

CRISTIANO FLIPS HIS LID

Video footage has emerged of Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo bringing an impromptu interview to a sudden halt -- by throwing the reporter's microphone into a nearby lake on Wednesday. The 21-second clip shows Ronaldo, surrounded by security guards, strolling by a lake with his team mates. When the reporter from Portugal's CMTV approaches to ask if he was prepared for the game, Ronaldo grabs the microphone from him with one hand and pitches it into the water. Correio da Manhã, a Portuguese language daily tabloid newspaper and television channel, have a history of bad blood. He successfully sued the company after it printed details of Ronaldo's private life relating to his son. The Portuguese superstar on many occasions has refused to answer questions from them, once saying: "CMTV? What is that? I didn't know that existed." --REUTERS



Record-man Ronaldo puts Portugal through

AFP, Lyon



Cristiano Ronaldo scored two trademark brilliant goals Wednesday to go into European Championship history and rescue Portugal in a 3-3 draw that took them into the last 16.

The 31-year-old opened his account in style with a deft backheel flick on 50 minutes, then a bullet header 12 minutes later to twice equalise at the Stade de Lyon.

The result left Hungary on top of Group F. Portugal squeezed through as one of the best third-place finishers but now face a tough match against Croatia.

The Real Madrid ace became the first player to score at four European championship finals and his 17th match in a Euro tournament was also a record.

It was his 128th appearance for Portugal, further extending the record he set last Saturday, as he made a record 17th appearance at Euro finals.

Hungary captain Balazs Dzsudzsak matched Ronaldo by netting two second-half goals as the Mighty

Magyars took first place in Group F winners. With three draws, Portugal advance as third behind Iceland.

Hungary took the lead in sweltering conditions at the Stade de Lyon when veteran midfielder Zoltan Gera unleashed a thunderbolt giving Portugal goalkeeper Rui Patrício no chance on 19 minutes.

Nani had the ball in the Hungary net five minutes from the break, but his effort was ruled offside. The Fenerbahce forward was not to be denied and his crisp finish, after a lovely pass in from Ronaldo, put Portugal level on 42 minutes.

The game burst into life with four goals in the opening 20 minutes of the second-half.

Hungary regained the lead just two minutes after the break when Dzsudzsak's well-struck free-kick took a slight deflection off the Portugal wall on 47 minutes.

The stage was set for Ronaldo.

The Real superstar made sure he would leave the Stade de Lyon with two records when he flicked his shot past Kiraly on 50 minutes to make it 2-2.

But Portugal's second equaliser only served to galvanise Hungary's resolve.

Dzsudzsak drilled a free-kick off the wall, but pounced on the rebound and his left-footed shot deflected off Nani, past Rui Patrício, into the far corner on 55 minutes for a 3-2 lead.

There was, however, no denying Ronaldo.

Just moments after coming on, Ricardo Queresma fired in a corner and Ronaldo drove his header past Kiraly on 62 minutes.

By now it was end-to-end stuff as Hungary's attacking midfielder Akos Elek hit the woodwork on 64 minutes as it stayed 3-3 at the final whistle.

Meanwhile, Iceland continued their fairytale story by making it through to knockout stage after a stoppage-time winner gave them a deserved 2-1 victory against Austria in their final group match on Wednesday.

Substitute Arnor Ingvi Traustason scored from close range deep into added time after collecting a though ball from Elmar Bjarnasson following a swift counter-attack.



Cristiano Ronaldo (L) celebrates in trademark fashion with teammate Nani after scoring one of his two goals against Hungary during Portugal's 3-3 draw at the Stade de Lyon on Wednesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Ramos, de Gea in press' crosshairs

AGENCIES, Madrid

Holder Spain lost for the first time in 15 matches at the European Championship finals on Tuesday when Croatia beat them 2-1 to win Group D at Euro 2016.

Ivan Perisic scored the winner with three minutes left after Croatia keeper Danijel Subasic had saved a penalty from Spain captain Sergio Ramos with 20 minutes remaining.

Croatia's Nikola Kalinic had cancelled out an early goal from Spain striker Alvaro Morata in the first half.

Spain meet Group E winners Italy in a heavy-weight last-16 tie on Monday in Paris -- a rematch of the 2012 final -- while Croatia will play one of the third-placed teams in Lens on Saturday.

Spain would need to beat Italy and then possibly Germany and France or England to reach the final. Having been so convinced that the tournament was there for the taking after they put paid to Turkey in their second game it was no wonder the headline on Diario AS's match report read: 'dragged to the dark side'.

Sergio Ramos and goalkeeper David de

Gea were not given a mark by the Madrid-based paper as the finger of blame also pointed in Ramos' direction.

Meanwhile, Marca chose to focus on the teams that Spain could now go on to face, with the prospect of their progress further into the tournament becoming bleaker.

The front of Sport used a photograph of Sergio Ramos and seemed to blame his penalty miss for the loss.

The last time a major tournament was held in France Croatia finished third. After last night's heroics Davor Suker, who played in those finals before securing a move to Arsenal, hailed the new national heroes and defended the country's football supporters.

He said: 'I said before the tournament that I thought we could be the surprise of the tournament and that's what I want us to be, not the favourites but the surprise.'

'We have seen a very strong Croatian team but we also showed we can play. We played one of the best teams in world football but we took advantage of how they game went after they missed the penalty. Maybe a draw was a fairer result but we'll take it. I don't want to put the pressure on them by comparing them to the team from 1998.'



Argentina thrash USA
Messi surpasses Batistuta's record

REUTERS, Houston



Lionel Messi scored his 55th international goal to become his country's all-time leading scorer as Argentina thrashed hosts the United States 4-0 to ease into the final of the Centenary Copa America on Tuesday.

Many of those in the 70,858 crowd in Houston had come to witness the Barcelona star etch his name in the history books and he did not disappoint, curling a sensational free kick past Brad Guzan after 32 minutes to put Argentina 2-0 ahead.

Messi had been chopped down by Chris Wondolowski 25 yards from goal as he burst forward and the ensuing strike moved him clear of previous record holder Gabriel Batistuta's 54 goal tally.

'I am happy to have surpassed Batistuta's record and I want to thank my teammates, it's theirs as well,' Messi, who turns 29 on Friday, told reporters.

The win, meanwhile, advanced Argentina into Sunday's final against either Colombia or reigning champions Chile, who meet in Chicago on Wednesday.

'We needed to get back in a final but we can never get ahead of ourselves,' Argentine coach Gerardo Martino assed. 'We've always taken

it one game at a time.'

'We are pleased with our general production (so far).'

Martino started Ezequiel Lavezzi up front in place of the injured Angel Di Maria and it took the China-based winger just three minutes to make his mark when he got on the end of a Messi chip to head over a stranded Guzan.

Argentina dominated the first half and Messi's goal was just reward for their superiority but if the home

TOP SCORERS		
	Caps	Goals
Messi	112	55
Batistuta	77	54
Crespo	64	35
Maradona	91	34
Aguero	76	33

side thought they could stage a second-half fightback, they were sadly mistaken.

USA coach Jurgen Klinsmann made two changes at the break but Napoli striker Gonzalo Higuain scored a third goal four minutes into the second period when he beat Guzan at the second time of asking after the keeper had saved his initial shot.

The USA enjoyed more possession as the match progressed but never managed a shot on goal for the entire game as Argentina exposed

the gulf in class between the very best South American and North American sides.

Messi, who captained the side in his 112th international, almost grabbed a second eight minutes from time but Guzan turned his shot around the post for a corner.

However, the mercurial forward was on hand to have a say in the fourth goal, when his pinpoint pass set up Higuain to complete the rout with a simple tap in after 85 minutes.

The result means Argentina have scored 18 goals in five games and conceded just two as they power towards what they hope will be their 15th Copa America title, and first since 1993, to take them level with all-time leader Uruguay.

The win would also cap Messi's international career after years of disappointment. Argentina reached the finals of their last two tournaments, the Copa America in 2015, and the World Cup in 2014, but were narrowly beaten in both.

'When you concede a goal after three minutes against such a team... that's when you've already lost your mental battle,' Klinsmann lamented. 'Once they have a lead they're not giving that lead away.'

'It's a special team Argentina,' he added. 'You saw tonight why they are the number one team in the world. I told the guys there's nothing to be ashamed of.'

Pique shrugs off anthem gesture

AFP, Bordeaux

Barcelona defender Gerard Pique insisted he was merely crossing his fingers after being accused of raising his middle finger during the Spanish national anthem before his country's Euro 2016 game against Croatia.

Pique, an outspoken supporter of a referendum for Catalan independence, was representing Spain for the 78th time in their 2-1 defeat to Croatia on Tuesday.

'I am crossing my fingers during the anthem,' Pique posted on his official Twitter account.

'We should stop looking for controversy where there is none and try to win the Euros together.'

Spanish sports daily Marca, a fierce critic of some of Pique's other controversial acts, labelled those making the accusations as 'lamentable.'

Spain coach Vicente del Bosque was also visibly annoyed at being asked about the incident.

'I am here to talk about football,' said Del Bosque.

Pique was booed and whistled by Spain fans earlier this season for anti-Real Madrid comments made during Barcelona's celebrations after winning the treble at the end of the 2014/15 season.

However, he received a hero's reception during Spain's 3-0 win over Turkey on Friday after scoring a late winning goal in a 1-0 win against the Czech Republic to open their Euro 2016 campaign in France.

Barca expect Neymar to stay

REUTERS, Barcelona

Barcelona are not contemplating selling their Brazil forward Neymar, the Spanish champions' financial vice-president Susana Monje said on Wednesday.

Neymar, who has been in talks over a contract extension with his current deal expiring in June 2018, has been linked in Spanish media with a move to Paris Saint Germain.

'Neymar's renewal is a sporting issue,' Monje told a news conference in which she spoke about the club's importance to the city of Barcelona.

'We have not studied the impact of hypothetically losing Neymar. We don't contemplate it.'

England 'out of a hole'

AFP, Nottingham

England captain Eoin Morgan praised Chris Woakes, Jos Buttler and Liam Plunkett for getting his side "out of a hole" as the first one-day international against Sri Lanka ended in a thrilling tie.

Set 287 to win, England collapsed to 30 for four and 82 for six in Nottingham on Tuesday.

But a stand of 138 between Buttler (93) and man-of-the-match Woakes, who made 95 not out -- the highest ODI score by any number eight batsman -- revived the innings.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SRI LANKA: 286 for 9 in 50 overs (Perera 24, Chandimal 37, Mathews 73, Prasanna 59, Shanaka 20, Maharooof 31 not out; Woakes 2-56, Willey 2-56, Plunkett 2-67)

ENGLAND: 286 for 8 in 50 overs (Morgan 43, Buttler 93, Woakes 95 not out, Plunkett 22 not out; Lakmal 2-65, Mathews 2-22, Pradeep 2-64)
Result: Match tied.
Player-of-the-match: Chris Woakes.

'We are one of the favourites'

REUTERS, Bordeaux



Croatia striker Nikola Kalinic believes his country are now one of the favourites at Euro 2016 after beating Spain to win Group D.

Bookmakers' odds for the Balkan nation to win the tournament have been changed from 16-1 to 8-1 after the 2-1 victory in Bordeaux. Kalinic scored the equaliser to cancel out Spain's early goal before Ivan Perisic grabbed a late winner.

'It was difficult after we fell behind but we showed that we are shoulder to shoulder with the world's top teams,' Kalinic said. 'We are now one of the big favourites of this tournament.'

Having been fined 100,000 euros for crowd trouble caused by their fans in a 2-2 draw against the Czechs, a makeshift Croatian side came from behind against the Spaniards after coach Ante Cacic made five changes to his side.

Kalinic's confidence may not be misplaced as Croatia's 20-year-olds Tin Jedvaj and Marko Rog, both of whom were winning only their third caps, showed maturity beyond their years.

Forward Marko Pjaca also shone as he delivered a defence-splitting pass for Perisic's winner, with injured playmaker Luka Modric, Croatia's key player, celebrating on the bench.

But Ivan Rakitic, who got the better of his Barcelona teammates featuring for Spain, struck a note of caution.

'Let's not get carried away,' said the attacking midfielder who added he had "a few things to explain" to his Spanish wife.

'We are overjoyed, we will celebrate this win thoroughly but there is no room for complacency.'

Perisic added: 'We bounced back after what happened against the Czechs and won the group, but it will mean nothing if we fail now.'



Argentina superstar Lionel Messi (R) celebrates after scoring the second goal from a freekick during their Copa America semifinal against USA in Houston on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP