



Portuguese star Cristiano Ronaldo (L) shoots to score the equalising goal during their 2014 World Cup qualifying match against Luxembourg at the Josy Barthel Stadium on Friday.

PHOTO:
AFP

World champs cruise

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

David Villa made a scoring return for Spain and Fernando Torres won his 100th cap as the world and European champions cruised to a 5-0 friendly win over Saudi Arabia in Pontevedra on Friday.

Barcelona striker Villa, back in the national team for the first time since breaking his leg at the Club World Cup in December, came on as a substitute and netted his side's fourth goal from the penalty spot in the 63rd minute.

Spain's all-time leading scorer took his tally to 52, while his club team mate Pedro weighed in with a double, and Santi Cazorla and Xavi also got on the scoresheet against Frank Rijkaard's visitors.

Chelsea forward Torres, who scored the winner for Spain in the Euro 2008 final, started out as captain and became the youngest of six Spaniards to have reached the 100 mark, aged 28.

New Arsenal signing Cazorla struck first for the hosts when he pounced on a parried shot in the 23rd minute, and Pedro doubled the lead with a neat lob.

Xavi came on as a half-time substitute and his first touch of the ball was to curl a free kick into the top corner

straight after the re-start.

Villa received a huge ovation when he replaced Torres in the 53rd minute and, just as he did on his official return for Barcelona last month, scored within minutes of entering the field of play.

Ignacio Monreal was brought down for a penalty and Villa sent the keeper the wrong way before Pedro sealed the victory with another deft finish after bursting away from the Saudi defence.

Nice coach breaks his nose

AFP, Nice

The coach of Ligue 1 club Nice, Claude Puel, suffered a broken nose on Friday after going up to challenge for a high ball in training with one of his players.

Former Monaco, Lille and Lyon boss Puel, who joined Nice in the summer, was caught by his Serbian defender Nemanja Pejcinovic, although the injury will not prevent him from leading Saturday morning's session.

"He wasn't looking too great, so he decided that his nose needed sorting out," joked Nice assistant coach Fred Gioria.

Big guns win sans Italy

REUTERS, London



England, Germany, France and the Netherlands all started the long road to the 2014 World Cup finals in Brazil with victories but Italy stumbled out of the blocks when the European qualifying campaign began on Friday.

World champions Spain do not begin their bid to reach the finals until Tuesday, but apart from the Italians, held to a 2-2 draw in Group B in Bulgaria, there were no major problems for the continent's big guns.

England won their opening Group H match 5-0 in Moldova, while Germany strolled to a relatively modest 3-0 Group C win over the Faroe Islands.

A first-half goal from Abou Diaby gave France a winning 1-0 start in their Group I campaign against Finland in Helsinki, while the Netherlands beat Turkey 2-0 in Amsterdam in Group D with Robin van Persie and Luciano Narsingh, who hit the second in stoppage time, scoring for the Dutch.

Italy, who have been world champions four times, had a topsy-turvy start in Sofia before drawing 2-2 with Bulgaria with Pablo Osvaldo scoring both their goals to put them 2-1 up after they conceded first.

Georgi Milanov equalised for the home side with 24 minutes to play and Italy could not find a winner.

Two Italians who had better

nights than their national team were Fabio Capello and Giovanni Trapattoni, the managers of Russia and Ireland respectively.

Ireland's bid to qualify for the World Cup for the first time since 2002 began with a dramatic win as two goals in the final two minutes from Robbie Keane, who netted a penalty, and a volley from Kevin Doyle gave Trapattoni's men a 2-1 win in Kazakhstan in Group C.

Capello's Russia also started with a win, with goals from Viktor Faizulin and Roman Shirokov, who scored from the spot, giving them a 2-0 victory over Northern Ireland in Moscow.

The highest scorers of the night were Bosnia, who began their quest for a first appearance in the finals by thrashing Liechtenstein 8-1 in Vaduz in Group G.

Edin Dzeko, who scored a hat-trick, became Bosnia's all-time leading scorer with 25 goals.

England were also among the goals, snubbing out any chance of a Moldovan upset with Frank Lampard scoring twice in the opening 29 minutes, the first after three minutes from England's 100th all-time penalty, as he took his England goal tally to 25.

Jermain Defoe marked his 50th appearance for England with a trademark strike after 32 minutes with James Milner and Leighton Baines scoring their first England goals in the second half.

Mesut Ozil was on target twice, scoring both his goals in the second half following Mario Goetze's first half opener as

Germany beat the Faroes 3-0 in Hanover.

The Netherlands also picked up three points after a shaky start when Turkey went close to a first minute opener through Omer Toprak but they recovered to win with Van Persie and later Narsingh scoring.

Portugal did not have things all their own way either before winning 2-1 in Luxembourg after

the unfancied hosts took a shock lead through Portuguese-born Daniel da Mota after 13 minutes.

Cristiano Ronaldo, who hit the headlines after failing to celebrate two league goals last weekend for Real Madrid and telling reporters he was "sad", levelled 15 minutes later.

He greeted the goal with a clenched fist, celebrating the equaliser not too exuberantly but apparently happy.

The visitors kept pressing and deservedly took the lead with a coolly-taken drive by Helder Postiga in the 54th minute.

Belgium, whose emerging squad includes a number of players now with high profile clubs in England, reinforced their claims for a place in the finals with a winning 2-0 start in Wales where Manchester City's Vincent Kompany and Tottenham Hotspur's Jan Vertonghen scored.

There was a tense atmosphere, two red cards and firecrackers in Podgorica where Montenegro and Poland, in the same group as England, fought to a 2-2 draw.

Jakub Blaszczykowski put Poland ahead from a fifth minute penalty but the Poles were angry after their goalkeeper Przemyslaw Tyton was struck by a firecracker thrown from the crowd, with more objects landing nearby.

Nikola Drinic and then, on the stroke of half-time, Mirko Vucinic, gave the hosts the lead, only for Poland to grab an equaliser through Adrian Mierzejewski 10 minutes into the second half.

Tempers became frayed with referee Kristinn Jakobsson sending

Jamaica stun USA

AFP, Washington



Jamaica surprised the United States 2-1 to seize the Group A lead on Friday as Mexico moved closer to the final round of 2014 World Cup qualifying in North and Central America and the Caribbean (CONCACAF) region.

Goals from Rodolph Austin and Luton Shelton overcame Clint Dempsey's first-minute strike for the Americans as Jamaica posted their first victory over the US in 19 matches.

Dempsey's goal -- 36 seconds into the match -- was the fastest for the United States in World Cup qualifying, confounding predictions that he would show some rust in his first competitive match since June.

But with Landon Donovan and Michael Bradley absent through injury, the United States couldn't hold their lead as free kicks from Austin and Shelton gave Jamaica the victory.

In the 22nd, Austin fired a low shot through the US wall and past US goalkeeper Tim Howard.

It was Shelton's turn in the 62nd minute and Jamaica, who came into the match level with the United States atop Group A, now lead with seven points.

The United States have four, as do Guatemala after their 3-1 victory over Antigua and Barbuda.

After Peter Byers put Antigua and Barbuda up 1-0 in the 38th minute, Carlos Ruiz scored twice -- in the 58th and 79th -- to put Guatemala ahead with Dwight Pezzarossi adding one more for the hosts in the waning seconds.

The top two teams from each of the three groups advance to the final round of regional qualifying next year, and the United States will be aiming to get back on track when they host Jamaica on Tuesday in Columbus, Ohio.

RESULTS

Jamaica 2 (Austin 22, Shelton 62)
United States 1 (Dempsey 1)
Guatemala 3 (Ruiz 58, 79, Pezzarossi 90)
Antigua-Barbuda 1 (Byers 38)
Costa Rica 0 **Mexico 2** (Salcido 43, Zavala 52)
El Salvador 2 (Gutierrez 4, Romero 21)
Guyana 2 (Bobb 20, 54)
Cuba 0 **Honduras 3** (Bengtson 31, Bernardez 63, Chavez 90+2)

Hulk, the difference

AFP, Sao Paulo

Substitute Hulk scored 15 from time to give Brazil a 1-0 win over South Africa in a friendly match at Estadio do Morumbi Friday.

The striker who moved from Porto to Zenit Saint Petersburg this week on a five-year contract created plenty of problems for a composed South African defence after his mid-second-half arrival.

He gave Itumeleng Khune no chance with a close-range left-foot shot after the ball ran loose in the goalmouth when the goalkeeper blocked a David Luiz shot with the visitors appealing for offside.

Replays of the goal showed there was a Brazilian in an offside position, but the Argentine referee waved play on, believing the player was not interfering with play.

It was an encouraging debut for South Africa coach Gordon Igesund as a side with new caps in midfielder Dean Furman and striker Dino Ndlovu never panicked under pressure from the five-time world champions.

The result maintained a pattern of one-goal victories for Brazil over South Africa following three in Johannesburg -- two friendlies and the 2009 FIFA Confederation Cup semifinal.

Jones suffers knee injury

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United defender Phil Jones could be out of action for up to eight weeks with a knee injury, the English Premier League giants said Saturday.

The 20-year-old suffered the injury during training earlier this week and was sent for a scan which has confirmed he faces a long lay-off.

A club spokesperson told United's official website, "Phil Jones has had surgery on a knee meniscus tear sustained in training that will require six to eight weeks of rehabilitation."



TEN Sports
US Open
Men's Singles Final
Live from 11:00pm
ATN BANGLA
Women's 3rd ODI
Bangladesh v South Africa



Bangladesh v South Africa
Women's 3rd ODI
Time: 9:30 am
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla

Argentina end 39 year wait

REUTERS, Cordoba



Lionel Messi's Argentina brushed aside Paraguay 3-1 to go top of the South American 2014 World Cup qualifiers at the Mario Kempes stadium on Friday.

Goals from Angel Di Maria, Gonzalo Higuain and Messi, with a brilliant free kick, gave Argentina their first home win over Paraguay in a World Cup qualifier in 39 years and sixth victory in a row including friendlies.

"I don't know if this is our best moment, but we've won a string of matches, friendlies and qualifiers. We've got to carry on like this," Messi, whose Argentina tally now stands at 28 after 10 goals in his last six matches, told reporters.

"Luckily the free kick went in and gave us calm (with a two-goal) lead. They didn't create chances apart from

the penalty," added Messi, who had two shots come back off the posts.

Argentina lead the South American group with 13 points from six matches, one more point than Chile and Ecuador and two ahead of Uruguay.

Copa America champions Uruguay slumped to their first defeat of the 2014

World Cup qualifiers as Colombia thrashed them 4-0.

Atletico Madrid's much coveted striker Falcao got Colombia off to the ideal start against the Uruguayans with a goal in the second minute.

However, it was to be Teofilo Gutierrez who was to be the Colombians matchwinner as he struck twice in

four minutes early in the second-half - Camilo Zuniga rounded off the stunning win in the final minute.

Argentina went ahead in the second minute when Ezequiel Lavezzi crossed square into the middle, Higuain played the ball back to him and the winger passed to Di Maria who found the top corner with a sweet left-footed shot.

Paraguay got a lucky break and equalised in the 17th minute when holding midfielder Rodrigo Brana, playing for the suspended Javier Mascherano, gave away a penalty for handball.

Argentine-born midfielder Jonathan Fabbro converted the penalty beating goalkeeper Sergio Romero with a good strike into the top corner from the spot.

Argentina regained the lead on the half hour when Higuain latched onto a defensive mistake on the right, fended off left back Richard Ortiz and shot low past Villar into the net off the inside of the far post.

RESULTS
Colombia 4 (Falcao 2, Gutierrez 47, 50, Zuniga 90) Uruguay 0
Argentina 3 (Di Maria 2, Higuain 30, Lionel Messi 65) Paraguay 1 (Fabbro 18-pen)
Peru 2 (Farfan 47, 59) Venezuela 1 (Arango 43)



Argentina superstar Lionel Messi celebrates his goal against Paraguay during their 2014 World Cup qualifier at the Mario Kempes Stadium in Cordoba on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP