

WORLD CUP 2014 - First Round - Group B
Salvador de Bahia, Bahia Arena, June 13, 2014

HOLLAND - SPAIN

5-1

VAN PERSIE'S ANGEL'S FLIGHT

Four years earlier they played the World Cup final in South Africa, a balanced match but in the end with a goal by Iniesta Spain became World Champions. The Netherlands, for the third time in History, had to surrender in a World Cup final without ever having won it. Four years later the two teams find themselves at the World Cup opener in Brazil, Spain the reigning World Champion and European bi-champion, favored with host Brazil for the final victory, Holland the usual outsider that has lost several pieces of the old guard replaced by youngsters at their first experience, but led by that foxy Van Gaal and a very strong desire for revenge.

Robben is serious right away, wanting to erase from his memory the nightmare of the 2 missed goals in the final in 2010, he conquers the ball in the three-quarter and immediately cuts a filtering suggestion for Sneijder who

threaded through the very high Spanish defense and aimed at Casillas, who miraculously managed to repel his finish on the way out. Spain waxes its tiki-taka with mastery and even a bit of haughtiness, as if to show the Brazilian public and the World who the champions are, the Netherlands waits covered with its unusual and surprising 5-man defense. The match seems destined for a sleepy zero-zero, but in the 25th minute Xavi invents a corridor for Diego Costa who enters the box, dribbles past De Vrij and slips to the ground touched by the Dutch defender: Rizzoli decisively whistles the penalty, admittedly somewhat sought by the naturalized Brazilian. He beats Xabi Alonso and makes the score 1-0 for Spain. They are still the strongest, tiki-taka and then winning tusk. The Netherlands does not flinch, stays covered, seems to accept the opponent's superiority, and Spain tries to strike the lethal blow in the 42nd minute: Iniesta invents a brilliant assist for David Silva, alone in front of Cillessen he tries the lob but the Dutch goalkeeper is very ready not to be surprised. That's the turning point, a minute

after Martins Indi from midfield launches a very long cross seeing Van Persie sprint past the line of defenders, the ball splashes to the edge of the box and the center forward dives with an angel's flight, hits a header creating a fantastic lob that leaves Casillas halfway to watch the ball swell the net. Fantastic Dutch equalizer, an action to be seen and enjoyed a hundred times over! We go to rest with that angelic flight in front of our eyes, and as soon as the resumption begins we realize that the game has changed: Spain is tired, scared, unable to take back the game; Holland is furious, spring-loaded, fresh and determined to win. A few minutes of stalemate pass, Robben hooks a Blind throw in an extraordinary way entering the area, with a dribble he takes Piqué and Sergio Ramos on his heels and then with his left thunders Casillas: 2-1! Spain in obvious trouble, the Netherlands realizes the slip and pushes on the accelerator, putting on a show: Robben takes off from his own half-court, passes Xabi Alonso like a pedestrian at the edge of the highway and arrives at the edge of the area, touch to Janmaat who spreads to the right for the onrushing Van Persie who without thinking about it hits the volley with his right in an extraordinary way, the ball goes over Casillas and hits the crossbar! In the 19th minute Sneijder hits a free kick from the left, the ball into the middle and Casillas comes out empty disturbed by Van Persie, at the second post De Vrij arrives and touches it into the net with his header! And that's three. Spanish protests over Van Persie's charge on Casillas, which indeed there was. Furious reaction by Spain, which put Pedro and Torres on the field to reinforce the attack: Pedro puts in the cross from the left, Silva on the penalty spot shoots, Martins Indi's rebound, Azpilicueta puts back in from the right for Pedro to head, Cillessen does not hold, Silva breaks in and it's goal! But Rizzoli cancels for clear offside by David Silva. A few minutes

after Sergio Ramos disengages on Casillas who misses the first control with his foot and Van Persie unbridled is immediately there to anticipate him and touch in the net on Piqué's return: and that's four! Spain totally lost, he expected to manage the game with his superior class, he does not understand what is happening. He tries to throw himself forward but the Dutch counter-attack is triggered, Sneijder beautifully launches Robben who is 5 meters behind Piqué when he takes off, overtakes him and arrives first on the ball, aims at the goal chased by all of Spain, Casillas comes out but is dribbled and ridiculed 3 times by the Dutch star who spins around, knocks him down another time and then shoots his left into the net leaving the Spanish captain lying on the ground without the strength to get up. And that's five. The Dutch do not stop, they have brooded too much over this revenge in four years. In the 86th minute Sneijder starts a splendid Dutch action, Blind from the left puts the ball the center to Wijnaldum who munches Piqué and shoot the ball the goal, Casillas' miracle, Sergio Ramos defers softly and the onrushing Robben comes on the the the volley to marvel with a left-footed volley, but Casillas redeems himself with a spectacular leap that denies the set piece. In the 90th minute Fabregas aims for the goal and in front of the goalkeeper touches on Torres who instead of leaning into the unguarded goal goes back to dribble past Blind, but is stopped inexorably by the sliding defender! Glaring mistake by a striker who has been a shadow of himself for years. An abrupt fall for the Spanish champions, who six days later will also be beaten by Chile and will thus have to immediately pack their bags for home. The era of Tiki-taka is over. Buried by a flying angel, a running devil and a genius on the bench.

HOLLAND: Cillessen 6.5, Janmaat 7, Vlaar 7, De Vrij 7 (*from 77' Veltman sv*), Martins Indi 7.5, Blind 7.5, De Guzman 6.5 (*from 63' Wijnaldum 7*), De Jong 7, Van Persie 8 (*from 79' Lens sv*), Sneijder 7.5, Robben 8.5. All. Louis Van Gaal.

SPAIN: Casillas 4, Azpilicueta 5.5, Piqué 4, Sergio Ramos 4.5, Jordi Alba 5, Busquets 5.5, Xabi Alonso 5 (*from 63' Pedro 6*), David Silva 6 (*from 79' Fabregas sv*), Diego Costa 5 (*from 63' Torres 4.5*), Xavi 6, Iniesta 6. Coach Vicente Del Bosque. Referee: Rizzoli (ITA) 6

On 21' Xabi Alonso (Rig.) 0-1; on 39' Van Persie 1-1.

On 54' Robben 2-1; on 63' De Vrij 3-1; on 66' Van Persie 4-1; on 75' Robben 5-1.