

All tickets valid

AFP, BERLIN

Spectators who buy World Cup tickets on the black market will still be allowed into the stadiums even if they are caught by security guards, the organisers said on Tuesday.

Tickets for the World Cup are printed with the holder's name and passport or identification card number in a bid to prevent known troublemakers gaining entry to stadiums.

Wolfgang Niersbach, the vice-president of the Organising Committee, said 500 to 1,000 ticketholders were being checked against ID documents at every match.

If someone was found to have a ticket that did not bear their name, the identity of the holder could be changed by officials once they were inside the stadium, he said.

"If someone says that they have a ticket but it is not their name on it, the transfer of identity can be done there and then at the stadium," Niersbach told a daily press briefing.

He dismissed suggestions that the practice could lead to troublemakers gaining entry to stadiums.

"There are no problems. Let us concentrate on the positive things," he added.

Niersbach warned however that fans who buy tickets from a tout were taking a big risk because they might be counterfeited.

Officials had found between 20 and 50 fake tickets at each of the 10 matches played up to Tuesday morning, he said.

Although 99 percent of tickets have been sold for the 64 matches, Niersbach said it was unavoidable that there would be some empty seats at stadiums because fans had failed to show up.

"It cannot be avoided that here and there there will be empty seats," Niersbach said, but he added there "was no need to investigate whether a bus carrying fans to the game broke down".

Ticket touts were asking for up to 1,000 euros (1,250 dollars) for the England v Paraguay match last Saturday, according to reports in Britain.

Czech papers have field day

AFP, PRAGUE

The Czech Republic's 3-0 football World Cup triumph over the United States was celebrated enthusiastically with photos and front page coverage in all Czech newspapers.

"3-0 We have the American scalp," said the daily Pravo. Midfielder Tomas Rosicky, who scored twice for the Czechs, was the undoubted hero of Monday's match and "perhaps the future hero of the whole championship," it added.

"3-0 with the USA. Great start," proclaimed the daily Dnes on its front page, adding that the victory was overshadowed by the injury to the Czech's giant striker Jan Koller, who was stretchered off soon after scoring the opening goal.

"Attractive and hot" was the headline in the daily Sport. "It was an amazing concert. Czech football at the World Cup yesterday celebrated its first major win," it added.



PHOTO: AFP

Japan's Brazilian coach Zico (L) and Australia's Dutch coach Guus Hiddink cross over during the two sides' World Cup match at Kaiserslautern's Fritz-Walter Stadium on Monday.

A match for Europe



AFP, Baden-Baden

Who said Asian football was no match for Europe?

Australia's all Asian Football Confederation (AFC) clash with Japan was one of the most enthralling matches of the World Cup so far, and a great advert for the game in a part of the globe striving to mix it with their European cousins.

Australia scored three goals in the last eight minutes to topple Japan, the Asian champions, giving an indication of where the future of the game in the Asia-Pacific region may lie.

The Aussies were only admitted to the AFC in January after defeating from Oceania and will play in Asian Cup qualifiers for the first time later this year as they attempt to make it to the showpiece event in 2007.

Their come-from-behind victory sparked wild celebrations Down Under while in Japan fans were left to lick their wounds and pray for a miracle against Brazil and Croatia in their final group games.

"We did not do anything after taking the lead," a downcast Japan

coach Zico said, knowing that his side have a mountain to climb if they want to keep the Japanese flag flying and maintain their position as Asia's No.1.

"The way Australia turned the game on its head is difficult for us to stomach," added the Brazilian legend who relinquishes his post after the World Cup.

"We had two clear goalscoring chances on the counter-attack but if you do not put the ball in at one end you sometimes concede it at the other.

"The way Australia turned the game on its head is difficult for us to stomach. This is football. There is no use in stopping here and we have to prepare for the next match."

Australia have coach Guus Hiddink, who took South Korea to the semifinals four years ago, to thank for their victory with his masterful tactical move of bringing in two-goal Tim Cahill eight minutes into the second half.

"In the end justice was done in this game," Hiddink said, maintaining that the Japan goal should have been disallowed.

"I think the referee will thank God for the result -- it was a clear foul on the goalie."

The Dutchman was delighted with the resilience shown by his players.

"We are very happy, so let's

enjoy this moment. I said to the boys before they went out 'You're here now in Germany, so enjoy it, but work for it.' They are so nice to work with."

South Korea's players were watching the end-to-end thriller and puffed their chests out at the spectacle of Asian teams performing so well on the world stage.

Manchester United star Park Ji-sung was on the edge of his seat along with millions of other Asian fans during the match and knows that when he laces his boots to play Togo later Tuesday, he will also be playing for Asian pride.

"I am really sorry to hear about the downfall of the two Asian teams in the opening games though Japan lost to another Asian side, Australia, the 25-year-old midfielder told.

"We are fully aware of the expectations of our Asian fans. We will play a good game and make Asia proud like four years back when we made the semifinals."

So far, Asian teams have had a mixed bag in the tournament. Along with Japan, Iran failed to win their opening game against Mexico after a moment of madness dashed their chances.

The other Asian team, Saudi Arabia, are to begin their campaign against Tunisia today.

'Ref apologised over goal'

REUTERS, Kaiserslautern

Australia's players said Egyptian referee Esam Abd El Fatah had apologised for allowing a disputed goal against them in their 3-1 over Japan in World Cup Group F on Monday.

Socceroos goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer said El Fatah had apologised for allowing Shunsuke Nakamura's goal to stand after Atsushi Yanagisawa collided with the Australian keeper and knocked him off balance as the ball sailed into the empty net.

The goal, which led to a furious protest from the Australians, gave Japan the early lead and the controversy threatened to overshadow the match until the Australians scored three times in a devastating flurry.

"At the end of the day the referee made a mistake but everybody makes mistakes and I think it was big of him to admit it and overall I think he refereed the game okay," Schwarzer told reporters.

He said after the game to (Australia captain Mark Viduka) that God was on his side because the result went our way in the end...in the sense that it didn't affect the result in the end.

Viduka confirmed the referee had spoken to him about the incident.

"I think it was obvious that he made a mistake but everybody makes a mistake. He said that God was with him today because he obviously made a mistake."

Australia coach Guus Hiddink also said the referee had got lucky.

"In the end justice was done in this game. It was a clear foul on the goalie."

'Kamikaze football for the fans'

AFP, Berlin

Goalkeeper Jens Lehmann has defended Germany's policy of all-out attack at the World Cup saying it is home fans who demand attractive football.

The hosts defeated Costa Rica 4-2 in Friday's opening match at the finals and Lehmann, who was exposed on several occasions, said the team would stick by the tactic of outscoring their opponents.

"It is the best system for us at the moment and we have been practising it for two years," Lehmann told German magazine Kicker.

"It is attractive for the fans and they want to see attractive football. What else should we offer the home fans?"

After last year's Confederations Cup, when the hosts leaked goals at will, former number one goalkeeper Oliver Kahn described Germany's football as 'kamikaze' but Lehmann said that was an exaggeration.

"I do not like the term 'kamikaze'. We play attractive football and need pace to defend well," Lehmann declared.

"It is the right system but against better opponents we will need to play it better. We showed we had mastered it in a 0-0 draw with France in November.

"You win a World Cup with defence but the clean sheet needs to come at the right time."

Clean sheets have been a rarity for Germany under manager Jurgen Klinsmann with just five in their last 19 games.

'Red Devils' on streets

AFP, Seoul

More than a million South Korean soccer fans were Tuesday set to take to the street of Seoul and other cities to cheer on the national squad in its World Cup opener in Germany, police said.

Giant TVs have been set up at main boulevards, public parks, plazas and other locations to welcome cheering crowds of "Red Devils", the Korean football fans who turned the streets of Seoul into a sea of red four years ago.

South Korea co-hosted the 2002 World Cup and the minnows, to everyone's great surprise, advanced to the semi-finals.

Fans in red T-shirts bearing the slogan "Once again 2002" began turning up on the streets eight hours before the scheduled kick-off against Togo.

Because of the time difference between South Korea and Germany, most World Cup matches take place in the early hours of the morning here. But the opening game against Togo starts at 10:00 pm (1300 GMT), a more attractive time for viewers here.

Some 250,000 people are to jam Seoul's city hall plaza, nearby streets and football stadiums where giant TV screens have been set up. The number could total 1.5 million nationwide, according to police and Red Devil supporters.

Bars, restaurants and pubs were also anticipating a busy night and even prison inmates will be allowed to tune in to the opening game, according to the justice ministry.

Humble Rosicky



REUTERS, Gelsenkirchen

Tomas Rosicky scored twice in the Czech Republic's World Cup opener with the United States on Monday and then said he was no great goalscorer.

With key strikers Jan Koller and Milan Baros both injured, however, midfielder Rosicky may just have to become one.

The Czechs beat the U.S. 3-0, helped by Rosicky's goals, one of them a fine swerving shot from 25 metres.

"Of course, I'm no great shooter... but I tried and today it worked. Three would probably have been too many," he told reporters.

Coach Karel Brueckner was forced to abandon his usual 4-4-2 formation and play Koller as a lone striker after Baros failed to recover from a foot injury that had stopped him training over the past week.

Just before halftime Koller was carried off on a stretcher with what Brueckner said initially was a serious injury.

The Czech team spokesman later said a hospital scan showed no major damage to his hamstring.

The problems facing the two top strikers will put pressure on midfielders like Rosicky to push forward more in their remaining Group E games against Ghana and Italy.

The Czechs have a wealth of talent to draw on in midfield, including former European Footballer of the Year Pavel Nedved.

"I don't need to say anything

about Pavel ... he is still one of the best players in Europe," said Brueckner.

The team still features most of the players that reached the Euro 2004 semifinals but the media has expressed concern that with three-quarters of the midfield over 30 they are past it.

That view did not hold up against the United States and the coach certainly does not agree with the commentators.

"Our team is not getting old," Brueckner said.

With younger talent like 25-year-old Rosicky in the team, age does not seem to be a problem.

Brueckner also had a few words for Rosicky's new club, Premier League Arsenal, who signed him just before the tournament started.

"I would like to congratulate Arsenal on getting such a player," he said.

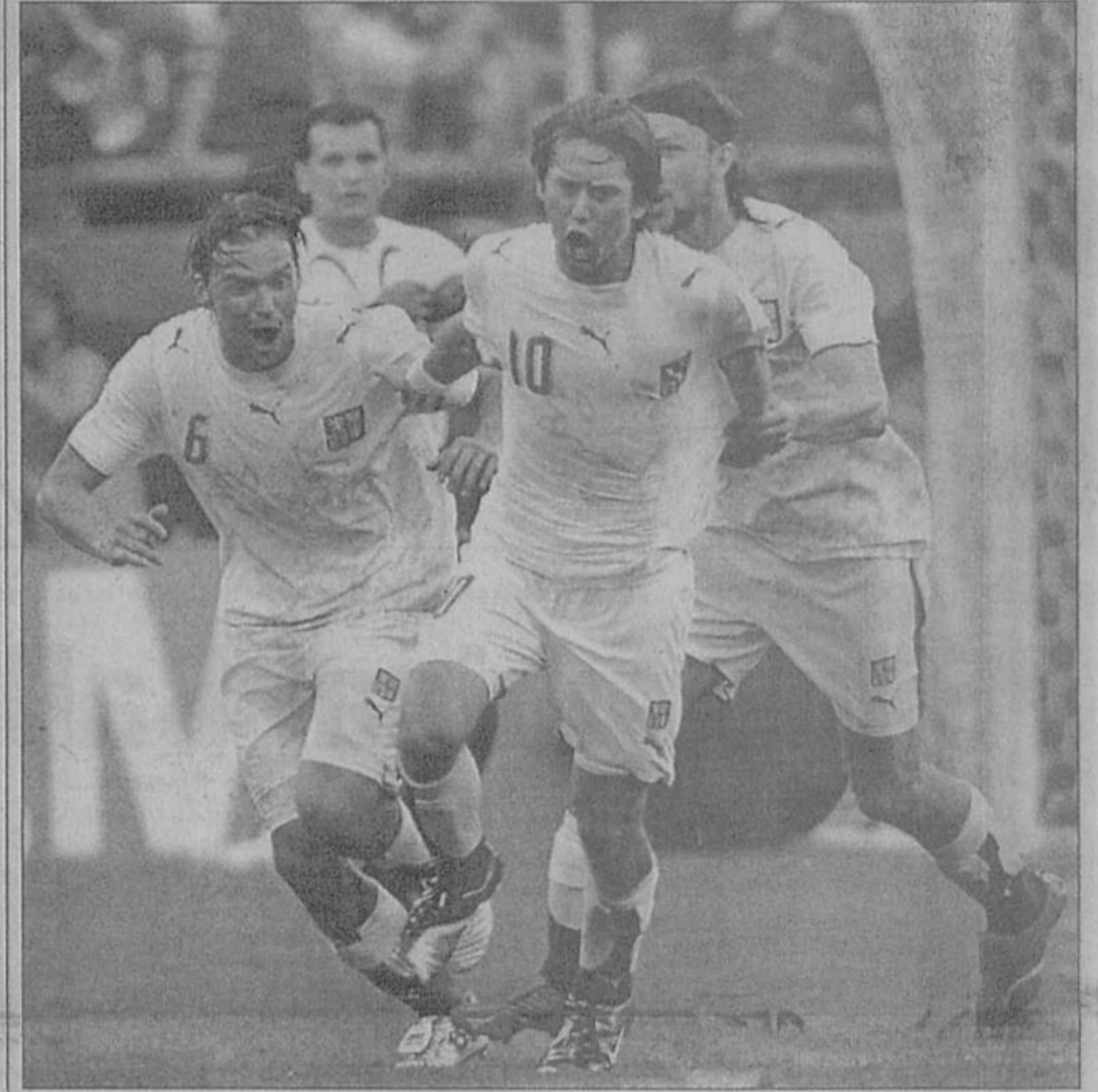


PHOTO: AFP

Czech midfielder Tomas Rosicky (C) is congratulated by teammates after scoring against USA in Gelsenkirchen on Monday.

Pfister's dream comes true



AFP, Frankfurt

German coach Otto Pfister returned to coach the Togo team just three days after he walked out over a dispute concerning player's bonuses.

The 68-year-old German was on the bench for Tuesday's Group G opener against 2002 World Cup semi-finalists South Korea.

"I am coming back and I will take my place on the bench for the match against South Korea," said Pfister before the game.

Togolese delegation Messan Attalou told that Pfister will be their coach for the whole tournament.

However the ever deepening sense of farce and confusion continued as at their eve of match

conference the man who replaced him, Kodjovi Mawuena, denied any knowledge of the late switch around.

"I am not aware of this," said Mawuena, who has been in charge of the national side before.

"I hope I remain coach," added the former national team captain, whose view was supported by the Sports Minister, who denied that any negotiations had taken place to get Pfister back.

Mawuena, who was one of Pfister's assistants, had been named officially as coach on Saturday replacing the German though at that point the newly-installed hander said he hoped his predecessor would return.

Pfister had explained to the FIFA media channel in no uncertain terms that the continuing financial debacle between the players and officials over bonuses -- the players were demanding 120,000 dollars apiece -- had forced his decision.

"When I started to be manager of Togo, I was promised that bonuses for the players would be cleared," he had told.

The Togolese federation had kept the channels open with Pfister, who returned to his home base in Switzerland, and also held talks with another German coach Winfried Schafer.

It had looked like being the second time that Pfister, who replaced Nigerian Stephen Keshi after the Sparrowhawks bowed out of the African Nations Cup finals at the first hurdle earlier this year, had seen his World Cup hopes dashed at the last minute.

Eight years ago Pfister successfully guided Saudi Arabia to the World Cup in France but was sacked just before the tournament because he demanded the Saudi princes interfere less in team affairs -- he regained the post after the finals.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS 42 "More than I see..." 2 "off to see..." 21 Actor Carlucci 1 Grassland needed to know" 3 Kindred dam 6 They may cry uncle in chat rooms 4 Gun the engine merger co. 12 Kitchen gadget 44 Quaint creation skill 25 Yule quaff 13 Fleet 46 Galleys lineup 6 Houston acronym 26 Texas city 14 Get there 50 "Wait a sec!" 7 "Reversal of Fortune" 30 Early hrs. 16 Smell 52 Papal representative 31 Omega precursor 17 Check bar codes 8 Ostrich's kin emotion 19 "relief did I tell you?" 54 Open a safe 9 Australia's capital bearing 20 Differently 55 Music prize 10 Icelandic saga 34 Ball-gizmo 24 Geneticist's abbr. 56 Fill the shelves 11 Back talk 39 Artist's garb 27 O.K. 57 Polygonal bounds 12 It's often 41 Unit 42 So 43 N. Dak. neighbor 29 Prepare presents 1 Withered 18 Beyond a doubt 45 Cartoonist's supply 32 Reaching accord 35 Culture medium 47 Wile E.'s supplier 36 Relaxation 48 Opician's selection 37 "was saying..." 49 Sauce source 51 Elmer, to Bugs 38 Scale members 53 Spoon-bender Geller 40 Detail

11x11 crossword grid with numbers indicating starting positions for clues.

CRYPTOQUIP OUG IGEEJBQ BJHZDAF PO OUG QAGPZGH IPTOJHX TJSN UPHNEX QSHDRG JAP QIJGOHDAF CSNFGO. Yesterday's Cryptoquip: MY ALCOHOLIC DRINK HAS A MORE SLIPPERY QUALITY TO IT, SO I'D CALL IT A SLICKER LIQUOR. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals T. 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.



PHOTO: AFP

Fans of Togo (L) and South Korea stand outside the stadium a few moments before the beginning of their World Cup match in Frankfurt on Tuesday.