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Swiss come to the party

Switzerland 2 Togo 0

AFP, Dortmund

Switzerland kept their World Cup dream well and truly alive with a 2-0 win over troubled but lively debutants Togo here on Monday.

Goals in either half from Alexander Frei and Tranquillo Barnetta lifted Kobi Kuhn's youngsters up to the top of Group G on four points along with South Korea, who await them in their remaining first-round fixture on Friday.

France, who are lying third and two points adrift after Sunday's 1-1 draw with the Koreans, take on Togo, who have nothing left to play for but honour.

The Africans, who only lifted their threat to boycott the game hours before kick-off after their long-running dispute over unpaid bonuses was finally settled, were without suspended captain Jean-Paul Abalo and fellow defender Ludovic Assemoassa.

The early exchanges were frenetic, with Frei heading into Togo keeper Kossi Agassa's hands in the eighth minute, and down at the other end Mohamed Kader, who scored in Togo's opening 2-1 loss to South Korea, sparking Pascal Zuberhuler into action.

Ricardo Cabanas and Borussia Dortmund winger Philipp Degen were proving menacing for the Togo defence which eventually

succumbed to the pressure in the 16th minute.

Ludovic Magnin crossed from the left for Barnetta to flick on to Frei who tapped in for Switzerland's first goal of the World Cup.

This 26th international strike was a redeeming moment for the Rennes forward after he was sent home in disgrace from Euro 2004 after spitting at England's Steven Gerrard.

Togo coach Otto Pfister made the first of a series of tactical changes before the half-hour mark, replacing midfielder Kuami Agboh with attacker Moustapha Salifou.

The Sparrowhawks had said they weren't in Germany to make up the numbers and the Swiss backline could vouch for that as they pressed hard for the equaliser.

Patrick Muller prevented Switzerland conceding an equaliser with a fine late tackle to deprive Kader of a clear close-range shot.

Muller was then at the heart of a vocal appeal by Togo to Paraguayan referee Carlos Amarilla for a penalty in the 33rd minute after the Lyon defender's tackle on Emmanuel Adebayor, who fell theatrically to the ground although TV replays showed he may have been tripped.

Barnetta had a shot tipped over the bar early in the second half and shortly after Frei hit over from close range.

Togo had Agassa to thank for keeping the Swiss from extending

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banglalink goal **banglalink picture of the day**



THE LONG WAIT IS OVER: Switzerland striker Alexander Frei (C) sets off to celebrate his strike, which gave his country the first World Cup goal in 12 years, against Togo in Dortmund yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Latinos not liking the baton

AFP, Berlin

Brazil have insisted all along that they do not want to pick up the baton of favourites -- their form to date suggests that could be a wise play -- and now Argentina are doing the same.

In the case of the Argentines, their caution belies their welcome attacking football on the pitch as stars such as Juan Roman Riquelme, Hernan Crespo and Lionel Messi have quickly found their feet.

The Brazilians, who arrived looking for a title defence and a sixth win in all, were being praised to the rafters before they even took to the training pitch, prompting skipper Cafu to issue an early warning against getting carried away.

Nonetheless, ahead of the narrow win over Croatia the 36-year-old fullback, seeking to become the first man to win the title twice as a captain as well as the first to play in

four consecutive World Cup finals, opined that "we have the best Brazil team I've played in."

Even before the "real" Brazil failed to stand up and show their true selves, Cafu added to his credit that "now we have to win to prove it."

Six points from two games have put a layer of gloss on their tournament to date -- as in the case of a similarly lacklustre England.

But the ariverde, the bookies' favourites at 5/2 over 7/2 for Argentina, have not impressed against either the Croatians or the Australians.

Australian skipper Mark Viduka had forecast before his side's 2-0 reverse in Munich that Brazil "are vulnerable in places," adding Croatia should have avoided defeat against a side who "are not superheroes or anything like that."

Ronaldo and company certainly proved that much in Sunday's rather fortuitous win which had the Soccereros kicking themselves for

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LEADING SCORERS

AFP, Berlin

World Cup leading scorers after Monday's Togo-Switzerland match:
 2 - Bravo (Mexico), T Cahill (Australia), Crespo (Argentina), Delgado (Ecuador), Klose (Germany), Maxi Rodriguez (Argentina), Rosicky (Czech Republic), C Tenorio (Ecuador), Villa (Spain), Wanchope (Costa Rica)
 1 - Adriano (Brazil), Ahn Jung-hwan (South Korea), Al Jaber (Saudi Arabia), Al Kahtani (Saudi Arabia), Aloisi (Australia), Barnetta (Switzerland), Cambiasso (Argentina), Cristiano Ronaldo (Portugal), Crouch (England), Deco (Portugal), Drogba (Ivory Coast), Fernando Torres (Spain), Fred (Brazil), Frei (Switzerland), Frings (Germany), Gerrard (England), Gilardino (Italy), Gilmour (Scotland), Gyan (Ghana), Henry (France), Inzaghi (Italy), Jaidi (Tunisia), Jaziri (Tunisia), Kaka (Brazil), Kaviedes (Ecuador), Koller (Czech Republic), Kone (Ivory Coast), Lahm (Germany), Lee Chun-soo (South Korea), Ljungberg (Sweden), Messi (Argentina), Mohamed Kader (Togo), Muntari (Ghana), Nakamura (Japan), Neuville (Germany), Park Ji-sung (South Korea), Pauleta (Portugal), Pirlo (Italy), Robben (Netherlands), Saviola (Argentina), Tevez (Argentina), Van Nistelrooy (Netherlands), Van Persie (Netherlands), Xabi Alonso (Spain), Zinha (Mexico)

THIRD EYE

AL MUSABBIR SADI

Brazil came out without any bruises (ask Ronaldo, he will show you 'a la adidas' stripes on his leg from the spikes of an opposition boot) from their group to reach the knockout stage. But not with flying colours, as it had been expected. After a lacklustre opening match, the world champions' 2-0 win in Munich over a spirited Australian side, who had promised to go physical, was anything but convincing to the millions of fans for whom Brazil is the name of football's rarest brand.

A year ago in Frankfurt, the world saw a different Brazil when they turned on the style to paint the German summer bright canary yellow. Coach Alberto Parreira's 4-2-4 system was crudely exposed by Argentina's attack in the first half of the Confederations Cup final but in an unforgettable second half, the Samba boys crushed their greatest South American rivals 4-1.

On Sunday, they were short of class and struggled to build attacks, failing to find the space or penetrate deep. The only thing they did right was winning the ball back from the opposition after losing it; full marks to Ze Roberto and German-based centre-backs Lucio and Juan.

Ronaldinho looked tired while their Croatia match-winner Kaka sometimes drifted away from the game. No wonder, these two have played almost two games a week for their clubs this season.

Australia's pressing game with sparkling Marco Bresciano and

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SWEDEN V ENGLAND Aiming to break jinx

AFP, Cologne

England have vowed to end their 38-year winless streak against Sweden here Tuesday -- even if the reward is a World Cup second round showdown with host nation Germany.

Fixture scheduling has left England heading into their final Group B match with the identity of their last 16 opponents in their own hands.

STANDINGS

GROUP B	Team	MP	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
	England	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
	Sweden	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
	T & T	2	0	1	1	0	2	1
	Paraguay	2	0	0	2	0	2	0

With Germany and Ecuador playing earlier in the day to determine the winners and runners-up in Group A, England will know exactly what they have to do against Sweden to avoid a titanic collision with the Germans.

But England manager Sven-Goran Eriksson insists however that his team, who have already qualified for the last 16 after wins over Paraguay and Trinidad and Tobago, are only thinking about beating Sweden and topping the group.

"If you win the group there are a lot of advantages," said Eriksson. "You have one more day off than your opponents all the way through to the final. So we want to win the group."

While a draw would be enough to give England top spot, Eriksson

has never beaten Sweden in three attempts during his five-year reign, and would dearly like to see England record their first victory over his homeland since 1968

before he steps down.

"Thirty-eight years -- that's a long time," Eriksson said. "Before leaving this job I should like to beat Sweden."

With victory in mind, Eriksson will hand a first World Cup start to fit-again Manchester United striker Wayne Rooney, who resumes his attacking partnership with Michael Owen.

Rooney's appearance as a second-half substitute, along with winger Aaron Lennon, gave England a huge lift against Trinidad last week and helped them secure a 2-0 victory.

"We are a different team with Rooney," Eriksson said. "He's a great linking player, he holds the ball up, which gives the team time to move out of defence. He's fantastic at everything when he's 100 percent."

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TODAY'S MATCHES
 ESPN & STAR SPORTS WILL SHOW THE MATCHES LIVE. *ALSO LIVE ON BTV.

TEAM	TIME	VENUE
Ecuador v Germany	7:50 pm	Berlin
Costa Rica v Poland	7:50 pm	Hanover
Sweden v England*	12:50 am (Wednesday)	Cologne
Paraguay v T & T	12:50 am (Wednesday)	Kaiserslautern

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