

SPORT



Denmark continue their dream run

REUTERS, Baku

Denmark's rousing Euro 2020 campaign continued as they beat the Czech Republic 2-1 on Saturday to reach the semi-finals thanks to first-half strikes from

Thomas Delaney and Kasper Dolberg. Patrik Schick responded for the Czechs early in the second half to score his fifth goal of the tournament and become the joint-top scorer with Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo.

However, Denmark stood firm to book their place in Wednesday's semi-final, where they will face either England or Ukraine.

The result avenged Denmark's 3-0 defeat by the Czechs in the last eight of Euro 2004 and meant they reached the semi-finals for the third time, taking them closer yet to adding to their unlikely triumph at Euro '92.

Denmark had ridden the wave of a raucous home crowd in their three group games in Copenhagen and also enjoyed strong support against Wales in the last 16 in Amsterdam, capturing the hearts of many neutrals after Christian Eriksen suffered a cardiac arrest in their opening game with Finland.

Even though there was a sizeable and noisy Danish contingent in Baku there was a less of a festive mood than in previous games as the players were separated by an atmosphere-sapping running track and sparse crowd in Azerbaijan, where locals have been largely less than enthusiastic about the tournament.

Denmark got off to a flying start when Delaney took advantage of slack marking from a corner to head home in the fifth minute, although replays showed the corner should never have been given as the ball had come off a Danish player when it went out.

The Czechs struggled to respond and Denmark missed several chances to double their lead, with Mikkel Damsgaard, Delaney and Martin Braithwaite all spurning decent opportunities.

They eventually scored again at the end of the first half when left back Joakim Maehle delivered an inviting cross with the outside of his right foot which Dolberg side-footed in on the volley, adding to his double in the 4-0 win over Wales.

After a poor first half, the Czechs made a double change which instantly gave them more purpose in attack and one of their substitutes Michael Krmencik forced Kasper Schmeichel into a save immediately while moments later Antonin Barak made the keeper make a full-stretch save.

The goal soon followed, Schick meeting a Vladimir Coufal cross first time to beat Schmeichel and match Milan Baros' five goals for the Czech Republic at Euro 2004.

But they failed to build on the momentum and Denmark woke up and defended well for the remainder of the half, ending the Czech Republic's hopes of reaching a first Euros semi-final since 2004 and a first final since 1996.

'Spain? Let's enjoy THIS VICTORY'

AGENCIES



Italy's detractors are running out of reasons to doubt their ability to win Euro 2020 after Friday's triumph over Belgium. The Azzurri's record unbeaten run has been well documented during the tournament, and it stretched to 32 matches in Munich.

But the fact that Roberto Mancini's side had not beaten any recognised international football powerhouses during that streak, which encouraged some pundits to raise questions about their ability to go far in the competition.

After Italy recorded back-to-back 3-0 wins against Turkey and Switzerland at the start of the Euros, former France midfielder Patrick Vieira said: "They lack intensity, power, pace, to be even more dangerous going forward... It's still a bit too early to take Italy into consideration, that they can go to the end."

Former England defender Gary Neville felt similarly, quipping: "I do feel once they start to play against the better teams, they won't have enough."

According to world football's governing body FIFA, there are no better teams than world

number one side Belgium, who were considered one of the pre-tournament favourites.

But the Azzurri's 13th consecutive win was their most impressive yet as they came out on top not just with the final score, but also in terms of possession and shots.

It was a performance that

Mancini said his players deserved to savour the triumph before thinking about Tuesday's game against three-times European champions Spain.

"We didn't have a minimum goal, we wanted to do our best, the road is still long, there are two games to go, we'll see what happens," he said.



There is still next year's World Cup in Qatar to come, but Belgium's "golden generation" will know that elimination on Friday from the European Championship is another opportunity gone. Belgium were among the favourites for the tournament, having spent more than 1,000 days at the head of the FIFA rankings. But after losing 2-1 to Italy in quarter-final in Munich, they admitted they were second-best on the night. "The feelings are sadness and disappointment because I don't feel like these players need to be out of this tournament. The players did everything they could to get as far as we could," said Belgium coach Roberto Martinez.

▶ Italy have set a new record for the longest winning run at the European Championship, qualifying included, their 15th consecutive victory taking them past opponents Belgium (14, 21-03-19 – 27-06-21) and Germany (14, 03-09-10 – 22-06-12).

▶ Italy have won their last 13 international matches (F36 A2) and are unbeaten in their last 32 internationals (W27 D5); their last defeat was in September 2018 (against Portugal).

felt like a statement of intent from a nation that has won four World Cups and one European Championship but has had to rebuild its reputation after the humiliating failure to qualify for the 2018 World Cup.

"Belgium beaten – we're back among the greats of football," said Gazzetta dello Sport's front page.

Coach Roberto Mancini was overjoyed with his Italy team. "We deserved to win. The boys were extraordinary in the game," he said.

"Spain? Let's enjoy this victory, then we'll think about it. Congratulations to my boys, they were very good."

Striker Lorenzo Insigne, who scored a curling strike, credited Mancini for building a "fun" atmosphere around the national team squad that has allowed him to put in his best performances.

The win was however marred only by a serious injury to left-back Leonardo Spinazzola, who had to be stretchered off and looks set to play no further part in the tournament.



WHAT TO WATCH

SONY SIX

England vs Sri Lanka

Third ODI

Live from 4:00 pm

Gauff, Raducanu advance to fourth round

REUTERS, London

Seventeen-year-old American Coco Gauff matched her dream Wimbledon debut as she again reached the fourth round with a 6-3, 6-3 defeat of Kaja Juvan on Saturday.

When Gauff reached the fourth round as a 15-year-old qualifier in 2019, it was something of a sensation.

Two years later, despite her age and playing in only her seventh Grand Slam tournament, Gauff's progress is far less of a surprise and she is now a serious title contender.

If Emma Raducanu managed to get any sleep before making her Court One debut at Wimbledon on Saturday, it is unlikely that even in her dreams would she have seen herself reeling off eight games in a row in a 6-3 7-5 third-round win over Sorana Cirstea.

The 18-year-old is a symbol of Britain's multicultural society, having been born in Canada to a Chinese mother and Romanian father, but on Saturday she was being hailed the world over as she produced an electrifying performance to reach the Wimbledon fourth round on her Grand Slam debut.

'We can play under all kinds of circumstances'

Brazil set up semi-final clash with Peru

AGENCIES



Brazil will face Peru at the Nilton Santos Stadium in Rio de Janeiro on next Tuesday at 5am (Bangladesh Standard Time) in the first semifinal of Copa America 2021.

In an incredible game of football, Peru emerged as the first semifinalist with a 4-3 penalty shootout win against Paraguay following a dramatic 3-3 draw. Brazil progressed to the last four, thanks to a narrow win against Chile despite a red card for Gabriel Jesus early into the second half.

The opening game of the quarterfinal was an exciting, fascinating encounter from start to finish while second tie between the last two Copa America champions was more closely fought than their form coming into the game suggested.

Brazil were unbeaten in 11 games and topped Group B, while Chile finished only fourth in Group A and have drawn four of their last six matches 1-1.

Brazil finally survived as Lucas Paqueta put the reigning champions 1-0 up within seconds of coming on as a half-time substitute. "We were beaten by the favourites, the team playing at home," said



Chilean midfielder Arturo Vidal. "At least we will leave with our heads held high."

Vidal however blamed the Argentine referee for his side's Copa America elimination to Brazil on Friday, calling him "a clown" who "thinks he is the star of the show."

Brazil forward Gabriel Jesus was apologetic after committing

one of the ugliest challenges on a Chilean defender which subsequently saw him being sent off.

This is also not Jesus' first red-card offense in a Brazil shirt in Copa America. He was also sent off following two yellow cards in a Copa game against Peru in 2019.

"Jesus was just bad luck," said Brazil forward Neymar after the win against Chile. "He had his eye on the ball, not on the man, and unfortunately, he was sent off."

"Every day that goes by we have tests to make us stronger, to prove that we can play under all kinds of circumstances. Chile are a good team, they have great players and it is very difficult with a man less. Everyone deserves praise – the defence, the midfield, the forwards.

"We managed to withstand something that rarely happens to this team. It was a big test for us."

The match-winner may have been Paqueta but Brazil's real inspiration behind the victory was Neymar. The PSG ace was in top form again and helped create the goal for Paqueta with some fine work on the ball, strengthening his case for the Copa America 'player of the tournament' prize.



Roger Federer continued his quest to become only the second player in history to win nine Wimbledon singles titles after Martina Navratilova with a 6-4, 6-4, 5-7, 6-4 win over local favourite Cameron Norrie, the last British man in the tournament. The sixth-seeded Swiss also reached the round of 16 at a Grand Slam for the 69th time in his career. "It's a nice stat to hear. It proves to me when I wake up in the morning that has happened," said Federer, who will turn 40 in five weeks' time. PHOTO: REUTERS

Batsmen enjoy fruitful warm-up

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh had a fruitful outing on the first day of a two-day warm-up game against Zimbabwe Select XI at the Harare Sports Club Ground yesterday.

The visitors reached 240 for two after 67 overs with Saif Hasan, Najmul Hossain, and Shakib Al Hasan scoring fifties after electing to bat.

Two of the most experienced cricketers, Tamim Iqbal and Mushfiqur Rahim, did not participate in the warm-up game as both are recovering from injuries.

Tamim has injured knee while Mushfiqur hurt his finger during the Dhaka Premier League. Both are expected to take part in the lone Test match starting from July 7.

On the pitch, Bangladesh lost opener Shadman Islam for a duck, the left-hander unable to score despite facing thirty deliveries.

Saif Hasan, who looked in fine touch at

the other end, was then joined by Najmul. Saif reached a fifty and after scoring 65 off 108 balls, a knock that included 13 fours and a six, the right-hander retired to give others an opportunity.

Najmul also looked solid and the left-hander was taken off the field after reaching his fifty to give experienced players Shakib and Mominul Haque a chance to utilise the center wicket ahead of the Test.

Shakib, who has struggled with the bat ever since returning from a year-long ban, looked in a different mood and smashed the bowlers all across the park.

Meanwhile Mominul remained cautious but was caught and bowled by leg-spinner Brighton Chipungu after scoring 29 off 77 balls.

Shakib continued to punish the bowlers and reached his fifty off 49 balls with a cover drive and eventually retired on 74 off 56 balls, which included 14 fours and a six. Liton Das and Mahmudullah Riyad were at the crease when the umpires called off the day's play.