



Ecstatic Spain players celebrate clinching their first-ever Women's World Cup following their 1-0 win in the final over England, who were left devastated in front of a packed Stadium Australia in Sydney on Sunday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

From mutiny to WORLD CUP GLORY

- Spain are the fifth team to win the FIFA Women's World Cup, after the United States (4), Germany (2), Norway (1), and Japan (1).
- Prior to this year's edition, Spain had only ever won one Women's World Cup match.
- A total of 164 goals were scored in this edition – highest at any edition of the World Cup.
- With 18 goals scored, Spain are the team with most goals this edition.
- Spain, the winning team, have been awarded a prize money of \$4.29 million. The total prize money for the tournament is \$110 million.
- With 64 matches played – most in one edition of the Women's World Cup – the tournament in Australia and New Zealand saw a World Cup record total attendance of 1,978,274.
- Having been beaten in the final by the USA while in charge of the Netherlands in 2019, England's Sarina Wiegman is the first coach to finish as runner-up in two Women's World Cup tournaments.
- Spain, who lost 4-0 to Japan 20 days ago, are only the second side to be crowned champions of the Women's World Cup despite having lost a group stage game. Japan are the first to do so in 2011.
- England have lost a competitive match for the first time under Wiegman, having gone 29 games unbeaten since losing against Spain in the SheBelieves Cup in March 2020.
- Spain's penalty, saved by Mary Earps from Jenni Hermoso, was the 27th to be awarded at this edition of the Women's World Cup, the most on record at the tournament (2011 onwards).
- The Stadium Australia in Sydney saw four games, including the final, played out in front of a full-capacity crowd of 75,784.
- The tournament saw an average attendance of 30,911 – more than 9,000 above the average for the 2019 edition in France, which had 24 teams participating.

AFP, Sydney

Coach Jorge Vilda was derided as a control freak who was not up to the job, but he has now made history by taking Spain to their first Women's World Cup crown. His team beat England 1-0 in front of a sell-out crowd of nearly 76,000 in Sydney in Sunday's final to seal an achievement that seemed unthinkable less than a year ago.

Discontent between players on the one side and the Spanish football federation (RFEF) and Vilda on the other had been brewing for some time.

In September 2022 the situation exploded – 15 of the squad emailed the RFEF to say they did not want to be considered for selection, citing their "emotional state".

The exact nature of their complaints was never officially made public, but Spanish media had previously reported that they wanted the 42-year-old Vilda sacked.

Reports said the players, many of whom were at Barcelona, accused Vilda of being "dictatorial" and did not approve of his training methods or tactics.

Mundo Deportivo and other publications said he would insist on the players keeping their hotel doors open before midnight while on national duty so he could personally check that they were asleep on time.

There were also claims that if the players went out, Vilda wanted to know where they were going, with whom, and what they were buying.

Vilda said in the lead-up to the World Cup that the dispute was "practically over", but of the 15 mutineers, he only called up three.



He is a typically guarded character, but following Spain's 2-1 win in the semifinals over Sweden, he said that the turmoil had "made all of us stronger".

"The support of Luis Rubiales, the president of the federation, and everyone at the federation, means so much and will always stay with me, as well as that of my family because they have suffered this year," said Vilda.

Vilda was a promising player in his youth but was forced into coaching by injury.

In 2015, he was made in charge of the senior side.

Spain were at a low ebb, having finished bottom of their group without a win at the 2015 World Cup.

With Vilda at the helm, Spain went out in the last 16 of the 2019 World Cup – to eventual champions the United States – and they also failed to get beyond the quarterfinals at two editions of the European Championship.

That lack of success despite the talent of the players at his disposal was also reported to be one of the players' objections to Vilda.

Reports said that Rubiales promised to act on some of the complaints by bringing in a nutritionist and more physios.

There was also a bit more leeway for the players to see their families during camps, including at the World Cup.

But he was always steadfast in support of Vilda.

"Jorge is a top-class coach who gave up the chance with other teams for more money to stay with Spain," Rubiales told Spanish television after the semifinal win.

He and Vilda have now been vindicated – and then some.

Abahani head to Kolkata

SPORTS REPORTER

Six-time Bangladesh Premier league champions Abahani are all set to fly to Kolkata today in two separate contingents to take part in their AFC Cup playoff match against Mohun Bagan Super Giants.

The match will take place tomorrow at the Salt Lake Stadium, with the winners progressing to the group stage of South Asian zone of Asia's second-tier club competition.

The Sky Blues will leave with at least seven foreign players including six of those who started in their 2-1 win against Club Eagles of Maldives in Dhaka last week.

In the last edition, Abahani suffered a 3-1 defeat against the Kolkata giants in a playoff fixture, as a result exiting the competition from either the preliminary round or the playoff stage for the third time in a row. This time, though, the team management is hopeful about getting into the group stage for the first time since 2019.

"Due to the inclusion of six foreign players, I think the gap between the two clubs is less than the previous occasions," Abahani manager Satyjit Das Rupu told The Daily Star yesterday.

Rupu, however, admitted that the Indian clubs are ahead of Abahani due to their experience of playing in the Indian Super League.

"There is no denying that Indian clubs are progressing due to the ISL, where a lot of big players are coming to play and the Indian local players also grow in stature. The Indian players are now more confident and the style of play has also changed," Rupu said.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

It had been more than a month since Tamim Iqbal last batted but his recuperation went well enough for the opener to pick up the bat yesterday and have a seemingly light training session. He batted at the nets to throwdowns before working with the Bangladesh Cricket Board's newly-appointed chief rehabilitation center physio Kieron Thomas.

Spikers lose big against Pakistan

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national volleyball team failed to carry their spirited performance against South Korea to the second match against Pakistan, suffering a 3-0 sets defeat in the Asian Senior Men's Volleyball Championship in Urmia, Iran yesterday.

Bangladesh set their sights on beating Pakistan to move into the top 12 teams of the championship, and they had a brilliant opening match against South Korea on Saturday where they gave the 31st-ranked side in the world a run for their money despite losing the match.

However, Bangladesh surrendered meekly against the Pakistanis, losing by 25-16, 25-14, 25-22 points. Bangladesh will now play in the 13th-18th place deciding matches.

'Observer' Mahmud to accompany Tigers in Asia Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

Former team director Khaled Mahmud Sujon had been away from the national side's periphery for a while.

Often the one to manage the dressing room environment in key tournaments, Mahmud's decision to keep away from the role of team director since head coach Chandika Hathurusingha's arrival created room for controversy. Mahmud had not served in that role since the India series in December last year.

"Since this is a home series, everyone will be here, so, I don't really want to [return to the role]," Mahmud had told the media before the England series this year.

However, the recent issues including the Tamim Iqbal retirement saga, have seen the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) feel the urgency for maintaining clear communications between players and the BCB hierarchy.

According to BCB sources, Mahmud will now be "with the team as an observer in the upcoming Asia Cup". It was also learned that if things go well, he may even return as the team director in the World Cup in India.



Mahmud yesterday attended the Tigers' practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur. He was seen overseeing spinners in a net session while also discussing things with the Tigers' coaching staff. During Hathurusingha's previous stint, Mahmud worked as the team manager.

Meanwhile, the Asia Cup standbys and the probable players for the New Zealand series in September also came to the ground yesterday after the national team's practice ended. A group of nine players, including Tamim Iqbal, are being kept prepared under a separate program with the World Cup in mind. The idea, as per the BCB officials, came from the head coach.

Tamim yesterday batted in a training session for the first time in 46 days since that first ODI against Afghanistan. Mahmudullah Riyad skipped the session due to family emergency. Meanwhile, the likes of Soumya Sarkar, Khaled Ahmed, Zakir Hasan, and Mosaddek Hossain also are with the group alongside the Asia Cup standbys Taijul Islam, Saif Hassan, and Tanzim Sakib. The players will continue their training under coach Sohel Islam.



Inter Miami players toss Lionel Messi in the air after the World Cup-winning Argentine helped the Major League Soccer side beat Nashville SC in a thrilling Leagues Cup final which was settled by a marathon 10-9 penalty shootout after a 1-1 tie on Sunday. Messi, who opened the scoring with a screamer into the top left corner of the net, overtook former Barcelona teammate Dani Alves and became the most decorated player in the history of the game as he won 44 trophies in a career spanning almost two decades.

PHOTO: AFP