



Mexico's goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa (C) and teammates are seen upon arrival in Lyon on Sunday for their training session in Saint-Etienne as part of their preparation for the World Cup.

Expectations low for Concacaf



AP, undated

For all of soccer's worldwide popularity, its biggest prize has long been the property of two continents. No team from outside Europe or South America has hoisted the World Cup. It has been decades since a team from CONCACAF, which comprises North and Central America and the Caribbean, even came close.

the Mexicans in the 2002 second round. "I think we will have to work very hard to deal with that mentality... sometimes we are our own worst enemy." History is not on the confederation's side, either. No CONCACAF team has made the semifinals since the United States in the inaugural World Cup in 1930. Since then, only three countries have reached the quarterfinals (or the second round of pool play, the format from 1974-82).

Portugal. The unseeded Americans could struggle in a group that includes Italy, the Czech Republic and Ghana. Even without Blanco, Mexico still has two proven scorers in Bolton's Jared Borgetti and Villarreal's Guillermo Franco, a native of Argentina who was naturalized last year.

the most offensive punch. Kansas City Wizards forward Eddie Johnson set a U.S. record with goals in his first four appearances with the national team and finished qualifying with seven. But he's been fighting injuries in the last year. Three-time qualifier Costa Rica, making its second straight appearance, reached the second round in 1990 with wins over Scotland and Sweden.

Buffon Milan-bound?

INTERNET, undated

Gigi Buffon will leave Juventus for Milan during the summer, insist reports in Italy on Monday morning. The Italian international 'keeper has been linked with the Rossoneri for a few months now and a transfer seems on the cards.

Klose Germany's best

AFP, Berlin

German international striker Miroslav Klose has been voted German Player of the Year by his fellow professionals following a survey by Kicker magazine. Werder Bremen forward Klose, 27, scored 25 league goals to top the Bundesliga scoring charts and was a clear winner polling 46.8 percent of the vote from the 233 professionals questioned.

place in his debut season. Bulgarian international forward Dimitar Berbatov of Bayer Leverkusen was third with 7.7 percent after scoring 21 league goals. Berbatov has already signed for English Premiership side Tottenham Hotspur in a 16 million euro (10.9 million pounds) deal.

Laudrup to leave Brondby

AFP, Copenhagen

Former Danish international Michael Laudrup is quitting Danish first division side Brondby after turning down the offer of a one-year extension to his contract which runs out in June. Laudrup, who joined the club in 2002, told the Berlingske Tidende newspaper on Monday: "It wasn't ideal, neither for me nor the club nor the players."

Forlan set for Barcelona

AFP, Madrid

Villarreal's Uruguay striker Diego Forlan is poised to sign for European and Spanish champions Barcelona according to a report here Monday. Barcelona are said by Spanish sports daily Marca to be prepared to pay Villarreal 15 million euros to secure the services of the former Manchester United player.



A colourful procession was brought out in Rangpur town yesterday on the eve of today's draw ceremony of The Daily Star Rangs Toshiba World Cup Quiz Round 1.

'Henry made a mistake'

INTERNET, undated

The Barcelona and Holland legend Johan Cruyff says Arsenal's Thierry Henry will regret his decision not to leave London for the Nou Camp. Henry opted to sign a new contract at Arsenal on Friday despite interest from Barca, who beat Henry's side in the Champions League final.

I cried when MU sold me: Becks

INTERNET, undated

England skipper David Beckham has revealed he broke down in tears when he was first sold by Manchester United to Real Madrid. He says he now wants to finish his career at the Bernabeu - or United. But he admits he was reduced to tears when manager Sir Alex Ferguson showed him the door at Old Trafford in July 2003.

Asked if he wanted to end his career at Madrid, he replied: "I think so. I want to settle down here. My family is happy here and I'm still happy playing football here. "I want to be known as a player who has played at the top level for the best teams - and they don't come better and bigger than United and Real Madrid. There are no other clubs I'd rather play for in England than United."

Campbell set for Fenerbahce

REUTERS, London

England and Arsenal defender Sol Campbell is set to move to Turkish club Fenerbahce, British media reported on Monday. The Daily Mirror and Daily Star both said Fenerbahce had made an eight million pound (15 million dollars) offer to lure Campbell with a three-year contract worth 70,000 pounds a week.

Diarra snubs Man U for Real

AFP, Madrid

Lyon's Mali international Mahamadou Diarra has "angered" Manchester United bosses by claiming he favours a move to Real Madrid, according to Spanish newspaper As on Monday. According to the Madrid daily, Diarra's agent Frederic Guerra had agreed a transfer fee with the English Premiership giants - 30 million euros (38 million dollars) - and the duration of the contract and all that was required was the player's signature - but Diarra broke off negotiations with United.

Moggi launches Berlu broadside

Football

AFP, Rome

Under-fire former Juventus general manager Luciano Moggi, the man at the centre of the Italian match-fixing scandal, has blamed all his problems on a meeting with former Italian president Silvio Berlusconi. Moggi said he regretted ever meeting AC Milan's owner and claimed that Berlusconi and AC Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani were responsible for his name being dragged through the mud.

The scandal sparked the entire Juventus board of directors' mass resignation before an emergency administrator was appointed to take control of the FIGC. Italian national team coach Marcello Lippi is also implicated in the affair after featuring in several intercepted telephone calls in which he talks to Moggi about the national team. Moggi is suspected of putting

approach in his interview. "It wasn't me who invented this football, the system has always been like this. "It wasn't me who created this world of football which exists with its ruthless logic. The real power is economic, with those who manage intercepted telephone rights. "If the magistrates tried to listen in to their telephone conversations, some very interesting things would



BERLUSCONI

MOGGI

pressure on Lippi to leave certain Juventus players out of the team so that they weren't too tired for their club matches. In another twist prosecutors started investigating the dealings of GEA, the largest company of football agents in Italy, who are run by Moggi's son Alessandro, and who count Lippi's son Davide as one of their employees. GEA are said to have 41 Serie A players, three Serie A presidents and several high-profile coaches on their books - although Lippi denies he is one of them.

come out." Moggi also offered up the following excuse for his conversations about referees. "Like my other colleagues, I simply wanted to ensure that we did not have enemies of Juventus on the field. I just wanted to have good, impartial, serious professionals," he said. Moggi claimed that the former president of FIGC, Franco Carro, who also resigned over the phone conversations, was aware of all these practices in Italian football. On May 18, police officers searched Juventus' offices and Moggi's house - he is also suspected of false accounting and tax evasion.

First Barca, now Brazil?

Football

INTERNET, undated

If the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung had ever compared and contrasted the chronologies of FIFA World Cup winners and European Champion Clubs' Cup winners he might have allowed himself a small smile and whispered to himself: "Synchronicity." This may sound daft, but if Jung's right the fact that FC Barcelona have been crowned champions of Europe makes it more likely that the World Cup will be won by Brazil or, at the very minimum, a team that plays attractive football. There is no proof that Jung considered the beautiful game when he suggested that two or more events can sometimes not be a pure coincidence but reflect a dynamic change occurring, possibly beneath the surface.

cultured football that, if anything, was slightly more fluid than Brazil's play as they retained the World Cup in Chile. The age of the star -- symbolised by Alfredo di Stefano, Pele and Eusebio -- then gave way to the team ethic with Helenio Herrera's FC Internazionale Milano and Sir Alf Ramsey's Wingless Wonders in 1966 dominating the field, more through organisational efficiency than sheer talent. Brazil's glorious resurgence in 1970 seems, in retrospect, a prequel to the dazzling genius of the AFC Ajax side that monopolised the European Cup from 1971 to 1973. And then FC Bayern Munchen -- and West Germany -- won football's ultimate prizes in 1974.

There's no great mystery to this. In football, as in any other business, nothing succeeds like success. There is, as Jung might say, a dynamic process at work -- winning teams and formulas have a magnetic effect on players, coaches, fans, sponsors and administrators. This process is one reason Ramsey was blamed for destroying wingers. He didn't destroy them, he just picked his best XI which, on the talent he had, didn't usually include wingers. Many other coaches, seeing how efficient that made his team, especially in midfield, dropped wingers. Imitation may be flattering but it is, ultimately, self-defeating. The gulf in quality between, say, Herrera's 'catenaccio' at Inter in 1964/65 and the same system employed by more technically limited coaches in Serie A was as vast as the chasm between the first Godfather movie and the third. So the real significance of this UEFA Champions League final had nothing to do with the Ali/Frazier-style contest between Thierry Henry and Ronaldinho that the media was hyping. No, the truly important news -- and it's glad tidings for everyone who loves football -- is that attractive football is back in vogue. The bad news, as Jung and football history will tell you, is there will probably be a counter-reaction in 2008.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words. Includes a solution time of 27 mins and a solution key at the bottom.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with a key: M J Y V Q M T O H H N V S R W O J H W D F Y V W C M C N V W C V Z Z F K K Q M T R V J C V S F J I C N V D M W C W V O W M J D V S F M H ?

CRYPTOQUIP Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A FOOD STRAINER IS MADE IN THE NETHERLANDS, ONE MIGHT CALL IT A HOLLANDER COLANDER. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: H equals D The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.