

Spain march on, but where was Ronaldo?

So Spain march on to the quarterfinals of the World Cup and a meeting with Paraguay... and it's a game they would expect to win 49 times out of 50, after beating Portugal 1-0 in Cape Town on Tuesday.



By Nick Said 30 Jun 2010



They were not helped by the absolute no-show from striker Fernando Torres though, who is the latest of the big name 'star' who have looked a shadow of their former selves in this competition.

Torres joins England's Wayne Rooney and Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo on the 'where were they?' list. There are players who were expected to lift their teams to glory in this competition, but have failed to fire. Luckily for Spain they have enough reserve with the likes of David Villa and Fernando Llorente, but for England and Portugal, when their trump cards didn't show up, that was their tournament done.

A bit of Dutch courage misfires?

The mind games have also begun ahead of what will hopefully be a World Cup classic between Netherlands and Brazil in Port Elizabeth on Friday, if it is not ruined by the Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium pitch.

Dutch legend Johan Cruyff slammed the Brazil side on Tuesday, saying he wouldn't pay money to go and watch them, adding that he didn't know who would. Er, probably the 42 000-odd that will pack into the stadium for the game ...

It is a silly statement from a man who was exceptionally well respected as a player, but has lost a lot of that adoration over years with some questionable remarks.

This Brazilian side may not have the flair of old, but it is a much better 'team' and one, for the purists, with no discernible weakness. Are they beatable? Of course they are, everybody is on the day, but for anybody who loves the 'art' of football and tactics, this is your side.

Maladjusted Maradona miffs men

Perhaps the least surprising story of the day on Tuesday was the news that there is unrest in the Argentina camp. Given that coach Diego Maradona could start a fight with his own shadow, it is surprising that the camp is not in total chaos.

But this 'unrest' allegedly comes from senior players who have not been selected for recent games. Players who are not playing getting upset ... Shock, horror.

Argentina is what Brazil is not... tactically naïve. They just play and rely on their skills to get them through matches. But when you have Lionel Messi in your side, it is something that fortunately works more often than not.

Images sourced from www.fifa.com

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