



LOOKING PAST PARAGUAY! Swedish captain Olof Mellberg (in the foreground) and midfielder Fredrik Ljungberg stretch during a training session on Monday. Sweden take on Paraguay in a Group B match today.

**We can beat Sweden: Ruiz**

AFP, Munich

Paraguay can beat Sweden in their next match and take a huge step towards taking their place in the second round of the World Cup claimed the South American side's coach Anibal "Maño" Ruiz on Monday.

Ruiz, whose side slipped to a 1-0 defeat in their Group B opener against England on Saturday, accepted that Sweden, who they play in Berlin on Thursday, were a good side but no better than his, who are bidding to reach the second round for the third successive time.

"Sweden has a lot of ability," said Ruiz, who has come in for some criticism since the England game with former goalkeeper Jose Luis Chilavert saying the team played like a bunch of losers in the frame of their coach.

"We know them well. They played well against Trinidad and Tobago without getting the result they needed (0-0 and against 10 men for most of the second-half).

"We are going to need to play a very good match if we are to win."

"However Sweden is one of the teams that we think are about our level."

Ruiz said that evidently they would need to attack to ensure they won but that did not mean they were going to concede ground at the back.

"Obviously mentally we have to believe we are going to win, but that does not mean we are going to take it easy and not support our defence."

The Paraguayans final group match is against Trinidad and Tobago on June 20 in Kaiserslautern.

**SWEDEN V PARAGUAY  
Quest for redemption**

AFP, Berlin

After getting a dose of self-inflicted humiliation in early with a frustrating goalless draw against ultra-minnows Trinidad and Tobago it's time to deliver for Sweden as they bid for redemption against Paraguay here on Thursday.

The encounter at the Olympic Stadium is make-or-break for Lars Lagerback's side with, at least on paper, their final match still to come against England.

The Trinidad match has clearly taken a toll on morale amid reports that skipper Olof Mellberg and teammate Fredrik Ljungberg had a bust-up after their first game.

What the TT news agency described as "a hot but short dispute" was a reprise of a similar spat the pair engaged in at the 2002 World Cup in Japan, when Ljungberg angrily went for Mellberg following a hard sliding tackle during training and the players had to be separated by force.

Team spokesman Thomas Saletog played down the row, believed to have stemmed from Ljungberg's frustration at the long balls out of the Swedish defence, making direct mention of Mellberg.

But that is behind the pair, who set aside their differences, according to Ljungberg, who revealed several of the players had bad words after Saturday's goalless draw threatening the Swedes' chances of topping the group.

"It was a little bit of an aggressive discussion but Olof and I can handle this. There are no problems between us," the Arsenal man

insisted, seeking to bury hatchets as the Swedes attempt to cool down in the Berlin heat, aided by the nine pm (1900 GMT) kickoff.

Sweden are set to bring back goalkeeper Andreas Isaksson, who briefly blacked out after a freak training ground accident which saw him hit in the face by a loose ball from former Rennes teammate Kim Kallstrom.

Reserve Rami Shaaban kept a clean sheet against Trinidad and Tobago but with Swedish nerves already frayed enough Lagerback plans to go with his first choice if possible against a side who need to go all out for three points after their narrow opening-match loss to England.

Sweden, 1958 runners-up on their own soil and third in 1994, are making their 11th World Cup appearance and will rely on a potent strike force of Juventus star Zlatan Ibrahimovic, freshly-crowned Champions League win-

ner Henrik Larsson and Ljungberg behind them to make amends for last week.

The trio scored 20 of their side's 30 goals in qualifying.

Larsson's 34 goals make the top active scorer in the current side, well ahead of the retired, of all-time leaders Pia Sundhage and Lena Videkull with 71.

But one more for the man who scored the first of his four World Cup goals to date in the third-place playoff win over Bulgaria in 1994 would help steady the Scandinavian ship.

Paraguay have had their own goalkeeping problems, with Justo Villar out of the tournament after injuring a calf muscle in the early stages against England.

But deputy Aldo Bobadilla of Asuncion side Libertad says he is ready to shine in Villar's place.

"I'm confident in my ability and I've been working hard to ensure I win the confidence of the coach. I will do all I can to ensure that confidence is not misplaced," he told reporters.

The South American side's coach Anibal "Maño" Ruiz insists his men can reach round two for the third successive time.

"Sweden is one of the teams that we think are about our level," he opined.

With the Paraguayans' last match against what they hope will be a flagging Trinidad and Tobago on June 20 in Kaiserslautern, they are aware that a result against the Swedes could give them at least an even chance of second place in the group.

**TEAMS**

**Sweden (4-4-2)**  
1-Andreas Isaksson; 2-Mikael Nilsson, 3-Olof Mellberg, 4-Teddy Lucic, 5-Erik Edman; 6-Tobias Linderoth, 9-Fredrik Ljungberg, 21-Christian Wilhelmsson, 16-Kim Kallstrom; 10-Zlatan Ibrahimovic, 11-Henrik Larsson.

**Paraguay (4-4-2)**  
22-Aldo Bobadilla; 21-Denis Caniza, 5-Julio Cesar Caceres, 4-Carlos Gamarra, 2-Jorge Nunez, 6-Carlos Bonet, 10-Roberto Acuna, 13-Carlos Paredes, 16-Cristian Riveros; 9-Roque Santa Cruz, 18-Nelson Haedo Valdez.

**Paraguay promise all out attack**

INTERNET, undated

Paraguay will go all out and attack against Sweden in order to claim three points from the match, according to goalkeeper Aldo Bobadilla.

Both teams need maximum points from Thursday's contest after failing to pick up wins in their opening games at the weekend.

Bobadilla says his side will be pumped up from the start in a bid to keep their hopes of qualifying from Group B alive.

"As well as us, they (Sweden) must win to qualify to the next round," said Bobadilla.

"We'll look for three points from the start."

The 30-year-old was a replacement for the injured Justo Villar after just seven minutes of Paraguay's defeat to England in Frankfurt and he admits he was not expecting to get a chance to make an appearance so early in the tournament.

"I'm just happy to be playing, but not so happy because a teammate was hurt," he added.

"Goalkeeper is a very delicate position on the pitch. In this case, Justo got injured while being in a very big moment and I'm sorry for that."

"We'll give him all the strength to get over it as soon as possible."

**Kallstrom regrets controversy**

INTERNET, undated

Sweden midfielder Kim Kallstrom regrets the team's bust-up being made public.

Premiership rivals Freddie Ljungberg and Olof Mellberg have admitted to having an aggressive discussion, after their 0-0 stalemate with Trinidad & Tobago on Saturday.

Striker Marcus Allback acted as peacekeeper in the changing rooms, as Juventus forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Copenhagen midfielder Tobias Linderoth also went head-to-head.

"It is unfortunate that what happened in the changing room came out," Kallstrom commented. "I feel it should involve only us in the group."

Manager Lars Lagerback praised the Soca Warriors' display immediately after the game, but has now had to fend off rumours that there is a clear division in the camp.

"It's up to the players themselves who they want to be with," Lagerback told Sportbladet.

"We try to live as normally as possible in the national team. The players who know each other are together."

Sweden face Paraguay on Thursday, as they look to resurrect their hopes of qualifying for the later stages and display some semblance of team spirit amidst all the controversy.

**Zlatan promises goal glut**

INTERNET, undated

Zlatan Ibrahimovic last night promised an up-turn in Sweden's fortunes as he took stock of a week that has lurched from the intense frustration of failing to pierce the defence of 10-man Trinidad & Tobago to the heated argument which erupted between teammates in the aftermath.

Lars Lagerback's side has failed to win a match in 2006, scoring only twice in six games. "Once we score that first goal, the whole team will get loose and others will follow," Ibrahimovic insisted. "That's what would have happened against Trinidad, but the first one wouldn't go in. Their goalkeeper (Shaka Hislop) was outstanding, but, if we continue playing like that the goals will come."

"There is pressure on us to win but we have to be realistic. We are not Brazil and not the favourites. It's only the media back home who are implying we should be among the favourites."

The bitter argument between Freddie Ljungberg and Olof Mellberg - a disagreement apparently born of the centre-half's

insistence on pumping the ball up-field from deep as they toiled - did little for morale, although Lagerback attempted to paint a rosier picture yesterday. "That type of thing is not normal, but it happens. If it had any effect on the team, I think it has been positive."

That remains to be seen, though Lagerback will be encouraged by the return of his No1 goalkeeper Andreas Isaksson against Paraguay tomorrow. Isaksson suffered concussion last week after being struck by a Kim Kallstrom shot in training.

Rami Shaaban deputised on Saturday, keeping a clean sheet in a goalless draw, but Isaksson is ready. "I am feeling good again," the 24-year-old told the Swedish newspaper Expressen. "The headaches and tiredness I felt have now gone."

Lagerback refused to reveal who would be between the posts for the Paraguay game but hinted Isaksson would get the nod. "He (Isaksson) has been our first-choice keeper during qualification and performed really well," he said.

Paraguay's goalkeeper Aldo Bobadilla insists his team will attack Sweden from the start. "We'll look for the three points from the first

minute, without doubt." Bobadilla made his World Cup debut after replacing Justo Villar after just seven minutes against England. "I'm happy for having played but not so happy because a team-mate picked up a serious injury," he added. "Goalkeeper is a very delicate position on the pitch."

**Total recall!**

AFP, undated

Sweden goalkeeper Andreas Isaksson, who briefly blacked out after a freak training ground accident, could be recalled for his team's World Cup clash against Paraguay.

Isaksson was hit in the face by a ball kicked by his former Rennes team-mate Kim Kallstrom in the incident and was forced to miss Saturday's Group B clash with Trinidad and Tobago which finished 0-0. He was replaced by back-up Rami Shaaban.

"Andreas returned to training with a light workout and I hope that he will be available again to face Paraguay," said Sweden coach Lars Lagerback.



Paraguay forwards Roque Santa Cruz (L) and Nelson Cuevas juggle balls during a training session ahead of their Thursday's game against Sweden.

**'Don't cry over spilt milk'**

AFP, undated

Paraguay can't afford to waste time being miserable and need to pick themselves up for their next game after losing to England, star striker Roque Santa Cruz says.

The South Americans felt they deserved a 1-1 draw in their opening Group B game in Frankfurt after England flagged in the second-half as the heat took its toll.

Cruz said they could build on the 1-0 loss.

"We can't afford to waste any time being miserable about the defeat," he said.

"I think we played well, and we've also got some good players in our squad. We improved in the second half, and we can build on that."

Paraguay coach Anibal Ruiz felt his side were unlucky to go down to an own-goal by captain Carlos Gamarra, and believes they can still qualify for the knockout round

despite propping up the table.

"I told the players in the dressing room they had played a good game but not a great game as we did not win," he said.

"I think we are capable of getting two good results in the next games."

Their immediate task is to get past Sweden who was held to a shock 0-0 draw by a 10-man Trinidad and Tobago on Saturday.

They will go into the game on Thursday without first choice goalkeeper Justo Villar, who looks set to miss the rest of the World Cup after injuring a calf muscle just eight minutes into the England game.

The 28-year-old left the field in tears after sustaining the injury when making a clearance under pressure from Michael Owen.

"The information I have is that he got a leg injury when he tried to kick the ball," said Ruiz.

"He will take at least two or three weeks to recover. It is a calf injury."

**Sweden deny bust-up claims**

REUTERS, undated

Sweden have strongly denied media reports on Monday that suggested a rift within their camp ahead of their crucial Group B game against Paraguay on Thursday.

The Swedish media reported that a bust-up took place between skipper Olof Mellberg and midfielder Freddie Ljungberg in the dressing room after 10-man Trinidad and Tobago held them to a surprise scoreless draw on Saturday.

It was also alleged that coach Lars Lagerback and his assistant, Roland Andersson, disagreed over the timing of the substitutions during the game.

"There are no problems in our camp, none at all. It's just you guys trying to find something wrong," Lagerback told reporters on Monday. Ljungberg confirmed that the players had a "discussion" after the game, but that it was "normal".

"We are very passionate and want Sweden to do our best. We



DEUTSCH HEAD: A hairstylist puts the German colours on the hair of a fan in Heindelberg on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP