



Fellini and Mertens in one

A Belgium football fan was so overjoyed by his team's World Cup win over Algeria that he named his new-born baby after goal-scorers Marouane Fellaini and Dries Mertens, Belgian media reported. The baby, born in Ghent, will be called Titus Marouane Dries, said the proud dad who added: "If we had scored five goals, he would have had five first names." "Titus Marouane Dries won't



Star DHAKA THURSDAY JUNE 19, 2014,
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SPORT



TODAY'S MATCHES

- COLOMBIA** **IVORY COAST**
Time: 10:00pm
Venue: Estadio Nacional
- URUGUAY** **ENGLAND**
Time: 1:00am (Friday)
Venue: Arena de Sao Paulo
- JAPAN** **GREECE**
Time: 4:00am (Friday)
Venue: Estadio das Dunas



Delight for the Netherlands (C) while despair for Australia after the former's narrow 3-2 win in Group B at Estadio Beira-Rio in Porto Alegre on Wednesday. PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Dutch escape

REUTERS, Porto Alegre

A long-range strike by substitute Memphis Depay gave the Netherlands a 3-2 win over Australia in a thrilling World Cup Group B game but a brave, hard-charging Socceroos side had threatened to earn a famous victory.

The game was marked by end-to-end action and spectacular goals - notably a stunning volley by Australia's Tim Cahill which cancelled out a goal by the Netherlands' Arjen Robben only a minute earlier.

The match belied Australia's status as underdogs and proved Netherlands coach Louis van Gaal's warning that they would come out attacking to be correct. But in the end, the mighty Dutch, conquerors of holders Spain in their opening game, prevailed.

It was against the run of play when man-of-the-match Robben opened the scoring in the 20th minute. Picking up the ball on the halfway line, he charged towards the goal like a bull to a matador and slammed the ball past Mat Ryan.

Tim Cahill replied immediately, however, by crashing a fantastic 20-metre volley into the roof of the net for what will be a strong contender for goal of the tournament.

"It just felt so right to hit it and I hit it sweetly... This is what it's all about because everyone dreams of playing on this stage and I want to leave a mark for all the kids back in Australia and around the world to be inspired by this today," Cahill said.

After that the pace stepped up as the Dutch tried to get more wind in their sails but it was the Australians who looked more threatening. Mark Bresciano missed a good chance in the 30th minutes when good work by Matthew Leckie set him up only for him to blast wide.

Nine minutes into the second half, Australia were awarded a penalty after Oliver Bozanic hammered the ball straight at Daryl Janmaat's arm.

Socceroos captain Mile Jedinak coolly slotted the penalty passed Jasper Cillessen, giving Australia a 2-1 lead and the chance to dream.

But this time it was the Netherlands' turn to strike back quickly. In the 58th minute Robin van Persie banged in a well-controlled shot inside the penalty area.

Memphis Depay whacked in what proved to be the winner with a long-range shot 10 minutes later, sealing the game for the Netherlands.

Mueller tips Mueller to break record

GOAL.COM

Germany legend Gerd Mueller has backed his namesake Thomas to become the World Cup's all-time top goalscorer.

Mueller scored a hat-trick as Joachim Low's side began their World Cup campaign with a 4-0 demolition of Portugal on Monday, taking his World Cup tally to eight goals in just seven appearances.

Ronaldinho holds the all-time World Cup record with 15 goals -- a tally veteran Germany attacker Miroslav Klose is only one behind, with his 14-goal haul the same as Gerd Mueller's.

Klose, playing in his fourth World Cup, was an unused substitute against Portugal, with Thomas Mueller taking his place.

And namesake Gerd told Sport Bild: "I am convinced that Thomas Mueller will nab the World Cup goal record, because he still has two or three more World Cups in him."

He said he had his "fingers crossed" that Mueller, who won the Golden Boot as the top scorer in the 2010 tournament, could defend that title.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who was at the Portugal match, visited the Germany dressing room where she praised the players -- and told Mueller to keep on scoring goals.

"We exchanged a few words," the Bayern player told Bild. "She does expect a couple more goals. But I don't have to score three in every match -- she'd prefer it if I divided them into several games."



'A Kid's mistake' Savouring heroics

GOAL.COM

Igor Akinfeev fronted up after his high-profile error gifted South Korea the lead in Russia's opening World Cup Group H game on Tuesday night. It would have been the easy option for the CSKA Moscow man to duck out of his media duties but to his credit he walked into the throng of Russian reporters and faced the music - albeit with his eyes to the floor like a condemned man.

"It was a kid's mistake," he said. "I take full responsibility for it. The goalkeeper of the national team should not be making errors like that."

Akinfeev, who has six times been named Russian goalkeeper of the year, had just fumbled Lee Keun-Ho's tame effort over the line to hand the initiative to the Asians before Alexander Kerzhakov equalised. It was not Akinfeev's only mistake on the night. On at least three other occasions he spilled routine shots into his goal mouth. He was lucky no Korean was around to take advantage.

Akinfeev has faced competition for the No.1 shirt before with Vyacheslav Malafeev and Vladimir Gabulov preferred at times during his period with the national team. Calls for the inclusion of young Zenit St Petersburg pretender Yuri Lodygin may increase after Akinfeev's howler. "Lodygin is already at Akinfeev's level and I can see him taking over in the near future," former Spartak Moscow president Andri Chervichenko told Sports.ru earlier in the year.

Now is not the first time Akinfeev has been called into question this year. His form for CSKA Moscow throughout their title-winning season in the Russian Premier League wavered. He came under close scrutiny in March when his inexplicable error cost CSKA the derby against Dynamo Moscow. Sloppy footwork allowed national team colleague Yuri Zhirkov to nip in and make it 4-2 and put the game beyond the reach of the Army Men.

Calls for Akinfeev to be dropped in favour of the Zenit man may be hasty but it will certainly be on coach Fabio Capello's mind despite his assertions to the contrary in the post-match press conference.

RUSSIA 1 (Kerzhakov 74)
SOUTH KOREA 1 (Lee Keun-Ho 68)

AFP, Fortaleza

Guillermo Ochoa is effectively a free agent, but the queue of clubs hoping to acquire the goalkeeper's services will have lengthened after his exceptional performance in helping Mexico hold Brazil to a 0-0 draw in the World Cup.

"It was the best game of my life," said Ochoa, 28, after he produced several stunning stops to frustrate Brazil at the Castelao Stadium in Fortaleza.

One stop in the first half, down low to his right to keep out Neymar's header, had shades of a legendary save by England's Gordon Banks to deny Pele in the 1970 World Cup in Mexico.

And he would surely have won the man of the match award even without producing incredible reactions to block the unmarked Thiago Silva's header from point-blank range late on.

"There is no doubt that today was the best game of my life, because of who we were playing -- the hosts of the World Cup," added Ochoa.

"At Neymar's header I didn't think I would get there because it surprised me that he jumped above (Mexico captain) Rafa Marquez, but luckily I got there."

Mexico have now kept clean sheets in each of their two Group A games, following a 1-0 success against Cameroon in Natal last Friday, and qualification for the last 16 is in their hands going into the final group game with Croatia on June 23.

Ochoa, nicknamed 'Memo', went to each of the last two World Cups as a back-up and his place in the Mexico side this year was far from assured heading into the tournament.

However, El Tri coach Miguel Herrera has been justified in choosing the former Club America star ahead of both Jose Corona and Alfredo Talavera.

"It was difficult because I had several goalkeepers in mind when I started this whole process," said Herrera.

"I decided to pick these three for the World Cup and then I had to select a first-choice 'keeper. It wasn't that the other two did not look solid but we decided that Memo looked just a tiny bit better than them. He has responded like we thought he would."

THIRD EYE

Fragility up front could cost hosts

AL-AMIN

World Cup is a stage where heroes are born. On Tuesday, the 20th edition of the global showpiece event presented a little Guillermo Ochoa, whose four outstanding saves under the bar against five times world champions Brazil made him an instant hero. The Mexican goalkeeper stood like the Great Wall of China to deny Brazil a victory and in the process made well enough headlines for a personal fortune, with top clubs in the world certainly fixing their radar on the free agent.

In a World Cup full of surprises and heart-stopping moments, Spain would have had liked Ochoa under their bar instead of Iker Casillas, firstly to try and stop an unstoppable RVP header and the subsequent Dutch demolition. Ochoa's first save -- a full stretched one-handed fist -- against a towering header from Neymar early in the first half deserves a World Cup medal and can match Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon's save against a Zinedine Zidane header in the 2006 final. He did not stop there and forced three more saves with his quick reflexes only associated with a Formula 1 driver.

But despite those Herculean Ochoa efforts that earned Mexico a creditable goalless draw, it could have been a victory for them had Julio Cesar not been called into action for a brilliant diving save at the stroke of the final whistle, how good or bad Brazil fared in a match they were supposed to win and claim a place in the last 16 from Group A.

Full marks were again for Neymar, the only player in the present Selecao lot who played the beautiful game in its true spirit. There was always something creative whenever he touched the ball. The fear, worst might be the case, is that this unbridled talent runs the risk of missing the first knockout game provided that he picks up his second yellow card in what now is a crucial final group league game against Cameroon. Neymar has the tendency of picking the yellow for unnecessary lunging tackles.

Oscar was all class in the opening game against Croatia. But this lithe forward hit the low against Mexico. This is a chronic problem with Oscar for his club Chelsea as well. He needs to be consistent if Brazil are to go the distance.

It is understood that under coach Luiz Felipe Scolari Brazil will even resort to ugly football to get a result. And the prime example is the presence of Gustavo and Paulinho in the midfield. They are more like workhorses than someone who loves to switch on the style. The biggest problem this Brazil team is currently facing is the lack of a quality striker. Fred was missing in action until he was withdrawn in the second half. His replacement Jo at least tried not to fall in frequent off-side traps. But he is hardly the ideal solution to Brazil's headache.

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