

**Suarez offered new contract**

AFP, Bad Kissington  
Luis Suarez' success in steering unheralded South American side Ecuador to an historic second round place at the World Cup has earned him an offer of a new four year contract it was announced on Saturday.

The 46-year-old Colombian said that he would look at it after the World Cup campaign was over. Ecuador face Germany in their final Group A match on Tuesday to see who tops the table, with the South Americans leading on goal difference.

"There is an offer on the table, in principle, on the part of Luis Chinboga, the president of the Ecuadorean Football Federation (FEF), for me to continue in the post for the next four years," revealed Suarez, who has been in the job since September 2004.

"For the moment I am not going to let that preoccupy me. I am not going to let my future distract me at the moment."

"The only thing that I am focussed on at the moment is Ecuador and the World Cup," added Suarez, who took up coaching aged just 29 after winning the Copa Libertadores as a player with Colombian side Atletico Nacional in 1989.

Ecuador will play either 1966 winners England or 1958 finalists Sweden in the second round.

**Roeder lobbies for Owen**

AFP, London  
Newcastle boss Glenn Roeder has urged England coach Sven Goran Eriksson to keep off-form striker Michael Owen in his side for the World Cup.

Owen was taken off in the second half of both Group B games and could lose his place in the starting line-up for Tuesday's clash with Sweden following two disappointing displays.

But Roeder, Owen's boss at Newcastle told Eriksson to persevere with the 26-year-old, reminding the England boss that he was a proven goal scorer at the international level.

"The manager has to make a call on these things and you have to respect that," he told BBC Radio Five Live's Sportsweek programme.

"Remember, Michael has hardly played any football since January 1, so he's had a long time out."

"If you add all his time on the pitch together since his return, it probably doesn't add up to more than four or five games."

"But with Michael Owen you know he's proven and in an instant he can go from not doing so well to scoring one, two or even three goals in a game."

"For me this is the time to show some faith in him."

**Crowd overrun screen areas**

AP, Berlin  
The 300 big screen areas set up across Germany to watch World Cup games have been overrun by such massive crowds that FIFA wants them expanded.

Berlin's fan mile, the country's biggest with dozens of screens, was closed Wednesday after 500,000 jammed inside to watch Germany edge Poland 1-0. The story has been similar across the country.

"If that many people keep coming, they are just too full," said FIFA spokesman Markus Sieglar.

Cities with World Cup stadiums have been overwhelmed as the 3 million visitors to Germany and locals from surrounding areas pour in for the all-day parties on game days.

FIFA and German organizers set up the jumbo screen areas to give people a place to watch matches together when it became clear tickets were extremely scarce. Demand for tickets was at least 10 times the 3 million printed.

World Cup cities Munich, Cologne, Frankfurt and Dortmund have already expanded their big screen areas, according to Sieglar.

Berlin, however, wants FIFA to foot some of the bill for building out its fan mile. Senate spokesman Michael Donnermeyer said the city also wasn't sure it could handle the added traffic or master other logistics.

The big screen areas have been peaceful, allaying authorities' fears before the tournament that violent fans could generate trouble there because they weren't allowed in the stadiums.

Police arrested fewer than 100 fans on minor offenses among the half-million people in Berlin that watched Germany beat Poland. That has been typical across the country for big screen viewings, interior ministry spokesman Christian Sachs said.

"Those figures are amazingly low. We are very happy about that," Sachs said.

Fearing hooligans and terrorists, German authorities instituted rules to control the areas just a few months before soccer's showcase. They are required to have fencing and security guards that check backpacks at the entrances.



Italy right-back Cristian Zaccardo (L) stares in disbelief as his teammates try to reassure him after he concedes an own goal against USA in Kaiserslautern on Saturday.

**Zaccardo relives comical error**



INTERNET, undated

Cristian Zaccardo admits his own goal will provide fodder for comedians, but his teammates tried to reassure the Palermo defender.

"Let's say I was unlucky. It's a shame, as we had taken the lead and were finding our form again after a tough first 20 minutes. I am very sorry, especially as I had felt in good shape tonight. It's an incident that'll go on the comedy shows, I'm sure, but the ball went in the opposite direction to where I intended it to go."

**Fan miles of smiles**



AFP, Berlin

As the opening phase reaches a climax, it's turning into the well-behaved World Cup with millions of fans seemingly happy to follow the FIFA maxim that it's "a time to make friends."

Along the "Fan Mile" in Berlin in the shadow of the Brandenburg Gate and at similar celebration centres erected in the other 11 host cities fans of the 32 participating nations have come together to prove that football and hooliganism are not joined at the hip after all.

True, months of cooperation between German authorities and their British counterparts ensured many known trouble-makers did not manage to travel to the host nation in the first place, while police did arrest two dozen mainly English and German football fans ahead of England's first match.

However, almost all of them were released within hours whereas the remainder of the more than 30,000 England fans who descended on Frankfurt -- barely half of them having match tickets -- were well behaved.

England fans have won a reputation for violence over recent decades, brawling with Tunisian counterparts at Marseille during France 1998 and again in trouble during Euro 2000 in Belgium.

But Euro 2004 in Portugal passed off peacefully and with some 3,500 known English hooligans banned from travelling, and

been dominated by Daniele De Rossi's dismissal for elbowing Brian McBride.

"Daniele certainly made a mistake, but he knows that all too well, so there's no point piling criticism on him. We all know one has to act sportingly on the field, as we're representing Italy."

Alessandro Del Piero also rushed to the aid of his teammates after a chaotic 1-1 draw with the Americans.

"Zaccardo shouldn't let this get to him, as he played very well here and against Ghana apart from that incident," added the Juventus star. "It was a very strange game and I tried to get the winner, but Kasey Keller made some wonderful saves. Damn him!"

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more than 80 British police officers working alongside the Germans during the World Cup, the preventative measures appear to be working.

On the Fan-miles, there is evidence of a cultural shift.

"The police are delighted at the most peaceful World Cup to date," trumpeted Berlin daily Der Tagesspiegel after the first 20 games and, on cue, the police confirmed that most England supporters have been setting an example.

"It was a pleasure to see the English fans and we hope to welcome them back in the future," said Nuremberg police head Gerhard Hauptmann, who along with his colleagues also had to cope with Jewish and Iranian opposition groups protesting at a World Cup visit by Iranian Vice-President Mohammed Aliabadi.

"They did not come to cause trouble," Hauptmann said of the English army of fans -- a sentiment echoed by Nuremberg mayor Ulrich Maly as some donned Bavarian outfits to underpin the mood of cultural interchange at an event which will attract an estimated three million visitors to Germany.

Fierce footballing rivalry persists between England and Germany but British Ambassador Sir Peter Torry says that pre-tournament "don't mention the war" pleas to supporters have generally been heard.

"Modern Germany has nothing in common with its Nazi past," Torry said in a statement.

"Germany has given a great welcome to the England fans." And they have reciprocated. The sourest relations have been between the Germans and

**Carlos shrugs off Argentina threat**

AFP, Munich

Brazilian veteran Roberto Carlos has rubbish talk of Argentina as World Cup favourites after their bitter South American rivals romped to a 6-0 win over Serbia and Montenegro on Friday.

"I have heard already that after all those goals that Argentina are the big favourites," said 33-year-old Carlos, a member of the 1998 and 2002 World Cup final teams, losing the former and winning the latter.

"They were saying the same thing after Spain beat Ukraine 4-0. This always happens. For me, Brazil are the most important favourites."

Argentina have already clinched a place in the last 16.

Champions Brazil, who laboured to a 1-0 win over Croatia in their opener, take on Australia on Sunday where a win would put them on the brink of the last 16.

**Scolari denies tears of joy**

AFP, Frankfurt

Tough-guy coach Luiz Felipe Scolari denied showing a softer side as he celebrated Portugal's qualification for the World Cup knock-out stages on Saturday.

Scolari, known as 'Big Phil' and 'Sergeant-Major', insisted he was not crying as he crossed the field to greet his family in the stadium after the 2-0 victory over Iran ensured Portugal moved into the second round for the first time in 40 years.

"Obviously we were emotional and we were happy with what happened," said Scolari.

"I'm not sure whether I was crying but I was very happy and I showed my emotions. Maybe my eye colour changed, but that's it."

Scolari won the World Cup with Brazil in 2002 and took Portugal to the final of Euro 2004 on home soil.

**Milan interested in Cassano**

AFP, Madrid

Italian club AC Milan are interested in signing Real Madrid's Antonio Cassano, according to Spanish newspaper reports on Sunday.

Cassano, 23, has struggled at Real since his five-million euro move from Roma in January and the Italian striker is believed to be considering a return to his home country.

Milan have contacted the Spanish club about Cassano's availability and Marca claims he will sign for Carlo Ancelotti's side if Real's new president, who will be appointed on July 2, agrees to the deal.

**Little Italy turns big**



AP, New York

"Go USA" or "Viva Italia?" Who do you root for in New York when the Americans and Italians face each other in the World Cup?

Scores of adoring and frustrated Italians flocked Saturday to Little Italy to cheer the Azzurri as they played the Americans in the first round. The afternoon ebbed and flowed like the Peronis, the Italian beer glued to plenty of gritty streets.

Every time the Italians missed a chance to score, their fans belated deep sighs. When the Italians put one in the net, thunderous cheers washed over the gritty streets.

When they accidentally put one in the net for the Americans, the grief was undeniable.

But Italians weren't they only ones looking for a victory. Thousands of Italian-Americans, New Yorkers and tourists crowded every nook and cranny of Little Italy, and plenty were rooting for the underdog Yanks.

The game put plenty, including amore, on hold.

Marco and Valeria Caprari, who live near Bologna, Italy, brought

their honeymoon to a halt as they positioned themselves inside an elbow-room-only trattoria showing the game.

"We need to see the game," said Valeria, 27.

Her husband, draped in a blue Italian jersey and unfazed by a phalanx of Americans behind him, confidently predicted 3-1 for the Italians.

America had never won a World Cup game on European soil. The Italians have won the cup three times. The United States didn't seem to have much of a chance.

Still, the Italians watching had their moments of panic.

When the Americans had a free-kick in the first half, Cecilia Bortoni, who also lives near Bologna, covered her eyes and shrieked a desperate, "NOOO!" The Americans missed; she exhaled.

Peter Carbonara, 26, of Queens, was conflicted. He wanted the Italians to win, but also wanted the Americans to get some credit for building a competitive soccer program.

He said Little Italy was the perfect place to watch the game because Italy was playing.

"I think if it was the United States playing the Paraguay, it would be a dust bowl," he said.

At one of the oldest cheese stores in America, Alleva,

employee Joe Pelmetto, 63, said he came to America in 1978 from southern Italy. His heart, he said, remained with his native land.

"I got to go for the Italians," he said in a thick accent.

John Alleva, 24, whose Italian family opened the store in 1892, had to pull for the United States.

"I was born here," he said. "I'd also like to see USA prove themselves on a global stage. If they don't do well, it doesn't bode well for soccer in the US."

When play resumed in the second half, a pair of Romans on their honeymoon stood in front of a television, their emotions playing out as the ball flicked back and forth.

Christina and Angelo Trevi stomped in front of a restaurant called Palermo when the Italians missed a possible goal. They hugged after the referee said an American player was offside when he scored, a goal that would have put the Americans up 2-1.

In the end, the undermanned USA team ground out a 1-1 tie. The Americans were happy. Not so the Italians.

"It was disappointing," Vito Abbate of Sicily said. "We should have won."

But Abbate remained undeterred, that famous Italian zest for life unabated.

"See you at the final. Ciao."

**Celebrating in their own way**



AFP, Berlin

Goals. They bring joy for some and tears for others, but everyone has his own way of celebrating making his mark on the World Cup stage.

So far, nobody had shown quite the breathtaking athleticism like Nigerian star Julius Aghahowa, who four years ago in Asia turned seven backwards somersaults after finding the net.

But as the top teams at this year's event begin finding their form and with it a place in the last 16 so the celebratory routines have been getting slowly more imaginative.

Ivan Kaviedes of Ecuador got in on the act when he helped to secure his side's surprise package to the second round after a thumping win over Costa Rica prompted him to take out a yellow Spiderman-style mask and place it on his head.

The zany move was to pay tribute in part to former international Otolino Tenorio, who died in a traffic accident last year and who also used to bring out a mask dedicated to comic strip heroes.

Togo preferred to leap as on their prey when they took a shock lead against South Korea.

Portugal's Pauleta lived up to his "Eagle of the Azores" nick-

name by spreading his arms wide when he netted the winner against Angola while the Saudi Arabian "sons of the desert" preferred to adopt a prayer stance.

The trend for outlandish goal celebrations is back, and the race is one for the wackiest, with Kaviedes probably out in front so far.

The elastic Aghahowa aside, recent years saw Brazil striker Bebeto celebrate on the way to 1994 glory by inaugurating the 'new dad' baby-cradling routine, colleagues Romario and Mazinho rushing to join him in what became a favoured triple celebration.

And who could forget the hip-wiggling performance in 1990 of Cameroon veteran striker Roger Milla, who at 38 thrilled the fans by dancing solo by the corner flag before he was engulfed by teammates?

Eight years later, Chilean Marcelo Salas impersonated a matador by going down on one knee, a red cape all that was missing as he put rivals to the sword.

In the eyes bulging category, nobody stands out to date in this year's finals. Certainly nobody has come close to emulating fiery Italian Marco Tardelli, who looked close to spontaneous combustion after he scored in the 1982 final win over the old West Germany.

At the other end of the scale, French defender Lilian Thuram sank to his knees and put a finger

to his lips after his semifinal double knocked out Croatia in 1998.

Thuram had never scored for the national side before -- and never scored again.

Here, England striker Peter Crouch may tread new goalscoring ground, but despite netting the effort that undid 82 minutes of Trinidad and Tobago's resistance he is keeping his famed robot dance routine under wraps until such time as he can net for England in the final.

If scorers have their own way of celebrating their exploits, this year has seen goalkeepers show that they can act in similar fashion after a victory.

Mexico keeper Oswaldo Sanchez sank to his knees and looked skyward, then burst into tears after the 3-1 win over Iran as his father had died four days earlier and he had to make a lighting trip home for the funeral.

"It's a special day for me but I had conflicting emotions," he explained, adding his father had been looking down on the side.

The death and glory theme for keepers went still further as Trinidad and Tobago goalkeeper Shaka Hislop said he was driven on by the memory of former teammate Mickey Trotman, who died in a car crash while preparing for a World Cup qualifier in 2001.

Hislop said he felt "tears and sadness when I remember Mickey Trotman."

**End of the road for Daei?**



AFP, Frankfurt

He has a goal-scoring record that not even Pele could match, but age may finally be catching up with Iran's evergreen striker Ali Daei.

After surprisingly dropping his captain for the crunch match with Portugal, coach Branko Ivankovic said what some Iranians have been saying for years: Daei, now 37, is

simply too slow.

"Maybe it's a surprise Daei was on the bench but I thought I needed a faster team," said Ivankovic.

It was a frank admission from the Croatian, a strong supporter of Daei who has been hinting heavily about leaving Iran after the World Cup.

Daei insists he is still capable of leading Iran's attack, and has vowed to keep playing until he gets the axe.

"I might look old from outside the field, but I feel really young

inside it," he said.

Few would have guessed the lanky striker would have such an impact when he first stepped on the field for Iran in 1993.

Tall, strongly built and with his trademark bushy moustache, Daei took six games to get off the mark but has with terrorised Asian defences ever since, becoming an Iranian icon in the process.

With a record 109 international goals in 148 appearances, Daei has outstripped the great Pele and Ferenc Puskas, although admittedly against less demanding opposition.

The former Asian footballer of the year once hit four past South Korea and played in Iran's greatest match -- the 2-1 win over the United States at France 1998.

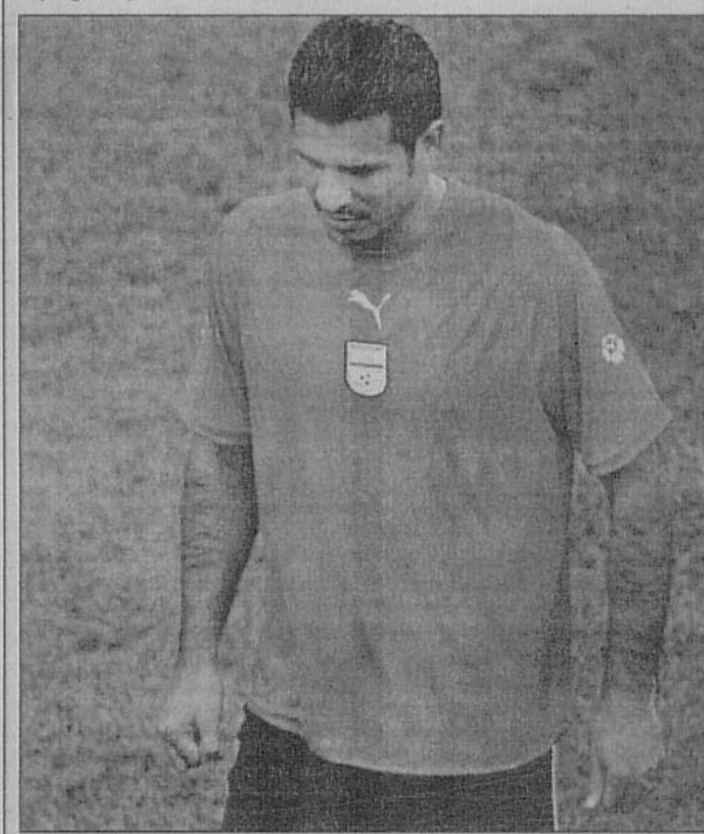
But even the biggest stars fade and calls have been growing for changes in the Iranian team, condemned to another early World Cup exit by the 2-0 loss to Portugal.

"I think there is too much pressure from some Iranian journalists. They have had problems with me for the last 10 years for so many reasons, saying bad things about me in Iranian newspapers, but everything is okay for me," Daei said.

"The Iranian people want me to score every time I play, but if the ball doesn't come to me I can't get a goal. I need crosses and passes, like all strikers."

Daei's club career includes stints with Bayern Munich and Hertha Berlin before returning to the Middle East. He now plays for Iran's Saba Battery, and hit five during the opening phase of this year's Asian Champions League.

Daei, who has his own line of sportswear, has said he would like to pursue a coaching career preferably in Iran.



ALI DAEI