



PHOTO: AFP

THE Saviour: French midfielder Patrick Vieira (C) carries Claude Makelele on his back as other teammates come screaming towards him after he scored against Togo in Cologne on Friday.

## Vieira answers country's call



AFP, Cologne

France coach Raymond Domenech isn't one to make wild predictions, so his pre-World Cup assertion that Patrick Vieira would leave his mark on these finals turned more than a few heads.

Yet after two quietish performances in France's brace of opening draws against Switzerland and South Korea the former Highbury favourite repaid his manager's faith with interest here Friday.

Handed suspended Zinedine Zidane's captain's armband in this must win match Vieira car-

ried his country over the line and into a second round clash with Spain in Hanover on Tuesday.

Fitting like a glove into the attacking midfield role with Claude Makelele alongside Vieira cast aside any concerns he may be harbouring over his future at troubled Juventus to fire France into a 55th minute lead.

Six minutes later he was at the heart of France's second goal, rising tower-like in the Togo box to head on to Thierry Henry who rifled the shot home to roars from the French fans.

The Dakar-born player's contribution on his 30th birthday earned him the man of the match award and a headache for his troubles after he was clouted by a Togolese elbow resulting in his substitution in the dying minutes.

"I don't like singling out play-

ers but in Patrick's case I'll make an exception," said Domenech.

"I said at the beginning of the World Cup that he would be the linchpin of this competition.

"I'm sorry if I was right yet again! But I know when Patrick's motivated he'll be one of the great players of this World Cup."

Despite praising the midfielder at the post-match press conference he refused to go so far as to say whether by lifting France into the next round Vieira had saved his job.

The former world and European champion, scoring his fifth goal on his 90th cap, confirmed that he'd been up for the challenge of defeating the Togolese to ensure France didn't crash out at the group stage for the second successive finals.

The birthday boy said: "I'm thrilled we've qualified and to

score is the icing on the cake.

"I was extremely motivated, we all wanted to go through to the next round. We did not deserve to make it. As the captain you've got to work hard."

He added: "I won't be celebrating my birthday, we've got a really important game coming up against Spain."

"I've seen them play, they're one of the best teams, they play really good football but we will be ready for them."

He added: "I'm getting stronger just like the team. We're getting better and better in each match."

"I hope this result will prove a trigger and that it's going to free us because when we're liberated we're capable of beautiful things."

"We've got a great French team here."

## Lyon, Monaco swap defenders

AFP, Lyon

French first division champions Lyon on Friday announced an agreement to pay Monaco three million euros (3.7 million dollars) in a swap involving defenders Sylvain Monsoreau and Sebastien Squillaci.

Monaco's Squillaci, 25, who despite nine French caps missed out on World Cup selection, on Friday underwent a medical checkup as a condition of his four-year contract with five-time league toppers Lyon.

Monaco-bound Monsoreau, also 25, arrived at Lyon last summer on a four-year deal worth five million euros from first division rivals Sochaux.

## Real election 'rigged'?

AFP, Madrid

The poll to choose the next president of Real Madrid is being marred by vote rigging and threats, a candidate said on Friday.

Lawyer Arturo Baldasano said he had discovered "aberrations" and "manipulations" in the postal voting system and called on the capital city's sports ministry to intervene.

The club's 70,000 members have until July 2 to pick one of five candidates, including construction tycoon Juan Miguel Villar Mir, businessman Juan Palacios, ex-president Lorenz Sanz and lawyers Ramon Calderon and Baldasano.

Accusing his rivals of faking signatures for ballot papers and putting pressure on businesses and fan clubs, Baldasano rejected 1,863 votes cast in his favour claiming he aimed to "win these elections cleanly."

In their bid for votes, the candidates for the post left vacant by the February resignation of former boss Florentino Perez have tempted fans with promises of star coaches, players, and free concert and night club tickets.

## Robben looks for more



INTERNET, undated

Arjen Robben's absence from Wednesday's goalless draw with Argentina underlined the value of the winger to the Dutch team. Robben gave a virtuoso display in the opening Group C win over Serbia & Montenegro and did well again in the victory over Ivory Coast before being rested against Argentina because he was on a yellow card.

But the Chelsea player said he was feeling no pressure to keep up his level of performances ahead of the second-round match against Portugal in Nuremberg tomorrow. "I do not feel any pressure, I just want to give everything I have," Robben said yesterday. "I always want to be valuable for my team."

The Dutch attack, especially Ruud van Nistelrooy, has been criticised following the 0-0 draw with Argentina. The coach Marco van Basten said on Thursday that Van Nistelrooy's position in the team was a point of discussion, adding that the striker was not an automatic first choice.

Robben said it was up to every member of the side to help out on the goal front. "The lack of power is not just about the forward line but also how they are supported by the rest of the team," he said. "In some matches you just get one chance and you have to convert it. Dirk [Kuyt] had one in the first half but the angle was very tight."

He added that Portugal's 2-1 win over the Dutch in the semifinals of Euro 2004 -- the last competitive match the Dutch lost -- would have no bearing on the game. "This will be a new match," he said.

Khalid Boulahrouz is expected to start at right-back after he impressed when replacing the injured John Heitinga against Ivory Coast and starting against Argentina in central

defence. "There is a big chance that Boulahrouz will start against Portugal," Van Basten said.

The Dutch defence is the one part of the team Van Basten does not have to worry about as they have conceded only four goals during an unbeaten run of 15 competitive matches. Van Basten also believes his midfield should take credit for the defensive record. "My midfield made a good impression," he said. "The strength of the defence has also to do with the support they get

from the midfielders."

"This group is growing in the tournament," said the captain Edwin van der Sar, who has had little work in goal but made some sterling saves when called upon. He will be making a record 113th international appearance for the Netherlands tomorrow but is focused on the quarterfinals only. "It will be good to think about it when I look back at the tournament," he said.

The winners will play England or Ecuador in the quarterfinals.

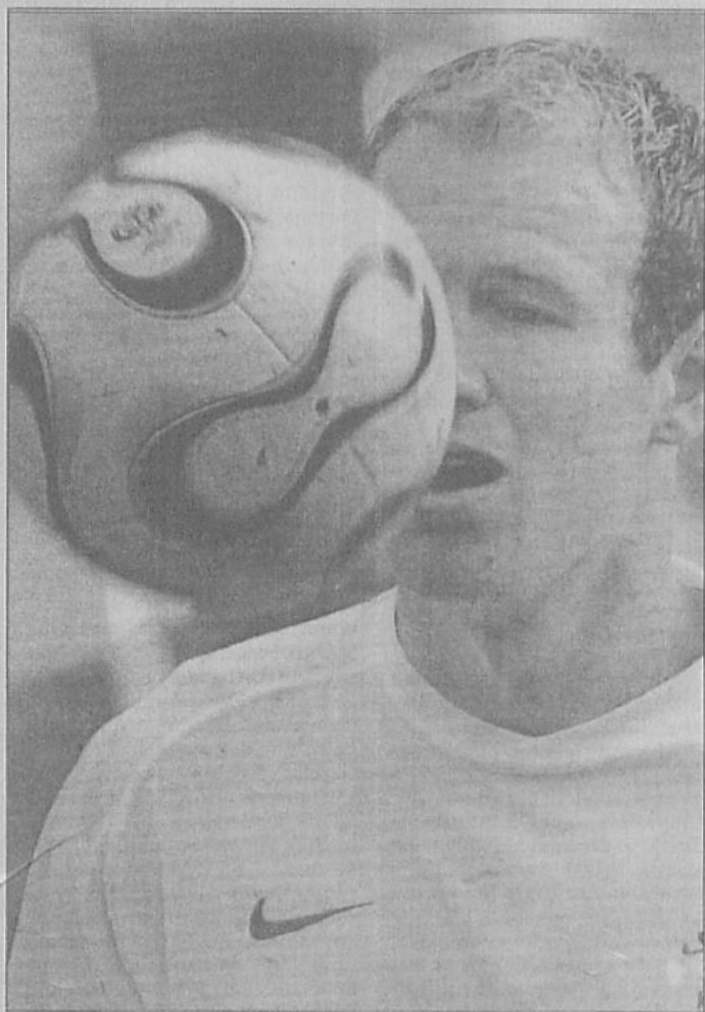


PHOTO: AFP

Dutch winger Arjen Robben controlling the ball at a practice session.

## Smile more, Deschamps tells Henry

AFP, Cologne

Thierry Henry, along with Patrick Vieira a goalscoring hero of France's 2-0 win over Togo, would be better off if he played the game with a smile on his face, 1998 winning skipper Didier Deschamps said on Friday.

Speaking after Henry and former Arsenal teammate Vieira helped lift France into the last 16 Deschamps told Radio Monte Carlo: "He has to have a smile on his face, he needs to laugh, to be happy, be communicative."

Deschamps added that Henry needed to be the lightning rod for the team.

"Thierry is a leader when he is enjoying things, when he is happy out there on the pitch."

Of Vieira he said the Juventus star would always be on song if he was in confident mode.

"If he feels confident there's nobody better."

## Dudek gets back stolen items

AFP, London

Police investigating the theft of thousands of pounds of football memorabilia from the home of Liverpool goalkeeper Jerzy Dudek have recovered his Champions League shirt and medal, they said Friday.

Merseyside Police said they raided a house in the Old Swan area of Liverpool earlier Friday and arrested two people -- a man, aged 26, and a 23-year-old woman -- on suspicion of burglary and handling stolen goods.

The force did not say where Dudek's goalkeeper's jersey and medal were found.

The break-in happened at some point last week at the 32-year-old player's house in Cady, northwest England, while he was visiting his native Poland.

Items still outstanding include more than 100 international and English Premiership goalkeeper shirts, a World Cup 2002 shirt, and a 2005 League Cup final shirt.

The player's 65,000-pound (95,000-euro, 120,000-dollar) black Porsche Carrera car was also taken.

## Sweet win turns sour

AFP, Accra

Three people, including two children, have died in Ghana in recent days in the wild celebrations that followed victories by the World Cup debutants, police said on Friday.

Police spokesman David Eklu said the three were run over by cars in two separate incidents in the west African country's capital.

"A 32-year-old male was knocked down by a hit-and-run driver on Thursday evening in the frenzy of celebrations after Ghana's 2-1 victory over the US," Eklu said.

Eklu also revealed that after Ghana beat the Czech Republic 2-0 last Saturday "there were wild celebrations (and) a driver who was celebrating lost control ... two kids who were playing in the street died."

Three-year-old Elizabeth Teche-Appiah, was crushed to death while Tabber Mensah, 5, died the following day in hospital, according to the police.

The Black Stars have been the revelation of the tournament so far, reaching the last 16 on their first appearance and saving Africa's honour in the process.

## BBC's flop show

AFP, London

Brazil's 4-1 World Cup thrashing of Japan might have sparked samba in the streets of Rio de Janeiro but the football folk of Preston were hardly going nuts, a British regional newspaper said Friday.

The Lancashire Evening Post reported that only 20 happy souls turned up at the BBC's costly giant screen in the northwest English city on Thursday to watch the match, after just four people and a dog braved the miserable rain for the earlier Group E games.

The public service broadcaster was slammed by one member of parliament for wasting money on the 27-metre screens dotted across the country, which cost 500,000 pounds (910,000 dollars, 725,000 euros) each and 5,000 pounds a day to operate.

"It would have been cheaper, and probably gained more of an audience for the games on show, if they had bought five plasma screens and given them to the people there and told them to invite their friends along," said Nigel Evans.

Live screenings in Liverpool and London were scrapped after trouble flared during the transmission of England's opening World Cup game against Paraguay.

Former mill town Preston was once a hotbed of football and the city's big screen is outside the National Football Museum at English Championship club Preston North End's Deepdale ground.

## Juventus face relegation



INTERNET, undated

Champions Juventus almost certainly face relegation as a result of Italy's match-fixing scandal while AC Milan may receive lighter punishment, media said on Friday.

The Football Federation's (FIGC) prosecutor charged Juventus, AC Milan, Fiorentina and Lazio, as well as 26 individuals including officials of the clubs and the federation itself, eight referees and two linesmen.

They were all ordered to appear before a sports tribunal in a trial starting on June 29 in Rome's Olympic Stadium.

The FIGC issued its ruling after Italy secured a place in the second round of the World Cup by beating the Czech Republic 2-0. The combination, as one television commentator put it, was "heaven in Germany and hell in Rome".

Italian goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon, who plays for Juventus, said the charges would not hurt the national side's chances.

"(The scandal) has not left any mark on us, there is nothing official, no sentence and every one of us is thinking exclusively about the World Cup," he said.

Thirteen of Italy's 23-man squad at the World Cup play for the

four clubs facing charges.

Former Juventus general manager Luciano Moggi, former Juventus CEO Antonio Giraudo and Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani were among those charged, their clubs said.

La Gazzetta dello Sport newspaper said the charge that Moggi sought to influence refereeing appointments to benefit Juventus left the Turin giants in an extremely perilous position.

"It is a terrible accusation, something that could send the club down to Serie C," the paper said.

Juventus, 29 times champion of Italy, said late on Thursday it would study the charges and reserved the right to defend itself. But unlike AC Milan and Lazio, it did not reject the accusations.

The two main charges -- sporting fraud and violating fairness and probity -- can be punished by fines, bans and relegations.

The verdicts will be delivered between July 7 and 9 -- the latter being the day of the World Cup final.

Juventus shares, which have lost about half their value since the scandal broke in early May, initially bounced higher on short-covering on the Milan bourse. But by the beginning of the afternoon, they were down 0.91 percent at 1.31 euros.

According to media which

obtained the prosecutor's charge sheet, all four clubs were accused of "sporting fraud".

Moggi and Giraudo face charges of sporting fraud and also of breaking rules governing fairness in the sport, Juventus said.

Galliani -- who quit as president of the Italian Football League shortly after the charges were announced but said he did nothing wrong -- faces a single charge of violating fairness and probity, AC Milan said. Media said that put him in a slightly better position.

The sporting fraud charge against Milan, European champions six times, was based on a single Serie A match against Chievo in April 2005, Milan said.

Juventus have been at the heart of the scandal since it began early last month with the publication of intercepted telephone conversations between Moggi and senior FIGC officials discussing refereeing appointments for matches during the 2004-05 season.

The eight referees who were charged included Massimo De Santis, who was the FIGC's proposed referee for the World Cup until he was withdrawn after the scandal broke.

Besides the FIGC trial, prosecutors in four cities are conducting investigations that could lead to criminal charges.

## Guus no longer worries him



AFP, Duisburg

Italy face their World Cup nemesis when they take on Guus Hiddink's Australia in the last 16, but Gianluigi Buffon is confident the Azzurri will not suffer another humiliating defeat at the hands of the master tactician and motivational guru.

Hiddink was in charge of the South Korea team that put two goals past Buffon in a 2-1 win over Italy in the second round four years ago, one of the biggest shocks in World Cup history.

"He's a great coach, we know that, and the results he has achieved speak for themselves," said goalkeeper Buffon here on Friday.

"He's achieved historic results with mediocre teams. But I believe that on our part many things have changed in the past four years. We are confident of going through."

Italy take on the Australians in Kaiserslautern on Monday and Buffon predicts a physical match similar to the one they had against the United States, which ended in a bad-tempered 1-1 draw.

"It's a tough challenge, even though we consider them beatable opponents," said the 28-year-old Juventus star.

"Physically they are a match for any team, they're enterprising and very strong. They also have great confidence in themselves having scored five goals in their three matches.

"We have to be careful because if you take everything into consideration, they have nothing to lose. We have to match them physically and tactically, and make sure we keep our heads.

"Against the USA we got caught out. We created our own problems and we won't let that happen again. The Australians have similar characteristics to the Americans, but with all due respect I am convinced

we will go through to the next round."

Buffon, whose Juventus team have been charged with match-fixing and could face being relegated, jumped to the defence of his Italy team after they were criticised by the Italian media for being too defensive.

through seven shirts."

A golden goal from Ahn Jung-Hwan sealed Italy's fate in Japan and South Korea in 2002.

Buffon prevented Ahn from scoring in the fourth minute when he saved his penalty.

Former Holland coach Hiddink was hired by the Aussies in July

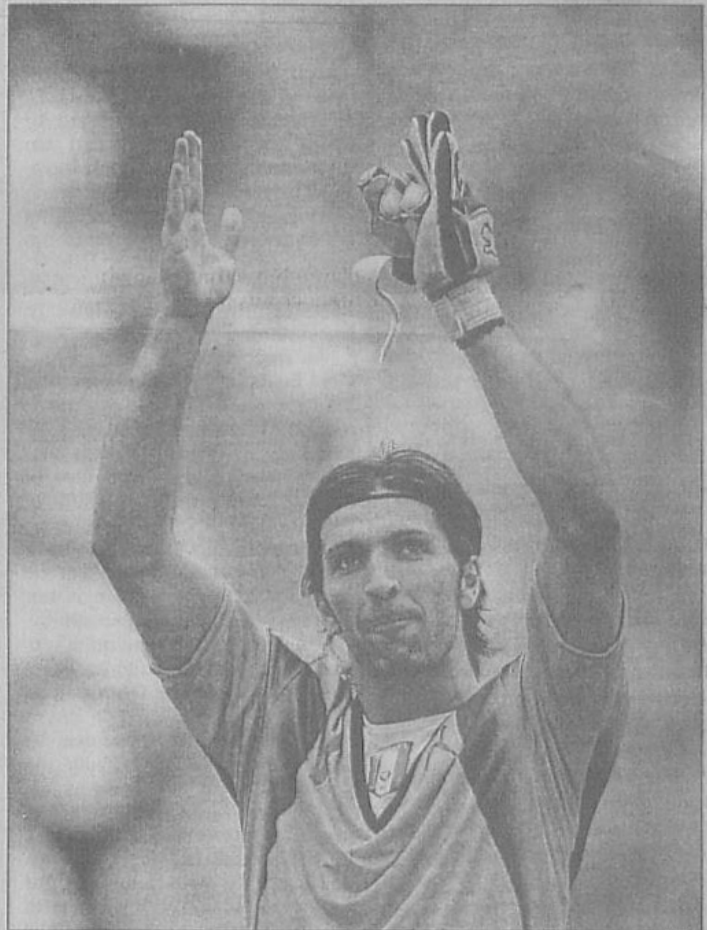


PHOTO: AFP

Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon takes the crowd's appreciation after the game against Czech Republic in Hamburg on Thursday.

"At this stage it's all about sweat and being solid," he said.

"The tournament is long. It's important to play with style, but our results tell the other teams that to beat Italy you will have to sweat

2005 and guided the 'Socceroos' to the World Cup for the first time in 32 years.

After the tournament, the Dutchman will take charge of the Russian national team.

## Asian hopes rest on Oz



AFP, Baden-Baden

Australia, who are in their first World Cup finals in 32 years, are the last Asian team still standing after South Korea and Saudi Arabia were turfed out on the last day of group matches.

Few would have tipped such a scenario, with the Australians untested at this level while South Korea, Japan and Saudi Arabia have all made the second round in previous campaigns.

Australia only qualified by beating Uruguay on penalties in a classic playoff encounter as an Oceania nation.

They have since become a member of the Asian Football Confederation, and have signalled here that they are a force to be reckoned with.

High hopes were held for South Korea, semifinalists four years ago on home soil, but they were unable to cope with a rampant Switzerland in Hanover on Friday.

Their 2-0 loss was compounded by a 2-0 win by France over Togo which consigned South Korea to an early plane home and left them despondent that they were unable

to challenge, let alone match, their feat in 2002.

Arsenal defender Philippe Senderos put Switzerland ahead in the first half before striker Alexander Frei killed the hopes of the Koreans with a hotly disputed goal in the 77th minute, which South Korea felt was off-side.

"Frei was offside -- the goal just killed off the game," said a bitter Lee Young-Pyo, South Korea's Spurs defender.

Saudi Arabia's chances of making the last 16 were always slim and their 1-0 loss to Spain in Kaiserslautern hammered the final nail into their coffin.

Real Betis defender Juanito's header in the 37th minute was enough to end their dream.

The match proved significant as the last one for veteran Saudi striker Sami al-Jaber, who announced his retirement from international football after the game.

The 33-year-old played 163 times and scored 44 goals. His strike in the 2-2 draw with Tunisia in the opening Group H game put him alongside Pele, Diego Maradona and Uwe Seeler as the only man to score in World Cups 12 years apart.

"The decision is final. I have talked about it with the federation and they are right behind me," he

said. Despite their early exit, Saudi coach Marcos Paqueta said it was good experience for his players who would learn from it and get better.

"Playing in the World Cup has been a great experience for Saudi Arabia. It's a wonderful opportunity for the younger players to face strong teams and pick up valuable experience," he said.

"We enjoyed a good qualifying campaign but we came up short in terms of international experience here, and that dented the confidence of the players quite a bit. We just need to keep improving our quality."

Along with Saudi Arabia and South Korea, Japan and Iran also failed to get past the first hurdle in a disappointing campaign for Asian teams.

Japan needed to beat Brazil on Thursday and hope Australia lost to Croatia to stand any chance of progressing, but they fell 4-1 while the Australians drew with Croatia 2-2.

Hopes now rest with the Socceroos who play Italy in the last 16 on Monday.

The Korean performance in 2002 was the best ever by an Asian team at the World Cup. The previous honour belonged to North Korea, who reached the last eight in 1966.