



England were in high spirits despite their heart-breaking loss to Croatia in their World Cup semifinal and The Three Lions will be hoping to take at least a consolation third-place finish back home. Belgium's Eden Hazard meanwhile will be hoping to electrify the crowd once again and, with a good enough performance, may be rewarded with a Golden Ball. PHOTO: COLLECTED/REUTERS

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Belgium and England reluctantly meet again

Southgate cites German model as road to glory



REUTERS, Saint Petersburg
Belgium and England have already met during the World Cup in a match both teams seemed reluctant to win and on Saturday they will face each other again in a game they both seem reluctant to play.
The two sides must pick themselves up and dust themselves down after suffering the crushing disappointment of semifinal defeats to play for the modest prize of third place in a fixture often criticised as pointless.
"It's not a game any team wants to play," said England manager Gareth Southgate after his team lost 2-1 to Croatia after extra time in Wednesday's second semifinal.
"Of course, we want to win, we'll be ready to go again because the team take great pride in

their performances. It's a bit too early after that defeat to think about it."
His Belgian counterpart Roberto Martinez was similarly unenthused about the game after his side were beaten 1-0 by France on Tuesday.
"It's a difficult emotion to manage. You're disappointed because you lose the semifinal, and it's very difficult to see the opportunity of playing another game as a positive," he said.
Even so, he said he would try to lift his team.
"We need to regroup and recover and see the opportunity. To try to finish third in the World Cup doesn't happen often. The only time it happened in Belgian football was in 1986, when we finished fourth."
The two teams previously met in their final group stage game when both had already guar-

anteed a place in the last 16 -- with the twist that the side who finished second would land in the easier side of the draw.
Martinez switched nine players and Southgate brought in eight, a decision he described as a 'no brainer' in the circumstances.
Belgium won 1-0 and were rewarded with games against Japan, Brazil and France while England played Colombia, Sweden and Croatia but the end result for both sides was the same.
Both teams are in their second third-place match, Belgium having lost to France in 1986 and England to Italy four years later. It tends to be a high-scoring affair with each of the last four winners scoring three goals -- Turkey in 2002, Germany in 2006 and 2010 and Netherlands in 2014.

AFP, Saint Petersburg
England manager Gareth Southgate hopes his team can ride the momentum generated by their run to the World Cup semifinals and follow the path Germany took to the top of international football.
Southgate and his players have been hailed back home after reaching the last four for the first time since 1990, and for bringing together a nation bitterly divided over Brexit.
"They see a team that leaves everything on the pitch, which they have, and played with style. I think the public have enjoyed it," Southgate said before Saturday's third place play-off against Belgium.
"They've got to know the players a little bit better and realised the perception is different from the reality. I feel there'll be an affinity and something we can build on."
He used the example of the feel-good aspect of Germany's performance at the 2006 finals, where the hosts -- with a young team like the current England crop -- won over a nation despite losing to Italy in the semifinals.
"The youth and enthusiasm of the team propelled them back into the minds of their public," said Southgate.
"The downside was it took them another eight years to win (the World Cup). I'm not looking for eight years by

the way but internationally you have to wait every two years.
"We'll be stronger then because of age and big-match experiences that build resilience."
Bobby Robson and Terry Venables, the last two men to lead England to semi-finals -- at the 1990 World Cup and Euro 96 -- left their jobs immediately afterwards.
However, Southgate has a contract until 2020, which could be extended until beyond the 2022 World Cup, giving England stability.
"We've set a benchmark for how we work," he said. "There is a culture that exists now that any new player that comes in has to follow."
"We're here to improve every time we play," he continued.
"There were low expectations that relieved the pressure coming into the tournament but still pressure to get out of the group, win a knockout game and win a shootout and they coped with that.
"If you want to play for England you have to cope with that. Players can now associate playing for England with enjoyment, fun and not feeling under siege as if everything is against them."
The sense that a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity may have passed Southgate and his squad by still clearly resonates with the England boss.

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BEST BRONZE BOUTS

 <p>Leonidas 1938 SWEDEN 2-4 BRAZIL</p> <p>Leonidas, who was inexplicably left out of the semifinal loss to Italy as Brazil 'wanted to keep him fresh for the final' returned to the line-up against Sweden for their third-place match in the second World Cup. The Black Diamond struck twice to give Brazil the win and claim the Golden Boot in the process. It was not quite the perfect curtain-call, but it was a rousing performance from arguably the Selecao's first in a long line of World Cup stars.</p>	 <p>Just Fontaine 1958 France 6-3 Germany</p> <p>Still arguably the best third-place game in the World Cup's history, and inspired by its finest individual performer, this nine-goal thriller featured nearly everything, barring the greatest prize in the footballing world. After scoring twice in their semifinal loss to Brazil, Frenchman Just Fontaine ran riot, scoring four times against the defending champions to underline his credentials and take his tally for the tournament to a frankly ridiculous 13, a record to this day.</p>	 <p>Bernard Genghini 1986 Belgium 2-4 France</p> <p>Having lost to Poland in the same game four years earlier, France responded with a thrilling victory in Puebla. France's Jean-Marc Ferreri cancelled out Jan Ceulemans strike before Jean-Pierre Papin gave them the lead. However Belgium found another equaliser and the match rolled into extra time; still the only third-place game to have run that long. In the last 30 minutes, strikes from Bernard Genghini and Manuel Amoros sealed the win.</p>	 <p>Hakan Suker 2002 S Korea 2-3 Turkey</p> <p>The two surprise packages of 16 years ago served up a treat in Daegu in the South Korea and Japan World third place match. Although many still question the plethora of favourable calls that went the South Koreans' way to get them to the stage, those questions were temporarily cast aside when Hakan Sukur scored the fastest World Cup goal in history, after 10.8 seconds. And a further two goals in the first 13 minutes only added to the drama.</p>	 <p>Arjen Robben 2014 Brazil 0-3 Netherlands</p> <p>A spectacle, if not a contest. Brazil seemed to be in national mourning after their 7-1 destruction by Germany in the semifinals. Meanwhile Louis van Gaal's Netherlands had come off a streaky loss to Argentina after some dominant performances. In the game, the Dutch showed no mercy. Robin van Persie scored from the spot three minutes into the game but it was Arjen Robben who ran the show, as it did for the majority of the World Cup.</p>
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