

Spain put five past Slovakia to book Croatia showdown

Spain claimed the biggest win of the tournament with a 5-0 thrashing of Slovakia in their final Euro 2020 Group E match

● Spain finish second in the group E

AFP | Seville

Spain finally have lift-off at Euro 2020 after a 5-0 hammering of Slovakia yesterday sent them through as runners-up in Group E, with Croatia their opponents in the last 16 on Monday.

Luis Enrique described his team as a bottle of cava about to be popped and they certainly exploded in Seville, where a scoring frenzy felt cathartic and could yet prove transformative for their chances in the knockout stages.

Spain were even about to progress as group winners until Viktor Claesson scored in the 94th minute against Poland to secure top spot for Sweden. Slovakia finish third and are out.

After two tension-filled draws against Sweden and Poland, Spain were left scrambling to qualify, with Luis Enrique admitting he would have taken any position in the group as long as it meant going through.

But Spain ran riot at La Cartuja, their early anxiety heightened by Alvaro Morata's missed penalty and then quickly eased by two dreadful mistakes by Slovakia's goalkeeper Martin



Spain's Aymeric Laporte heads the ball to score his side's second goal

Dubravka.

The first was an own goal that will surely go down as one of the strangest moments of the tournament before another Dubravka error allowed Aymeric Laporte to head in.

With the shackles off, Spain let loose in the second half as Pablo Sarabia, Ferran Torres and another own goal from Juraj Kucka confirmed an emphatic win, even if Croatia and Luka Modric will provide a much sterner test next week.

Spain monopolised the ball in the first half but for 30 minutes, it was a familiar story of chances missed and frustration growing.

Spain were awarded a penalty as Jakub Hromada went to clear

but instead lashed into the leg of Koke.

Morata had deferred the spot-kick to Moreno against Poland and this time took charge, only to whip the ball at a comfortable height for Dubravka to palm away to his right. It was the fifth consecutive penalty Spain have missed.

Dubravka nightmare

They might have crumbled but instead persevered, even as Sarabia and Pedri both kicked the air before finally Dubravka stepped in to give them a helping hand.

Lubomir Satka's scuffed clearance fell straight to Sarabia, whose dipping shot banged



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against the top of the crossbar and flew upwards. Dubravka was under it and as he tried to flick the dropping ball over his own crossbar, he succeeded only in flapping it into his own net.

Spain breathed a sigh of relief and just before half-time they made it two. Dubravka was again at fault, this time edging out only to see Moreno steer the ball away from him in the area and cross it back in. Laporte did brilliantly to loop his header into the top corner.

Slovakia threw Michal Duris and Stanislav Lobotka on at half-time but Spain were liberated and within 10 minutes, it was three. This time, it was not a mistake but a slick move that made it, Jordi Alba pulling back to Sarabia, who steered into the corner.

Argentine Gonzalez joins Fiorentina on five-year deal



Nicolas Gonzalez (L) in action at the Copa America with Argentina

AFP | Milan

Striker Nicolas Gonzalez has signed for Fiorentina after three seasons with Stuttgart, the Serie A club confirmed yesterday.

The 23-year-old, currently playing in the Copa America with Argentina for whom he has eight caps and two goals, has signed a five-year deal until June 2026.

Fiorentina reportedly paid 23-million euros (\$27.5 million) plus bonuses for the player whose season at Stuttgart was hampered by a muscular injury.

Gonzalez played just once between February and May, having scored six goals in 15 games earlier in the season.

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Fiorentina are searching for a new coach after former Napoli manager Gennaro Gattuso left three weeks after being appointed following a row over the club's strategy and resources for signing new players.

England get the job done with 1-0 win over Czechs

England beat Czech Republic to top group as Raheem Sterling strikes again

● Raheem Sterling's early goal was enough for England to top Group D, as Bukayo Saka and Jack Grealish both impressed

AFP | London

Raheem Sterling scored the only goal as England found an attacking spark to beat the Czech Republic 1-0 at Wembley on Tuesday and clinch top spot in Group D at Euro 2020.

The Manchester City forward, who kept his place alongside Harry Kane in a rejigged attack also featuring Jack Grealish and Bukayo Saka, settled fans' nerves with an early headed goal, which ultimately proved decisive.

The result means Gareth Southgate's side finish top of their group with seven points while Croatia are second with four points. The Czech Republic will join them in the last 16 as one of the best third-placed teams.

With just two goals scored, England are the lowest-scoring side to ever finish top of a group at a European Championship but their defence is yet to be breached.

England now have the dubious privilege of a potential match-up against world champions France, holders Portugal or Germany but will have home advantage on June 29.

"We are not fluent but we have moments where we look a good side," Southgate told ITV.

"Different sorts of tests. All of our



England's Raheem Sterling nets the winner

next opponents will be different games. There is a lot of good things we are doing. We are getting minutes for a lot of the players. Ninety minutes for Harry Maguire was important tonight. Jordan Henderson getting 45 minutes is a step forward. A lot of positives."

Grealish starts

There was clamour before the match for Aston Villa captain Grealish to start to shake up a blunt attack that produced an insipid display in the 0-0 draw against Scotland.

Southgate obliged, also bringing in Saka among four changes to his side.

Chelsea midfielder Mason Mount was unavailable as he was isolating due to coronavirus protocols while Southgate opted to leave Phil Foden out to prevent the risk of a suspension.

Manchester United defender Maguire made his first appearance of Euro 2020 alongside John Stones in central defence.

England started brightly in the evening sunshine and Sterling went agonisingly close in just the second minute but could only watch as his deft chip over the goalkeeper come back off the post after he collected a raking pass from Luke Shaw.

As chants of "Football's Coming Home" rang around the stadium, captain Kane -- heavily criticised for his toothless performances in the tournament so far -- shot from distance and Grealish let fly.

England broke the deadlock in the 12th minute, when Grealish, on the left side of the penalty area, lifted the ball to the back post, where Sterling headed in for his second goal of Euro 2020.

Grealish and man-of-the-match Saka

were inventive and direct on either side of Kane, showing a willingness to run at their opponents.

Kane went close midway through the first half, forcing a fine left-handed save from Tomas Vaclik and thumping the ground in frustration.

But the Czechs carried a threat of their own on their forays forward, growing in menace as the half wore on.

Tomas Holes forced a flying save from England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford just before the half-hour and Tomas Soucek fired wide of the left post.

Liverpool midfielder Henderson replaced Declan Rice at half-time and the Czechs made their own change, bringing on Petr Sevcik for Jakub Jankto.

The sides were evenly matched in the second half, with the reduced crowd making an impressive noise in the cavernous stadium.

Both sides made further changes as the match wore on and the intensity dipped, with fans having to wait until the 83rd minute for the first attempt at goal in the second half.



2 goals were only scored by England to become the lowest-scoring side to ever finish top of a group at a European Championship

Up to 10,000 fans allowed at Tokyo 2020 venues, despite warnings



A general view shows the National Stadium during an athletics test event

Reuters | Tokyo

Up to 10,000 domestic spectators will be allowed in Tokyo 2020 venues, Olympics organisers said on Monday, a decision that cuts against the recommendation of medical experts who said holding the event without fans was the least risky option.

The announcement ends months of speculation and highlights Japan's determination to push on with the Games and salvage the multi-billion-dollar extravaganza amid public opposition and deep concern about a resurgence in infections.

The decision was widely expected after some recent comments by organisers and as the government's own medical experts last week appeared resigned to the event going ahead with fans.