

Spain select Euro 2012 trio

REUTERS, Madrid
Euro 2012 winners Juan Mata, Jordi Alba and Javi Martinez were included in Spain's soccer squad on Tuesday for the London Olympics later this month.

Chelsea midfielder Mata and full back Alba, who is set to leave Valencia for Barcelona this week, scored in Sunday's 4-0 final victory over Italy in Kiev. The world champions became the first side to retain the European title, stringing together three major tournament triumphs in a row.

Luis Milla's 22-man Olympic squad was named the day after Mata, Alba and Athletic Bilbao midfielder Martinez were involved in a huge homecoming celebration as the team paraded the trophy through the streets of Madrid. "I believe it would be unfair to demand that this team be at the same level as the full national team," Milla told a news conference.

"This team has character and a similar playing philosophy but it is a different team under different pressures." The Olympic team will join up on Friday and will face Senegal and Mexico in friendlies before heading to London.

The squad, which will be trimmed down to 18, also includes Manchester United goalkeeper David De Gea, Chelsea midfielder Oriol Romeu and Barcelona trio Martin Montoya, Thiago Alcantara and Cristian Tello.

Lazio sign Ederson

AFP, Rome
Italian Serie A side Lazio on Monday announced the signing of Brazilian midfielder Ederson from Lyon on a five-year deal.

Ederson, 26, was out of contract at Lyon after spending four injury-hit seasons at the Stade de Gerland.

The Brazilian international had been signed by OL for 14 million euros (\$17.6m) from Nice but made just 82 league appearances after his transfer, scoring 11 goals.

Ederson, who left Juventus in his homeland for Nice at the age of 19, has won one cap for Brazil.

At the end of last week, he gained Italian nationality, allowing him to move to Rome without taking up one of the limited squad places available to non-EU players.



Spanish players celebrate their Euro 2012 victory as they parade on an open-top bus at the Cibeles Square in Madrid on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

PSG snap up Lavezzi

REUTERS, Paris
Argentine forward Ezequiel Lavezzi has joined Paris St Germain from Napoli on a four-year deal, the Ligue 1 club said on Monday.

Lavezzi, 27, is PSG's first recruit this summer as they look to build a competitive team for next season's Champions League after finishing second in Ligue 1.

"He is a very very important player," general manager Leonardo told a news conference at the Parc des Princes.

"He will mark the club's history."

Lavezzi, one of the crowd favourites at San Paolo, hopes he will find the same connection with the demanding PSG fans.

"I will do what I can to enjoy the same relationship with the Paris crowd," he said.

No financial details on the deal were disclosed but media reports suggested the transfer fee was about 30 million euros.

Fiesta in Spain Quartet faces probe

AFP, Madrid



Spain's triumphant Euro 2012 heroes partied a red-and-yellow sea of fans in central Madrid on Monday in a giant, deafening national fiesta that swept aside all thoughts of economic crisis.

An open-top double-decker bus ferried the team like a small boat picking its way through a vast ocean of hundreds of thousands of adoring Spaniards waving flags, cheering and dancing to thumping rock music.

Helicopters hovering above filmed a crowd that seemed to carpet the entire heart of the capital to rejoice in Spain's historic 4-0 thrashing of Italy in the Ukrainian capital Kiev.

At the climax of the party, the players basked in glory in the central Plaza de Cibeles square, where Queen's "We are the Champions" blared from loudspeakers.

In the centre of the square, a huge Spain flag was draped around the neck of an emblematic stone fountain of the goddess of nature riding a chariot hauled by lions.

The team joined a rock group to sing and dance on a huge stage in the square, with towering video screens behind.

Rappers blared out the song "No hay dos sin tres (You can't have two without three)" in praise of Spain's unprecedented third straight title and the team

danced along, wearing red T-shirts reading "Champions of Europe."

"For me it is a great pride to be able to captain this team of great players and great people," Spain goalkeeper and captain Iker Casillas told fans from the stage.

"Thank you for being here!"

Left winger Andres Iniesta, who was crowned the player of the tournament, said he was humbled to be part of a legendary squad.

"But more than anything I feel very proud to see your expressions of joy in these difficult times for us -- it is a matter of pride to see you happy," he said.

During the victory parade, Spaniards packed the streets from the buildings right to the edge of the bus, which was escorted by mounted police as it gingerly made its way to the city centre.

Leaning over the edge of the bus, forward Cesc Fabregas brandished the silver trophy, adding to an unprecedented collection that includes the 2008 Euro and the 2010 World Cup.

Residents hung from apartment balconies to get a glimpse of their heroes, waving wildly as the team passed and throwing buckets of water to cool fellow party-goers on the street below.

Giant red balloons bobbed above supporters' heads. One fan, 42-year-old Jaime Barea, brought a group of 14 children, his own and his friends' offspring.

"It will give them an unforgettable memory," he said.

"When I was small I did not have this

chance. Spain went for 40 years without winning."

Fernando Torres, winner of the Golden Boot for his three goals and one assist in the tournament, perched nonchalantly at one point with one leg hanging over the edge of the bus.

Barcelona forward Cesc Fabregas laughed and waved to fans. Real Madrid's Sergio Ramos danced in his seat.

Smiling coach Vicente del Bosque, in a white business shirt, leaned over, waved gingerly and even swayed to the music.

Chants of "Champions, Champions!" rang through the Spanish capital.

King Juan Carlos, 74, still hobbling after injuring his hip during an African elephant-hunting safari, joined with the royal family in hailing the victors at the Palacio de la Zarzuela in Madrid.

"Spaniards are proud of you, really proud, and not only because each of you are good players but because as a team you are terrific," he said before the players joined the national fiesta.

Casillas gave the king a Spain shirt with the number 1, signed by the entire team.

"The country is more united and people can forget their problems for a while," said 27-year-old Jessica Pino in a team shirt, draped in the Spanish flag and with a Viking hat in the national colours.

The party erupted from the end of the first half of the match on Sunday night, when Spain was already 2-0 up, and huge numbers of fans invaded the Plaza de Cibeles.

AFP, Paris



Bonuses owed to the France team for having made the quarterfinals of the recently-concluded European Championships have been frozen, the French football federation announced on Tuesday.

Each member of the French team, which lost 2-0 in the quarters to eventual winners Spain, was eligible for a bonus of 100,000 euros.

But in light of the in-fighting and ill-discipline that dogged the country's Euro campaign, federation president Noel Le Graet said: "The whole of the bonuses of the France team at Euro 2012 are frozen."

"It's blocked money, which may be redistributed or maybe not."

Le Graet, up for re-election in December, added that four players from the squad would appear at a disciplinary committee "as soon as possible after their holidays" to explain their behaviour at the tournament hosted by Poland and Ukraine.

"Four players will go before the disciplinary committee: (Hatem) Ben Arfa, (Yann) Mvila, (Samir) Nasri and (Jeremy) Menez," Le Graet said after a meeting of the executive committee, a body he said was unable to impose sanctions.

"The players must be punished, sanctioned, but I don't want to make victims out of them."

"Financial sanctions are detailed in our statutes, and (possible) suspensions for the upcoming cases will be examined most fairly."

Nasri verbally abused an AFP journalist after the loss to Spain and was seen as a disruptive influence throughout, while Ben Arfa had a dressing room row with Laurent Blanc, who stood down as coach after the tournament.

Giggs in Britain's Olympic team

AFP, London



British Olympic football coach Stuart Pearce said no manager "picks on sentiment" as he explained why David Beckham had been left out of his squad for the London 2012 Games.

Pearce unveiled his 18-man squad Monday with veteran Manchester United midfielder Ryan Giggs, who played alongside Beckham when they were both making their way in football at Old Trafford, Liverpool striker Craig Bellamy and Manchester City defender Micah Richards occupying the three over-age places in an 18-man squad where the other players are under 23.

"I have a vast amount of respect for David and what he has done to bring the Olympics here," said former England defender Pearce.

But he added: "I have a duty of care to everyone to pick in my mind the best squad. I don't think there's a football manager around who picks on sentiment."

Pearce named a squad containing 13 players from England and five from Wales. That meant there were no Scottish or Northern Irish players selected. Football officials in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales had all expressed concerns about their players participating in the Olympics, fearing it could signal the start of their demise as independent football nations.

But Pearce said of his squad: "They are individuals that are all Olympians. There are no nationalities there in my eyes."

Tottenham and Wales winger Gareth Bale was not considered due to injury.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers:
Jack Butland (Birmingham), Jason Steele (Middlesbrough)

Defenders:
Ryan Bertrand (Chelsea), Steven Caulker (Tottenham), Craig Dawson (West Brom), Micah Richards (Manchester City), Neil Taylor (Swansea), James Tomkins (West Ham)

Midfielders:
Joe Allen (Swansea), Tom Cleverley (Manchester United), Jack Cork (Southampton), Ryan Giggs (Manchester United), Aaron Ramsey (Arsenal), Danny Rose (Tottenham), Scott Sinclair (Swansea)

Forwards:
Craig Bellamy (Liverpool), Marvin Sordell (Bolton), Daniel Sturridge

Italy return home



Three Italian supporters, holding paintings depicting Mario Balotelli, Cesare Prandelli and Gianluigi Buffon, wait for their arrival of their football team at the Fiumicino International Airport near Rome on Monday.

AFP, Rome



Italy's footballers were welcomed back by a small group of just a few dozen fans on Monday after defeat by Spain in the Euro 2012 final but said they were already looking forward to the World Cup in 2014.

Arriving on a flight from Krakow in Poland at Rome's Fiumicino airport, the footballers dressed in suits and ties were greeted with shouts of encouragement and later attended a high-pomp ceremony with President Giorgio Napolitano.

Fans chanted the national anthem and asked the players to autograph a placard reading "Go Italy!" before the footballers boarded their buses.

One player, Leonardo Bonucci, admitted to AFP before getting on that there was an overwhelming feeling of disappointment among his team mates.

"There is always sadness because we were there -- one step away from the dream, from realising something important," he sighed.

"Unfortunately we did not manage to impose ourselves against a great team. Now we are leaving this

Euro with the will to put into practice the tactics that (coach) Cesare Prandelli taught us," he said.

"We'll prepare well for the World Cup" he added, as focus turns towards the qualifiers for the 2014 tournament in Brazil.

At the ceremony in the president's Quirinale palace, Prandelli said he was grateful to Napolitano for coming to support the team in its first match against Spain in Gdansk and for inviting them over "whatever the result".

Napolitano was Italy's "biggest fan" and had helped the team get over their crushing 4-0 defeat, Prandelli said.

The coach added the players were proud to have represented Italy and handed the president the silver medal they brought back.

Team captain and goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon later presented the other members of the team to the 87-year-old president, who stood up one by one as a sign of respect.

Andrea Pirlo and Mario Balotelli also gifted Napolitano a football.

Napolitano expressed his gratitude "on behalf of the institutions and millions of Italians" saying the team's achievement had been "extraordinary."

"I could see the passion that fired you up and your love for Italy, which were the best presents you could have given us," he said.

SPORTS POLL
WEEKLY QUESTION
Do you think the Tigers have made strides in Twenty20 cricket?
Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast vote

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What to WATCH
TEN Cricket
Sri Lanka v Pakistan
Second Test, Day 5
Live from 10:30am

STAR Sports
Wimbledon Championships
Men's Singles Quarterfinals
Live from 5:30pm

STAR Cricket
England v Australia
Third ODI

DAY'S EVENT
Premier Hockey League
Mohammedan v Wari
Time: 2:30pm
Ajax v Sadharan Bima
Time: 4:15pm
Venue: Maulana Bhasani National