



Euro 2020 crowning moment for Mancini, Italy's renaissance man

ROME: Roberto Mancini marked the crowning moment of his career on Sunday by winning the European Championship title with an Italy side transformed from the dark days of their 2018 World Cup qualifying fiasco.

The four-time world champions beat England 3-2 on penalties as the Euro 2020 final finished 1-1 after extra time at Wembley, with Italy claiming their second European crown, and first since 1968. "It has not sunk in yet but we are delighted for the Italian public because they really deserve this after what has been a trying period. This is great joy for us," said Mancini.

It was his 14th trophy as a manager and first with Italy after falling short as a player with the national team between 1984 and 1994. "I was very fortunate to play in a great side in 1990 and fortunate to play in a terrific under-21 team in 1988 but despite the fact we were the best team we didn't win it and lost both times on penalties, so I was due this."

In May 2018, few were in a hurry to take over from Gian Piero Ventura, after Italy failed to qualify for the World Cup for the first time in 60 years. First choice Carlo Ancelotti politely declined before Mancini, then coach of Zenit Saint Petersburg, landed his "dream" job.

Mancini had been coaching for 17 years, winning trophies with Fiorentina, Lazio, Inter, Manchester City and Galatasaray. But his coaching career seemed to have lost a sense of purpose since leaving City in 2013 before the Azzurri hotseat became vacant.

His first job was to restore confidence in a demoralized side. "At the beginning when he said we had to think about winning the European Championship, we too thought he was crazy," said captain Giorgio Chiellini.

The 36-year-old defender was at the San Siro in Milan in November 2017 when Italy lost a World Cup play-off to Sweden. "But it's a dream which he slowly instilled in our heads until it became reality," said Chiellini.



LONDON: Italy's defender Giorgio Chiellini raises the European Championship trophy during the presentation after Italy won the Euro 2020 final football match between Italy and England at the Wembley Stadium in London on Sunday. — AFP

The victory follows three years of reconstruction, carried out with the support of many of his former Sampdoria teammates, including former Chelsea manager Gianluca Vialli. The new-look Italy were without big stars, the bulk of their international experience centered largely around Chiellini and fellow Juventus defender Leonardo Bonucci.

"He worked on the head, giving us back our confidence, enthusiasm, self-esteem," said 34-year-old Bonucci. "He's a man of few words, but he created a

great group and he revived a team that was at their lowest in 60 years. With great serenity, he conveys calm and confidence," continued Chiellini.

'Young, modern game'

The statistics under Mancini have been impressive. Just two defeats in 39 matches and an ongoing series of 34 games without defeat stretching back to September 2018. During the European Championship he broke the national record of 30 games without defeat set by for-

mer World Cup-winning coach Vittorio Pozzo in the 1930s, and is now just one behind the records of 35 held by both Spain and Brazil.

Before this faultless Euro, Italy had enjoyed a perfect qualifying run with 10 wins in 10 matches, and secured a place in the last four of the Nations League to be played in Milan and Turin in October. They also won the first three matches of their 2022 World Cup qualifying campaign.

But beyond the results, the former Sampdoria and Lazio striker has built a modern team with an eye-catching brand of football. A solid midfield of Marco Verratti, Jorginho and Nicolò Barella proved crucial to victory while remaining faithful to Italy's defensive fundamentals. He has opened the door to players, with 77 called up in three years and 35 of them handed debuts.

Nicolò Zaniolo got his first call in September 2018 at the age of 19 before he had even made his league debut with club side Roma. Barella, 24, and 23-year-old Federico Chiesa were among the architects of the European coronation, with the choice of Manuel Locatelli, 23, and Matteo Pessina, 24, also paying off. "I feel very proud, because it was not a good situation when I arrived. Everyone said Italy didn't have good quality players," said Mancini.

Decline had followed Italy's 2006 World Cup victory, with group stage exits at the 2010 and 2014 editions, despite reaching the final of Euro 2012 and quarter-finals in 2016. For Azzurri legend Luigi Riva, on Italy's previous European championship winning team 53 years ago, the victory is Mancini's.

"Mancini has given the team a young, modern game, stamped his mark," said Italy's all-time leading goalscorer with 35 goals in 42 appearances. "It is his national team." Mancini now has plenty of time to continue shaping his national side for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, with his contract extended before the Euro until 2026. — AFP



LONDON: Italy's defender Giorgio Chiellini and Italy's defender Leonardo Bonucci (right) pose with the European Championship trophy after Italy won the Euro 2020 final football match between Italy and England at the Wembley Stadium in London on Sunday. — AFP

Italy's old warriors Bonucci, Chiellini win battle over England

LONDON: Italy had to watch on from home as England reached the World Cup semi-finals in 2018, but three years on they are European champions after extending the 'Three Lions' 55-year wait to win a major tournament. Just three minutes into a night laced with tension in front of an official capacity of 67,000, and many more who had forced their way through the turnstiles without tickets, an Italian victory looked a long way off.

A swift counter-attack caught the Azzurri defense scrambling and Luke Shaw's sweet strike from Kieran Trippier's cross had England fans believing their time had finally come. The game seemed perfectly set up for the hosts to get at the ageing legs of Italy's old guard at center-back of Giorgio Chiellini and Leonardo Bonucci.

Instead, the Juventus duo battened down the hatches and rolled back the years. England's star strikeforce of Harry Kane and Raheem Sterling barely got another sight of goal as the giant goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma was protected until he broke English hearts in a penalty shootout. Roberto Mancini's new-look Azzurri remain unbeaten in three years thanks to a style and swagger on and off the field. But they, like their manager, were bedraggled early on in the London rain as Wembley erupted. Mancini's Armani grey blazer was replaced by a

raincoat as he prowled the touchline, bellowing instructions at his players, but growing ever more frustrated as they failed to break through England's mass ranks of defense.

For 67 minutes, the hosts put in the type of clinical, disciplined display Italian sides of old would have been proud of. Gareth Southgate's men had conceded just one goal — a stunning free-kick from Mikkel Damsgaard in the semi-finals — all tournament to reach the European Championship final for the first time.

But they were undone from another set-piece as Bonucci and Chiellini piled forward for a corner to provide the goal the Italians' ailing attack could not find. Chiellini threw himself at a loose ball and after Jordan Pickford saved Marco Verratti's header, the ball fell kindly for Bonucci to stroke home the equalizer.

Savoring the moment

Wembley was silenced bar the small band of Italian blue behind the goal where Bonucci bellowed in celebration. Chiellini, 36, admitted on the eve of the game he was "savoring every last drop of my career".

His famous celebrations of defensive interventions as if they were goals themselves were in evidence as he congratulated Bonucci for seeing off a dangerous late break from Sterling. But the wily old fox was also in evidence as he hauled down Bukayo Saka by his collar to pick up a booking in stoppage time. England boss Gareth Southgate unloaded his bench with crowd favorite Jack Grealish and latterly Marcus Rashford and Jadon Sancho coming on, but even into their third period of extra time of the tournament, the veteran legs of Italy's old couple at the heart of the defense did not buckle.—AFP

Jubilant Italians celebrate Euro victory to forget pandemic

ROME: Italians spilled into the streets from Milan to Palermo to celebrate their national side's Euro 2020 triumph over England on Sunday, pushing aside thoughts of the pandemic which has gripped the nation.

In the heart of the capital Rome, a concert of car horns and foghorns rang out amid a cloud of smoke from firecrackers after Italy lifted their second European title and first since 1968. Roberto Mancini's side won 3-2 on penalties after the match at Wembley had finished 1-1 after extra time. At the final whistle, thousands of fans draped in Italian flags left fan zones installed near the Colosseum and Piazza del Popolo to converge on Piazza Venezia, at the foot of the monument to King Victor-Emmanuel II, father of Italian unification.

"Forza Italia! Campioni d'Europa!" roared the supporters. Many had dreamed of a double in London on Sunday, but Matteo Berrettini lost the Wimbledon final to Novak Djokovic. The European football crown returned to Italy, though, three years after the four-time world champions failed to qualify for the World Cup for the first time in 60 years.



MILAN: Supporters of the Italian national football team celebrate after Italy beat England 3-2 on penalties to win the Euro 2020 final football match between England and Italy in Piazza del Duomo in Milan on Sunday. — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144

Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
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