

DHAKA SATURDAY JULY 8, 2006

GERMANY V PORTUGAL Farewell to Figo, Kahn

AFP, Stuttgart

Germany and Portugal have to try and put aside their disappointment of failing to reach the World Cup final when they meet in the third-place play-off match here today.

The game is undoubtedly an anti-climax for the losing semifinalists but it has added spice with Portugal's Luis Figo and Germany's Oliver Kahn set to bring the curtain down on their glittering careers.

Portugal winger Figo retired after Euro 2004 but came back for one last crack at a major title only to fall to France 1-0 in the semifinal.

On Saturday the 33-year-old Figo will win his 127th and final cap and he wants to sign off with a win.

"We want to finish off with a win over Germany," said Inter Milan star Figo. "It was disappointing to lose the semifinal but we have to try and win this game for the fans."

Germany goalkeeper Kahn, capped 85 times, will also want to go out on a high after playing second fiddle to Jens Lehmann for the finals.

Jurgen Klinsmann confirmed the 37-year-old Kahn would start against Portugal on Saturday in recognition of his service to the national team.

"I can confirm that Oliver Kahn will be in goal. He has played a big role in this team behind the scenes

and deserves this match," Klinsmann said. "Jens has no problem with that."

Hosts Germany, still coming to terms with the 2-0 extra-time defeat to Italy in the last four, will be psyched up to give Kahn a winning send-off and the fans a final win to savour.

"We want to give a good performance on Saturday to give the supporters something to cheer about it," Klinsmann declared.

"We wanted to be in Berlin for the big final but we have to settle for this mini final in Stuttgart.

Portugal will be boosted by the news that Germany captain Michael Ballack will miss the match with a knee injury that has stopped him from training.

Portugal also have at least one player missing with defender

Ricardo Carvalho suspended and right back Miguel doubtful after limping out of Wednesday's 1-0 defeat by France.

Germany will also be without injured defenders Philipp Lahm and Per Mertesacker against Portugal. Midfielder Tim Borowski is also doubtful through injury and a decision on his fitness will be made on Saturday.

Germany striker Miroslav Klose is also struggling with a calf injury but is desperate to play as he bids to secure the golden boot.

"I still have pain in my calf. I want to play but if it is not 100 percent I won't risk it," Klose declared.

"Finishing top-scorer at the World Cup would be a great honour and it would be fantastic if one title stayed in Germany after these finals."

The 28-year-old Werder Bremen forward, the top scorer in the German domestic league last season, is currently the leading marksman at the finals with five.

French striker Thierry Henry is his closest rival with three goals and has Sunday's final against Italy to swell that tally.

But whatever is at stake on Saturday, Germany and Portugal will cast envious eyes on the Berlin final wondering what might have been.

TEAMS

Germany (4-4-2): Oliver Kahn; Jens Nowotny, Christoph Metzelder, Robert Huth, Philipp Lahm; Bernd Schneider, Sebastian Kehl, Torsten Frings, Tim Borowski; Lukas Podolski, Miroslav Klose

Portugal (4-5-1): Ricardo; Paulo Ferreira, Fernando Meira, Ricardo Costa, Nuno Valente; Costinha, Maniche, Luis Figo, Cristiano Ronaldo, Deco; Pauleta



GETTING READY: A combo picture shows players of Germany (L) and Portugal warm up prior to their training sessions on the eve of their World Cup third-place playoff in Stuttgart.

PHOTO: AFP

Ad

Podolski find of 2006

AFP, Berlin

Germany coach Jurgen Klinsmann selected Podolski as part of a drive to field a new young team at the World Cup.

He scored three goals, playing a key role in helping the host nation to reach the semifinal where they were beaten by Italy.

"It is a great motivation to go on playing and become more successful," Podolski said after receiving the award at a press conference.

"I would have liked to take home another trophy (the World Cup) but this is a great honour for me."

Holger Osieck, who heads the FIFA Technical Study Group, dismissed English journalists' assertions that Ronaldo was a "cheat" and therefore did not meet the fair play criteria for the award.

"I would not agree. That is a harsh formulation," Osieck said in reference to accusations that Ronaldo had urged referee Horacio Elizondo to dismiss England striker Rooney off after he had stamped on Portuguese defender Ricardo Carvalho.

Podolski won because of the efficiency of his play, his skills and the fun he brought to the game, Osieck said.

"He not only scored three goals, he was a key element in Germany's attack."

"He showed a great understanding with Miroslav Klose and the two players formed a very effective partnership. Together, they netted eight of Germany's 11 goals."

Podolski played with FC Cologne last year but after they were relegated to the second division he joined champions Bayern Munich.

He has now scored 15 goals from 31 appearances with the national team.

Three players from the shortlist for the award were chosen by just under one million fans voting through the official World Cup Internet site Cristiano Ronaldo, Luis Valencia of Ecuador and Lionel Messi of Argentina.

Podolski, Tranquillo Barnetta of Switzerland and Spain's Cesc Fabregas were selected by the Technical Study group.

The patron of the award, Lothar Matthaus, Germany's most capped player who is now coaching Salzburg in the Austrian league, said Podolski had a bright future.

"He fulfilled all the criteria. He brought fun to his football."

Matthaus said it was a pity that Messi had not had the chance to play against Germany in the quarterfinal - Argentina coach Jose Pekerman kept the 19-year-old Barcelona starlet on the bench as Argentina lost on penalties.

The award was open to all players born after January 1 1985. A total of 40 players from the 32 qualified teams were eligible.

PHOTO: INTERNET

PRINZ POLDI: German striker Lukas Podolski holds the FIFA Best Young Player Award in Berlin on Friday.

Italians dominate all-star squad

REUTERS, Berlin

Seven Italy players and four from fellow World Cup finalists France were named in a 23-man All-Star squad of the tournament by FIFA on Friday.

The players were selected by FIFA's Technical Study Group.

All-Stars squad: Gianluigi Buffon (Italy), Jens Lehmann (Germany), Ricardo (Portugal)

Defenders: Roberto Ayala (Argentina), John Terry (England), Lilian Thuram (France), Philipp Lahm (Germany), Andrea Pirlo (Italy), Gennaro Gattuso (Italy), Luis Figo (Portugal), Maniche (Portugal)

Strikers: Hernan Crespo (Argentina), Thierry Henry (France), Miroslav Klose (Germany), Francesco Totti (Italy), Luca Toni (Italy)

The All-Star nominations are sponsored by MasterCard.

Elizondo's final

AFP, Berlin

Argentine referee Horacio Elizondo will be in charge of Sunday's World Cup final here between France and Italy, FIFA announced on Thursday.

Elizondo was also in charge of the tournament opener between Germany and Costa Rica in Munich on June 9.

In the quarterfinals he was the referee for the England v Portugal game and sent off England striker Wayne Rooney in a controversial decision for stamping on an opponent.

The 42-year-old physical education teacher will become the first referee in the history of the World Cup to officiate at both the opening game and the final.

Elizondo has been a professional referee since 1994 and his first international was a game between Ecuador and Colombia in October 1996.

He lists playing golf and writing poems as his main hobbies.

Joining him for the final as linesmen will be compatriots Dario Garcia and Otero Rodolfo with two Spaniards - Medina Cantalejo and Giraldez Carrasco - as the fourth

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Scolari eyes good game

INTERNET, undated

Portugal coach Luiz Felipe Scolari believes that Germany and Portugal will show the healthy respect they have for one another during Saturday's play off for third-place.

The third place final is not a universally loved fixture, and Scolari has the task of trying to rally his troops for a last push after the disappointment of going out to France in the semifinal.

The Brazilian admitted: "I would rather have been playing in

the final.

"But we must be proud to have come so far. We will try to play a good game."

"It will be an encounter between two sides with coaches and players who respect each other."

Scolari was a World Cup winner four years ago with Brazil, and in 2004 he was a losing finalist in the European Championships with Portugal.

He thanked the Portuguese fans for their staunch support of

the team in Germany 2006.

"We must be grateful to all our supporters who never tired in their backing for us. We are not going to let our heads drop because of this."

"We lost to a very good team and that's what football is like sometimes. Let's just thank those who supported us in Portugal and elsewhere in the world."

"We are proud and happy with our performances and it is a real pleasure to work with these players."

Scolari underlined his determination to win the bronze medal, saying: "We have to get rid of this melancholy, we still have a target. "Third place at the World Cup is not to be sniffed at. We'll go on to the field with the same dedication we've shown so far."

FIFA revamps rankings

AFP, Berlin

The new version of the much criticised football world rankings were revealed by the governing body FIFA on Thursday.

Chief among the changes is that results from the past four years and not eight as was previously the case will only be taken into account.

Two other former factors have been taken out of the equation, number of goals scored and whether the matches were played at home.

Points will be allocated thus in major championships with three points for a win, one for a draw and none for a defeat.

Germany in particular had complained that them being 19th in the rankings while Mexico are fourth and the United States fifth is unfair and that they have been penalised for playing friendlies for the past two years.

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Quality upsets Kaiser

AFP, Berlin

Two-time World Cup winner Franz Beckenbauer, now president of the World Cup organising committee, says the finals in his homeland have disappointed him from a sporting aspect with few great games or players to ignite the tournament.

The 60-year-old, who won the title as a player in 1974 and then as a coach in 1990, has seen more live matches than most after jetting to games on a helicopter, but with just two games left, he admits he is still waiting to see a thrilling match.

"There were not many bad games at the final but there were no real thrillers," Beckenbauer said in an interview with German sports agency SID.

Beckenbauer also slammed teams such as England who

deployed just one striker up front.

"If I had my way the teams that play with one striker would not be allowed into the tournament."

"It was a joke. I was seriously annoyed by the lack of courage from some teams -- how afraid the coaches were."

"There were hardly any shots on goal and that explains the low goal quota."

Before the tournament there was talk of who would light up the tournament but Beckenbauer said no-one had really caught the eye.

"I have been on the panel to help pick out the best ten players at the tournament," said the former Bayern Munich player. "We could have picked a completely different ten. There were no stand-out players."

TODAY'S MATCH

MATCH LIVE ON ESPN & BTv.

TEAM	TIME	VENUE
Germany v Portugal	12:50 am (Sunday)	Stuttgart

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