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Antoine Griezmann decided to try his hand at goalkeeping during France's training session in Moscow yesterday, but his ambitions were quickly put to bed after Paul Pogba's flick over his head left him red-faced.

Perisic hails 'dream' goal

AFP, Moscow

Ivan Perisic said his equaliser that helped Croatia come from behind to beat England 2-1 after extra time and reach the World Cup final was a goal that "he could only dream of" as a child.

The Inter Milan winger poked home a cross from Sime Vrsaljko to haul Croatia level midway through the second half having fallen behind to an early Kieran Trippier free-kick.

"It was a very difficult game. We all know what was at stake and how important a semifinal is for a small country like Croatia," said Perisic.

"We started slowly, but we showed our character just as in the previous two knockout games when we were a goal down. We didn't used to be that resilient."

The 29-year-old Perisic recalled watching Croatia's last semifinal appearance in 1998, a game won 2-1 by eventual champions France.

"I was back in my hometown. I rooted for Croatia wearing the Croatian jersey," said Perisic. "I could only dream to play for my country and to score one of the most important goals."

PHOTO: REUTERS

'The star on this shirt is not mine; I want mine'

REUTERS, Moscow

France are determined not to make the same mistakes they did two years ago in losing the Euro 2016 final when they take on Croatia for the biggest prize in football, midfielder Paul Pogba said on Thursday.

France face the Croats in the World Cup final at Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium on Sunday, but they are rejecting the favourites tag which cost them dearly two years ago, he said.

The French beat Germany in the Euro 2016 semifinal to set up an encounter in Paris against Portugal, who stunned them 1-0 in extra time to win the continental title.

"We are conscious of the situation, we do not want to make the same mistakes like two years ago. We want to work for it, to give everything we have to take this Cup home," Pogba told reporters.

"I think at the Euros we thought it was already a done deal, the mentality was not the same as now. I cannot lie that when we beat Germany we thought that was the final. I know the taste of losing a final. I don't want it to happen again."

"Against Portugal we thought we had won it before the start of the game. That will not happen again."

Croatia needed spot kicks to advance against Denmark in the last 16 and



against Russia in the quarter-finals. They then came from a goal down against England to win 2-1 in extra time.

That is not a sign of a struggling team, according to Pogba, but one that has a lot of talent.

"The Croats had a very difficult match and they were behind. But they are mentally very strong. There are two teams in the final, a Cup and there are 90 minutes more."

"For us, we are not the favourites. We stay as we are from the start of the tournament. We have no doubts, we play together, that's our strength. We are chasing something and will do everything to succeed."

France, world champions in 1998 after beating Croatia in the semis, are in their third World Cup final. It is unknown territory for Croatia however.

"For sure the Croats want the star, they have had a good run. They want to win. But I have no star either although there is one on my shirt. I want mine."

Pogba said while midfielder Luka Modric was their driving force the French plan would not be limited to stopping the Real Madrid playmaker.

"The Croats are not just Modric. They have [Mario] Mandzukic, [Ivan] Rakitic and [Ivan] Perisic," Pogba said. "I don't think there is a plan just for Modric. The plan is to win the match."

'Neymar's diving makes us laugh'

REUTERS, Moscow

Brazil forward Neymar's playacting makes people laugh, former Netherlands forward Marco van Basten said on Friday.

Speaking in his role as FIFA's chief officer for development, Van Basten said the Brazilian player needed to take a look at himself.

"It's not a good attitude in general. You have to try to do your best and be sporting and if you act too much, it is not going to help," he told reporters. "That's a point in which I think he should personally understand his situation."

He added: "It's always nice if we have some humour in the game and he makes people laugh and that is positive."

Neymar was undoubtedly the victim of some tough tackling at the World Cup but his playacting and diving made him a figure of mockery, especially in Europe.

However, Carlos Alberto Parreira, the head of FIFA's technical study group at the World Cup, said Neymar was often on the wrong end of some rough treatment.

"He gets knocked around a lot, he suffers a lot of fouls, sometimes he goes down unintentionally. He attracts this sort of publicity but for us (Brazil) he is still a player who makes a difference," said Parreira, who coached Brazil at the 1994 and 2006 World Cups.

Brazil's bid for a sixth world title ended when they lost 2-1 to Belgium in the quarterfinals.

Van Basten is the latest in a series of high-profile footballers to criticise Neymar, with Brazil legends Ronaldo and Cafu both saying recently that they expected more from the 26-year-old.



Rakitic says he played with fever

AGENCIES, Moscow

Ivan Rakitic revealed he was suffering with a fever in the days leading up to Croatia's 2-1 semifinal win over England at the World Cup.

Losing the 30-year-old would have been a big blow for Zlatko Dalic's Croatia, but the former Sevilla and Schalke player said he would have done everything possible to play.

"Last night I had a fever, almost 102 [degrees]," he said. "I was lying in bed finding the strength to play and it was worth it. I would play a final without a leg if necessary."

Rakitic added that hype surrounding the England team on social media did not go unnoticed by Croatia.

"They thought they were already in the final, with all the things uploaded on [social] networks," he said.

Caught in a landslide

"I was just changing my lens as the players ran towards me. They just kept coming towards me and they fell on me! It was a crazy moment, they were delighted. Then they suddenly realised that I was underneath them. Then they asked me if I was OK. Another one picked up my lens and another player (Domagoj Vida) gave me a kiss."

YURI CORTEZ
AFP PHOTOGRAPHER



Agence France-Presse photographer Yuri Cortez unwittingly became part of Croatia's unrestrained celebrations as he was buried under a pile of joyous players after the Croats scored the decisive goal against England in their World Cup semifinal on Wednesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

INFO-ZONE



HARRY KANE

6

TOP
SCORERS



ROMELU LUKAKU

4

GOALS SCORED



DENIS CHERYSHEV

4



CRISTIANO RONALDO

4

GOALS SCORED



ARTEM DZYUBA

3



GRIEZMANN

3

GOALS SCORED



GUILLERMO OCHOA

25

TOP
SAVES



THIBAUT COURTOIS

22

SHOTS SAVED



KASPER SCHMEICHEL

21



JORDAN PICKFORD

15

SHOTS SAVED

TOURNAMENT STATS

GOALS SCORED

161

AVERAGE

2.6

OWN GOALS

11

YELLOW CARDS

213

AVERAGE

3.5

RED CARDS

4



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The Daily Star

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