Italy coach Cesare) Prandelli who has shown confidence in me and was close to me when everyone was telling me I was fat."

"We have a special relationship, we talk on the phone a lot and he gave me the platform to do well with Milan."

As for his future after football, Cassano jokingly aimed a dig at his detractors.

"I don't know how to do anything, not even speak so I couldn't be an expert summariser because I only say stupid things," he added.

"Seventy percent of (his stress) is my fault, I've always looked for trouble."

"But even when I do something good 30 per cent of the time, I get criticised by journalists."

"I'm leaving, but don't worry you'll still have a lot to write because there's still (Mario) Balotelli."

Cassano also reacted angrily to a question about him equalling Francesco Totti's nine goals for his country.

Cassano and Totti famously didn't get on when the pair played for Roma together from 2001 to 2006 before Cassano moved to Real Madrid.

"It's normal that I wanted to score the goals otherwise I would have shot wide," said Cassano.

"Every so often it would be nice to be praised otherwise I'm always getting massacred, as for the rest I've been a clown since birth."

'Euro no cakewalk'

AFP, Dusseldorf

Euro 2012 will not be a cakewalk for holders Spain and in-form Germany, German coach Joachim Loew said on Wednesday, insisting other nations such as France had to be considered.

"It's not certain this match (a Germany versus Spain showdown) will happen at this tournament -- even if everyone is talking about this duel," Loew told reporters who asked him to compare his side's chances with those of the defending European and world champions.

"The Dutch, England, Portugal, France are also among the favourites," insisted Loew, although the Portuguese will have to qualify via the play-offs after Denmark edged them in the group stage.

Danes, French thru'

PHOTO: AFP

RESULTS

Germany 3	(Ozil 30, Schurrle 33, Gomez 48)	Belgium 1	(Fellaini 86)
Turkey 1	(Yilmaz 60)	Azerbaijan 0	
Republic of Ireland 2	(Aleksanyan 43-0, Dunne 59)	Armenia 1	(Mkhitarian 62)
Russia 6	(Dzagoev 5, 44, Ignashevich 25, Pavlyuchenko 29, Glushakov 59, Bilyaletdinov 78)	Andorra 0	
Italy 3	(Cassano 21, 53, McAuley 74-0)	Northern Ireland 0	
Slovenia 1	(Vrsic 45+1)	Serbia 0	
Sweden 3	(Kallstrom 14, S. Larsson 51-pen, Toivonen 53)	Netherlands 2	(Huntelaar 22, Kuyt 49)
Croatia 2	(Eduardo 66, Mandzukic 72)	Latvia 0	
Georgia 1	(Targamadze 19)	Greece 2	(Fotakis 79, Charisteas 85)
Switzerland 2	(Derdyok 2, Lichsteiner 65)	Montenegro 0	
Denmark 2	(Krohn-Dehli 13, Bendtner 63)	Portugal 1	(Cristiano Ronaldo 90+2)
Spain 3	(David Silva 6, 44, Villa 54)	Scotland 1	(Goodwillie 66-pen)
Lithuania 1	(Sermas 68-pen)	Czech 0	

Denmark, France and Russia booked their places at Euro 2012 while Portugal were consigned to the play-offs after a tense conclusion to qualifying on Tuesday.

Greece, surprise champions in 2004, joined that trio as winners of their respective groups with Sweden also sealing their passage as best runners-up in Group E with a shock 3-2 win over already qualified Holland in Stockholm.

Two-time former winners France did it the hard way, fighting back from 1-0 down to force a 1-1 draw with Bosnia-Herzegovina, who would have topped the table had they held on to win.

Denmark, European champions in 1992, stunned the Portuguese with a 2-1 win in Copenhagen to leapfrog the visitors and top Group H consigning the Euro 2004 finalists to the play-offs.

Greece edged Georgia 2-1 away while Russia as expected had no problem in disposing of Andorra 6-0 to top their respective groups.

Both title holders Spain and 2008 finalists Germany rounded off their campaigns without dropping a point as Spain beat Scotland 3-1 and the Germans prevailed by the same score against Belgium.