

Spain eases past Germany 1-0 and into World Cup final

By JAMES POULTER
Epoch Times Staff

Spain's quality shone through clearly and in the end they were just too strong for Germany in this absorbing and tactically astute World Cup semifinal, held at the Moses Mabhida Stadium in Durban.

"We played very well in every sense and my lads gave it everything. There were some great performances out there," said Spain coach Vicente del Bosque on FIFA.com.

A fantastic, committed header from captain Carles Puyol in the 73rd minute sealed victory for the European champions, but in truth it was the possession and movement throughout the game that ground down a German side that had been so effective until this match.

"I thought the whole team was great and Puyol just threw himself at the ball. You could feel the whole team behind him when he scored and we could have got another one too," said Spain's Xabi Alonso.

Man of the Match Andres Iniesta's great skill on the ball was apparent for the break through goal, as he took on Philipp Lahm in the penalty area, raced toward the byline and forced the corner. Puyol came in at great speed, and with a marvelous leap thundered the ball past Manuel Neuer in the German goal.

For the first 25 minutes Spain dominated possession, and despite the game ebbing and flowing after this point, when the tempo really started to rise around the hour mark it was the German legs that began to tire.

As well as draining the German side with their superior ball control, it was remarkable how tightly Spain pressed the German back four, forcing them to play long balls and preventing the fluency through midfield, which had led



CAPTAIN TARZAN: Carles Puyol celebrates his game-winning goal that led Spain to victory over Germany in the World Cup semifinal on Wednesday. JEWEL SAMAD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

to so many Germany goals earlier in the tournament.

"All credit to the Spanish. They've been the best team around in the last two or three years, and I think they'll win the tournament. They're just such

good footballers, and that showed up our current limitations today," said Germany coach Joachim Loew.

With Germany forced to push forward in the last 10 minutes gaps inevitably began to appear, and with substitute

Fernando Torres and Pedro two on one, only Pedro's selfishness prevented Spain from adding another.

Germany did have chances, including a possible penalty when Mesut Ozil came down on the edge of the penalty area late

in the first half under Sergio Ramos's challenge, but overall they did not have the time and space to develop their usual fluid, expansive style.

This was Germany's 11th World Cup semifinal and Spain's first, though with Spain having defeated Germany by the same margin in the final of Euro 2008, perhaps history was on their side.

Germany described the 2008 loss as "death by one thousand passes," and this experience will have been little different. In the first half, Vicente del Bosque's Spanish side was almost reluctant to play on the counterattack, preferring instead to hold up the ball and build their attacks carefully and thoroughly, patiently waiting for the opening.

With Fernando Torres out of form and on the bench for most of the game, Spain did lack options in the danger area when they had the ball out wide, and at half-time it wasn't easy to see where the breakthrough would come from.

But as the second half progressed Xavi and Iniesta began to really stamp their authority on the midfield, and the Spanish attacks came in waves of tight, controlled exploration, searching relentlessly for weakness.

Pedro too, for many a surprise selection, had an outstanding game in attack, fitting seamlessly into the well-developed Spanish style.

Germany is a young team and perhaps their time will come later. For now though, the glory is Spanish, and with Netherlands also never having won the World Cup, we will have new world champions by Sunday.

"Holland are a great team, they've got really strong players, especially from the midfield to the attack and they're on a great run of form. But we have to play our football. If we play like today, we have a great chance," said Iniesta.

Head coach Dunga fired after Brazil's World Cup flop

By FELIPE SANTIAGO
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RIO DE JANEIRO—Fired last Sunday, shortly after arriving from South Africa, Brazilian head coach Caetano Bledorn Verri, better known as Dunga, leaves with a solid record of two titles (2009 Confederations Cup and 2007 Copa America) heavily overshadowed by a disappointing World Cup.

Brazil was eliminated by Netherlands in the quarterfinals of the World Cup last Friday. They did not improve on 2006's quarterfinal finish.

"The Technical Commission of the Brazilian selection is dismissed. [A] New Technical Commission will be announced later this month," read the website of the CBF (Brazilian Football Confederation).

In a letter to CBF's chairman, Ricardo Teixeira, Dunga thanked him for the opportunity to lead the national team and said that the "past mistakes" (seen in Brazil's 2006 team) have been corrected during his administration.

"Concerning 2006, we renewed the cast of the Brazil national soccer

team. Once again, we are respected on the world scene, and fundamentally, have respect for the Brazilian national soccer team, and by extension, to the very CBF," wrote former coach Dunga to Teixeira.

The disciplinarian coach who dared to leave out of the team superstars such as Ronaldo and Ronaldinho, as a proof that on his team "no one would play on one's name" was considered by many as being authoritarian and stubborn. But despite the enormous criticism from press and fans, Dunga had the best performance among the Brazil coaches in the last decade.

In 57 games, he racked up 40 wins, 11 draws, and only suffered 6 defeats. A success rate of 76.6 percent, surpassing the 73.2 percent of Carlos Alberto Parreira in his last mandate, and 74.3 percent of 2002 champion Luis Felipe Scolari.

But the numbers didn't save Dunga. With the frustration of leaving the World Cup early and the dream of the sixth title postponed, the fans seem to have forgotten the victory over the United States in the final of the Confederations Cup (also held in South Africa), as well as the

title of Copa America champion, won over rival Argentina in Rosario in 2007.

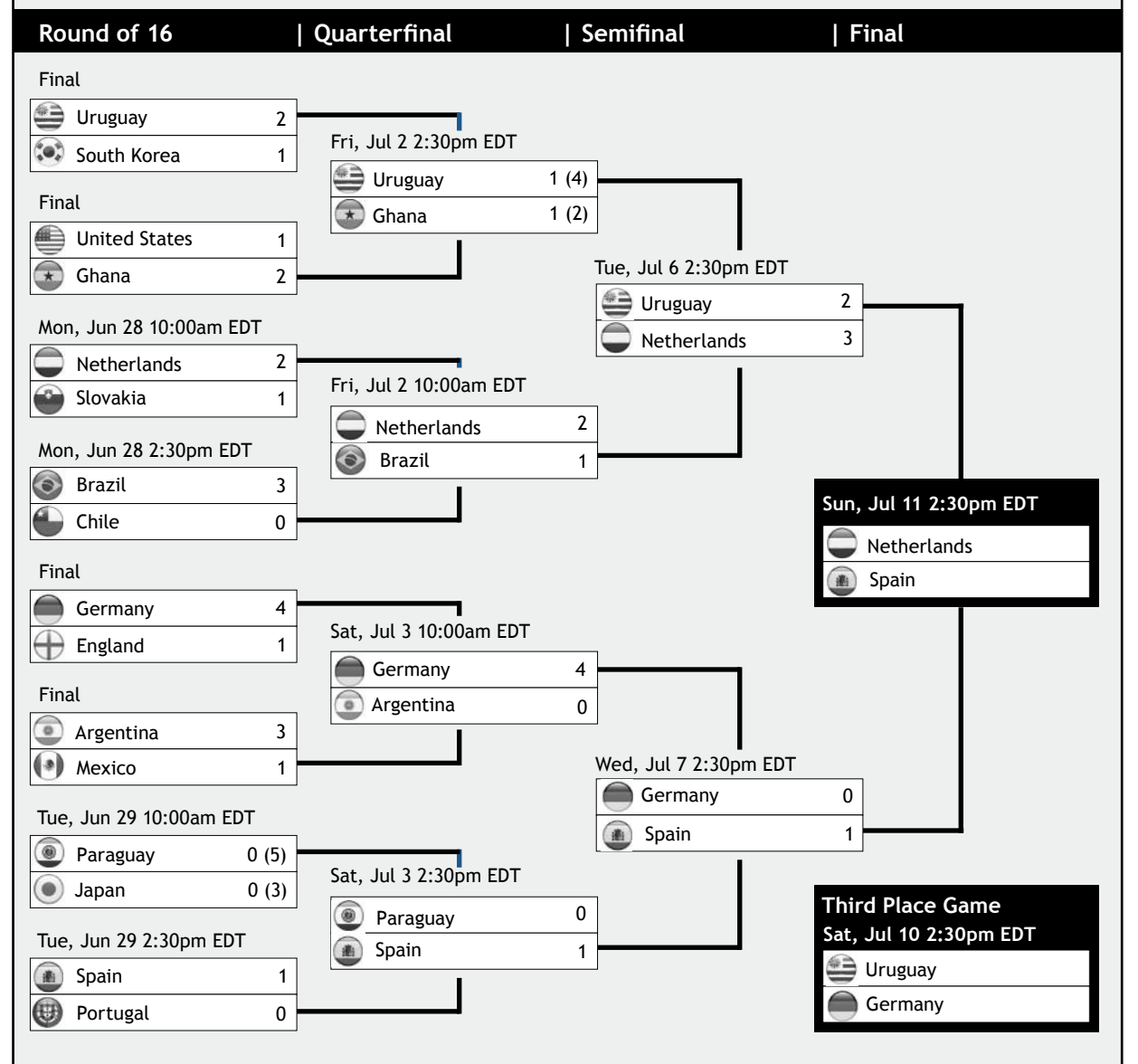
A representative of CBF confirmed that five names are being worked on to take command of the Brazilian national team. Since Brazil will host the World Cup in 2014, the responsibility the chosen one will shoulder, carrying all the expectations of a nation where soccer is the number one passion will be enormous. The priority is for an experienced coach that works well under pressure.

The perception is that Mano Menezes, Luis Felipe Scolari, Leonardo, Ricardo Gomes, or Muricy Ramalho will assume the post in the next four years.

Scolari has the advantage, as he has the sought profile, and has won a World Cup (2002). However, he has just been hired by Palmeiras, but the club's president, Luiz Gonzaga Belluzzo, who had primarily refused to share the coach, changed the tone of his speech.

"Palmeiras do not think [sharing the coach with the national team] is convenient, but we can not oppose it so intransigently," Belluzzo said in an interview with ESPN.

2010 FIFA WORLD CUP KNOCKOUT STAGE



Hyundai Sonata

By CHRIS JACKSON
MyCarData

Remember when Honda was the sole four-cylinder holdout in the mid-size sedan market? The company insisted that there was no need for the extra thirst of a V6 in the Accord, despite the demands of a horsepower-hungry U.S. market. These days, there's an Accord V6, but for 2011 the Hyundai Sonata is doing without a six-cylinder version.

The move simplifies the lineup, but it's not the only motivation. Recent advances in engine technology have made a four-cylinder a viable alternative to a V6, and considering the growing role that fuel efficiency is playing in purchase decisions, Hyundai is gambling that more mid-size sedan buyers won't mind that the Sonata is missing a couple of cylinders.

Try to picture a 2010 Sonata. Unless you own one, or your beloved uncle was killed by one, you can't, can you? That's why there's new, more "emotional" styling to go with the rethought powertrain philosophy.

Strong, expressive body lines dominate the new Sonata's look. The hood's

curves carry down into the bumper, while bulges at each side grow out into a belline marked with a distinctive chrome spear that carries into the headlights. The body side echoes this curve with a deep character line. The Sonata's new silhouette is similar to the current European "coupe-sedan" look, though the car was penned in Irvine, California. Complainers will whine about a new era of "jellybean" cars. Ignore 'em. The Sonata looks good.

The interior is similarly appointed to impress. The Sonata's new swept-away dash has several textures and looks like it belongs in a more expensive car. If Hyundai's work with the instrument panel is anything to go by, the days of the indifferently designed corporate dashboard are a thing of the past. The new Sonata's two-pod instrument panel features clever off-kilter curves that could've come from a concept car. The climate controls use a silhouette-type interface reminiscent of that used by Volvo, and Bluetooth connectivity is standard.

And all of that's just in the base model. Moving up the price scale, the Sonata Limited gets a pushbut-



2011 Hyundai Sonata COURTESY OF NETCARSHOW

ton start, heated front and rear seats, and rear seat air vents. USB and iPod jacks are available, as are a 400-watt Infinity sound system, HD radio, and a special wine-colored leather interior. A navigation system with a 6.5-inch screen is available on all Sonata grades, and for price convenience it's available as a standalone option rather than being bundled with options like a backup camera.

The new 2.4-litre four-cylinder is a DOHC, 16-valve unit that uses direct fuel injection. Power is comparable to many V6 cars, with 198 horsepower. The four-cylinder's advantage comes

at the fuel pump, of course, where it returns 9.4/5.7 fuel economy. A performance Turbo version will be along shortly, for buyers who are looking for real speed.

In stock form, the Sonata's engine is the most powerful four-cylinder in its class. What's even more impressive, it's 5.7-L/100-km freeway rating matches that of some hybrids. The torque is available down low, and Hyundai's given the Sonata a light throttle to ensure that drivers notice. Power is good, though like most big fours the 2.4-litre sometimes sounds overworked. This is a noise issue—big four-cylinders

tend to sound harsh at higher revs. Did I miss having two extra cylinders, however? Nope.

The new six-speed automatic transmission is lighter than the five-speed it replaces. It's a sealed, maintenance-free unit, as many new automatics are, and it features paddle shifters. Guess what? The Sonata is still available with a six-speed manual transmission, too. They're a tiny percentage of sales (less than two percent) but there are still those of us who care. In this market, the price savings is the primary reason for choosing a stick, rather than sporting intentions.

On all Sonatas, MacPherson struts are used up front, with a lightweight aluminum multi-link rear. Out on the road, the Sonata is composed and quiet. That's not a surprise though; the Sonata has had the basics down for a good long time. The new suspension is tied down better, with crisper responses than I've come to expect from Hyundai. That's a good thing. A bit of road noise is all that intrudes into the quiet cabin.

Around town, manoeuvrability's enhanced by electronic power steering with a tight turning circle. Stability control, anti-lock brakes, traction control, and corner brake control are all on the standard equipment list, so the Sonata is well-equipped with driver aids

to keep families feeling secure no matter how poor the road conditions.

Expect to hear a lot in the coming months about this car; it's poised to be a homerun for Hyundai, and just might change the market. At the very least, the 2011 Sonata gives Hyundai a credibility it's never had when it comes to competitive mainstream product.

That doesn't mean that the brand has lost its trademark value, however. Sonata pricing starts at \$22,649 (with a 6-speed manual), and is reasonable throughout the range. Want a family sedan with a navigation system for \$30,999? The new Sonata is your chariot.

2011 Hyundai Sonata specs

- Base price: \$22,649
- Engine: 2.4-litre direct-injection inline DOHC four-cylinder
- Drivetrain: 6-speed manual / optional 6-speed automatic, front-wheel drive
- Horsepower: 198 @ 6,300 rpm
- Torque: 184 lb ft @ 4,250 rpm
- Fuel capacity: 70 L
- Est. mileage city/highway: 9.4/5.7 L/100 km (automatic)