

Italy send Spain home

AFP, Paris



Giorgio Chiellini and Craziano Pelle scored the goals as Italy exacted revenge for their Euro 2012 final hammering by dumping Spain out of Euro 2016 with a deserved 2-0 last 16 win in Paris on Monday.

Chiellini forced home the winner from close range after goalkeeper David de Gea could only parry Eder's fiercely struck free-kick. Pelle volleyed in a deflected cross in injury time to complete Spain's heartbreak.

After crashing out of the World Cup in the first round, Vicente del Bosque's team have now failed to get to the Euro quarter-finals.

A series of De Gea saves kept Spain in the game, but their quest for an unprecedented third consecutive Euro title peetered out as Gianluigi Buffon saved from Andres Iniesta and Gerard Pique late on to set up a mouthwatering quarter-final clash with Germany on Saturday in Bordeaux.

Spain had lost just one of their previous 11 meetings with Italy, including a 4-0 win in the Euro 2012 final. But the Azzurri were by far the

better side in the opening 45 minutes and could have been more than one goal up at the break.

De Gea had been much-criticised for his performance as Spain's 15-game unbeaten in the Euros came to an end on Tuesday with a 2-1 defeat to Croatia which cost them top spot in Group D.

However, the Manchester United stopper more than made amends when he turned Pelle's bullet header wide on eight minutes.

Emanuele Giaccherini's acrobatic effort was then turned onto the post by De Gea, albeit referee Cuneyt Cakir had already blown for a foul as Italy continued to dominate the early exchanges.

It took Spain 28 minutes to even have an effort on goal as Iniesta's weak shot was straight at Buffon.

Antonio Conte's side finally made the breakthrough 12 minutes before half-time when Spain captain Sergio Ramos unnecessarily dived in on Pelle to concede a free-kick on the edge of the box. Eder's powerful effort was parried by De Gea only as far as Giaccherini and he nudged the ball into Chiellini's path to bundle home.

Only a De Gea wonder save to tip a fiercely dipping drive from Giaccherini

over kept Spain in the game before half-time.

Spain coach Vicente del Bosque introduced the more physical presence of 35-year-old striker Arritz Aduriz for Nolito at the break.

And it nearly paid dividends straight away as Alvaro Morata -- kept quiet in the first 45 minutes by former Juventus teammates Chiellini, Andrea Barzagli and Leonardo Bonucci -- headed a golden chance straight at Buffon.

De Gea was called upon once more to block from Eder when the Brazilian-born Inter Milan forward burst clear on goal with the chance to double Italy's advantage.

Another Italy counter-attack then caused chaos in the Spanish defence as Mattia de Sciglio's low cross ricocheted around the box before being cleared.

Aduriz swept the ball wide and Ramos headed over from a corner as Italy began to settle on their one-goal lead in the final quarter.

Iniesta's rasping volley was tipped over by Buffon, before Pique's long-range effort stung the palms of the 38-year-old.

Italy comfortably held on and Pelle doubled the lead with his poacher's strike in the first minute of injury time.



An emotional Giorgio Chiellini (C) celebrates Italy's opening goal with Emanuele Giaccherini (L) and Citadin Martins Eder during their Euro 2016 clash against Spain on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

Novak off the mark

AFP, London



World number one Novak Djokovic got his campaign for a third successive Wimbledon title off to a winning start with a 6-0, 7-6 (7/3), 6-4 victory over Britain's James Ward on Monday.

While five-time champion Venus Williams battled past Croatian teenager Donna Vekic 7-6 (7/3), 6-4.

Williams, 36, is the oldest woman in the main draw of this year's tournament and first won Wimbledon in 2000 when Vekic was just four.

The world number eight, playing in a record-equalling 71st Grand Slam, will play Greek qualifier Maria Sakkari for a place in the third round.

Former world number one Ana Ivanovic was knocked out, losing 6-2, 7-5 to Russian qualifier, Ekaterina Alexandrova, the world 223.

Djokovic, the holder of 12 Grand Slams after clinching a first French Open earlier this month, is on target for the record books.

A fourth Wimbledon title would make him just the second man since Don Budge

in 1938 to win five straight majors.

It would also put him three-quarters of the way to becoming the first since Rod Laver in 1969 to complete the calendar Grand Slam.

Top seed Djokovic, who holds all four majors, goes on to face France's Adrian Panarino for a place in the last 32.

"The first nine games were flawless," said Djokovic, who raced out into a 6-0, 3-0 lead before Ward, ranked at 177, steadied the ship.

"James had a few nerves but he was playing better in the second set. Overall it was a solid performance for me. It's always special to come back to the cradle of our sport."

Djokovic has won six of the last eight Grand Slams, taking him to a career tally of 12 -- within two of Rafael Nadal's mark and five behind Roger Federer's record.

Federer, whose last major triumph was at Wimbledon in 2012 when he won his seventh title at the All England Club, begins later Monday against Argentina's world number 51 Guido Pella.

Federer, 34, has been runner-up to Djokovic for the last two years and is attempting to become the oldest ever Wimbledon champion in modern times.

Alves arrives in Turin

AFP, Rome

Brazil international Dani Alves has arrived in Turin ahead of a medical with Juventus on Monday, the Italian Serie A champions announced on Twitter.

The 33-year-old full-back left Barcelona in June at the end of his contract, after eight seasons with the Catalan giants produced 23 trophies.

"Look at who just landed in Turin. Welcome Dani Alves," Juve posted above a photo of the player on Twitter.

A video shows Alves getting into a car where he says "Come on Juve, let's go".

After leaving Sevilla for the Camp Nou in 2008, the Brazilian claimed six La Liga titles and three Champions League winners' medals.

Hazard turns it on

AFP, Toulouse



Eden Hazard could eclipse his "difficult" season with Chelsea by taking Euro 2016 by storm, according to Axel Witsel.

Hazard struggled to make his mark for Belgium as they finished runner-up place in Group E behind Italy.

But in a man-of-the-match performance against Hungary in Toulouse on Sunday, Hazard, captain for the night, turned on the style to score his maiden goal as his country secured a last eight fight against Wales in Lille.

It will be the Red Devils' first European Championship quarter-finals since they lost the 1980 final.

Although Hazard warned Wales will be a "complicated" side to play, Belgium are now waiting for a repeat performance against Gareth Bale's side on Friday.

"If we want to go all the way, we need Eden to be playing like he did tonight," said Zenit Saint Petersburg midfielder Witsel.

"He's getting better match by match, and it's good for us. He has all the qualities needed to win the (FIFA) Ballon d'Or (award)

or to become the world's best player.

"For me, he's already among the world's best. After his difficult season at Chelsea. He's playing a lot more freer, scoring goals and giving assists."

Chelsea teammate and goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois had little to do in a one-sided performance that saw Tottenham defender Toby Alderweireld head a 10th minute lead before Belgium added three more goals in the second half.

Their driving force, he said, was Hazard.

"Hazard was fantastic," said Courtois. "When he wants to, he's one of the best players in the world."

Hazard was handed the captain's armband by coach Marc Wilmots, and the 25-year-old responded by producing what he said was his best performance in a Belgian shirt.

Wilmots said he told Hazard to do the talking with his boots.

"Everyone knows he talks a lot, but a captain can't just talk about scoring," said the Belgium coach.

"I told him I wanted him to score a goal, that he didn't shoot enough. And tonight, his feet did the talking."

Sanchez crowned Copa's best

AGENCIES, Phoenix

Alexis Sanchez has been crowned the Copa America Centenario's best player after Chile won the tournament for the second successive year.

Defending champions Chile made it back-to-back wins with a 4-2 penalty shoot-out victory over Argentina following a goalless 120 minutes in Sunday's fiery final in New Jersey.

And afterwards at MetLife Stadium, Alexis received the Golden Ball award for his efforts throughout the century tournament in the United States, where he scored three goals and had four assists.

Chile captain and goalkeeper Claudio Bravo took the Golden Glove for a second consecutive year.



Novak Djokovic stretches to make a return against James Ward during their men's singles first round match at the All England Lawn Tennis Club in Wimbledon yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Trophy won, but work to be done

REUTERS, Bridgetown



Australia, the world's top-ranked one-day international side, need to work on a number of aspects to improve ahead of next year's Champions Trophy, captain Steve Smith said after they won a triangular series in the West Indies on Sunday.

All-rounder Mitchell Marsh's bowling and wicketkeeper Matthew Wade's lower middle order batting powered Australia to a 58-run win against hosts West Indies in the final of the tournament, which also included South Africa.

"I was pleased with the way we scrapped today," Smith told reporters after the victory in Barbados. "I am using that word a lot. But that's been bit of a theme in this series with the kind of wickets we have been playing on."

The Champions Trophy, featuring the top eight teams in the world, will be held next June in England and Wales where Australia have been grouped with the hosts, New Zealand and Bangladesh.

In Sunday's final, West Indies made a brisk start in their chase of 271 with a 49-run opening stand between Johnson Charles and Andre Fletcher before Australia wrested back control and Smith said his bowlers need to start better with the new ball.

"We have to continue to start well with the ball," the 27-year-old said. "In the last probably three or four series we have been up against some pretty dynamic opening batters. They have got the better of us at the start."

"We have been lucky enough to pull back in the middle overs and bowl pretty well at the death. We will make things a lot easier for ourselves if we start really well, hit good areas and

execute our plans."

Smith was confident that Australia's young team will only get better as they play more together.

"We still got a lot of areas to work on ... our fielding still needs a lot of work. We need to have the energy we had today in every game," he said.

"Hopefully as this group continues to play more together we will continue to learn each other's games and continue to gel well as a team."

SCORES IN BRIEF
AUSTRALIA: 270 for 9 in 50 overs (Finch 47, Smith 46, Bailey 22, Marsh 32, Wade 57 not out; Gabriel 2-58)
WEST INDIES: 212 all out in 45.4 overs (Charles 45, Ramdin 40, Pollard 20, Holder 34, Narine 23; Hazlewood 5-50, Marsh 3-32)
Result: Australia won by 58 runs.
Player-of-the-match: Mitchell Marsh.
Player-of-the-series: Josh Hazlewood.

Chile deny Argentina again

AFP, East Rutherford



Holders Chile stunned Argentina to win the Copa America Centenario in a penalty shoot-out here Sunday as Lionel Messi's title curse struck again.

Messi blazed a penalty over the bar in the shoot-out before Lucas Biglia missed to leave Chile's Francisco Silva with the task of stroking home the winning spot-kick at the MetLife Stadium.

It was a carbon copy of last year's Copa America final, also won by Chile on penalties after a goalless draw.

Argentina's players meanwhile were left disconsolate as they digested a third defeat in a major final following losses to Germany in the 2014 World Cup and Chile in last year's Copa.

The defeat also ensured Argentina's 23-year wait for a major title -- and a first for five-time world player of the year Messi -- continued.

The final had gone to penalties after finishing deadlocked at 0-0 after 120 minutes.

Both sides were reduced to 10 men in the first half as Brazilian referee Heber Lopes struggled to get a grip on an ill-tempered contest played in front of a crowd of 82,026.

The first yellow card of the match came in the 16th minute when Marcelo Diaz brought down Messi with a cynical hack across the thighs as the Barcelona star advanced on the Chilean goal.

Argentina should have taken the lead on 21 minutes when a defensive blunder from Gary Medel, miscontrolling a back pass, allowed Gonzalo Higuain to go clean through on goal.

Higuain had time and space but opted to lift his shot over the advancing Bravo and it rolled wide of the post in a huge let-off for Chile.

It was a nightmarish case of deja vu for Higuain, who missed potentially match winning chances in both the 2014 World Cup final and last year's Copa America.

Seven minutes later Chile were left rocking when Messi burst forward only to be bodychecked blatantly by Diaz.

For a moment it appeared that referee Lopes had forgotten Diaz's earlier caution but eventually he brandished a red card and Chile were down to 10.

It ought to have been a warning to both sides but the spiteful tone contin-

Two minutes from half-time and Lopes was reaching for a red card, this time sending off Manchester United's Marcos Rojo for a rough tackle on Vidal.

The cards continued in a fractious start to the second half, Jean Beausejour booked for hacking at Gabriel Mercado.

A cynical foul on Messi by Charles Aranguiz resulted in another yellow card.

The introduction of Sergio Aguero for Higuain had little effect with



Chile players celebrate with the Copa America Centenario trophy after winning the final against Argentina in East Rutherford on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Argentina failing to break the stalemate.

Chile striker Eduardo Vargas went close on the 80th minute, thumping a fierce low shot that Romero did well to block at his near post.

Aguero had a chance to steal victory in the 84th minute when he was worked into space on the right of the box but he blazed his shot high and wide.

There was still time for late drama when Ramiro Funes-Mori made a stunning match-saving block to deny Alexis Sanchez.