

WORLD CUP USA '94

Pele sees bright side of it

TORONTO, June 8: Brazil's disappointing 1-1 draw with Canada on Sunday could be a boost rather than a burden to their World Cup preparations, Pele said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Pele, who led Brazil to their last World Cup triumph in 1970 said the upset against the unrated Canadians in a friendly in Edmonton could help the South Americans mentally before next week's start to the finals.

"It was disappointing for the Brazilian team but the result could be important in preparing the team psychologically," he said.

"Everybody thinks the Brazilians have the ability to win when they want to win — it is good to shake them a bit. The Brazilians have been preparing hard. They have worked hard physically. This was their first game after 15 to 20 days of hard work."

Pele, now 53, played in four World Cup finals between 1958 and 1970, three of which the Brazilians won. He believes his country now have their best

chance for years to repeat the triumph. But he said the main challenge from South America could come from elsewhere.

"Brazil have a lot of players with experience of playing in Europe. Many are a good age between 27 and 28, Pele said. "But the best team from South America is Colombia. There is no doubt about that. They have a chance to be in the final."

Colombia should thrive in the hot conditions and have a relatively easy first round group with the US, Switzerland and Romania. Brazil have a more difficult group with Russia, Cameroon and Sweden.



PELE

Pele said he thought reigning world champions Germany, who meet Canada in Toronto today in their final test before opening the finals against Bolivia on June 17, possessed a better organised team than four years ago.

But he believes Berti Vogts' squad does not have so many individually brilliant players as in Italy where their captain Lothar Matthaus shone in midfield. Matthaus has since moved into a defensive role at Liverpool and is unable to use his attacking talents as effectively.

"The Germans are more organised as a team but I think their players were individually better at the last World Cup," he said. "It is exactly the opposite with the Brazilians."

Pele has been heavily involved in promoting soccer and the World Cup finals in the United States where he played at the end of his career.

He said the tournament was a dream come true. "Some 15 or 20 years ago nobody would have believed the finals could begin the United States. People said I was crazy and teased me when I suggested it before."

Injury to key Russian player

MOSCOW, June 8: Russian World Cup striker Vladimir Beschastnykh has come down with tonsillitis and has been house-bound for three days, national coach Boris Ignatyev told Sport Express newspaper on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

The news is a further blow for the 20-year-old Spartak Moscow striker, who has been struggling to shake off an injury for the last month.

Russia can ill-afford to lose Beschastnykh since a rebellion by several players against national trainer Pavel Sadyrin has already deprived the side of top forwards Sergei Kiryakov of Karlsruhe and Igor Kolyvanov of Foggia.

Ignatyev gave no indication of when Beschastnykh was expected to recover but said the

other injury-hit members of the Russian squad were now training normally.

If Beschastnykh, due to move to German club Werder Bremen after the World Cup, does not improve Sadyrin would be forced to call up reserved striker Igor Simutenkov of Dynamo Moscow, top scorer in the Russian Premier Division with 11 goals so far.



Italy's boss Arrigo Sacchi, is greeted by fans upon his team's arrival at Newark international Airport in New Jersey on Tuesday. Italy, who will play their games at the Giants Stadium, will train at a private school in northern New Jersey. — AFP photo

Azzuris in America

NEW YORK, June 8: Italy's players received an ecstatic welcome from their fans at Newark Airport on Tuesday as they flew in for the World Cup finals, reports Reuters.

Dozens of chanting, flag-waving spectators jostled with camera crews, police and started passengers in the arrivals lounge to greet the Italian squad's flight from Rome.

Fans chanted the names of Roberto Baggio and coach Arrigo Sacchi and became so excited that some players had difficulty in boarding the team bus. Several onlookers, desperate for souvenirs of the occasion, even resorted to photographing the squad's luggage.

It was an early indication of what the Italian squad can expect over the next month in New Jersey, whose population includes a large Italian community.

Their opening match against Ireland at Giants Stadium on June 18 has generated more local excitement than almost any other opening phase fixture, although most New Yorkers are currently preoccupied with more immediate sporting matters.

Yet a remarkable crowd of 73,511 watched the World Cup warm-up match between Colombia and Greece on the specially-laid grass pitch at Giants Stadium on Sunday, creating an atmosphere which had drawn favorable comment from the New York media.

Italy, who beat Switzerland 1-0 in a home warm-up match on Saturday, have a training session organised on Wednesday in preparation for their friendly against Costa Rica in New Haven on Saturday.

Cowbells maybe okay, but no cows

DALLAS, June 8: Swiss fans have been given special permission, at FIFA's request, to jangle cowbells at the World Cup finals, reports Reuters.

"We told them that yes, the cowbells may be brought in but no cows," said World Cup managing director Scott Parks Le Tellier after attending the official opening of the International Broadcast Centre in Dallas on Monday.

Le Tellier said the cowbells, traditionally clanged by Swiss supporters at major sporting events, became an issue after the Swiss media heard that musical instruments would be banned from venues for security reasons.

"It became a concern and actually reached FIFA which of course is based in Switzerland and they asked us to confirm that the Swiss could bring cowbells to the stadium. We told them not to worry, the cowbells could come."

World Cup Chairman Alan Rothenberg also reassured Brazilian reporters that their country's fans would be able to bring drums into the stadiums during matches.

"As long as they don't smuggle weapons inside them, they can bring the drums in. We're just going to shake them and see whether they rattle. The World Cup would not be the World Cup without the Samba and drums from Brazil."

But he warned that flags would only be allowed in without flagpoles, which could be dangerous.

Rothenberg said two friendly matches staged last weekend in Los Angeles — between Mexico and the United States — and in New York — between Greece and Colombia — had been successful dummy runs for World Cup security.

Some 91,000 filled the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, venue for the final on July 17, without incident.

"There were no fences and no problems," said Rothenberg, who has been sharply critical of the decision by Dallas police and city authorities to fence in the fans at their Cotton Bowl Stadium.

"At Colombia-Greece we had mixed fans, we made no attempt to segregate by nationality and we had a phenomenal game with a great atmosphere and no problems."

"Toto" Schillaci suspended

TOKYO, June 8: Salvatore "Toto" Schillaci, the goal-scoring hero of Italy's 1990 World Cup team, has been suspended from his Japanese club side for two matches, a spokeswoman for the Japan Professional soccer league (J-League) said today, reports Reuters.

She said the league disciplinary committee decided on Tuesday to suspend Schillaci, who plays for the Jubilo Iwata team, for insulting a referee in last Saturday's match against JEF Ichihara.

PROFILES: ARGENTINA

BUENOS AIRES, June 8: Following are brief profiles of the 22 members of Argentina's World Cup squad.

- ### GOALKEEPERS:
- Sergio Goycochea**, Age 30, Club River Plate; 44 caps; one of Argentina's most popular sportsmen; ad agencies scramble for his services as model; renowned for heroics in penalty shoot-outs in 1990 World Cup; recently dropped by club and country after a series of blunders; faces anxious wait to see if he will be first choice.
- Luis Islas**, 28, Independiente; 30; reserve in 1986 squad who refused to go to Italy in 1990 as understudy to Nery Pumpido for second tournament in a row; nicknamed "cat"; has shown great form for club but yet to produce best for national side; local critic quibble that he is sometimes slow off his line.
- Norberto Scoponi**, 33, Newell's Old Boys; 0; understudy for above two; reliable cover although yet to taste international soccer.
- ### DEFENDERS:
- Sergio Vasquez**, 28, Universidad Catolica, Chile; 30; tough defender whose pace makes up for otherwise sluggish back four; certain to be in starting line-up.
- Jorge Borelli**, 29, Racing Club; 15; cover for defence; good header of ball; took decisive penalties that saw Argentina through quarter-final and semifinal of 1993 Copa America.
- Oscar Ruggeri**, 32, San Lorenzo; 93; nicknamed "cabezon (big head)"; Argentina's most capped player; former captain and butt of fans' frustration when things are going badly; often followed by nimble forwards; stood rooted to spot as Colombians ran amok in 5-0 defeat in 1993.
- Jose Chamot**, 25, Foggia, Italy; 8; accomplished defender and tough tackler who is also good coming forward; certain starter; made Argentina debut in play-off against Australia last year after impressive Italian league performances.
- Roberto Sensi**, 27, Parma; 22; recalled on May after being in wilderness under Basile since 1990; famed for giving away penalty against Germany in 1990 World Cup final defeat.
- Fernando Caceres**, 25, Real Zaragoza; 9; uncompromising centre-back; not scared to mix it with strikers; considered one of the best Latin Americans in Spanish league this season.
- Hernan Diaz**, 29, River Plate; 22; cover for right back position; recalled last year after laying string of friendlies under previous coach Carlos Bilardo in mid-1980s; scored spectacular goal against Germany in December 1993.
- ### MIDFIELDERS:
- Fernando Redondo**, 25, Real Madrid 22;

PROFILES: BULGARIA

SOFIA, June 8: Following are brief profiles of the 22 members of Bulgaria's World Cup squad.

- ### GOALKEEPERS:
- Borislav Mihailov**, Age 31, Club Mulhous; France; 73 caps; veteran of 1986 World Cup who has captained country 31 times, plays in French Second Division. Balding, had hair implant in 1992.
- Plamen Nikolov**, 32, Levski Sofia; 2; has been country's best goalkeeper for past two league seasons.
- ### DEFENDERS:
- Emil Kremenliev**, 24, Levski Sofia; 7; right back with taste for attacking down the wing.
- Trifon Ivanov**, 28, Xamax Neuchatel; 39; has scored four goals for Bulgaria, joined Swiss side Xamax from Spain's Real Betis. Pillar of Bulgarian defence, usual task is to mark most dangerous member of rival team.
- Tzanko Tzvetanov**, 24, Levski Sofia; 17; confident left back who often leads dangerous attacks down wing.
- Petar Hubechev**, 30, Hamburg; 16; first Second Division player to join national team 10 years ago. Calm, cool, has a reputation for anticipating his opponents' moves.
- Nikolai Iliev**, 29, Roussen; 53; only Bulgarian to have played in Italian First Division, for Bologna in 1989, now with Rouven in French Second Division. Likes to attack and is versatile scorer with both feet and head.
- Ilian Kiryakov**, 26, Merida, Spanish Second Division; 35.
- ### MIDFIELDERS:
- Zlatko Yankov**, 27, Levski Sofia; 29; as defensive midfielder does much "invisible" but useful work. Scored four goals for country.
- Yordan Lechkov**, 26 (27 on July 9), Hamburg; 14; first Bulgarian to play in German Bundesliga when he joined Hamburg in 1992.
- Daniel Borimirov**, 24, Levski Sofia; 9; one of most improved players in Bulgaria in last two years. Fast with a talent for spotting scoring opportunities.
- Boncho Guenechev**, 29, Ipswich Town; 4; first Bulgarian to play in English Premier league when he joined Ipswich from sporting Lisbon last year.
- Georgi Georgiev**, 31, Mulhouse; 9; busy midfielder Dynamo.
- Krasimir Balakov**, 28, Sporting Lisbon; 34; attacking midfielder good at free kicks, has scored five goals for Bulgaria. Joined sporting in 1990.
- ### FORWARDS:
- Emil Kostandinov**, 26, Porto; 33; fast winger who has been at Porto for four seasons. Scored 11 goals for Bulgaria, among them two vital strikers, including last minute winner against France that put his country into finals.
- Hristo Stoichkov**, 28, Barcelona; 41; has scored 13 goals for Bulgaria. Brilliant strikers who also lays on goals. Gregarious, generous man who gives money to up-and-coming Bulgarian teams and likes spending time in home town of Plovdiv with friends. He enjoys betting on football pools and often wins.
- Nasko Sirakov**, 32, Levski; 57; veteran of 1986 World Cup with 19 goals for country. Top scorer in the Bulgarian First Division last season. Played for Real Zaragoza an Espanol in Spanish league.
- Ivaylo Yordanov**, 26, Sporting Lisbon; 9; Bulgarian league top scorer in 1991.
- Petar Miltarev**, 27 (28 on July 15), Pirin Blagoevgrad; 48; on loan at Pirin from Porto. Experienced centre forward.
- Petar Alexandrov**, 31, Levski; 27; in 1993 he helped Aray win Swiss league.
- Velko Yotov**, 23, Espanol; 6; fast, skilful goalscorer.
- Invalio Andonov**, 26, CSKA Sofia; 3; Bulgarian league's second highest scorer last season with 25 goals.

PROFILES: ITALY

ROME, June 8: Following are brief profiles of Italy's World Cup squad:

- ### GOALKEEPERS:
- Gianluca Pagliuca**, Age 27, Club Sampdoria; 17 caps; reliable and athletic goalkeeper who has made number one shirt his own over past 18 months; prone to occasional lapses in judgement of when to come off his line.
- Luca Marchegiani**, 28, Lazio; 5; made disastrous World Cup debut as he presented Switzerland with two goals in a qualifier in 1992 and has since been relegated to role of understudy.
- Luca Bucci**, 25, Parma; 0; earned place in squad on strength of his performances for beaten Cup Winners' Cup finalists Parma in his first season in Serie A; solid and dependable, the ideal choice as a back-up goalkeeper.
- ### DEFENDERS:
- Franco Baresi**, 34, AC Milan; 76; captain of club and country and acknowledged as one of best defenders in world; quit international soccer in 1992 but was persuaded to return after Italy's jittery display without him and although lost a little pace remains key element.
- Alessandro Costacurta**, 28, AC Milan; 19; Baresi's faithful lieutenant for club and country; the tall defender is not a pretty performer but timing of his tackles has greatly improved over past two seasons.
- Paolo Maldini**, 25 (26 on June 26), AC Milan; 51; powerful and commanding left back who is always willing to push forward; seen as heir to Baresi as captain of Milan and expected to move into central defensive slot when his great teammate finally retires; father Cesare played for Milan and Italy in 1960s and now coaches Italy's under-21 team.
- Mauro Tassotti**, 34, AC Milan; 4; Milan's "Mr Reliable" who knows his limitations and plays within them; part of 1989 and 1990 European Cup-winning team; became Italy's oldest debutant in first appearance for national team in October 1992.
- Antonio Benarrivo**, 25, Parma; 7; adventurous full back; emerged in successful Parma team over last three years; can play on either side of defence; his attacking instincts sometimes leave him caught out of position.
- Luigi Apolloni**, 27, Parma; 1; tall stopper, strong in air; surprise choice when coach Arrigo Sacchi opted for an extra defender at the expense of a midfielder.
- Lorenzo Minotti**, 27, Parma; 2; captain of Parma team which has developed into one of Europe's top clubs; good all-round defender who is composed on the ball; in spare time helps out as volunteer in drug rehabilitation centre.
- Roberto Mussi**, 30, Torino; 2; experienced and reliable defender who spent two seasons with Sacchi's AC Milan before joining Torino five years ago.
- ### MIDFIELDERS:
- Demetrio Albertini**, 22, AC Milan; 14; strong tackler whose main role is to win ball for more creative players around him; made Italy debut at age of 20 and has been regular since; packs a powerful shot.
- Dino Baggio**, 22, Juventus; 12; tall, slightly ungainly figure; no relation to Juventus teammate and namesake Roberto; like Albertini, his strengths are mainly defensive but has scored important goals including the one which gave Italy vital 1-0 win over Portugal in their last World Cup qualifier.
- Roberto Donadoni**, 30, AC Milan; 50; has bitter memories of 1990 World Cup in Italy where he missed from the spot in semifinal penalty shoot-out with Argentina which saw hosts eliminated; plays wide on right in midfield and his excellent technique and dribbling abilities make him a favourite with crowds.
- Nicola Bertl**, 27, Internazionale; 25; another survivor of 1990 World Cup squad, the combative Bertl has not played for Italy since March 1992; his brash personality did not endear him to coach Sacchi.
- absence in March have earned him recall.
- Antonio Conte**, 24, Juventus; 11; type of hard-working midfielder player who fits in very well with Sacchi's tactics; joined mighty Juventus from humble home town club Lecce almost three years ago.
- Alberto Evani**, 31, Sampdoria; 10; solid and reliable left-footed player; another member of Milan side which conquered Italy and Europe in late 1980s; moved to Sampdoria with Ruud Gullit last summer and has since enjoyed a renaissance.
- ### FORWARDS:
- Pierluigi Casiraghi**, 25, Lazio; 16; powerful centre-forward who has kept his place in national team despite failing to pin down regular first team spot at Juventus, then at Lazio; strong in the air, Sacchi thinks he is perfect foil for smaller, nimbler Roberto Baggio.
- Roberto Baggio**, 27, Juventus; 35; European footballer-of-the-year in 1993 and one of game's outstanding talents; pony-tailed Baggio is superb passer and dribbler of ball and deadly from set pieces; will need to be at his best if Italy are to justify their role as one of favourites; a practising Buddhist whose pre-match ritual includes prayer recital; has scored 19 goals for Italy.
- Giuseppe Signori**, 26, Lazio; 15; leading scorer in Italy's Serie A over past two seasons, netting 23 times in just 24 league games this season; small for a striker but has great pace and fine left-foot shot.
- Gianfranco Zola**, 27 (28 on July 5), Parma; 6; small Sardinian who inherited Diego Maradona's number 10 shirt at Napoli before moving to Parma last summer.
- Daniele Massaro**, 33, AC Milan; 8; one of surprise success stories of last Italian season; discovered a happy knack of netting at crucial times to emerge as Milan's top scorer with 11 league goals; such form earned him recall to Italian national squad after eight-year absence;

ITALY IS CHOSEN TO HOST THE 1994 TOURNAMENT. THEIR NATIONAL LEADER MISSOURI SEES THE WORLD CUP AS THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO PROMOTE HIS FASCIST REGIME.

AMAZINGLY, MEXICO TRAVEL TO EUROPE AND, AFTER A QUALIFYING ROUND DEFEAT BY THE USA, SAIL FOR HOME WITHOUT PLAYING EVEN A SINGLE MATCH IN THE FINALS!

THE TOURNAMENT IS BASED ON A STRAIGHT KNOCK-OUT FORMAT. HOSTS ITALY, BOLSTERED BY THREE ARGENTINIAN 'IMPORTS', BEGIN WITH A 7-1 THRASHING OF THE USA.

DOMESTIC PROBLEMS MEAN THE ABSENCE OF WORLD CUP HOLDERS URUGUAY WHILE THE 1930 RUNNERS-UP ARGENTINA SEND A VIRTUAL THIRD-CHOICE TEAM. THEY ARE AFRAID OF LOSING MORE PLAYERS TO THE LIRA-LADEN ITALIAN CLUBS.

IN THE QUARTER-FINALS, FLORENCE STAGES TWO BRIBING ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN SPAIN AND ITALY WHO EVENTUALLY WIN THROUGH AFTER A REPLAY.

ARGENTINA LOSE TO A WORKMAN-LIKE SWEDEN AND THE SOUTH AMERICAN CHALLENGE ENDS WITH BRAZIL MISSING A PENALTY AND GO DOWN 3-1 TO SPAIN IN GENOA.

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