

## TOGO V SWITZERLAND

## Looking for improvement

AFP, Dortmund

Switzerland will be favoured to grab the points when they take on Group G minnows Togo in Dortmund on Monday.

Kobi Kuhn's side opened their campaign with a goalless draw against France, who take on table leaders South Korea 24 hours earlier.

Kuhn, who was on the Swiss side that competed in the 1966 finals but never got a game as he was sent home early for breaking a curfew, has injury concerns involving Lazio defender Valon Behrami whose World Cup looks over after getting injured in training.

There was more positive news about Ludovic Magnin, who was left with an injured ankle after the France match and skipped training on Thursday.

"We're optimistic. He should be fit to play on Monday," said Swiss medical officer Roland Grossen.

The Swiss, who boast the third youngest side at the finals, proved a match for former world champions France last Tuesday, with Arsenal centre-half Philippe Senderos, who hit the bar with a header in

Stuttgart, in particular catching the eye.

Like France though they've got striking issues after Johan Vonlanthen, the preferred choice to pair up with Alexander Frei in attack, missed out on coming to Germany with a torn thigh muscle.

## TEAMS

## Togo (4-4-2)

16-Kossi Agassa (50-0); 2-Dare Nibombe (17-0), 23-Assimiou Toure (2-0), 5-Massamasso Tchangai (66-1) 8-Kuami Agboh (4-0); 9-Thomas Dossevi (10-1), 10-Cherif Toure-Maman (40-17), 15-Alaixys Romao (12-0), 17-Mohamed Kader Coubadja (47-14); 13-Richmond Forson (9-0), 4-Emmanuel Adebayor (30-12)

## Switzerland (4-4-2)

1-Pascal Zuberbuehler (41-0); 3-Ludovic Magnin (31-2), 4-Philippe Senderos (13-2), 20-Patrick Mueller (65-3), 23-Philipp Degen (16-0); 8-Raphael Wicky (68-1), 6-Johann Vogel (86-2), 7-Ricardo Cabanas (38-4), 16-Tranquillo Barnetta (14-2); 9-Alex Frei (46-25), 11-Marco Streller (11-3)

Kuhn put Marco Streller, who plays his club football down the road from here with FC Cologne, up front with Frei in the opener and he'll be hoping this duo can be more productive this time around.

His verdict on his team's debut was mixed. "My team played with a lot of will but we have a number of things to put right, especially in defence and ball possession."

South Korea coach Dick Advocaat stressed before his side's run-in with World Cup debutants Togo that he wouldn't be underestimating them, and he was right as the Africans went into half-time leading the 2002 semi-finalists 1-0 after a goal by Mohamed Kader.

But the Koreans eventually hit back, taking the honours 2-1.

Togo, who place heavy reliance on star player Emmanuel Adebayor of Arsenal, put up a spirited performance made all the more meritorious considering their captain Jean-Paul Abalo was sent off early in the second half and the hiatus over their coach.

German Otto Pfister resigned just days before the game in a row

over unpaid player bonuses.

In a face that did Togolese football's reputation no good at all Kodjovi Mawuena was appointed to step in before Pfister eventually returned just before the game after the bonus row was resolved and will stay at least until after the World Cup is over.

But the Togolese camp is not a happy one for Pfister this week announced he was intending to sue Assogbavi Komlan, secretary general of the Togo Football Federation, who claimed the 68-year-old was an alcoholic.

"I am going to sue Komlan for defamation and bring the matter to the attention of FIFA," said Pfister.

"To say that I am an alcoholic, is risible, because I don't drink a drop of alcohol."

Pfister blamed a lack of realism for the loss to South Korea.

"African players take it very easy - they think they are going to win before the game. You have to respect the opposition - the players thought we were going to win and get three points. But it is time to forget about that - it is old news - and concentrate on Switzerland," he said.

## Reunion for coaches

INTERNET, undated

It'll be a reunion of sorts for Switzerland coach Kobi Kuhn and his Togo counterpart, Otto Pfister, when their teams face each other next week.

The 61-year-old Kuhn and the 68-year-old Pfister go back 40 years, having first met as players in Switzerland. They're also neighbors: the German-born Pfister lives in a small town in Switzerland, about 60 miles from Kuhn's native Zurich.

"We run into each other from time to time," Kuhn said.

But knowing the opposing coach won't be an advantage in this case, Kuhn said, because their styles are very different. Pfister spent the last 34 years coaching teams in African and Arab countries, while Kuhn remained in his native Switzerland.

## Swiss seek to end 12-year drought

INTERNET, undated

Switzerland striker Marco Streller hopes to end a 12-year World Cup scoring drought for the Alpine nation when the Swiss face Togo in Dortmund in their next Group G match.

The Swiss have failed to find the net in a World Cup tournament since Adrians Knups netted in 1994 at the Detroit Silverdome in a game won 4-1 by Romania.

After the Swiss kicked off the 2006 tournament with a 0-0 draw with France in Stuttgart the drought continues.

"We must score goals," said Streller

in remarks on www.football.ch, the Swiss Football Federation website. "We strikers are really motivated now for the games with Togo and South Korea."

"I felt strong in the France match but we have to think about attacking more."

Streller hailed the defensive work of his team-mates against the French who found the Swiss hard to break down.

"We played a really good defensive game and now we have to work on the attack," said Streller. "Maybe we strikers need to make different kinds of runs."

"Maybe one needs to drop back

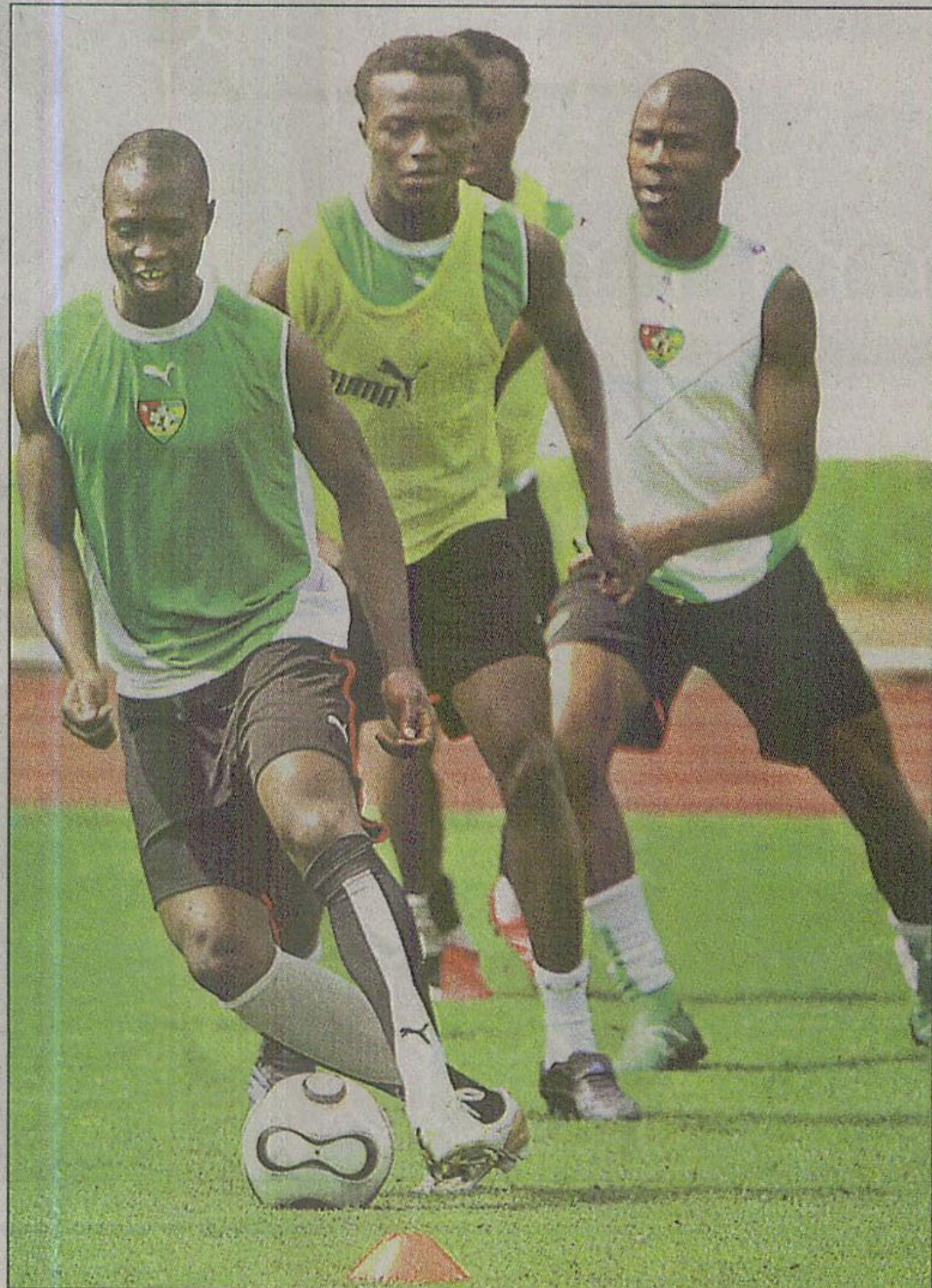
but and the other can play a more forward role."

That scenario would likely see Alexander Frei play up front with Streller playing off him.

Streller admitted the Swiss would wear the mantle of favourites at the Westfalenstadion in Dortmund but claims the Swiss won't underestimate the west Africans.

"That will be us," he said when asked who the favourites were. "But there is no doubt they have a strong team."

"We need an early goal and that will make everything easier."



RUNNING TOWARDS GHANA? Togo defender Massamasso Tchangai (L) is being chased by his teammates during a training session at the Allgeustadion in Wangen on Friday.

## Togo players miss flight

REUTERS, Frankfurt

Togo did not leave their team base Wangen on Sunday on time for a planned departure to their next World Cup group match.

"We are still in the hotel," coach Otto Pfister told Reuters on the phone when the team was meant to get on the plane to Dortmund, where they are due to play Switzerland on Monday.

Togo's World Cup debut has been overshadowed by a row over players' pay, in which Pfister walked out on a team that boycotted training sessions only to return days later.

Asked whether Togo were boycotting the match, a source close to the team just said the side showed no signs of getting ready for their departure.

"The departure (from the match camp in Wangen) was planned for now but the players are showing no signs of getting ready or leaving," the source said.

While players said on Saturday a solution had not yet been finalised, officials have insisted the pay dispute is settled but have not given details.

Togo, who lost their debut against South Korea 2-1, are due to play Switzerland in Dortmund on Monday.

## Pfister will take legal action

INTERNET, undated

Togo coach Otto Pfister is considering legal action over comments ascribed to the secretary-general of the country's football federation.

Assogbavi Komlan was quoted as saying that Pfister drank too much after the team's 2-1 defeat to South Korea in their opening Group G match.

"I might take legal action. The moment he makes those comments, what can I do?" the German said on Wednesday.

"I am one of the people who doesn't drink alcohol."

"But after the World Cup I will also contact FIFA to see what we can do, just so we don't make any mistakes," Pfister said.

Komlan had also made it clear that he did not want Pfister to regain control of the team, after he quit last week, following a pay dispute between the players and the federation.

Although his assistant coach Kodjovi Mawuena was hastily promoted and officials approached former Cameroon coach Winfried Schaefer, Pfister changed his mind and returned to the job on Monday.

While he said he would remain as Togo coach until the end of the World Cup finals, Pfister was unsure of what would happen afterwards.

"In this job you think from one day to the next, not beyond the World Cup," he said.

Meanwhile, Togo defender Ludovic Assemoassa, who came off injured during their World Cup debut match, has been ruled out of the rest of the tournament.

He tore a tendon and had surgery in Frankfurt early on Wednesday.

Togo, who are bottom of Group G, face Switzerland in Dortmund on Monday and France four days later.

## Africans want to make impact

INTERNET, undated

Togo can put their chaotic start to the World Cup behind them and make an impact at the tournament, two of the team's players said on Saturday.

The West African nation are making their first appearance at the finals but their preparations were disrupted by a row over player payments and the walkout and subsequent return of coach Otto Pfister in the days before their first game.

Striker Mohamed Kader Coubadja said the team were totally focused on Monday's Group G game with Switzerland following a 2-1 defeat by South Korea in their first game.

"We had good chances to win after I scored against South Korea," Coubadja told Reuters. "We had a

lot of chances and I am sure we can create a lot against Switzerland."

"We feel we can win and we want to put the stories of everything else behind us now. The dispute over money and the coach is not finally finished, but it is more or less done."

"We have tried not to let it affect us. We are footballers and we here for the World Cup, to play our games, not to talk about other things."

The striker, who plays in France for Guingamp, gained overnight fame in Africa by scoring the late goal that earned Togo qualification by winning 3-2 away to Congo and also struck the opener against South Korea in their 2-1 defeat.

"It was a great feeling to score that goal, but it was a big disappointment to lose the game," he added. "We want to show our best

in Dortmund so people know what we can do."

Switzerland drew 0-0 with France in their first game.

Midfielder Alaixys Romao said: "We have a strong offensive team, we can score goals and I think we can do well against the Swiss. They have a good defence, but we have a strong team and we are motivated well."

"We never allowed the dispute about the money or the coach to affect us. That was happening outside the squad. It was not for us to worry about. For us, the only thing that matters now is the football and the game against Switzerland."

The Togo squad have no fresh injuries, said Romao. "We have a good atmosphere now, everyone is training very well, very hard. We want to win and we want to enjoy

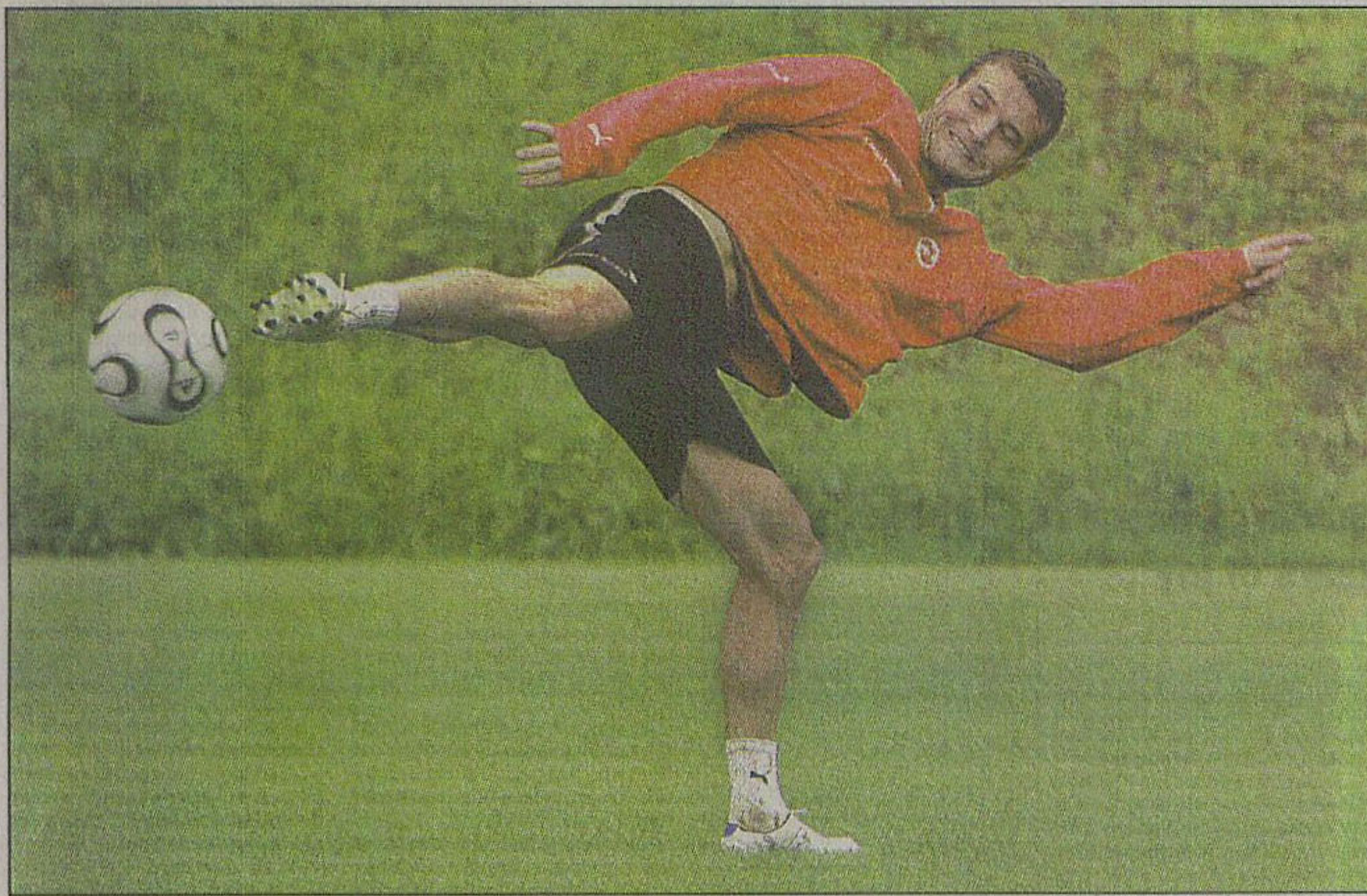


PHOTO: AFP

CAN THEY GO ONE BETTER? Switzerland striker Alexander Frei tries to control the ball during a training session at the Uessbachtal Stadium near the resort town of Bad Bertrich on Thursday. The Swiss, who held France 0-0 in their opening match, face Togo in Dortmund today.

## Behrami dragged in asylum row

INTERNET, undated

Switzerland's injured defender Valon Behrami has expressed his disappointment at becoming unwittingly embroiled in a political row over asylum.

The Kosovan born star's comments come on the day that 11,000 people protested in the Swiss capital against tough new asylum and foreigners laws.

Behrami, who helped Switzerland reach the World Cup with a goal in a play-off match against Turkey, said he had rejected an apology from the centre-left Social Democratic Party after they issued an electronic mail shot pointing out that he had nearly failed to find refuge in the country.

The Social Democrats had highlighted the problems Behrami had getting asylum in Switzerland as part of its campaign against the tightening of immigration policy.

"They did not ask me if I wanted to be in this campaign and I did not know anything about it," he told swissinfo at the Swiss team's training camp in Bad Bertrich, Germany. "I received a fax from [the Social Democrats] apologising for what they did, but that's no good to me and my family because it is too late. This is not the right way of doing things."

"Politics does not interest me and I do not understand what this campaign is all about."

Behrami arrived in canton

Ticino in 1990 aged five after fleeing Kosovo, but his family was only granted residence on the third attempt. Switzerland's asylum policy has become tighter in recent months, prompting complaints from the Social Democrats.

Behrami emerged as a special football talent through the Swiss youth system and was rewarded with his first senior cap in 2000 and a call-up to the Swiss World Cup squad.

But the 21-year-old's tournament has been blighted by a nagging groin injury that he picked up in training and is threatening to end his World Cup participation early.

He missed Switzerland's opening match against France last Tuesday and has been ruled out of Monday's game against Togo.

Doctors will decide next week whether to send him home, but Switzerland would then have to make do with a weakened squad as they have missed the deadline to replace injured players.

"I feel better than I did a few days ago, but it keeps flaring up when I train which is very disappointing," Behrami told swissinfo.

"I have stayed fit and healthy throughout my career so far so it is extremely frustrating to suffer this injury at this moment."

"I have every confidence that my team mates will give me a bit more time to get fit by continuing to play well. If the worst happens, then I will just have to accept it and carry on because I am young and have a few years ahead of me."



PHOTO: AFP

An American fan waves her country's flag as she cheers her team on against Italy in a World Cup Group E match at Kaiserslautern on Saturday.