

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

**Match # 64; 11-JUL-2010 20:30 (Local time); Johannesburg / 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):**

<b>Netherlands (NED)</b>		<b>Spain (ESP)</b>
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

### **Prepared by:**

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**Mass Development Coach**  
**USSF A License, UEFA A, US Soccer National Staff Instructor**

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**National Referee Emeritus, State Assessor**  
**Former FIFA Referee Candidate, MLS Referee, Professional league referee**

Match Analysis: Buckley

**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.

**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.

## Match Analysis: Kokolski

### **Game Plans:**

#### **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.

### **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 missed by Webb, and one that I believe set up the thuggary 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.

Following were attempts at slowing the foul count by Webb with his "that's enough" arm gestures. After these were eventually ignored by the players, 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 seemed to have little effect, and the players showed this in their actions.

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 required to be employed.

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 decisions 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 minutes (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 almost anything to win?

**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, it may be seen as a somewhat unrewarding ending that left me personally 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" of NED or clean, compact possession tactics from ESP that was expected from these teams, but more of a "neutralize the other" approach. Imagine if it was wide open football.

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.