

Spain remembers Arconada, Puerta in Euro celebrations

Spain's players celebrated the second European Championship title in the country's history Sunday by giving veteran coach Luis Aragonés the bumps in Vienna's Ernst Happel stadium.

After Italian referee Roberto Rosetti blew the final whistle, substitute goalkeeper Pepe Reina raced on to the pitch for the ball, the most precious souvenir of the well-deserved 1-0 win over Germany in the final.

And the rest of the team hugged in the midfield, while those who had been sitting on the bench - by then including goal-scoring hero Fernando Torres - ran to join them.

Spain's stars of Euro 2008 sprinted to the end of the stadium where some 15,000 privileged Spaniards had watched one of the greatest moments in the country's football history.

German midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger, in turn, signalled his frustration by lying on the grass.

Spain's third-choice goalkeeper Andres Palop wore the shirt of his historic predecessor Luis Maria Arconada. It was a mistake by Arconada against Michel Platini's France that played a part in Spain's defeat in the final of Euro 1984.

Palop would then hug Platini himself - now UEFA president - in another snapshot for the album of an unforgettable night.

Defender Sergio Ramos wore a flag of his native Andalusia on his back, first, and then a T-shirt with the photograph of former team-mate Antonio Puerta, who died in August after suffering from heart failure on the pitch during a game with his club, Sevilla.

Aragonés got a well-deserved thank-you from his men, in the form of the bumps. The veteran, 69, was physically tense during the ordeal, but he smiled broadly.

The coach of the new European champion was then congratulated by rival coach Joachim Löw, who paid his respects to each and every one of the winners in a gentlemanly gesture.

Then came the prize-giving ceremony. After all the men in red had got their gold medals, Spain keeper and captain Iker Casillas hugged Platini and with Spain's King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia presented his country with an unforgettable image.

He climbed Cannavaro-style on the railing of the podium on the side of the pitch, grunted like a gladiator and lifted the Henri Delaunay trophy to the crowd as dejected German players watched.

The tour of the stadium was yet to come, prior to the fireworks. 'The Kid' Torres, wrapped in a Spanish flag, grabbed the trophy with his hands and with his heart, in a new run like the one that allowed Spain to pull ahead of Germany definitively, to win its second Euro 44 years after the first one.

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