

SPORT

BRAZIL humble Spain

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil humbled world and European Champions Spain with a crushing 3-0 win in the Confederations Cup final on Sunday, ending their opponents' three-year record run of 29 unbeaten competitive matches.

Two goals from Fred and a stunning left-foot shot from Neymar gave next year's World Cup hosts their fifth straight win in the competition as they clinched the trophy for a third time in a row.

Spain endured a miserable night with Sergio Ramos missing a penalty early in the second half and Gerard Pique sent off for a lunge on his new Barcelona team mate Neymar after 68 minutes.

Fred put Brazil ahead after two minutes, Neymar added a majestic second just before halftime with his fourth goal of the tournament and the crowd erupted again when Fred made it 3-0 two minutes after the re-start with his fifth of the competition.

The Maracana crowd taunted Spain and chanted "the giant is back" as Brazil overpowered Vicente del Bosque's team whose last competitive defeat was against Switzerland at the 2010 World Cup.

Brazil started this competition just over two weeks ago with a third minute goal against Japan and began this final in similar fashion with an even faster opener.

Fred's second minute hook-in while he was sitting on the ground lacked the powerful beauty of Neymar's strike against Japan, but its impact was even more emphatic.

The crowd, who just minutes earlier gave a rousing rendition of the Brazilian national anthem, raised the decibel levels even higher in celebration to settle Brazil's nerves, unsettle Spain and put the hosts firmly in control.

Oscar should have quickly doubled the lead but fired wide after eight minutes when Fred set him up with a clever



Fred 2, 47
Neymar 44

backheel, while Paulinho went close in the 14th minute when he had Spain keeper Iker Casillas back-peddalling to keep his lobbed shot out.

Spain were clearly rattled by Brazil's rampaging start and they survived another scare when defender Alvaro Arbeloa escaped with a yellow card when he was the last defender and sent Neymar tumbling.

Spain, who usually dominate matches with their intricate midfield passing moves, showed patches of their usual self-assured control, but they also looked tired following Thursday's exhausting semifinal pen-

alty shootout victory over Italy.

In contrast Brazil, with Fred, Neymar and Paulinho looking fresh and powerful, continually had Spain on the backfoot with a series of swift breaks, often initiated by David Luiz after some Spanish-style passing of their own.

Luiz's name boomed through the cavernous ground four minutes before halftime when he raced back to clear a goalbound shot from Pedro one metre in front of the line with Julio Cesar beaten.

Instead of finding themselves pegged back to 1-1, Brazil were 2-0 ahead within three minutes.

Oscar provided the final pass to Neymar who smashed an unstoppable angled left-foot shot past Casillas into the roof of the net.

The third goal came after another sweeping move with Paulinho finding Fred wide on the left after Neymar shimmied out of the way of the ball. Fred unleashed another unstoppable low shot past Casillas.

The rest of the second half proved to be just as miserable for Spain. Ramos fired wide from the penalty spot after Marcelo fouled Jesus Navas who had just come for the disappointing Juan Mata.

Then 14 minutes after that Pique lunged at the escaping Neymar, and after living dangerously with a number of late challenges Dutch referee Bjorn Kuipers showed Pique the red card.



BRA	SPA
48%	52%
14(8)	15(7)
26	16
0	2
0	1

Armed goons kept protesters away from the stadiums throughout the Confederations Cup, yet after the final it feels like a regime has been overthrown. Not this, that of a bloodsucking corporate elite but just of a sporting one, that of Spain, the team that for over half a decade has subjected football to a tyranny as all-encompassing as it was artful.

Coming at the end of a season in which German clubs matched the slickness of Barca and Real while out-pressing and out-muscling them, the displays of Italy and Brazil gave further sustenance to the belief that Spain, for all their ingenuity, lack mettle and a flaw has been found in their method.

All who aspire to beat Brazil (now) must ascend. Germany might be able to rise to challenge, as may Argentina, Holland, Italy, Belgium and, of course, Spain. Maybe others, too. But the bar has been raised, heightening our anticipation of the World Cup.

PAUL DOYLE, COLUMNIST FOR THE GUARDIAN



Papon looking forward

SPORTS REPORTER

There were a number of issues that the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon had to address upon his arrival at the Shahjalal International Airport yesterday from the three-day ICC meet in London.

The most important was the fate of the Dhaka Premier League. Now that the ICC's Anti Corruption and Security Unit's (ACSU) report on suspected match-fixing in Bangladesh has been delayed till August, would the board wait for it or go ahead with the league?

"We can start the league any day now. I believe there's a good chance to start the league in two week's time," said Papon at a press conference at the airport yesterday.

"We were almost sure that the ACSU was going to submit the report to us in London this time. However, they have asked for a month's time, we can't wait any longer. Actually we are not even sure if we are going to get the report in August either -- they just gave us an estimated time," said the president.

The president had earlier stated that he wanted to wait for ACSU's report before hosting the Dhaka League in case more names of players, after Mohammad Ashraful's confession, emerged in the report.

"They still haven't completed their interrogations with regard to the BPL. The

Bangladesh chapter of interviews is done. There's only one more left, I think. But they want to interrogate people outside the country and that will take a month's time."

When asked if there were any further discussions with the ACSU, the president stated, "There are a number of things that can only be disclosed once the ACSU report arrives."

The president also revealed that he had discussions with the ICC regarding the BCB elections. "We are going to get a letter from the ICC with their comments on it very soon. Of the two constitutions available to us, the 2008 (government-elected president) and the NSC amended 2012, the ICC supported the latter," said Papon.

The president further stated that the BCB elections had a good chance of being declared in a month's time. He also rubbished recent criticism by former members of the board that he was forcibly trying to assume power.

The ICC's decision of proposing an alternate venue for the Twenty20 World Cup was another issue at the meeting. BCB now have till August to work on the Sylhet and Cox's Bazar venues before the next ICC inspection.

He also revealed that a decision about the Akram Khan-led selection committee, the tenure of which ended two days ago, would be taken in a board meeting scheduled to take place tomorrow.

Serena joins casualty list

AFP, London



Sabine Lisicki ended Serena Williams' reign as Wimbledon champion as the German 23rd seed clinched a stunning 6-2, 1-6, 6-4 victory over the world number one in the fourth round on Monday.

Meanwhile, British second seed Andy Murray survived a second set wobble to carve out a 6-4, 7-6 (7/5), 6-1 win over Russian 20th seed Mikhail Youzhny to reach the Wimbledon quarter-finals.

Murray, the runner-up to Roger Federer in 2012, will face Spain's Fernando Verdasco for a place in the semi-finals.

Murray had to battle back from 2-5 down in the second set to quell the threat posed by Youzhny who needed treatment on a shoulder injury after one game of the third set.

Eight seeded Juan Martin Del Potro of Argentina defeated Andreas Seppi of Italy 6-4, 7-6 (7/2), 6-3 to reach the quarter-finals.

Lisicki, who plays Estonia's Kaia Kanepi for a place in the last four, has an impressive Wimbledon record, reaching the quarter-finals three times and the last four in 2011, but this

incredible upset on Centre Court was by far her greatest achievement at the All England Club.

The 23-year-old has failed to make it past the fourth round in 16 Grand Slam



US star Serena Williams reacts after losing to Germany's Sabine Lisicki in the fourth round of the Wimbledon Championships in London yesterday.

appearances outside Wimbledon, but she comes alive on the grass-courts and has now beaten the reigning French Open champion in each of her last four visits to south-west London.

Chinese sixth seed Li Na raced into quarterfinals with a 6-2, 6-0 demolition of Italian 11th seed Roberta Vinci.

In contrast to her roller-coaster two previous matches, which both went to three sets, the 2011 French Open champion took just 55 minutes to get past her fourth round opponent.

In reaching the last eight, Li has matched her Wimbledon best, having made the quarterfinals in 2006 and 2010.

The 31-year-old will face Polish fourth seed Agnieszka Radwanska on Tuesday for a place in the semifinals.

Britain's dreams of a first woman in the quarter-finals for 29 years were shattered on Monday when Laura Robson bowed out in tears after falling to Estonia's Kaia Kanepi.

Though roared on in a closely-fought match in the 11,000-seater Court One bowl, Kanepi just had the edge in the crucial points to win their fourth round clash 7-6 (8/6), 7-5.

Spanish fourth seed David Ferrer reached the last eight for the second successive year with a 6-7 (6/8), 7-6 (7/3), 6-1, 6-1 win over Croatia's Ivan Dodig.

Hockey players to take a hard line

SPORTS REPORTER

Players under the banner of Hockey Players' Welfare Association (HPWA) decided to take a tough stance after the interim committee of the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) postponed the scheduled July 2-4 players' transfers saying that the transfers are a matter for the elected committee.

"We will meet the sports minister tomorrow (Tuesday) at the National Sports Council to let him know the latest development," said HPWA president Rasel Khan Bappi after a meeting among the players yesterday.

It has been learnt that the hockey players would appeal to the minister to form an ad-hoc committee without general secretary-elect Khaza Rahmatullah, chairman of MSC hockey committee Shafiullah Al Munir and Rashid Shikdar, general secretary of Usha KC.

"Everyone at the federation failed to keep their word. Now we want a solution within a week from our sports minister (Minister Ahad Ali Sarker) and if we do not get any solution, we will place the federation under lock and key," said a former national player under conditions of anonymity.

Meanwhile, the National Sports Council (NSC) is yet to issue a circular on the hockey elections which was won unopposed by the combined panel.

Dhoni blow for India

AFP, Kingston

Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni has been ruled out of the remainder of the Tri-Nation Series with a right hamstring strain sustained while batting against the West Indies on Sunday at Sabina Park. Uncapped 27-year-old batsman Ambati Rayudu takes his place in the squad.

Vice-captain Virat Kohli takes over as captain for the remainder of the series.

Gregarious regain title

SPORTS REPORTER

The Gregarious became unbeaten champions of the Citycell Premier Division Basketball League by beating two-time defending champions Dhaka Gladiators (Europa Youth) 80-62 in an entertaining last match of the league at the Dhanmondi Indoor Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.

The 2010 champions held the lead through all the four quarters of the match to beat their nemesis, thanks to 22 points scored by Reginald Holmes and 13 by Jaraun Burrows. Shoyeb caged 17 points while Cheyenne Moore scored 15 for the Gladiators. Both teams played three Americans each, but the Gregarious -- boasting six current national players -- edged the former champions with precision and technique.

The Gregarious finished on 16 points, winning all their eight matches, while Gladiators finished on 15.



The victorious Gregarious players celebrate becoming Citycell Premier Division Basketball League champions after beating the Dhaka Gladiators in the season's last match at the Dhanmondi Indoor Basketball Gymnasium yesterday. INSET: Gigantic Dhaka Gladiators player Jerome James shrugs off a desperate defence attempt.

Not quite NBA

ATIQUE ANAM



For the past one week, the Dhanmondi Indoor Basketball Gymnasium was a stomping ground for an NBA-size giant. Former New York Knicks centre Jerome Keith James was the focus of attention of the crowd that had built up slowly through the week, culminating in a full house during the last match yesterday.

The 7 ft 1 inch and 130 kilogram giant was head and shoulders above everyone else at the court, even the average 6-footers looked like midgets beside him. As he trudged by the courtside before the game with his headphones on, James looked every bit like an NBA star might look and act. He was single-minded, paying little attention to the goings-on around him, as if his performance at the court would do all the talking. But unfortunately, there wasn't much to talk about his performance either. He scored a meagre 10 points during the game, moving clumsily through the court and looking for teammates to provide him with the ball for an easy dunk. In fact this was a fair reflection of the sad career of James, a career that promised much, hit a massive peak, before going all downhill.

The high point of his career was an outrageous 30-million-dollar buy-out by the New York Knicks in 2005, a price tag he ruefully failed to justify. The reasons -- his nonchalant approach to the game, voracious habits and his slow-paced game which is ill-suited to the world's premier league. Failing to match the NBA standards, James ultimately sought easier and more relaxed competitions to ply his trade. That's how James ended up in Bangladesh.

In the end, James did not end up on the winning side and neither did he put in a star-like performance. But it was his mere physical presence that would keep him firmly in our basketball folklore.

PHOTOS: FIROZ AHMED