



England winger Ashley Young (2nd from L) hammers home a left foot shot past Norway goalkeeper Rune Almenning Jarstein during their friendly match at Oslo on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Tough going for big guns

Football

AFP, Paris

Germany and the Netherlands, two of the sides widely tipped as potential Euro 2012 winners, suffered worrying friendly international defeats on Saturday.

Germany slumped to a shock 5-3 defeat in Switzerland while the Dutch were booed off in Amsterdam after surrendering a one-goal lead to lose 2-1 against Bulgaria.

Defending European and world champions Spain, however, showed off their impressive strength in depth when a second-string side defeated Serbia 2-0.

England, meanwhile, gave Roy Hodgson a winning start as new national coach with a hard-fought 1-0 win over Norway in Oslo.

Germany, who rested their eight-strong Bayern Munich contingent, suffered their first loss to Switzerland, who failed to qualify for Euro 2012, since 1956.

Joachim Loew's Germany qualified for Euro 2012 without losing a match, but they have now lost two friendlies in succession having been defeated 2-1 by France in February.

Their last friendly will be against Israel on May 31 before embarking on their Euro campaign against Portugal, Netherlands and Denmark in Group B.

Swiss striker Eren Derdiyok, who has just left Bayer Leverkusen for fellow German Bundesliga side Hoffenheim, grabbed a hat-trick in Basel with Andre Lichtsteiner and Admir Mehmedi also on target.

Mats Hummels, Andre Schurrle and Marco Reus hit back for the Germans.

"We didn't expect a result like this and we cannot be satisfied by it," said Loew.

"After a lot of intensive training sessions, it's clear that we didn't concentrate enough and made a lot of mistakes. The

team didn't function, we weren't good today."

Netherlands' 2-1 loss to Bulgaria came just four days after they were beaten 3-2 by Bayern Munich.

Robin van Persie had given the Dutch a 45th-minute lead but Bulgaria levelled four minutes into the second half with an Ivelin Popov penalty after a handball by Rafael van der Vaart.

Striker Ilijan Mizanski hit the winner in the second minute of injury time on a counter-attack.

Dutch fans were so frustrated that Bert van Marwijk's team were jeered off at the final whistle.

"The result is disappointing," admitted the coach. "We took a lot of risks at the end of the game and were caught on the counter-attack."

"But that's football and we need to learn the lessons."

Roy Hodgson made a winning start to his reign as England manager after an Ashley Young goal in the ninth minute gave his side a 1-0 victory over Norway in Oslo.

Hodgson, who only took over as the successor to Fabio Capello earlier this month, saw his experimental England side record their first win over Norway for 32 years.

With only four or five of Saturday's starting England XI likely to feature in their opening Euro 2012 game against France on June 11, Hodgson was given the opportunity to run the rule over several fringe members of his squad.

However despite an encouraging opening spell from striker Andy Carroll and another goal-scoring contribution from Young, there were few major English success stories in a low-key contest.

"It's a great start. I was concerned about fatigue creeping in and some players were feeling their muscles," said Hodgson. "They worked hard in training trying to impress me."

RESULTS

Holland 1 (Van Persie 45) Bulgaria 2 (Popov 49-pen, Mizanski 90+2)
Portugal 0 Macedonia 0
Spain 2 (Adrian 64, Cazorla 75) Serbia 0
Switzerland 5 (Derdiyok 21, 23, 50, Lichtsteiner 67, Mehmedi 76) Germany 3 (Hummels 45, Schurrle 64, Reus 72)
Poland 1 (Perquis 30) Slovakia 0
Republic of Ireland 1 (Long 78) Bosnia-Herzegovina 0
Brazil 3 (Hulk 8, 40, Zimling 13-og) Denmark 1 (Bendtrner 71)
Croatia 3 (Corluka 16, Kalinic 20, Vukojevic 81) Estonia 1 (Vassiljev 83) Norway 0 England 1 (Young 9)
Czech Republic 2 (Baros 17-pen, Lafata 90+2) Israel 1 (Shechter 45) Greece 1 (Torosidis 8) Slovenia 1 (Kurtic 87)
Finland 3 (Eremenko 19, Pukki 73,

Webber delivers Red Bull treble

Football

AFP, Monte Carlo

Australian Mark Webber made Formula One history on Sunday when he steered his Red Bull to victory and claimed his first win this year and his team Red Bull's third successive Monaco Grand Prix victory.

It was Webber's second win in the race and the eighth of his career - it also meant six different drivers have won the opening six races of this season - the first time this has happened in the history of the Formula One world championship.

Webber, 35, started from pole position and controlled the race almost throughout as the local micro-climate delivered its usual capricious weather, moving from sunshine and blue skies to rain for the closing laps.

But driving with great control and judgement, he finished the 78-laps race six-tenths of a second clear of second-placed German Nico Rosberg of Mercedes with two-time champion Spaniard Fernando Alonso third for Ferrari.

Double defending world champion German Sebastian Vettel was fourth for Red Bull ahead of Briton Lewis Hamilton of McLaren and Brazilian Felipe Massa, who came home sixth in the second Ferrari.

Webber's win lifted him to joint second in the drivers' world championship with 73 points behind leader Alonso on 76. Vettel also has 73. Hamilton is fourth on 63 and Rosberg - son of Finland's former champion Keke - fifth with 59.

"I'm feeling incredible," said Webber, who jumped into the harbour after his maiden Monaco win.

"It was an interesting race. It was reasonably straightforward at the start, getting the gap and managing super-softs and then it was a matter of trying to build a gap before and after the pit stops.

"The weather was threatening around the pit stop window, but Nico went for it, went for the 'undercut' by stopping early, so a few people had to react to his chess move, but it's an amazing day for the team, and myself, and I'm really happy to have won here again."

Rosberg said: "I got a good start, but so did Mark! He was very controlled and for me it was a matter of tyre-management.

"I was a bit surprised how strong we were in qualifying and in the race. We probably had the fastest car out there and we are making progress all the time."



Germany star Bastian Schweinsteiger walks out of the Mercedes Pit prior to the start of the Monaco Grand Prix yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

EURO2012

PREVIEW

Will lightning strike twice?

AFP, Athens

When Greece unexpectedly won the 2004 European Championships, they beat hosts Portugal in the opening group match and when the two sides met again in the final.

With Greece drawn against co-hosts Poland in Group A, they are now hoping that lightning will strike twice, as the teams play the opening match of the tournament in Warsaw on June 8.

"In our minds was Euro 2004," said striker Angelos Charisteas, who scored the winning goal when Greece beat Portugal to win the title and is one of several players still in the squad and keen to put their poor 2010 World Cup showing behind them.

Portuguese coach Fernando Santos, who took over from Otto Rehhagel after the disappointing performance in South Africa, has generated a more attacking team than the defensive-minded side under the German.

"Neither a Messi nor a Pele would have personal marking," said the 57-year-old, who has had four spells coaching league sides in Greece and has recently seen his contract extended to 2014, with a 45 percent pay rise.

"We have our own identity and will not change for anyone. I will not follow the tactics of Rehhagel. I want them to say that Santos' national team is a compact group with its own identity. We want to dominate the game," he added.

Santos, who had a modest playing career that lasted just four years with Maritimo and Estoril, said he wanted his players to stick to the style of play that served them well in qualifying top of their group.

"Our obligation is to dedicate ourselves 100 percent and stick to the fundamentals of our team," he said. "To have passion, organisation, a clear mind and always play to win."

Santos, who guided Porto to the 1999 league title and to two Cup victories in 2000 and 2001, believes Group A, which also includes Russia and the Czech

Republic and Greece beat in the 2004 semi-finals, is wide open.

"The group that we have been drawn in is passable, as all the teams have a 25 percent chance of advancing," he said.

"I don't believe in lucky or unlucky draws. Everything will be decided on the pitch. I have total trust in my players and I know

they will be ready for the group stages."

While Santos has a core of experienced players at his disposal, he has also blooded plenty of emerging talent. But a 3-1 defeat in a friendly against Romania which ended a 16-match unbeaten run served as a wake-up call.

"When we go to Austria for training later this month, I will take with me players who conform to the team's tactics. This is the basic criteria," he said. "Then, we will work on quality level and team spirit."

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Spain cut Soldado

Football

AFP, Schruns

Sevilla striker Alvaro Negredo edged Roberto Soldado for the final striker's spot in defending champions Spain's squad for Euro 2012 announced by coach Vicent del Bosque here on Sunday.

Negredo effectively fills the void of Spain's record goalscorer David Villa -- who failed to recover from a broken tibia in time -- after scoring 14 goals in La Liga in the season just finished.

Soldado misses out despite scoring 17 league goals as his form dipped dramatically in the latter stages of the season.

Barcelona's Pedro was rewarded for doing exactly the opposite as his rich vein of form in the latter part of the season -- including a double in Barca's Spanish Cup final win over Athletic Bilbao on Friday -- saw him make the squad.

"Pedro had an inconsistent season like others did," said Del Bosque.

"But we took into account certain aspects of his season. We looked at his season in its entirety.

"And also we need players out wide, wingers who are effective," added del Bosque of the 2010 World Cup winner.

Negredo will compete for places up front with Fernando Torres, who showed glimpses of a return to form for Champions League winners Chelsea at the end of the season, and Athletic Bilbao's Fernando Llorente.

There are just four members of the 2008 squad missing, with Carlos Marchena and Joan Capdevila no longer in favour and talismanic defender Carles Puyol and Villa out because of injuries.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers:
Iker Casillas (Real Madrid), Jose Reina (Liverpool/ENG), Victor Valdes (Barcelona).
Defenders:
Juanfran (Atletico Madrid), Alvaro Arbeloa, Raul Albiol, Sergio Ramos (all Real Madrid), Jordi Alba (Valencia), Gerard Pique (Barcelona), Javi Martinez (Athletic Bilbao).
Midfielders:
Xabi Alonso (Real Madrid), Santi Cazorla (Malaga), Xavi Hernandez, Cesc Fabregas, Andres Iniesta, Sergio Busquets (all Barcelona).
Forwards:
David Silva (Manchester City/ENG), Jesus Navas, Alvaro Negredo (both Sevilla), Fernando Torres, Juan Mata (both Chelsea/ENG), Pedro (Barcelona).

SPORTS POLL WEEKLY QUESTION

Who has been the best player in the IPL?

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STAR Cricket

England v West Indies

Second Test, Day 4

Live from 4:00pm

NEO Sports

French Open

First Round

Men's & Women's Singles

Live from 3:00pm

ESPN

Sportscenter India

Sports News



Bangladesh Premier League

Arambagh v Sk Jamal

Time: 4:15pm