



Striker Moise Kean shone on his full debut with the Italy national team, scoring 16 minutes from time after finishing his brilliant run with a powerful strike in a 2-0 win over Finland. In another EURO 2020 qualifier, (inset) Sergio Ramos scored from the spot to secure three points for Spain against Norway.

PHOTO: TWITTER/AFP



Ramos helps Spain edge Norway

Ronaldo-inspired Kean stars for Italy

AFP, Paris



Sergio Ramos scored a second-half penalty to help Spain beat a spirited Norway 2-1 on Saturday in their opening Euro 2020 qualifier, while teenage striker Moise Kean netted in Italy's win over Finland.

Spain were not at their clinical best in Valencia, but got their Group F campaign off to a solid start despite Norway threatening an upset.

The 2010 World Cup winners have been unpredictable of late, having been dumped out by Russia in the last 16 of the World Cup and then missing out on the Nations League finals after a home loss to England.

"The team responded well to their equaliser. You always have the dream and aim of achieving something important," Ramos told Spanish television channel TVE. "We're in a new stage with a coach who has a fantastic style of play.

We'll take things game by game. We'll pick up more confidence from winning."

Coach Luis Enrique named an attacking line-up, with Marco Asensio, Alvaro Morata and Rodrigo all starting, and it was the latter who volleyed home the opener from Jordi Alba's cross in the 16th minute.

Norway started to grow into the game and were handed a chance to draw level in the 65th minute when Inigo Martinez grabbed Bjorn Johnsen, and Bournemouth striker Joshua King stepped up to slot past David de Gea.

Spain wasted little time in getting their noses back in front, though, as Jarstein felled Morata to concede a 71st-minute penalty. Centre-back Ramos stepped up and confidently dispatched a 'Panenka' spot-kick down the middle to score his 16th goal of the season for club and country.

In Udine, Juventus youngster Kean, 19, became the youngest striker to start for Italy in more than a century as Roberto Mancini's men

saw off Finland 2-0.

Italy got off to a flying start as Nicolò Barella gave them a seventh-minute lead with his maiden international goal. The 22-year-old Cagliari midfielder hammered home a low volley after a free-kick was only half-cleared by the Finnish defence.

The day belonged to Kean, though, as he slotted in the second with 16 minutes to play to mark his full debut in style.

"I learn from Cristiano Ronaldo, in training, I steal his secrets," said Kean, who was born in Vercelli, a town between Milan and Turin, to Ivorian parents. "I always try to be ready and train regularly so that I'm prepared when the time comes.

"This is a beautiful evening, but I know that I still have so many records to beat and I intend to beat them.

"To become part of Azzurri history is an added incentive to keep working," said Kean. "There are many goals ahead of me and my aim is to achieve them. I wanted to show that I deserved this chance from Mancini."

Bangladeshi's Messi drawing comes alive

AFP, Dhaka



A young Bangladeshi architect has earned fame after his digital drawing of Lionel Messi was matched in real life six years later.

Suhas Nahian's 2013 artwork shows Messi dribbling past a group of players in green and white, leaning his head forward as one of the defenders grabs his red-and-blue Barcelona jersey.

Photos of Messi shot during a recent match against Real Betis show him in an almost identical pose, complete with one defender on the ground as the Argentinian charges through.

"I painted something 6 years ago, and

football gods made the image come true," Suhas, 29, said on Instagram.

He told AFP that he watched the La Liga match but noticed nothing exceptional until a friend phoned him and excitedly pointed out the striking similarities.

"I looked back and found those are actually very similar," he said. "It was fascinating, I was surprised."

Suhas said he did not choose Betis's white and green jersey consciously.

"Barcelona's jersey is very vibrant with blue and red, so from the point of colour I wanted to paint the rest of the painting in green so that Messi stays in focus," he said. "So I chose this green and white jersey, not specifically thinking of Betis but from the sense of colour."



Brazil denied by resolute Panama

AFP, Porto



Brazil were held to a 1-1 draw against Panama in an international friendly played at Porto's Dragao Stadium on Saturday.

AC Milan's Lucas Paqueta claimed his first international goal for the five-time World Cup winners before captain Adolfo Machado responded for the side in 76th place in the world rankings.

Injured PSG forward Neymar watched from the stands as he recovers from a fractured right foot.

"The performance wasn't brilliant but it wasn't below par," coach Tite said. "When we go to the Copa America we will make more accurate choices to be more efficient."

The Selecao opened the scoring just after the half-hour mark. Midfielder Paqueta was on the end of a deep Casemiro cross to volley home at the backpost.



Lucas Paqueta celebrates his first international goal for Brazil. The AC Milan midfielder was on hand to fire home a volley but it was not enough as Panama hit back to secure a draw.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Osaka, Zverev stunned

AFP, Miami



Naomi Osaka crashed out of the third round of the WTA and ATP Miami Open on Saturday as Hsieh Su-Wei exacted revenge for a painful Australian Open defeat with a 4-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 victory.

World number one Osaka had looked in little danger after winning the first set and moving a break ahead in the second. But Taiwan's Hsieh battled superbly.

"This was a very emotional win for me," said Hsieh. "Any time you beat one of the top players it is amazing."

It wasn't the only shocker of the day, as Spanish veteran David Ferrer rallied to beat world number three Alexander Zverev 2-6, 7-5, 6-3 to reach the third round.

Ferrer, 36 and ranked 155th in

the world, received a wild card into the tournament as he continues a limited schedule in a 2019 billed as his farewell tour.

The 33-year-old Hsieh will play Caroline Wozniacki in the fourth round of the women's draw, which now looks wide open following Osaka's defeat and former world number one Serena Williams's surprise exit with a left knee injury.

Elsewhere, Roger Federer survived a scare but battled back from a set down to beat Radu Albot 4-6-7-5-6-3.

"I've never really seen him play live matches so I watched some video to get an idea about him," Federer said.

"I see where he can cause problems. I have a lot of respect for those types of players who don't have the size, so have to find a different way to win. I'm happy I was able to find a way."

Proteas sweep SL in T20Is

AFP, Johannesburg

A tour that started with an unexpected Test series triumph ended with a second successive limited overs series humiliation for Sri Lanka when South Africa won the third and final Twenty20 international on Sunday.

South Africa made a daunting 198 for two and Sri Lanka were beaten by 45 runs using the DLS method when they were bowled out for 137 as they chased a reduced target of 183.

It completed a 3-0 series sweep for South Africa, who also won a one-day series 5-0.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: 198 for 2 (Hendricks 66, Pretorius 77 not out; Vandersay 1-35)

SRI LANKA: 137 all out in 15.4 overs (Dickwella 38; Phehlukwayo 4-24)

Result: South Africa won by 45 runs (DLS method) and won the series 3-0.

Player-of-the-match: D Pretorius
Player-of-the-series: R Hendricks



26 + 03 + 19

GLORIOUS 48 YEARS

You can solve an equation by adding numbers, but it is impossible to measure and solve the equation of infinite contribution by the martyrs of our country. On the 48th anniversary of Independence, we salute the martyrs with immense respect.

Let us create a glorious history with humble tribute.