

A HUMBLE MAN



Euro 2012 Gr D Preview | World Cup 1970 | Argentina 1955-59

PSG Version Ancelotti | Milan Injury Crisis | Maximus Tacticus: Liverpool



200412GT9

Ludo Ergo Sum

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| Edition IX |

Starting Line Up

First Whistle.....4

Goalden Times warms you up for busy weeks of football ahead.

A Humble Man.....5

Gino de Blasio pays respect to Piermario Morosini on behalf of the entire Goalden Times team

The Milan Injury Crisis.....6

Milan's season has been as notable for controversies and title fight as by the injuries suffered over the season. *Annalisa D'Antonio* tries to find out why this has been a remarkably injury-plagued season for her beloved team

Scouting Network.....10

Goalden Times profiles Lorenzo Crisetig and says his tweets talk as much as his feet

Maximus Tacticus.....12

Debojyoti Chakraborty goes tactical and analyses EPL clubs and their styles. This month – Liverpool Hotspurs comes under his gaze

Forgotten Trinkets – Angels with Dirty Faces.....17

In a new series dedicated to the forgotten teams which are not quite well known beyond their own boundaries, *Subhodip Basu* takes you through a treasure hunt of these Forgotten Trinkets.

A Cultural dilemma22

Italian football is hit by a new scandal - Calcioscommesse. Gino de Blasio tries to find out why Italian football has been plagued by these scandals

The French Revolution.....26

A new force in Europe emerged last summer in Paris. With the appointment of Carlo Ancelotti, they gained momentum. Ogo Sylla investigates why all is still not well.

GOALDEN TIMES

UEFA Champions League Semi final preview.....29

The business end of Champions League is on us. Get the lowdown on each team and each tie with
Debojyoti Chakraborty

The Conjugated Twins.....33

Separated at birth; united by fate. *Debojyoti Chakraborty* chronicles the conversation of the conjoined twins of English Football who come across each other at a pub on a cold Manchester evening

How to get banned from GT Lottery Syndicate.....35

Gino de Blasio had made moving predictions about the fate of Antonio Cassano and Carlos Tevez back in January and February in Goalden Times. Read of his fate, as a result of those predictions!

The Trophy Finds a Home...37

1970: the greatest World Cup of all time! *Kinshuk Biswas* recounts the story of the last edition of Jules Rimet Cup

What's the Goalden Word.....50

We build our own footballpedia with words you came across in articles or commentaries and wondered what they really meant.

Euro 2012 Preview: Group D52

We continue our build up to the European Cup looking at Group D here

A Sneak Peek: Stars of UEFA Euro 2012 Group B.....58

We continue our build-up to the Euro 2012 with the rising stars of Group B.

A Sneak Peek: Stars of UEFA Euro 2012 Group C.....61

We continue our build-up to the Euro 2012 with the rising stars of Group C.

A Sneak Peek: Stars of UEFA Euro 2012 Group D.....65

We continue our build-up to the Euro 2012 with the rising stars of Group D..



GOALDEN TIMES

First Whistle

At the impressionable age, when I just entered high school, the goal that left a lasting impression is what we depicted on the cover of our very first issue. We call it the '*Locus of God*'. But that's not the only way to score a great goal. There could be a set of amazing passes leading into a goal, or a chip or a free-kick. Our revamped look from March onwards is somewhat a convex combination of such techniques; largely run solo, but ably assisted by other key players in team **Goalden Times**. We have received encouraging feedback on our new layout from our readers and this kind of support eggs us on to continuously improve and enrich our content.

Moving on to the football pitch, news of Antonio Cassano, the Milan and Italy striker finally receiving a go-ahead to resume playing following a heart surgery has been very heartening. With the collective prayer of football fans around the globe, Fabrice Ndala Muamba is getting better and Eric Abidal is progressing fine. However, not all news has been good for the heart. We would like to take this opportunity to send our sincere best wishes to Aston Villa's captain Stiliyan Petrov, who doctors say, has been a victim of the Chernobyl disaster. We wish him a positive outcome and speedy recovery. The game also lost a great man in Livorno midfieder Piermario Morosini who collapsed on the pitch and died of cardiac failure last week. We extend our condolences to his family and friends.

Outside of health hazards, Carlos Tevez is back doing what he does best - showing his (hat)tricks on the football pitch. But his club, Manchester City is now 5 points behind the city rival United with five matches to go. In Italy, just 1 point separates the league leader Juventus, still unbeaten this season, and AC Milan. Borussia Dortmund seems to have a decisive 8-point lead over Bayern Munich in Bundesliga. In La Liga, the gap between Real Madrid and Barcelona has been reduced to 4 points with both teams to play five more games including an El Clásico. Elsewhere in Europe, Montpellier has a narrow 3-point lead over their nearest rival - the big spending Paris Saint-Germain, while Ajax is 6 points ahead of AZ Alkmaar and Feyenoord Rotterdam. In India, Dempo Sporting Club has clinched the I-League title.

Odds are of another El Clásico on May 19 in the UEFA Champions League final. There is a distinct possibility of an all-Spanish final in the UEFA Europa League as well with three Spanish clubs in final four.

We shall see how the Spanish national team dominates the UEFA Euro 2012 starting June 8, in Poland and Ukraine. **Goalden Times** will celebrate Euro and football in more ways than one. Keep watching this space, our [Facebook page](#) and [Twitter](#).

Follow football, follow us!

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A Humble Man

Gino de Blasio pays respect to Piermario Morosini on behalf of the entire Goalden Times team

The sporting world paid tribute to Piermario Morosini last weekend.

During a Serie B match between Livorno and Pescara, the young midfielder collapsed, and later died from what appears to have been a fatal cardiac arrest on the pitch.

Stories from friends and colleagues, however, will tell a story of a man much loved by those who knew him, with the word “*humble*” being the most used adjective. And quite deservedly so, the [streets of Bergamo were filled with thousands of fans on Thursday](#) to pay their final respects to the man whose motto, if **Goalden Times** had to guess, would quite aptly translate to *Ludo Ergo Sum*.

Humble Beginnings

“I lost my mother and father when I was a child, and I played for them. These are things that change your life, and at the same time it teaches you to never give up on your dreams, and mine was to be a football player, as it was their dream for me”.

He grew up in the youth Atalanta scheme before being bought by Udinese and then sent on loan around the country to get match experience. Everywhere he went, he made friends; he was loved in the dressing rooms, always there for his companions when they needed someone they could trust.

His impact on the pitch may not have been the greatest, and his death may unfortunately be the only thing that those outside of calcio may ever get to know about him.

His Reach was Greater than that of the Game

Of all the stories that have been pouring in from those who knew him best, what stands out is that he was a man who apparently “***made you know how to smile everyday***”. According to Marco Andreolli, a former under-21 Italian national, colleague and friend, Morosini was a happy man, who always saw the “glass half full”.

His death will pose some pertinent questions for, and teach a few [important lessons](#) to Italian football.

His life, however, whilst filled with sadness and tragedy was one of hope, positivity and kindness.



Piermario with his fiance

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The Milan Injury Crisis

Milan's season has been as notable for controversies and title fight as by the injuries suffered over the season. Annalisa D'Antonio tries to find out why this has been a remarkably injury-plagued season for her beloved team



Have any of you been wondering about the vast amount of injuries plaguing Milan these past few years? Have any of you wondered where these problems are stemming from? Well, I've been wondering about this for quite awhile and it puzzles me, as I'm sure it does all other *Milanisti*: why the number of injuries has been increasing dramatically in the past few years.

Milan is currently in second place in the Serie A table, just one point behind first place contender Juventus. However, it should be taken into consideration that Milan have suffered quite an astounding number of injuries this season, as opposed to Juventus who have had very few. No one could have ever imagined that Milan could be in such bad physical shape. The *Rossoneri* are the team that have been struck by the most number of injuries in Serie A this season. According to *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, the sum of games missed by unavailable players due to injuries are 247 in Serie A alone, with an increment of 150% with respect to last season. This could be a fundamental deciding factor for the *scudetto* race between Milan and Juventus in the final stages of the season. Some may argue that Milan has been struck with bad luck, when taking all their injuries into consideration. Two of their many injuries can fall into the bad luck category: Gennaro Gattuso and Antonio Cassano. Gattuso was diagnosed with ocular myasthenia, which is a paralysis of the optic nerve, which kept him out from the twentieth minute of the

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second league match, making him unavailable for the majority of the season. Cassano, on the other hand, suffered an ischemic stroke and while he was hospitalised, a heart defect was discovered and he underwent an operation to correct this problem. However, as any *Milanista* would agree, not all of Milan's problems stem from ill fate. Two injuries caused by bad luck isn't a significant amount to be considered a bad luck streak, when compared to the amount of overall injuries.

Throughout the years, we have heard about the avant-garde MilanLab, located in Milanello, which is known as being one of Europe's most innovative sports facilities with its exceptional training and medical centre. MilanLab was considered to be one of the secrets behind Milan's success. The aging players (by football standards) would benefit from the amenities of the MilanLab, therefore prolonging their career beyond what is considered to be the usual age of retirement. MilanLab is a high-tech scientific research centre, with a mission to aid athletes to attain the best performance possible, to maintain fitness and to decrease the risk of injury.

Regardless of having the world-renowned MilanLab, which is supposed to detect possible injuries and prevent them, in the past couple of years Milan have been suffering a substantial amount of injuries; each year being worse than the last one, thus making it exceptionally difficult for them to participate in all competitions at the capacity they are used to. This season has been record-breaking, as Milan have been inundated with numerous injuries at once, having to endure the shortage of available key players. It hasn't been uncommon this season for Milan to have to reinvent their starting lineup, due to the fact that they've had up to fourteen injured players unavailable at once.

LE PARTITE NON GIOCATE PER INFORTUNIO DOPO 26 GIORNATE



Statistics show that the injuries that have been occurring in the past years are mainly linked to muscle problems. In the past two seasons, players who were well

known for their strength and stamina are now succumbing to Milan's dreadful injury plague. A good example of that is Mark van Bommel, a pillar in the midfield and a vital player for Milan, who is just now coming back after a month-long back injury. Last month, right-back Ignazio Abate suffered a muscular injury while training, putting him out of commission for a few weeks. This was a major setback for Milan, as he is one of their most prominent starters.



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Another problem is that players are not gradually brought into the game after recovering from an injury. The decision to play Thiago Silva in a league match against Roma was a bad judgment call, knowing that he had received a knock four days prior in a Coppa Italia match against Juventus. Milan took a risk letting the Brazilian play; unfortunately he had to abandon the game after ten minutes with a problematic flexor muscle,

which would keep him out for four weeks. In my opinion, the decision to have the players at the team's disposal is not well thought out between manager, Massimiliano Allegri and the physicians at the MilanLab. Does Allegri obtain the information and not use it to his advantage? Or is the MilanLab not circulating the information appropriately? The fact that the players come to play and become injured shortly after shows that they are not physically fit to be playing as a starter or in the game at all. This goes to prove my theory that it seems that something is missing in the final decision that determines whether they are ready to play again or not. Players don't fully recuperate from their initial injury, not allowing them to heal completely, thus making their injuries repetitive. A perfect example is the man made of crystal, also known as Alexandre Pato. He has suffered fourteen injuries in the last couple of years, mainly due to chronic thigh injury. This season alone, Pato has suffered from four serious muscular injuries keeping him out for the majority of the season. When not even the team's doctors could solve the puzzle of Pato's recurring injuries, they took him all over the place; from Germany to the United States, hoping they would be able to find the solution. The Belgian doctor Jean-Pierre Meersseman was fresh out of ideas and said that if Professor Frederick Carrick at the Life University of Marietta in Atlanta, Georgia would not be able to solve this issue, he would have to resort to his last option, which would be to contact his spiritual therapist to pray for Pato.

Shortly after returning from Atlanta, Pato was subbed on in the second half of the second leg of the Champions League quarter-final against Barcelona. This turned out to be disastrous, as the young striker had to leave the pitch in pain after merely fourteen minutes. As the club doctor said: "*Pato was declared clinically recovered thirteen times but is obviously not cured.*" The 22-year-old went from being one of the most promising young strikers to being the most injury-prone, with the fear that his career could be over at such a young age, if a cure is not found.

Many have speculated that relentless training, Allegri's tactics, some players' excessive sex life and the condition of San Siro's pitch cause the injuries. However, I do not agree with such speculations for

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specifically two reasons: a) I haven't heard of many Milan players who got injured by having sex with their girlfriends (or at least, not that we've read about in [Vanity Fair](#)) and b) if the condition of the pitch was directly related to the injuries, that would mean that Inter Milan would have just as many injuries, seeing that they share the same pitch. Let's face it, the injuries don't only happen at San Siro: they have occurred during training sessions, away matches and etcetera. I still stick to my opinion that there is an unresolved problem at the MilanLab, because with all the state-of-the-art equipment and technology, there shouldn't be this influx of recurring injuries, which usually span over a minimum of two weeks and up.



Milan started the season without a full squad and have come this far, competing in three major competitions and making it to the quarter-finals of the UEFA Champions League, only to be eliminated by the best team in the world, while still holding their own during both legs. At this point of the season, with only six games remaining, it gives us *Milanisti* hope that, although we still don't have a full squad, we are in second place, only one point behind Juventus. Let us not forget that while Juventus only had Serie A to focus on and hardly any injured players, Milan were in first place for a while, with Juventus trailing behind in second place. All things considered, Milan is doing quite well bearing in mind the lengthy and numerous injuries. To my fellow *Milanisti*, I leave you with this: *Forza Milan, non mollare mai!*¹

¹ Forza Milan, Never Give Up!

Scouting Network: Lorenzo Crisetig

Goalden Times brings you the stars of tomorrow – 20 years or under, promising players from across the world



Date of Birth: January 20,
1993

Height: 1.83m

Weight: 80kg

Position: Midfielder

Nationality: Italian

Club: Internazionale Milan

Market Value: €1mn

Lorenzo Crisetig has been long identified as a prodigy. He has created a couple of youngest player records in various levels of the Italian age group teams. A midfielder who plays in front of the defence, protecting it and creating opportunities, he has been marked out for great things from quite a young age.

Crisetig was born in the province of Udine of Slovenian parentage and by the age of 14 had signed for Internazionale, even though hometown club Udinese and Inter's crosstown rivals Milan had their eyes on him. Inter, at that time were in the middle of a wonderful run in the league (four Serie A titles on the trot). They had upgraded their academy and were in the process of promoting a fresh crop of talented young players. Talents like Mario Balotelli and Davide Santon formed a part of this bunch. Crisetig had this to say about the other two prodigal talents of that team: "I know Mario very little. But Davide was in boarding school with me. He's right now just like himself (in the past) even now that he is playing for the National team."

As a 14-year-old, Crisetig though did not merit much attention but while Balotelli exploded in and out of the field and Santon sparkled and then fizzled off, Crisetig grew on to be the pillar of the Inter Primavera team that has always been in the forefront of Primavera competitions.

That growth was noticed when Jose Mourinho became the manager of Inter. Mourinho had ushered in the careers of aforementioned Santon and Balotelli at the senior level, and in 2009 he gave Crisetig his first break in the senior team in a friendly match. But with a star-studded Inter team that was winning both in Italy and Europe, regular chances were hard to come by. Mourinho gave him exposure by including him in the Champions League team. And even though he would not make his debut for the senior team, these stints would help him grow his game.

GOALDEN TIMES

Crisetig grew through the ranks in the Italian team appearing in the U-16, U-17, U-18, U-19 and U-21 youth teams, all within a stretch of two years. So fast was this progress that he became the youngest ever player to be picked for the Italian U-21 team. On August 11, 2010, Crisetig broke the record of Federico Macheda (18 years 10 days) when he made his debut at the Azzurrini's 2-2 European Championship qualifying draw against Denmark at the age of 17. The Azzurini boss Pierluigi Casiraghi praised his composure saying, "Crisetig is a player with important attributes" and in a match in which Italy U-21 team came back from 0-2 to level things, Crisetig had covered himself with glory. Casiraghi would subsequently be replaced as the Azzurini boss by Ciro Ferrara, but praises for Crisetig would be a common thread. After a particularly important 3-1 win over Sweden, Ferrara gushed, "Lorenzo has great personality and responded to the task at hand."

Crisetig finally made his senior Inter debut in the 2011-12 Champions League away to CSKA, but would require some more time to be a regular as he is only 19. But even at this age, his physical presence, enthusiasm on the ball and a deft left foot, bodes well for the future. With Inter at crossroads, and in need of a new cycle at the club, it would be players like Crisetig who could shine the light.

Maximus Tacticus – Liverpool

Debojyoti Chakraborty analyzes the strategies of top English Premier League clubs. This month Liverpool comes under the microscope. You may contact him on [@debojchak](#)

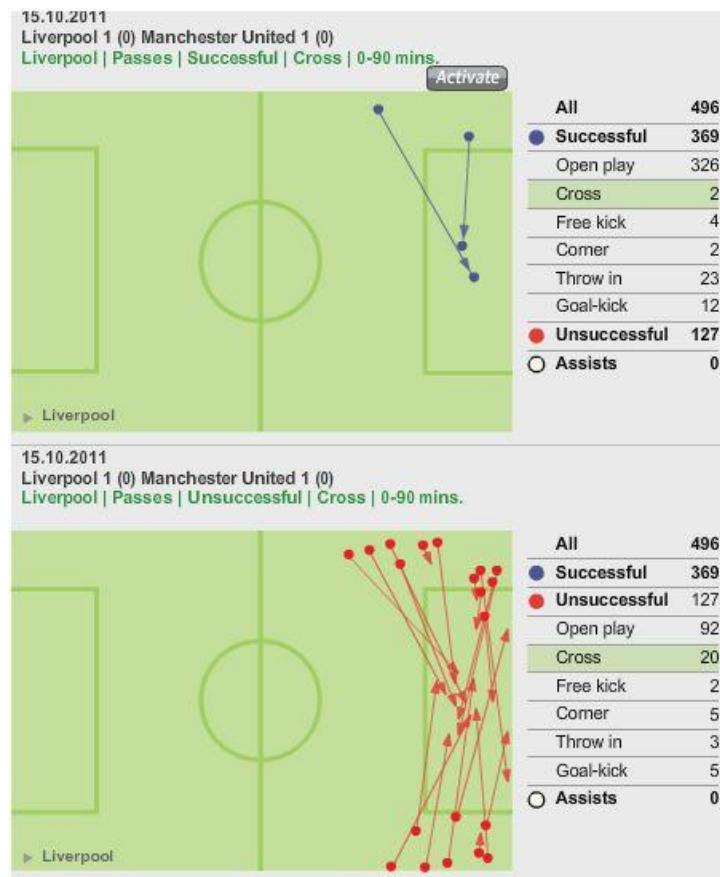
Induction

Will Liverpool win the Premier League? This was the question last season when *King Kenny* (Dalglish) took charge at Anfield last season. Going by their performances so far, the answer to that is a clear NO. Their season has gone from bad to worse. Far from fighting for the crown or even vying for the Champions League spots, they are now simply fighting to be in the top half of the league. This is even more frustrating since Dalglish had the support of the board and fans and he was one of those fortunate managers who had enough cash to splash.

Problems Aplenty

The problem for Liverpool has been getting results in games where they are expected to win. From the days of Rafael Benitez, the Reds have adopted a compact playing style based on speedy counter attacks. They love to play with a five-man midfield, press the opponent, forcing them to commit mistakes and then to pounce on to them. It has worked in matches against the bigger teams; against less ambitious teams, especially playing at home, Liverpool has found it difficult to break through. It is evident now that Dalglish is a very passionate administrator, but not a shrewd tactician who can change the course of a match. Part of this problem can be attributed to the absence of inspirational captain Steven Gerrard for most of the season due to niggling injuries. His passing, be it *those Hollywood passes* to initiate a counter-attack or some killer through balls to unlock a packed defence, was a major weapon which was dearly missed. Liverpool have done well in keeping their shape but they have been too *bookish* – lacking any idea when most needed. None of the three preferred central midfielders – Charlie Adam, Jordan Henderson or Lucas Leiva / Jay Spearing – have been given a definite duty which has compounded their midfield woes. For some inexplicable reason, Dirk Kyut, Liverpool's player of the season last time round, has been quite irregular, even as the new signing, Stewart Downing has failed to spark in the wide areas. Too many work-horses but lack of any craft and vision has hampered Luis Suarez, who has been left alone high up the field. He has also been desperately unlucky as he has hit the posts the most in EPL – and his clever movements have often gone unnoticed. Without the lanky Andy Carroll, Liverpool have missed a target in the box for their crosses as is evident from the following graphic. Only 2 out of 22 crosses met a shirt in Red and that's how poor they have been!

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The Reds have been decent in the back though. Led by Jose “Pepe” Reina, one of the best distributors of the ball in the league, they have kept 11 clean sheets so far – only Swansea City and Manchester City have bettered them. Martin Skrtel has been the leader in defence and his partnership with the ball playing centre-half Daniel Agger has blossomed this season. Jamie Carragher has been used as a reserve in what could be his swansong season and it is clear to see why he is not a regular anymore. Glen Johnson and Jose Enrique have formed a competent partnership on the opposite flanks as wing-backs. Martin Kelly has been the reserve right-back while Johnson has been instrumental even in the unusual left back position in Enrique’s absence.

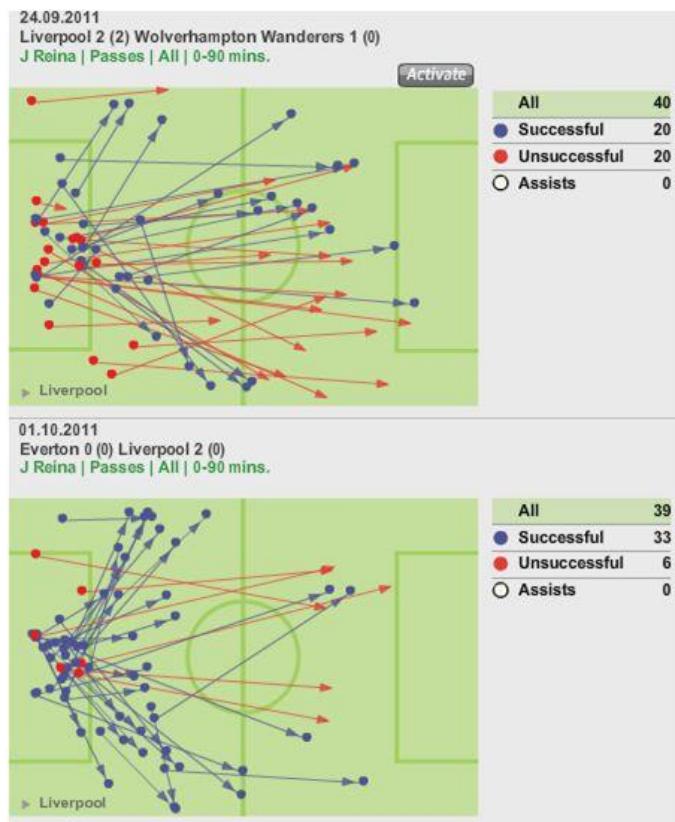
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Man To Watch (1) - Pepe Reina

Jose "Pepe" Reina is perhaps the best distributor of the ball in England. He has set up the most number of goal-scoring opportunities (five) for his team, according to the official Barclays statistics. Besides, his short passing is exceptional and he is at ease with the ball either throwing it or rolling it to a teammate. Wolves had pressed him more forcing him to play more long balls which reduced his passing accuracy considerably to only 50%. But at Goodison Park, as Everton were down to 10 men quite early in the match with Jack Rodwell sent off, he faced less pressure and thus dictated the game quite well with 84% accurate passing.

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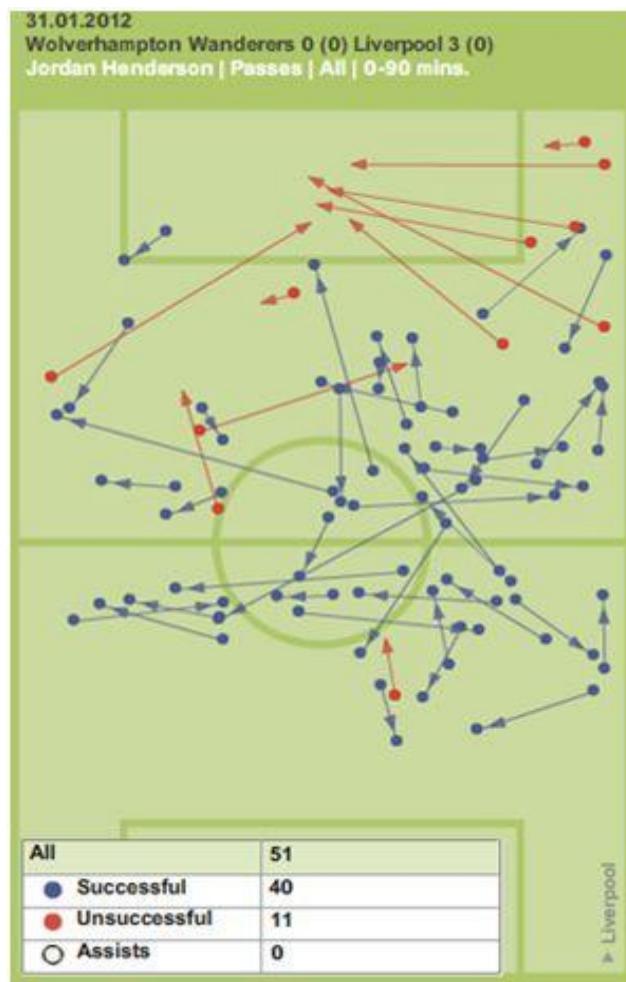
This shows the amount of talent at Spain's disposal and why he cannot even make the bench for the national team. But that does not undermine the fact that he is a brilliant shot-stopper. He is a true leader organizing the back four and it is no wonder they have kept so many clean sheets. But some occasional lapse in concentration has cost Liverpool dear – most notably the game at [Etihad Stadium](#) and against Fulham.

Man To Watch (2) – Jordan Henderson

Henderson was bought from Sunderland for a jaw-dropping £20 million at a tender age of 20 with only a single season of top flight football behind him. Pundits thought he was overpriced and so far, with his performance, Henderson has proved them right. Regularly deployed in a more advanced position in the central midfield, he has until now contributed by scoring only once and two assists. He has been sloppy in possession, lacks the technique to win 50-50 duels consistently, and his aerial strengths are nothing to write home about. May be a club like Liverpool, where nothing but wins are expected in each and every match, has come a little too soon for him. He looks lost at times, out of his comfort zone from the Stadium of Light. Though he has an overall passing accuracy of 83%, most of those passes have not been venomous. Against Wolves, as shown below, he failed to deliver a single telling cross. Moreover, only

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one of his completed passes was really *threatening*. He is playing it safe but how long can the Kops bear with him?



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Forgotten Trinkets – The Angels with Dirty Faces

In a new series dedicated to the forgotten teams which are not quite well known beyond their own boundaries, Subhodip Basu takes you through a treasure hunt of these Forgotten Trinkets

The greatest national teams of the ‘beautiful game’ may be divided into three groups. The first and most visible are the “**Achievers**” - teams that won ‘em all. The Uruguayan *Charrúas* of 20s, the Italian *Azzuri* of 30s, the Brazilian *Seleção* in late 50s leading up to the legendary West Germans of 70s, the French *Les Bleus* in late 90s or the current Spanish *La Roja*, all fall into this category.

The second and perhaps more fondly remembered are the “**Tragic Heroes**”. These are teams of the ‘nearly men’. They often dominated all comers but missed the ultimate prize. The Austrian *Wunderteam* of the 30s, the magical *Magyars* of the 50s, the brilliant *Oranje* in the 70s or the Brazilians of ‘82, fall into this category. While the “Achievers” won trophies, the “Tragic Heroes” at least won hearts.

However, there is a third lot, whose saga is even more poignant. These “**Hidden Gems**” are often not that well known outside their own country. As they seldom made it big in the highest grade, part of their status in football history is driven by myth, imagination and innuendo. Some of them shone brightly for a brief while before suddenly going off boil. On other occasions, they got broken up by events beyond football. Some even existed only on paper, with key players being left out by bizarre selection policies.

The first edition of the series is dedicated to the *Albiceleste* of the 50s.

The Angels with Dirty Faces: Argentina 1955-59

Getting to Know the Dirty Faces

“Mirror mirror on the wall, who’s the prettiest of them all?

It’s the angels with dirty faces!!! The angels with dirty faces!!!”

Well, the only pretty part of the chief protagonists of the 1957 South American champions was their craft with a leather ball. No one really wrote an ode for them, though the above would not have been out of place. The *Albiceleste* won three South American Championships in the 50s - ’55, ’57 and ’59. These were won largely without their talented exiles, who had fled to Colombia and then to various countries in Europe post the Argentina players’ strike in 1949.

Thankfully, unlike their contemporary edition, which required middle-aged Juan Sebastián Verón to be recalled to provide some class quotient in midfield, the *Albiceleste* of the 40s and 50s simply churned out talented creative midfielders and forwards by the dozen. The ’57 team was perhaps their apogee. In another two years, post pocketing another championship, the Argentineans went steadily downhill for almost two decades. However, in ’57, their inside trio of Antonio Angelillo, Omar Sívori and

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Humberto *Maschio*, with some help from right winger Omar *Corbatta*, swept all before them. The nickname “Carasucias”, or dirty faces, possibly due to their heavy Latin American features, was coined soon after. Post their prompt departure to Italy, they subsequently came to be known as the “Angels with Dirty Faces”, after the ’38 gangster classic by Michael Curtiz. As *Maschio* and *Angelillo* had striking resemblances to Humphrey Bogart and George Bancroft respectively, while *Sívori* looked somewhat like Billy Halop and *Corbatta* like James (“Jimmy”) Cagney, the name stuck.



Antonio *Angelillo*



Corbatta

Lure of Money and Curse of Isolation

Ever since the Oriundi (or Rimpatriati aka ‘The Repatriates’ as it was known then) like Renato *Cesarini*, Luis *Monti* and Raimundo *Orsi* shifted to Italy in early 30s, Argentina had been a consistent supply line to European clubs, especially Italy. It’s worthwhile to recall that the Oriundi formed the core of the ’34 world champions with Monti organising the defence and Orsi, Enrique Guaita and Attilio Demaría leading the attack. However, till the players’ strike in 1949, inflow exceeded outflow. So as Bernabé Ferreyra and La Máquina arrived along with imports like Paraguayan Arsenio Erico, Spaniard Isidro Lángara, Uruguayans Severino Varela and Walter Gomez and Brazilian Domingos da Guia, exiles were soon forgotten. Post 1949, exodus ballooned and the tap began to dry up.

Also, in the 50s, two significant events took place. First, competitive international club football started in 1955 with the first edition of the European Cup. This increased player demand in Europe, led by ambitious Spanish and Italian clubs. The policy of banning exiles from the national team was common across most nations till the 60s. Even Brazil ignored José Altafini and Dino Sani when they left for Italy. The philosophy was primarily driven by clubs who wanted the best players at home to ensure good

GOALDEN TIMES

gates. Argentina sent a second string team in 1934 and missed '50 and '54 editions due to this. However, with a large exodus, the Federation may have done well to recall the exiles to the national team. Instead, they chose to become completely insular.

Secondly, tactical revolution was at hand with first Hungary and then Brazil doing away with the traditional pyramid formation, with the world following suit. This impacted Argentina even more. Their game, though high on creativity and technique, was slow and tactically naïve. They still played the pre-war Método (the method) game with a perambulating centre-half in Néstor Rossi. Hence, in 1958 in Sweden, without their exiled inside trio, they slid to a disastrous 6-goal defeat against a very ordinary Czech team, while Rogelio Domínguez, Alfredo Di Stéfano, and Héctor Rial were gobbling up European cups for Real Madrid.

The Best of the Rest

Whatever their tactical limitations, when in full strength, the teams that won three championships were full of very high calibre players. If you add exiles such as Di Stéfano, the team took world-beater proportions.

Minding their goal was Amadeo Carrizo. Nicknamed Tarzan, Carrizo was a pioneer in goalkeeping techniques, being the first in South America to wear gloves, venture out of the penalty area and use long goal kicks. Peruvian Ramón Quiroga, Colombian René Higuita and Paraguayan José Chilavert are all said to have been influenced by him. Even Pele has spoken about his mental block of scoring past him. Carrizo was ably backed up by the more traditional, but not less brilliant, Julio Musimessi.

In defence, there was liberal sprinkling of both elegance and thuggery. The elegance department was led by Juan Francisco Lombardo, Federico Vairo and Eliseo Mouriño, all extremely high quality defenders. Pedro Dellacha and Vladislao Cap were the thugs. Interestingly, post the disaster against Czechs in '58, the thug quotient increased. During the Copa winning effort in '59, Jorge Griffa was added. This tendency reached alarming proportions over the next decade, with notorious hard-men like Rubén Navarro, Roberto Ferreiro, Thomas Rolan and José Albrecht typifying their defence. A similar trend followed among halfbacks, where the slow but classy Néstor Rossi and Juan Héctor Guidi gradually gave way to the more abrasive José Varacka and Antonio Rattín.

As we are speaking mostly of a pre-1958 Argentina, it's the attack that defined the team. Potentially there was Alfredo Di Stéfano, who did not even play for them in this decade, having left for Millonarios of Bogota and then to Spain. With him was Héctor Rial, an old-style goalscoring inside forward for Real Madrid's all-conquering team. Other high scoring strikers were Ernesto Grillo of '55 Copa vintage who shone in AC Milan, Roma legend Pedro Manfredini of the '59 team and José Sanfilippo of San Lorenzo and Boca, the most prolific of the lot. Each managed at least a goal every two games throughout their careers, with Sanfilippo managing a 70% strike rate.

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The team had many brilliant wingers, none more so than Oreste Corbatta. Widely regarded as their best ever on right wing, he was also a penalty specialist. His career was often interrupted by injury breaks, caused by brutal kicking, due to his tendency to toy with defenders. He remained to make the '58 trip, where he became the top scorer. Eduardo Ricagni of Milan was the other wing wizard, winning two titles with the Rossoneri, and maintaining quite an unbelievable goalscoring rate of almost 50% as a wingman. Even the second rung of Rodolfo Michelini on right and Ernesto Cucchiaroni on left would have made it to most international teams save perhaps Brazil. Michelini was actually the top scorer in '55 Copa with 8 goals. Finally there was the "Trio of Death" – Maschio, Angelillo and Sívori.

The *Carasucas* and Their Legacy

Omar Enrique Sívori was perhaps the best of the trio and the only one to make good of his Italian move with three scudetti and a European Player of the Year award. Despite playing primarily as a schemer to John Charles, he still managed 2 goals every three games, all the while taking added pleasure in audaciously nutmegging defenders. Humberto Maschio, a Hidegkuti-like withdrawn striker, had a 100% scoring rate with Argentina. But with less talented colleagues, who could not read him, his goalscoring dropped to a goal every three games. He was also unlucky not to hit it off with Helenio Herrera at Inter and missed out on the Nerazzuri golden run. Ironically, Luis Suárez and Alessandro ("Sandro") Mazzola at Inter were perhaps the support he needed to explode. The story of Angelillo is even sadder. Unlike Maschio, his game was simpler and he started very well at Inter, maintaining an 80% strike rate. However, in came Herrera, and promptly confined the opinionated Angelillo to the bench. Off he went to Roma, picked up an alcohol addiction, gained weight and lost his touch. However, when all three were together and in form, few could keep up with them. In the '57 Copa, Uruguay and Brazil (the latter admittedly without Pele and Garrincha) were brushed aside 4-0 and 3-0, respectively.



Humberto Maschio



Omar Enrique Sívori

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The story is incomplete without understanding their interdependence. The trio clubbed with Corbatta had high technical ability, and each had individual flair to boot. Apart from Sívori, the rest failed to reproduce the same magic with others. It did not help that football was fast becoming very rough and defensive in both Argentina and Italy where the four plied their craft. With each other, for Argentina, the trio averaged almost 3 goals every game as a unit. What they might have achieved together for the *Albiceleste*, is anybody's guess. What we do know is that only one other inside trio has a similar record, the *troika* of Sándor Kocsis, Nándor Hidegkuti and Ferenc Puskás. With Corbatta on the right wing to support them, they could have well become the team to beat in the 60s, rather than Brazil.

In reality, a potentially beautiful team soon degenerated to a cynical and despised football culture during 60s. This reached its nadir during the infamous forays by Independiente, Estudiantes and Racing Club in the Intercontinental Cup. Alas, for the stupidity of the Argentinean Federation and the lure of the lira!

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A Cultural Dilemma

Italian football is hit by a new scandal – Calcioscommesse. Gino de Blasio tries to find out why Italian football has been plagued by these scandals

In an interview published in [La Repubblica\[1\]](#), a key figure in the recent *Calcio Scommesse* investigation has provided details to a match-fixing scandal gripping a nation.

"We buy information and then bet. Players call me and say '€20,000 on this game or this result.' And I do it, it's that simple." Who are the football players? "30 in total, 90% from Serie B and the rest from Serie A, I'll never tell you their names though."



It seems that whilst the informant is intent on not naming the players, he does indicate this to being an Italian only problem. *"The players are the heart of the problem, the English league doesn't have this kind of issue, but in Italy, players talk between themselves, they arrange the results, be it with us, with the Hungarian or Sicilian mafia's, or even Beppe Signori, who is the head of the Calcio Scommesse in Italy."*

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It reads like something straight out of a John Grisham novel, and has all the less palatable elements of a leftover three-day-old takeaway; but the latest *Calcio Scommesse* scandal in Italy has brought into question not only the actions of the individuals but the sport as a whole in the Italian peninsula.

It seems that this time though, in difference to the 2006 Calciopoli debacle, it is more the figures behind the scandal that is causing the shock. Names such as Stefano Bettarini, Beppe Signori and Cristiano Doni have given way to the gossip and tell-tale nature of Italian journalism, causing the guilty before charged tags in some cases.

In a two-hour interview given to *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, Cristiano Doni had admitted guilt in his part, reaching out to other players and pleading with them to “never commit the same mistakes as me.” It’s a sad and psychological blow to the game, system, player and fans alike, that someone so loved had succumbed to the criminality that is an undercurrent in the current Italian system, and perhaps even further afield.



The dossier being created for the prosecution grows daily, with more and more individuals being involved, all from different backgrounds, and fewer it seems for now, actually coming from the world of football; it still doesn’t stop the unfounded accusations of some to name and shame stars such as Gennaro Gattuso, Gigi Buffon and Morgan De Sanctis.

In what has become an even more intriguing twist and turn, former Bari captain and now suspended Atalanta defender Andrea Massiello has become the man that the investigation has turned to following arrest and shock confessions.

Massiello’s actions in the Pugliese Derby last season saw Lecce staying up and Bari going down. His own goal sealed the deal. An own goal, which, when watched over and over, you get to realise just how much one man’s corrupted actions sealed the fate of a team he loved playing for.

GOALDEN TIMES

Now, under arrest and facing many years in jail for match-fixing, he's talking. What will come out, and what accusations are made, the intensity and the anger directed to others and their corroborators, only time will tell.

Getting Away with It

When Illievski (the informant) made the point that this is 'an Italian only problem' it had me thinking, could he be right? Is there something intrinsic in the nature of Italian culture that makes these actions acceptable in the minds of those committing the crime?

Andrea De Carlo once said, "In Italy corruption is in the blood, even if we don't like it."



One Twitter friend and Serie A enthusiast, Rocco Cammisola (@rcammisola) finds the term "corruption" a bit too harsh to describe such affairs. "Self-Serving" is more appropriate in the way he thinks of it, and I couldn't agree more.

From stories of blatant copying in school exams, to passing your driving test in the most unconventional of manners, through to tax evasion, these used to be things that weren't chastised but praised. You'd receive a pat on the back for having done the "right thing". These have been ingrained into the Italian culture. Slowly changing, but still ingrained; it can't just change overnight.

Whether or not it's a far reach to associate a footballing scandal with the "anti-Tuscan hills" imagery of Italian culture in such a way is probably best left with the sociologists; however, it's hard to not see an association when you look at the country's ideology as a whole.

It, self-serving, resides in the political class, medical fields and even education boards. And these aren't just wild accusations that some desk jockey, I, am coming out with, but court cases brought forward and resolved. Is this to mean that it is only in Italy? No, however, it seems they don't mind not hiding it either.

And whilst a "new" generation of thinking is taking shape, it also holds true, as the great Caesar once famously said, while speaking of his legacy, "*If it takes 10 years to create, it will take 100 to destroy.*" And maybe this latent acknowledgement of self-serving interest even in Caesar's day goes

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to show there is a long way to go when it comes to eradicating it from the culture, and then perhaps from the game.

Is football's self-serving nature more likely to occur in Italy because of the elements stated? Perhaps, but times change, and with that so does mentality.

GOALDEN TIMES

The French Revolution

A new force in Europe emerged last summer in Paris. With the appointment of Carlo Ancelotti, they gained momentum. Ogo Sylla investigates why all is still not well



“PSG version Ancelotti”, as the French media affectionately (even if a bit patronisingly now, given recent form) refers to it, has been an interesting new step in the project funded by a Qatari group.

It all started in the summer of 2011, at that time under the stewardship of Antoine Kombouaré, when the club splashed a Ligue 1 record-breaking €43mn on Javier Pastore. The Argentine starlet made a blistering start to his Paris Saint-Germain career with 5 goals and two assists in his first 10 games, which accounted for nine wins and a single draw. A considerable dip in form, however, - linked to his lack of pre-season preparation and adaptation to a new league – has directed a lot of the PSG fans’ ire towards the ex-Palermo playmaker.

Some other players brought along on this project, like Jeremy Menez and Diego Lugano, also failed to impress and were heavily criticised, especially the Uruguayan defender. Only the talented Salvatore Sirigu was irreproachable as his consistency and decisiveness in the goal endeared him to the Parc des Princes faithful. An embarrassing elimination in the group stages of the Europa League in the last home stretch before the winter transfer season, and a sentiment that Antoine Kombouaré could not survive at the helm of such an ambitious project (in terms of coaching in the Champions League and handling the dressing room), all led to the sacking of the PSG idol and so entered Carlo Ancelotti.

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Ancelotti arrived at PSG with a biodata unrivalled by anyone except, probably, by PSG's eternal rival - Marseille's coach, Didier Deschamps. In his suitcase, the Italian brought Alex from Chelsea, Maxwell from Barcelona, and Thiago Motta from Internazionale. The nature of these purchases and structure of the PSG squad have many of the French press succumbing to old catenaccio stereotypes and thus labelling Ancelotti as a defensive coach. The fact is Ancelotti reinforced critically weak positions in the PSG squad, which were the left-back and the defensive midfield spots. Alex is an extra centre-back he possibly could have done without but this remains logical when we consider that Ancelotti deemed Milan Bisevac more apt to play as a (right-sided) fullback. The only weak position PSG and its Qatari millions were not able to reinforce was the striker position where the club only counts on Kevin Gameiro, Guillaume Hoarau, and Peguy Luyindula (who was brought back by Ancelotti after a judicial row with the club under the previous Kombouaré regime). Despite all this, Ancelotti went undefeated for the first 10 league games until his first loss as PSG coach in the Coupe de France against Lyon and then in the league against Nancy.

In recent weeks, PSG's game has been deteriorating. Ancelotti seems to be struggling to get the best out of his team. The team, as a whole, is not playing well and is labouring through games. PSG have often managed to salvage draws from losing positions in the final five minutes of games, something the French press came to rather cleverly and humorously refer to as "*Ancelot-time*". The issue is that *Ancelot-time* has masked many of the team's failings; one in particular, which was an inordinate amount of goals conceded on set pieces.



Beyond that, Pastore was still below his best level – despite it being his statistically best season yet, sometimes looking leaden-footed in games, almost as though he was going through the motions. Even his technique failed him as the Argentine's first-touch evaded him and he missed easy passes that he used to complete blindfolded.

Menez was also a constant target of the Parc des Princes faithful for his unique running style, always keeping the ball too long and looking to beat his man rather than make a pass. Nene, the talismanic Brazilian, too, experienced his customary seasonal dip in form, barely ever scoring a goal or making an assist. Gameiro is not proving to be the clinical striker he was at Lorient, despite his constant complaints that he does not receive enough of the ball from his teammates.

As for the club's young captain, Mahamadou Sakho, he struggled hard since Ancelotti's arrival. Some said the Italian's presence on the sidelines inhibited his game and thus caused a string of rather dilettantish errors.

GOALDEN TIMES

In fact, the offensive line is the real issue for Ancelotti. Those who know the Italian well can vouch that he often goes for a tridente (trident) to spearhead his attack. The lack of variety and depth in quality behind the likes of Menez, Nene, and Pastore, however, prevents him from truly influencing and changing things when the game is not going his way.

Ancelotti has attempted to change the formation, starting with his famous ‘Christmas Tree’ formation (4-3-2-1) which has been the most successful so far. However, he attempted switching to a 4-4-2 or even a 4-1-2-1-2 but the team looked lost and failed to adapt to the change. This lack of flexibility in his players frustrates the Italian.

The fact remains that PSG were at the top of the table when Ancelotti took over from Kombouaré. But have now slipped to second spot and on even points with the league’s surprise package, Montpellier. Four points behind them are defending champions Lille, headed by an inspired Eden Hazard. Ancelotti has managed 5 wins, five draws and a single defeat in his first 11 games at the helm. PSG are heading into le Classique as well, and after having been left licking their wounds following a 3-0 hammering at the Vélodrome, they will certainly be looking for revenge.

The question is how will PSG version Ancelotti fare against Marseille this time round? The situation is identical, with Deschamps’ men on a terrible run of form and coming into this always highly charged derby atmosphere with the bit between the teeth. PSG are fighting for the title and Marseille would love nothing more than to derail their archrivals from their objective.

With players not in their best form and usually suffering from an inferiority complex vis-à-vis Marseille and also considering that even Ancelot-time has turned against the Italian in last month’s shock defeat against a vibrant Nancy ending his invincibility streak, it may not be too tough a task for PSG’s fiercest rivals.

It is a new project, a new team. The team is not only different from the one Kombouaré coached last season but has also seen a marked improvement in six months since the signing in of new players. It will be very disappointing if PSG does not secure the title given the poor competition around them with Marseille nowhere near the podium, Lyon in transition, and Lille looking a bit inconsistent. However, it is equally important to allow this end of the season to be a test-driving period for Ancelotti and judge the next season, despite that the Italian has added some key players to the squad already this season.

Ancelotti is left with little margin for error in a project that seems even less indulgent of failure.

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UEFA Champions League Semi-Final Preview

The biggest club team honour is reaching its finale while the second-tier club competition in Europe is gathering momentum too. Get the showdown of the semi-final encounters with **Debojyoti Chakraborty**

The quarter-final stage of the Champions League 2011-12 got over without much brouhaha. A Milan faithful may not agree, but Barcelona was a clear favourite for this tie. Real Madrid surged past APOEL FC leaving them looking rather distraught. Their opponents, Bayern Munich also eased their way through to the last four after seeing Marseille off. Chelsea had to endure the toughest of the ties as they shook off a strong fightback from a 10-man Benfica. Teams to feature in the semi-finals have been really consistent throughout the tournament as is evident from the fact that they have topped their respective groups. Spain continued its dominance here as well while Real and Barcelona established themselves as the two top club teams. Italy have lost out on one Champions League spot to Germany from next season and they should not feel hard done by as none of the Serie A teams could make it to the last four whereas German Champions Bayern Munich look to challenge the *Spanish Armada*. The biggest surprise in the lineup is Chelsea, who have managed to come so far this season. So after a roller coaster ride, it is that time of the season when finally men are separated from the boys. Now let us prepare for the last two-legged encounter of the season.

	FC Bayern Munchen (GER) vs Real Madrid FC (ESP)		
April 17, 2012	Fußball Arena München, Munich (GER)	Estadio Santiago Bernabéu, Madrid (ESP)	April 25, 2012
<u>Top European Cup / Champions League Honours:</u> Winner – 4, Runners-up – 4		<u>Top European Cup / Champions League Honours:</u> Winner – 9, Runners-up – 3	
Quarter-Final		Quarter-Final	
Olympique de Marseille (2-0, 2-0)		Apoel FC (3-0, 5-2)	
Round of 16		Round of 16	
FC Basel 1893 (0-1, 7-0)		PFC CSKA Moskva (1-1, 4-1)	
Group Stage Group A Winner		Group Stage Group D Winner	
Villarreal CF (A) 2-0	SSC Napoli (H) 3-2	GNK Dinamo Zagreb (A) 1-0	Olympique Lyonnais (A) 2-0
Manchester City (H) 2-0	Villarreal CF (H) 3-1	AFC Ajax (H) 3-0	GNZK Dinamo Zagreb (H) 6-2
SSC Napoli (A) 1-1	Manchester City (A) 0-2	Olympique Lyonnais (H) 4-0	AFC Ajax (A) 3-0
Talking Point		Talking Point	
There is no bigger incentive for Bayern to win this tie than to feature in their home turf for the final on May 19. They face a mighty Real Madrid, a record nine-time conquerors of the continent. While many are preparing		These two superpowers of Europe have locked horns quite a few times resulting in almost even honours. Real has been in superb form from their group stages where they secured a perfect win record – only the	

GOALDEN TIMES

for another *El Clasico* in the final, it is the German Superpowers who seem to have a realistic chance of preventing that from happening. They had to come through the rigours of play-offs but they have looked sharper and clinical as the tournament approaches its crescendo. The Bavarians then topped the *Group of Death* before annihilating FC Basel 7-0 at home in the Round of 16 following a shock defeat in the first leg. A typical professional German display saw them ease past Marseille thereafter. Now they find themselves in a proper Big Match, and anyone can win it. Mario Gomez vs Karim Benzema, Franck Ribery vs Kaka, Philipp Lahm vs Sergio Ramos, Manuel Neuer vs Iker Casillas – it is perfect show time.

fifth club in the history of the tournament to do so. A creditable draw in the freezing Moscow turf set them up nicely for the Round of 16. *Los Blancos* followed it up with bidding adieu to APOEL FC from little Cyprus – story of the season so far. Cristiano Ronaldo may be leading his counterpart in *La Liga* in terms of goal scoring but he is still some way behind in Europe. It will be a good stage for him to set the records straight as the competition nears its business end. Real has a star-studded side which is performing like a well-oiled machine – they have top two assist providers in Kaka and Karim Benzema, 3 out of the top 5 scorers are from Bernabéu (Cristiano Ronaldo, Karim Benzema and José Callejón). Coupled with a compact defence which has conceded the least number of goals so far, this is a mouth-watering tie.

	Chelsea FC (ENG) vs FC Barcelona (ESP)		
April 18, 2012	<i>Stamford Bridge, London (ENG)</i>	<i>Camp Nou, Barcelona (ESP)</i>	April 24, 2012
<u>Top European Cup / Champions League Honours:</u>		<u>Top European Cup / Champions League Honours:</u>	
Runners-up – 1		Winner – 4, Runners-up – 3	
Quarter-Final		Quarter-Final	
SL Benfica (1-0, 2-1)		AC Milan (0-0, 3-1)	
Round of 16		Round of 16	
Napoli (1-3, 4-1)		Bayern Leverkusen (1-3, 7-1)	
Group Stage Group E Winner		Group Stage Group H Winner	
Bayer 04 Leverkusen (H) 2-0	KRC Genk (A) 1-1	AC Milan (H) 2-2	FC Viktoria Plzen (A) 4-0
Valencia CF (A) 1-1	Bayer 04 Leverkusen (A) 1-2	FC Bate Borisov (A) 5-0	AC Milan (A) 3-2
KRC Genk (H) 5-0	Valencia CF (H) 3-0	FC Viktoria Plzen (H) 2-0	FC Bate Borisov (H) 4-0
Talking Point		Talking Point	
Chelsea seem to have over-achieved this season in the Champions League considering their woeful domestic form and unrest in the dressing room. They saw off Valencia in the last match day in a must-win encounter in some style before staging one of the most memorable comebacks in the history of Champions		Barcelona are through to the semi-finals of this competition fifth time in a row. By doing so, they have equalled the feat set by their archrivals Real Madrid in the late '50s – then known as the European Cup. And they would like to match another envious record held by their quarter-final rivals – win	

GOALDEN TIMES

League against Napoli in the Round of 16. Another tough nut waited in the quarter-finals and Chelsea rode their luck a little to knock out a resolute and gritty Benfica side. They would be determined to keep their continental form going as automatic Champions League qualification from the EPL is uncertain and hence winning this year's Cup would be their only hope. They face the mighty Barcelona in a repeat fixture to 2009 edition. That time, Barcelona advanced on away goals and Chelsea would hope to do it one better this time. Chelsea seem to be the weakest of the surviving teams – they have hardly been able to hold on to the ball, rarely threatened the goal mouth, scored the least and conceded the most number of goals. Add to that the quality of opposition over the two-legged semi-final tie – possibly the greatest club team ever to have played the game – and Chelsea seem down and out. But matches have never been won on paper and Chelsea would dearly love to prove this once again.

consecutive top European Club honours. Records are nothing new to the man named Lionel Messi. He became the youngest man, and fourth overall, to score 50 Champions League goals and also bettered his own Cup record of 12 goals in a season. The little magician has netted *only* 56 times so far this season and there will be hardly anyone who would bet against him scoring in this tie. People mesmerised by the *tiki-taka* brand of football often fail to appreciate their tight defence – Barca have not lost at home in Europe since 2009. They have some problem against aerial balls, but they more than make up for it through their defensive organisation. Except for Milan in the group stages, the Catalan side have conceded only 3 goals while scoring a staggering 28 in seven matches. They do keep the ball well – better than any other team in the competition – and make good use of it as they have outscored everyone else. This should be a good test for Barcelona, but not likely to be much more than a good warm-up for the impending final.

Europa League Semi-Final Preview

Some call it the poor cousin of the Champions League, but the teams vying for the Europa League would strongly object to that. After much blood, sweat and rigour of the horrific schedule, four teams survive to fight it out. The all-conquering Spanish dominance is even more evident here as we have Sporting Clube de Portugal sandwiched between three clubs from Spain. Some may argue that the competition is dampened by the reluctance of top clubs to compete in this demanding tournament and they have preferred to focus on their respective domestic leagues. But this, in no way, can undermine the achievements of the semi-finalists. Let us build up to these matches.

Club Atletico de Madrid vs Valencia CF

In their last meeting in Europe, Atletico Madrid edged past Valencia on the basis of away goals in the quarter-finals of Europa League in 2009-10 and went all the way to lift the trophy. This time they will host Valencia on April 19 with the away match a week later. The club from Madrid has failed to score against their La Liga counterpart in the domestic season and they would surely love to break the

GOALDEN TIMES

shackles this time. Thibaut Courtois, on loan from Chelsea, has been in superb form under the bars for them – taking over from the now Manchester United goalkeeper David de Gea – conceding the least number of goals in the competition. Up front, Falcao Garcia, the leading goal scorer in the tournament, has impressed some cash rich clubs in Europe and he would surely like to prove his worth. Not only him - Adrian Lopez, Eduardo Salvio - Atletico have quite a few options going forward and they are clear favourites to clinch it. They have shown the desire by eliminating Manchester United from the tournament. On the other hand, Valencia are the only team to have come from the Champions League, having been eliminated on the last match day of the group stages in the hands of Chelsea. They boast of a strong defence consisting of Victor Ruiz and Adil Rami. They have a free-flowing approach to the game, reminiscent of any modern top Spanish side. They have netted 4 goals in two consecutive home matches and they would look to hone their goal scoring skills once again against their Spanish compatriots.

Sporting Clube de Portugal vs Athletic Club

Only non-Spanish team left in the competition, Sporting Club will entertain Athletic Club on April 19 in an Iberian derby. They are enjoying their best season in Europe since 2005. History favours the Portuguese side in this tie as they have beaten – that too after trailing in the first leg – Athletic Club in their only meeting so far, way back in 1985-86 season. But they will have to go past a fantastic Gorka Iraizoz who has made the most number of saves (37) in the competition. Sporting is inspired by the ex-Liverpool left-back Emiliano Insua who is having a tremendous season. Diego da Cunha is leading the pack in the midfield as he leads the assists chart with four of them while chipping in a few on his own. Ricky van Wolfswinkel up front also has performed beyond expectation. They are up against an Athletic team, which is the only team to compete with Atletico de Madrid in terms of goal scoring. They have come back from behind twice against FC Schalke 04 to clinch the tie which shows their hunger for success. In fact, they have had the most number of attempts - 67, close to six per match on an average - in goal amongst the teams surviving in the competition. Markel Susaeta has orchestrated the midfield quite well and he will have a major part to play in this tie as well. But they have leaked quite generously in the back and this is one area where they would like to improve. They will be further handicapped as star defender Javi Martinez has been suspended. This should be a fierce battle as both the teams rank right up there in terms of fouls committed throughout the tournament. Nonetheless, this promises to be an enthralling contest – plenty of goals, some shrewd tactics being employed and a nail-biting finish.

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The Conjugated Twins

*Separated at birth; united by fate. **Debojyoti Chakraborty** chronicles the conversation of the conjoined twins of English Football who were destined to come across each other at a pub on a cold Manchester evening*

It was a freezing New Year's Eve in a suburb in Manchester - a perfect occasion to head out to a bar and nurse a pint of beer to embrace the New Year.

And so our two central characters walk into a pub. One of them, a Latino, evident from his strong accent, was looking for something non-alcoholic, much to the amusement of the people around. After struggling for a while, he somehow managed to get hold of a drink which appeared (and smelt) like orange juice. But the pub was jam-packed by that time. So he had to share the table with a lanky East European. "Enjoy your drink, Sir, you are both riding on the same boat now" said the waitress with a perky smile and disappeared.



At the Crossroads

"Hi mate, take a seat" greeted the lanky figure, with a strong Bulgarian accent, "Good to see you again!"

The Latin American dropped his hood, smiled and took a seat. Not sure how much he understood, not sure if he was greeted or abused as the scar running through his neck was more expressive than his facial muscles.

"Little wonder that we are both here today, isn't it?" the Bulgarian continued. "After all, neither of us feature in our club's first XI. But hey, I didn't call you, in fact, don't even have your number!" he said with an impish grin.

"I wanna play," was the Latino's short and curt reply.

GOALDEN TIMES

"Hey, don't you recognize me? We were there at the annual awards ceremony last year, holding the Golden Boot together!" He looks a tad perplexed.

"Ya, ya...I wanna play," is all he could mutter, reminiscing his glory days.

"Strange mate, isn't it?" he is now starting to lose it, "I banged in a score last season, yet I don't fit into the gaffer's plans. Don't you think I deserve to play?"

"Yup, play football," he confirmed before ordering his favourite grilled beef.

"It's all fate, my dear, who would have thought that both of us would struggle to get a game last season?"

The scar-face was not amused at all, especially since his beef too was out of stock.

"I think I should make a move now, maybe next season I'll be heading towards Italy."

"Ya, ya, Italia!" exclaimed the enthusiastic Latino.

The East European was under the cosh, but his humility was still intact, "I think I see what the manager wants. I no longer feature in his plans, not even as the third best striker. He might even let me go. What do you think?"

One word that struck him was "Go". He started feeling nostalgic about his two daughters and started to leave.

"Hey, you leaving so early?" he mocked. "Or are you not used to warming the seats nowadays? Ha ha ha!!"

The curly-haired Latino was all but gone by then. The tall East European sipped his red wine and was lost in his own thoughts. Maybe they will bump into each other someday again. In some other city, some other country. Maybe, just maybe.

P.S.: Things have changed slightly after this piece was written. The scar-face has been summoned from his (self-imposed) suspension amidst a mini crisis in his club. His lanky friend (really?) is pondering over a similar scheme - how about an accidental food poisoning in the squad which would leave the gaffer with no other option? Or, a few match bans handed over to the star strikers in the team? That would help. May the poor guy *dream* in peace!

GOALDEN TIMES

How to get Banned from GT Lottery Syndicate

Gino de Blasio had made moving predictions about the fate of Antonio Cassano and Carlos Tevez back in January and February in Goalden Times. Read what his fate became, as a result of those predictions!

I am not a gambler. I've never been one, but I do love the thought, like anyone else, of winning the lottery. The whole, "*you have to be in it to win it*" couldn't be truer. Now with the **Goalden Times** staff scattered all across the globe, you could perhaps imagine a Christmas party or a summer barbecue to be quite difficult events to attend, but a syndicate on the lottery would be a pretty nice thing.

I'd suggested that in the virtual suggestion box a few months ago. So far I've heard nothing. And now, I think I've figured out why.

When I wrote the words "*Mancini had exclaimed that 'Tevez will never play for this club again'*" it wasn't me who said it; that was Roberto Mancini. How was I supposed to know that he'd take him back and make him play the final twenty minutes against Chelsea?

His return, and in particular in that match, couldn't have come at a more decisive time for Manchester City. Being knocked out of the Europa League and suffering a shaky form away from home including a loss to Swansea, they needed that extra something to get them out of the slump.

Carlos Tevez, in the meantime, has been busy training in his native Argentina since his self-imposed exile and making statements like "Mancini treated me like a dog" (in Spanish) - and to ESPN Spain, you know he couldn't make the whole "I got confused with the foreign language" excuse – which could get you scratched off the Christmas card list in the United Kingdom.



Tevez had an instant impact

GOALDEN TIMES

The rest, you could say is, recent history. He trained, he scored (for the reserve team) and then he made his league return, producing a fine 20-minute display that saw him set up the winning goal with a sublime pass to Samir Nasri.

If City needed their fix, they received it that night; whether he'll last, I'll let you guess.

And then my second piece of infinite wisdom came when I wrote "Cassano's prognosis is showing signs of great encouragement and could be back with the squad sooner rather than later." That was four months ago, but going by the current circumstances, it's unlikely he'll be back before September.

Now, once again, this piece of information was from a very trustworthy source - La Gazzetta dello Sport. How on earth was I supposed to know they are feeding me garbage?!



Looks like Antonio has come to know of the author's crystal gazing feats

What I can unhesitatingly report though, from an entirely different source, and verified at least 40 times before writing this short piece, is that Antonio is back to training, with his teammates and with the ball. This must give his doctors and trainers confidence in his recovery phase and they may start working on the physical aspects of his game.

So, for fear of incorrectly predicting anything more on either Tevez or Cassano and being banned thereby from any future job as a football clairvoyant and **Goalden Times'** lottery syndicate participant, I wish you best of luck in this week's lottery; a game I shan't be playing.

GOALDEN TIMES

The Trophy finds a Home

1970: the greatest World Cup of all time! Kinshuk Biswas recounts the story of the last edition of Jules Rimet Cup

This journey into the various incidents of the FIFA World Cup tournaments started in 1930 from the streets of Montevideo. The series comes to an end with the 1970 World Cup - a tournament widely regarded as the best till date. The journey was memorable, and I hope I have been able to bring forward a few unknown facts and lesser known incidents which have shaped this great tournament over the years. This is not the end as the journey will continue with other stories of this '*beautiful game*'.

The choice of venue for the 1970 finals was made in 1964. Mexico edged out Argentina to win the right to host the tournament. The Mexicans were already going to host the next Olympics and a massive stadium named Azteca opened in 1966. This stadium could seat 107,494 people, the largest then, with the exception of the Maracana stadium in Brazil.

A total of 75 teams entered the qualification tournament for the final 16 spots in the tournament. For the first time, a team each from Africa and Asia Zone were confirmed an automatic place in the final tournament. Mexico being the hosts, another team from North and Central America was also guaranteed a place in the finals. Europe would have 9 teams including England who qualified automatically as defending champions and South America would have three representatives. There were some surprises in the qualifications as Portugal finished bottom of their group which was won by Belgium. Hungary, the Olympic champions were tied on points with Czechoslovakia but the latter won the play-off match 4-1. Belgium qualified ahead of the fancied Yugoslavia and Spain. Argentina was eliminated by Peru in a tense 2-2 draw in Buenos Aires where reportedly 15 minutes of injury time was played. The Asian group was dominated by Israel and Australia with the former winning in Tel Aviv and hanging on to a draw in Sydney to qualify. Interestingly Rhodesia, an African country, played in the Asian zone as the other African nations refused to play against a country governed by a racial regime. Morocco qualified from Africa winning against Tunisia by a toss of the coin en-route. El Salvador qualified from North and Central America after defeating Haiti. Before that they had been involved in a bitter contest with neighbouring Honduras which they won in a play-off. This resulted in a war between the two nationals which led to 3000 lives lost. This war known as the 'Football War' had more to do with Honduran land reforms and subsequent mass population immigration into El Salvador than the game which was the final flash point.

The champions England still had a very strong team and had lost only 4 out of the 35 matches they played between the two World Cups and all of them to a single goal margin to very good teams. Bobby Moore, Bobby and Jack Charlton, Geoff Hurst, Martin Peters and Gordon Banks were all back. In place of Nobby Stiles there was Alan Mullery who was better with the ball and equally combative off it. Brazil had put behind the horror showing of 1966 and scored 23 goals and won all their matches in an

GOALDEN TIMES

emphatic qualifying campaign. Tostao, Jairzinho and Carlos Alberto were all in the peak of their careers. Pele was still impressive with new players like Clodoaldo and Rivelino coming to the fore. They had Joao Saldanha, famous sports journalist and former Botafogo player as manager during qualification. Saldanha had to resign when he was asked to pick the favourite players of the President of Brazil. He responded by giving the President suggestions on his choice of cabinet ministers. In a military dictatorship like Brazil, it was not a wise move and eventually led to his dismissal as manager. Mario Zagallo, the player of 1958 and 1962, was selected as manager in his place. Italy had recovered from the Korean debacle of 1966 to win the European Cup and had a good bunch of players in Giacinto Facchetti, Luigi Riva, Sandro Mazzola and Tarcisio Burgnich. They were managed by Ferruccio Valcareggi - one of the best of those times. West Germany had the same side as 1966 with the prodigious goal-scoring talent of Gerd Muller and goalkeeper Sepp Maier, the newcomers in a strong side.

The format was the same as the last tournament with four groups where the top two teams from each group would advance to the quarter-finals. In case of two teams tied on points, the team with the better goal difference would progress. This was the first use of goal difference instead of goal average which was used in the earlier tournaments. This was the first tournament to feature yellow and red cards and a total of two substitutions were allowed for every match irrespective of injuries, which meant that tactical switches could be made. This was also the first tournament to be telecast in colour. The altitude of venues was a big factor. The organisers had scheduled the matches for prime time telecast in Europe which meant that the teams would have to play under the intense mid-day sun. The draw was done on a geographical basis without any seeding. After the draw the Groups were:

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Soviet Union	Italy	England	West Germany
Mexico	Uruguay	Brazil	Peru
Belgium	Sweden	Czechoslovakia	Bulgaria
El Salvador	Israel	Romania	Morocco

Group 1

[The opening match between the hosts and Soviet Union](#), on May 31, was a dour and bruising encounter where both teams played a listless 0-0 draw. There were very few chances, five yellow cards and Anatoliy Puzach became the first tactical substitution made after half-time. In the other match, [Belgium](#)

GOALDEN TIMES

[dominated El Salvador and won 3-0](#). The star Belgian striker Paul Van Himst (most famous for starring in the film *Escape to Victory*), however, struggled with the altitude. Wilfried Van Moer scored a brace and Raoul Lambert the other. The second round of matches featured [Belgium against the Soviets](#) and the hosts against El Salvador. The first match was dominated by the Belgians in the opening 15 minutes. Van Moer's header was saved by Anzor Kavazashvili, the Soviet keeper. Van Moer hit rebound against the bar; the Soviets cleared the ball and counter-attacked. Anatoliy Byshovets hit the target from thirty yards out. After that it was the Soviet show with Byshovets scoring another goal, and further strikes by Kakhi Asatiani and Vitaliy Khmelnytsksyi gave them a four-goal lead. Lambert scored a consolation for Belgium making the final score 4-1 in favour of the Soviets. In the other match, the [Mexicans dominated against El Salvador](#) but could not score till the end of the first half. The state of the match changed in the 44th minute when the Salvadoreans thought they had been awarded a throw-in by the Egyptian referee Ali Kandil. Instead the Mexicans took a quick free-kick. Aaron Padilla crossed, Enrique Borja missed the open goal but Javier Valdivia stroked the ball into goal. All this when their opponents had stopped playing. Pandemonium followed with the El Salvador team surrounding the referee who astonishingly let the goal stand. In the second half the El Salvador team was so dejected that they tried to kick the Mexicans more than the ball. The hosts helped themselves to three more goals from Valdivia, Javier Fragozo and Juan Ignacio Basaguren who were on target. Basaguren became the first substitute to score a goal. The Mexicans won 4-0 and Kandil never refereed another World Cup finals match. In the last round of matches, [Soviet Union defeated El Salvador 2-0](#) with a brace from Byshovets. The crowd were disappointed that the Soviets did not give a chance to their 40-year-old reserve goalkeeper, Lev Yashin who was still a very popular figure. [The Mexicans defeated the Belgians](#) after a very controversial penalty converted by their captain Gustavo Pena enabling them to win 1-0. The Soviets topped the group on the basis of the more number of goals scored as they had identical points and goal difference as the hosts who were the other team to advance.

Group 2

The opening match of the group was between [Uruguay and Israel](#). Uruguayans were quite comfortable in the altitude but were cautious in their approach against the Israeli amateurs. They won 2-0 easily with goals from Ildo Maneiro and Juan Mujica. The other match featured the European champions [Italy against Sweden](#). The match was played in Toluca, 8744 feet above sea level, and the thin air affected the performance of both teams. Luigi Riva tormented the Swedish defenders and was unlucky not to score. The only goal was scored in the 11th minute when Angelo Domenghini took a short corner on the left, got the return ball from Facchetti and hit a hopeful shot at the near post which the goalkeeper Ronnie Hellstrom tried to gather by cupping in the chest but the ball slipped under his body. Italy won 1-0. Second round of matches featured a predictable [0-0 draw between Italy and Uruguay](#) in a match which was bereft of chances and very listless. The other match was a surprising [1-1 between Sweden and](#)

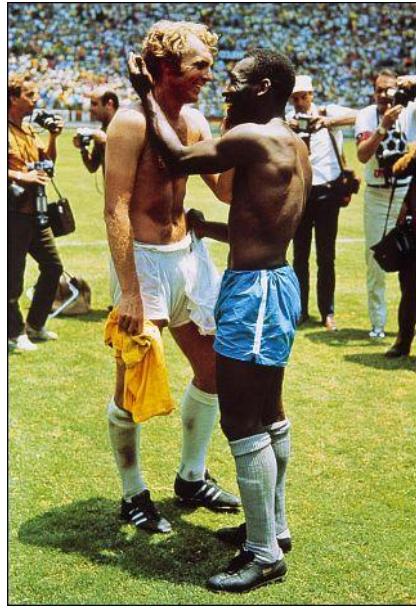
GOALDEN TIMES

[outsiders Israel](#). The Swedes took the lead in the 54th minute when Tom Turesson side-footed a cross into the back of the net. Three minutes later Mordechai Spiegler equalised from an explosive long range shot. In the last round of matches, [Sweden needed a two-goal victory against Uruguay](#) to advance. They nearly took the lead through a Leif Eriksson shot in the first minute which bounced off the post. After that the Uruguayans shut shop and did not allow the Swedes too many chances. Eventually the Swedes scored through Ove Grahn in the 89th minute but it was not enough. In the other match, [Israel held Italy to a 0-0 draw](#). Italians dominated but could not score. Gianni Rivera was introduced in the second half but had a very quiet game. Italy topped the group to advance to the quarter-finals. Uruguay qualified second making Sweden the first team to be eliminated on goal difference.

Group 3

The most attractive group of the finals featured [England playing Romania](#) in the first round. The match was marked by cynical tackling of the Romanians which left Keith Newton unable to continue. Geoff Hurst eventually scored off a left-footer in the 64th minute off an Alan Ball cross from the right to give them a 1-0 victory. In the other match, there was a lot of expectation on [Brazil who were facing Czechoslovakia in a repeat of the 1962 World Cup final](#). Tostao had undergone a retina-detachment operation in his eye and there were questions on his fitness. It started awfully with Clodoaldo loitering in defence with the ball for too long, was promptly dispossessed by Ladislav Petras, the Czech forward who dragged it past Brito, the Brazilian defender, and scored by beating the goalkeeper Felix by a clipped shot in the 11th minute. Brazil woke up and Pele missed an open net after a cross from Rivelino. In the 24th minute, Brazil got a free-kick just outside the box and Rivelino took a fierce curling shot aimed at Jairzinho who was standing in the wall. He ducked and the ball went into the net with a desperation touch from the keeper. The famed Brazilian ‘banana kick’ was unveiled. At the stroke of halftime, Pele tried an audacious shot from inside his own half to catch out the keeper which missed just to the right of the goal. In the 59th minute, Gerson’s magical left foot picked out Pele with a superb aerial ball over the defender which was chested down and volleyed into the net. Then another long pass from Gerson found Jairzinho who ran on, flipped the ball over the keeper and shot it hard into the net. Jairzinho completed the scoring going past two sliding tackles and putting in a cross-shot into the net. The Brazilians had served notice with the emphatic 4-1 victory. In the first of the second round matches, [Romania faced Czechoslovakia](#). Petras gave the Czech’s an early lead yet again with a header in the third minute. The Romanians equalised in the 53rd minute through Alexandre Neagu. Neagu was fouled in the penalty box in the 78th minute and Florea Dumitache converted the penalty to give them a 2-1 win.

GOALDEN TIMES



Bobby Moore (L) and Pele (R) after the group stage match

The other second round match was between the two tournament favourites - [Brazil and England](#). The match had many incidents which have become famous in the annals of the game. First '*the save*' - Carlos Alberto hit a superb pass which beat Terry Cooper and reached Jairzinho who managed to cross the ball towards Pele who out-jumped Tommy Wright and headed the ball down and into the goal... not as Gordon Banks jumped to his right and finger-tipped the ball over the bar. Banks had later said that he had made better saves in league matches but Tostao thought it was very special as he stood with his hands raised in disbelief for some period of time in front of goal. Bobby Moore was having a great game as he executed a copybook tackle to take the ball off the feet of Jairzinho in the penalty box where a slight error could have resulted in a penalty. Moore found a solution to Rivelino's banana free-kick by standing behind Jairzinho in the wall and thus did not let the ball through. In the 62nd minute, Tostao worked hard to retrieve the ball off a rebound off Moore's shin and took the ball to the left by beating Wright, and crossed into the penalty box. Pele trapped and passed out in a single movement to take out two defenders and find an unmarked Jairzinho who took a fierce shot to beat Banks and give Brazil a deserved lead. Ball later clipped the top of the Brazilian crossbar. The match finished 1-0 in favour of the Brazilians and the everlasting memory of this match is the respectful interaction between Pele and Moore at the end of the match. The English media started writing things like the final will be replayed with the same teams again, but it was a long way to go. In the last round of matches, [Brazil defeated Romania 3-2](#) in a match which they dominated much more than the score suggests. Pele scored the first goal from a free-kick and the third with a delightful toe-poke. In between, Jairzinho had scored from the near post. Emerich Drembrowski and Dumitache reduced the margin for Romania. In the last match, England defeated Czechoslovakia 1-0 where they scored through a contentious Allen Clarke penalty. It

GOALDEN TIMES

was a poor performance from England for whom Jack Charlton was never capped again. Brazil topped the group with a 100% record followed by England who also qualified.



Gerson (C) was a revelation for Brazil

Group 4

[In the first match Peru played Bulgaria.](#) The Peruvians were reeling from the shock earthquake which had devastated their homeland a few weeks before. The Bulgarians started brightly going into a 2-0 lead through Dinko Dermendjiev in the 13th and Christo Bonev in the 49th minutes. Peru kept on attacking and Alberto Gallardo scored off a long ranger in the 51st minute. Hector Chumpitaz equalised in the 56th minute by scoring off a free-kick. Teofilo Cubillas, a 20-year-old played a superb one-two with Ramon Mifflin and scored in the 74th minute. The Peruvians dominated and eventually won 3-2 in a great match. In the other match, [West Germany started slowly against Morocco.](#) The West German manager, Helmut Schon accommodated both Gerd Muller and Uwe Seeler in the team by playing Seeler in the midfield. Seeler went on to have a brilliant tournament in this position. However, in this match he was still getting used to his new role when the Moroccans took the shock lead in the 22nd minute through Houmane Jarir. The African goalkeeper, Allal Ben Kassou had a superb game keeping out waves after waves of West German shots on goal. Eventually the West Germans equalised in the 56th minute off a goalmouth scramble. Muller scored in the 78th minute from a rebound off the bar after a Seeler header. The West Germans won 2-1. In the next round of matches, [Peru crushed Morocco 3-0](#) with two goals from Cubillas and another from Roberto Challe. In the other match, West Germany fell behind again to Bulgaria from an Asparuh Nikodimov penalty in the 12th minute. Schon introduced a new German winger, Reinhard Libuda who was brilliant tearing the Bulgarian defence to bits and equalising in the 19th minute. Then he set up Muller with a cross to score with a volley. Libuda was fouled in the penalty box and Muller promptly dispatched the penalty. Seeler scored the fourth off a Muller cross and Muller completed his hat-trick by heading in from a free-kick. Todor Kolev got a consolation to make the [final score 5-2 in favour of West Germany.](#) In the last round of matches, [West Germany played Peru](#) to decide who would

GOALDEN TIMES

top the group as both teams had qualified. Muller scored an easy hat-trick within 38 minutes to settle the match. Cubillas scored from a deflected free-kick. The West Germans were far superior and the deserving (3-1) winners. West Germany qualified top of the group with an all-win record followed by Peru. The quarter-final lineup was complete with Soviet Union facing Uruguay, Italy meeting the hosts Mexico, a South American clash between Brazil and Peru and the repeat of the 1966 World Cup final between West Germany and England.



Gerd Muller - the highest scorer with 10 goals

Quarter-Finals

The first match was a very dreary affair in which the Soviets and Uruguayans committed 70 fouls. Byshovets was specially singled out by the Uruguayan for some very rough tackles. There were very few chances and the match went into extra-time, goalless. Three minutes from the end, Atilio Ancheta, the Uruguayan defender went up the field and took a glancing header which was going out of play being shielded by the Soviet defender Valentin Afonin. Luis Cubilla managed to steal the ball between Afonin's legs and hit a near post cross which was headed in by Victor Esparrago. The Soviets surrounded the referee claiming the ball had gone out of play. [The video shows that the ball did not go out of play.](#) Uruguay was into the semi-finals (1-0). They were very defensive but to be fair their best attacking player, Pedro Rocha was out with an injury before the tournament started.

In the second quarter-final, Mexico took the lead against Italy with a goal from Jose Luis Gonzalez in the 13th minute. After that the Italians equalised in the 25th minute from a low driving shot by Domenghini which turned into his own net by the Mexican defender Javier Guzman. The Italian manager Valcareggi got his tactics right with his *staffetta* system of relay-substitution by bringing in Rivera in place of

GOALDEN TIMES

Mazzola at half-time. Then Riva came to the party scoring two goals. Rivera scored a fourth to give a [4-1 victory to Italy](#). The European champions had finally arrived in the tournament.

[Brazil easily defeated Peru 4-2](#) with Gerson returning after missing last two matches to orchestrate the mid-field. Both goalkeepers were very poor. Two goals from Tostao, one from Rivelino and one from Jairzinho sealed Peru's fate. Cubillas and Gallardo scored for Peru capping off a very successful tournament for both and their team in general. Brazil was, however, a class above and in control of the match.



Muller scores to eliminate England

The last quarter-final was between bitter rivals [West Germany and England](#) - a repeat of the last World Cup final. Gordon Banks was out with food poisoning. The reserve goalkeeper, Peter Bonetti had helped Chelsea win the FA Cup and in his six England appearances had a 100% winning record. England started playing like true world champions and the West Germans were on the mat for an hour of the match. Mullery had given England the lead in the 32nd minute. Martin Peters extended the lead to 2-0 in the 50th minute. England was coasting to a semi-final against Italy. They again forgot that their opponents were the comeback kings of football. In the 67th minute, Franz Beckenbauer received the ball on the right, beat Mullery and unleashed a right-footer which beat Bonetti into the goal. Eight minutes before the end, a West German free-kick from a central position outside the box was headed backwards by Seeler in the right side of the penalty box facing his own goal. The looping header beat Bonetti and nestled into the goal. Repeat of the Wembley stadium as the match went into extra-time 2-2. Alf Ramsey's wing-backs were getting tired in the Mexican heat. Juergen Grabowski, the right-winger went past Terry Cooper and crossed. Hennes Loehr headed the ball back in from the far post and Muller was in hand and stabbed in a volley to give the West Germans a 3-2 lead. The English could not reply and the

GOALDEN TIMES

world champions had been knocked out. The semi-finals were continental match-ups between Brazil against Uruguay and West Germany facing Italy. Three of the four teams had won the World Cup twice before and as per FIFA rules a third time champion would take permanent possession of the Jules Rimet trophy.

Semi-Finals

In the first semi-final, Brazil struggled in the first half. A chip from Uruguayan Julio Morales found Cubilla in the right side of the penalty box in the 17th minute. He put the ball into the back of the net with a lifting shot which the goalkeeper Felix watched. Brazil were not at their best but managed to equalise in the 44th minute. Clodoaldo passed to Tostao in the left wing then ran on to take the return pass in the left side of the penalty box and smashed in a left-footer. Brazil came out after halftime looking a completely different side. Pele beat the goalkeeper with an audacious dummy only to shoot wide. In the 69th minute, Pele and Tostao touched the ball into the path of Jairzinho, who ran ahead of the attending defender on the right side of the penalty box and scored with an angular shot off the far post. In the 89th minute, Pele laid a ball out from the left side of the box to Rivelino just outside. He took a fierce left-footer which was valiantly touched by the goalkeeper on its way to the back of the net. The final score was [3-1 in favour of Brazilians](#) who were in position to lift their third trophy.



The teams before 'The Match of the Century'

The other semi-final was a classic known as *Partita del Secolo* in Italy and *Jahrhundertspiel* in Germany, or simply as ['The Game of the Century'](#). For 90 minutes, this game was very predictable. Roberto Boninsegna scored with a shot from the edge of the box in the eighth minute. In the rest of the match, the Italians setup their defence to preserve their lead. Wolfgang Overath hit the bar with a left-footer otherwise Italy was in control. In the 70th minute, Beckenbauer dislocated his shoulder after a foul by

GOALDEN TIMES

Giancarlo de Sisti. West Germany had made their two substitutions and he continued after his hand was put in a sling. It seemed that the famed Italian defence would take them to their first final since 1938. But the West German ‘comeback kings’ had other things in their mind. In injury time, Grabowski held off two challenges in the left wing and crossed. Karl-Heinz Schnellinger, the West German left-back who played for the Italian club AC Milan, jumped towards the ball and hit a flying volley with his right foot into the net. It has to be said that both the teams were very tired and in no shape to play in the extra half hour to follow which was one of the greatest ever in football history. In the 94th minute, Italian defender Fabrizio Poletti and goalkeeper Enrico Albertosi got involved in a terrible mix-up which enabled Muller to get in-between and score to give the West Germans the lead. In the 98th minute, Rivera chipped in a ball too long while taking a free-kick into the opposition box. Siegfried Held, the West German defender headed the ball down but it fell to Burgnich who scored (2-2). In the 104th minute, Riva received the ball in the opposition penalty box from the left, fooled Schnellinger with a turn and scored with a left-footer to give Italy a 3-2 lead. In the 110th minute, the Germans crossed into the Italian penalty box from the left and Seeler headed the ball back towards Muller who scored with a delicate header past Rivera who was guarding the near post with Albertosi looking on (3-3). From the subsequent kick-off, Boninsegna ran down the left wing, cut inside the box and pulled back a pass for Rivera to arrive and slot the ball into the middle of the goal with Maier diving to his left in the 111th minute (4-3). The last nine minutes were like watching both teams at the end of their energy and Italy held on to book a meeting with Brazil. A plaque commemorates this great match outside the Azteca stadium. The Jules Rimet trophy would be permanently claimed by a team, whatever the result. West Germany defeated Uruguay 1-0 with a goal from Overath to claim the third position. This match would be repeated in the similar stage of a World Cup four decades later with the same result, and with the same margin with four more goals.



Plaque outside the Azteca stadium commemorating the match of the century

GOALDEN TIMES



Giacinto Facchetti (L) , Rudi Scheurer (Linesman), Rudi Glockner (Referee) and Carlos Alberto (R)

Final

In front of a huge crowd at Azteca stadium who were backing Brazil, Italians tried to win back some crowd support by distributing bouquets of roses to the spectators. Italy started brighter with Riva forcing a good save off Felix with a 25-yard shot from the right wing. The Italians were always defensive by instinct and fell back allowing the Brazilians to come at them. In the 18th minute, Brazil got a throw-in on the left which was received and hooked a cross-in by the left foot of Rivelino. Pele beat Burgnich in the air and headed the ball into the net in the far post (1-0). Brazil allowed Italy back in the contest by conceding a silly goal in the 37th minute. Clodoaldo tried a back-heal which was intercepted by Boninsegna. He held off Brito's challenge and with Felix off his line prematurely, stabbed in the ball from the left into an empty net with Riva waiting in case he missed (1-1). Rivelino hit the bar off a free-kick taken amazingly by his weaker right foot. Brazil posed more menace but Italy held fort as the teams went into halftime tied 1-1.

GOALDEN TIMES



Pele celebrates at the final whistle

Italians did not bring on Rivera at the start of the second half which was a tactical error as he could have tested the shaky Brazilian defence. Brazil kept attacking but Italian defence was resolute. Jairzinho, who had outmuscled other defenders, found no quarter from Facchetti who gave him no time and space on the ball. Jairzinho was tackled superbly by Facchetti in the 66th minute just outside the box. The ball fell to Gerson who took the ball left and unleashed a thunderous left-footer to beat Albertosi to his left (2-1). Five minutes later, Gerson took a long free-kick which came to Pele in the opposition penalty area; he beat Burgnich to lay a header to Jairzinho who for once had managed to get free of Facchetti. The ball hit Jairzinho's thigh and went into the net (3-1). Rivera was introduced in the 84th minute but the match was already decided. Brazil put an exclamation point to their performance in the 86th minute. Gerson passed to Jairzinho who was again not allowed space by Facchetti so he passed to Pele. Pele, thirty yards out in a central position, laid a superb square pass to the right which was thumped in by the captain Carlos Alberto (4-1). [A fitting end to a great team performance.](#) Brazil became the permanent holders of the Jules Rimet trophy which was lost after being stolen a few years later. It was a tournament which was a celebration of huge crowds and great goals. Experts believe that the Brazilians could not have played so well if not for the altitude and thin air of Mexico City which affected the European players more. However, it is all hypothetical and it was a great tournament.

GOALDEN TIMES



Carlos Alberto with the trophy

GOALDEN TIMES

What's the Goalden Word?

We football fanatics often come across terms and phrases that we start using without knowing its meaning. We hear them on television or read them in magazines wondering what the word is all about. WTGW will endeavour to focus on such terms and their usages helping us create our very own footballpedia. If you would like to know about any such word associated with the football world, do toss in a mail at editor@goaldentimes.org

Poznań² : (pɔ̃n) : [Masculine – Noun – Singular]

Goal is something we all love to see. The thrill, the joy, the panache – we love everything about a goal. And we love goal celebrations. Who can forget a certain Roger Milla [wiggling](#) in the Italia '90? Or the Samba team doing a [Bebeto](#) in the World Cup of 1994? In this feature, we shall talk about one of the most famous goal celebrations – the [Poznań](#).



The Poznań

² Poznań (Latin: Posnania; German: Posen; Yiddish: Poyn) is actually a city located in west-central Poland. It is one of the oldest cities in Poland, and was one of the most important centres in the early Polish state, whose first rulers were buried at Poznań's cathedral. It is also renowned as the first capital of the kingdom of Poland.

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Lately in the news for the buoyant Manchester City fans celebrating their hard-earned draw against Stoke City, this unique goal celebrating technique dates back to early last century from the Polish club Lech Poznań, based in Poznań. It is no wonder when the club visited the Etihad stadium in January last year for a Europa League match, the visiting fans embraced the occasion with their very own goal celebrating style. It can be called a dance (really?) of sorts, where a group of people turn around, huddle together and start jumping up and down. Initially the move was restricted to celebrating a goal but with time it has gathered storm and has become a kind of chant to lift the tempo of the game. *Poznań* has been followed by many countries in Europe like France and Netherlands by the name of *Grecque*.

These little wonders make a game of football all the more fascinating. The idea to cheer the team by charging up the atmosphere in the stands is certainly a novel one. The excitement, entertainment and ecstasy attain an all-new high. Such a pulsating and throbbing atmosphere makes a match even more rejuvenating. It is like a breath of fresh air where common sense is so rare and supporters love to boo their own players for a mere harmless miss pass.

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UEFA
EURO 2012
POLAND-UKRAINE

Group D Preview

The Euro 2012 Group preview ends with Group D. **Kinshuk Biswas** assesses the contenders

Goalden Times concludes the group preview of the Euro 2012 with Group D. Group D, unlike Groups [B](#) and [C](#), does not have any of the hot favourite teams. It is similar to Group [A](#) with a host with three good teams. England and Sweden have a long history of matches against each other in international tournaments. England finally managed to beat Sweden after 43 years, in a friendly at Wembley, in November 2011. France is the only team in the group who are previous winners. France will take a lot of confidence in a victory over favourites Germany in a recent friendly. Ukraine, the co-hosts, will look to perform well in front of home crowd.



England

Resume: Semi-final - 1968 and 1996. Quarter-final - 2004

Road to the finals: Qualifying Group G Winner. P-8 W-5 D-3 L-0 GF-17 GA-5 GD-+12

England, the seeded team of this group, is always a hot favourite with the media due to their high profile domestic league. The team qualified comfortably topping their group under the management of Fabio Capello. The English team have never been successful in the Euro - their best performance being a semi-final at home in 1996. The current England team is a team in transition and a team which has recently lost its most successful manager (in terms of winning %) ever, Fabio Capello. Capello resigned after his chosen captain John Terry was being stripped of captaincy due to allegations of making racist comments against a league opponent. The caretaker manager is Stuart Pearce but a new manager will be chosen after the domestic league ends on May 13. Harry Redknapp, current Tottenham manager, is the favourite to take over. England had been using the 4-1-4-1 formation under Capello which is likely to be continued.

In goal, they have Joe Hart who had an outstanding season for Manchester City. Scott Carson of Bursaspor is the likely second choice. The centre of defence will be marshalled by the Chelsea duo of John Terry and Gary Cahill. Phil Jagielka of Everton, Joleon Lescott of Manchester City, Phil Jones and Chris Smalling of Manchester United will be the likely substitutes. Rio Ferdinand of Manchester United, although a fan favourite, may not be selected due to his tendency to get injured. In left-back, Ashley

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Cole of Chelsea will be the first choice with Leighton Baines of Everton as cover. The right-back position will be a toss-up between Micah Richards of Manchester City, Kyle Walker of Tottenham and Glen Johnson of Liverpool. Richards is most likely to start due to his form this season. The holding role in the midfield is likely to be given to Scott Parker of Tottenham for his recent club performances. Gareth Barry of Manchester City is likely to be his substitute. Phil Jones has also been used in this role this season. In centre of midfield, Steven Gerrard and Frank Lampard are obvious choices, which is sad as they have to still look up to these two ageing players. With future stars like Jack Wilshere ruled out of Euro 2012, there are talks of even a certain Paul Scholes returning to don the Three Lions shirt. In the wide areas, England have a lot of good players like Theo Walcott of Arsenal, Ashley Young of Manchester United, Stuart Downing of Liverpool, James Milner and Adam Johnson of Manchester City. Aaron Lennon of Tottenham is also in the mix due to the Redknapp factor. The main striker position is a major worry as the first choice Wayne Rooney will be suspended for the first two games. A lot of players have been tried. Jermain Defoe of Tottenham will probably be the starter. Darren Bent of Aston Villa and Bobby Zamora of Queens Park Rangers were recently used. Although young players like Danny Welbeck of Manchester United, Daniel Sturridge of Chelsea and Gabriel Agbonlahor of Aston Villa would be better replacements.

The main problem with England is that they will not have a manager till two weeks before the tournament. In that little time, how the team selection and tactics will be finalised and implemented is to be seen. However, miracles have been known to occur in football, although the first two matches against France and Sweden will be tough tests.

Head to Head

Team	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	GF	GA	GD
Sweden	21	6	9	6	30	25	+5
France	28	16	4	8	66	35	+31
Ukraine	4	3	0	1	7	2	+5



Sweden

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Resume: Semi-final - 1992. Quarter-final - 2004

Road to the finals: Qualifying Group E Runner-up. P-10 W-8 D-0 L-2 GF-31 GA-11 GD-+20

Sweden qualified automatically as the best second placed team with a home victory against Netherlands in their last qualifying match. The manager of the team, Erik Hamren is not a big name but has managed to put a well-knit team together which should perform well at the finals. Sweden plays with the 4-2-3-1 formation. Andreas Isaksson of PSV Eindhoven is the first choice keeper, Johan Wiland of Copenhagen being the reserve. The central defence is quite experienced with Olof Mellberg of Olympiacos and Daniel Majstorovic of Celtic. Behrang Safari of Anderlecht and Jonas Olsson of West Bromwich Albion are likely to be the substitute centre-backs. Mikael Lustig of Celtic and Andreas Granqvist of Genoa will compete for the left-back position. Martin Olsson of Blackburn Rovers will play as right-back. In Oscar Wendt of Borussia Monchengladbach they have someone who can play both as right- and left-back and will be an ideal substitute. The team has an excess of riches in the midfield areas. Experienced Anders Svensson of Elfborg and Kim Kallstrom of Lyon can be integrated with exciting youngsters like Pontus Wernbloom of CSKA Moscow, Emir Bajrami of Twente and Rasmus Elm of AZ Alkmaar. Christian Wilhelmsson of Al-Hilal is likely to be on the bench as backup. In the wide positions, Sebastian Larsson of Sunderland and Ola Toivonen of PSV can play on both wings. There is flexibility in the wings as Elm and Bajrami can both play as wingers. In the withdrawn central attacking forward and main striker positions the team has alternated between the captain Zlatan Ibrahimovic of A.C. Milan and Johan Elmander of Galatasaray. There is good flexibility in this area and Toivonen has played in the hole as well.

The Swedes should do well. The first match against the hosts will be a relatively easier start. The problem with the team is their aging central defence which can be vulnerable against pace. Their team also lacks quality in all areas but their spirit is second to none. Sweden is a good bet to reach the knock-out stages. If they do it will be a good tournament for them.

Head to Head

Team	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	GF	GA	GD
England	21	6	9	6	25	30	-5
France	17	4	5	8	16	25	-9
Ukraine	3	1	1	1	2	2	0

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France

Resume: Champions- 1984 and 2000. Semi-final - 1960 and 1996. Quarter-final - 2004

Road to the finals: Qualifying Group D Winner. P-10 W-6 D-3 L-1 GF-15 GA-4 GD-+11

France is the most successful team in this tournament from this group. The last two international tournaments have been a total disaster for the Le Bleus. Manager Laurent Blanc has tried to build up a new side without the prima donna stars that were the major reason for discord and subsequent poor performance at the last World Cup. France sealed the automatic qualifying spot with a draw against Bosnia and Herzegovina which had a late French equaliser. Blanc has experimented with various formations like 4-2-3-1, 4-4-2 and 4-3-3. It is most likely that he will adopt the 4-2-3-1 formation to accommodate his strong bunch of midfielders which can be transformed into a 4-4-2 if required. In goal, France has the national captain Hugo Lloris of Lyon who has been in good form. Steve Mandanda of Marseille is a very able replacement. In defence, they will miss the services of Eric Abidal of Barcelona who has just undergone a liver transplant. The central defence is likely to be marshalled by Adil Rami of Valencia and Phillippe Mexes of A.C. Milan. Laurent Koscielny of Arsenal and Younes Kaboul of Tottenham are both in good form and will be able replacements. In right-back, it will be Bacary Sagna of Arsenal with Mathieu Debuchy of Lille as cover. At left-back, Patrick Evra of Manchester United will be the first choice. Anthony Reveillere of Lyon is a very good substitute who can also play on the right if required. The holding midfielders should be the young duo of Yohan Cabaye of Newcastle United and Yann M'Vila of Rennes. In Alou Diarra and Mathieu Valbuena of Marseille there is ample flexibility. Samir Nasri of Manchester City should start as the central attacking midfielder. Franck Ribery of Bayern Munich will play on the left wing and Jeremy Menez of Paris Saint-Germain on the right wing. Blanc has further options with Florent Malouda of Chelsea. Karim Benzema of Real Madrid should be the first choice forward with Kevin Gameiro of Paris Saint-Germain and Olivier Giroud of Montpellier. In case of a 4-4-2 formation, Menez slots in as a second striker and Nasri moves to the wing with Cabaye and M'Vila in the middle.

The French team looks very talented and has a good balance of youth and experience. Nasri and Benzema, who were not chosen for the World Cup, will be looking to impress. France should qualify from the group stage and is not a bad bet to go further into the tournament. In their manager they have a good football strategist and man-manager which would serve them well in this tournament.

Head to Head

Team	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	GF	GA	GD
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England	28	8	4	16	35	66	-31
Sweden	17	8	5	4	25	16	+9
Ukraine	6	3	3	0	9	3	+6



Ukraine

Resume: Debut

Road to the finals: Automatic qualifier as co-host.

Ukraine will be making its debut in the Euro finals and being one of the hosts, the team automatically qualified for the tournament. In coach Oleg Blokhin, they have one of the all-time greats of Soviet and Ukrainian football. The problem that Blokhin faces is the lack of competitive matches for his team. He has tried different formations like 4-2-3-1 and 4-4-2. He would be likely to start with 4-2-3-1 against much more fancied opponents in the group. In goal, Oleksandr Shovkovskiy of Dynamo Kyiv is the first choice, Andriy Dikan of Spartak Moscow being the second. In centre of defence, the Shakter Donetsk duo of Oleksandr Kucher and Yaroslav Rakitskiy should be the starters. Taras Mykhalyk and Yevhen Khacheridi of Dynamo Kyiv will be likely substitutes. Bohdan Butko of Illichivets Mariupol is the likely to play at left-back. The right- back will be Yevhen Selin of Vorskla Poltava. Oleh Husyev, the experienced Dynamo Kiev midfielder can fill in on both positions. In the midfield, the experienced duo of Anatoliy Tymoshchuk of Bayern Munich and Ruslan Rotan of Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk will start in the anchoring role. Young Denys Harmash of Dynamo Kyiv will be the substitute. In central midfield, Oleksandr Aliyev of Dynamo Kyiv is the first choice to play behind the striker. Serhiy Nazarenko of Tavriya Simferopol is a very experienced alternative. The lone forward position is likely to have Andriy Voronin of Dynamo Moscow as the starter. Andriy Shevchenko, the legendary Ukrainian striker now at Dynamo Kyiv is likely to feature as a substitute. Artem Milevskiy of Dynamo Kyiv and Marko Devych of Metalist Kharkiv will also be in the squad.

Ukraine will play with partisan home support. They should give a good fight to the other teams in the group but it will be difficult for them to qualify against stronger French and Swedish teams. They surprised a lot of people to reach the quarter-finals of the World Cup in 2006 but will have to play out of their skin to make it past the group stages in this Euro, but at home who knows?

Head to Head

GOALDEN TIMES

Team	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	GF	GA	GD
England	4	1	0	3	2	7	-5
Sweden	3	1	1	1	2	2	0
France	6	0	3	3	3	9	-6

Final Verdict

The final verdict has four categories of team: 1) Sure-shot which means that the team is the favourite to progress from the group. 2) Likely is the team which is not the total favourite, rather the second favourite to qualify. 3) Dark Horse is a team which can reach the quarter-finals but has to overcome similar teams or favourites to do so. 4) Upset means that the team reaching the quarter-finals will be a major surprise. In groups there maybe more than a single team in each category.

Sure-shot:

Likely: France and Sweden

Dark Horse: England and Ukraine

Upset:

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A Sneak Peek: Stars of UEFA Euro 2012 Group B

We continue our build-up to the Euro 2012 with the rising stars of Group B. **Kinshuk Biswas** profiles them

In this feature we bring you some of the players who have the potential to become stars in Poland and Ukraine. We began with [Group A](#) and now move on to Group B.



Denmark

Name: Christian Eriksen
Age: 20 (14.02.1992)
Club: Denmark 2008 – Present
Position: Attacking Midfielder
National Caps (Goals): 21 (2)
Current Market Value: € 13,000,000



Christian Eriksen is one of the most exciting young talents in Europe. Though deployed in the attacking midfield position in his club as well as for his national team, he is being hailed as the complete midfielder by the pundits. He has great vision to pick up a fellow player, good passing and dribbling skills to open up defences as well as a thunderbolt of his own. He has made a meteoric progress so far in his short career and has already notched up the coveted *Danish Football Player of the Year* award in 2011. Under coach Morten Olsen he has been a regular in the first XI and quite an influential player at that with his recent performances. This year in the Eredivisie he has made an astonishing 18 assists over and above netting seven. The little playmaker has drawn attention from European giants but he remains committed to Ajax for his professional development so far. So far, that is.

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Germany

Name: Mario Götze

Age: 19 (03.06.1992)

Club: Borussia Dortmund 2009 – Present

Position: Attacking Midfielder / Winger

National Caps (Goals): 12 (2)

Current market Value: € 30,000,000



Mario Götze, a promising German midfielder, is a product of the Dortmund youth system. Competent in either flank, as well as through the middle, Götze has done well through various age groups and made his senior international debut at a tender age of 18. That came on the back of his impressive 2010-11 club season when he was an integral part of the Bundesliga winning team. He is pacy, full of trickery and is helped by the fact that he is naturally two-footed. His growing influence in the international stages – he started the 2011-12 campaign by scoring back-to-back goals for the national name – will see him as one of the (if not *the*) youngest player in Euro 2012. He is yet to cement his place in the starting XI and is likely to be used as an impact player given the riches of wealth in the midfield for the *Die Mannschaft*.



Netherlands

Name: Kevin Strootman

Age: 22 (13.02.1990)

Club: PSV Eindhoven 2011 – Present

Position: Central Midfielder

National Caps (Goals): 10 (1)

Current market Value: € 8,000,000



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Kevin Strootman was plying his trade in the second tier of Dutch league two years back. The tall, deep-lying playmaker has made a rapid progress since and is now a well established international player. In the qualification stages he has made five appearances with 2 assists and a fine goal against Finland. Overall a technically sound player, he can lock horns with his more illustrious counterparts. For the Orange he is the fulcrum of the midfield just as he is for his club Eindhoven. Besides anchoring the midfield and winning balls in a 50:50 duel due to his strong physical presence, Strootman has great vision, is an astute passer of the ball and often dictates the tempo of the match. He is also a dead ball specialist on virtue of a deadly left foot. An all round player, Strootman is more of a box-to-box midfielder who will like to announce himself in the Euro 2012 in a grand fashion.



Portugal

Name: Fábio Coentrão

Age: 24 (11.03.1988)

Club: Real Madrid 2011 – Present

Position: Wing-back/ Midfielder

National Caps (Goals): 19 (1)

Current market Value: € 24,000,000



Fábio Coentrão is a natural left flank player who has established himself in the Portugal first XI for quite some time now. Still only 24, he is a relative greenhorn for a defender, and Euro 2012 will be a great platform for him to continue his fine showing at the World Cup 2010. He is a natural dribbler, likes to be involved in a short passing game and is very good with the ball in his feet. His stop-start career at Benfica finally blossomed at Real Madrid. He is given more of a defending role and has shone brilliantly there. Coentrão is also quite multi-dimensional as he can be slotted in the midfield – either in the left side or as a defensive shield – and it would give Portugal the added flexibility to change their shape and tactics during a game. Challenge for him will be to use his trademark maundering runs down the left flank to his advantage without being exposed defensively.

A Sneak Peek: Stars of UEFA Euro 2012 Group C

We continue our build-up to the Euro 2012 with the rising stars of Group C. **Debopam Roy** profiles them

Goalden Times has started the countdown to Euro 2012 with the reviews of Groups (A, B, C, D). In this feature we bring you some of the players who have the potential to become stars in Poland & Ukraine. Here we focus on Group C.



Spain

Name: Iker Muniain
Age: 19
Club: Athletic Bilbao
Position: Winger/Forward
National Caps: 1
Current Market value: €20m



Iker Muniain has been labelled a prodigy since he joined the [cantera](#) of Athletic Bilbao in 2005 as a 12-year-old. His diminutive stature alongwith his pace and dribbling skills had marked him out as a special talent. He has a host of youngest player ever awards - youngest player ever to wear Athletic's shirt in an official game, at 16 years 7 months 11 days; youngest ever player to score a goal (16 years 7 months and 18 days) in an official match; youngest player to have donned the club's shirt in La Liga and youngest player to score in a first division match for Bilbao. Having rushed through the Spanish age group squads in three years, Muniain finally got his senior debut in February this year. His goals and assists have propelled the club to their first ever European final in over 35 years. The virtuoso performance against the two finalists of last season's Champions League viz. [Manchester United](#) and [Barcelona](#), has shown how he can fight with the big boys. He may not be a starter for Spain but on the back of his stupendous season,

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would definitely merit a call-up and play the role of an impact sub. Don't count out some dazzling play from the "[Spanish Messi](#)".



Italy

Name: Angelo Ogbonna
Age: 23
Club: Torino
Position: Defender
National Caps: 2
Current Market value: €6m



The story of Angelo Ogbonna is not probably as colourful as other African origin players of Italy like Mario Balotelli, but it is a story played out of the prying eyes and in Torino's youth academy, which he joined as a wide-eyed teenager in 2002. Apart from a loan spell at Crotone in 2007-08, his entire career has been with *La Granata*. In his first full season with *il Toro* in 2008-09, his club got relegated and has been in Serie B ever since. His progress has thus been not as documented as say some of the other defenders like Leo Bonucci of Juventus or Andrea Ranocchia of Inter Milan, but Ogbonna with his powerful displays and the technique and tactical acumen is probably the true heir to the generation of Alessandro Nesta and Fabio Cannavaro. Ogbonna is comfortable in the centre of the defence but can also play on the left.. Torino is on the verge of returning to Serie A. But Ogbonna who has already been part of the *Azzurri* senior side quite a number of times can actually set a unique distinction of representing the *Azzurri* in a major competition while playing in the second division. And it will be a much deserved distinction too.

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Republic of Ireland

Name: James McClean

Age: 23

Club: Sunderland

Position: Winger

National Caps: 1

Current Market value: €1.5m



Imagine being born in a country which has a furious political divide with a neighbour and then choosing to play for that neighbouring country when you come of age. James McClean was born in Northern Ireland and rose through the ranks, and was ultimately called up by the Northern Ireland manager for the senior team. But he rejected that and waited for the call-up from Republic of Ireland manager. He faced abuses for this decision from several Northern Irish tweeters. Giovanni Trapattoni, the Republic of Ireland manager, did ultimately call him up but has not since played him frequently. If Ireland are to cause an upset or two in this group of death, then Trap would have to change his opinion about this 23-year-old winger because he has been explosive for his new club Sunderland. McClean made his Sunderland debut in a 1-0 win over Manchester City on January 1, 2012. And since then, he has not been dropped for a single match – playing 20 matches to score 4 goals and provide three assists. That puts him on fourth for the club in terms of goals scored and third in terms of assists, though those in front of him have been playing for the whole season. Already he has been put on a new contract for three years which is triple of what he initially signed for, when he joined Sunderland in the summer. But if Il Trap does give McClean a chance, expect a display which would attract the top clubs and test Sunderland's resolve to hold onto their starlet.

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Croatia

Name: Ivan Perišić

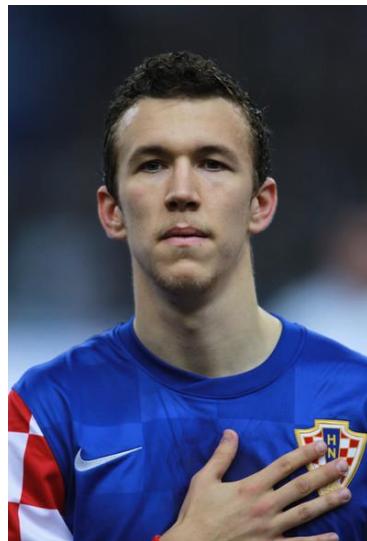
Age: 23

Club: Borussia Dortmund

Position: Attacking Midfielder

National Caps: 7

Current Market value: €6m



Of all the other players profiled in this group, Perišić is the one with the best chances of being a regular protagonist for his country in the Euros. He comes in as the latest in line of Croatian midfield playmakers. While two of them play for Tottenham and are well established, Perišić has made rapid strides to be counted as equivalent to both Niko Kranjcar and Luka Modric. Coming from the famous academy of Hajduk Split, Perišić was courted by some of the biggest talent spotters (including PSV Eindhoven and Ajax) but ultimately signed for French club Sochaux. After a couple of seasons, he was on a move to Club Brugge where he was voted *Player of the Year* in Belgium by his fellow footballers on the back of his 22 league goals. German champions Borussia Dortmund, who had lost Nuri Sahin to Real Madrid, came calling and signed him for €5.5m. In 38 matches for the club, he scored 8 times with four assists but spectacular goals like the one [against Arsenal](#) in Champions League brought him to worldwide notice. He has been a key player for Dortmund retaining the title they had won last year. Such progress was noted by the national team boss Slaven Bilić. So even though Perišić played for Croatia U21 team in 2011 European U21 championships, he was promptly called up to be part of the senior team and has been a regular feature ever since. If Croatia is to get out of this group of death, then Perišić will have his role to play alongside the other established tenors of Croatian midfield.

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A Sneak Peek: Stars of UEFA Euro 2012 Group D

We continue our build-up to the Euro 2012 with the rising stars of Group D. **Kinshuk Biswas** profiles them

In this feature we bring you some of the players who have the potential to become stars in Poland and Ukraine. After covering Groups [A](#), [B](#) and [C](#), here is Group D.



England

Name: Joe Hart

Age: 25 (19.04.1987)

Club: Manchester City 2006-Present

Position: Goalkeeper

National Caps (goals): 17 (0)

Current Market Value: €18.5-21m



England has never found a goalkeeper who was immune to errors since the great Gordon Banks. Even the great Peter Shilton's mistakes cost them dearly in the semi-final and the third place match of the 1990 World Cup. A lot of goalkeepers have been tried and eventually Joe Hart has finally made the position his own with some brilliant performances for his club last season. [Hart won the Barclays Golden Glove for the 2010-2011 season for having kept the most number of clean sheets in the league.](#) He has been outstanding this season with brilliant performances that propelled Manchester City to the top of the Premier League. He is a tall keeper with great presence in the penalty box. Shot-stopping is his strength like all great modern keepers but he is also strong against crosses and good in one-to-one situations. He has also shown great distribution skills with strong throws initiating attacks for his club. Hart has shown composure when required to go out of the penalty area and use both his feet for defensive clearances although he is primarily a right-footed player. Hart is already a star in his home league but Euro 2012 can be his platform to national team greatness.

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Sweden

Name: Rasmus Elm

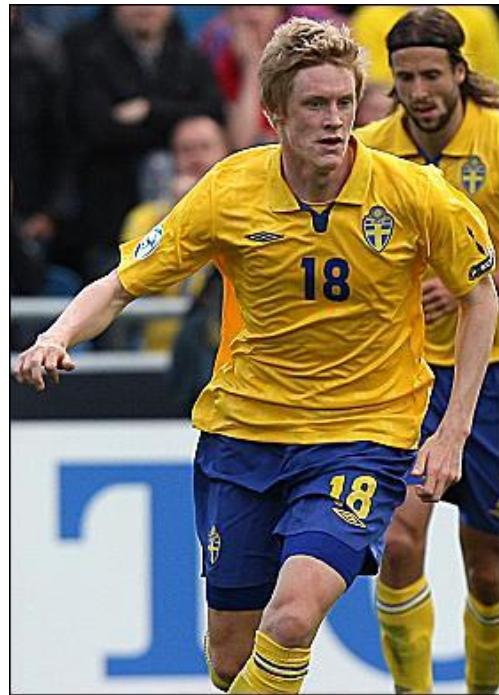
Age: 24 (17.03.1988)

Club: AZ Alkmaar 2009-Present

Position: Midfielder

National Caps (goals): 22 (1)

Current Market Value: €6.6-7.5m



Rasmus Elm comes from a family of football players with both his elder brothers playing for professional elite leagues in England and Netherlands. He generally plays in the centre of midfield but has also been used in the hole behind the striker and also in the right side of midfield. He joined AZ Alkmaar in 2009 but first two seasons were very poor due to illness. This year he has been better with 10 goals and nine assists in 30 appearances as a central midfielder. Tall and composed in possession, [he is a good passer of the ball and proficient with free-kicks too](#). He is often considered the next big thing in Swedish football after a certain Zlatan Ibrahimovic. He is a quality playmaker, an asset to the Swedish team which does not have a plethora of stars. He has been linked to teams like Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur in the Premier League. This is a very plausible move and better things might be in store following this tournament.

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France

Name: Yann M'Vila

Age: 21 (29.06.1990)

Club: Rennes 2009-Present

Position: Defensive Midfielder

National Caps (goals): 18 (1)

Current Market Value: €17.5-20m



Yann M'Vila is a footballer of Congolese descent who plays for Rennes of France. After the fiasco of the 2010 World Cup, manager Laurent Blanc started to build a new team. M'Vila was called for his senior international debut in a friendly against Norway in August 2010. France lost the match but his performance as a defensive midfielder was applauded by the media and the experts. Since then Blanc has made him a permanent member of his first choice starting XI as a defensive midfielder. [He has a great engine and a very good work rate with impressive tackling capabilities.](#) He has been described having the game-reading abilities of Claude Makelele and the presence of Patrick Vieira - two greats of French football. He is very good in possession with great conversion percentage of passes. In spite of his position, which requires him to be destructive at times, his discipline is very good with only 16 yellow cards and one red card in 120 matches in his professional career. He will be an important member of a strong French midfield which will look to impress in the tournament. Arsene Wenger has already shown interest in him and a successful tournament may see him in Arsenal colours as early as next season.

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Ukraine

Name: Andriy Yarmolenko

Age: 22 (23.10.1989)

Club: Dynamo Kyiv 2008-Present

Position: Winger

National Caps (goals): 18 (7)

Current Market Value: €7.9-9m



Andriy Yarmolenko is a product of the Dynamo Kyiv youth system. With a sublime left foot and good pace, he has been used by Oleg Blokhin, the Ukrainian national team manager, in both the wings. He also has a knack for scoring goals as he has netted seven for his national team in 18 appearances. He was termed as the “new Sheva” as he started his career as a striker similar to the great Andriy Shevchenko. Primarily a left-footed player, he is often used in the right wing in the modern system of play where the player plays as an inverted winger to cut in and score a la Arjen Robben and Franck Ribery of Bayern Munich. Thus now he is known as the new ‘Blokhin’ after his national manager, one of the greatest European wingers of all times. He had an aversion to come back and defend which is something his national manager has changed to a great extent but is still a work in progress. The lack of competitive matches is the only major problem faced by the Ukrainian team. The defences of Euro 2012 opponents may not give him the same leeway as friendly match teams. Yarmolenko’s duel with Ashley Cole could be one of the highlights of this tournament. Napoli has already shown a keen interest to sign him but Roman Abramovic and Chelsea will be looking eagerly as well.

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