SPORT

The Daily Star

said one 20-something in central

Kiev, a Ukrainian flag wrapped

around his shoulders. "But they

defied all expectations to get this far.

crowd erupted following the defeat

in a rendition of the classic Queen

song "We are the Champions" and

"Get Up!" by Ukrainian band Okean

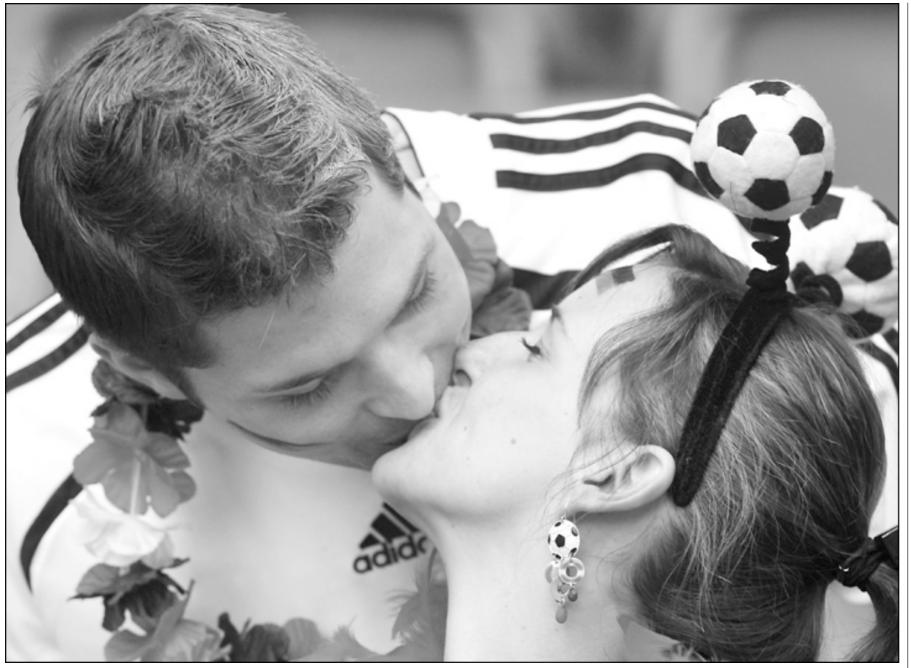
Ukraine's head coach Oleo

"I'm disappointed at losing but

"We were among the best teams,

we made it to the last eight, as a

So I'm not crushed. Next time." In the western city of Lviv, the



VICTORY TASTES SWEET: Two German supporters kiss each other after the hosts won against Argentina at the Berlin Olympic Stadium on Friday.

Owen's knee surgery in US

AFP, Newcastle

England striker Michael Owen revealed on Friday he will undergo surgery on his knee ligament injury in America next week. Owen, 26, was forced to fly home

from England's World Cup campaign in Germany after rupturing an anterior cruciate ligament in the second minute of his side's Group B draw against Sweden

The Newcastle star has set a date for his operation and will travel to Colorado with club doctor Roddy McDonald, where the procedure will be carried out by world-renowned surgeon Dr Richard Steadman, who has treated the likes of Alan Shearer,

Craig Bellamy and Henrik Larsson. The former Real Madrid and Liverpool player will remain in the US for around a fortnight before returning

Lehmann the toast of Germany

SERMANY the World Cup title.'

AFP, Berlin

now go and win the thing," urged Bild. "If you play like that against Germany's victorious goalkeeper Jens Lehmann had his picture plastered over German newspapers Italy on Tuesday you will win again." on Saturday after saving two spotkicks in Friday's 4-2 penalty shoot-

With home support driving them on. Germany will start as strong out triumph over Argentina as the favourites against Italy particularly hosts reached the World Cup semias they have never lost in Dortmund.

Klinsmann.

. Klinsmann said.

FROM PAGE 22

both.

Tuesday's semifinal in Dortmund.

two wins from the ultimate prize.

"We want to be world champions

"The players are obviously

Italy can't spoil

celebrating, but we have two tough

games ahead and we want to win

Significant too that Totti should play

a part in one of those strikes; has

Italy's playmaker woken from the

torpor that has understandably

affected him in recovering from the

double break of ankle and leg in

February? His performance

reflected a greater sense of purpose

and influence that may be required

Lippi can take great heart from

the improving performances of his

leading players. Cannavaro, still

without Alessandro Nesta alongside

him and having to play alongside his

third partner this tournament in

Palermo's Andrea Barzagli, domi-

nated Ukraine's attack with a

masterclass in tackling and inter-

ception that rendered Shevchenko

a negligible side issue. Nesta will be

with his partner of nearly a decade in

Dortmund and that could spell

trouble for Germany's highly popu-

lar striker pairing of Klose and

For the Ukraine and the visibly

depressed Blokhin, their first World

Cup is over, though they can take

strength from recovering from that

terrible opening thrashing from Spain,

whom, of course, they eventually

Their slow start in this match

though was fatal, leaving us with a

repeat of the semi-final of 1970, the

final of 1982 and a chance for

revenge for a 4-1 friendly thrashing

Despite a spell of Ukraine pres-

progressed a stage further than.

of Germany earlier in 2006.

Podolski.

in the semi-final against the hosts.

and we have said that all along. Now

people are starting to believe us,"

declared the Berliner Zeitung. "We are only one step away from "Germany rejoices and after the the final and that is our aim. We Argentina win we are favourites for have removed a big hurdle in Argentina but there are another two Italy, who defeated Ukraine 3-0 coming up."

on Friday, will face Germany in Germany captain Michael Ballack, who converted a penalty in 'You have beaten Argentina. the shootout despite suffering from cramp, said there was a real belief among the players that they could now win the World Cup for the fourth time

be given three points, while two go to a team winning by a single "We have removed a big obsta-

Defeated, not disappointed



AFP. Kiev

Ukraine on Saturday forgave its footballers a 3-0 thumping at the hands of Italy in a World Cup quarterfinal, just grateful the team had gotten to the last eight in their debut appearance

'The end of a fairy tale," headlined the Gazeta po-Kievsky daily. "Ukraine's squad couldn't extend

the fairy tale in Germany having lost to the Italians 0-3. But it doesn't matter. The only thing we can say is: Thank you!" the paper wrote.

A hopelessly outclassed Ukraine may have been crushed by the Italians, but to their fans at home the only thing that mattered was their appearance in the last eight -- the best result of any ex-Soviet republic at the Cup since the fall of the Iron

"Of course I'm disappointed,"

Elzy.

"For the first time, even though the squad lost, there is no bitterness of defeat," Yuryi Rybchinsky, a poet, said on "Third Time," a late-night sport talk show immediately after the match in Hamburg.

"We ended up in the last eight while ranked 45" in FIFA world rankings, he said,

"We were among the eight strongest teams in the world," said Olexander Chubarov, a former national trainer. on the same show. 'That's something.'

Blokhin was likewise philosophical. President Viktor Yushchenko, who flew in to Hamburg for the completely satisfied with our performatch, went to the locker room after mance considering it was our first World Cup," he told reporters in the game and congratulated the players on their accomplishments. Hamburg. "Today each Ukrainian can be

proud of our team," his office quoted him as saving. The feeling was shared by the

thousands of fans who had gathered to watch Friday's match on giant screens throughout Ukrainian

coach I have to be very happy with that. The sides which have made it to this stage are worthy of being world champions, and we almost made it.

FIFA stands by refs

Co Sermany

INTERNET. undated

The standard of refereeing at this World Cup has been the best in the competition's history, according to the head of the FIFA referees committee. Angel Maria Villar, the Spanish chairman of the panel, also rejected widespread criticism of officials from the likes of Fifa's president Sepp Blatter and Franz Beckenbauer, president of the organising committee

A record number of yellow and red cards have been shown, and crucial games including a decisive group match between Australia and Croatia and the second-round tie between Portugal and Holland have been coloured by poor officiating. The respective referees in those matches, Graham Poll and Valentin Ivanov

were sent home after their poor disfootball and players are simulating all the time," the Spaniard said.

and the goal not stood."

Portugal v Holland game

He also claimed there has been an

Villar said he had encouraged Poll

to continue his career after he showed

three yellow cards to the same player

before dismissing him, and he

defended Ivanov who showed 16

vellow and four red cards in the

man who has admitted to a mistake.

Mr Valentin is a great referee who

Spanish FA, a Fifa vice-president

and executive committee member,

was once sent off for punching

Johan Cruyff in the face during a

Villar, the president of the

showed the cards as he saw fit."

"Mr Poll is a great ref and a great

plays. Villar denied that those two were typical of the tournament as a whole, improvement in the performances of however, and claimed that the vast linesmen: "It is the World Cup of the majority of officials had got decisions assistant referee. More goals are being scored in situations where right. before the flag would have gone up

"Ninety per cent of the refereeing has been at a very high level at this World Cup, a far cry from Korea and Japan in 2002," he said. "We have far less serious injuries, and far more goals scored. Most of the matches have been played fairly in a great sporting spirit. We want a clean World Cup and we are achieving that. Of course there have been errors, but we are all human beings and have the right to make mistakes.

Villar was critical of the attitude of some players, however, echoing concerns about simulation voiced by Beckenbauer, who said that players were doing "everything in their power" to mislead officials. "Simulation is now a huge part of

Friendly win counts for nothing, says Lippi



The German press crucified their "Mamma mia were bad, head-

lined Bild, Germany's biggestselling daily paper.

"greasy", "parasitic", "cheats" and

team after their thrashing by Italy.

earlier this week It described Italian men as

match in Spain

finals

He told the club's website: "It's just coming up to a couple of weeks now since I did it, and at the minute it is just dead time really while I'm waiting to have the operation.

"The last few days has just been trying to get the swelling down and trying to get the knee as healthy as possible so we can get it operated on.

"I'll go out on Monday, be examined on Tuesday, then we'll do the operation as quickly as possible and get straight into the rehab.

"As soon as we get the operation out of the way, we will be looking forward to a fixed date or a fixed time to come back."

It was initially feared Owen would be ruled out for the whole of next season, but he hopes to be back in action by the new year.

He added: "The operation needs to go according to plan first. If all goes well after that, I'd like to think I will be playing as soon as possible in the new vear.'

Klinsi wants

FROM PAGE 19

Ballack cross for Miroslav Klose to score his fifth goal of the tournament. "I never felt we had a problem

when we went 1-0 down, Klinsmann said. "I hoped the equaliser would come quickly but I never doubted that we'd get it."

Klinsmann, who is in his first coaching job, is already looking beyond the semifinal in Dortmund on July 4. "The players are performing

magnificently and they want to discover just what their limit is. Maybe we'll reach it on the day of the final on July 9."

"We're enjoying the moment," he added. "Now we want more.'

Sheva laments FROM PAGE 22

saying they had already achieved their pre-tournament aim of qualifying from the group stage and so go home with their heads held high.

With Ukraine eliminated, Shevchenko -- who won many hearts during his time in Milan -- had no doubts about who he would be supporting to win the World Cup

"I'm rooting for Italy now," he

Lehmann was the hero, saving two penalties from Roberto Ayala and Esteban Cambiasso to spark wild celebrations in the host nation.

"The party goes on! Penalty hero Lehmann and our hand of god," headlined Bild, the country's bestselling newspaper, in a reference to Diego Maradona's infamous 'hand of god' goal for Argentina.

Maradona, who watched Argentina's defeat from the stands, scored a controversial goal in a 2-1 quarter-final win over England using his hand as Argentina went on to lift the 1986 World Cup in Mexico. "A hero called Lehmann,"

Germany warned FROM PAGE 22

the backdrop of a Serie A matchfixing scandal with a tribunal due to deliver its verdicts on July 10

after charges against four leading clubs. Corriere added that coach Marcello Lippi, after making a

mess of his tactics in the previous game against Australia, had finally got it right against Ukraine. Lippi put the team on the pitch

with intelligence, care, and with that ferocious fighting spirit that had not been seen so far."

Tuttosport also praised Lippi's willingness "to correct himself", while La Repubblica said Italy had played "a perfect match". "Now it's the Germans' turn to

be scared of Italy," it said. La Gazzetta dello Sport was

less tub-thumping, but joined in the celebrations by hailing a complete performance by Italy.

It said the attack -- spearheaded by two goals from striker Luca Toni -- finally matched the defence which has only conceded once, and that was an own goal, so far in the tournament. "After the exhilarating 3-0 win

over Ukraine Italy need not be scared of anyone -- not even the home side," said Gazzetta.

"Italy has shown it is a complete side, capable of holding out in defence, but also of imposing its own game.

cle to the title. Argentina were one of the favourites for the title but now we "The country reaches a new level

of euphoria after Argentina win," are." Ballack explained. said Die Welt. "It is above all a "We will play in Dortmund again triumph for manager Juergen and that will push us on. We are ready for two more games and hope In two years as manager to win them." Juergen Klinsmann has turned a

Ballack was a part of Germany's team that flopped at Euro 2004 --2002 team that went all the way to where they failed to win a single match -- into genuine World Cup the final -- which he missed through contenders and they are now just suspension -- against the odds before losing 2-0 to Brazil.

With fan power driving them on they are threatening to pull off a surprise again and the three-time winners hope to go one better than four years ago.

sure in the early part of the second

face of Michael Ballack in Berlin.

Though that will not dim the

spirits of the good burghers of

Hamburg for whom the party down

the Reeperbahn was sure to be

continuing until well into the small

hours. Pity a World Cup Quarter-

taking a fuller part in the festivities.

Blatter furious

Bierhoff was shown in the midst of a

want any of them to get in trouble and

have shown that they can interact in a

friendly way, so players and team

said: "They gave us a few kicks.

Argentina are unfair and can be bad

officials should set an example."

"It is a pity. The fans in Germany

German midfielder Torsten Frings

Cufre was shown a red card by

Slovak referee Lubos Michel for

unsporting behaviour for his part in

appeared to try to confront him.

FROM PAGE 19

then be suspended.

losers.

the melee.

d one for a draw The ghost table will then be

standings next season.

French seek

French football chiefs on Friday

revealed a plan to make their

country's top two divisions more

The French League of

Professional Football (LFP) direc-

tors are determined to increase

the number of goals scored in the

first and second divisions and

have suggested rewarding high-

run alongside the actual league

Reports say a ghost table will

In the ghost table, teams who

win by more than one goal would

scoring teams with cash prizes.

to spice up

domestic

action

AFP, Paris

entertaining.

published alongside the actual league table at the end of each

PHOTO: AFP

week. At the end of the season, the team in each division that wins the ghost championship will be given a cash prize.

In the first division the winner will receive 2.4 million euros (3.06 million dollars) and in the second the prize will be 542.348 euros (692,000 dollars).

Former France manager Michel Hidalgo, who led his country to victory at the 1984 European Championships, recommended the idea in a report.

Dosek joins FC Thun AFP, Thun, Switzerland

Swiss club FC Thun confirmed on

half, Italy's job was completed with some ease, giving them less of a Friday they have signed Czech footballing war to recover from than Republic international defender their German counterparts for Lukas Dosek from Sportfreunde whom signs of fatigue and injury Siegen. were worryingly wracked over the

Former Slavia Prague star Dosek, 27, has agreed a two-year contract with Thun after deciding to quit German team Siegen.

We deserved

FROM PAGE 19 Final prevented some of us from

> 'We're on a good run at the moment. Since the start of the World Cup we've done very well and played at a very high level with very few mistakes,' said Ballack.

Substitute Oliver Neuville, who melee of players on the pitch at also scored in the shootout, said: Berlin's Olympic Stadium and Argentinian defender Gabriel Heinze 'Either side could have won it. We had the luck to do it. It was typically "I was just trying to get in between German. the players," Bierhoff said. "I didn't

'Neither team played very well. It was more of a fight. It was a difficult match. Our team didn't have many chances but thank God we won.

Neuville, who said he had never thought about losing, added: 'Argenting played a good match but we fought to the last second. Penalties at the end are about luck but we were able to keep our nerve. wanted to take (one) and thank God it worked out.'

Germany will play Italy or Ukraine in the semifinals



AFP, Hamburg

Italy humiliated Germany in a friendly four months ago, but Azzurri coach Marcello Lippi insists that result will have no bearing on the mouth-watering World Cup semifinal between the two teams.

Italy, who beat Ukraine 3-0 here on Friday to set up a meeting against the hosts in the last four, thumped Germany 4-1 in a warm-up match on March 1, 100 days before the tournament was due to begin. A one-sided game in Florence

saw Italy billed as potential World Cup winners, while German football sank to an all-time low.

"We won't score four goals against Germany again," Lippi said after his team had ended Ukraine's first World Cup adventure

"They're not the same side we met in March. That result was a bit harsh on them and a poor reflection of the German team. Now they are exploiting the enthusiasm of the whole nation and it has transformed

"They have a good side and an excellent coach. It will be very tough for us, but it will be tough for them too.'

"Only 99 days to go to the World Cup and our national team is playing worse than ever before. If we play like that at the World Cup well be obliterated."

"Germany shrinks to a football dwarf," wrote Frankfurter Allaemeine Zeituna.

The defeat also left Germany captain Michael Ballack fearing for his country's World Cup chances.

"Defeats like this can send you back to square one, particularly in terms of confidence and team spirit. Doubt has set in," he said.

Germany coach Juergen Klinsmann was equally concerned.

"There are days when things just don't go the way you'd want them to. And days like this one, where it all goes completely wrong," he said.

Revenge will be on German minds when they meet Italy in Dortmund on Tuesday, more so for their 1982 World Cup final defeat

rather than the March friendly. Italy beat Germany 3-1 in Spain 24 years ago to become world champions for a third time.

Tuesday's match has been spiced up by an article that was published on the website of German weekly magazine Der Spiegel

"mummy's boys". The website later withdrew the article and issued an apology after complaints from irate Italians.

Italy midfielder Gennaro Gattuso couldn't resist taking a swipe back at Der Spiegel after picking up the man-of-the-match award against Ukraine

"Maybe the editor had a problem because his wife is having an affair with an Italian." said the combative AC Milan midfielder

Italy defender Alessandro Nesta, who missed the Ukraine match with a groin strain, believes jealousv was the motivation for the offensive article

"Italians have taken their fashion and food all over the world. They (the Germans) criticise us for the way we are, but then they want to dress and eat like us. There is a touch of jealousy in it," he said on Wednesday.

Gianluca Zambrotta gave Italy an early lead against Ukraine with a left-footed drive before Luca Toni scored twice -- a close range header and a simple tap-in -- for his first goals of the competition.

Germany advanced to the semifinals by beating Argentina in a penalty shoot-out after the match had ended 1-1 after extra-time

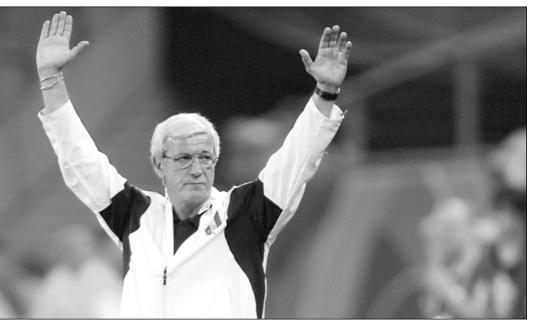


PHOTO: AFF Italy coach Marcello Lippi takes the applause of the crowd after the end of his side's successful guarterfinal tie against Ukraine in Hamburg on Friday.

said.