

Dani Alves has echoed what every defender in La Liga already knows -- playing against Luis Suarez is a pain in the balls. The two are teammates at Barcelona, but came face to face in a 2018 World Cup qualifier this morning, with Uruguay coming back from 2-0 down to draw with Brazil. It was Suarez's first game after a nine-match suspension following his World Cup bite on Giorgio Chiellini, and Alves admits it was a tough day out. "It's very difficult to play against Suarez... it's a pain in the balls. He is always cooking up



Uruguay forward Luis Suarez celebrates his equalising goal against Brazil during their FIFA World Cup qualifier in Recife on Friday. The Barcelona striker scored on his return to international football as the five-time world champions were held 2-2.

PHOTO: AFP

Suarez denies Brazil

AFP, Recife



Luis Suarez scored on his return from a worldwide ban for biting as Uruguay fought back from 2-0 down to grab a 2-2 draw with Brazil in a pulsating World Cup qualifying battle here Friday.

Barcelona star Suarez -- playing his first international since infamously chomping on Italy's Giorgio Chiellini at the 2014 World Cup -- struck in the 48th minute to complete a remarkable Uruguayan fightback.

Uruguay had looked to be sliding to a heavy defeat after Brazil went 2-0 up inside the first half an hour thanks to goals from Bayern Munich striker Douglas Costa and Renato Augusto.

But Edinson Cavani pulled a goal back for Uruguay to allow Suarez -- installed as captain by coach Oscar Tabarez -- his moment of glory at the Arena Pernambuco.

The draw left Uruguay in second place in the South American standings, three points behind leaders Ecuador with 10 points from five games.

Brazil moved up to third, level on eight points with Argentina and

Paraguay but ahead on goal difference.

Brazil took the lead in the opening minute with a well worked goal created by Chelsea winger Willian.

The 27-year-old teased and tormented Sebastian Coates on the right flank before floating a cross to Costa who delicately steered home the finish.

Brazil's dream start set the tone for the rest of the half, with the hosts rampant against a feeble Uruguay who offered only token opposition for long periods.

However Brazil had to wait until the 26th minute to grab their second, which

BRAZIL 2 - 2 URUGUAY
(Costa 1, Augusto 26) (Cavani 31, Suarez 48)

arrived after more sorcery from Neymar.

The Brazilian captain split Uruguay's defence with a wonderful pass that Alvaro Pereira could only deflect into the path of Renato Augusto.

Augusto then pulled off a magical dummy to wrong-foot the advancing Fernando Muslera before firing high into the net for 2-0.

Yet Uruguay came roaring back to score with their first attack of the game and what turned out to be their only attack of the half.

Pereira advanced down the left flank and crossed to Carlos Sanchez at the far post, who knocked down into the path of Paris Saint-Germain star Cavani who lashed in a perfectly timed volley to make it 2-1.

Thereafter however it was all Brazil, with Neymar shooting just wide on 34 minutes as Brazil laid siege to the Uruguayan goal.

But in the opening minutes of the second half Uruguay drew level with another goal against the run of play.

Pereira released Suarez, and the striker drilled a low shot that the advancing Brazil goalkeeper Alisson couldn't grasp.

The goal galvanised Uruguay who showed far greater resilience thereafter.

Although Brazil dominated they were kept at bay, and Neymar's frustration boiled over on 63 minutes when he was booked for a peulant kick on substitute Alvaro Gonzalez.

Dani Alves also earned a caution in the 75th minute for a wild tackle on Pereira.

Brazil's Liverpool midfielder Philippe Coutinho tested Muslera with a late long-range strike but Uruguay's defence held firm.

France edge Netherlands

Ronaldo penalty miss costs Portugal

AFP, Paris

France claimed an exciting 3-2 friendly win over the Netherlands on a night of emotion in Amsterdam on Friday, the day after Dutch legend Johan Cruyff died at the age of 68.

Antoine Griezmann sparked the match into life early on as he gave France the lead with a precise left-footed free-kick, and Olivier Giroud lashed home from close range to make it two in the 13th minute.

Home manager Danny Blind responded by making two changes at half-time, and his men dragged themselves back into the match through Luuk de Jong.

Substitute Ibrahim Afellay drove the Netherlands level in the 86th minute, but there was still time for Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Blaise Matuidi to snatch the victory for Les Bleus.

The visitors forged ahead in just the sixth minute, as Atletico Madrid forward

Griezmann continued his red-hot run of form by curling in to the top corner from the edge of the area, grabbing his sixth goal in seven games for club and country.

Things got even better for France as they doubled their lead just seven minutes later.

Against a hapless Netherlands side who failed to qualify for this summer's Euros, Deschamps' men were in total control and Giroud pounced inside the box after the Dutch failed to clear a Dimitri Payet corner, before drilling a volley low into the corner.

The goal comes at a perfect time for France and Giroud, after the striker has lost his place in Arsenal's starting lineup, and at a time when Karim Benzema's international future remains in the balance after the Mathieu Valbuena sex-tape scandal.

Blind's Netherlands outfit finished fourth in their Euro qualifying group behind Iceland, Czech Republic and Turkey, and they were all at sea at the back as Griezmann headed over when well-placed.

Wingers Afellay and Memphis Depay came on at the break, and less than two minutes after the restart de Jong halved the deficit by turning in Depay's free-kick with his arm.

The Dutch appeared to have snatched a draw when Depay rolled his corner along the ground to his fellow substitute Afellay, and the Stoke City man smashed in his seventh international goal.

But any result other than a win would have been harsh on the French, and they completed a remarkable end to the game when Anthony Martial set up Matuidi to nutmeg goalkeeper Jasper Cillessen in the 88th minute.

Cristiano Ronaldo missed a penalty for the second time in a week as Portugal slumped to a 1-0 defeat to Bulgaria in Leiria.

Brazilian-born Marcelinho bundled the away team into a surprise lead in the 19th minute. Bulgaria held on, with the help of goalkeeper Vladislav Stoyanov's second-half save from Ronaldo, who also missed a spot-kick for Real Madrid on Sunday.

Friendly football tie ends in draw

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) Red team played out a 2-2 draw against BFF Green team in the Independence Day friendly football match at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamlapur yesterday.

Moni put the Red team ahead in the 25th minute while Milon restored parity for the Green team in the 55th minute. Nakib extended the lead for the Green team in the 68th minute before Moni scored his second in the 80th minute to equalise for the Red team.

The match was arranged to mark the 46th Independence Day, with participation of former national booters and BFF officials.



STAR ECONOMICAL BOWLER: Having seen Mustafizur Rahman fire in those cutters, Grant Elliot (C) decided to unleash a few tricks of his own as he went on to record marvellous figures of three for 12 as New Zealand dismissed Bangladesh for 70.

PHOTO: AFP

SUPER STAR
Future is bright

LET'S ILLUMINATE OUR FUTURE

www.ssgbd.com

LED

Federer pulls out from Miami Open

AFP, Miami

Roger Federer withdrew from the ATP and WTA Miami Open on Friday with a stomach illness only hours before his scheduled return from a two-month layoff following left knee surgery.

The 34-year-old Swiss star, winner of a men's record 17 Grand Slam singles titles but none since Wimbledon in 2012, was replaced by lucky loser Horacio Zeballos for a second-round match against Argentine compatriot Juan Martin Del Potro.

Federer won at Miami in 2005 and 2006 but has not reached the final since. This marks the third time in four years he has missed the event.

World number three Federer, who appeared well Thursday in speaking with reporters, has not played since losing to eventual champion Novak Djokovic in the Australian Open semi-finals two months ago.

The next morning, Federer suffered a torn meniscus making a simple move as he was preparing to bathe his children.

"I turned. I turned back. I felt a click in my knee," Federer said Thursday.

"It was a very simple movement, one I've done a million times. I'm glad it didn't happen on a tennis court, where I could have strained it more."

'Cruyff made Barcelona champions'

AFP, Barcelona

It was Johan Cruyff who "made us champions", wept long-time Barcelona fan Jose Gilabert Cortina, a retired printer who joined the thousands of fans who came to the Camp Nou on Saturday to pay tribute to the Barca legend.

Dutchman Cruyff, who first moved to Barcelona from Ajax Amsterdam in 1973, died on Thursday in his adopted city aged 68 after a five-month battle with lung cancer.

"When he arrived as a player 43 years ago I came to all the matches for the sheer entertainment he provided," recalled the bespectacled 69-year-old.

"We were a team of losers, it was 14 years since we'd won the Liga and he changed everything. You would have thought that football had been transformed into another sport," he recalled with tears in his eyes like many of his generation who mixed with the international crowd including

Spaniards, Chinese, Japanese and Moroccans who came to the special condoleance area opened by the club at the Camp Nou.

Cruyff's debut in 1973 "was like a revelation," recalled 74-year-old retired taxi driver Fidel Diaz Fernandez.

The style and freedom with which the 1.80 metre athlete with blue eyes and a Beatle haircut played was a breath of fresh air during a time when Spanish dictator Franco was still in power.

"Franco was still in power and you couldn't wear long hair at that time without being taken for a transvestite. Cruyff did it," said Fidel.

"He was always inventing something," recalled 70-year-old composer Franck Charles, particularly of Cruyff's time as a coach from 1988 to 1996. "I remember a lovely phrase that he said to the players before they took to the pitch: 'guys have fun'. And they had fun!"

"Today it's Messi who resembles him the

most. Like Cruyff said there's no need to run a lot to control the game and Messi doesn't run much."

Suddenly, Fidel, the former taxi driver with grey hair, begins to laugh loudly as he recalls Cruyff's legendary goal against Atletico Madrid in 1973 when the striker leapt into the air, twisting his body to score as he faced away from goal.

And it amuses him now to see top officials from Barcelona's eternal rivals Real Madrid - such as president Florentino Perez - come to pay tribute to the player who "changed the face of football", 43 years after Real's humiliating 0-5 home loss.

When Cruyff arrived at Barcelona the team were second bottom in the league. But they won 17 games in a row to win their first La Liga title in 14 years.

The relationship between player, club and fans became even stronger after he took over as head coach in 1988.

In an eight-year spell in charge he won

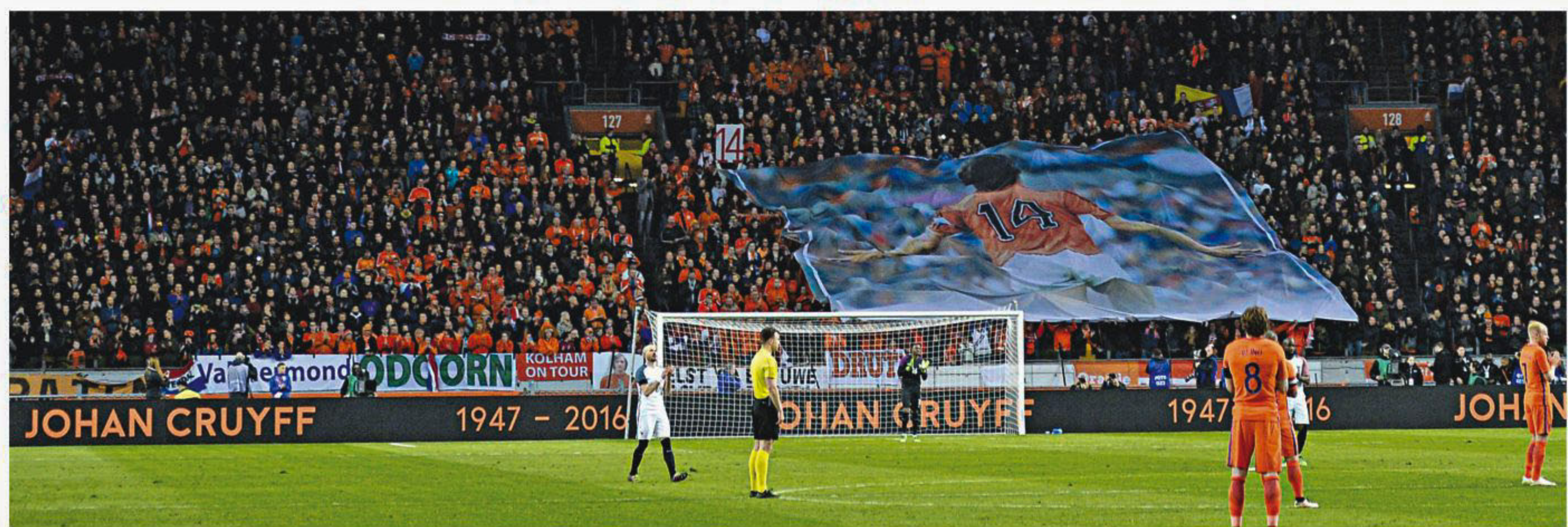
four consecutive league titles, and Barcelona's first European Cup in 1992.

"He was a Dutchman more Catalan than a lot of Catalans," recalled Franck, noting Cruyff's insistence on naming his son Jordi (the patron saint of Catalonia), a regional name banned at the time by the Spanish administration.

"He supported the Catalans a lot in their battles," Franck continued.

"Under Franco, Cruyff was the first to wear the armband bearing the colours of Catalonia as captain," added Jose. "That he was pro independence or not, I don't know, but he was clearly for a self-determination referendum for the Catalans to decide their future."

In front of the cameras, the president of the region, the separatist Carles Puigdemont, praised Cruyff's ability to "bet on the collective talent". "On behalf of the country, thank you for all Catalans."



The death of Johan Cruyff has cast a pall of gloom across the football fraternity. In this picture the France and Netherlands footballers observe a minute's silence, during the 14th minute of their international friendly at the Amsterdam Arena on Friday, to pay respect to the legendary Dutch footballer, who used to wear the number 14 on his Ajax and Dutch national jersey.

PHOTO: AFP

BKSP clinch 3-on-3 b'ball

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishthan (BKSP) clinched the title of an Open 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament title beating Josephites by 18-14 points yesterday. The match was held at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium marking the 45th Independence Day of Bangladesh. Heqad of NFS & Sports of FIBA (Federation of International Basketball Association), Mageshwaran Saba, witnessed the match and distributed prizes among the participants.

Independence Day boat race held

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Rowing Federation arranged a boat race at Hatirjheel Lake in the capital yesterday, marking the 45th Independence Day of Bangladesh.

Kamal Hossain-led team clinched the men's title while Ajmeri Begum-led team won the women's title of the daylong meet.

A total of 10 men's teams and three women's teams took part in the competition. State Minister for Youth and Sports Biren Sikder distributed prizes among the winners as the chief guest of the occasion.

President of Bangladesh Rowing Federation Mollah Abu Kawser and tournament committee chairman Khorshed Alam were also present.