



Tens of thousands of Australians jubilate in Sydney after the Soccerros drew with Croatia to book a place in the round of 16 on Thursday.

# Eruption down under



AFP, Sydney

Wild celebrations erupted across Australia Friday after the Soccerros secured a vital draw in their do-or-die match against Croatia to reach the last 16 of the World Cup for the first time. Melbourne's Federation Square had to be closed off after more than 9,000 people jammed into the precinct to cheer the Australians to a 2-2 thriller in which the Soccerros had to come from behind twice to draw level.

Thousands more blocked off streets in the city centre for the game in Stuttgart that kicked off at 5:00 am local time (1900 GMT Thursday), lighting flares and banging drums after a pulsating match that gripped the sports-mad nation.

Spectators ignored the mid-winter chill and chanted "Soccerros, Soccerros" as daylight broke over the city, bringing football fever to a country that normally reserves its sporting passion for cricket.

Police reported fans jumped on the tops of trams and garbage

trucks making their early morning collections in celebration.

For Melbourne resident Enver Enver the result represented vindication for a team written off by many after qualifying for the tournament for the first time in 32 years and only the second time ever.

"People have been laughing at us, calling us the Soccer-whos and stuff like that, we've shown them now," he told AFP after the final whistle.

In Sydney, 1,000 people gathered at Circular Quay, yelling "Aussie, Aussie, Aussie -- oi, oi, oi" after the match.

Prime Minister John Howard stayed up to watch the match wearing a Soccerros tracksuit from 1974, the last time Australia reached the finals.

Howard admitted he was nervous before Harry Kewell's late strike brought the scores level at 2-2.

"Well he is King Harry for all of us now and it was a fantastic performance," Howard told Channel Nine television.

Other politicians were also inspired by the draw, with state leaders in New South Wales and South Australia floating a plan to host the World Cup in 2018.

While fans watching Australia's match against Brazil earlier this

week were happy simply to stretch the world champions in a 2-0 loss, expectations against Croatia were much higher.

"I always thought we would win (through to the second round)," Tanny Hall said in Melbourne. "Even after they (Croatia) scored in the second minute I knew we would come back."

Alex Afifi did not share her confidence, watching with heart in mouth as Australia went behind for the second time before Kewell sealed the draw the Soccerros needed to advance.

"I thought we were gone around the 70th minute," he said. "They were attacking and we stepped back a bit. We didn't play as well as we did against Brazil but just to be through is unbelievable."

The draw came too late to make newspaper deadlines but websites hailed it as a historic breakthrough.

"Kewell saves the day," said the Sydney Morning Herald, while Sydney's Daily Telegraph said a "bizarre and unbearably tense" match had ended in joy for Australia.

Australia's sizeable Croatian community, numbering about 200,000, was out in force for the game, cheering on the Soccerros' opponents to good-natured jeers from the rest of the crowd.

Australian Croatian National Hall spokesman Paul Saric said loyalties were split among a crowd of 350 people who watched the match at a Croat community centre in the regional city of Geelong.

"I suppose it's a mix of congratulations and commiserations," he told AFP. "At the final whistle everyone was up and cheering because it was Australia. If we had to lose to anyone, we'd prefer it to be them."

He said the Croat community were in a win-win situation, boasting six players in the Soccerros squad of Croatian heritage and three in the Croat squad who grew up in Australia.

Victoria police superintendent Mick Williams said 14 people were charged with possessing or lighting flares but the overall crowd behaviour was good.

He said large numbers were also expected to watch the Soccerros' next match against three-time champions Italy Tuesday morning, local time.

"We expect a huge crowd, much larger than today," he said.

An upbeat Howard refused to rule out the Soccerros upsetting Italy's fabled Azzurri.

"It's obvious that the team spirit is very strong and I think they will continue to surprise a lot of people."

## Bring on Brazil, says Appiah

INTERNET, undated

Former Juventus midfielder Stephen Appiah insists his Ghana side will go into their Brazilian clash with no fear.

The African nation will meet the world champions in the last 16 of the World Cup after the Black Stars progressed from Group E, with Italy, by beating the USA yesterday.

"We are not scared of anyone now," said the former Udinese and Brescia ball-winner. "We have no fear."

"After all, we are the Brazil of Africa. Who knows what is happening back home in Ghana now after this qualification?"

The Fenerbahce ace played a key role in their progress after he netted a controversial penalty to give his side the lead against the Americans.

Ghana and Brazil will meet in Dortmund on June 27.

## 'Les Bleus reflect French woes'

AFP, Paris

With the French football team facing a crucial game against Togo Friday after two disappointing performances, a Paris newspaper said the squad's difficulties are a perfect reflection of the current state of the nation.

"This French team symbolises the woes which our country is going through," said Les Echos financial daily.

"First it is undermined by doubt and lack of confidence. And in football as well as in the economy, confidence is an absolutely essential ingredient," it said.

The second similarity is the "lack of team spirit."

"Composed of remarkable individuals who shine in top European clubs, the team is incapable of playing with the solidarity and the bonding necessary for collective sport."

"The Barthez-Coupet (goal-keeper) rivalry and the lack of understanding on the pitch between Thierry Henry and Zinedine Zidane reminds us all too clearly of the hostility between (Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin and Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy)," Les Echos said.

"Finally the side lacks the kind of leader capable of inspiring faith and dynamism. The trainer Raymond Domenech is performing this function very badly."

"And in France too -- ever since the failure (in May 2005) of the referendum on Europe -- we are missing the presence of a pilot capable of choosing a course and sticking to it," the papers said.

## End of an era



REUTERS, Nuremberg

When United States captain Claudio Reyna lost possession, allowing Ghana to score the first goal in the final Group E match on Thursday, eventually winning 2-1, the Americans must have felt this was the end of an era.

An equaliser by Clint Dempsey just before the break may have given some fans in the stadium hope they could still qualify but in reality it was the dying breath of a team that had just scored their first goal in the tournament.

The Americans crashed out of the World Cup with only a point, a deserved draw against Italy, but both their 3-0 tactical demolition by the Czechs and their defeat to the Black Stars showed they never really had the quality of four years ago when they made the quarterfinals, eventually losing to Germany.

The United States ended their disappointing World Cup campaign with Reyna retiring after the match, coach Bruce Arena contemplating his future and aging Eddie Pope and Pablo Mastroeni unsure of their place in the new team.

Arena's resignation, after eight years at the helm, should not be far off.

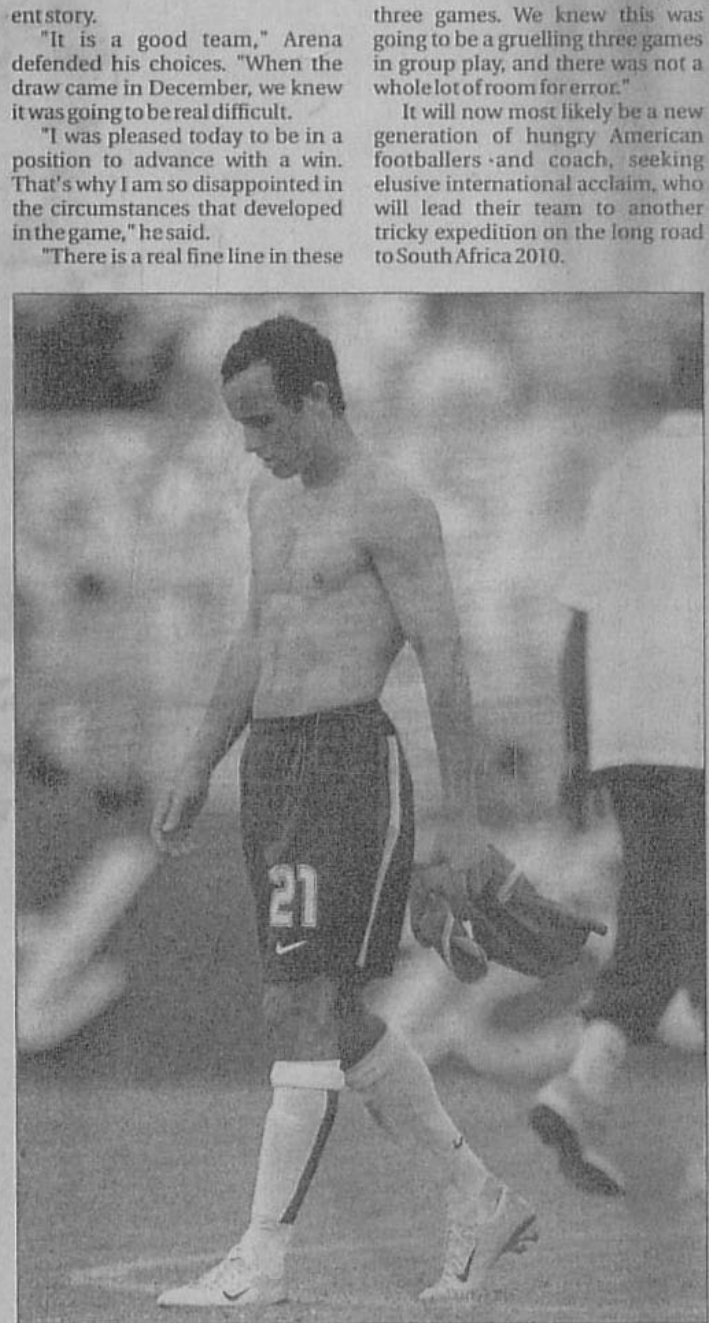
But not for the reasons the American media have said.

They have insisted that a team ranked fifth in the FIFA World rankings should have a better run in the World Cup.

But being ranked fifth does not really mean much, other than pleasing the U.S. public's need for a soccer reference point.

Relatively untroubled qualification matches against the likes of Grenada, Panama and El Salvador, mean ranking points come easy.

But being drawn in a group against Italy, the Czech Republic and Ghana is an altogether differ-



A dejected Landon Donovan walks off the pitch following USA's exit from the World Cup after losing to Ghana in Nuremberg on Thursday.

## Serie A giants indicted



AFP, Rome

Italy football heavyweights AC Milan, champions Juventus, Lazio and Fiorentina were all charged on Thursday over alleged match-fixing.

Italian football federation prosecutor Stefano Palazzi decided that the Serie A giants would go on trial in Rome from next Tuesday or Wednesday on charges of sporting fraud.

"Stefano Palazzi has named 30 people or clubs, including Juventus, AC Milan, Lazio and Fiorentina for violations of articles 1 and/or 6 of the sporting code of ethics," the federation (FIGC) announced in a statement.

An investigation was launched following the publication in May of telephone conversations in which the then Juventus general manager Luciano Moggi was heard telling Pierluigi Paretto, the head of the Italian referees' association, which match officials he wanted assigned to certain league and European games.

The FIGC statement did not give the names of any of the individuals charged but late Thursday Italian football league president Adriano

Galliani resigned while denying any wrongdoing.

"I have decided to resign from my position as president of the Italian football league, but I wish to make it clear that this is not in any way interpreted as an admission of responsibility," said AC Milan vice-president Galliani. "The charges against me are an injustice and I reiterate that I am a total stranger to this affair," he added.

All four teams could be relegated to the second division if found to be directly guilty of fraud.

However, if the fraud is deemed indirect they face having points deducted ahead of next season's league campaign.

Palazzi took just three days to act after receiving a 180-page document from the investigating anti-corruption judge Francesco Saverio Borrelli, who had spent two weeks interviewing players and officials.

A verdict is expected between July 7 and 9, the latter date being that of the World Cup final, in which Italy could be involved.

The announcement was made just minutes after Italy's national team qualified for the last 16 of the World Cup after beating the Czech Republic 2-0 in Hamburg. Thirteen of the national squad play for the four clubs charged.

Italy coach Marcello Lippi said his team would not be affected by the revelations. "We are concentrating on the World Cup," Lippi said after he was asked by a foreign journalist if the scandal was having an impact on the team.

"You foreign journalists seem to believe that all we are thinking about is the scandal."

The timetable for the legal action is tight.

In the case of appeals, a definitive decision should be known by July 20 according to the timetable set out by the FIGC, which has promised that the start of the 2006-07 season, scheduled for August 27, will not be delayed.

With Sampdoria also being investigated by prosecutors in Naples, a total of five Serie A teams, 41 people and 19 matches from last season have come under the spotlight in the ongoing saga.

Referees, match officials and players are all under scrutiny.

The scandal has wider implications than just relegation from the Italian top flight as three of the four teams charged qualified for next season's Champions League while Lazio finished in a UEFA Cup spot.

All four clubs would be thrown out of European competition if found guilty.

## Kaka extends Milan stay

INTERNET, undated

Real Madrid have failed in their bid to net Kaka after the play-maker signed a contract extension with AC Milan.

The Brazilian sensation was being heavily linked with a switch to the Spanish giants who are now dealing with life after Zinedine Zidane.

The Rossoneri had already warned the Liga outfit to stay away from their prodigy and they have taken an even tighter grip of their star man.

Vice-President Adriano Galliani did suggest earlier this week that Kaka would be handed a fresh Rossoneri deal and that has coincided with reality.

The former Sao Paulo ace, poached under the noses of Chelsea, has now agreed to extend his Milan marriage until June 2011.

"I've signed a renewal," stated the 2006 World Cup player. "That way, all of these Real Madrid rumours will not be spoken about anymore."

Kaka, now the club's leading light after the sale of Andriy Shevchenko to Chelsea, is arguably the outfit's most valuable asset.

He's played 102 games in Serie A and has riddled the net on 35 occasions. He's also bagged 11 goals in 35 Champions League appearances.

## 'Becks not untouchable'



AFP, Baden-Baden

England boss Sven-Goran Eriksson has insisted he would be prepared to axe captain David Beckham if it improved his team's chances of winning the World Cup.

Beckham, who will win his 93rd cap in Sunday's last 16 clash with Ecuador, has been way off his best throughout the first phase and was anonymous for most of England's faltering 2-2 draw with Sweden in their final Group A match.

The Real Madrid superstar contributed only 28 passes, around half as many as fellow midfielder Frank Lampard, and offered precious little in the way of an attacking threat down the right flank.

Eriksson's failure to substitute his skipper against the Swedes has once again given weight to the view that Beckham is an untouchable in the England manager's eyes.

However Eriksson insisted that he would not hesitate to drop or substitute his captain if the situation demanded it.

Asked if he could ever envisage hauling off Beckham in the way that Portugal coach Luis Felipe Scolari controversially replaced skipper Luis Figo at 2004, Eriksson was adamant he would.

"I'm prepared to do whatever I have to if I see things going wrong," he said.

Whilst making it clear that he has no intention of dropping Beckham from the starting line-up against Ecuador, Eriksson said his captain of five years should not take his place for granted.

Eriksson has never substituted Beckham for tactical reasons during a competitive fixture, and only replaced him against Sweden in the 2002 World Cup when he began to tire in his first match back from a long lay-off.

"I have taken off David Beckham before," Eriksson said. "I'm not married to David Beckham. He's the captain, but he's treated in all the same ways."

"At the dinner table, on the bus, on the pitch, training, matches -- exactly the same as all the others."

"He doesn't have any favours just because he's the captain."

While Beckham has had a hand in two of the five goals England have scored in the World Cup so far and remains arguably the world's most accurate striker of a ball at set pieces, the 31-year-old has struggled to offer width out wide.

Blinding pace has never been one of Beckham's qualities, but his lack of pace was highlighted during the 2-0 victory over Trinidad and Tobago last week, when the introduction of Tottenham's flying winger Aaron Lennon midway through the second half made an immediate impact.

On that occasion Beckham was shunted to right back in order to accommodate the 19-year-old supersub -- and Eriksson admits it is something he would consider doing again if necessary.

"I could do that," Eriksson said when asked if Beckham could be played out of position. "Everything's possible."

## Sevilla sign up Hinkel

REUTERS, Madrid

Sevilla have signed VfB Stuttgart's right back Andreas Hinkel on a four-year contract, the UEFA Cup winners said on Friday.

The 24-year-old German international, who spent the past six seasons with Stuttgart, becomes the Primera Liga side's second closed season signing after Danish midfielder Christian Poulsen.

He will be officially presented on Monday.

Hinkel's arrival could hasten the departure of Brazilian right back Daniel Alves, who has stated he wants to leave to join Liverpool.

Sevilla finished fifth in the Primera Liga.

## De Rossi banned for four games

AFP, Berlin

Italy midfielder Daniele De Rossi has been banned for four international matches for elbowing US striker Brian McBride in the face in the World Cup Group E match last week, FIFA said on Friday.

The FIFA disciplinary committee also fined the Roma player 10,000 Swiss francs (6,400 euros) for the offence, which led to him being sent off.

As De Rossi has already served one match of the suspension, he can only play again in this World Cup if Italy reach the final or the third-place playoff.

McBride needed three stitches to a cut under his eye after the incident in the 1-1 draw in Kaiserslautern on June 17.

US defender Pablo Mastroeni was also banned for three matches and fined 7,500 Swiss francs for his straight red card when he clattered into Andrea Pirlo during the full-blooded match, FIFA spokesman Markus Sieglar said.

The Americans were then reduced to nine men a minute after half-time when Eddie Pope picked up his second yellow card.

It was only the fourth time in the history of the World Cup that three players had been red-carded in the same match.



Italian midfielder Daniele De Rossi (L) reacts after seeing the red in the match against USA in Kaiserslautern on June 17.

## Annan sad to miss Ghana match

REUTERS, Geneva

United Nations chief Kofi Annan missed out on watching his native Ghana as they played a decisive World Cup match against the United States on Thursday.

"I think it is going to be a fun game," Annan told a news briefing in Geneva before leaving for New York, where he lives.

"Unfortunately, I shall be trapped in a plane as the game goes on and it is really very sad," the U.N. secretary-general said. Ghana need to beat the U.S. to ensure a place in the second round in the match in the German city of Nuremberg.

## Joy and tears in Italy



AFP, Rome

The Italian press was split between joy and despair on Friday as the national side's achievement at reaching the World Cup last 16 was overshadowed by a new twist in the Serie A match-fixings scandal.

"Italy advances but the Tifosi are in despair," headlined Rome daily Il Messaggero after the 2-0 win over the Czech Republic on Thursday came just after the announcement that AC Milan, Juventus, Lazio and Fiorentina were all charged over alleged match-fixing.

Italian football federation prosecutor Stefano Palazzi decided that the Serie A giants will go on trial in Rome next week on charges of sport-

ing fraud.

While demanding "Relegation" for the offending parties Corriere dello Sport praised the national team.

"Italy makes us dream because they avoid Brazil and play against Australia on Monday," the newspaper continued.

Turin-based La Stampa headlined: "Italy win but the Serie A loses".

The newspaper estimated the World Cup win was achieved "in Italian style: not very pretty to watch, but efficient, and above all with home grown ingredients like caution and guile."

La Stampa quoted a triumphant Italy coach Marcello Lippi, who stated: "We would have beaten even Brazil" and insisted that the scandal would not affect his players "who are concentrating on the World Cup and will have plenty of time to think about next season afterwards."

Leading sports daily La Gazzetta

dello Sport, focused on the World Cup victory, but gave over some space on the front page to the scandal by announcing the resignation of Italian football league president Adriano Galliani.

Galliani, who is also the vice-president of AC Milan, denied any wrongdoing and the La Gazzetta dello Sport insisted he was the victim of "a deep injustice" while slamming the decision not to publish the names of those implicated.

"The victim is public opinion which is kept in the dark," complained Marco Travaglio, a journalist at l'Unita.

The atmosphere of joy and tears was underlined further in Il Messaggero who described the "mixed sentiments, joy, disillusion, bitterness," felt by Italian fans.

"The usual ritual of a party with a procession of cars and horn blowing was this time a little forced," added Il Messaggero.