

DHAKA MONDAY JUNE 19, 2006

# Aragones denies rift with Raul

AFP, Stuttgart

The Spanish camp has poured cold water on a reported clash between their coach Luis Aragones and talismanic striker Raul ahead of Monday's Group H test with Tunisia.

The Real Madrid player has scored a record 43 goals in 95 games for his country but as Spain continue to dream of a place in the final stages Raul is facing life on the bench due to lack of form following an injury-hit season.

Spain look favourites to top the group and thus secure a ticket to the second round where a clash with either Group G's France, South Korea, Switzerland and the highly unlikely scenario of wide outsiders Togo.

However, Spain's bid to get past the quarterfinals stage for the first time in 56 years has been overshadowed by what are claimed to be

exaggerated reports in the Spanish press.

Despite making a second half substitute appearance in Spain's 4-0 romp over Ukraine, Raul has appeared down in the dumps over his relegation to the substitutes bench.

On Sunday the Spanish media interpreted his brief but apparently heated discussion with Aragones during Saturday's training session at their team base in Kamen as a falling-out.

As Spain prepare for a stiffer test of their World Cup credentials against Roger Lemerre's 2004 African Nations Cup champions, Aragones admitted that his skipper could be in the doldrums.

But he was quick to deflate reports of a rift.

"It's only normal if Raul is a bit concerned about his chances of playing. I would feel the same," said Aragones shortly after the

team arrived in the southern German city.

"But I don't see what the fuss is all about. He's done everything possible to play, and he played 40 minutes against Ukraine. Raul is someone who is modest and isn't prone to causing problems."

Despite Raul's reported influence in the team, Aragones is a no-nonsense coach whose record with the national side would be hard to argue with.

Since he took charge after their early exit from the 2004 European Championships the 67-year-old has steered Spain on a 23-match unbeaten run which has left them in a good position to finally break their World Cup hoodoo.

Raul's goalkeeper teammate at Real Madrid, Iker Casillas, said that for the players there is no case to answer.

"We regard him (Raul) the way we always regard him," said Casillas.

"He's not used to being in this situation but he's still an example for the rest of the players."

Raul played a part in Spain's qualifiers, however an injury to his left knee during a league match against arch rivals Barcelona in November of last year left him out of action for three months.

The rest of the 29-year-old's season was a relative disaster, and for many it is no surprise that he has been overlooked by Aragones, who has seen Fernando Torres, Luis Garcia and David Villa operate well together up front as part of his 4-3-3.

Aragones said that when Raul was out through injury, he had even called him to offer support.

"We have a good relationship. When he was out injured and wasn't even in the team I telephoned him," said Aragones, before calling a halt to the questions about Raul.

"I won't say another thing if you keep asking questions about Raul."



Spanish goalkeeper Iker Casillas (L) and forwards Fernando Torres (C) and Raul leave the field after a training session in Kamen on Saturday ahead of their today's match against Tunisia.

# Ghana deliver the shocker

AP, Cologne

Ghana delivered Africa's first victory in this World Cup with style.

The Black Stars stunned the Czech Republic -- ranked second in the world -- 2-0 Saturday.

Ghana's win also helped the United States, who tied Italy 1-1 later Saturday. The Italians lead Group E with four points, the Czechs and Ghana have three and the Americans one.

All four are alive to advance, depending on their games Thursday. The Americans play Ghana and the Italians face the Czechs.

Asamoah Gyan scored in the second minute off a piercing pass from captain Stephen Appiah. It all went the West Africans' way from then for the biggest upset in Germany so far.

"It's fantastic. We showed we can do it," Appiah said. "I thank the Ghanians for their massive support and the Germans, who were shouting 'Ghana, Ghana!'"

"I couldn't believe it. I was nearly crying."

Salley Muntari put the game out

of reach in the 82nd minute after keeper Petr Cech made a handful of spectacular saves.

Czech coach Karel Bruckner had hoped to have qualification sealed before facing Italy on Thursday, but was left to marvel at Saturday's stunner.

"Our opponent showed extraordinary quality. We couldn't cope," Bruckner said.

Heavily outnumbered by Czech fans in the crowd, Ghana's supporters roared with delight at every chance and danced in their seats in the 45,000-seat Cologne Stadium.

Ghana defender John Pantisil, who plays for Hapoel Tel-Aviv, pulled out an Israeli flag in celebration. John Mensah revealed a T-shirt with an image of Jesus holding a lamb.

Gyan picked up a pass from Appiah and easily beat Cech from just inside the area only 68 seconds into the match. Muntari added the second, sending a rocket of a shot into the upper right corner of the net.

Both goal scorers will miss the next match after successive yellow cards.

Gyan missed a penalty kick in

the 67th after Czech defender Tomas Ujfalusi was sent off. He hit the right goalpost moments after putting a shot into the net -- but before the referee blew his whistle to restart play.

Ujfalusi brought down striker Matthew Amoah to draw the penalty.

The Czechs were missing strikers Jan Koller and Aston Villa's Milan Baros with injuries, but it was the defense that broke down.

"Ghana played very well, starting with their early goal. We were forced to play an open game which served Ghana," coach Bruckner said.

Vratislav Lokvenc, the lone striker for the Czech Republic, was quiet for most of the game and will be suspended in the third group match for getting his second yellow card of the round.

Ghana coach Ratomir Djukovic shook up his team's defence following a 2-0 loss to Italy. His strategy worked, in great part because of the early score by Gyan.

"Today we had big motivation. It was to do or die... I'm surprised it was only 2-0," Djukovic said.

"I'm very happy. We are still in the battle for qualification. I believe we can pass. We had many chances to score... Cech made many saves. He saved the Czech Republic this afternoon."

Cech said his teammates lost the initiative from the start.

"We let them do what they wanted," the keeper said. "They scored in 70 seconds and then we had to attack and they relied on counterattacks and added another goal."

Ghana dominated with Appiah and Michael Essien repeatedly exposing weaknesses in the Czech defense. Cech did well to stop a shot at close range from Amoah in the 70th, and again from Muntari three minutes later.

With Essien and Appiah running the Czech defense ragged, Cech also stopped a barrage of late shots, with Gyan missing another one-on-one chance in the 79th.

But Muntari found the net with a shot that left Cech no chance -- and the Americans a better chance.

"It was a good victory for the team, my country and Africa as a whole," Essien said.



PLOTTING AN UPSET: Ghanaian players gather before the kick-off of their match against Czech Republic in Cologne on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

## WC BRIEFS

AFP, Berlin

England's World Cup-winning right back George Cohen says coach Sven Goran Eriksson should think about dropping captain David Beckham, saying his performance had become too limited in a side which is "poor, stereotyped and mundane."

Cohen said England only got into gear against Trinidad and Tobago when Tottenham's 19-year-old winger Aaron Lennon came on and Cohen told the Independent on Sunday that Lennon's showing had given the side more width, throwing doubt on the usefulness of the skipper.

"Beckham did get in that looping cross for Peter Crouch's goal but he had another poor game. The fact is, he's reduced to taking the corners and the freekicks. He's just not got the speed to take him down the wings."

"If he was playing American football, they could bring him on to take the kicks and then take him off again, but unfortunately in this game you can't do that."

### Munich not for me

Munich is not the luckiest city by a long chalk for former Dutch star Johan Neeskens, currently assistant to Guus Hiddink with the Australians.

The former member of the Johan Cruyff-led "total football" Oranje school lost out in the Bavarian capital in the 1974 World Cup final and this weekend had to be taken to hospital in the city with severe toothache for which he required treatment.

### Franz-ship!

German coach Jurgen Klinsmann has had to battle for acceptance in the media and among fans alike after taking the job two years ago. But two wins into the tournament and he is almost a love object.

A banner held aloft at the match between Portugal and Iran read "Klinzi, marry me."

However, it was signed... Franz.

### Short of flag

Importers of German flags are worried that demand is outstripping supply to the degree that they will run out within days. The FIG supplier imported 100,000 produced en masse in China but they have sold out and others will take some time to arrive.

"We would have to transport them by sea as it is too expensive by plane," explained FIG marketing spokesman Calogero Lo Cicero.

The Daily Star  
**RANGS TOSHIBA**  
 WORLD CUP QUIZ 2006

LCD TV  
 ....THIS CAN BE YOURS

2006 Round 4, Draw in Chittagong  
 (See June 8 issue of the Star Sport for competition information, prizes and rules)

The Daily Star RANGS TOSHIBA World Cup Quiz Round 4, Ends June 29, 2006

Tick (✓) the correct answers

|   |  |  |                                    |
|---|--|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. Who scored the first goal in the 2006 World Cup?                       | Klose <input type="checkbox"/>             | Lahm <input type="checkbox"/>          | Wanchope <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| 2. The smallest nation to have played in the World Cup finals is:         | Trinidad & Tobago <input type="checkbox"/> | Cameroon <input type="checkbox"/>      | Jamaica <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| 3. Which Asian player scored in three World Cup finals?                   | Nakata <input type="checkbox"/>            | Sami Al Jaber <input type="checkbox"/> | Alli Dael <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Which World Cup final match ended goalless during the regulation time? | Italia '90 <input type="checkbox"/>        | Argentina 78 <input type="checkbox"/>  | USA '94 <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| 5. Who is this player?  | Totti <input type="checkbox"/>             | Kaka <input type="checkbox"/>          | Messi <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 4."

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how to pick your team?  
 Write Message: pw tog  
 Select Back go to message option type pw<space> 1st 3 letters of country

Phone Number: 2006  
 OK Clear send to 2006

in case of a draw?  
 Write Message: pw tog draw  
 Select Back go to message option type pw<space> 1st 3 letters of country<space>draw send to 2006

to know your accumulated points type 'pt' and send to 2006

today's matches  
 match1 : Togo (tog) vs Switzerland (swi)  
 match2 : Saudi Arabia (sau) vs Ukraine (ukr)  
 match3 : Spain (spa) vs Tunisia (tun)

banglalink you, first!