



Spain goalkeeper Iker Casillas (R) is on his knees, which only epitomises the holders' total surrender against the rampant Dutch, who came from a goal down to win 5-1.

# Blame me: Casillas

Iker Casillas believes he must shoulder much of the blame for Spain's humbling 5-1 defeat to the Netherlands.

Louis van Gaal's side recovered from falling behind to a first-half Xabi Alonso penalty, with Arjen Robben and Robin van Persie both scoring twice and Stefan De Vrij adding another to avenge the 1-0 defeat the Dutch suffered in the final of the 2010 World Cup.

Casillas, whose heavy touch allowed van Persie to rip in and score the Oranje's fourth goal on the night after he had earlier missed the cross for De Vrij's tap-in, acknowledged that he was below

## No record for Iker

Iker Casillas came up short in his bid to break Italian goalkeeper Walter Zenga's long unbeaten World Cup record on Friday. Had Casillas kept a clean sheet until at least the last four minutes of Spain's Group B opener against the Netherlands in Salvador, he would have overtaken Zenga's 517-minute unbeaten run from Italia 1990.

Casillas had not conceded a World Cup goal since Rodrigo Millar scored in the 47th minute of world champions Spain's final group game 2-1 victory over Chile in South Africa four years ago.

But when Dutch striker Robin van Persie netted in the 44th minute of Friday's clash, to equalise Xabi Alonso's earlier penalty, Casillas's run stopped at 477 minutes, 40 minutes short.

# Kaiser cancels Brazil trip

German football legend Franz Beckenbauer is cancelling his trip to the World Cup in Brazil in the light of FIFA suspending him for 90 days over the investigation into the Qatar 2022 World Cup bid, he told the German media on Saturday.

The 68-year-old, who won the World Cup both as a player and as a coach in 1974 and 1990 respectively, told daily newspaper Bild he did not feel he would be made welcome after FIFA announced he had been suspended because he refused to speak to investigators looking into allegations that Qatar paid bribes to secure votes for its 2022 World Cup bid.

"I won't be going to Brazil," said Beckenbauer, whose sole title these days is honorary president of Bayern Munich. "I am basing that decision on the fact I will not be welcomed by FIFA."



The picture says it all. Spanish supporters are inconsolable after watching their beloved La Roja dismantled by Netherlands.

# Chile pile pressure on Spain

Alexis Sanchez helped Chile pile the pressure on world champions Spain after a 3-1 win over Australia in their World Cup opener in Guaiaba saw them join the Netherlands on top of Group B.

Sanchez set Chile on their way early on, the Barcelona star turning provider 70 seconds later to set up Jorge Valdivia.

Tim Cahill pulled one back before half-time with Wigan Athletic's Jean Beausejour grabbing a third for Chile in injury time of a pulsating encounter under the Arena Pantanal's floodlights.

But following Spain's 5-1 rout by the Dutch earlier in Salvador, the reigning champions almost certainly must beat Chile in Rio on June 18th to avoid an ignominious early exit.

Chile thought they'd done enough to snuff out the Socceroos in the time it takes to make a pisco sour.

The 12th minute opener came after sterling work by Charles

# Spanish media mournful

Dutch delighted

The Spanish press were trying their best to be optimistic -- and almost managing it -- after Spain were walloped 5-1 by Netherlands in their opening Group B opening game in Salvador.

Saturday's mostly black Marca front cover said: "Fix This," telling readers that "Netherlands humiliated the champions in 45 minutes of a physical overrunning and football hurricane."

The paper said the remaining two group games, against Chile and Australia, were "two finals to show the talent and football that made us champions. We believe."

Inside, the main match report was headlined "Global Humiliation", while another reaction piece went under the banner "A Historic Defeat."

"Never in history has a defending champion been punished so in a World Cup final," it said. "Never. A team with a star never took such a punch to the face. Netherlands' revenge for the last final was so tough for us. The hammering at the Arena Fonte Nova has a place in the blackest moments in the history of the Spain team."

Much of the focus post-game was on La Roja captain Iker Casillas, who was at fault for the third and -- especially -- the fourth Netherlands goals. Juanna Trueba's match report in AS, headlined "The worst nightmare of the champion," acknowledged his errors but put the scale of the defeat down to a more general bad reaction to going unexpectedly behind.

"If you want, you can torture yourself watching again the Casillas' mistake for Netherlands' fourth goal," Trueba wrote. "His mistake symbolises the collapse. The player who protected us for six years left us in the open."

"But we did not lose because of Iker. We lost as we had to lose. The storyline is another story. First we slipped in the dark, and then we did ourselves unnecessary damage trying to switch on the light. We stumbled over all the sharp furniture."

Reaction in the Netherlands media was of stunned delight, with De Telegraaf headlining its report "Oranje slaughters Spain" and saying: "For a moment, the trauma of 2010 is forgotten." The paper crowed: "Flying start -- amazing revenge on Spain."

Algemeen Dagblad -- which said "Amazing Oranje runs Spain ragged" -- focused on two-goal Arjen Robben, who had been denied by Casillas' outstretched foot in the 2010 final with the score at 0-0, saying: "Robben takes revenge on Casillas' toe."

It added: "Casillas' toe will probably haunt Robben for the rest of his life. It's the pain that will never go away, because it cost Oranje the world title. But on Friday, the 30-year old attacker from Bedum took a little bit of revenge for his much-talked about miss."

Former Netherlands player Willem van Hanegem wrote in the paper: "The Dutch national team made me so happy" and hailed Van Persie's magnificent headed equaliser as "one of the most beautiful goals he has ever scored."

Football writer Charles Bromet said in De Volkskrant: "The world is upside down, and this reversed world looks mightily beautiful."

# ARGENTINA V BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

## Messi's moment to shine

Lionel Messi will be attempting to cement his legacy as an all-time great when Argentina tackle Bosnia-Herzegovina in their World Cup Group F opener in Rio de Janeiro on Sunday.

Trophies, plaudits and individual honours have rained down upon the record-shredding 26-year-old Barcelona sensation over the past few years, but a signature showing at a major international tournament still eludes him.

Although he was a member of the Argentina team that claimed Olympic gold in Beijing in 2008, success in the World Cup and the Copa America has proved harder to come by.

A four-time Ballon d'Or-winner and three-time European champion with Barcelona, Messi's devastating ability cannot be questioned, but without success with Argentina, there will always be an asterisk against his achievements.

But while his previous World Cup experiences in 2006 and 2010 proved unfulfilling, there is a feeling that 2014 should be Messi's time.

As an 18-year-old in 2006, he scored once off the bench against Serbia and Montenegro, while in 2010 Diego Maradona's tactics left him overburdened as the sole creative force in an unbalanced 4-1-3-2 formation.

Now, though, he has been given everything he needs to



succeed, with coach Alejandro Sabella carefully crafting his team to put Messi in an optimal position to thrive.

Having abandoned attempts to recreate Barcelona's system, Sabella now asks Messi to line up on the right side of an extravagantly gifted three-man frontline, usually alongside Gonzalo Higuain and Sergio Aguero.

With Real Madrid's Angel di Maria, man of the match in the Champions League final, also darning forward from midfield, it ensures that Messi is not the sole focus of opposition defenders' attentions, but he rejects any notion that Argentina are a one-man team.



Brazilian striker Neymar and Dutch forward Robin van Persie have made their grade scoring twice each in their opening games. The onus will be now on Argentina talisman Lionel Messi (C) to make his mark against Bosnia and Herzegovina at the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro on Sunday.

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# FRANCE V HONDURAS

## Giants v underdogs

Former champions France should put underdogs Honduras to the sword in their World Cup Group E opener in Porto Alegre on Sunday - although their penchant for self-destruction gives the Central Americans hope of an upset.

Les Bleus go into the campaign with a happier, more settled squad under coach Didier Deschamps and will aim to banish the memories of the 2010 tournament in South Africa, when the players revolted against Raymond

Domenech and flew home in disgrace after a disastrous showing.

Those with longer memories will also recall their opener as reigning champions in 2002 against Senegal, who handed them an embarrassing defeat that led to an early exit.

France dealt a blow when veteran Frank Ribery pulled out of the squad with a back injury. The 31-year-old, though erratic in his performances for the national team, was in outstanding form for his club Bayern Munich in the past few seasons and was expected to spearhead the

French challenge. Midfielder Clement Grenier has also been ruled out of action.

Morgan Schneiderlin and Remy Cabella have been drafted in their place. Deschamps, who captained the 1998 World Cup-winning side, resisted the temptation to call up Samir Nasri, whose girlfriend poured scorn on the French coach after her man was left out of the original squad.

The focus will now be on Karim Benzema, the 26-year-old Real Madrid striker, who has excelled for the Spanish club this season. Much is also expected of Paul Pogba.

# BRAZILIAN BAURU

The Brazilian Football Confederation website. The striker said that after receiving the ball and trying to turn "I felt a weight on my shoulder and the ball went beyond my reach."

"I lost my balance and fell," he explained, adding a similar situation had arisen in Brazil's warm-up match against Serbia.

On that occasion, he recalled he managed, while going to ground, to hook the ball into the net.

RIBERY COULD HAVE PLAYED  
Frank Ribery could have played at the World Cup if he wasn't afraid of injections, the France team's doctor Franck Le Gall claimed Thursday.

A week ago Bayern Munich star Ribery pulled out of the World Cup due to a back injury that virtually stopped him running.

But Le Gall now claims that Ribery could have played if the France team had listened to him rather than another doctor, while he also said Ribery's own fears hampered his willingness to take such a route.

"Franck belongs to a club where the treatment for all problems, whatever they are, starts from a base of injections," said Le Gall.

"He can have 10, 20, 25, 40 per problem, per year. We could have chosen this option, which we didn't do."

"The time came when he couldn't cope with any more injections, so we didn't do it because he's afraid of injections."

FLYING KEBAB JOKES  
NOT FUNNY  
Germany midfielder Kevin Grosskreutz said he's fed up with jokes about his two recent run-ins with the law - hurling a spicy kebab sandwich at a fan and urinating in a Berlin hotel lobby.

In an interview on the Germany team's official website, Grosskreutz bristled when asked if he was glad there were no kebabs at the team camp in Brazil.

"It was clearly a penalty," said Fred, pointing out FIFA's refereeing commission chief had seen an apparent show. Television replays indicated little contact between Lovren and the Brazil centre forward.

"There's no such thing as a more or less penalty," Fred said in a video statement on

HERRERA PLEDGES TO AZTEC FANS

Mexico coach Miguel Herrera pledged to repay his country's fans who he said would "sell their houses, cars and even pawn their grandma's clothes to come to Brazil" by battling to keep their World Cup dream alive.

"The Mexico fans were unbelievable and I think there are going to be thousands of them in all the stadiums throughout," said Herrera.

"They've done the impossible just to come to Brazil to support us, selling their houses, cars and even pawning their grandma's clothes!"

"They made us feel like we were playing at the Azteca (stadium, in Mexico City). We want to repay them for their efforts."

FRED DEFENDS PENALTY  
Brazil striker Fred insisted Friday that Japanese referee Yuichi Nishimura was right to give a controversial penalty in their opening World Cup win over Croatia.

"It was clearly a penalty," said Fred, pointing out FIFA's refereeing commission chief had seen an apparent show. Television replays indicated little contact between Lovren and the Brazil centre forward.

"There's no such thing as a more or less penalty," Fred said in a video statement on

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ARGENTINA BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA

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2	2	0	0	2	0	0	2

RESULT OF THEIR LAST MEETING: ARGENTINA 2-0 BOSNIA (FRIENDLY, NOV 18 2013)

KEY PLAYERS

LIONEL MESSI EDIN DZEKO

86	62
38	35
1	0

TEAM FORMATION

4-3-3 4-4-1

Romero Begovic

4: Zabaleta, Fernandez, Garay, Rojo

4: Mujdza, Bicakcic, Spahic, Salihovic

3: Biglia, Mascherano, Di Maria

4: Hajrovic, Medunjanin, Pjanic, Lulic

3: Messi, Higuain, Aguero

1: Iblisevic, 1: Dzeko

SWITZERLAND V ECUADOR

Battle on the wings

REUTERS, Brazil

Stephan Lichtsteiner, whose marauding runs down right flank for Switzerland have earned him the nickname Forrest Gump, may find his style cramped by Ecuador's pacey wingers in Sunday's World Cup match.

The Swiss right back, one of his team's most potent attacking weapons, could find himself bogged down with less-favoured defensive duties to help his side cope with the threat posed by Ecuador winger Jefferson Montero in Sunday's Group E match.

Lichtsteiner, who has won three successive Serie A titles with Juventus, usually plays on the right of a five-man midfield for his club, giving him more freedom for his probing runs.

But Switzerland coach Ottmar Hitzfeld prefers him as a right-back in a 4-4-2 which, against teams such as Ecuador who attack down the flanks, invariably limits his freedom to charge forward.

Sunday's match will also be played at 1300 local time and, with temperatures likely to be in the mid to upper 20s Celsius, Lichtsteiner may also have to dose his energies.

"When it's 30 degrees Celsius and you have to run 80 metres back, it's a different story," he said after scoring in a 2-0 friendly win over Peru on June 3.

Montero's speed and trickery can make him unplayable on his day, although he is prone to inconsistency and frustrating tendency to go it alone.

KEY PLAYERS

XHERDAN SHAQIRI ANTONIO VALENCIA

32	71
9	8
0	0

TEAM FORMATION

4-2-3-1 4-4-2

Benaglio Dominguez

4: Lichtsteiner, Van Bergen, Djourou, Rodriguez

4: Paredes, Erazo, Guagua, W Ayovi

2: Inler, Behrami

4: A Valencia, Gruozo, Noboa, Montero

3: Shaqiri, Khaka, Stocker

2: E Valencia, Caicedo

1: Stefanovic

LOVREN'S WIFE MOCKS NISHIMURA

ESPFC.COM

The wife of Croatia centre-back Dejan Lovren mocked referee Yuichi Nishimura for his performance in the 3-1 loss to Brazil by posting a picture of him wearing a Selecao shirt.

The Croatians felt aggrieved by a number of decisions made by the Japanese official in their 3-1 defeat, particularly the awarding of a 71st-minute penalty as a result of Fred's tumble in the box under pressure from Lovren.

The Southampton man's wife Anita took to social media to make her feelings over the incident clear, posting a mocked-up photo of Nishimura in a Brazil shirt on her Instagram account.

Alongside the image of Nishimura in the style of a Panini World Cup sticker was a still of Ivica Olic's challenge on Brazil keeper Julio Cesar that led to Croatia being denied an equaliser with the score at 2-1.

CEMON

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