

Japanese fan hangs himself

AFP, Taipei

A Japanese man hanged himself in Taiwan Sunday after the Asian champions failed to secure a single victory in the World Cup, a report said.

The 60-year-old man identified as Yoshio Takanashi was found dead at the home of his Taiwanese wife's parents in the city of Taichung, the cable television news network ET Today reported.

It said his wife told police that her husband had stopped watching television following Japan's dismal performance in the competition.

The team failed to secure a victory in Germany, losing to Australia, drawing with Croatia and losing again to champions Brazil.

Fearless Ballack

AFP, Munich

Germany captain Michael Ballack says the host nation are playing so well that they should not fear any team at the World Cup -- including their next opponents Argentina.

After defeating Sweden 2-0, Germany face off against Argentina in a quarterfinal in Berlin on Friday and Ballack is in a bullish mood.

"Along with Argentina we have made the best impression so far. We do not need to hide," Ballack said.

"We are meeting a terrific opponent and they deserve the utmost respect but we have to look at our game."

"We are playing well and will continue to play our game whoever comes along. If there is a team that is better then fair enough."

"But if we play like we can then we have a chance. On current form we do not need to fear anyone."

Germany benefited from two Lukas Podolski goals in the first 12 minutes as they defeated ten-man Sweden on Saturday but Ballack expects a tougher game from Argentina.

"That was the best game Germany have played for a long, long time -- particularly in the first half," Ballack declared. "It is not possible to play better than we did in the first half hour."

"We have gained a lot of confidence from the Sweden win but Argentina is the next obstacle."

"They are of a higher calibre because they are one of the favourites for the title."

Argentina reached the quarterfinals with a 2-1 extra-time win over Mexico on Saturday.

Argentina and Germany met twice last year with both matches -- a friendly in Dusseldorf and a group match at the Confederations Cup -- ending 2-2.



YOU TWO HATCHING A PLAN: Brazilian midfielder Kaka (L) gives a thumbs-up as coach Carlos Alberto Parreira (C) chats with Ronaldo during a training session at the Belkawa Arena in Bergish Gladbach on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Jose's high-ball headache

AFP, Leipzig

Argentina coach Jose Pekerman said he was confident his side could beat Germany in Friday's mouthwatering quarterfinal clash after seeing them scrape through past a gallant Mexican team.

But Pekerman added that his squad would have to work more on playing as a unit and learn how to deal better with high balls, which Mexico used to great effect in an action-packed first-half in the second round match here.

"Football is a combination of tactical discipline, mental stability, a winning mentality and the ability of the players at key times, and

overall I think we were worthy winners," Pekerman said.

"On the downside, I would have liked us to get a third goal, and we lost control of the game a little despite having people who can move the ball around well."

"We were overly ambitious at times. Some of the players held onto the ball for too long and were a little individualistic."

"We've got to look at that because it stopped us from winning the game earlier."

"We'll also have to sort out our problems with high balls because (Mexican strikers) Borgetti and (Francisco) Fonseca caused trouble in that area."

But Pekerman added that spirits would be high going into Friday's game in Berlin against the tournament hosts.

"Germany will be another really difficult game. You win a match at a World Cup and there's an even tougher opponent lying in wait," he said.

"I'm confident, though, because I think this win against Mexico will make us stronger and help us grow as a team."

Rodriguez, whose chest-down, swivel and exquisite volley past a flailing Osvaldo Sanchez sent the large contingent of Argentinian fans in Leipzig into a chanting

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R factor returns

THE GUARDIAN

Tracking his every move in the last 20 minutes of Brazil's 4-1 win against Japan last Thursday was like watching a microcosm of the great Ronaldo debate. A highlights show. First he exchanged delicate passes with Juan, swivelled and whipped in a vintage strike. Then he was passed the captain's armband by Dida, a symbolic gesture to give a man who still looks vulnerable some of the love he obviously needs. Finally, he was brushed. With play down the other end of the pitch, he stood in the centre circle and stretched his heavy limbs like Bagpuus. He leaned on his haunches. Knackered. Just as well there was no need to chase a late goal.

It was a strange kind of renaissance. Ronaldo's gifts are unmistakably still in place. But so is the extra load he shoulders, physically and emotionally. Did Carlos Alberto Parreira, and the other 180million Brazil managers back home, see enough evidence against Japan to keep faith in their iconic Number 9 as the competition intensifies? What they did see, for certain, was a method to best use a player whose body mass ratio to his height makes him officially the stoutest footballer at the World Cup.

"I know my body, my possibilities," said Ronaldo. "I feel better than at the beginning of the tournament, and I hope that in the following days I will feel better still."

The goal that really tore the monkey from his back, which elevated him to the top of the World Cup's all time leaderboard alongside Gerd Muller, was a flash of Ronaldo in his pomp.

It is no coincidence he improved with a nimble, speedy partner alongside him on the front line. Robinho was a starter for the first time during the World Cup, in

place of Ronaldo's fellow heavy-weight Adriano, and Brazil's attacking rhythm accelerated at once. The 22-year-old unloaded a flurry of feints and dashes, interacted playfully with his teammates, was no need to chase a late goal and was unlucky not to add to the scoring.

With Robinho's zest, the spirit of the three Rs was revived. Ronaldo-Ronaldinho-Rivaldo was the hallmark of Brazil's World Cup triumph in 2002. Since then, Ronaldinho has overtaken Ronaldo as the game's most prized talent. Rivaldo -- arguably their most scintillating performer in South Korea and Japan, apart from an indefensible piece of play-acting in the opening game against Turkey -- would approve of the way the newest R imposed his ability so vibrantly on the team.

While questions remain over the fitness not just of Ronaldo, but also Ronaldinho, who unsurprisingly has a touch of burn out after a long and compelling season inspiring Barcelona, Parreira must surely now continue with Robinho. Together with Kaka's elegant canter, there is enough running, enough young legs, to carve open spaces for the senior partners to work their magic.

Happy watching for Adriano on the bench? He cannot have been the only member of Parreira's supposedly set-in-stone first XI pondering the team-sheet for Tuesday's duel with Ghana. All five Brazilian changes for their final

group game made an impression.

Lyon's leader Juninho Pernambucano emphasised why he is a popular choice to start for Brazil with his refined touch and intelligence. Arsenal's Gilberto Silva played in Champions League, rather than Premiership awayday, form. The leftback Gilberto scored a classy goal, and rightback Cicinho, while desperately wanting defensively, was zipper than the veteran Cafu going forward.

It underlined the serious point behind the joke that had been going round all last week about a phone call between Parreira and Japan's coach, Zico.

"Look, Brazil have already qualified and we haven't," says Zico. "Do you think you could do me a favour?"

"Of course Zico, no problem," says Parreira. "What do you want? Do you want me to field my reserve team?"

"No. For the love of God Parreira," wheezes Zico. "Not the reserves." The all round improvement inspired by the B-list has renewed Brazilian confidence, and it is difficult to argue with a platform of maximum points and a healthy number of goals spread around the squad.

But Brazil still haven't shown a sustained quality of passing and movement to rival the standards set by Argentina and Spain. Like Ronaldo, they are happy to feel better, but hope the best is still to come.

Kahn reopens debate

REUTERS, Berlin

Bayern Munich's Oliver Kahn has said Germany coach Juergen Klinsmann still owed him an explanation for replacing him as first-choice goalkeeper for the World Cup, though he did not expect to get one.

Kahn told German magazine Der Spiegel he would never accept Klinsmann's decision to replace him with Arsenal's Jens Lehmann as the country's number one keeper, and said sitting on the bench during the World Cup was 'not pleasant'.

"Normally, I'd have expected a thorough explanation (from Klinsmann)," he was quoted as saying on Sunday. "But as there hasn't been one up until now, there probably won't be one."

Television coverage of Germany's 2-0 second round victory over Sweden on Saturday was punctuated with shots of a grim-faced Kahn watching the match from the bench as elated German fans celebrated in the stands.

"Until recently, I was firmly convinced I would be playing (in the World Cup)," he said. "Every walk to the bench has been tough. I watch the game, try to form an impression of the action and then disappear into the changing room as fast as possible."

Kahn said the only reason he had heard for why he was dropped was that Lehmann was supposedly playing a 'tick' better.

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BALL BERLIN-BOUND: Midfielder Maxi Rodriguez (R) unleashes a spectacular volley to score Argentina's winner against Mexico as rival defender Gonzalo Pineda looks on at Leipzig on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

WC BRIEFS

AFP, Berlin

More than 22 million people in Germany watched the national side oust Sweden 2-0 and advance to the World Cup quarterfinals with a whopping 86.3 percent share of the home television audience. The ratings topped the World Cup record set by public broadcaster ZDF during Germany's 3-0 victory over Ecuador June 20, which clocked 82.2 percent of viewers. But the raw number of viewers who tuned in at home Saturday -- 22.38 million to be exact -- fell short of the 23.88 million who watched Germany dismiss Poland in the first-round 1-0 nailbiter.

However the market share of that game was "only" 72.5 percent. An independent poll by the Forsa institute for ZDF showed that the actual number of viewers in Germany for the Sweden game likely hit some 35 million because television ratings only count home viewers and not the fans assembled before giant public screens set up across the country.

Goleo survives

The cuddly toy version of the World Cup mascot that helped bankrupt its manufacturer -- Goleo the Lion -- has made a comeback as football fever sweeps Germany. German toymaker Nici has received more than 700,000 new orders for the stuffed animal thanks to strong demand among fans, news weekly Focus reports in its Monday issue. The company had filed for protection from its creditors in May, blaming poor sales of the shaggy lion. Nici paid 28 million euros (35 million dollars) to win the license to produce Goleo, according to media reports, but sales in the run-up to the world's biggest sports event were sluggish.

Muller's clone!

Germany striker Miroslav Klose reminds Franz Beckenbauer of Gerd Muller, the legendary West Germany forward who is the joint all-time World Cup scorer with 14 goals.

"The way he swivelled to score the first goal against Ecuador and the way he moves in the opposition's

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The Daily Star
RANGS TOSHIBA
 WORLD CUP QUIZ 2006

.....THIS CAN BE YOURS

FLAT BOBA
 DYNAMIC BOMBA SOUND SYSTEM
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2006 Round 4, Draw in Chittagong
 (See June 8 issue of the Star Sport for competition information, prizes and rules)

The Daily Star RANGS TOSHIBA World Cup Quiz Round 4, Ends June 29, 2006

Tick (✓) the correct answers

1. Who scored the first goal in the 2006 World Cup?	Klose <input type="checkbox"/>	Lehm <input type="checkbox"/>	Wanchope <input type="checkbox"/>
2. The smallest nation to have played in the World Cup finals is:	Trinidad & Tobago <input type="checkbox"/>	Cameroon <input type="checkbox"/>	Jamaica <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Which Asian player scored in three World Cup finals?	Nakata <input type="checkbox"/>	Sami Al Jaber <input type="checkbox"/>	Ali Daei <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Which World Cup final match ended goalless during the regulation time?	Italia '90 <input type="checkbox"/>	Argentina '78 <input type="checkbox"/>	USA '94 <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Who is this player?	Toti <input type="checkbox"/>	Kaka <input type="checkbox"/>	Messi <input type="checkbox"/>

Name (Mr/Mrs/Ms).....Age.....
 Father's name.....Occupation.....
 Address.....
 Telephone (if any).....Signature.....Date.....

Write with a ballpoint pen in clear BLOCK letters.
 Cut along the dotted lines and mail to OR drop in the Quiz Box at The Daily Star
 You may send as many entries as you like. Envelopes of entries must be clearly marked "Star World Cup Quiz 4."

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 type pw<space> 1st 3 letters of country

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others will win them if you don't!

to know your accumulated points type 'pt' and send to 2006

today's matches

match 1 : Italy (ita) vs Australia (aus)
 match 2 : Switzerland (swi) vs Ukraine (ukr)

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