

Croatia stun Spain

Tin Jedvaj strikes twice to keep Croatia's Nations League hopes alive

AFP | Zagreb, Croatia

Spain passed up the chance to seal progress to the Nations League finals as they were beaten 3-2 by Croatia on Thursday, undone by a 93rd-minute winner from Tin Jedvaj.

Jedvaj's late strike leaves Group 4 wide open ahead of its final fixture between England and Croatia on Sunday. The victors will qualify, while Spain can still go through if the match at Wembley finishes in a draw.

Croatia were deserving winners in Zagreb, where Jedvaj scored twice -- his first international goals -- to snatch a memorable victory at the end of a pulsating contest.

Andrej Kramaric had put Croatia ahead but twice Spain came back, as Dani Ceballos' equaliser and Sergio Ramos' penalty looked to have earned them a point, before Jedvaj prodded in deep into injury-time.

Croatia will now head to London with a spring in their step while Spain are left to ponder back-to-back defeats under their new coach Luis Enrique, following their surprise loss by the same scoreline at home to England last month.

"I am obviously worried about the things we have to improve. But I think football today has not



Croatia's Tin Jedvaj celebrates after scoring a goal during the UEFA Nations League football match between Croatia and Spain

been fair to us," Enrique said.

Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic said: "We were rewarded for a magnificent match."

Spain are at least safe from relegation, which cannot be said of either England or Croatia, who could still both finish first or last come Sunday night. England will be relegated if they lose or are held to a score draw. Croatia will go down if they are beaten or draw 0-0.

"It shows it was a very difficult group," Luis Enrique added. "We still have a chance."

'Win or wait in hope'

Diario AS summed up Spain's position with the headline "Win or wait in hope" on Thursday. For Croatia, there was pride to be restored, after their 6-0 humiliation in Elche in September. "Six reasons to respond", read the front page of Croatian daily

Sportske Novosti.

Eight of their 11 World Cup finalists started as Jedvaj, Nikola Kalinic and Kramaric replaced Ivan Strinic, Danijel Subasic and Mario Mandzukic, the latter two having since retired from international football.

Jordi Alba went straight into Spain's line-up while Athletic Bilbao's Inigo Martinez played alongside Ramos in central defence, with Nacho out injured.

Croatia dominated the opening exchanges but Spain began dictating possession as the half wore on, even if Isco's long-range shot shortly before half-time was their only real effort of note.

The game was more balanced and open after the restart and two goals arrived in as many minutes. First, Ramos and Sergi Roberto were pressed into a mistake, the latter's poor pass allowing Kramaric to sneak in and slot past De Gea with 53 minutes gone.

Spain performed better at the other end. Ceballos bundled in a quick equaliser and Aspas should have added another soon after but poked onto the crossbar.

Spain paid the price for that miss when Jedvaj headed in his first international goal after meeting Luka Modric's sumptuous cross at the back post.

Marcelo Brozovic should have put Croatia out of sight but spurned a one-on-one, his shot grazing De Gea on its way wide. This time Spain made them pay.

Sime Vrsaljko hacked substitute Alvaro Morata's header off the line before giving away a penalty, lowering his arm to meet a cross that was probably on its way behind. Ramos made no mistake from the spot.

Marquez tops Valencia practice

AFP | Valencia

World champion Marc Marquez powered his Honda to the top of the timesheets in a rain-interrupted free practice session for the season-ending MotoGP in Valencia.

With a massive lead of 101 points on Italian Andrea Dovizioso (Ducati), Marquez has already secured the championship title ahead of the season finale.

The Spaniard has won three consecutive titles and five overall in motorcycling's top category.

But he signalled his bid to finish the season in style by setting a fastest lap of 1min 39.767sec in the first session, which held throughout a day plagued by delays due to heavy rain.

"The conditions were complicated," said the 25-year-old Marquez. "There was less water in the morning and the grip was good, but in the afternoon there was more water."

"There were two points where the water crossed (the track), and you had to be careful."

Ducati's Jack Miller and Italians Danilo Petrucci and Andrea Pedrosa took the next positions, with Dani Pedrosa clocking the fifth fastest time at 0.700sec on what will be his final world championship weekend before retirement.

BRAVE 18 marks new chapter in the history of Bahraini Sports

TDI | Manama

The fight night of Brave 18 marked the biggest success in the history of sports in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Brave Combat Federation is a truly Bahraini sports initiative found by H Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

The biggest sports event in the Kingdom of Bahrain was presided by Ramzan Kadyrov,

WFCA 54 Official Results

Abdul Rakhman Dudaev defeats Joe Taimanglo by unanimous decision
Magomedrasul Khasbulaev defeats Robert Emerson by Anaconda Choke (Round 2)
Akhmed Sheraniev defeats Antonio Carlos Ribeiro by unanimous decision
Goyti Dazev defeats Vasilii Kurochkin by knockout (Round 3)
Anzor Abdulkhojaev defeats Nikolay Kondratuk by TKO (Round 1)

Head of State of Chechnya, HH Khalifa and HH Shaikh Khalid Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

The event attracted big names from the world of sports including Khabib Nurmagomedov, the son of legendary coach, Abdulmanap Nurmagomedov and the current UFC lightweight champion.

Brave International Combat Week 2018 marked the biggest combat sports event hosted in Asia. The fight night opened with the fights from WFCA 54.

Cowley shocks Rai



Cian Cowley faces Hardeep Rai

TDI | Manama

Cian Cowley from SBG Ireland shocked fellow IMAF medalist, Hardeep Rai with a thrilling first round TKO finish.

The prospect who trains at SBG Ireland was accompanied by veteran Coach, John Kavanagh. In a pure stand up action,

Cowley unleashed menacing low kicks that brought Rai down.

In the opening bout of Brave CF, Khamzat Chimaev picked a first round TKO victory. The welterweight proved to be a force to be recognised in the near future in the most competed division in the promotion.

Japan remain undefeated under new boss

AFP | Oita, Japan

Japan drew with Venezuela 1-1 in a home friendly yesterday with defender Hiroki Sakai netting his first goal for the Blue Samurai, who stay undefeated under their new coach.

The draw in Oita came as Japan are gearing towards an attempt at a record-extending fifth title in the Asian Cup starting in January.

Sakai scored a 39-minute opener for Japan as he fired a volley following Shoya Nakajima's precise free-kick. It was his first goal for the national team on his 49th international.

In the second half, midfielder Tomas Rincon netted an equaliser for Venezuela from the penalty spot after a foul in the box by Sakai.

The Blue Samurai nipped at the South Americans' heels and Maya Yoshida's header



Japan's Yuya Osako (2nd L) and Venezuela's Jhon Chancellor (L) fight for the ball during their international friendly soccer match in Oita, Japan

squeezed the ball into the goal but it was disallowed for offside, silencing the 33,000 local fans.

Japan made it three wins and one draw from Hajime Moriyasu's first four games following their surprise run to the last 16

of the World Cup under Akira Nishino.

"Our players made the best preparations and won the opener," Moriyasu said.

"We wanted to add a goal to win but that's what we have to

”
We wanted to add a goal to win but that's what we have to overcome

HAJIME MORIYASU

overcome," he said.

Venezuela coach Rafael Dudamel was quoted by Jiji Press as saying: "It was a tough match. I'm satisfied as our players concentrated on the fight understanding Japan's offence."

Last month Japan stunned Uruguay 4-3 as Takumi Minamoto netted twice against the World Cup quarter-finalists.

Japan will take on Kyrgyzstan in another friendly Tuesday next week before going to the United Arab Emirates for Asia's showcase tournament.

Trophies will define Liverpool's season, not stats - Wijnaldum

Reuters | London

Liverpool's Premier League statistics this season make for impressive reading but the focus should be on delivering trophies at Anfield, according to midfielder Georginio Wijnaldum.

The Merseyside club are second in the league after 12 matches with 30 points, two

behind defending champions Manchester City.

It is Liverpool's joint best start to a league season since the inception of the Premier League in 1992 and their unbeaten run has been built on solid foundations at the back.

The team has conceded five league goals — joint-best defensive record in competition alongside Manchester City.