



# **Match Analysis**

**A review of the 2010 World Cup Final**

**July 11<sup>th</sup> 2010  
NED v. ESP**

**Prepared by  
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**Presented in his individual capacity as a  
contributor to Kicking Back**

## Netherlands - Spain 0:1 a.e.t.

Match # 64 11 JUL 2010 20:30 (Local time) Johannesburg / Soccer City Stadium / RSA  
Att. 84,490

Referee: Howard WEBB (ENG)

Assistant Referee 1: Darren CANN (ENG) Assistant Referee 2: Michael MULLARKEY (ENG)

4th Official: Yuichi NISHIMURA (JPN) Reserve Assistant Referee: Toru SAGARA (JPN)

Match Commissioner: Molefi OLIPHANT (RSA) General Coordinator: Mustapha FAHMY (EGY)

Match Statistics (from FIFA report):

Netherlands (NED)		Spain (ESP)
13	Shots	19
5	Shots on Goal	6
28	Fouls	19
6	Corner Kicks	8
3	Direct Free Kicks to Goal	4
0	Indirect Free Kicks to Goal	0
0/0	Penalty Kicks/Converted	0/0
7	Offsides	6
0	Own Goals	0
7	Cautions	5
1	Expulsions due to Second Caution	0
0	Direct Expulsions	0
43%	Ball Possession	57%
36	Actual Playing Time	48

### Game Plan:

#### Spain.

As was the case throughout the tournament Spain played compact. Their ball possession was in the middle 1/3 of the field for better than half of the match (61%). Further, short crisp passes were the order of the day with an occasional poke forward at times, which generally was closed down quickly and at times brutally by Holland. Defensively, Holland spend a significant amount of time in front of Spain's goal, but had almost nothing to show for it due to the work of Pique and Puyol.

#### Holland.

Where Spain played in the middle 1/3 of the field, Holland played in the middle of the field (50%) straight up and down. I would classify Holland's tactics as attempting to be "disruptive" to Spain's control and possession tactics. Others have used for courser terms that I will use in the analysis of the referee. Offensively Holland seemed to pin their hopes on the singular attacks of Robben, who to me was the single largest producer in the match.

**Key Matchups:**

Pique and Puyol v. Robben

Robben was the producer for NED today and was well handled by the back combination of Pique and Puyol. Most dangerous chance was in the 82' when Robben (to his credit) fought without falling looking for a foul.

Heitinga v. Villa

Stopped well today and neutralized Villa to very few chances (6 shots, only 1 on goal). It should be noted that the goal came from the center defense position ... after Heitinga was sent off.

**Critical incident:**

28' Where De Jong challenged Alonso and was only booked for the foul. While the remainder of the 1<sup>st</sup> half continued without incident as I believe no player wanted to be next in the book for fear of the color of the card, the players reacted to how the bar was sent and responded accordingly in the next 75' with relatively unattractive soccer.

**Referees:**

Today the UK trio had their work cut out for them, even before the 1<sup>st</sup> whistle. Referee's of such matches have a completely unrealistic expectation heaped on them of not only assuring that the match comports with the Laws and the Spirit of the Game, but also that the pageantry of the match comports with FIFA's expectations.

My analysis of Mr. Webb will not pick nits of particular decisions, save one, the caution to DeJong in the 28'. This to me was a critical incident that was sorely missed by Webb, and one that I believe set up the thuggery in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half and additional time in the match.

That said, I believe I understand why only a caution was given for such a violent tackle, and I further believe that had this not been a World Cup Final, DeJong would have been sent off. Reflect for a moment, refereeing teams were being sent home for missing offside decisions, and phantom fouls. Had this incident occurred in a group stage match, do we really think Mr. Webb would have been chosen for the final? I think not.

From there, the match dithered. There was too much "conducting" by Webb with his "that's enough" arm gestures. After these were rendered ineffective fairly quickly, he then moved to cautions, and while some were mandated by the Laws (e.g. removing a shirt after a goal, and incredibly blatant dissent), the majority of the remaining were meaningless, and the players showed this as well in their action.

A sending off in the 28' may have saved this ... or may not have.

I will say however, the players made a meal of very slight contact, and really did not allow the match to develop through their skills as players, but rather through their skill as actors, leaving Webb as the drama critic on the World's Stage. A task not suited for referees, but one often employed by many.

Beyond this playing “catch up” with the match, Webb threw everything he had of his significant experience at this match, and with a lesser referee disaster may have loomed. His fitness and communication was top shelf, as was the assistance he received from his ARs. There were several very close offside decision that deserve special praise for Cann and Mullarkey, who were truly top shelf during the final.

Overall Webb and crew kept a lid on a brutal outing where no one may have been able to do better. One particular statistic stands out for me. In this match there was a shot on goal on average every 8 minutes (84/11), and a foul every 2 (84/47). How realistically can a referee manage a group of individuals to an entertaining conclusion with so much at stake, and a set of players willing to do anything to win?

That said, I believe Webb could have done better with the chances he had and put a stamp on the match early on. This is offset by an excellent performance by the ARs for an overall grade of 6 out of a possible 10.

**Summary:**

This is not the showcase FIFA wanted for the final. For the laymen, a very dull ending to a month long tournament. For the informed, a somewhat unrewarding ending that left me wanting more. A match played in the middle of the middle 1/3, 41% of the time marked with thuggary and few real opportunities from either side. This was not the “total football” or clean, compact possession tactics of either team that was expected, but more of a “neutralize the other” approach.

While overall the tournament will be touted as a success for FIFA and the sporting world, I fear one of the main talking points out of the tournament will be how refereeing can be improved, which never bodes well for those charged with that responsibility. I for one am expecting endless debate and more mandates from FIFA to attempt to improve on this ever criticized aspect of the Game.