



EYING ONE LAST SHOT AT GLORY: Saudi Arabia striker Sami Al-Jaber, who became only the fourth player in history to score goals in World Cup finals 12 years apart after his second-half strike in a 2-2 draw with Tunisia on June 14, is seen in action during a training session in Hamburg on Friday.

SAUDI ARABIA V UKRAINE

Shevchenko the key

AFP, Hamburg

Ukraine are looking for a return to form for star striker Andriy Shevchenko to get their stuttering World Cup campaign back on track against Saudi Arabia in a Group H game here on Monday.

Oleg Blokhin's side suffered a shock 4-0 trouncing at the hands of Spain in their opening match, a result that set them back in their bid to progress to the knock-out phase of World Cup while Saudi Arabia were held to a 2-2 draw with Tunisia.

Saudi Arabia coach Marcos Paqueta boldly criticised Ukraine as "weak" after their Spanish debacle, and suggested they needed to change their tactics after finding themselves bottom of Group H following the first set of matches.

"Ukraine is a weak team," said the Brazilian whose team leaked a goal to Tunisia two minutes into injury time for the North Africans to snuck a draw.

"The Saudi players have to benefit from Ukraine's bad situation to get a good result," he said.

"Ukraine have to change the way they play because they need to score goals so they can qualify."

Warning enough for the Saudi back four that they can expect a barrage of attacks spearheaded by Chelsea's record new signing Shevchenko.

The former AC Milan striker has been struggling with a knee injury and he looked out of sorts against the Spaniards, although he said just getting that game under his belt would help.

"I'm glad I played the full 90

minutes after not being in action for such a long time," he said. "The knee was fine but my physical condition is still a long way from my optimal form, but I need to play games to get that form."

It was a lack of Ukrainian firepower during the Spain game that was most evident, with the former Soviet republic only mustering two shots on target during the entire 90 minutes.

Saudi Arabia have not won a match since their first appearance in the 1994 World Cup when they reached the second round.

Paqueta will be hoping from more of the same from striker Sami al-Jaber, a veteran of four World Cup campaigns who joined an elite club when he came off the bench to score for the 'sons of the desert' against Tunisia.

TEAMS

Saudi Arabia (4-4-2)
21-Mabrouk Zaid (34-0); 2-Ahmed Dokhi (69-4); 13-Hussein Sulaimani (98-3); 6-Omar Al Ghamdi (39-5); 4-Hamad Al Montashari (33-6); 14-Saudi Al Khairi (35-12); 8-Mohammed Noor (64-22); 18-Nawaf Al Temyal (57-13); 16-Khaled Al Thaker (15-2); 9-Sami Al Jaber (161-44); 20-Yassir Al Qahtani (44-33)

Ukraine (4-4-2)
1-Oleksander Shovkovsky (69-0); 5-Volodymir Yezersky (25-1); 6-Andri Rusol (24-1); 13-Dmitro Chigrinsky (0-0); 2-Andri Nesmachny (50-0); 14-Andri Husin (65-9); 4-Anatoli Timoshchuk (56-1); 8-Oleg Shelayev (20-0); 21-Ruslan Rotan (20-3); 7-Andriy Shevchenko (65-29); 10-Andri Voronin (33-4)

The 34-year-old became only the third player to have scored at World Cups 12 years apart, joining Pele and German great Uwe Seeler.

Both scored their first World Cup goals in 1958 and last in 1970, meaning Jaber, who puts his longevity down to a special diet and employing a fitness trainer, is the first to achieve the feat in 36 years.

"It's great to help the team just immediately after getting on the pitch. Things like that don't happen every time," he said.

"We were not lucky (against Tunisia) because we should have won the match but we conceded a goal late in injury time while we were dominating the match. But in the end, that's football."

Jaber added that he expected to come on as a 'supersub' against Ukraine "to help my team get the result it needs".

Right-back Ahmed Dokhi said the second-half performance against Tunisia was a sign that Saudi Arabia's disastrous 2002 World Cup campaign was behind them.

"Our team played very well," Dokhi said. "This will push us to play Ukraine with the same spirit and performance."

"We will have to play our best to get the three points which will help us get through to the second round."

Midfielder Oleg Gusev is doubtful for Ukraine after injuring his left knee in the loss to Spain.

The Dynamo Kiev player, who failed to appear for the second half against the Spanish, has been unable to train since the match.

Gusev apart, coach Blokhin will have all his players available for a game his side must win.

Saudis want hot weather to return

REUTERS, undated

Saudi Arabia coach Marcos Paqueta said on Friday that rain and falling temperature in Hamburg could be as damaging for his team as stifling heat was for Ukraine when they were thrashed in their opening match by Spain.

Saudi Arabia came to Hamburg early for training in the cooler weather before Monday's Group H match against Ukraine. They were greeted with showers before their evening training session that sent temperatures falling to 15 Celsius (59 Fahrenheit) from 25C on Thursday.

"I like the rain but I don't want to play in the rain," said Paqueta. "Like higher temperatures for Ukraine, playing in rain is very dangerous for us. I need the sun to come out for us."

With temperatures in Saudi Arabia now well above 40 C, the players bunched up in layers of sweatshirts, jackets, long trousers and even ski caps for training on Friday.

Paqueta said he was optimistic about his team's chance of reaching the knockout round after their 2-2 draw against Tunisia in their opening match.

"God willing," he said when asked if he thought they could get through the group. Spain, who beat Ukraine 4-0 on a boiling day in Leipzig, leads the group with three points.

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'Weak Ukraine'

INTERNET, undated

Saudi Arabia coach Marcos Paqueta has labelled upcoming Group H opponents Ukraine "a weak team" after their 4-0 loss to Spain in their debut appearance at the World Cup.

Paqueta's team picked up a point in a dramatic 2-2 draw with Tunisia in Munich on Wednesday evening as Bolton defender Rahdi Iaidi scored an injury time equaliser to give the African side a share of the spoils.

Now the Saudis travel to Hamburg to face Ukraine on Monday in a vital game as both teams look to keep pace with the Spaniards in the race for one of the group's two places in the knockout round.

"We lost two points so we are together with Tunisia," said the Brazilian, who took over as Saudi Arabia coach from Gabriel Calderon in December.

"The team who lost three points, is Ukraine. Ukraine is a weak team and they will have to change how they play so they can score goals to qualify. We have to look at the situation against Ukraine."

Saudi Arabia are targeting a place in the second round for the first time since their debut appearance at the finals in the United States in 1994 and Wednesday's draw went some way towards erasing the memories of the nation's abysmal campaign in Japan four years ago.

Then they famously lost 8-0 to

Germany in their opening game before subsequent defeats to Cameroon and the Republic of Ireland meant the Asian side were one of the first countries to exit the tournament.

Wednesday's result, however, could have been so much better for the Saudis.

After falling behind to Zied Jaziri's acrobatic finish in the 23rd minute, a tactical reshuffle by Paqueta saw his team emerge in a more positive frame of mind in the second half and a lightning quick break down the right ended with a sublime finish from Yasser Al Kahtani 12 minutes after the restart.

The game looked destined for a draw before veteran striker Sami Al Jaber - playing at his fourth World Cup - slotted home to give the Saudis the lead six minutes from time.

But the team's defensive frailty was exposed once more when Iaidi scored from close range after the Saudi back line failed to clear the ball in the third minute of injury time.

Tunisia coach Roger Lemerre admitted he was concerned about losing a player to a red card after Karim Haggui, Yassine Chikhaoui, Riadh Bouazizi and Adel Chedli were all booked by referee Mark Shield and the French coach replaced all but Haggui in the second half.

"That's the problem for everyone," said Lemerre, whose team face Spain on Monday. "Every coach has to deal with yellow cards,

especially at a World Cup.

"At a high level you can't afford to have players expelled and it wasn't just Chedli. We had to deal with four. People are suffering during the game and that happens and on the bench we have to deal with that."

"You can't risk having a player expelled. We had to take the measure of replacing the players, although it wasn't just because of the yellow cards."

Gusev a doubt

REUTERS, undated

Ukraine midfielder Oleg Gusev injured his left knee in Wednesday's 4-0 defeat by Spain and could miss the team's second Group H match against Saudi Arabia on Monday, a team spokesman said on Friday.

The 23-year-old, who plays on the right and is one of Ukraine's brightest prospects, was unable to train at the team's base in Potsdam on Friday and could be replaced in the starting line-up by Oleg Shelayev.

Coach Oleg Blokhin will be without experienced central defender Vladislav Vashchuk, who is suspended after his sending-off against Spain. There are no other injury worries.

Friday's training session at Potsdam's Luftschiffstadion was interrupted after about an hour by a huge thunderstorm, which sent the players and staff scurrying back to the team bus.



WAKE UP SHEVA: Ukraine's big time forward Andriy Shevchenko (L) receives the ball as midfielder Oleg Gusev looks on during the team's training session in Potsdam on Friday.



RED-HAPPY REFI Uruguayan referee Jorge Larionda (R) gestures at his touchline assistant after brandishing a red card to Italian midfielder Daniele de Rossi (4) during the ill-tempered Italy-USA match at Kaiserslautern's Friz-Walter-Stadion on Saturday.

Professions many but the passion is same

AFP, Berlin

What do a Uruguayan parrot breeder, a Mexico lawyer, a stamp collector from France and a Slovakian vascular surgeon have in common?

Give up? Here's a clue. Dress them in yellow and black, put a whistle in their hand, and yes, you've got it -- they're four of the FIFA referees helping to keep order on the pitch at the 2006 World Cup.

Referees may have a reputation for being stern, faceless disciplinarians but scratch beneath the surface and you find an exotic and eclectic cast of characters.

And they have a pretty hard time of it all things being considered -- do a good job and no one notices, muck up and the flak flies.

A Time To Make Friends is the World Cup motto but the men in the middle may find that harder to achieve than most.

Still the 40,000 dollars plus 100 dollars daily allowance they pocket must help ease the pain of any verbal coming their way from irate

players. Russian Valentin Ivanov knows the feeling.

He was the referee who turned down France's appeals for a penalty when Swiss defender Patrick Muller's hand got in the way of Thierry Henry's 37th minute shot in Stuttgart on Tuesday.

Henry was perplexed by Ivanov's ruling. "Somebody better explain to me the handball rule," said the Arsenal attacker.

"If the hand stops the ball from going in the goal, it should be a penalty."

Henry probably wasn't aware though that Ivanov comes from prized footballing stock as the teacher from Moscow is the son of no less an icon than Russian great Valentin Kozmich Ivanov, joint top scorer at the 1962 World Cup.

The range of jobs and interests from which this band of brothers are drawn is mind boggling.

For instance if the report on Germany's pulsating 3-2 win over Costa Rica in the opening game last Friday was written in iambic pen-

tameter there's a good reason as the ref that day, Horacio Elizondo, is an Argentine poet.

Australia were on cloud nine after hammering Japan 3-1 in Kaiserslautern on Monday which is where the referee that day Essam Abd El Fatah spends a lot of his time as a pilot for Egypt Airways.

And players may regret provoking the ire of assistant referee Jean Marie Endeng Zogo who when he's not running up and down the sideline serves as a prison military superintendent in his native Cameroon.

He is also a karate expert and speaks six languages.

Football is a stressful business for the health -- just ask any German fans watching the host's last gap win against Poland -- and anyone with problems in that department could do worse than book a consultation with one of Zogo's colleagues, Roman Shysko, a vascular surgeon from Bratislava.

Premiership stars who wish to take action against tabloids publishing lewd reports about their not-so-private private life should be addressed to Benito Archundia,

a lawyer from Tlalneantla in Mexico who refereed Brazil's opening win over Croatia, while if there are any parrot breeders out there then Jorge Larionda's your man.

But if any were looking for a holiday companion they might think twice before choosing Eric Poulat, a computer wizard who lists stamp collecting as his preferred pastime.

Swiss managing director Massimo Busacca, in charge of Spain's rout of Ukraine on Wednesday, meanwhile conceded what many fans have doubted -- that referees are, after all, human.

"Ours is a thankless task, because everyone expects the referee's performance to be faultless," said the 37-year-old who enjoys rustling up a cordon bleu meal in his spare time.

"No one wants their team to lose -- players, managers or fans... But since we are human, we sometimes make mistakes."

Bussacca says that while refs may be flesh and blood it helps to have nerves of steel. And a cool head.