



I AM GETTING IMPATIENT: English forward Wayne Rooney (C) jumps into defender Jamie Carragher during a training session at Mittelbergstadion in Buhlertal on Wednesday. Rooney is unlikely to play against Trinidad and Tobago today.

WC BRIEFS

AFP, Berlin

Brazilian president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said he "suffered" as Brazil struggled past Croatia by the only goal. "It was tough, I imagined Brazil would come through easier but our opponents (Croatia) did not let Brazil play well. But what counts in football is a win."

Girlfriend defends Ronaldo
 Ronaldo's girlfriend Raica Oliveira has come to the defence of the much-maligned midriff of her boyfriend. "If he's fat then I'm obese," the Brazilian model told Rio daily Extra.

Ronaldo's paunchy performance against Croatia has inflamed the critics but Oliveira, a model, says he may not be svelte but he's not overweight at an official 83 kilos for a man of 1m 83 (6' 1"). Oliveira herself weighs 55 kilos, Spain's Marca magazine added helpfully.

Sorry London, Liverpool
 The BBC decided Tuesday not to show World Cup matches on giant screens in London and Liverpool after trouble flared during England's clash with Paraguay on Saturday.

"This decision will clearly be a disappointment to many people but the activities of a tiny minority have jeopardised the enjoyment of many," the BBC said in a statement.

Scuffles broke out in the Canary Wharf financial district in east London, where 6,000 fans had gathered to watch the live transmission from Frankfurt. Bottles were thrown in the crowd watching the game on a giant screen in Liverpool. Two people were arrested but nobody was injured. The BBC has decided to keep its seven other giant screens installed around the country for the rest of the World Cup.

Costa Rica Amnesty's champs

Costa Rica may not be about to win the World Cup but they score highly with Amnesty International. The human rights organisation says in a new report that since 2000 it has not had to call for any "urgent action" regarding human rights in the Central American state.

Amnesty is less impressed with holders Brazil as "Amnesty has reports of human rights violations by the police, including excessive use of force."

And AI is none too keen on the fact that nine of the 32 finalists -- Trinidad and Tobago, Iran, Ghana, the United States, Japan, South Korea, Togo, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia -- still have the death penalty on the statute book.

The name game

For every match taking place at Hannover, the city's Gruppens-trasse (group street) avenue is being rechristened in the names of the coaches of the relevant teams.

Ahead of Friday's match between Mexico and Angola workers were taking down the plaques of Marcello Lippi-Strasse and Ratimir

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Up against his heart

AFP, Rotenburg

Should World Cup minnows Trinidad and Tobago pull off another upset against England on Thursday, expect the Caribbean islands to party like never before.

Just don't expect Chris Birchall to join in the celebrations though. The Stafford-born midfielder is the first white player to represent Trinidad and Tobago for 60 years as well as the first Port Vale player to appear in the finals.

"If I score against England, I won't celebrate," said Birchall.

"I respect England -- it's the country where I'm from. On the off chance I score against them, I won't disrespect England by celebrating."

Birchall's appearance at the finals in one of the quirkier stories of the tournament. It all started during a routine fixture in the third tier of English football between Vale and Wrexham last year. Wrexham's Trinidad defender Dennis Lawrence sidled up to Birchall and asked him where his mother was born.

"Port of Spain, Trinidad," a puzzled Birchall replied and the rest was history. Lawrence put Birchall in touch with the TT squad's British liaison officer and soon he was drafted into Dutch legend Leo Beenhakker's squad.

Soon Birchall had established himself in the islanders' midfield.

Now the 22-year-old, who cheered England to the World Cup quarter-finals in 2002 from his local pub in Stone, has swapped Stoke-on-Trent for Germany.

Birchall's last outing for Port Vale, who finished 13th in League One, was in front of a crowd of 4,478. Trinidad and Tobago's opening group game with Sweden on Saturday -- a shock 0-0 draw -- attracted a 67,000 crowd.

"It's still sinking in," added Birchall. "I'm used to playing in front of crowds of 5,000 in League One and I've only just completed my second full season at Port Vale."

"Now I've got a chance to play against England on the biggest stage in the world."

Birchall admits he could have found himself facing Trinidad and Tobago if things had gone to plan earlier in his career.

He attracted a lot of interest while emerging as a star of Port Vale's youth team and was watched by England scouts at under-18 level.

"Who knows what might have happened if I'd been selected for England then?" said Birchall.

"But it never happened. I knew scouts from the England youth team watched me, but that's as close as I came to being picked for my country."

Birchall has praised his 'Soca

Warriors' teammates for welcoming him into the Trinidad and Tobago set up.

He admits he was worried how he would be received by players and supporters when he first joined the team in training for the first time before making his competitive debut in the 1-0 World Cup qualifying win over Panama last October.

But those fears were quickly dispelled when he scored in a 1-1 draw with Honduras in the CONCACAF Gold Cup before his memorable goal in the 2-1 aggregate play-off win over Bahrain, which booked Trinidad and Tobago's ticket to Germany.

"I have expected a bit of animosity when I was first called up," added Birchall. "I expected players and fans to be asking who is this English lad who's in our team?"

"But I can't believe how everyone has taken to me. The players and fans have all made me feel very welcome."

Birchall is also pleased to have acquired a degree of respect from his Vale teammates since his international career began.

"I used to get plenty of stick from the lads when I first went over," he added. "They would say 'Why are you going over? You'll never qualify!'"

"But to be fair, they have been great, they have wished me all the best and are now asking me for tickets all the time!"

Brazil 'planned' slow start

REUTERS, Berlin

Brazil coach Carlos Alberto Parreira said that his team were operating at around 60 to 70 percent of their capabilities in Tuesday's 1-0 win over Croatia, which is exactly how he had planned it.

The world champions were unconcerned by their unconvincing start to the defence of their crown, insisting that the three points were always going to be more important than the performance in their first game.

Before the match, Parreira had repeated numerous times that the world would not see the best of his side, and their embarrassing array of talent, in their first outing.

"If you play your best at the start, then there's no room for improvement," he said at one stage. "We're thinking big, we intend to play seven games here and we want to go better as we go on."

Tuesday's post-match verdict headed exactly in the same direction.

"It was an exceptional result for the first match," Parreira repeated on several occasions. "I can assure you that the performance of the team can improve and will improve."

History tends to side with Parreira, whose team extended their unbeaten run to 11 matches and set a record by winning their eighth match in a row at the World Cup finals.

The World Cup's past is littered with cases of teams who have made a flying start only to falter as the going gets tough, and others have lumbered away from the starting line and picked up momentum during the course of the tournament.

Ronaldo's performance, in a match listed by the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) as his 100th in a Brazil shirt, was arguably one of his worst.

Parreira has already confirmed the Phenomenal One will start Sunday's second game against Australia but it remains to be seen how long the coach's patience will last, especially with the fans and

critics already starting to demand Robinho.

Croatia's fans lit flares and celebrated at the end of the match to show just how proud they were of their team.

Croatia coach Zlatko Kranjcar said that they always knew that this would be a game they would probably lose -- but that wins over Japan and Australia in their remaining two Group F fixtures should be enough to see them through.

"We always thought we might well find ourselves in this position after the first game so it's no surprise and no real disappointment," he said. "We were perhaps unlucky not to get a point but we know what we have to do to qualify now."

Croatia are desperate to do well in these finals after flopping out at the first-round stage in 2002 following their semifinal appearance on their debut in 1998.

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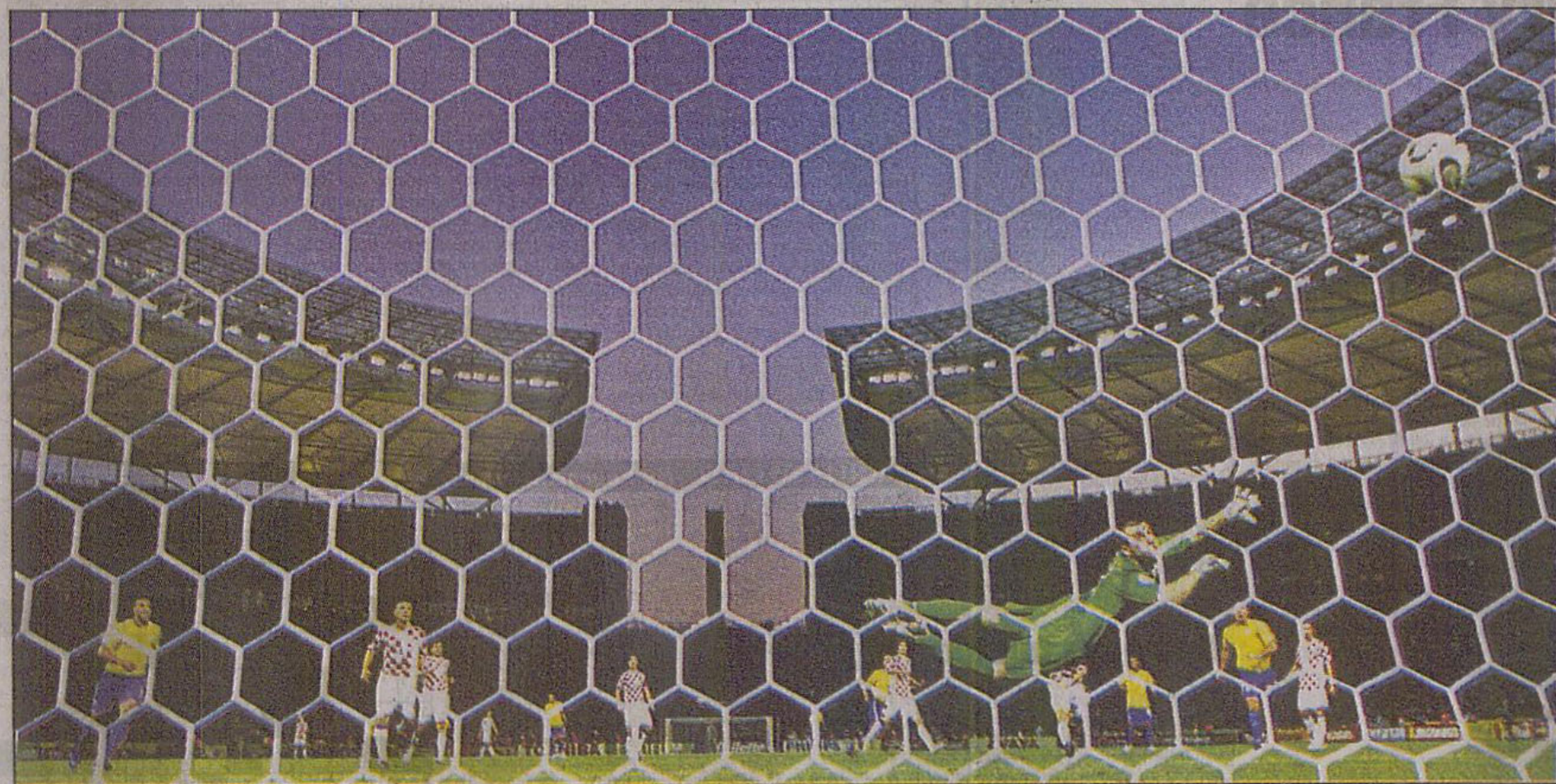
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GOAL: Croatian goalkeeper Slipe Pletikosa dives in vain as Brazilian midfielder Kaka scores the match-winner at the Berlin Olympic Stadium on Tuesday.

PHOTO AFP

The Daily Star
RANGS TOSHIBA
 WORLD CUP QUIZ 2006

.....THIS CAN BE YOURS

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

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

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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