

DHAKA TUESDAY JUNE 13, 2006



IN HER BEST BIB AND TUCKER: An all-smiling Mexican girl cheers her national team ahead of their match against Iran at Nuremberg's Franken Stadium on Sunday. Mexico won 3-1.

Lavolpe owes Bravo one

AFP, Nuremberg

Mexico scored twice in three second-half minutes to beat Iran 3-1 on Sunday and give a massive boost to their bid to go past the World Cup quarterfinals for the first time.

The world number four and Group D seeds were held at 1-1 for 40 minutes by a battling Iran before man-of-the-match Omar Bravo broke the deadlock with his second of the match.

It was a vital victory for Mexico, who have never bettered their two quarterfinal appearances on home soil, with games against Portugal and Angola to come.

Coach Ricardo Lavolpe said his substitutions, including replacing both strikers Jared Borgetti and Guillermo Franco, and bringing on Jose Fonseca and Zinha, had done the trick.

"I think the substitutions were perfect and the team was better, more ordered on the field and better organised," he said.

It was Zinha who made the difference, setting up Bravo's second and scoring himself. But he could not provide a third for Bravo, who was on course for a Mexican hat-trick.

"It wasn't necessarily that players were playing badly, it was just the way the match was going but the changes we introduced were

certainly positive."

Lavolpe hailed the 20-year-old Zinha, who has battled back from a knee cartilage operation.

"Today the whole team made me happy but it made me very happy to put Zinha on the field and show why he's on the team," the coach said.

"He's got a lot of talent, he knows how to make a great pass and I think this will give him a lot of confidence."

Iran coach Branko Ivankovic was left cursing the defensive lapses that saw his preparations go up in smoke.

"We had a chance to do something today, we played very well

especially in the first half and maybe we could have scored more than one goal," he said.

"We lost a goal through a terrible mistake in the defensive line, and of course after that it was much harder."

Meanwhile, more than 1,000 protesters gathered in Nuremberg, a former Nazi heartland, to demonstrate against Iran's president who has described the Holocaust as a "myth".

But coach Ivankovic denied that the persistent controversy had affected his team.

"Nobody in our team discussed politics, we only discussed our opponents and football," he said.

'Negative' press irks Scolari

AFP, Cologne

Portugal coach Luis Felipe Scolari was in feisty mood after watching his World Cup side struggle to a win on what proved to be a testing opening night against spirited minnows Angola.

Pedro Pauleta kept his promise of getting on the scoresheet at the 2006 finals to make up for drawing a blank in Asia four years ago to earn Portugal a 1-0 win against their former colony.

But Big Phil saw red when asked at the post match conference if he was disappointed the Paris Saint Germain striker, man of the match Figo, and company hadn't gone on to trounce the 750-1 outsiders.

"You always see the negative side," Scolari railed.

"I don't see what you expected - Portugal to win 5-0? We're the only team forced to win by that margin. But if you look at the results up to now most of the sides have won by one or two goals."

"Sweden are one of the best teams in the world but they drew with Trinidad and Tobago."

"You have to get the three points, now we have them in the bag. Victory, even by the narrowest of margins, is excellent."

"Now we only have six matches left!"

Scolari reckoned his team, which was weakened by the eleventh hour absence of midfielder Deco, was functioning at a decent level given the rustiness that goes with the territory of a first night performance.

"My team's at a good level, and I saw what I expected in a first game against a quality team."

"Traditionally the first game is very important. Asked if he thought the media were too demanding, Scolari, not

averse to speaking his mind, played the diplomat.

"I'm not going to say anything otherwise it'll be on the front pages tomorrow portraying me as the worst guy in the world."

When Pauleta put Portugal

ahead in the fourth minute it seemed for a moment that a rout was on the cards such was the way they were dominating the World Cup first-timers.

But Angola eventually brushed off the shock of going 1-0 down to

give Portugal a real run for their money, with the country's record scorer Akwa giving Portugal keeper Ricardo reason not to feel guilty about claiming his pay check at the end of the month.

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THE FINAL PASS: Luis Figo (R) releases the ball past Angolan defender Jamba to set up Pauleta (not in picture) score the match winner in their World Cup Group D match in Cologne on Sunday.

Ronaldo eyes 'Der Bomber'

AFP, Berlin

Records are made to be broken and in World Cup terms they don't come tumbling down more often than when Brazil are in town.

If the rest of the squad will content themselves with extending their overall title successes to six, Ronaldo, his reputation on the line for being a little more portly than he once was, has something else in his more immediate sights.

Three more goals will mean he becomes the World Cup finals' all-time top goalscorer, moving from his current 12 beyond Germany's Gerd 'Der Bomber' Muller's 14.

At a time when the media, and even Brazilian president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, have wondered aloud if he is still up to it, Ronaldo can cock a snook at his detractors.

He can push Pele off his perch, the latter having signed off after a total of 12 goals in 14 finals appearances, going into the finals from bagging the one strike, preferably

against Croatia on Tuesday in Berlin, that would move him ahead of Pele.

That would leave only Just Fontaine of France, who scored 13 in the 1958 tournament to earn the

nickname Monsieur Dynamite, to overhaul.

On Sunday, Ronaldo told FIFA's official World Cup website that he was raring to go and promised his ambition was burning as brightly

as ever.

"We can get better. Our aim is to win the Cup. We did play very well in 2002, but its now a case of matching that level of performance, taking our chances, and trying to emulate what we did back then," he said.

On overtaking Muller, he added that was also in his mind.

"For me personally, its important, but what is more important is how the team does."

"Of course, Ill be delighted if I do break the record, but its not my number one priority."

He added that "as a footballer you always have something to prove."

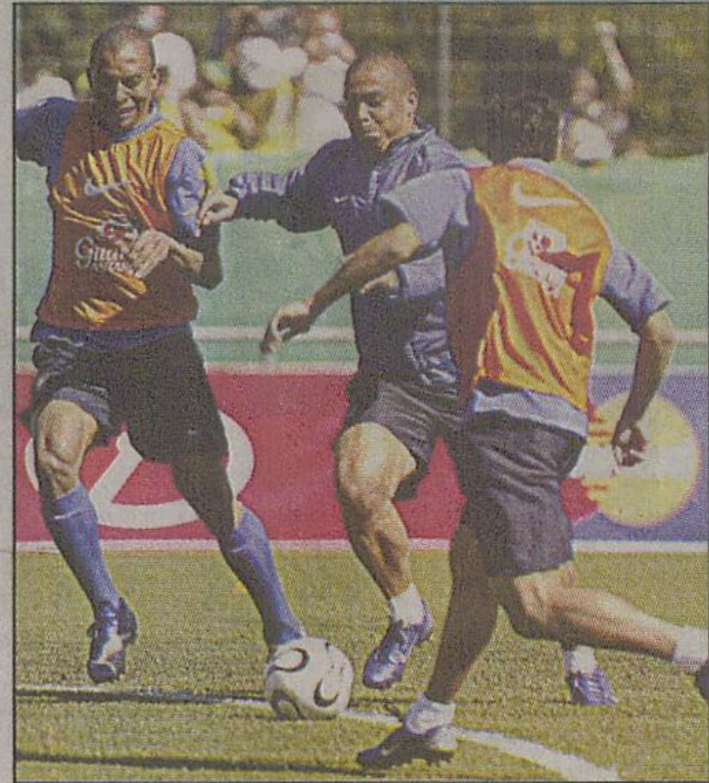
Displaying a touch of modesty, Ronaldo added that among strikers appearing at the finals he most admired teammate Adriano "because he is strong, skilful and he has got a great shot."

Pele, meanwhile, backed Ronaldo to set a new goalscoring mark.

"He has a great chance to write his name into the record books, he can beat Gerd Muller's record of 14 goals."

"Muller was a wonderful striker but Ronaldo and Brazil can write World Cup history together."

"If he is fit and healthy Brazil have a great chance of winning the title. He is so close now and it would be an honour to see a Brazilian player with the (goalscoring) record," Pele said in an interview with Bild Am Sonntag newspaper.



R U READY? Brazil striker Ronaldo (C) fights for ball with teammates Gilberto Silva (L) and Cicinho during a training session in Konigsstein on Sunday.

WC BRIEFS

AFP, Berlin

World Cup coaches leave no stone unturned, or more importantly any blade of grass unmeasured, in their quest for the ultimate prize in football.

The attention to detail was highlighted during a meet-the-media session at South Korea's team hotel on Sunday when a television journalist asked why the team were training in a stadium where the grass was shorter than in their match venue.

"The grass in Frankfurt (where South Korea play Togo in Group G on Tuesday) is 28 millimetres long while BayArena in Leverkusen (where South Korea have been training) is 25mm. How will the players get used to (the difference)," he asked coach Dick Advocaat.

"That is an important point and I agree with you," said Advocaat. "They (the ground staff at BayArena) cut it earlier in the week - we asked them to let it grow and it has grown like hell because of the (hot) weather. It was 28mm when we trained today."

Ballack talking Italian!
 German dynamo Michael Ballack flummoxed German newspapers readers and fans by wandering through the streets of Berlin wearing a t-shirt bearing the legend "Italia Gold" and an Italian flag insignia.

Asked mass daily newspaper Bild: "What was THAT?"

-Ballack explained his duties were to the Fatherland and not the Squadra Azzurri.

"I just bought the t-shirt at Dolce Gabbana a few years ago. It reminds me of our last World Cup win as we won it in Italy in 1990."

Slay a lion everyday
 You're only as good as your last game, Ronaldo asserts, insisting that he will be out to show that his next game, against Croatia on Tuesday, will see him once again hit the World Cup heights.

Criticised for his apparent weight problems by the media and mired in a brief spat over the issue with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Ronaldo told O Globo television that "just being at a World Cup gives you all the motivation you need."

"In football you have to show your form, your talent."

"You have to slay a lion every day."

Croatia, who Ronaldo says will be sent packing 3-1, have been warned.

Some guys have all the luck
 The total number of Berlin police on duty for the World Cup dropped back from 2,500 to 2,000 on Sunday, allowing the lucky ones to enjoy the sunshine with the fans proving well-behaved in the good weather. "We've been surprised by how extraordinarily calm it is," a spokesman said. Countrywide, 260,000 police are on duty for the duration of the tournament.

The Daily Star
RANGS TOSHIBA
 WORLD CUP QUIZ 2006

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2006 Round 3, Draw in Sylhet
 (See June 8 issue of the Star Sport for competition information, prizes and rules)

The Daily Star RANGS TOSHIBA World Cup Quiz, Round 3 Ends June 15, 2006

Tick (✓) the correct answers

- The only player to have scored a hat-trick in a World Cup final match: Hurst Zidane Vava
- Which nation will host the 2010 FIFA World Cup? South Africa England Colombia
- Just Fontaine played for: France Peru Mexico
- The scoreline of the first-ever World Cup match is: 4-1 4-2 4-3
- Who is this player? Beckham Nistelrooy Torres

Name (Mr/Mrs/Ms)..... Age.....
 Father's name..... Occupation.....
 Address.....
 Telephone (if any)..... Signature..... Date.....

Write with a ballpoint pen in clear BLOCK letters.
 Cut along the dotted lines and mail to OR drop in the Quiz Box at The Daily Star
 You may send as many entries as you like. Envelopes of entries must be clearly marked "Star World Cup Quiz 3."

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