

3 GREEKS IN CAR CRASH

Three Greek international footballers were slightly injured on Monday in a car crash as they travelled by taxi to Budapest airport following Greece's Euro 2016 qualifying goalless draw against Hungary on Sunday. Vangelis Moras, Panagiotis Tachtsidis, and Giannis Fetfatzidis were not seriously injured in the crash in which one person was killed, and are expected to leave hospital later Monday, a Greek federation spokesperson told the Hungarian MTI news agency. Police said one person died at the scene while several people were injured, three seriously.



Verdasco stuns Nadal

AFP, Miami

Fernando Verdasco upset second seed Rafael Nadal 6-4, 2-6, 6-3 Sunday in a third-round matchup of Spaniards to advance at the ATP and WTA Miami Open.

Nadal, a four-time Miami runner-up, leaves the Masters Series event without a title again this year after his 11th appearance.

Verdasco, ranked 29th, defeated Nadal for the second time in a row, although their prior match was three years ago in Madrid.

Nadal saved a match point in the eighth game of the second set trailing 5-2, but Verdasco closed out the shocker a game later with a return winner.

BGB reach handball final

SPORTS REPORTER

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) reached the men's final of the Independence Day Handball Tournament beating Bangladesh Police by 34-21 goals at the Shaheed M Mansur Ali National Handball Stadium yesterday.

Kamrul Islam scored nine and Imdadul Haque scored five goals for the winners while Mahbubul Alam and Kader netted five goals each for the losing side.

Navy clinch kabaddi title

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Navy clinched the Independence Day Kabaddi title beating Bangladesh Army by 25-23 points in a keenly-contested final at the Kabaddi Stadium yesterday.

Mohammad Ardurzzaman of Navy was named the best player of the tournament.

Bayern could flex spending power

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich's finance director has said they could one day flex their spending power by becoming Germany's first club to pay 100 million euros (US\$108.5m) for a future transfer.

"Yes, we could pay 100 million euros for a player," Bayern's Jan-Christian Dreesen told magazine Kicker.

Spain plotting revenge

AFP, Amsterdam

European champions Spain travel to face the Netherlands in a friendly on Tuesday with the pain from their 5-1 thrashing at the hands of the Dutch at last year's World Cup still fresh in the memory.

The hammer blow delivered by Louis van Gaal's men in Salvador last June was one from which Spain never recovered as their defence of the title they won with a 1-0 final victory over the Netherlands four years previously in South Africa ended after just two games.

Just over a year out from the European Championship in France there are signs of questions over both sides' form.

Spain sit only second in Group C of qualifying after limping to a 1-0 win over Ukraine on Friday, while the Netherlands have plenty of work to do just to qualify having won just two of their opening five games in Group A.

However, there are high hopes for Spain's new generation of stars that have graduated from winning back-to-back European Championships at under-21 level.

Isco, Koke and goalscorer Alvaro Morata all started against Ukraine, while David de Gea is expected to get his chance ahead of Iker Casillas in goal in Amsterdam.

And Isco believes it is only a matter of time before the goals begin to fly in again for Spain after a relatively lean spell in front of goal since winning the third of three consecutive major tournaments at Euro 2012.

"Possibly in the national team we are not scoring many goals lately, but we are creating plenty of chances and it is something that can change from one game to another. It is a question of being more deadly."



India players (L) take a breather from training while (R) Bangladesh coach Lodewijk de Kruij shows his charges how to defend effectively during their respective practice sessions at the Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club Ground yesterday.



PHOTOS: STAR

Only pride at stake

SPORTS REPORTER



The only thing that will probably be at stake when hosts Bangladesh take on India in the last match of the AFC U-23 Championship Qualifiers (Group-E) today is pride. The two neighbouring countries are fierce rivals on the football pitch and their match-ups, whether between senior teams or youth teams -- have produced some mouth-watering clashes over the years.

Except nothing different when the youth teams of these two countries meet at the Bangabandhu National Stadium at 6:00pm today because this is the only match where they can salvage something from a campaign which has been horribly wrong for both sides.

Both teams have lost their opening two matches against the groups' favourites Uzbekistan and Syria by big margin. But India's superior goal-difference (-6) puts

them at a relatively better position than the hosts (-8), in terms of standings. However, both coaches were looking to salvage a win in their last match, ruling out the possibility of playing for a draw.

Bangladesh coach Lodewijk de Kruij, having termed his opponents as a strong side, asked his charges to give their best.

"They (boys) took two hammerings on their head in the games against Syria and Uzbekistan. All they can do to make it up tomorrow (Tuesday) is by winning the game," said de Kruij at the pre-match conference at the BFF House yesterday.

However, the way Bangladesh lost their matches against much higher-ranked sides brings forth the question whether they have the morale left to fight against India. De Kruij feels that his side can shrug off those heavy defeats and play their natural game.

"We will hope for the best. We will do our best and give one hundred percent and hope for a good result," vowed de Kruij, adding

that the game between India and Bangladesh is a completely different prospect since India are close to the level of Bangladesh.

Although India's senior side (173) are ranked lower than Bangladesh (162) in FIFA rankings, the Indian youths have shown a bit more fighting spirit than their beleaguered hosts thus far.

For this match, Bangladesh will be missing their skipper Raihan Hasan for received marching orders against Uzbekistan and will be replaced either by Tutul Hossain Badsha or Nurul Naim Faisal in defence. Midfielder Sohel Rana, who is likely to wear the captain's armband, vowed that they would not concede goals from set-pieces in this match. Bangladesh have conceded six goals from set-pieces out of a total of eight in the first two matches.

India coach Savio Madeira felt the team that will make less mistakes and pounce on opportunities, will come out as winners.

"Both teams are in the same situation. I think it is going to be another tough match. I feel the team which will make less mistakes and avail their opportunities will come out as winners tomorrow (Tuesday)," said Madeira fearing that the home team would come all out in front of their home crowd.

UZBEKISTAN, SYRIA TO FIGHT FOR TOP SPOT

The eagerly anticipated encounter between Bangladesh and India will take place after Uzbekistan and Syria square off to decide which team grabs the outright qualification spot. The Syrians are in a better position with a superior goal-difference (+8) and will need only a draw for the outright spot. Uzbekistan, on the other hand, will need to beat Syria to claim that spot. However, a defeat for either team will not rule them out, as five best runners-up teams from 10 groups will also qualify for the final round along with ten group champions and hosts Qatar.

'Netherlands a disgrace'

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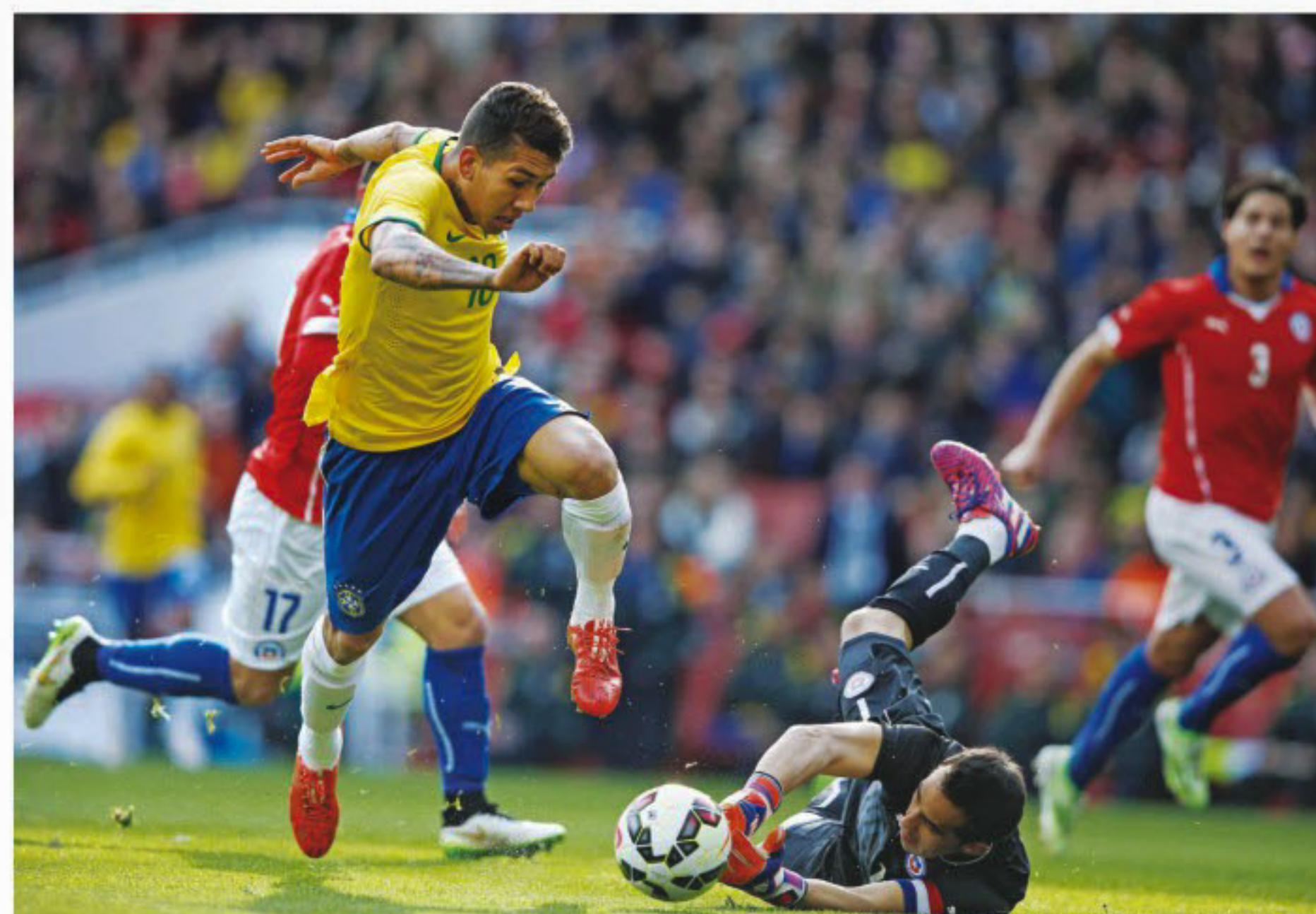
Johan Cruyff has slammed Netherlands in the wake of their 1-1 Euro 2016 qualification draw with Turkey on Saturday, branding the performance "a disgrace".

The 2014 World Cup semifinalists needed a stoppage-time equaliser from Klaas-Jan Huntelaar, who deflected Wesley Sneijder's shot past the goalkeeper, to salvage a draw in Amsterdam.

And Cruyff has pulled no punches in his assessment of the team's performance, and the standard of Dutch football on the whole.

"Netherlands were terrible against Turkey. Nobody did what they had to do," Cruyff wrote in his column for De Telegraaf.

"The defenders were only passing the ball to the midfielders and they then passed it back to the defenders. The people with little creativity were dictating play. This is not what you want. The problems only got bigger."



Brazil midfielder Roberto Firmino (L) takes the ball past Chile goalkeeper Claudio Bravo (C) to score during their international friendly at the Emirates Stadium on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Dunga hails players

AFP, London



Dunga says Brazil's renaissance under his leadership has been sparked by the players' burning desire to make amends for their country's World Cup humiliation.

Dunga's side secured their eighth successive victory since last year's World Cup as Roberto Firmino came off the bench to seal a 1-0 win over South American rivals Chile in a feisty friendly at Arsenal's Emirates Stadium on Sunday.

It was far from the most fluent performance of Dunga's second spell in charge of the Selecao.

But, after showcasing their dazzling skills in Thursday's 3-1 win against France in Paris, Brazil had to display the less glamorous side of their game against Chile as they delivered the kind of steely display that deserted them when they crumbled to a 7-1 defeat against Germany in the World Cup semifinals.

That agonising loss on home soil sent the football-crazed nation into a prolonged period of mourning, but disciplinarian Dunga, employing the same no-nonsense style as a manager that served him so well as a player, has quickly restored some pride in the beleaguered Selecao.

He refuses to accept plaudits for Brazil's revival over the last eight months and insists it is the positive attitude of his players, many of whom didn't feature in the Germany

massacre that has been the catalyst for the quick turnaround.

"I'm happy with the players and with how they are dealing with everything after the World Cup. They are working very hard," Dunga said.

"They know the responsibility they have when they play with the national team. They are determined to change what happened in the past.

"At the moment they are still learning my methods, but as they play with each other more and more that will disappear and they will start to gel."

Although Brazil's winning streak has been a major boost, Dunga knows they need success on an international stage before they can completely banish the bitter memories of the Germany meltdown.

The first opportunity comes in June when the Selecao travel to Chile for the Copa America, a competition that Dunga regards as a major test of his team's progress.

"Yes, it will definitely be very difficult," he said. "The south American teams are a lot stronger because there are a lot of players in Europe now and that makes the competition tougher than ever."

"This was the last chance before the Copa America to try out some players. The risk was worth it to see how they work with my methods."

"We played well in France, then made six changes to that side and were still very stable against a good Chile team."

Zidane's high ambitions

AFP, Paris



World Cup legend Zinedine Zidane says he wants to be the coach for Real Madrid or France.

The former Juventus and Real star, who has been learning the ropes as coach of Real's reserve side Castilla, set out his ambitions on French channel Canal Plus.

Would he take over the Real job? "Yes I would go for that," he said, while adding "there is already a coach (Carlo Ancelotti) in place who is doing a great job."

"Do I feel ready if I was offered the first team? You are never ready, but if it happened like that I would have to say yes."

The 42-year-old added France, with whom he won the World Cup in 1998, to his wish list in the programme late Sunday.

"I was a player in this team and it would be good, one day (to be coach), but for the moment there is a coach (Didier Deschamps) who is doing a great job. But yes I have this target, this ambition," Zidane said.

The former world player of the year retired from club and international football in 2006. Zidane said he has time to wait until taking on a bigger post. "I am doing fine at Madrid."



Germany rebound

AFP, Tbilisi



Marco Reus and Thomas Mueller's first-half goals sealed a 2-0 win in Georgia on Sunday to put world champions Germany's Euro 2016 qualifying campaign back on track.

After suffering a shock defeat to Poland and drawing at home to Ireland last October, Joachim Loew's Germany arrived in Tbilisi needing three points to stay in the hunt for top spot in Group D.

Scotland's 6-1 drubbing of bottom side Gibraltar in Glasgow means the Scots, Poland and Germany are all level on 10 points in the table ahead of Sunday night's qualifier in Dublin between Ireland and Poland.

After failing to impress in their seven internationals since winning Brazil 2014, this was a far more polished display from the world champions.

Germany created 13 chances while restricting their hosts to just two shots, and only an outstanding display from Georgia goalkeeper Giorgi Loria kept his side in the game.

Having experimented with a 3-1-4-2 formation in Wednesday's 2-2 friendly draw at home to Australia, Loew reverted to the 4-2-3-1 line-up with which he won the World Cup.

Loew started with seven of the side which won the World Cup final while captain Bastian Schweinsteiger made his first appearance since Germany were crowned world champions in Rio de Janeiro.

Georgia suffered an early set back when experienced centre-back Aleksandr Amisulashvili was forced off injured, to be replaced by uncapped teenager Lasha Dvali with just four minutes gone.

Reus, who also scored Germany's opening goal against Australia, hit the crossbar with five minutes gone, while Mueller fired just wide on 12 minutes.

Georgia are second from bottom of Group D after also losing to Poland, Ireland and Scotland, but the home crowd passionately cheered every counter-attack by the hosts at the sold-out Boris Paichadze stadium.

RESULTS

- Georgia 0 Germany 2 (Reus 39, Mueller 44)
- Scotland 6 (Maloney 18-pen, 34-pen, 5 Fletcher 29, 77, 90, Naismith 39) Gibraltar 1 (L Casciaro 20)
- Republic of Ireland 1 (Long 90+1) Poland 1 (Peszko 26)
- Northern Ireland 2 (K Lafferty 33, 38) Finland 1 (Sadik 90+1)
- Romania 1 (Keseru 21) Faroe Islands 0
- Hungary 0 Greece 0
- Albania 2 (Mavraj 77, Gashi 81) Armenia 1 (Movsisyan 4)
- Portugal 2 (Carvalho 10, Fabio Coentrao 63) Serbia 1 (Matic 61)

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