

Big boys enquire about Klose

AFP, Berlin

Several of Europe's top clubs have asked about Germany's World Cup striking sensation Miroslav Klose, his agent said Thursday.

Werder Bremen forward Klose has scored four goals to top the scoring charts at the World Cup and his goalscoring exploits have not gone unnoticed.

"There are a number of enquiries from top European clubs," Klose's agent Alexander Schutt told the Kolner Express.

English giants Manchester United and Arsenal have been mentioned along with leading Italian side Inter Milan.

The 28-year Klose admitted in a recent press conference that he wanted to move abroad at some stage but said he did not want to get distracted from the World Cup.

"It is the World Cup and that is all I am thinking about. I need a clear head," Klose declared in Bild daily.

Bremen, who have Klose under contract until June 2008, are determined to hang onto their star man who was top-scorer in the German league last season with 25 goals.

"Miro's performances has made the whole world aware of his talents but he is not for sale at any price," said Bremen sporting director Klaus Allofs.

Bremen signed Klose from Kaiserslautern for five million euros in August 2004.

Food is the secret!

FROM PAGE 23 Year" by Der Feinschmecker magazine.

Seol added that the imposing Grandhotel Schloss Bensberg, a converted castle built on a hill overlooking Cologne, was the perfect base camp for South Korea.

"It has been great being based here," said Seol. "The players are living in suites - they are huge - and we can relax in the grounds or the spa."

South Korea, World Cup semi-finalists on home turf four years ago, have to beat Switzerland in their final Group G match in Hanover on Friday to ensure a spot in the second round.

Braving

FROM PAGE 23 chicken before the game ended.

Not all businesses, however, are cashing in on the World Cup.

Cinemas, restaurants and bars are losing custom to outdoor big screens.

Yoo Jae-Wan, a 44-year-old owner of a bar at Sejongro Street, the downtown thoroughfare where wide-screen TVs draw tens of thousands of supporters, said the impact from the World Cup on his bottom line was mixed.

"On the eve of football games, the bar is full but many of the clients stay too long without ordering enough drinks," he said.

All to play for

FROM PAGE 23 now injury-free after a long spell on the sidelines.

"It could also be dangerous though because the Koreans need to win. It's no good us playing for a draw because we saw during their draw with France how dangerous they can be in the last 10 minutes."

A sub-text to the plot will be South Korean goalkeeper and captain Lee Woon-Jae, one of the heroes in 2002, making his 100th appearance for the national team.

Switzerland's influential midfielder Daniel Gyax has been ruled out of the clash with badly bruised stomach muscles. He was replaced at half-time in the 2-0 win over Togo.

Swiss accuse

FROM PAGE 23 trying to put some extra pressure on Switzerland with these statements but we are not going to let ourselves get stressed by what he says."

Domenech felt his side should have been given a penalty when a shot from French striker Thierry Henry struck the hand of Swiss defender Patrick Mueller. The referee ignored the claims, however, and the two teams went on to draw 0-0.

Togo had more cause to feel aggrieved during their encounter with the Swiss after Henry's Arsenal team mate Emmanuel Adebayor appeared to be brought down in the box with Mueller again the man involved.

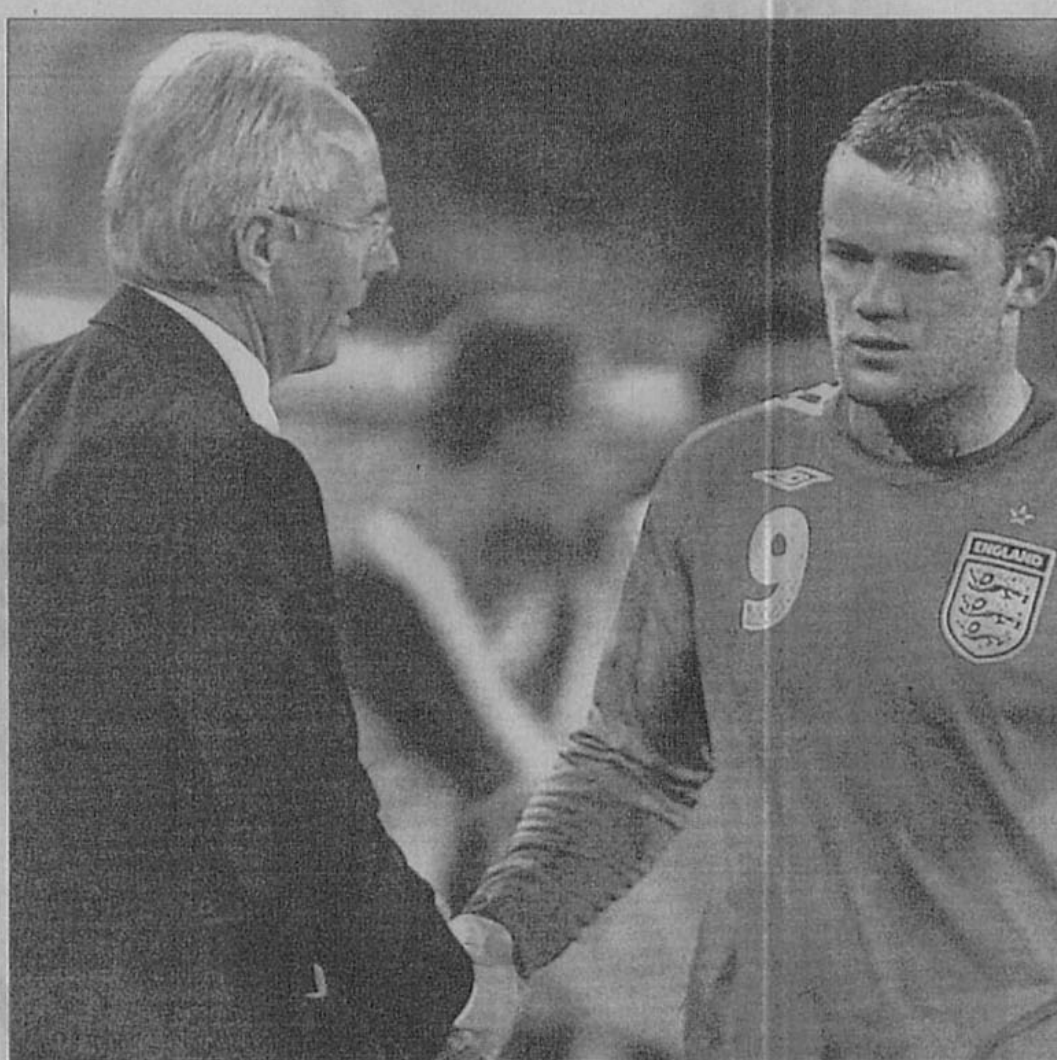
Mueller later admitted there had been some contact but said the penalty claim was '50-50'. After watching a replay of the incident, Switzerland coach Koenig Kuhn conceded that it was a 'clear penalty'.

We can

FROM PAGE 23 behind the ball, and whenever they have a chance, they like to attack, whether they play England or Korea. That is their style of play.

"However, it's important for us that we know them well and we're well prepared for their style."

With a combination of seven experienced players (veterans of the 2002 World Cup) and young talented players, who brought us so far, we're very pleased to be with these players," Advocaat said.



An unhappy Wayne Rooney (R) shakes hands with coach Sven Goran Eriksson (L) as he leaves the pitch after being substituted against Sweden in Cologne on Tuesday.

Rooney subbed as precaution



INTERNET, undated

Wayne Rooney was taken off against Sweden because Sven-Goran Eriksson was concerned about Michael Owen's injury.

Owen ruptured his knee ligaments in the first minute of the 2-2 draw against Sweden, leaving England short of strikers.

Eriksson insists he is not worried about his lack of firepower but did not want to push his luck with Rooney.

The Manchester United striker was not happy to be taken off in the 69th minute and replaced by Steven Gerrard.

Rooney kicked a water bottle, punched the dug-out and threw his

boots away. Eriksson said: "It's not a problem. He was more disappointed with himself. We cannot risk him to be injured."

"He had played 30 minutes five days before and it was not right professionally that he played 90 minutes."

Rooney returned after a broken foot against Trinidad and Tobago last week before starting against the Swedes in Cologne.

Eriksson expects Rooney, 20, to be one of those who star in Owen's absence.

The England boss said: "I'm not that worried about the situation because Rooney is getting better and better. That's a big thing for us."

"And we have midfielders who can easily play second striker and have done for their clubs."

"Joe Cole has done it sometimes and Steven Gerrard has done it

many times." The England manager opted to leave Tottenham striker Jermain Defoe out of his 23-man squad in favour of an extra midfielder.

He also chose Theo Walcott ahead of Defoe and now seems reluctant to expose the 17-year-old to the World Cup.

The decision attracted criticism at the time and surely will again now the gamble appears to have backfired.

Eriksson said: "I can understand that people will talk about that."

"If you talk about strikers and people who can play as strikers I think we are very well covered even without Michael."

"I'm sure about it. We don't want any more injuries on strikers."

"But who scored the goals against Sweden? Steven Gerrard and Joe Cole and they can do that job easily."

Klinsmann optimistic as usual



INTERNET, undated

Germany coach Jurgen Klinsmann holds no fear about his side coming under increased pressure now the group stage is over.

The host nation qualified for the second round with a near-perfect record in Group A.

The only blot on an otherwise clean copybook were the two goals conceded against Costa Rica in the opening match.

Miroslav Klose, who with four goals in three games is the tournament's top scorer so far, has led a spirited attack which has sent out a clear warning that this Germany side means business.

However, Klinsmann is refusing to adhere to the euphoric attitude throughout the nation, despite his confidence in his side's ability.

"From now on, the mental side of things plays a bigger role," he

said. "We must not allow ourselves to lose concentration."

Germany have yet to go behind in any game thus far, but the confident coach does not believe that will be a problem, even if their second-round opponents Sweden manage to get ahead.

"I am not worried about us going 1-0 down," said Klinsmann. "I am sure we can fight back if it happens."

"We are in a good physical shape and are mentally very concentrated."

"The youngsters have grown up and matured a lot these weeks and we have the conviction (in ourselves)."

Full-back Arne Friedrich was singled out for criticism by the German media after the opening game of the World Cup, but the Hertha Berlin captain believes his response has been exemplary.

At the age of 27, his appointment as club captain at Bundesliga side Berlin may have come as a surprise, particularly with the amount of more experienced

players at the club, but Friedrich has adjusted to the role well and believes this helped him silence the critics.

His performances against Poland and Ecuador were much improved and he said: "It is not easy to be the only player criticised, but I think we have taken some big steps since. The team is growing together."

Friedrich remained diplomatic when one journalist asked him why he was not spending extra time "learning" how to cross the ball.

"I think I can cross and don't have to prove anything," he replied.

"I have been working on improving my own pace and I think everybody is taking good care of themselves, like I have."

With Philipp Lahm, scorer of the tournament's first goal, marauding down the right, Friedrich believes he has more defensive responsibilities.

"The aim is not to concede any goals and if we can go through the tournament winning 1-0 and I don't score, I would be happy," he said.

EURO TRANSFERS

Ferguson in for Senna

INTERNET, undated

Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson has turned his attentions to Marcos Senna as he bids to fill the void left by Roy Keane.

The Old Trafford giants are preparing a \$5 million move for the Villarreal star, according to the Mirror.

The Brazilian-born Spanish international impressed during his side's run to the semi-finals of the Champions League last season and has started Spain's opening two World Cup matches.

However, the paper claims United are reluctant to meet Villarreal's \$8 million asking price.

Ferguson is also still keen on signing Michael Carrick from Tottenham.

Lyon sign Squillaci

AFP, Lyon

Lyon are set to sign Sebastien Squillaci from Monaco, the reigning French champions announced Wednesday.

Gerard Houllier's side are in

discussions with Monaco over a fee for Squillaci and hope to complete the 25-year-old defender's transfer by the weekend.

Squillaci would be Lyon's third signing of the summer, following the arrivals of Jeremy Toulalan from Nantes and Rennes's Swedish midfielder Kim Kallstrom.

Milan snap up youngster

AFP, Rennes

AC Milan have signed young Rennes midfielder Yoann Gourcuff, the French team announced Wednesday.

The 19-year-old has signed a five-year deal with the Italian giants who are believed to have paid between four and five million euros (5 to 6.3 million dollars) for his services.

Cisse's heart set on Marseille: Diouf

AFP, Marseille

Liverpool forward Djibril Cisse is determined to move to Marseille, according to the French giants'

president Pape Diouf. Diouf travelled to Liverpool on Wednesday to meet with the FA Cup winners' club chiefs.

"Djibril is still determined and eager to come to Olympic Marseille," said Diouf.

Cisse is currently undergoing rehabilitation for a horrific broken leg he suffered in France's last World Cup warm-up match against China on June 7.

Fulham for Thuram?

INTERNET, undated

Fulham are lining up a shock move for Juventus defender Lilian Thuram, according to the Mirror.

The 34-year-old has one year left on his contract with the Serie A giants and reportedly wants to end his career in the Premiership.

If Juve are relegated as a result of the match-fixing scandal, it is unlikely Thuram would want to stick around to spend one of his last remaining years as a player in a lower division.

Thuram is currently on international duty with France at the World Cup finals.

Costa Ricans heckled

REUTERS, San Jose

After losing all their World Cup final matches in Germany, a disheartened and jet-lagged Costa Rican World Cup squad returned home to face taunts from angry hecklers on Wednesday.

Receiving the loudest catcalls was national team coach Alexandre Guimaraes, who emerged from the airport to chants of "Dog! dog!" from a small group of unhappy soccer fans.

Costa Rica lost 4-2 to Germany, 3-0 to Ecuador and 2-1 to Poland, leading to media speculation that Guimaraes, already the team's third coach in little over a year, might need to look for another job upon his return home.

One heckler, 65-year-old truck driver Leo Herrera, suggested the players might do better in an industry for which, unlike soccer, the small Central American nation is renowned for its excellence across the globe.

"Sirs: Coffee pickers are needed," read a sign he waved at the players. "The only requirement: lack of shame."

Gilberto Vargas, 65, brought with him a bucket of water, soap and towels.

"Guimaraes said they were going to wash their faces (with Poland) in their last game," he said. "But they didn't, so I'm giving him the chance now."

Seol spurred by growing interest

AFP, Hanover

South Korea winger Seol Ki-Hyeon is being linked with a move to English Premiership side Spurs where he would join up with international teammate Lee Young-Pyo.

There is growing interest in Seol after his dazzling second-half display against 1998 world champions France which culminated in him setting up the equaliser for Manchester United midfielder Park Ji-Sung.

The 27-year-old Seol has made no secret of the fact that he wants away from Wolves, who missed out on promotion to the English Premiership last season, but his comments during the World Cup have not gone down well with club officials.

"We understand players want to play at the highest level, but one of the frustrations that we face is that sometimes they are quoted saying things neither the club nor the fans want to hear," Wolves chief executive Jez Moxey told the media in England.

"We have had some interest in Seol and I can confirm that more than one club has enquired about him."

"But he has still got two years left on his contract and we will just have to see if anything develops in due course."

Deja vu

FROM PAGE 26 perhaps because as he turns 30 on Friday it would not be a birthday to remember and he would be unlikely to get another chance to redeem himself.

"It will be worse than 2002, because we're convinced we're better prepared and stronger for this World Cup," said the Juventus midfielder enforcer.

"It will be a big big disappointment if we don't make it," added Vieira, who like many of the old guard is really starting to show that his powers are on the wane.

Lemerre would hardly be very appreciative of Vieira's remark about the preparation being better and certainly their opening two performances have been little better than the defeat by Senegal and the draw with Uruguay four years ago.

It is fair to say that Lemerre's Tunisians gave a far more vibrant performance than anything France have done in their present winless streak of five matches at the World Cup finals in the match with Spain until Raul levelled and they went on to lose 3-1.

Lemerre, who turned 66 on Sunday, was justifiably proud of his 2004 African Nations champions but does not see any comparison with the 2002 edition and this renewal.

"I was in charge of the world champions then which is entirely different and they failed," he said.

"Now I am in charge of a great power in African football but that does not mean if we go out in the first round that I have failed again," said Lemerre.

"They are on two entirely different levels. I believe we can do it but if we don't, well, so be it."

More midfield

FROM PAGE 26 frogs but they're not getting in the way of our preparations."

Central defender Vladislav Vashchuk, expected to return after picking up a red card against Spain, said: "We're preparing according to plan and everyone's in good shape."

"We're laughing about those frogs now."

Sven happy with performance



INTERNET, undated

Sven-Goran Eriksson insists England are starting to find their World Cup rhythm.

Eriksson looked back on Tuesday's 2-2 draw with Sweden and declared himself happy with many aspects of his team's performance.

He was not so impressed with the way his team defended set-pieces, however, or the serious injury to Michael Owen.

Eriksson said: "I think we played better than the other two games. We are coming."

"Even if we didn't win the game. I think we took a step forward - if you take away the set-pieces and Michael Owen of course. That's a negative."

Sweden caused England serious problems from set-pieces in the second half.

They scored twice, hit the woodwork twice and had one cleared off the line from set-pieces.

Eriksson said: "I admit we did it badly. We will handle it better on Sunday."

"We have to defend better on set-pieces. When we defend against the long ball we knocked it back sometimes."

"We should try to keep it and come out with the team."

Eriksson hailed the performance of Owen Hargreaves, starting his first England game for more than two years.

Hargreaves played in place of Steven Gerrard, who was started on the bench because he was one booking from a ban, but came on for Wayne Rooney and scored.

Eriksson said: "He showed he is a great player. I thought he was brilliant out there."

"He was full of energy until the last minute. He plays in that position for Bayern Munich week-in and week-out."

Hargreaves was booked against the Swedes but the suspension threat has now eased because the yellow cards from the group games are not carried forward into the knock-out phase.

Eriksson's praise extended to Joe Cole, who opened the scoring with a spectacular dipping volley.

The England boss said: "The goal he scored was fantastic. He played very well."

"He kept the ball, beat people, passed good and defended as well. There were much more positive things than negative things if you were to take away Michael Owen."

Owen ruptured his cruciate knee ligaments in the first minute of the draw with Sweden.

He will not take any further part in the tournament and may not play again this year.

England's 2-2 draw was enough to win Group B and set up a second-round clash with Ecuador, in Stuttgart, on Sunday.

Iniesta wants to make mark



INTERNET, undated

Barcelona midfielder Andres Iniesta is looking to cement his place in Spain's squad by shining against Saudi Arabia in Friday's World Cup Group H clash.

With the Spaniards having already sealed their place to the knock-out stages following straight victories against Ukraine and Tunisia, national coach Luis Aragones will rest his top players for their last group clash in Hamburg.

Iniesta, fourth in the pecking order behind Liverpool's Xabi Alonso, Arsenal's Cesc Fabregas and club-mate Xavi, is set to play against the Saudis.

"I cannot wait to make my World Cup debut," said Iniesta.

"I hope everything goes well and more importantly, that I can contribute to Spain's third consecutive victory."

The 22-year-old attracted the attention of Aragones after his solid campaign with Barcelona, where he proved a sturdy substitute for the then injured Xavi.

Now he is hoping to earn a regular spot in the Spanish side.

"I can play in all three positions in midfield," said Iniesta. "It wouldn't be a problem."

"All I want is to prove that I'm ready whenever the coach needs me."

Iniesta believes it is good to compete for a place against top players like Xavi or Fabregas.

"It only makes you a better player and I like the healthy competitiveness that exists in the group," he said.

"I already compete against great players at my club."

"Xavi has more experience but Cesc has already proved that he has the quality to play in top games."

Spain will not have it easy as Saudi Arabia have not given up hopes of reaching the knock-out stages, according to their number one goalkeeper Mabrouk Zaid.

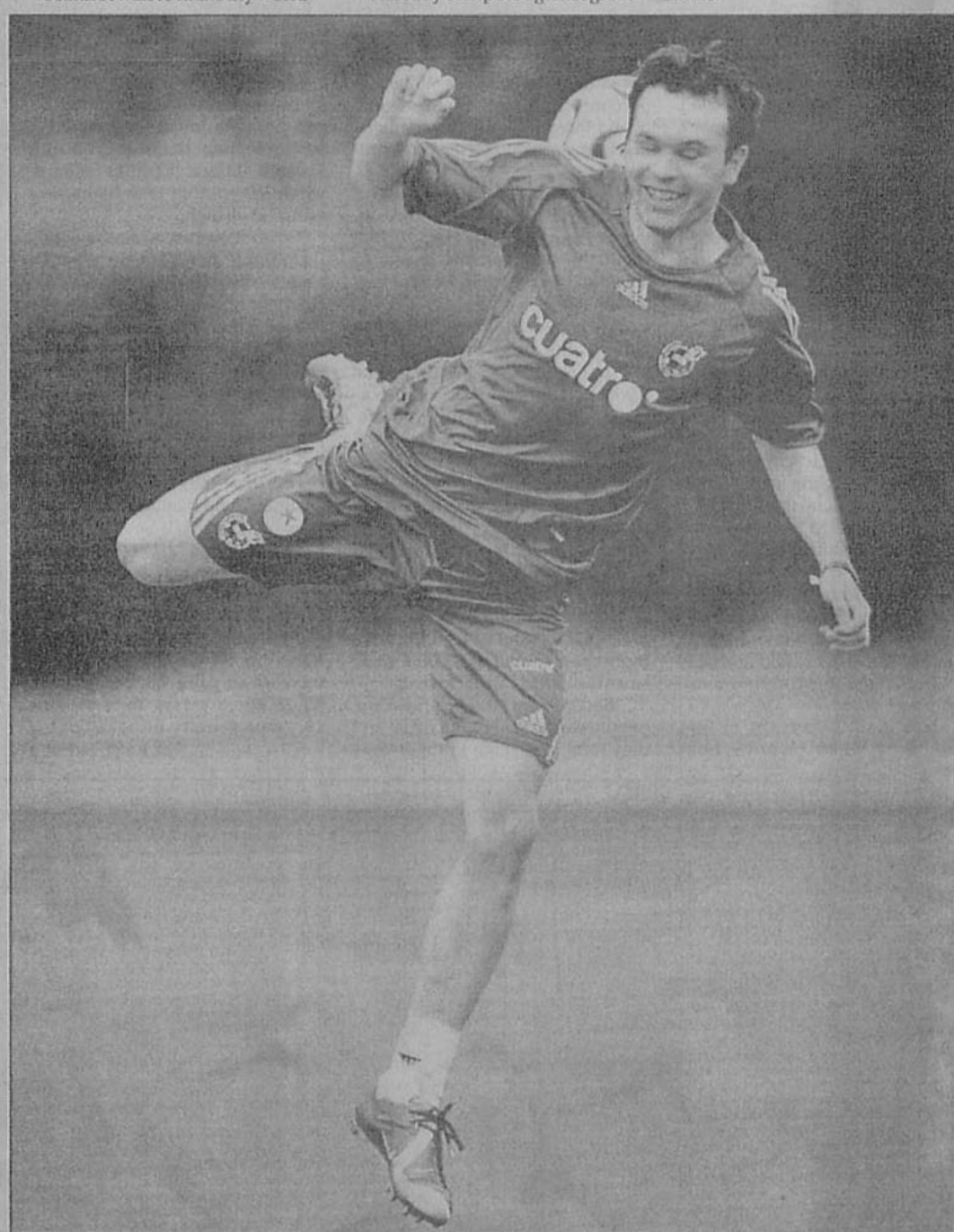
Marco Paqueta's side must beat the Spaniards and hope that Tunisia hold Ukraine to a draw in order to keep their World Cup hopes alive.

Zaid believes that his team have to show a major improvement following their 4-0 debacle against the Ukrainians.

"We lost the game against Ukraine because of mistakes from our own players," said Zaid.

"We didn't play well and we will have to change the way we play for the match against Spain."

"We hope we can still progress, but we rely also on the result of others."



Spanish midfielder Andres Iniesta leaps into the air as he tries to control the ball during a training session in Kamen on Wednesday.

Croat hooligans sent back



AFP, Berlin

German police on Thursday said they turned back five known Croatian hooligans at the country's southern border with Austria ahead of the World Cup match between Croatia v Australia.

One of them is a 43-year-old who has in the past seriously injured several people at sports matches in Croatia, a police spokesman in the southern state of Bavaria said.

He had seven tickets for World Cup matches in his backpack.

All five Croatians were refused entry into Germany and handed over to Austrian authorities, the spokesman said.

Croatia is playing Australia in Stuttgart, in the southwest, on Thursday evening in a match they must win to stay in the tournament.

The police arrested 31 people at the Portugal v Mexico match in Gelsenkirchen, in western Germany, on Wednesday and said they would face charges of theft, assault and fraud.

Another 137 people were arrested in Cologne on Wednesday which drew some 70,000 English and 20,000 Swedish fans to the western city.

Ninety-nine of those arrested were Germans, however, who were

trying to provoke the England fans, police spokesman Dieter Klinger said.

They threw bottles, chairs and tables at riot police.

"We must praise the English and the Swedes. They are very loud and drink a lot but they caused us no problems," Klinger said.

Thirteen rowdy Dutch fans were arrested in Frankfurt on Wednesday before the Netherlands v Argentina match.

They were held for the duration of the match, a 0-0 draw, and released afterwards.

"They were obviously not allowed to follow the match on television but our officers kept them informed of the score," police spokesman Michael Cordy said.