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# Mexico thru' despite loss

Portugal 2 Mexico 1

AFP, Gelsenkirchen

Ten-man Mexico scraped into the World Cup second round on Wednesday despite a chaotic 2-1 loss to a second-string Portugal.

Mexico gave away a penalty, missed another and had a man sent off with 30 minutes left but squeaked through when Group D rivals Angola were pegged back 1-1 by Iran.

Portugal, already qualified after wins against Angola and Iran, rested five first-team players as a precaution against them picking up a second yellow card.

Mexico needed only a draw to guarantee second place in Group D but they went 2-0 down early in the first half through Maniche and a Simao penalty.

However, they hit back through Jose Fonseca and appeared in the ascendancy before Omar Bravo's penalty horror show and Luiz Perez's dismissal soon after.

Bravo, scorer of two goals in the opening 3-1 win over Iran, had the chance to secure qualification when Miguel was penalised for handball 10 minutes after half-time.

But with the pressure on, Bravo's nerve failed him and he blasted his kick over the bar.

Worse was to come when Luiz Perez, booked for diving in the area, saw red for arguing with Slovakian referee Michel Lubos.

Mexican frustrations grew when

Bravo, set free in space with only the goalkeeper to be skied his effort over the goal.

Goalkeeper Oswaldo Sanchez almost gifted Portugal a third goal with an ill-advised roll of the ball into a congested area in front of his box but Simao shot over.

Jose Fonseca went close at the other end as the thrill-a-minute match drew to a close.

Mexico needed just a point to finish ahead of third-placed Angola, who started the day three points behind and with an inferior goal-difference.

But they were rocked after six minutes when Simao burst down the left flank, drawing defenders on the edge of the area before laying off to Maniche who buried it in the top right.

Mexico almost found an immediate response when Bravo's flying volley went just wide.

But Portugal doubled their lead after a moment of madness from, of all people, Mexican captain Rafael Marquez, who instinctively palmed away a corner while under pressure from Fernando Meira.

Sabrosa stepped up to stroke the penalty past Sanchez, who was so busy jiggling along his line that he left a gaping hole to his right.

Mexico looked on course for a hammering but they received a lift on 29 minutes when Fonseca, unmarked and six yards out, headed a corner low and into the bottom left.

Portugal came close through Helder Postiga and Tiago but

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Portuguese midfielder Maniche celebrates after scoring the opening goal against Mexico during their final World Cup Group A match at Gelsenkirchen's Arena AufSchalke yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Angola going home

Iran 1 Angola 1

AFP, Leipzig

Angola scored the first goal of their short World Cup history but a 1-1 draw with Iran in their final Group D match on Wednesday signalled the end of their remarkable journey in Germany.

The southern African nation appearing in their first World Cup had needed to win by three clear goals and hope that Group D rivals Mexico lost to Portugal.

Angola finished behind Mexico with two points to the central Americans' four while Portugal headed the group.

But a side whose two best players -- goalkeeper Joao Ricardo and striker Akwa -- cannot even find a club, can look back with pride on a record of a narrow defeat to Portugal, a heroic draw with Mexico and this battling display.

The historic goal from the head of Flavio, who met an inch-perfect

cross from Ze Kalanga powerfully on the hour mark, giving Iranian goalkeeper Ebrahim Mirzapour little chance.

And it could easily have been followed by another two minutes later when Mendonca had a golden opportunity but he shot wide when the ball fell to him on the edge of the penalty area.

Iran, fighting to avoid a third consecutive defeat, struck back when Sohrab Bakhtiarizadeh outjumped the Angolan defence from a corner to equalise with a well-placed header on 75 minutes.

Iran's veteran striker Ali Daei should have added to his world record tally of 109 international goals but his first-half header from close range was woefully misdirected even though he was completely unmarked.

Angola's hopes suffered an early setback when Mateus, who had ballooned the ball over the bar after eight minutes, had to be stretchered off the pitch after apparently injuring his arm as he slipped and became entangled with an Iranian defender.

Two minutes later Loco had to leave the field by the same route after a bruising tackle but the defender returned.

But the biggest loss came when Angola's captain Akwa had to be substituted just minutes into the

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## JAPAN V BRAZIL

# Sentiments take back seat

AFP, Dortmund

Despite having already reached the last 16, Brazil will show no mercy for struggling Japan in their World Cup clash on Thursday even though Zico, one of the South American country's favourite sons, coaches them.

Brazil Coach Carlos Alberto Parreira said the five-time champions are only getting to grips with the demands of the event and there should be no sentimental attachment to their final Group F match in Dortmund.

"We played better than we did against Croatia and we will play even better in the next one," Parreira said after Brazil beat

Australia 2-0 on Monday to qualify for the knockout stages.

Zico, the former star of three Brazilian World Cup campaigns, is shaking up the formula up front to get the goals his side need to have any chance of reaching the knockout stages for the second straight World Cup.

"We are not confronting an awful monster," Zico said. "They are a strong team. But, as professionals representing Japan, we must never give up as long as there is the slightest of chances."

Japan lost to Australia 3-1 and shared a goalless draw with Croatia.

Both Japan and Croatia trail two points behind Australia. To clinch

the last of the group's two second-round berths, Japan must beat Brazil by a margin of two goals,

### TEAMS

**Japan (4-4-2)**  
 23-Yoshikatsu Kawaguchi; 21-Akira Kaji, 22-Yuji Nakazawa, 19-Keisuke Tsuboi, 14-Alex; 8-Mitsuo Ogasawara, 7-Hidetoshi Nakata, 17-Junichi Inamoto, 10-Shunsuke Nakamura; 9-Naohiro Takahara, 13-Atsushi Yanagisawa

**Brazil (4-4-2)**  
 1-Dida; 2-Cafu, 3-Lucio, 4-Juan, 6-Roberto Carlos; 5-Emerson, 17-Gilberto Silva, 8-Kaka, 10-Ronaldinho; 9-Ronaldo, 7-Adriano

provided that Croatia defeats Australia by no more than one goal.

Brazil's galaxy of stars, including Ronaldo, Adriano and Ronaldinho, have so far failed to sparkle with Kaka salvaging a 1-0 draw over Croatia in their opener.

Parreira said he might rest injured and yellow-carded players from the game against the three-time Asian Cup winners.

Midfielder Gilberto Silva and defender Cicinho were seen likely to make the starting lineup.

In Tuesday's training, Gilberto Silva linked up in midfield with Kaka and Juninho with Ronaldinho. The Arsenal player could come in for either Ze Roberto

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### THIRD EYE

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

With all due respect to Trinidad & Tobago, Paraguay, Costa Rica and Poland, there were only two matches worth watching yesterday. England and Germany squaring off against Sweden and Ecuador respectively, to determine whether the auld enemies could clash in a scrumptious second round tie. As it happened though, that did not materialise, but it was not an evening short of drama in anyway.

First let us take a minute to reflect on the misfortune of Michael Owen. The Newcastle

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## Bashar to lead in WC

SPORTS REPORTER

Habibul Bashar has been re-appointed as captain of Bangladesh until the end of the World Cup in the West Indies in 2007, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) confirmed in an executive committee meeting held at the Dhaka Club yesterday.

The meeting informed that Zimbabwe, who are due to visit Bangladesh towards the end of the year, will play seven one-day internationals as well as a Twenty20 international.

According to the tentative schedule, there will be two matches in Bogra, one in Khulna, two in Chittagong, two in Dhaka and the Twenty20 tie also to be held in the capital.

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

TEAM	TIME	VENUE
Czech Rep v Italy	7:50pm	Hamburg
Ghana v USA	7:50pm	Nuremberg
Japan v Brazil*	12:50 am (Friday)	Dortmund
Croatia v Australia	12:50 am (Friday)	Stuttgart

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