

PREMIUM DAIRY ICE CREAM

Rakitic, Mbia swap shorts!

Swapping shirts has long been a football ritual, but Croatia's Ivan Rakitic and Cameroon's Stephane Mbia went further and swapped shorts after their countries' World Cup game. The two former Sevilla teammates exchanged shirts in the middle of the pitch in Manaus after Croatia beat Cameroon 4-0 in a stormy Group A encounter. They went off together toward the tunnel where in full view of shocked officials they peeled off their shorts and exchanged them. Rakitic and

TASTE OF TOGETHERNESS
MI AMORE

DHAKA FRIDAY JUNE 20, 2014,
e-mail: sports@thedailystar.net

SPORT

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TODAY'S MATCHES

ITALY COSTA RICA
Time: 10:00pm
Venue: Arena Pernambuco

SWITZERLAND FRANCE
Time: 1:00am (Saturday)
Venue: Arena Fonte Nova

HONDURAS ECUADOR
Time: 4:00am (Saturday)
Venue: Arena da Baixada

Disconsolate Spanish fans reflect after their team relinquished the World Cup with a 2-0 defeat to Chile in a Group B match at the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Photo of the Day

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'A sad day for Spain'

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Spain coach Vicente del Bosque could not hide his disappointment after the holders were eliminated from the World Cup following a 2-0 defeat to Chile in Rio de Janeiro on Wednesday.

"It is a sad day for all of us," he said after Spain were left without a point from two games in Group B, having lost 5-1 to the Netherlands in their opening match last Friday.

"We are sorry we didn't succeed (but) now is too early to analyse where we go from here.

"We were inferior to both Holland and Chile. They got the goals and gave us a mountain to climb. We were too timid in the first half and did not react sufficiently in the second.

"The first goal really buoyed them and they really got into our faces."

The defeat marks a huge fall from grace for Spain, winners of the last two European Championships as well as the 2010 World Cup but joined the other side in their group Australia in being the first two teams to be knocked out of these finals.

"These things happen in sport. It was unexpected, but we need to deal with it. We were unable to maintain the levels of conviction and hunger that brought us success and happiness before," said midfielder Xabi Alonso, the 32-year-old veteran of more than 100 games for his country.

"We committed a lot of errors and didn't have the solidity that had helped us win so many matches. We didn't have the same feeling on the pitch that we had during other championships. Mentally we were not ready and physically we were struggling a little."

Captain Iker Casillas, who has come in for heavy criticism for his performances at these finals after a difficult two years at club level, hinted that a lack of hunger cost the holders dear.

"The level of commitment was not what we wanted it to be," said the goalkeeper. "We didn't deserve to go through to the next round. We have been beaten by superior teams."

"I have not played well and neither has the team in general. Now we need to be even more united and finish in the most dignified manner possible."

'The end was horrible'

ESPNFC.COM

The Spanish newspapers were filled with pain and sadness but also an enduring sense of pride on the morning after Wednesday's 2-0 defeat to Chile had knocked Vicente del Bosque's previously all-conquering side out of the World Cup after just two games.

Marca's simple 'The End' front page showed Andres Iniesta walking alone into the distance, and summed up the feelings of a country shocked by such a brutal end for a team which had given so much over recent years.

"It was nice while it lasted," said the AS cover -- with Iniesta and a forlorn captain Iker Casillas pictured. Inside Juanma Trueba's match report began: "The end was horrible. It had to come some day, that was accepted, but we never imagined such a painful goodbye, so unrecognisable and so vulgar. Goodbye, World Cup."

Jose Samano in El Pais likened La Roja to the Titanic, and said this had been a harsh way for things to finish: "Destiny was especially cruel with Xavi [Hernandez] and some others, like Iker and [Xabi] Alonso, the other two icons of this Spain."

Elsewhere in El Pais Ramon Besa wrote that it was somehow fitting that such a singular side had collapsed completely when its time had come.

"The problems all surfaced at once, and there was no way to rescue even one virtue, or even to negotiate a dignified scoreline," Besa said. "Maybe because Spain was not a conventional team, one of those who sometimes win and sometimes lose, but one with an admirable uniqueness, impossible to copy or clone. Nobody played with the football like La Roja. But over time the ball was inflated so far that it burst -- and the

national team was left naked at the World Cup."

Inside Marca an analysis piece headlined 'The end of a unique generation' reminded Spain's fans that in time this painful end would not overshadow the incredible past achievements of these players.



Chile coach Jorge Sampaoli lauded his side after they dumped reigning champions Spain out of the World Cup on Wednesday to motor into the last 16 on the back of a deserved 2-0 triumph in Rio.

Spain came in on the ropes after suffering a 5-1 battering by the Netherlands and Chile delivered the knockout punch in some style to ensure they and the Dutch will compete in the next phase.

"I am proud of the way Chile put out world champions," said Sampaoli. "It was a great win over great rivals.

"Against the Dutch we must now make a similar effort and hit these heights again -- we want to finish first in the group," added the Argentinian-born coach, who knows his side are likely to clash with hosts Brazil in the next round should they come second and the Brazilians top their opening pool.

"I don't know if this is our best ever victory, as for me the best victory is always the next one. But I think it's unlikely I shall ever forget this win," he told reporters as he savored a success adding to an opening 3-1 in over Australia.

"It is logical that Spain's fans are disappointed, but the respect owed to this team must be eternal," wrote Javier Estepa. "They achieved what no Spaniard imagined they could achieve. They made millions of Spaniards happy. They made it so the whole world feared this team. Everything ends in this life and in the Maracana was written the 'adios' of a unique generation."

THIRD EYE

Death at the Maracana?

ATIQUE ANAM

Why it is becoming a recurring theme at the World Cups that the defending champions make a first round exit? It is the third time now in the last four editions that the defending champions have exited from the group stages, and rather meekly too. Is it just coincidence or is there something more to this succession of failure? Could it be that the champions become too predictable in the way that they operate? Could it be that they become too complacent to ring in the changes that may seem necessary from outside? Or is it a combination of both of these factors?

Let's go back four years to South Africa where Italy were defending the title they had won under Marcello Lippi in 2006. Lippi, having enjoyed a two-year sabbatical, went to South Africa with an Italy squad that retained nine of the players who had lifted the trophy four years earlier. Not only were those nine players older by four years, most of them were well past their prime. Poor Lippi, who had tinkered with his personnel and formation with great success from game to game and within games in 2006, left himself with few options four years later and paid the ultimate price. Italy made a meek exit, with only two points, from a group which included lightweights like Paraguay, Slovakia and New Zealand.

On Wednesday, Spain followed suit in becoming the latest in the defending champions casualty list, having lost both of their first two group stage matches and conceding seven goals against one. It has not been a meek exit for the Spaniards; it has rather been a humiliating one. Like Lippi, Spain coach Vicente del Bosque was too reluctant to see what was written on the wall. But unlike Lippi, Del Bosque was not even willing to concede his mistakes.

This Spanish side, despite being the predominant force in world football over the last six years, had developed very distinctive chinks in its armour. No chink was more distinctly visible than that in Iker Casillas. Once the world's best goalkeeper, Casillas made two dreadful mistakes in the first match, yet was chosen ahead of Pepe Reina and David de Gea for the second match against Chile. The result was disastrous as Real Madrid's second-choice keeper gifted a second goal to the Chileans by parrying a rather straightforward free kick back to the danger zone when he only needed to punch it out wide to clear the danger.

Up front, Diego Costa was used as the lone centre-forward at the expense of other strikers including David Villa, the proven goalscorer for Spain in international matches.

The Atletico Madrid marksman, who flourishes in a team which is the absolute antithesis of Barcelona, looked like a fish out of water in a Spain side which is modeled solely, and unvaryingly, after the Barcelona model. The result was disaster yet again.

Having gone down 2-0, Del Bosque made three changes, but all of those changes were like-for-like, probably because he was simply unwilling to test any formation other than the one which yielded so much success. The result was an obvious one.

But these issues over the choices of personnel and formation had its root in a bigger malaise -- the failure to set the transition in process, failure to give youngsters like Isco, Alvaro Morata, Thiago Alcantara and Daniel Carvajal enough opportunities in the lead-up to the World Cup to consider them for the big stage.

Does Spain's elimination spell the death for tiki taka, as many people are calling it? Let's not get too ahead of ourselves, let's not brush aside a system which has given us so many memorable moments over the best part of the last decade. Great ideas in football have a way of reinventing and redefining themselves. Even if Spain comes out of its obsession for possession-based passing football, let's hope they employ it in some form or

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