

AUSTRALIA V SPAIN

Nothing but pride at stake

Only pride is at stake when deposed champions Spain meet Australia in the World Cup on Monday but the Australians want to inflict more pain on their demoralised rivals before they head home.

Both teams have no points and have been eliminated but the mood in the two camps is very different, reflecting their contrasting expectations coming to the tournament.

Spain cannot wait to leave Brazil behind after the European and world champions were humbled in a 5-1 thrashing by the Dutch and a 2-0 loss to Chile.

The Australians want to show that their spirited display in a 3-2 defeat by the Dutch was not just a flash in the pan.

"We might look back and be happy with parts of the performance, but it's a results business and we didn't get the result we wanted," defender Alex Wilkinson said.

Spain coach Vicente del Bosque has said there will be consequences from their World Cup flop and has refused to be drawn on his own future while there is still a game to be played.

The Spanish soccer federation wants him to remain in the job despite the team's collapse in Brazil.

Once the World Cup is over, Spain are likely to call time on veterans including captain Iker Casillas who has had a miserable two games in goal.

Del Bosque confirmed that neither Casillas nor Xavi Hernandez will start his side's final game.

"For sure Xavi will not play tomorrow (Monday) because he has a slight muscular problem," said the former Real Madrid boss on Sunday. "Reina will definitely play."

"I don't think one game more or less is going to give him more recognition than he already has," Del Bosque said on Xavi missing out on a final World Cup appearance after 133 caps.

Spain's record goal-scorer David Villa could start up front in place of the disappointing Diego Costa.

Australia will have to do without their talisman Tim Cahill, scorer of a superb volley against the Dutch, who is suspended for picking up two yellow cards.



Will goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa (C) lead Mexico into the final 16 of the World Cup as he did during the team's training session at Rei Pele Training Center in Santos on Friday?

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

CROATIA V MEXICO

Mandzukic v Ochoa

REUTERS, Recife

Croatia's World Cup shoot-out with Mexico for a spot in the last 16 pitches Mario Mandzukic, a gunslinger who is back among the goals, against Guillermo Ochoa, a goalkeeper who has shown a unique ability to keep his final alive.

Mandzukic, Croatia's principle attacking weapon, will be looking to add to the two he scored on his return from suspension in their 4-0 win over Cameroon, but the obstacle in his path, Mexico's maverick shot-stopper Ochoa, has already put up a one-man barricade to keep Brazil at bay on Tuesday.

The prize on offer in Monday's decisive Group A clash in Recife is a spot in the knockout stages, with Mexico, who have four points from their opening two salvos, knowing a draw will enough to see them safely through.

Niko Kovac's Croatia, a point behind, will almost certainly need to win, although a draw would suffice if the already-eliminated Cameroon can produce one of the biggest shocks of all time against Brazil in a match played simultaneously in Brasilia.

If Croatia are to come through, the 28-year-old Bayern Munich forward Mandzukic, who was sorely missed in their opening 3-1 defeat to Brazil, will need to be sharp.

"It was great to have Mandzukic back, he is one of the best strikers in the world," said team mate Ivan Perisic, who made his own mark on the Cameroon win with a superb solo goal.

"Playing with the likes of him, (Luka) Modric and (Ivan) Rakitic is a big motive because they make all of us

better players."

In making two outstanding saves to deny Neymar, Ochoa proved decisive in Mexico's 0-0 draw with Brazil that ended the hosts' 10-game winning streak.

He went full length to brilliantly beat out a header from Neymar in the first half, evoking memories of England great Gordon Banks's famous diving stop against Pele in 1970.

He then blocked a fierce shot from the forward in the second half and stopped a thumping Thiago Silva header on the line late on to leave Brazil facing their own final game decider against Cameroon.

"Mexico are a quick and skilled side, Ochoa had a great game against Brazil but if we repeat the Cameroon performance I think we have a fair chance of coming out on top," Perisic added.

Croatia have not reached the last-16 since their impressive third place finish in the 1998 tournament.

Kovac is unlikely to ring too many changes to his side but attacking midfielder Mateo Kovacic could return for Brazilian-born Sammir, one of the few players who failed to impress against Cameroon.

Mexico have made a habit of making it out of their group, having reached the knockout stages in the last five World Cups.

The Group A winner will face the runner-up in Group B and vice versa, with the Netherlands and Chile playing each other in their final match to decide who finishes first in that pool.

NETHERLANDS V CHILE

Fight for top spot

REUTERS, Sao Paulo

With the loser likely to face hosts Brazil in the next round, the Netherlands and Chile will go all out for victory when they meet in their Group B match on Monday, even though both teams are through to the last 16.

While coaches studiously avoid discussing anything but the next game, what lies ahead adds a tantalising twist to a contest between European thoroughbreds and a Chile team that has surpassed expectations by ousting champions Spain.

That 2-0 win at the Maracana stadium in Rio sent shockwaves through the tournament and will ensure that the Netherlands take their opponents seriously when they meet in Sao Paulo.

Robin van Persie, who like fellow striker Arjen Robben is joint top scorer in Brazil with three goals, was impressed with what he saw of the South American opponents.

"They looked very good. They looked fit, they look strong, they play together," Van Persie said.

"I think that four or five players made Spain's life very hard. So we've got a big task. It will be very hard to at least draw against them," added the forward, who will miss the clash after picking up two yellow cards in the first two matches.

His absence is a blow to the Dutch, whose 5-1 destruction of Spain in the opening game was followed by a far less convincing 3-2 win over Australia, who are out.

But in Jeremiah Lens, favourite to replace him up front, the Netherlands have a forward who shone in the buildup to Brazil, scoring five goals in nine qualifying matches.

Bruno Martins Indio, who was hospitalised after suffering concussion against Australia, returned to training on Friday.

The Dutch have the slight edge, in that a draw will see them top the group owing to a superior goal difference.

That could encourage coach Louis van Gaal, who will join Van Persie at Manchester United next season, to opt for the more defensive 5-3-2 formation which he adopted at times in both the Spanish and Australian games.

But the neutrals will be hoping to see the more attacking 4-3-3 set-up that has produced breathtaking soccer at times reminiscent of the national side in its 1970s pomp.

For Chile, the main concern of mid fielders Arturo Vidal, who scored against Spain on Wednesday, was sub-ute, and Vidal, who month, came off near going into the match is the Charles Aranguiz and

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Dutch without a Van for first time since '96

REUTERS, Salvador

The suspension of captain Robin van Persie for Monday's World Cup Group B decider against Chile means the Netherlands will play an international without a player whose surname begins with 'Van' for the first time in almost two decades.

The last time it happened was in 1996 in a friendly against China, some 221 matches ago, the Algemeen Dagblad reported on Saturday.

Since then the Dutch have had at least one 'Van' on the field but ironically in the reign of coach Louis van Gaal that run is about to end.

Van Persie is suspended after being booked in the opening two wins over Spain and Australia.

The last time the Netherlands played in the World Cup finals without a 'Van' they lost a group match in 1994 in Orlando to neighbours Belgium, for whom Franky van der Elst lined up on the other side.

Injury before the tournament in Brazil kept Rafael van der Vaart out of the Dutch squad and full back Gregory van der Wiel, who played in the 2010 final, was left out because of poor form.

Dutch football is littered with venerable footballing 'Vans' - Marco van Basten, Edwin van der Sar, Giovanni van Bronckhorst and Ruud van Nistelrooy in recent times and the likes of Willem van Hanegeem and the Van der Kerkhof brothers, who played in past World Cups.

Fightback delights Loew

AFP, Fortaleza

Coach Joachim Loew was delighted by Germany's fight-back in their 2-2 World Cup draw against Ghana on Saturday despite their below-par performance.

"I'm actually quite pleased because we showed great moral to come back from 2-1 down in these temperatures," said Loew about the tropical conditions.

"We took the lead, then conceded two goals from nothing."

"The players are completely exhausted, but in the end we had a few good chances against a good, combative and skilful team."

But Loew's enthusiasm failed to mask several deficiencies in the German defence that were exposed by Ghana's determined counter-attacks.

Gyan, whose goal saw him join Cameroon legend Roger Milla as the leading all-time African World Cup scorer with five, said that they had played much better than in the 2-1 defeat to the United States.

"We believed in ourselves today," the 28-year-old told the BBC.

"I think tactically we were perfect today."

"Now we definitely have to beat Portugal. We will have to focus but we believe we can beat them."

Ghana coach Kwesi Appiah praised his side's never-say-die spirit.

"I always believed in us, because we fought until the end," said Appiah, whose side play Portugal in Brasilia on Thursday.

"It won't be easy to reach the last 16, we only have a point, but it's not impossible."

"For us to contain Cristiano Ronaldo, who is the best player in the world, will be a team effort, we can't allow him the space to play his game."

Goal appeases 'Welcome to the club' Messi, not the performance

AGENCIES, Belo Horizonte

If Argentina were perhaps fortunate to beat Iran 1-0 with a stoppage-time goal in Belo Horizonte, a result that means La Albiceleste are through to the last 16, their luck was twofold. They might have already been behind to an Iranian team who had three good chances of their own. But mainly Argentina are simply lucky to have Lionel Messi, who afterwards described his stoppage-time winner as a "wonderful moment".

"As soon as I got the ball at the end we were all in attack because we wanted to put Argentina through with a win," Messi said. "Obviously I was very happy with the strike and then I heard people screaming and smiling."

"Iran] were able to close us down at the back and it was very difficult to find space. It was very hot too. But we still had many opportunities in the first half; they had some in the second half too."

Messi however lamented that the Albiceleste have not been able to show all their potential in the World Cup so far.

"It's very difficult to play against a team that hand you the ball and just wait in their field. We created several chances though, but we couldn't score," he explained.

The Barcelona star recognised the team have not played their best football yet, but said the qualification gives time to Argentina to "improve towards the final stages of the tournament."

"We got what we came for; we made it to the last 16. Now we have time to concentrate and improve our game," he concluded.

TOP SCORERS

- 15- Ronaldo (BRA), Miroslav Klose (GER)
- 14- Gerd Mueller (GER)
- 13- Just Fontaine (FRA)
- 12- Pele (BRA)
- 11- Sandor Kocsis (HUN), Jurgen Klinsmann (GER)

"Welcome to the club," he wrote on his Twitter account in German and English.

Klose had sat out Germany's 4-0 thumping of Portugal on Monday when Thomas Mueller claimed a hat-trick in his place, but the veteran came off the bench to spare Germany's blushes.

"You really want to come in when the team is winning," admitted Klose.

"If a team like Ghana gathers momentum, it is of course difficult."

"It was much warmer than the Portugal game, and it was very intense."

"It doesn't matter whether I play from the start or come off the bench: all games are

important and 15 goals in 20 World Cup games isn't bad."

Klose claimed a goal record even before flying to Brazil when he became Germany's all-time top scorer and his goal against Ghana extended his tally to 70 goals in 133 internationals.

He bettered the previous record set by Gerd Mueller, who scored the winner in the 1974 World Cup final to claim his 68th goal in 62 appearances for West Germany.

Klose was the top-scorer at the 2006 World Cup in Germany with five goals, having finished second with another five at the 2002 tournament, while he scored four in South Africa four years ago.

His longevity -- he has been a constant presence since making his debut in 2001 -- is remarkable and say him celebrate his 36th birthday the day the Germans arrived at their World Cup base.

"I'm incredibly pleased for him, that is another high point in his unparalleled career," Germany coach Joachim Loew said Saturday after Klose's latest milestone.

"It has not been an easy season for him, but he has done it again and got himself in top shape for a tournament."

"For a coach it is of course great to have options like him on the bench."

Klose has said next year will be his last in the famous white shirt of Germany, but he could yet break Lothar Matthaeus' record of 150 caps for his country.

He signed a contract extension in May with his Italian side Lazio until June 2015, with an extra year's option, but expects next season to be his last.

"At the moment, I assume that 2015 will be the end, but it depends on my fitness and any injuries," he told German daily Bild.

Van Gaal blasts media

AFP, Sao Paulo

Netherlands coach Louis van Gaal hit out at Dutch media on Sunday after details of a closed training session leaked out ahead of their World Cup game with Chile.

Van Gaal said the briefings, which included indications that Dirk Kuyt may deputise for suspended striker Robin van Persie, were not helping the Dutch World Cup campaign.

"If we have a closed training session, somehow or other Dutch media find out about something and I don't like it because it doesn't help, it works against us," he told reporters.

"I really don't understand that because I really think all of us should be singing from the same hymn sheet here, but apparently we can't do that."

While some training is done in front of the cameras, much of it is closed to media to allow teams to work on tactics and formations in private.

Van Gaal said he wouldn't discuss possible personnel changes, to avoid giving Chile any possible edge ahead of Monday's game in Sao Paulo.

Both teams have qualified from Group B but they will want to finish top to avoid a likely last-16 match-up with hosts Brazil.

"I'm not going to discuss individual players because I don't want our opponents to know more than they're supposed to know," he said.



PHOTO: AFP

An Iranian fan blows a 'vuvuzela' on capital Tehran's Vanak Square during their team's World Cup match against Argentina on Saturday.



Iranians feel robbed

AFP, Tehran

Passionate Iranian fans held their heads up Saturday after a last minute goal from four-time world player of the year Lionel Messi, saw their beloved Team Melli lose 1-0 to Argentina.

But they also felt "robbed" after Iran were denied what looked like a clear penalty.

"We were robbed," cried an overwhelmed Ardebil, dressed in Iran's national shirt.

Ehsan, with a face covered in an Iran flag, chipped in: "We played wonderfully, and against one of the best teams in the world. In the end, we only lost to Messi."

Some people in Tehran took to their cars, honking horns and waving the national flag in a show of support.

"This is a proud moment in Iran's footballing history," said Negar, who like her friends had plastered a small Iran flag on her face.

Reza, while expressing pride over the 1-0 defeat, blamed 'what he termed as poor management at Iran's Football Federation.

"Our boys were perfect. It is a shame that they did not have a proper preparation," he said.

"Argentina + the referee 1, Iran 0,"

read the headline by Jam-e-Jam newspaper on Sunday, next to a photo of Iranian forward Ashkan Dejagah going down in the box in a tackle by Argentine defender Pablo Zabaleta.

"Argentina won because of the referee," the Quds paper said, with the government-run Iran daily lamenting that "Iranian stars (became) victims of injustice."

President Hassan Rouhani praised the players' performance in a Tweet: "Well played to our Persian Cheats! It might not be the result you deserved but great effort and heads held high!"

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BRAZILIAN BAURU

INTERNET

DIEGO WATCHES MATCH WITH DAUGHTER

Argentine football icon Diego Armando Maradona was able to enter the Mineirao arena in Belo Horizonte to watch the Albiceleste beat Iran, after having been denied access to see the Albiceleste opener against Bosnia in Rio de Janeiro last Sunday.

Diego watched Messi and co together with his daughter Giannina -- former wife of national team attacker Sergio Aguero, who didn't play a good game.

At 10 minutes of the first half, the stadium camera spotted Diego and fans started to chant the classic "Maradoooooooo, Maradoooooooo" from every stand.

Then, as a tease towards Brazilians, Argentine fans compared Diego with local Pele, saying the former Boca star is better than the Brazilian star: "Brasilero, brasileiro, que amargado se te ve, Maradona es mas grande, es mas grande que Pele" [Brazilian, Brazilian, you look so bitter, Maradona is greater, he is greater than Pele].

SECURITY BREACH NEAR ARGENTINE TEAM BUS

Brazilian police used non-lethal munitions on Saturday to disperse a group of World Cup fans who breached a security line protecting the Argentina team bus.

Four Brazilians, three Argentines and one Colombian were slightly wounded in the incident near the stadium in the southeastern city of Belo Horizonte, the military police said.

"With the aim of allowing the bus's access to the stadium,

police had to use non-lethal munitions to disperse the fans who passed the security perimeter," the military police said in a statement.

The statement did not say what sort of security was around the bus.

It also failed to indicate the type of munitions used, though Brazilian police tend to use rubber bullets, tear gas and stun grenades in protests.

The security breach took place before Argentina defeated Iran 1-0 at Mineirao Stadium.

ENGLAND NEED TO GET 'NASTY'

England striker Wayne Rooney believes his country's players need to acquire more "nastiness" if they are to arrest 48 years of underachievement at major international tournaments.

The 1966 world champions were dumped out of the World Cup on Friday, halfway through the competition's group phase, after losing 2-1 to both Italy and Uruguay in their first two Group D matches.

Rooney has now tasted disappointment at five major competitions and having seen England flop in Brazil despite preparations that were widely considered to be ideal, he feels the problem is one of mentality.

"I think you look at teams who have won the tournament over previous years and you can see that nastiness in them. I think we need to get that in us," he told a group of journalists in Rio de Janeiro on Saturday.



Arjen Robben (R) and Daley Blind can afford to smile ahead of their World Cup Group B match against Chile today.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES



INFO ZONE

HEAD-TO-HEAD

NETHERLANDS CHILE

THEY HAVE NEVER FACED EACH OTHER

KEY PLAYERS

DALEY BLIND EDUARDO VARGAS



14	CAPS	32
0	GOALS SCORED	15
0	WC GOALS	1

TEAM FORMATION

5-3-2 3-5-2

Cillessen Bravo

5: Jansma, Vlaar 3: Jara, Silva, Medel

De Vrij, Verhaegh, Blind 5: Mena, Annuniz, Diaz, Isla, Vidal

3: De Guzman, De Jong, Sneijder, 2: Robben, Depay 2: Vargas, Sanchez

HEAD-TO-HEAD

CAMEROON BRAZIL

M	W	D	L	M	W	D	L
4	1	0	3	4	3	0	1

LAST MEETING: BRAZIL 0-1 CAMEROON (19 JUNE 2003, CONFEDERATIONS CUP)

KEY PLAYERS

SAMUEL ETO'O THIAGO SILVA



118	CAPS	48
56	GOALS SCORED	2
3	WC GOALS	0