



Subasic never gave up

FIFA.COM

Daniyel Subasic embodied heroism in Sochi. The Croatia goalkeeper went into the FIFA World Cup quarterfinals carrying a knock, aggravated it against Russia, played through the pain rather than going off, made a fine block from a tight angle to deny the hosts victory in second-half stoppage time, and saved a penalty to help his country win the shootout.

It made Croatia just the second side in the competition's history to win back-to-back ties on penalties - Subasic repelled three spot-kicks as they eliminated Denmark in the Round of 16 - after Argentina in 1990. It made the 33-year-old only the third man to make four saves in World Cup shootouts, equalling the record shared by Harald Schumacher and Sergio Goycochea.

It also underscored why many feel Subasic, who kept clean sheets in his two appearances in the group stage, against Nigeria and a Lionel Messi-spearheaded Argentina, is among the forerunners for the adidas Golden Glove.

"I started warming up before kick-off and I felt the pain in the muscle," Subasic explained to FIFA.com after the thriller at Fisht Stadium. "My physiotherapist massaged my leg a bit and saw I could play."

"Later, I felt the pain again, but I didn't want to give up. I knew that



the coach needed another substitution. During the break the masseurs did some quick work and, like a Formula One car after a pit stop, I was as good as new.

"It's been a long season, but you play in a World Cup semifinal once in a lifetime and there's no point giving up now."

Croatia's opponents in Moscow are England, and Subasic is relishing the clash.

"England have great players -- they are a fantastic team," he said. "They have a lot of youngsters, but they are really good, fast, they play for great clubs. It will be another very tough match for us, a great challenge."

"We don't really care about who

we play or who are the favourites. It's important that we do our best on the pitch. Just do your best and it ends how it ends."

A Croatia side featuring Zvonimir Boban, Robert Prosinecki and Davor Suker wowed the world at France 1998, leading the hosts before falling 2-1 in the semifinals. And the Monaco man, who was voted Ligue 1's best goalkeeper in 2016/17, is determined for the Vatreni not to fall at the same stage again.

"Some of my personal, life goals were to play at the World Cup and especially this: to play a significant role in the games. I've worked hard at my club to achieve this level, and now I enjoy it. Let this story go on!"

Rooney lauds England

AFP, Washington

England and Manchester United top career goalscorer Wayne Rooney praised his homeland's "fantastic" World Cup effort on Monday, cheering the buzz and belief their semifinal run in Russia has inspired.

Rooney appeared at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new \$200 million home stadium of DC United, where the 32-year-old striker makes his Major League Soccer debut Saturday against Vancouver.

"They are doing fantastic. Hopefully we can get the win," Rooney said. "It's great. You see the atmosphere back home. There are billions watching it. Hopefully we can get through and go on to the final."

Manager Gareth Southgate's England squad will face Croatia in a Wednesday semifinal for a berth in Sunday's championship match against either France or Belgium.

"For the players and Gareth, I wish them massive good luck. They are making us all proud," Rooney said. "Hopefully they can get that one step further and get to the final and bring the Cup home."

"I've enjoyed all the buzz coming out of this. We're enjoying it and we believe."

DC United, which last won the MLS title in 2004, has the worst record in the league with two wins and five drawn from 14 matches. But there is renewed hope in Rooney and the new 20,000-seat Audi Field.

"I can't wait. I'm looking forward to it," Rooney said of Saturday's match.

Rooney will make his move from Premier League side Everton official on Tuesday when the transfer period opens and he can sign a three-year MLS deal worth \$13 million with DC United.

Dele Alli gets self-critical

REUTERS, Repino

England's run to the World Cup semifinals has prompted widespread praise but amid the euphoria midfielder Dele Alli can still be self-critical.

Alli, who scored the second goal in the 2-0 last-eight win over Sweden, admitted he was not happy with his performance in that game.

"Personally, I spoke to the manager and some of my team mates, I didn't feel like I was playing as well as I should have been," Alli told reporters.

"Even speaking to my family, I didn't feel like I was playing well, especially in the first half," he added.

Alli is often given an advanced role at his club Tottenham Hotspur supporting his England captain Harry Kane, but in Southgate's formation he has more defensive duties, helping out Jordan Henderson in midfield when England are without the ball.

Ironically, Alli says he felt he did better with the less familiar tasks than with his usual forte, making penetrating runs and providing a threat in the box. "Defensively I did my job, did what I needed to do, but I felt like in possession, obviously you want to be on the ball creating chances and being a threat. I felt like my movement was good, but on the ball I wasn't sharp enough, I didn't keep it as much as I should have," he said.

"So to score, it gives you a lift. But I'm my own biggest critic. I know I can play better than that."

Alli, who missed England's final two

group games due to a thigh injury, dismissed the notion that nerves may have got to him in the quarterfinal.

"I didn't feel nervous or anything like that. I don't really ever get nervous anyway. As players, we know that sometimes you can have games where your control isn't as good as it should be or your decision making isn't as sharp -- and I felt like it was one of those games," he said.

"But when it happens like that you have to make sure you are still benefiting the team and helping them as much as you can, off the ball. I helped the side like I always do and won the ball back as much as I could," added the 22-year-old.

Alli had a positive chat with Southgate. "He told me I'd done the other side (of the game) well and it wasn't negative. That's one of his big things. He wants you to try things, he wants you to express yourself and as a player that's what I've always been (about)," Alli said.

Alli was part of the England squad who crashed out of Euro 2016 with defeat by Iceland and he said Southgate had encouraged the players to confront that memory before the tournament.

"Straight after that game you want the floor to eat you up. You want to hide and not come out of your room. You want to forget about it and lock yourself away," Alli said.

"When Gareth came in it was the first time we relived it. You don't want to watch it back but we know how important it was, going into the World Cup, that we had to go back through it to come out stronger."



A key component in England's line-up, Dele Alli was expected to play a pivotal role for his side, but he hasn't been able to do so and he knows it. PHOTO: AFP

Robson's spirit with England

AFP, London

Bobby Robson -- the last manager to take England to the World Cup semifinals -- would be urging Gareth Southgate's team on with "every fibre of his being" says his widow Elsie.

Robson, who died of cancer in 2009, saw his dream of emulating the 1966 World Cup-winning team end with a penalty shootout defeat by eventual champions Germany in 1990.

Elsie said her late husband would have been swept away by the surprise run to the last four.

"Bob would be thrilled by the progress of this talented England team," said Elsie.

"Representing his country as a player and a manager meant the world to him and I know he would be enjoying every minute of this World Cup."

"Bob was immensely proud to reach the semifinals at Italia '90 and bitterly disappointed not to go further."

"He would be willing Gareth Southgate and the England team to go all the way in Russia with every fibre of his being."



INFO-ZONE

ENGLAND	HEAD-TO-HEAD	CROATIA
7	MATCH	7
4	WIN	2
1	DRAW	1
2	LOST	4

RESULT OF THEIR LAST MEETING:
ENGLAND 5-1 CROATIA (9 SEPTEMBER 2009)



HARRY KANE

28
19
6

KEY PLAYERS



MARIO MANDZUKIC

87
31
3



DELE ALLI

28
3
1



LUKA MODRIC

111
14
2



RAHEEM STERLING

42
2
0



IVAN PERISIC

71
19
3

TOURNAMENT STATS

GOALS SCORED	YELLOW CARDS
157	205
AVERAGE	AVERAGE
2.6	3.5
OWN GOALS	RED CARDS
11	4



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DELE ALLI
England midfielder

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Man City finally land Mahrez

AFP, London

Algerian international Riyad Mahrez secured his move to Premier League champions Manchester City on Tuesday, seven months after his hopes were dashed when City refused to pay Leicester's asking price.

This time though Leicester said they had sold him for what is a club-record fee, with some reports suggesting the champions paid £60 million, which would make it their record buy.

The 27-year-old -- a pivotal figure when Leicester stormed to a shock Premier League title in 2016 -- signed a five-year contract.

"I am so pleased to have joined City, a side playing great football under Pep Guardiola," Mahrez told the Manchester City website. "Watching them from afar has been a pleasure."

"Pep is committed to playing attacking football, which is a perfect fit for me, and City's performances last season were outstanding."

"They're redefining the English game and I wanted to be a part of it," said Mahrez.

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Answer:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

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