



PHOTO: AFP

Brazilian booters Robinho (R) and Roberto Carlos share a joke during a training session at Bergish Gladbach stadium on Thursday.

## Robinho aims to close ZZ



AP, Bergisch Gladbach

Brazil will try to finish off Zinedine Zidane's career without a hint of a flourish for the Frenchman when they meet France today in the World Cup quarterfinals, in what could be Zidane's last match if his team fails. Zidane has said he will retire from soccer at the end of this tournament. "We know France are going to be a difficult opponent," Brazil striker Robinho said Wednesday. "But we hope Zidane will have to end his career against us."

The Brazilians still haven't forgotten what Zidane did to them in 1998 when France won its world title. The midfielder starred in the final against

Brazil, scoring twice and leading the host to a 3-0 victory at Stade de France.

"I was really little, but it's a sad memory," said the 22-year-old Robinho, who now is Zidane's teammate at Spain's Real Madrid and calls him a friend. "I hope the story will be different this time."

Zidane helped France advance to the quarterfinals Tuesday by setting up the deciding goal and then scoring one of his own late in the team's 3-1 victory over Spain.

"I hope he makes his last World Cup match on Saturday," said Brazil's assistant coach Mario Zagallo, who in 1998 was Brazil's headman. "I don't know if it's going to be his last (career) match, but I hope it's his last match at this World Cup."

Zidane will soon end a 12-year international career, which also saw him lead France to the 2000 European Championship. He was

FIFA World Player of the Year three times. At the club level, he has won every major honor with Juventus and Real Madrid.

"He regained his form during this World Cup," said Brazil defender Cris, who plays for five-time French champion Lyon. "If you let him do his thing, he'll unbalance the game so we have to pay special attention to him. He is the most dangerous player."

Zidane retired from international soccer for the first time after France was eliminated by Greece at the 2004 European Championship. He decided to return in August 2005 in time for France's final four World Cup qualifiers.

Six current Brazilian players got to see Zidane up close in the 1998 World Cup: Ronaldo, Dida, Ze Roberto, Cafu, Roberto Carlos and Emerson.

Ronaldo, Cafu and Roberto Carlos started in the final in which

Zidane ended Brazil's title hopes.

According to Robinho, Zidane has never belittled Brazil.

"He respects the Brazilian team," Robinho said. "(He) jokes sometimes, saying that Brazil is always winning the World Cup."

Although Brazil have been the most successful team in the tournament's history, they do not have a good record against France.

In addition to losing the 1998 final, Brazil were eliminated by France in the quarterfinals of the 1986 World Cup in Mexico, losing on penalty kicks after a 1-1 draw. Brazil's only World Cup win over France came in 1958, when Pele scored a hat trick in a 5-2 victory in Sweden.

The teams played two other times since the 1998 final, with France winning 2-1 in the 2001 Confederations Cup in South Korea and then playing Brazil to a 0-0 draw in a 2004 friendly in Paris.

## Diego cautions class of 2006

INTERNET, undated

Argentina legend Diego Maradona has reminded the current squad of the agony Germany put the nation through in the 1990 World Cup final.

Andreas Brehme's 85th-minute penalty for West Germany broke Argentinian hearts at Rome's Stadio Olimpico and the two nations meet again in the quarter-finals of this year's competition on Friday.

Maradona visited the team in Herzogenaurach in the build-up to the game in Berlin and could not help but mention the 1990 final.

"When I was talking to the players, I told them, 'Don't forget that in 1990 they made me and everybody cry. Remember that,' he told Argentinian TV station TyC Sports.

"I promised them I'd be with them, so as soon as I came from Hanover I went to the hotel to be with them.

"They asked me to visit them, eat with them, tell them some anecdotes, and anything that can help them and make them feel good, I'll do it.

"The players respect Argentinian football history and want to write more pages in that book."

Maradona feels confident ahead of Friday's game, saying: "Germany have not faced such a big team as ours, with such an important history and so many high quality players."

The 1986 World Cup-winner also revealed he is eyeing a return to management following spells at Deportivo Mandiyu and Racing Club in the 1990s, but did not refer specifically to the national team.

"If I'd have to choose whether to suffer outside or inside a squad, I'd prefer to suffer inside," he added.

"I want to share whatever I have with a team, on a pitch, in a match."

"I was offered some projects abroad but I want to think about them very carefully."

## Aragones stays

AFP, Madrid

Luis Aragones is to stay on as coach of Spain despite their elimination by France in the second round of the World Cup, a source close to the Spanish Football Federation said on Friday.

The 67-year-old Aragones took over from Inaki Saez following Euro 2004. The source said he will now likely see the side through to Euro-2008 which will be held in Austria and Switzerland.

Aragones had said before the World Cup he would step down unless the Spanish at least reached the semifinals but said Thursday he would stay on if the Federation so wished.

## Friendship the best gain

AFP, Berlin

The enduring legacy of the World Cup in Germany will be the friendships forged by fans at matches and in the highly popular fans areas, the chief organiser Franz Beckenbauer said on Thursday.

"At the fan areas, people of all creeds, colours and religions have met each other and exchanged addresses and telephone numbers."

"That will be the lasting legacy of this World Cup," Beckenbauer said at a press conference to assess the progress of the tournament's organisation.

The German organisers and FIFA say more than 11 million people have gone to the fan zones to watch matches on big screens so far, and millions more will follow suit in the build-up to the final in Berlin on July 9.

Horst R. Schmidt, the senior vice-president of the organising committee, told the same press conference that the 24 teams which had already been eliminated and had left Germany had praised the enthusiastic response from the residents of towns and cities where they were based.

"They have told us they found outstanding conditions here and said what a warm welcome they found," Schmidt said.

"This was, perhaps, not what everyone was expecting."

The World Cup is on track to make a profit of around 20 million euros (25 million dollars), said Theo Zwanziger, the head of the German Football Federation who is responsible for the financial organisation of the World Cup.

He said the target of 200 million euros from ticket sales had been met because all 64 matches were sold out and total receipts were set to be around 450 million euros compared to the target of 430 million euros.

"This excess will be used for non-profit activities, such as football and grassroots activities," Zwanziger said.

The World Cup resumes on Friday with the quarterfinal between Germany and Argentina in Berlin before Italy and Ukraine meet in Hamburg.

## Eusebio gets his chance



AFP, Berlin

Portugal's World Cup quarterfinal with England may give Sven Goran Eriksson the chance to avenge the Euro 2004 defeat but for Portuguese footballing legend Eusebio it represents a possibility of revenge 40 years on from his adopted country's most crushing defeat.

The 'Black Pearl', as the Mozambique-born striker was known, has been to the Portuguese what Diego Maradona has been to the Argentines at this World Cup, a motivator from the sidelines.

It may have been England who broke Portuguese hearts in 1966 when they beat Portugal 2-1 in the semifinals and went on to win the tournament but it was Eusebio who was the star of the tournament.

He top-scored with nine goals, including four in the remarkable 5-3 victory over North Korea when they trailed 3-0 at one point, and such was his lustre that a waxwork of him was immediately installed in

Madame Tussauds in London.

Now, however, all he can do is sit and watch as the team commonly known as 'The Brazil of Europe' try to set aside once and for all their tag of under-achievers and land the biggest trophy of them all, first of all by beating England in Gelsenkirchen on Saturday.

Eusebio, his country's record scorer until he was overtaken by Pauleta last year, is confident that the Portuguese can step up to the plate at last.

"I have a gut instinct that Portugal are going to go that extra mile further than we did in 1966," said the 64-year-old, who was moved to tears after watching the 2-0 group stage victory over Iran.

"I can sense this feeling of confidence, not complacency certainly, but genuine optimism that at last that bridge is going to be crossed.

"It will be ironic in a way that it will be the first major finals with most of the 'golden generation' gone," added Eusebio, referring to the Portugal youth world champion team of the early 90s which had players like Rui Costa, Fernando Couto and Luis Figo, although the latter is still there.

For the players and firebrand Brazilian coach Luiz Felipe Scolari

there is no mistaking the value they put on having Eusebio around the camp and handing on some motivational advice.

"He is quite rightly judged to be Portugal's greatest ever player and was party to the greatest as yet moment in the country's footballing history," said Scolari.

"What he has to say is invaluable to the players, because he is an idol to most of them and also a large reason why they took up the sport."

"I have seen them take on board what he has to say and it has certainly helped in building up their self-belief."

Eusebio acknowledges, however, that for all his advice and encouragement there is nothing to be done once the players are out on the pitch and he knows only too well how hard defeat can be, a point he has impressed on them.

"The crushing feeling I felt after the England match was unimaginable. Having come within sight of making the greatest final in the sport and to lose left me completely devastated."

"I just hope that I have conveyed that to the players and it will only serve to get them even more determined to avoid that feeling."



PHOTO: AFP

A file photo shows Portuguese forward Eusebio (L) celebrating after scoring a goal during a World Cup 1966 match against Bulgaria in Manchester.

## British police expect behaviour from fans



REUTERS, Gelsenkirchen

The head of a British police team working in Germany said on Friday he was confident there would be no trouble from England fans in Gelsenkirchen as the supporters were spread out over a large area.

Over 500 England fans were detained in Stuttgart before their side's second-round match against Ecuador in the town's main square following clashes with German supporters and riot police.

But in Gelsenkirchen, the venue for Saturday's quarterfinal match against Portugal, the fans are spread over several miles, in the town centre, campsites and fan park areas.

"Our supporters will be spread over the region, rather than being in one area," Assistant Chief Constable Stephen Thomas told a press conference. "I think that's a good thing because it will avoid the scenes we saw in Stuttgart."

"We won't see the repeat of those incidents here," he said before praising the supporters.

Some 70,000 England supporters are expected to descend on the industrial city for England's 1500 GMT match and unlike the other venues England have played in, Gelsenkirchen has a small town feel to it with no obvious focal point.

## A man of principle

AFP, Marienfeld

Portugal coach Luiz Felipe Scolari said Friday that his principles had stood in the way of him accepting to become the English coach.

Scolari, who led Brazil to the 2002 World Cup title and took Portugal to the final of Euro 2004, had been widely tipped to succeed Sven Goran Eriksson as England coach after the current World Cup finals.

But the Brazilian withdrew from the race because of the ongoing pressure associated with the high-profile job.

Scolari had met with England FA chief executive Brian Barwick in Lisbon in April to discuss the job but he had become instantly disenchanted with the intense attention the job attracts.

Talking ahead of Portugal's quarterfinal clash with England on Saturday, Scolari said: "Some people like me like to respect contracts and I had a contract with the Portuguese FA. I'm very happy with it."

"If my 'no' to the English FA hurt someone, I'm sorry, but I respect contracts and will stick with Portugal until the end."

"My contract ends on July 31, so I'll be a free coach after that, and can speak with whoever."

The Brazilian added that he was very proud that the English FA came up with their proposal.

"But the timing was not correct. Come July 31 I'm a free man and the Portuguese FA is also free to choose another coach."

"I have some ideals in my life that I like to show my players and I can't break them."

"In the future, who knows? If the English FA comes again with another proposal, probably we can speak again and maybe we can deal."

## Not America's game



REUTERS, New York

If you look west from Germany these days you'll see America stifling a yawn at the World Cup.

Despite a doubling of TV ratings for the first-round matches this month, before the US squad failed miserably, soccer still ranks below televised poker tournaments in a land where baseball, basketball and American football rule.

To put it in context, ABC-TV's average rating of 2.5 for the first eight matches it aired represents barely 8 million viewers in a nation of just under 300 million. Only 3.9 million Americans watched the 2002 World Cup final, out of 1.1 billion worldwide.

By comparison, nearly 91 million viewers watched this year's Super Bowl, the glitzy climax to the season for America's homegrown form of football. Nearly 39 million watched the Academy Awards, Hollywood's big night, in March and 36 million tuned in for last month's finale of "American Idol," a TV talent show.

And on ABC's sports cable network, ESPN, which presumably attracts more serious sports fans, the World Cup has had even fewer viewers, averaging around 1.75 million on channels that reach 91 million homes.

No surprise then, that a poll by the Global Market Insight market research service found only 11 percent of Americans surveyed were "definitely" interested in the World Cup, compared with 45 percent of respondents worldwide.

"Despite an estimated combined \$420 million invested in official partnerships by U.S.-based corporations to gain worldwide visibility, the facts don't lie: the U.S. lags significantly behind other countries when it comes to being passionate about 'the beautiful game' of soccer," GMI said.

The poll revealed that 56 percent of Americans did not even know that the 2006 World Cup was taking place in Germany.

Soccer just isn't part of the culture in a country that often prides itself on sporting isolationism.

Millions of kids may play the game in America. But unlike the spontaneity of soccer on Rio or Cape Town beaches, or in the alleys of Berlin and Bologna, you don't see kids kicking a ball around on the streets of Philadelphia or Memphis.

American opinion is still shaped by a handful of sports commentators who can barely hide their hostility.

Yet, even as the U.S. team was competing in its fifth consecutive finals, two long-time opponents of soccer appeared to soften.

First, it was Frank Deford, a Sports Illustrated columnist, who delights in provoking soccer fans with outrageous jibes.

In a National Public Radio commentary, he actually praised the passion of the world's fans, and called soccer players "rock stars of soccer."

But the transformation was fleeting, as he still thinks soccer is not for Americans.

"America is one of the few countries that escaped being infected by the soccer pandemic," Deford went on. There is more interest this month in the professional basketball and hockey playoffs in America, "the only country where soccer is not important," he said.

Another apparent convert was Jack Kemp, the former NFL quarterback and Republican presidential candidate, who once called soccer "socialistic and collectivist" during a speech in Congress.

Yet he acknowledged in a posting on his Web site this week that seven or eight of his 16 grandchildren play soccer.

"Watching our USA soccer team tie the Italian team last week and on Sunday watching the athleticism of the Brazilian team, I'm hereby publicly acknowledging that soccer can be interesting to watch," said Kemp.

Unfortunately, he couldn't resist a late hit.

"I love soccer, but it's still boring," he added.

If a nation's newspapers reflect its thinking, then USA Today has America's attitude to soccer nailed down.

"That Americans have a love-hate relationship with soccer is indisputable," columnist William Mattox Jr. wrote last week. "We love to play the game, or at least to have our children play it. But we hate to watch it."

The newspaper ran letters echoing his comments.

"If America hadn't been founded by the pilgrims leaving ... to seek freedom of religion, a few hundred years later America would have been founded by the pilgrims seeking freedom from soccer," wrote Rollie Robinson of Portland, Oregon.

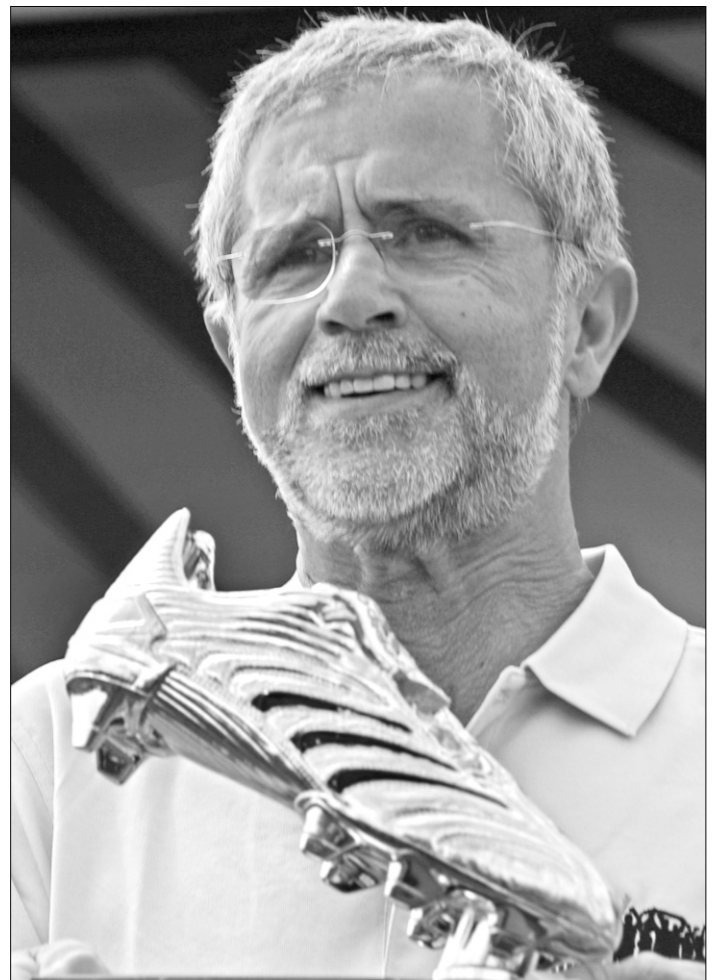


PHOTO: AFP

German football legend Gerd Muller presents the Golden Boot trophy for the World Cup in Berlin on Thursday. Muller, past winner of the Golden Boot Award in 1970, unveiled the official FIFA trophy for the 2006 FIFA Football World Cup's Top Scorer.