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# All quiet on D'mondi front

MOHAMMAD ISAM

As the rain trickled from a fiery sky, a deafening hush descended upon Dhaka on Friday night as Jens Lehmann saved the crucial fourth spot-kick struck by Esteban Cambiasso.

Throughout the penalty shoot-out, there was a wave of cheers and groans. In the end, everyone went home quiet, very quiet.

Argentina had exited World Cup 2006, making it also the end of the road for the millions die-hard Bangladeshi supporters.

It was all so different when the first quarterfinal between Bangladesh's favourite team Argentina and hosts Germany began at Berlin and was telecast on big-screens throughout Dhaka, including the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

The lines of rickshaws near the small gate were proof enough for yours truly that he would have to jostle his way through, inside the otherwise cricket hotbed of Dhanmondi.

Hundreds of students from the nearby coaching centres and private universities congregated with drums and whistles, which were played with glee as the South Americans dominated the first-half.

It was a stark contrast with the atmosphere that prevailed at the Olympiastadion. Surely, this had to be similar to Buenos Aires or any other Argentine city.

The atmosphere was brilliant and rather expectant. There were a few nervous moments, but loud cheers went up everytime the Argentines won the ball back.

The cross-section of people -- service holders, students, retired persons as well as workers and rickshawpullers from Dhanmondi and nearby Jigatola, Rayer Bazar, Mohammadpur, etc -- were rewarded with a goal, thanks to a Roberto Ayala header and the small corner at the ground went berserk.

Hysterical hugs followed by deafening roar broke the night's silence. The hundreds who braved the rain hoped that there would be more goals. There was one more but that came from the Germans.

Miroslav Klose headed home the equaliser just ten minutes before full-time in normal period, and the first signs of quietness came over. Criticism of the coach, referee (!) flew left and right. Nobody wanted to leave at that stage even though it was getting late for most of the students, who came to the area to do classes in the early evening.

There were several heart-stopping moments during extra-time -- some because of phone calls from wives and parents back home as it was actually getting very late.

Realisation also struck that their hero -- the wonder boy Lionel Messi -- would not play the quarterfinal.

"(Jose) Pekerman was supposed to be a coach of the youth, but he seems to be more defensive than I thought," said a concerned Sohel, a resident of Mohammadpur.

The few muted German fans suddenly started to voice their excitement as the game inevitably drew towards tie-breaker, which the Germans are famous for.

Then a sequence of emotions went through the Argentina fans. Some could not even dare to watch. Ayala was cursed after his miss, proving how fickle supporters can be. And then as every German penalty went in, the minority seemed to grow in numbers, but were largely quiet too, a bit of sympathy it seemed.

The end neared with Tim Borowski's successful kick but some still hoped against hope.

"Score and save, and they miss," screamed a visibly anxious Hasan, a student.

But his hopes were dashed as Cambiasso missed. Hands in heads, hips and then wiping off the tears.

They sat motionless for a while before hurrying home inconsolable.

# No fair go

INTERNET, undated

Australia didn't receive a "fair go" from referees at soccer's World Cup because of FIFA's perception it was a dirty team, Socceroos assistant coach Graham Arnold said Friday.

"I felt in all games we didn't get a fair go," Arnold said on his arrival home from Germany. "I think Mark Viduka was the most-penalized player in the World Cup and I don't think he's that kind of player."

Arnold said he read that of the five referees sent home early from the world tournament, four officiated in Socceroos matches.

Asked if he believed officials discriminated against smaller nations at major tournaments, he said simply "Yep."

Arnold described as "cheap" the decision of Spanish referee Luis Medina to award an injury-time penalty to Italy in the second round match. Francesco Totti made the kick on the final play for a 1-0 Italy victory.

Arnold said the Aussies have cleaned up their act since gaining more skill.

"I just want FIFA and people around the world involved in football to get rid of the perception that Australian football teams are dirty

and aggressive," Arnold said. "I'll admit when I played in the mid-80s and early 90s we did play like that."

## No foul so far!

AP, Frankfurt

Brazil defender Lucio entered Saturday's quarterfinal match against France with a chance to surpass the mark for most consecutive minutes played in a World Cup without committing a foul.

Lucio has not been called in Brazil's first four matches and is 23 minutes from passing the mark set by Paraguay defender Carlos Gamarra, who in 1998 spent 383 minutes without allowing a free kick.

Aside from goalkeepers, Lucio is the only player yet to commit a foul after playing at least 360 minutes -- or four matches -- in this year's tournament.

"It's a positive (statistic), but it's not my priority," Lucio said. "I know eventually I'll end up making a foul in order to help the national team."

Gamarra played four matches and an additional 23 minutes of extra time without committing a foul in 1998. He also didn't get called in four games in 2002.



PHOTO: AFP

WHERE ARE YOU GOING? England midfielder Steven Gerrard (L) slide-tackles Portugal forward Cristiano Ronaldo during their World Cup quarterfinal at Gelsenkirchen on Saturday.

# An English invasion

AFP, Gelsenkirchen

Tens of thousands of England fans were pouring into this western German city on Saturday for the World Cup quarterfinal against Portugal.

There were no major incidents to report as the kick-off time approached, but 13 England supporters and more than 30 Germans were detained overnight after rival fans had faced off outside the main rail station.

One England fan was injured by a bottle in the scuffles which broke out when German fans took to the streets to celebrate Germany's victory over Argentina in Friday's quarterfinal in Berlin, police said.

An estimated 80,000 England fans had been expected to arrive for the last eight game, although only around 30,000 have a ticket for the match at the AufSchalke Arena.

Big screens have been set up at a racing track and a football stadium to allow fans to watch the match at a

racetrack and a football ground.

England fans in the city were filling the bars and pubs in the industrial city and drinking heavily as temperatures topped 30 degrees Celsius, an AFP reporter said.

One England supporter, Craig Smith, 26, from Sunderland, said he feared the atmosphere could turn nasty if England do not win. "If England lose, it could be aggressive, but even if they win, there could be trouble because people drink too much."

He said he was intending to watch the match on a big screen because he did not have a ticket.

A total of 43 British police officers are helping their German counterparts with the security operation.

Police said they were expecting fans to arrive in Gelsenkirchen shortly before the match after travelling from nearby cities in the Ruhr conurbation such as Dusseldorf and Dortmund.

The senior British police officer in Germany, Assistant Chief Constable

Stephen Thomas, said he did not expect a repetition of the clashes seen before England's last match, the 1-0 victory over Ecuador in Stuttgart.

"Our supporters will be spread over the region rather than being in one area," Thomas said. "I think that's a good thing because it will avoid the scenes we saw in Stuttgart, with that very focal point on the steps outside the main fan park."

England's once notorious fans were praised for their behaviour at their country's first two matches of the World Cup, but several hundred were detained after the clashes with German fans in Stuttgart.

A German court on Thursday handed one of the England fans involved in the Stuttgart violence a five-month suspended prison sentence.

Police say most of the fighting has been sparked by drunken fans. If England beat Portugal, they would play in the semifinal in Munich on Wednesday against the winners of the France v Brazil quarterfinal.

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**THIRD EYE**

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

If we were playing word associations and you happened to mention the word quarterfinal, the most prompt reply would probably be 'intense.' And that was exactly what the first of the quarterfinal ties between Germany and Argentina was -- intense. Emotions boiled over at the end and there was a fracas involving the players. There was also a hint of controversy as Diego Armando Maradona was not allowed onto the stadium. But that's drifting too far away from the topic at hand. Football is what we are here to talk about, not whispers of controversy from the teams that find themselves on the losing side.

It is a pity that both these sides

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## LEADING SCORERS

AFP, Berlin

World Cup leading scorers after Friday's quarterfinals:  
 5: Klose (Germany)  
 3: Crespo (Argentina), Fernando Torres (Spain), Maxi Rodriguez (Argentina), Podolski (Germany), Ronaldo (Brazil), Villa (Spain)  
 2: Adriano (Brazil), Bosacki (Poland), Bravo (Mexico), T Cahill (Australia),

Delgado (Ecuador), Dindane (Ivory Coast), Frei (Switzerland), Gerrard (England), Henry (France), Maniche (Portugal), Rosicky (Czech Republic), Shevchenko (Ukraine), C Tenorio (Ecuador), Vieira (France), Wanchope (Costa Rica)

1: Ahn Jung-hwan (South Korea), Al Jaber (Saudi Arabia), Al Kahtani (Saudi Arabia), Allback (Sweden), Aloisi

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