

## STOICHKOV BREAKS DOWN IN TEARS ON TELEVISION

Bulgaria legend Hristo Stoichkov broke down in tears while speaking about the racial abuse England players suffered during a match against his country on Monday night. The Euro 2020 qualifier in Sofia was halted twice as England's players were subjected to racist chants and monkey noises. Stoichkov, a Ballon d'Or winner and Bulgaria's greatest ever player, was asked how to tackle racism during a television appearance on TUDN and got emotional. "[The solution is] That fans are not allowed in the stadium or even heavier punishments. Like in England. Five years without going to stadiums. People don't deserve to suffer." The 53-year-old then leaned forward and appeared to start to cry as the conversation moved on to the other guests. It appeared Stoichkov was talking about a similar punishment to that imposed by UEFA in the aftermath of Heysel when English clubs were banned from European competitions for five years.

-- AGENCIES



# Spain leave it late

AFP, Paris



Rodrigo Moreno fired Spain into Euro 2020 with a last-gasp equaliser in Sweden while the Republic of Ireland's chances of reaching the finals are still in the balance after they fell 2-0 in Switzerland.

Spain became the sixth team to qualify for next summer's tournament thanks to Rodrigo, who came off the bench to score a dramatic injury-time leveller in a 1-1 draw in Stockholm, sparking wild celebrations on the touchline.

"Qualification is a must for a team like Spain but achieving it still has value," said Moreno. "It releases the pressure and gives us time to work."

Robert Moreno's side are top of Group F on 20 points after drawing their last two matches. They are five ahead of Sweden and six above Romania.

However it was a far from vintage display from Spain, who started brightly but faded as the match wore on against the lively hosts, who were distraught after missing out on a famous victory right at the death.

A celebratory night was tempered slightly by the loss of goalkeeper David de Gea to a thigh injury in the second half, although that will worry his club Manchester United more ahead their meeting with Premier League leaders Liverpool this weekend.

In Group D, Haris Seferovic's early strike and Shane Duffy's late own goal kept Switzerland's hopes of automatic qualification alive with a 2-0 victory over the Republic of Ireland.

The win in Geneva means the Swiss are

just a point behind group leaders Ireland and Denmark with two matches remaining in their campaign, compared to just the one for the Irish, who host the Danes needing win to guarantee qualification.

"It's a cup final. Beat Denmark to reach Euro 2020. I would have taken that at the start and I'll take it now," said coach Mick McCarthy. The Swiss take on Georgia and Gibraltar in their final two games.

"The result doesn't mean a lot in the group, we still need to get results in our next two games. If we get the points we need against Georgia and Gibraltar we can turn our attentions to Euro 2020," said Switzerland coach Vladimir Petkov.

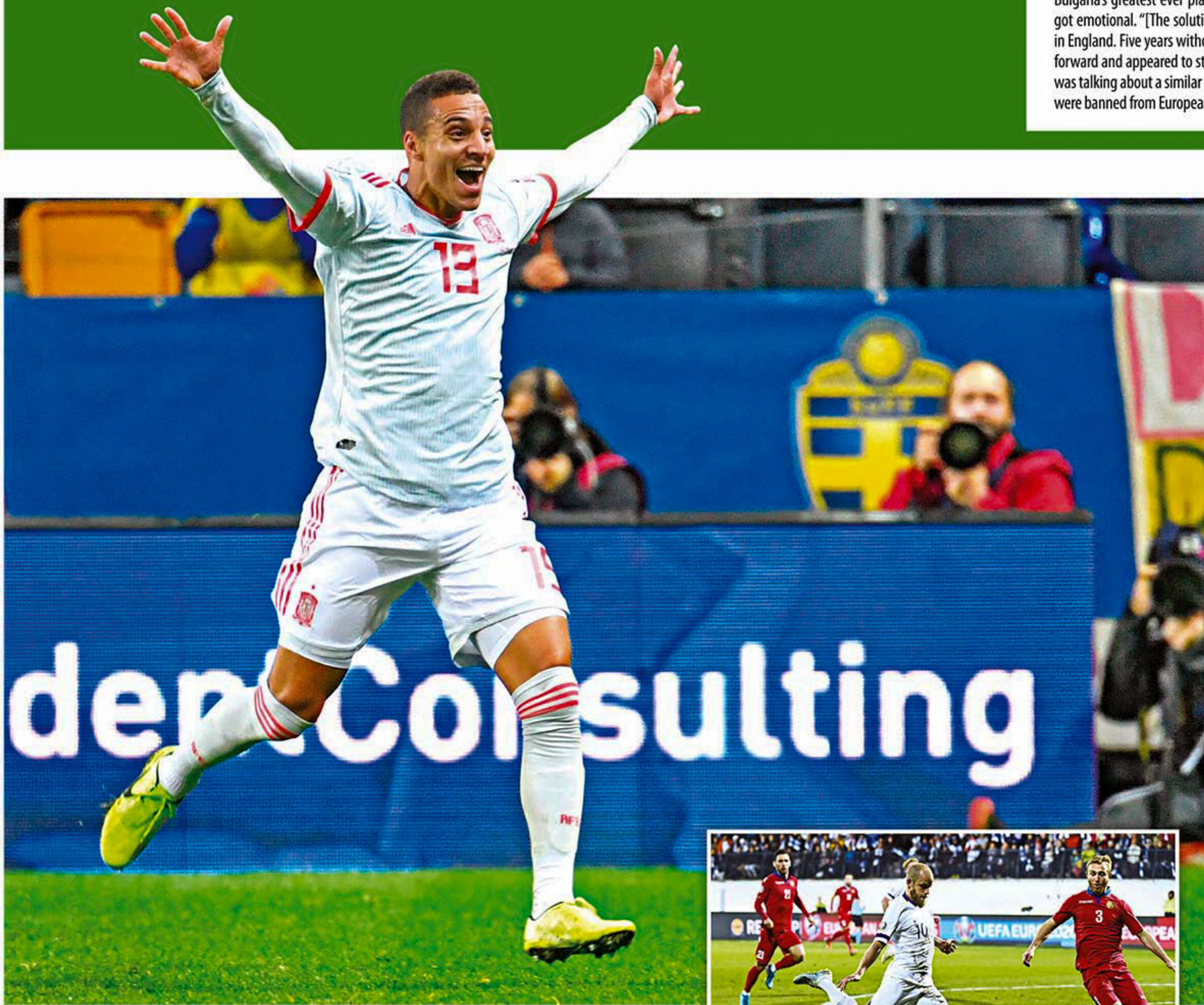
## PUKKI EDGES FINLAND TOWARDS HISTORY

Finland inched closer to qualifying for their first ever European Championships after Teemu Pukki took his qualifying tally to seven in eight matches with a double to sweep aside Armenia 3-0 in Turku.

Fredrik Jensen gave the Finns a 31th minute lead. Norwich City striker Pukki then scored just after the hour and got his second two minutes from the end with a neat dinked finish.

Markku Kanerva's side stay nine points behind Group J winners Italy, who maintained their 100 per cent record with an eighth straight win, 5-0 against Liechtenstein.

Finland need a win over rock-bottom Liechtenstein to qualify for their first major tournament after fourth-placed Bosnia & Herzegovina lost 2-1 in Greece with an 88th-minute own goal from Adnan Kovacevic.



Spain forward Rodrigo Moreno celebrates after his equaliser late into the Euro 2020 qualifier ensured Spain's advancement to the tournament proper. (Inset) Meanwhile, Teemu Pukki scored a brace against Armenia to take Finland closer to a historic berth in European football's showpiece tournament.

PHOTO: AFP



## Shaila to lead emerging team in SL

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced a 15-member Bangladesh squad for the upcoming ACC Women's Emerging Teams Asia Cup yesterday. Shaila Sharmin will lead the team in the four-nation tournament which will take place in Sri Lanka from October 22.

Bangladesh will take on India in the opening game of the tournament at Thurstan grounds in Colombo. The teams -- Sri Lanka and Pakistan being the other two -- will face each other once and the top two teams will play the final on October 27 at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo.

The Bangladesh women's A team recently lost both the one-day and T20 series against India A at home recently while the national team are still awaiting a security approval for the tour of Pakistan later this month.

Squad: Shaila Sharmin (captain), Nuzhat Tasnia, Murshida Khatun, Sobhana Mostary, Fahima Khatun, Ritu Moni, Ishma Tanjim, Rubya Haider, Nahida Akter, Suraya Azmim, Puja Chakraborty, Rabeya, Mumta Hena, Fariha Islam, Sumaiya Akter.

## 6 Bulgarians held by police

AFP, Sofia

Six Bulgarians have been detained over racist abuse at a Euro 2020 qualifier against England that sparked a storm of protest and led to the resignation of the country's football chief, police said Wednesday.

Monkey chants and Nazi salutes overshadowed England's 6-0 win in Sofia on Monday, with the match halted twice during the first half due to the abuse.

"Six people have been detained and another three are being actively sought," Sofia police chief commissioner Georgy Hadzhiev told journalists.

Hadzhiev added that so far 15 people had been singled out via CCTV at the Vasil Levski National Stadium as being suspected of directing abuse against England's black players.

Penalties for the offences carry brief detentions, fines and bans from sports events.

## UEFA ASSIST U-16 DEVELOPMENT FOOTBALL

# Winning start for hosts

SPORTS REPORTER



Midfielder Moinul Islam bagged a brace as Bangladesh made a winning start to the four-team UEFA Assist Under-16 Development Tournament with a 2-0 victory over Cambodia at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

After a barren first-half, Moin broke the deadlock in the 49th minute with a placing shot past the advancing Cambodia goalkeeper on an excellent long ball from defender Apurbo Mali.

Bangladesh looked set for a single-goal victory when Moin scored again, three minutes into stoppage time with a shot from a goalmouth melee after being set up with a cross by captain Jonny Sikder.

In the opening match of the tournament, Faroe Islands thrashed Maldives 10-3 despite being 2-0 within the opening 20 minutes. Maldives stunned the European representatives with two quick goals, Mohamed Adam Khanaan scoring the goals in the seventh and 19th minutes. However, Tokyo Logv got Faroe Islands on level terms with strikes in the 26th and 29th minutes. And there was no stopping the

Faroese since then as the slotted seven more goals, with Heini Sorensen bagging a second-half hatrick. Mohamed Sanin Salim, however, pulled one goal back seven for the island nation minutes into the second half.

Bangladesh will face favourites Faroe Islands tomorrow while Maldives will square off against Cambodia on the same day.

Bangladesh will play their last match against Maldives on October 20 while Faroe Islands will meet Cambodia on the same day.

The champion team will be decided on the basis of final points table.



Bangladesh forward Moinul Islam, who scored both goals in a 2-0 win over Cambodia in the UEFA Assist Under-16 Development Tournament, takes the ball past opposing players at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

# I wish the best for Inter: Icardi

AFP, Paris



Argentina striker Mauro Icardi said Wednesday he was enjoying the focus being back on football and away from his private life at French club Paris Saint-Germain.

The former Inter Milan captain arrived in the French capital on loan this season and after recovering from injury has scored two goals in the Champions League and Ligue 1.

"In Italy a vicious circle had been created in certain journalistic circles where we always ended up talking a little too much about anything concerning me," Icardi said in an interview with Italian sports daily Gazzetta Dello Sport. "Here in Paris it's not like this."

Icardi was the joint top-scorer in Serie A in 2017-18 with 29 goals. But last season, he was stripped of the

club captaincy amid a long contract dispute and later barred from training.

The 26-year-old's life with his television host wife Wanda Nara, who is also his agent, had also become the focus of many reports.

Despite parting on bad terms the forward said he had no bad feelings towards the Italian club he joined in 2013 and scored 120 goals in just over 220 matches.

"I can only wish the best for Inter in every competition," said Icardi.

"I'm good now, I'm up and running again even if I have to keep working because I had a complicated summer and I wasn't one hundred percent when I arrived in Paris."

PSG are unbeaten on top of Ligue 1, and are also leading their Champions League group which includes Real Madrid.

"I've always been used to pressure

but I think it helps that we've almost always won so far," said the former Sampdoria player. "It's a little different than Inter even though I don't have a real yardstick to compare because I haven't played in other great teams in the past."

"PSG has the right players to do well but the Champions is a trophy coveted by all the great teams."

Icardi said he had settled in to life in France even if he still considered Milan his home.

"I didn't expect so much support from the fans. [PSG coach Thomas] Tuchel is very friendly with the players. He talks a lot, jokes, tried to put me at ease from day one. I think I made a good impression on him."

"Neymar, [Kylian] Mbappé, [Edinson] Cavani, are all strong players. It is nice to play with star players who change matches even at the last minute, like Neymar does."



Even Lionel Messi must have been left pondering just how he had accomplished such a feat as he looked mesmerised by his sixth Golden Shoe -- the award for finishing as the top-scorer in European Leagues -- yesterday. Messi said: "Without my team, I could not even have won the award once."

PHOTO: AFP

## SHORT CORNER

### 17-year-old hits double ton

Mumbai opener Yashasvi Jaiswal on Wednesday scripted history as he became the youngest batsman in the world to score a double century in List A cricket.

At 17 years and 292 days, Yashasvi scored 203 runs during the Vijay Hazare trophy Elite Group A match between Mumbai and Jharkhand.

His 154-ball inning, which was studded with 17 fours and 12 sixes, helped Mumbai post 358 for three at the KSCA Cricket Ground.

This was his third century in the ongoing tournament. He has so far amassed 585 runs in five matches and is the leading run-scorer of Vijay Hazare Trophy.

Yashasvi also becomes the seventh Indian cricketer to score a double century in List A cricket.

Sachin Tendulkar, Virender Sehwag, Rohit Sharma (thrice), Shikhar Dhawan, KV Kaushal and Sanju Samson are the other Indian cricketers who have scored double hundreds in List A cricket.

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### 3 UAE cricketers charged with corruption

Captain Mohammed Naveed is one of three UAE cricketers who have been charged with corruption, the ICC announced on Wednesday.

Batsman Shaiman Anwar and right-arm pace bowler Qadeer Ahmed have also been charged, the three facing a total of 12 counts of breaching the governing body's anti-corruption rules.

All three have been provisionally suspended with immediate effect.

A fourth individual was also charged for refusing to cooperate with the ICC.

-- AFP

### Pollard to lead Windies in ODI and T20I series

Kieron Pollard was named the captain of both ODIs and T20Is as West Indies announced their squads for the upcoming tour against Afghanistan to be played in Dehradun, India.

Jason Holder, who found a place in all three squads, will continue to lead the Test side. The new-look West Indies T20I team includes several players who performed exceedingly well in the recently concluded Caribbean Premier League (CPL).

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## Basketball team fly to Singapore tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

A 19-member Bangladesh national basketball team will leave for Singapore tomorrow for a six-day training camp as well as at least three practice matches against their Sri Lankan counterparts as part of their preparation for December's South Asian Games.

Bangladesh's only medal in basketball discipline of the SA Games was a bronze which they won in Dhaka in 2010. The discipline was excluded from the 2016 SA Games roster in Guwahati but reinstated this time.

Bangladesh Basketball Federation (BBF) is targeting at least one silver medal from this year's edition.

"There are less opportunities to play practice matches because we don't have enough players. We arranged this tour so that they can play against better teams," BBF general secretary AK Sarkar informed at a press conference at the Bangladesh Olympic Association yesterday.

Bangladesh team will be accompanied by coaches Wasif Ali and Mizanur Rahman while a FIBA coach will train the team in Singapore.

Bangladesh will take part in three events of basketball in the SA Games -- men's 5-on-5, men's 3-on-3 and women's 5-on-5. The preparation camp began on July 15. The team is scheduled to return on October 24.