

Sports

New-look Germany edge Dutch in Euro thriller as Croatia stumble

Hazard celebrate 100th cap by scoring opener in 2-0 win over Cyprus

PARIS: Germany's Nico Schulz sealed a thrilling 3-2 win over the Netherlands in a see-saw Euro 2020 qualifier as Joachim Loew's new-look line-up survived a severe test on Sunday. Elsewhere, World Cup finalists Croatia stumbled to a 2-1 defeat in Hungary, and Eden Hazard celebrated a century of caps with the opening goal in Belgium's 2-0 win over Cyprus.

A revamped Germany raced into a 2-0 lead in Amsterdam with thrilling strikes from Leroy Sane and Serge Gnabry but the hosts struck back with a second half header from Matthijs De Ligt before Memphis Depay pounced for an equaliser on 63 minutes.

The four-time world champions were put under immense pressure from a Netherlands side seeking a winner but the visitors, who were booed by their own fans in a 1-1 friendly draw against Serbia last Wednesday, snatched victory in the 90th minute through 25-year-old Schulz. The Hoffenheim midfielder, who made his international in August, tapped home a loose ball after a tireless Sane had taken the defence with him on a run into the box.

The win comes after Loew took an axe to Germany's squad ahead of the qualifying campaign in the aftermath of last year's calamitous World Cup elimination, when he told Bayern Munich trio Thomas Mueller, Jerome Boateng and Mats Hummels they had no future in the national side.

Bayern stopper Manuel Neuer may also come under pressure for his place after De Ligt beat him with a flying header just after the restart. Neuer, 32, was also slow to react as Depay pounced for the equaliser.

Dutch 'keeper Jasper Cillessen was left with little chance after Gnabry ended his mazy run by outwitting Virgil Van Dijk before sending a rasping long-range effort into the bottom corner in the early action.

Chelsea star Hazard celebrated his 100th cap by scoring the opener in their 2-0 win over Cyprus in Group I with Michy Batshuayi grabbing the second as Real Madrid's Thibaut Courtois went largely untested in the Belgian goal.

Ballon d'Or winner Luka Modric was powerless to stop beaten World Cup finalists Croatia from slipping to a 2-1 defeat to Hungary in Group E on Sunday as Mate Patkai notched a 76th minute winner in Budapest.

Croatia had struggled against Azerbaijan in their opening qualifier last Thursday before escaping with a 2-1 win, but they made the perfect start in the Hungarian capital when Ante Rebic put them ahead on 13 minutes. But Hungary pulled level through Adam Szalai's fifth goal in as many games and with a quarter of an hour left, 31-year-old Patkai scored his first international goal to pull off a famous victory.

Scotland got back to winning ways with an uninspiring 2-0 win at perennial makeweights San Marino, following an embarrassing defeat at Kazakhstan in their opening qualifier.

"It was a wee bit nervy, it's been a tough few days for everyone," admitted Scotland coach Alex McLeish.

Minnows Israel made it four points from their opening two qualifiers as they swept past Austria 4-2 thanks to a Eran Zahavi hat-trick, setting them up nicely for a tilt at qualification. — AFP



AMSTERDAM: Netherlands' midfielder Marten De Roon (L) vies with Germany's defender Jonathan Tah during the UEFA Euro 2020 Group C qualification football match between The Netherlands and Germany at the Johan Cruyff Arena in Amsterdam on Sunday. — AFP

Pedersen seals win for Juve women in front of record crowd

TURIN: Danish international Sofie Pedersen sealed a home win for Juventus women who marked the team's first game at the Allianz Stadium in Turin by playing on front of a record crowd for a top-flight women's game in Italy, three months before the start of the World Cup in France. The championship-leading Juve women's team, who usually play their home games at Vinovo in the suburbs of the city, played rivals Fiorentina with

39,027 watching at the Allianz.

Juventus decided against charging fans an entry fee for the game at the 41,500-capacity arena, with the turnout beating the previous record for a women's football match in Italy of 14,000 spectators.

Pedersen nodded in the winner seven minutes from time, as Juventus moved four points ahead of Fiorentina in the top-of-the-table clash with three matches to go in the 12-team women's league. "Today will be an important day for the whole movement of women's football," tweeted Juventus men's captain Giorgio Chiellini. "Girls enjoy the Stadium!!!" he wrote, adding the club's slogan "Fino Alla Fine (until the end) Juventus!!!" Italian international defender Cecilia Salvai was stretched off in the second half, but was carried back onto the pitch to celebrate with her teammates after the win. Salvai's knee injury could be a worry for

Italy ahead of the World Cup in June. Juventus women's team are on course for a second consecutive Scudetto having won the trophy in their first season in 2017-2018. The interest in the women's game has been building ahead of this summer's World Cup in France with a world record crowd of 60,739 watching a women's match between Barcelona and Atletico Madrid at the Wanda Metropolitano last Sunday.

That attendance was the largest ever for a top-flight club match in European women's football while Atletico claimed the number also set a new world record. The top-of-the-table clash was played in Atletico men's team's arena instead of the women's much smaller home stadium which has a capacity of 3,500.

The previous European record was 48,121 who watched Athletic Bilbao's women's team play Atletico in a Copa del Rey match in Bilbao in January. — AFP

Caps sweep Flyers, keep division lead

WASHINGTON: Tom Wilson, Travis Boyd and Jakub Vrana each scored a goal as the Washington Capitals defeated the visiting Philadelphia Flyers 3-1 in a Sunday matinee. The Capitals maintain a narrow lead in the Metropolitan Division, leading the New York Islanders by one point and the Pittsburgh Penguins by three. Each team has six games remaining, with Washington hosting the Islanders in the regular-season finale on April 6. The Capitals snapped a two-game losing streak and completed a sweep of their four-game season series with the Flyers, whose fading playoff chances took a hit. Braden Holtby played another strong game for Washington with 35 saves. Alex Ovechkin did not score a goal for the eighth time in his last nine games, but tallied one assist.

HURRICANES 2, CANADIENS 1 (OT)

Andrei Svechnikov scored 3:15 into overtime as Carolina defeated visiting Montreal at Raleigh, N.C. Svechnikov scored his 20th goal of the season, this one set up on an assist from Jordan Staal. It was Carolina's only shot in overtime. Trevor van Riemsdyk scored the tying goal in the third period for Carolina, which won four of five games during a homestand. Hurricanes goalie Curtis McElhinney stopped 28 shots, and Montreal goalie Carey Price made 38 saves.

BLUE JACKETS 5, CANUCKS 0

Sergei Bobrovsky made 21 saves for his seventh shutout of the NHL season, and Josh Anderson posted two goals and an assist as visiting Columbus blanked Vancouver. Bobrovsky returned after being sidelined Thursday in Edmonton due to an undisclosed upper-body injury. He recorded his second shutout in three games. Columbus (41-30-4) ended its losing streak at three games. The Blue Jackets moved within two points of Montreal for the second Eastern Conference wild-card spot.

ISLANDERS 2, COYOTES 0

Jordan Eberle scored early in the first period and Robin Lehner recorded his fifth shutout of the season with 31 saves as New York further damaged the playoff hopes of visiting Arizona with a win in Uniondale, N.Y. Brock Nelson scored on a wraparound with 3:14 left in the third for the Islanders (44-25-7, 95 points), who won for the second time in as many days to remain in second place in the Metropolitan Division. Goalie Darcy Kuemper, who made his 17th straight start, made 24 saves for the Coyotes (36-33-7, 79 points), who lost their fifth straight (0-3-2) and missed another chance to move into the final wild-card spot in the Western Conference.

BLACKHAWKS 2, AVALANCHE 1 (OT)

Duncan Keith scored the game-winning goal 1:23 into overtime to carry host Chicago to a win over Colorado to keep his team's slim playoff hopes alive. The 35-year-old Keith denied Nathan MacKinnon on a one-on-one battle, then raced the length of the ice and slid in the game-winner for his sixth goal of the season.



UNIONDALE: Lawson Crouse #67 of the Arizona Coyotes skates against the New York Islanders at the NYCB Live's Nassau Coliseum on Sunday in Uniondale, New York. The Islanders shut-out the Coyotes 2-0. — AFP

Both goaltenders—Chicago's Corey Crawford and Colorado's Philipp Grubauer—played back-to-back games for just the second time this season. Crawford made 19 saves, Grubauer 40.

The win pushed Chicago to 76 points in the standings—five behind Colorado, which holds the Western Conference's second wild card, and three behind the Minnesota Wild and Arizona Coyotes. — Reuters

Solo break earns De Gendt Tour of Catalonia win

CALELLA: Belgian Lotto-Soudal rider Thomas de Gendt completed a long range solo break through the mountains to win the Tour of Catalonia's opening stage yesterday ahead of an all star cast of contenders.

In glorious spring sunshine De Gendt finished a 164km route in 4hrs 14mins and 32sec as the only survivor of an early six man breakaway that began after 12km in a race that started and ended in the seaside town of Calella.

The 32-year-old from Flanders leads the overall classification, the points, the mountain and the special breakaway category too. Germany's Maximilian Schachmann of Bora-Hansgrohe broke from the peloton with 5km or so remaining to finish second a couple of seconds ahead of the onrushing peloton as Grega Bole of Bahrain Merida came third.

With three category one climbs across the forested peaks behind Spain's Costa Brava an elite group had been expected to drop a major part of the peloton, which it did as Spanish outfit Movistar led by world champion Alejandro Valverde and Colombian climber Nairo Quintana set a high tempo late on.

"I was surprised the gap didn't come down," the win-

ner said after the race. "I was at the limit of my endurance but when I was getting closer I just had to carry on." "This is the best race I've had here and it's a joy to race in these circumstances."

It was a quiet day for four time Tour de France champion Chris Froome and his compatriots Simon and Adam Yates, while Australian contender Richie Porte and his Colombian teammate Estaban Chaves all finished in the main group.

Tuesday's second stage is a relatively flat 166km-long race which heads north along the coast from Mataro to Sant Feliu de Guixols and is expected to finish in a bunch sprint.

Overall standings:

1. Thomas De Gendt (BEL/Lotto) 4hrs 14min 16sec, 2. Maximilian Schachmann (GER/BOR) at 2min 48sec, 3. Grega Bole (SLO/BAH) 2:54, 4. Alejandro Valverde (ESP/MOV) 2:56, 5. Egan Bernal (COL/SKY) 2:57, 6. Michael Matthews (AUS/SUN) 2:58, 7. Mikel Bizkarra (ESP/EUS) same time, 8. Andre Greipel (GER/FST) s.t., 9. Daryl Impey (RSA/MIT) s.t., 10. Jay McCarthy (AUS/BOR) s.t.

Stage 1:

1. Thomas De Gendt (BEL/LOT) 164km in 4hrs 14mins 32sec, 2. Maximilian Schachmann (GER/BOR) at 2min 38sec, 3. Grega Bole (SLO/BAH) 2:41, 4. Michael Matthews (AUS/SUN) s.t., 5. Mikel Aristi (ESP/EUS) s.t., 6. Andre Greipel (GER/FST) s.t., 7. Egan Bernal (COL/SKY) s.t., 8. Daryl Impey (RSA/MIT) s.t., 9. Nick van der Lijke (NED/ROP) s.t., 10. Patrick Bevin (NZL/CCC) s.t. — AFP

Cardiff to claim Sala transfer 'null and void': Report

LONDON: Cardiff are set to tell FIFA that the £15 million (\$19.8m, 23m euros) deal they agreed to pay Nantes for Emiliano Sala became "null and void" after he died in a plane crash, a report said yesterday.

The 28-year-old Argentine forward was killed when the small plane carrying him came down in the Channel on January 21, two days after he completed his transfer from the French Ligue 1 side.

The Daily Telegraph said Sala signed a contract with Cardiff that was rejected by the Premier League and died before a revised one could be signed, adding that there is a dispute about whether he had agreed to sign a new deal.

According to the report, a source close to Cardiff said the agreement stipulated that Welsh and French football authorities had to confirm to both clubs that Sala "has been registered as a Cardiff City FC player and that the player's International Transfer Certificate has been released".

The source said this had not happened before Sala died. "The transfer agreement between Cardiff and Nantes was subject to several conditions," the source told the paper.

"If any were not satisfied, the contract would be deemed null and void, with no payment due. Nantes proposed that clause. They asked for the strict notification requirements." Nantes reportedly plan to dispute Cardiff's case, saying the club completed the required paperwork. The club last month referred their dispute with Cardiff over the transfer to FIFA, football's governing body.

Britain's Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AIB) previously said the plane carrying Sala, piloted by David Ibbotson, did not have a commercial licence. But it said the journey would have been allowed as a "private" flight in which costs are shared between pilot and passenger.

It added that on which Sala was a passenger had not been established. The investigators also said since the pilot's logbook and licence were not recovered, it was unclear whether Ibbotson was authorised to fly at night. Sala's body was recovered from the wreckage early last month but Ibbotson's body has not been found. — AFP

Stuani strikes again as ruthless Uruguay win China Cup

SHANGHAI: Stand-in forward Cristhian Stuani scored his third goal in two games as Uruguay taught Thailand a footballing lesson to win the China Cup with a 4-0 victory yesterday. The 2018 World Cup quarter-finalists hardly missed the injured star striking duo of Luis Suarez and Edinson Cavani as they made it seven goals in two games.

Uruguay, comfortable 3-0 victors over Uzbekistan on Friday in the four-team tournament, profited from some poor Thailand defending in the Chinese city of Nanning. Unmarked Inter Milan midfielder Matias Vecino headed home after just six minutes—Thai goalkeeper Siwarak Tedsungnoen should have done better—and it was 2-0 on 38 minutes when Gaston Pereiro prodded in after the Thai defence went AWOL. Stuani, starting because of the absence of PSG's Cavani and Barcelona's Suarez, made it 3-0 just before the hour with a close-range bullet header from a corner. The Girona striker, who scored a brace against the Uzbeks, had hit the post just minutes earlier. Substitute Maxi Gomez made it 4-0 two minutes from the end of normal time with goalkeeper Siwarak stranded out of position. Earlier in the day, Uzbekistan defeated Fabio Cannavaro's China 1-0 to leave the hosts last of the four teams involved. — AFP