



Game Analysis

A review of the 2010 World Cup Final

July 11th 2010

Holland v Spain

Prepared by

Glen Buckley

Mass Development Coach

USSF A License, UEFA A

US Soccer National Staff Instructor

Presented by

The

Mass Youth Soccer Technical Department

Introduction.

To Play in the World Cup Final is the ultimate dream of all professional soccer players. To represent your country is the greatest honor that can be bestowed upon any individual athlete. Because of the timing of the event which comes along every four years the majority of players are happy to take part in just one. Those that have been at two or three finals have sustained a level of consistency in their play that puts them at the highest level of the sport. The handful that have played in more than three have achieved the honor to be called a world class player and maintained their physical condition and technical proficiency spanning over a period of 12 years. Only two players have played in 5 tournaments. Germany's Lothar Matthaus [1982-1998] and Mexico's Antonio Carbajal [1950-1966]

Only eight nations have been crowned World Champions since the competitions inception in Uruguay in 1930. They are Brazil [5] Italy [4] Germany[3] Uruguay[2] Argentina[2] and England, France and now Spain with [1] each. There have been 19 tournaments. European nations have won 10, South American nations 9.

To give you an idea of the magnitude and global interest in this event and indeed Soccer's world popularity here are some viewing figure comparisons

- Fifa World Cup Final 2006 in Germany attracted 715.1 Million viewers
- Semi Final 2010 Germany v Spain Attracted 600 million viewers
- World Cup Final 2010 Netherlands V Spain is expected to reach 1 billion
- At the France 98 World Cup there was an accumulated audience of over 37 billion viewers with the final attracting 1.3 billion viewers.
- World Series Baseball average viewing is 20 million
- Super Bowl averages 95 million.
- Olympic Opening ceremony averages over 110 million
- An estimated 12.5 million people watched the Holland v Uruguay semifinal game in the Netherlands. The country has a population of only 16 million!

It is reported that in the future, when more people in India can buy TV's, then the World Cricket final will surpass the 200 million mark!

The World Cup makes household names of the games' superstars in all four corners of the World. You can be in the remotest outback and the names of Pele, Beckenbauer, Charlton, Maradona, Cruyff, and more recently Beckham, Messi and, Ronaldo form the basis of a universal language.

Education.

Observing the game has become a major business with advances in technology and the sophisticated IT products that are readily available to receive the reviewed data. Consequently it has never been easier to gather information. In the months to follow you will see your inbox filled with amazing data on both individual games from the World Cup to the entire tournament. Companies have sprung up over the last decade each outdoing the other with further advances in their products. We have at our fingertips now how many yards a player has run during a game, where those runs were made into and out of various areas of the field. How many runs were with or without a ball. How many passes were attempted by the individual or team, what length were they and how many were successful. How many shooting opportunities were not taken, how many crosses came in etc etc. This information is being sold at the highest level to help both national teams and club teams alike keep one step ahead of the competition and better prepare their players.

For us at the grass roots of player, coach and referee development, we must learn to observe the game without the use of hi-tech equipment but perhaps with the most technical of all things at our disposal - our eyes!

It is amazing the information you can gather from watching a game. It only takes a little preparation of your pre-set challenges. The hardest thing is to change from watching as a fan to watching as an educator. This will enable you to take back to the individual or group in both the classroom and training field the information you have gleaned to pass on to your students.

All of the information from the actual game was done using no more than eyes and the ability to stop and rewind the DVD!!

The Environment.

The World Cup Final July 11th 2010. Holland V Spain

Venue: Soccer City, Johannesburg, South Africa

Kick off: 7.30pm Field: Firm

Weather : Good, no wind Temp: 47 C

Game Plans

Spain.

Very compact with very little width. Looked to unbalance Holland with neat short passing. Majority of passes were sideways with the occasional forward pass to find Villa, who found it very difficult to find space. With two forwards there would have been more opportunities to penetrate into the attacking third from the middle third. Crossing was very poor by their standards. Defensively they were caught centrally on a couple of occasions when Robben's late forward runs exposed Puyol and Pique. They stayed consistent with the game plan of the last two to three years, but seemed unable to change the style during the game. They were very successful at stifling Sneijder and his partnership with Robben. They limited the pair's success to only a couple of dangerous connections.

Holland.

Had a very clear plan to try to have an effect on Spain's passing game. This was apparent after the first 10 minutes when two players were very lucky to stay on the field. They had a clear plan to try and expose the central defensive partnership of Spain by really high pressuring either one of Puyol or Pique when they were in possession. It was working for the most part, however Van Persie was alone in doing so and so was isolated in his efforts. It also took away from Van Persie's attacking contribution. Defensively they set a very deep line of confrontation not allowing space behind the back 4 for Villa to exploit. It was only when Hettinger was sent off that Spain began to see some space and enjoy some success in and around the box.

Formations:

Holland: 1-4-2-3-1

Stekelenburg

Van der Wiel-Heitinga-Mathijssen-Van Bronckhorst

De Jong-Van Bommel

Robben-Sneijder-Kuyt

Van Persie

Subs: 1st-Elia for Kuyt (70), 2nd-Van der Vaart for De Jong (99), 3rd-Braafheid for Van Bronckhorst (105).

Observations:

- Played 1-4-2-3-1 and maintained the same shape and attitude when all three substitutions were made. Went very direct once the goal was conceded and lost their shape for the final four minutes plus injury time.
- Did not play in a typical Dutch way. Were more pragmatic in their approach and played like a German team.
- Their performance in the final was similar to their performance in the friendly game against the USA on March 3 when they were very physical, played very defensively and pressed from the front. 10 of the 11 starters in the final started against the USA (Van Persie was injured) and 13 of the 14 who played against the USA played in the final.
- Right footed Kuyt played on the left and left footed Robben play on the right to allow both players to cut inside for shots, for in-swinging crosses and for diagonal passes behind the opposite full back.
- Tried to play diagonal and high balls in behind and between Capdevilla and Puyol at every opportunity.

- Adopted a systematic approach to fouling with the first one after 30 seconds. Continued to adopt a cynical approach for the whole game. Targeted Puyol, Xavi and Iniesta.
- Got 11 players behind the ball as quickly as possible with Van Persie defending on the half way line. Only pressed at certain times and especially when Puyol was on the ball.
- Played the ball back to Stekelenburg when under no pressure (24 passes) to slow the game down, take the pace out of the game and to upset Spain's rhythm. The tactic was a throw back to the 1990 World Cup, the last before the back pass rule was introduced. At 0-0 in extra time Stekelenburg walked the ball across the penalty area for a goal kick and should have earned a yellow card for gamesmanship.
- Tried a variety of short corners and free kicks with the final pass/shot letting them down.
- Closed down Xavi and Iniesta throughout the game, but left Pedro open to receive the ball.
- Had a couple of crosses played into the penalty area, but no forwards or runners from midfield attempted to get on the end of the ball. Never gambled, so never really were opened up on the break.
- Dived in and committed some poor fouls in middle and attacking thirds, but were very patient and composed defending in the final third. Limited Spain to few clear cut chances from open play despite all their possession.
- Created a couple of good chances from open play with a runner (Robben) breaking from deep and getting in between the two central defenders. The connection between Robben and Sneijder was successful on only two occasions in which Robben should have scored.
- Van Bommel returned the ball to Spain on an injury, but infuriated the Spanish by putting it out for a throw in deep in Spain's half. Holland nearly scored when returning the ball for an injury although Van Bommel did give Casillas the ball on the resulting corner.

Spain: 1-4-2-3-1

Casillas

Ramos-Pique-Puyol-Capdevilla

Busquets-Alonso

Iniesta-Xavi-Pedro

Villa

Subs: 1st-Navas for Pedro (60), 2nd-Fabregas for Alonso (87), 3rd-Torres for Villa (105)

Observations:

- Played 1-4-2-3-1 to start and adopted their usual passing and possession game. Only created clear cut chances late in the game and in extra time.
- Went more attacking by bringing on Navas. Went 1-4-1-4-1 when Fabregas came on with Iniesta sliding left. May have been the change that decided the game. Torres coming on for Villa was a little baffling considering it was 0-0 at the time, but Torres helped set up the winning goal.
- Villa tried to make blind side runs in between the central defenders and full backs and was unlucky on a number of occasions not to get on the end of a ball.
- Looked for late and deep run from Puyol on most wide free kicks and corners. Pique blocked defenders to allow for free run by Puyol.
- Defended very high on wide free kicks. Did not allow Holland in and around the keeper, pushed them outside the penalty area.
- Lacked creativity on central free kicks and wasted some good opportunities.
- When Pedro went off to be replaced by Fabregas, Iniesta came into the game and he started to cause Holland a lot of problems.

- The Torres substitution was a gamble because he was clearly unfit, but the change as with all three Spanish subs was an attacking one.
- Gave the ball away at the back a number of times when pressed from Holland.
- Ramos started the game well and got forward, but once Kuyt started tracking his runs Spain had to play more and more through the middle which suited Holland

Best Players:

Holland:

- **Van Bronckhorst** – Did well to contain the surging runs of Ramos and despite being on a yellow card was able to limit the contribution of Navas too. He was subbed only after he tired in extra time. Played a captain's role throughout the game.
- **Heitinga** – Imposing in the center of defense and limited Villa and Torres to few chances. Silly yellow card and a harsh red, but his sending off may have turned the game. There was a gaping hole in the middle when Spain scored the winner.

Spain:

- **Busquets** – Hardly put a foot wrong and when the changes were made he sat deep allowing the more attacking players to push on and cause Holland problems.
- **Iniesta** – Good on the ball and caused Holland a lot of problems and deservedly scored the winning goal. A central player who likes to drift left and make deep runs. Was not picked up on a number of occasions and ultimately punished Holland.
- **Casillas** – Made some key saves when his team needed them the most. Calm and commanding throughout and played a captain's role.

Weakest Players:

Holland:

- **Van Bommel** – Had Holland won the game his performance and approach would have been justified. With the loss his performance can be questioned. He is an excellent player in his own right and with his defending the Dutch lost an influential player. Should have been sent off and was too emotionally involved in winding up Spain to have played well.
- **Van Persie** – Poor game by his standards. Had no influence on the game, created little for himself or others. Defended okay, but as a forward needed to do more. Could have been withdrawn, but the Dutch had few forward options on the bench so stayed on beyond his usefulness.

Spain:

- **Alonso** – Lost possession when under no pressure and was disappointing in set plays and forward passes. His replacement changed the course of the game and allowed Spain to attack more.
- **Villa** – Started the game well, but the role of being a lone forward took its toll. Had a couple of half chances in the second half to get in behind the Dutch but was tracked well by Heitinga. Better coming in from wide positions and with nowhere to go he struggled up front. Still a surprise he was taken off.

Game Statistics

Holland

Spain

Goals	0	Goals	1
Shots on Target	4	Shots on Target	4
Shots off Target	8	Shots off Target	13
Corners For	6	Corners For	8
Offsides	7	Offsides	8
Yellow Cards	7	Yellow Cards	5
Red Cards	1	Red Cards	0
Fouls Won	18	Fouls Won	28
Fouls Conceded	28	Fouls Conceded	18
Passing Success	69%	Passing Success	85%

Possession

Holland	37.1%	Spain	62.9%
----------------	--------------	--------------	--------------

Territorial Advantage. Playing in opponents defensive third during 90mins

Holland	39%	Spain	61%

Officials.

Mr. Howard Webb and two fellow English assistants took charge of the game. In the beginning it was clear that this was going to need all Mr. Webb's experience to keep both teams playing with a full complement of players.

Both Van Bommel and DeJong of Holland could have and surely would have been sent off for what amounted to assault, by a lesser experienced and in control referee. The assistant referee's calls were excellent throughout.

I do not think anyone could argue with the 13 yellow cards or the red. It is easy to say that the game did not warrant so many, but on the other hand the players do not help. There is very little contact on 50% of the cards, yet the players are going to ground very easily and writhing around in agony only to get up and run or take the free kick themselves. A very difficult situation in normal circumstances let alone in front of almost a billion eyes!

It is interesting to read both Robben and Van Bommel's comments on Mr. Webb. Robben claiming that he should have had a free kick when through on goal and Puyol impeded him. Well as he was so intent on getting his name on the World Cup score sheet he kept going.....thus letting Mr. Webb believe that there was minimal contact because under normal circumstances Mr. Robben would have gone down before Puyol made any contact whatsoever!!!

You can't have it both ways.

Van Bommel bleating on about the lack of control or strength of Mr. Webb was laughable. Van Bommel should thank the referee for allowing him to not to have to explain to his grandchildren why he was sent off in a World Cup Final.

All in all the referee and his assistants did a commendable job in very difficult circumstances and had little to no effect on the outcome of the game.....only the fact that the majority of the game was competed 11v 11.

Summary.

It has to be said that this was not a classic game. The goalmouth action was minimal with very little or poor serves played with quality into the penalty area. There was a lack of penetration by either team either by pass, shot, dribble or running off the ball. Each seemed overly concerned with cancelling out the others qualities rather than focusing on their own. Had the goals been on the half way line then the score may have been 7v7 as both teams spent the majority of the game passing sideways or in Holland's case backwards [24 back passes to the gk] The goal by Iniesta itself was fitting of a master technician and he was probably the Man of the Match for his overall contribution. The tournament itself will be seen as a success for FIFA who against many opposing the choice of South Africa, put on a colorful if not noisy spectacle.