



'We shall return stronger'

APP, LISBON

Captain Cristiano Ronaldo said on Monday he was "proud" of holders Portugal's efforts despite bowing out of Euro 2020 after the weekend's 1-0 last 16 loss to Belgium.

"We did not get the result we wanted and we leave the competition sooner than expected," the 36-year-old Juventus star and five-time Ballon d'or winner admitted as his side failed to match their 2016 exploits.

"But we are proud of our showing. We did everything we could to retain the title of European champions and this group proved it could still give the Portuguese people much joy," the former Manchester United and Real Madrid attacker posted on social media after Sunday's loss.

"Congratulations to Belgium and good luck to all the teams left in. As for us, we shall return stronger," vowed the veteran who at least could console himself with having matched the 109 international goals record of Iran's Ali Daei during the tournament.

Meanwhile, coach Fernando Santos said his players were crying in the changing room after their "unfair" defeat against Belgium.

"I think it's an unfair result but they scored and we didn't," said Santos after the game. "They had six shots, one on target. We had 29 and couldn't score even once. They had a shot from nothing.

"We came back and thought we could turn it around. My players tried their best but the ball wouldn't go in, that's football."

GERMANY V ENGLAND

Old foes England and Germany face off in the last 16 of Euro 2020 on Tuesday with the victors knowing they will then be favourites to go on and reach the final thanks to a kind-looking draw. Neither side has hit top form during the tournament so far, but England are confident of beating the Germans in the knockout stage of a major tournament for the first time since 1966 in front of 45,000 fans at Wembley.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

At Euro: Played-4, England won-1, Germany won-1, Drawn-2
Overall: Played-32, England won-13, Germany won-13, Drawn-6

PLAYERS TO WATCH



Kai Havertz

3 Matches
2 Goals
0 Assists
9 Attempts
84% Passing Accuracy



Raheem Sterling

3 Matches
2 Goals
0 Assists
5 Attempts
82% Passing Accuracy

SWEDEN V UKRAINE

Sweden's free-scoring winger Emil Forsberg has declared himself fit and ready to go for Tuesday's Euro 2020 last-16 clash with Ukraine. Swedes opened with a scoreless draw against Spain before edging Slovakia 1-0 thanks to Forsberg's penalty and finishing with a dramatic 3-2 win over Poland. They will face a fired-up Ukraine side led by Andriy Shevchenko that is receiving a great deal of support from high places after going through as the third-placed team in Group C.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

At Euro: Played-1, Ukraine won-1, Sweden won-0, Drawn-0
Overall: Played-4, Ukraine won-2, Sweden won-1, Drawn-1

PLAYERS TO WATCH



Emil Forsberg

3 Matches
3 Goals
0 Assists
8 Attempts
78% Passing Accuracy



Andriy Yarmolenko

3 Matches
2 Goals
1 Assists
8 Attempts
79% Passing Accuracy

'As a coach I couldn't be prouder'

REUTERS, Seville

Belgium coach Roberto Martinez hailed his team's strong mentality after they ended Portugal's reign at the European Championship with a 1-0 win in a bruising last-16 encounter in Seville on Sunday.

It was a display, he said, that highlighted not only Belgium's attacking talent but their ability to defend and tough it out.

"It wasn't just about how good we can be but how we could adapt to what Portugal do best: They do exactly what they need to win -- that's why they are the current European champions. They know how to take those moments that can hurt you, but I think we had incredible concentration and defended really well," a beaming Martinez told the post-match news conference.

"We played a really good game in the first half, controlling and scoring a very good goal." Belgium went ahead thanks to a long range bullet from Thorgan Hazard.

"But then in the second half, more of the momentum went to Portugal and we had to show an incredible mentality.



It was about those aspects of being disciplined, very tactically astute and we never lost concentration.

"There were difficult moments as Portugal tried to get back in the closing minutes, but this result gives me an incredible satisfaction because this is what a winning team needs.

"We all know the talent we have and the good football we can play, but today we showed all the other elements also

needed. As a coach I couldn't be prouder."

Martinez will, however, have to sweat over injuries during the match to key players Eden Hazard and Kevin de Bruyne, who he said would undergo scans on Monday and rest up for the next 48 hours.

He said he had no idea what their chances were of playing on Friday, when Belgium meet Italy in the quarter-final in Munich.

Proteas put Windies in a spin

REUTERS

South Africa spinners Tabraiz Shamsi and George Linde stifled West Indies' chase as the visitors claimed a 16-run victory in the second Twenty20 international on Sunday to level the five-match series at 1-1.

After being sent into bat in St George's, Grenada, South Africa posted a below-par 166 for seven in their 20 overs.

However, the home side's fast start was halted by the spin duo and they were restricted to 150 for nine.

Left-arm wrist spinner Shamsi recorded figures of 1-16 in his four overs and the tall orthodox



Linde posted 2-19 as they frustrated the home side in the middle of the innings and took the momentum out of their chase.

West Indies had cruised to an eight-wicket victory in the first match with 30 balls to spare on Saturday, but the tourists were vastly improved with their skills with the ball, as well as in the field.

South Africa also made a fast start to their innings as opener Reeza Hendricks (42 from 30 balls) and captain Temba Bavuma (46 from 33 balls) took the attack to the bowlers, but once they were out the innings stuttered.

The third match in the series will be played at the same venue on Tuesday.



Brazil's Everton Ribeiro engages in an aerial battle with Ecuador's Pedro Hincapie Reyna during their Copa America group fixture in Goiania on Sunday. The match ended in a 1-1 draw.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Perfection does not exist for Tite

AGENCIES



COPA AMERICA 2021

Brazil head coach Tite insisted "perfection does not exist" after the Selecao's 10-game winning streak was snapped following a 1-1 draw with Ecuador at the Copa America.

Neymar was rested for Brazil's final Group B fixture as the defending champions played out a disappointing stalemate against Ecuador at the Estadio Olimpico Pedro Ludovico on Sunday.

Eder Militao's first international goal gave Brazil -- who made 10 changes to the starting line-up -- a 37th-minute lead before Angel Mena secured a point for Ecuador eight minutes into the second half.

Tite had been looking to extend Brazil's winning streak in pursuit of the country's all-time record -- 14 under legendary boss Mario Zagallo -- but his team were forced to share the spoils in their final group fixture.

"Saying that you cannot err is not human, perfection does not exist, what we have to do is minimise the margin of error for a team," Tite said post-match. "When we talk about defensive solidity

and also when we talk about game generation, we have to find the balance point without being too defensive or offensive. "During matches there are different ways to play, dominance is when you have the ball and you try to attack, control when you stand further back, you do not have the ball and the opponent does not generate danger. "So to play these difficult games we have to find the balance between dominance and control."

It was the first time Brazil had scored at least one goal at the CONMEBOL showpiece tournament and did not win since the 2015 edition.

Brazil, meanwhile, are the only team to score more than one header at this year's Copa America -- Militao's goal was the nation's third consecutive headed goal.

Tite's Brazil will face either 15-time Copa champions Uruguay or two-time winners Chile in the quarter-finals. "I can't choose, they both have tradition, quality, individual technique and weight of the jerseys, great technicians, outstanding players," Tite replied when asked who he would prefer to face in the last eight.

Gaping holes in potential leadership roles

MAZHAR UDDIN



Dark clouds concerning the relatively less younger players to assume the leadership role in future has hovered over Bangladesh cricket in the recent years as the four horsemen, the most experienced players -- Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim, and Mahmudullah Riyad -- approaches the tail-end of their respective careers.

Considering the likes of -- Soumya Sarkar, Mohammad Mithun, and even Najmul Hossain Shanto -- who has been in the national set-up for the past four-five years as of now and yet failed to perform on a consistent basis, helped cast an ominous shadow over the likelihood of which next crop of cricketers, and if any for that matter, would step up to fill the void when the seniors finally draw the curtain.

Looking back, there was hardly ever a doubt over the talent and potential from the aforementioned players but their inability to meet the optimum expectations has been the most disappointing feature of Bangladesh cricket, to say the least.

Primarily due to the alarming lack of consistency, the selectors shied away despite having given them enough opportunities. Mithun, for instance, who previously was part of all three formats for the Tigers, finds himself only in the ODI side after being dropped from the Test and T20 side for the upcoming Zimbabwe tour.

Similarly, Soumya was also dropped from the ODI team and is considered only for the T20 side while Najmul was included in the Test format and was dropped from the T20 side due to his poor run of performances of late.

For someone like Najmul who is rated highly by the Tigers think tank for all three formats, the young left-hander failed to prove his worth, especially in the limited-overs formats after a string of failures, both home and away.

The 22-year-old, who scored his maiden Test hundred in Sri Lanka back in April this year, will surely look to overcome his weakness by showcasing his talent laced with consistency, in the one-off Test against Zimbabwe.

"At the moment my focus is fully on the lone Test in Zimbabwe. My aim is to remain consistent and score runs in whatever format I play so that I gain more confidence," said Najmul before

leaving for Zimbabwe yesterday.

Soumya, arguably remains the standout player who arrived at the international circuit with a massive potential for his natural free-flowing batting style. Yet the left-hander, despite possessing all the ingredients, lacks necessary confidence and is still far off from cementing a place in all three formats.

"As I am only in the T20 format for the Zimbabwe tour, my aim will be to play well and make a comeback to the other two formats for Bangladesh. Obviously, Zimbabwe is a tough opponent on their home soil but I plan to work on my own game and gain confidence for the road ahead," said Soumya.

For the 30-year-old Mithun, the upcoming Zimbabwe tour could be his decisive mission for survival in the Bangladesh team since he too is under heavy scrutiny, for his lack of consistency, from the team management.

"International cricket is always full of pressure and as a player, you have to absorb all that and perform. I always had to fight for my place so I look forward to maintaining consistent performance for the team," said Mithun.



Second seed Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus won the first match at Wimbledon in two years on Monday, seeing off Romanian qualifier Monica Niculescu in straight sets. Sabalenka won 6-1, 6-4 under the roof of Court One and will face either Danielle Lao of the United States or Britain's Katie Boulter for a place in the last 32. Last year's Wimbledon was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic while play at this year's event was delayed by rain on the outside courts.

PHOTO: TWITTER