

WORLD CUP USA '94

Azzurris fail to impress

NEW HAVEN, Connecticut, June 12: In-form striker Giuseppe Signori netted his third goal in as many games to give World Cup finalists Italy a laboured 1-0 win over Costa Rica in a friendly international on Saturday, reports Reuter.

Italian coach Arrigo Sacchi will doubtless have been hoping for a more convincing performance than his team produced in their final test ahead of the eagerly anticipated World Cup opener with Ireland in New York on June 18.

But he can have no complaints about Signori, who is relishing the striking role he has been given after previously being forced to play out of position in midfield for Italy.

Top scorer in Italian soccer in the past two seasons, the Lazio man swivelled and struck home a low shot with his trusty left-foot in the 65th minute after a dribble by European footballer-of-the-year Roberto Baggio had set him up.

Baggio should have scored a second two minutes late against a team which is not among the World Cup qualifiers but he side-footed over the bar after substitute Daniele Massaro had created a glit-tered chance.

MEXICANS GLIDE
In Miami, Markman Luis Garcia struck twice in the first half as World Cup qualifiers Mexico bounced back from an upset defeat by the United States and trounced Northern Ireland 3-0 in their final warm-up.

A second-half strike from Carlos Hermosillo completed the victory that helped to restore Mexican confidence after they slumped 1-0 to the World Cup finals hosts in Los Angeles seven days previously.

Garcia, who plays for Spanish league side Athletic Madrid, fired Mexico in front

after 18 minutes from a spot-kick awarded after a foul by Northern Irish Goalie Alan Pettis well inside the penalty box.

Mexico extended their lead in the 30th minute from a free kick by Ignacio Ambriz 25 metres out, Garcia deflecting the ball home.

Hermosillo how came on for Hugo Sanchez in the 69th minute, took only eight minutes to make an impact, scoring from close range following a deft pass by Luis Alves.

ROK RELAXED
In Dallas, South Korea, whose players switched shirts to fool any World Cup opposition spies, warmed up for the finals with a relaxed 3-0 victory over Honduras.

The Koreans never looked remotely like emulating Brazil, who thrashed the Hondurans 8-2 on Wednesday, but were clearly a class above their opponents in a match played on a bumpy high school pitch in

Aussies sweep series
SYDNEY, June 12: Australia midfielder Jason Polak scored a superb individual goal to sink South Africa 1-0 on Sunday and wrap-up the two-match series 2-0, reports Reuter.

After receiving the ball inside his own half, Polak ran 60 metres, weaving past two defenders, before smashing his shot past South African keeper Steve Crowley from 15 metres.

His 38th minute goal was the highlight of a lacklustre game which highlighted South Africa's inexperience at this level.

The scoreline was a repeat of the first meeting between the sides in Adelaide on Wednesday.

South African midfielder Doctor Khumalo returned after a one-match suspension but failed to inspire his teammates.

Duncansville.
Goals from Ko Jeong-Woon, Hwang Sun-Hong and Kim Joo-Sung in the 7th, 37th and 77th minutes earned South Korea an essential victory ahead of their opening Group C game against Spain on June 17.

But they rarely lifted their game above the ordinary and struggled to create enough openings to suggest they can improve on their record of one draw and seven defeats in their three previous World Cup final appearances.

DULL DRAW
Away in Montreal, Bolivia moved toward one of the most difficult games of their history against world champions Germany in the World Cup opening game with a far from convincing performance against Switzerland.

In a goalless draw in their last friendly before the finals, Switzerland exposed several holes in the Bolivian defence.

Bolivia will need to address the problems before they face Germany in Chicago in the opening match of first round Group C next Friday.

The Swiss, who play in Group A in the first round with host the United States, Romania and the widely-tipped Colombia, should have come away from the game with a victory.

German-based striker Stephane Chapuisat had two superb chances to score in the first half.

The Bolivians were not at full strength and are likely to make a few changes before the Germany test. They showed they had some creative midfield players and can look dangerous in attack.

But at times their defence certainly looked suspect against a Swiss side that is nowhere near as classy as the world champions.

In Lagos, Nigeria beat Georgia 5-1 (half-time 3-1) in a soccer friendly played in Ibadan, western Nigeria.



Costa Rica's Mauricio Montero (20) rides on top of an Italian player during a World Cup warm up match at Yale University, New Haven on Saturday. Italy beat Costa Rica 1-0. — AFP photo

World Cup briefs

UNDATED, June 12: Cameroon players said they voted to replace Stephan Tataw as captain with goalkeeper Joseph-Antoine bell, who has been among the players asking higher bonuses, reports AP.

Bell got 14 of 22 votes while Tataw got two. Roger Milla, the 42-year-old forward, got one vote.

It is the first time players on the Indomitable Lions elected their own captain. In the past, captains usually were appointed by the minister of youth and sports.

Central defender Patrik Andersson, who banged up his left knee in practice Friday, is likely to miss Sweden's final World Cup tuneup Sunday against Romania at Mission Viejo, Calif.

"The knee is still hurting a little bit," Andersson said Saturday in San Diego. "I don't want to risk anything tomorrow if I'm not fully fit."

He was injured Friday in a collision with midfielder Jesper Blomqvist.

Midfielder Klas Ingegnon practised Saturday after missing the team's workout on Friday because of a bruised thigh.

Norway's players might have thought they'd woken up in Oslo on Saturday if it hadn't been for the Danish flag fluttering outside their hotel at Princeton, NJ.

On their first morning in the United States, the players were served Norwegian-style bread, baked for them by their hotel. They sipped milk flown in from Norway, and chatted in Norwegian with reporters.

Their Scandinavian-owned hotel — the Scanticon-Princeton — had a Norwegian flag waving alongside ones from the United States and Denmark.

"The hotel was designed by Danish architects. I could tell the first time they (team officials) walked in here that they felt at home," hotel manager Henri Vergnaud said.

Even the weather was more Nordic cool than East Coast hot, which was actually a disappointment for a team that fears the thermometer.

"Since we probably will have to play in the heat, it would have been an advantage to get started right away," forward Jahn Ivar Jakobsen said.

Vergnaud said the team doctor was even worried that ice cubes made from tap water could contain bacteria that would make the players ill. The hotel manager said ice will be withheld from the team until an analysis of the water is completed next week.

At Lisle, Ill. where Spain is training at Illinois Benedictine, coach Javier Clemente worried that South Korea may be more difficult for his team than Germany.

In Dallas, South Korean goalkeeper Choi In-young said he may miss Friday's game because of an injury sustained against Ecuador this week.

Korean residents tried to make the players feel at home by sending special Korean dishes and gifts to the hotel. There are more than 1.5 million Koreans living in the United States.

In Brazil, fans were angry that television networks used poor camera angles against Canada and Honduras in the past two weeks in order not to show advertising for Brahma, a Brazilian brewery.

Fortune in FIFA's favour

CHICAGO, June 12: After a tumultuous year, FIFA calls its 49th Congress to order on Wednesday with its long-reigning president chastised but secure. It's bankbook bulging and its biggest star once again a welcome guest, reports AP.

A record number of delegates from 190 nations gather in the run-up to the World Cup, which makes it US debut Friday when Germany open defence of their title against Bolivia at Soldier Field.

By the opening kick-off, the sport's leaders are expected to have adopted a budget containing a surplus almost three times bigger than the current one, considered proposals to give more power to African and Asian members and most assuredly re-elected Joao Havelange to a fifth term as president.

A towering former Olympic swimmer with an icy stare and a cold eye for business, Havelange has ruled soccer since 1974. His grip appeared to be loosening last winter, when European and American regional federations started talking about running a candidate against Havelange in Chicago.

They complained about his autocratic style and a whirl of controversy, including a snub of Pele at December's World Cup draw.

But the 77-year-old Brazilian dispelled his critics with the type of manoeuvre that over the last two decades has become truly Havelangean.

Two years after awarding the 1998 World Cup to France, Havelange pushed through expansion of the field for that tournament from 24 to 32 teams. Distribution of the extra eight spots won't be decided until later this year, but expected are:

— Europe will retain its 13 berths, silencing that dissent, and may get a few more.

— Qualifying spots also should be added to the five other continental associations: South America, Asia, Africa and CONCACAF, and Oceania is finally expected to get a guaranteed one.

Havelange also took care of the Pele matter. The one player recognised by almost everybody, including Americans, was barred from the draw in Las Vegas after suing Havelange's son-in-law. American organisers were angry and bitter words were exchanged.

But in recent months, soccer's boss and it's ambassador —

at-large have had a rapprochement. They even sat together at a tournament in Trinidad and Havelange let it be known that Pele was OK.

Lingering opposition to Havelange vanished. He will run unopposed in Thursday's balloting, the highlight of a relatively light and friction-free agenda.

"Any congress will serve that purpose, to bring the entire membership together," said Keith Cooper, a FIFA spokesman in Zurich, Switzerland. "It's the only time when all delegates come together in one room, as one big happy family."

This congress will have more delegates than ever before, since for the first time FIFA is paying expenses. Fifteen new members will be installed, including seven from the former Soviet Union. A vice president's seat formerly reserved for a Soviet delegate will be abolished.

Further restructuring of the executive board is expected, with an African proposal to add members from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and the Caribbean. A proposal from the board itself recommends only an additional European member.

Wherever the members come from, they'll have much more money to spend.

The congress will consider a budget for the next four years of \$73.3 million, an 11.3 per cent increase from 1990-93. The new budget includes a surplus of \$5.1 million, compared with \$1.6 million in the previous plan. The biggest increase in revenue comes from women's soccer sponsorships — from zero in the previous budget to \$1.8 million this time.

The delegates also are expected to be lobbied heavily by countries bidding to host the 2002 World Cup. China and Japan are considered the front-runners.

Out of frying pan, into fire

DALLAS, June 12: The Dallas World Cup venue resolved one conflict and headed into another on Saturday when workers began removing part of a controversial security fence and a local group threatened to picket matches, reports Reuter.

"I know it's been a very visual symbol of confrontation," said venue director Bill Stroube of the metal chain-link fence, erected by Dallas City Council in May despite opposition from FIFA and World Cup organisers.

Dallas police wanted the fence to prevent possible outbreaks of soccer hooliganism. World Cup officials said it was unnecessary and insulting to fans.

Saturday's main Dallas Morning News newspaper reported a local group as saying they intended to "boycott and picket" games in protest at the organisers' alleged failure to award sufficient contracts to ethnic minorities.

Stroube said World Cup organisers would spend about 12,000 dollars to take down the fence on the west side and would then also have to pay additional security costs.

PROFILES: RUSSIA

MOSCOW, June 12: Following are brief profiles of Russia's World Cup squad:

GOALKEEPERS:

Dmitry Khariin, Age 25, Club Chelsea; 22 caps, inspired keeping helped Chelsea to England's FA Cup final this year, made debut at age of 16 and signed for Chelsea from CSKA Moscow in 1992, member of 1988 Olympic gold medal team.

Stanislav Cherchesov, 30, Dynamo Dresden; 20; the bulky mustachioed Cherchesov is the only foreign goalkeeper in the Bundesliga and was voted best keeper after first half of season; spent several years in shadow of Soviet keeper Rinat Dasayev at Spartak Moscow before Dasayev went to Spain.

DEFENDERS:

Dmitry Galyamin, 31, Espanol; 19; one of Russia's best defenders; known for his explosive acceleration from a standing start; could play the role of sweeper in World Cup; played for CSKA Moscow before his transfer.

Dmitry Khlestov, 23, Spartak Moscow; 12; rugged, fleet-footed right-winger nicknamed Baresi after famed AC Milan defender; brimming with talent but criticised by Spartak Moscow manager Oleg Romantsev for not doing more in centre of field and not supporting attacks.

Yuri Nikiforov, 23, Spartak Moscow; 8; a tough player who began his career in Ukraine, Nikiforov is most comfortable in the centre of defence; also packs a strong shot.

Sergei Gorlukovich, 32, Bayer Uerdingen; 32; the hard-tackling Gorlukovich is the most experienced player in the squad and the one with most yellow cards.

Viktor Onopko, 24, Spartak Moscow; 21; Ukrainian-born all-rounder who has been voted Russian player-of-the-year for last two years despite some under-par performances and a chequered disciplinary record.

Vladislav Ternavsky, 25, Spartak Moscow; 2; former figure skater and gymnast who is now a penalty and free kick specialist; also known as a good marker; player for Ukrainian sides Dynamo Kiev and Niva Ternopol before joining Spartak.

MIDFIELDERS:

Dmitry Popov, 25, Racing Santander; 11; flexible winger who is comfortable on both sides of the pitch and can also play left-back; scored seven goals in Spain this season, all from the left wing; signed from Spartak Moscow.

Omari Teradze, 24, Dynamo Moscow; 9; Georgian-born all-rounder with fierce shot who prefers centre of field; recovered from mysterious and as yet unsolved assault in

Moscow bar last year in which his jaw was broken.

Andrei Pyatitsky, 26, Spartak Moscow; 10; one of the undoubted stars of the side; a skilled passer and header of the ball; has a thunderous shot and is virtually impossible to pin down on his day.

Dmitry Kuznetsov, 28, Espanol; 27; prefers defensive midfield role; not always on best terms with national trainer Pavel Sadyrin, who accused him of throwing a match in 1992 when both were at Russian club CSKA Moscow.

Ilya Tsybalar, 24 (25 on June 17), Spartak Moscow; 2; natural winger with fine understanding of the game; moved to Spartak from Ukrainian side Chernomorsk Odessa.

Alexander Boroduk, 31, Freiburg; 13; took advantage of players' rebellion to score fine hat-trick against Mexico in friendly earlier this year; first Soviet player sold to Germany and recently scored 30,000th goal in history of Bundesliga; member of 1988 Olympic gold medal team.

Igor Kornev, 26, Espanol; 13; former Spartak Moscow player who has been in Espanol for three years where he is featuring more and more in an attacking role; extremely difficult to get off the ball.

Igor Ledyakhov, 26, Spartak Moscow; 14; in theory Ledyakhov is a skilled all-rounder but has been suffering from a serious lack of confidence which saps his game at both club and international level.

FORWARDS:

Sergei Yuran, 24 (25 on June 11), Benfica; 27; stocky Ukrainian-born striker with love for life in fast lane who sparked storm of protest when decided to play for Russia.

Oleg Salenko, 24, Logrones; 5; bulky striker who has just signed to join Spanish side Valencia after scoring 16 goals last season; promised new club he would score 25 goals next season.

Vladimir Beschastnykh, 20, Spartak Moscow; tall, prolific striker with flowing blond locks who is about to sign to join Werder Bremen; very quick and great passer of the ball; in spare time likes collecting soft toys.

Dmitry Radchenko, 23, Racing Santander; 14; lanky long-haired striker with superb shot who was one of Spartak Moscow's best players before moving to Spain; known for individual style of play and ice-cool nerves.

Alexander Mstov, 25, Cannes; 20; superb ball-player but hindered by patchy form; signed for Benfica from Spartak Moscow but did not shine in Portugal.

Valery Karpin, 25, Spartak Moscow; 10; Estonian-born player who is one of Russia's best midfielders, and prefers the right wing when moving into attack.

PROFILES: SWEDEN

STOCKHOLM, June 12: Following are brief profiles of Sweden's World Cup squad:

GOALKEEPERS:

Thomas Ravelli, Age 34, Club IFK Gothenburg; 109 caps; second most-capped Swedish player, chasing Bjorn Nordqvist's 1963-78 115 game record; former high jumper, he may retire to be full time electronic goods salesman after finals; team motivator, self-appointed spokesman; ball handling sometimes nervous; Austrian parents.

Lars Eriksson, 28, IFK Norrkoping; 15; coach Tommy Svensson's first choice substitute has waited five years to prove he is as able as Ravelli; still waiting; talk of move to Turkey's Galatary next season has come to nothing.

Magnus Hedman, 21, AIK; 0; Svensson calls him his only possible alternative; good under-21 performance means seen as big future prospect; tall (193cm) part-timer who lists profession as product developer.

DEFENDERS:

Roland Nilsson, 31, IF Helsingborg; 60; veteran back; he plays favourite players; seldom has a bad game for Sweden; family disliked England so he got early release from Sheffield Wednesday and free transfer back to Swedish league.

Patrik Andersson, 22, Borussia Moenchengladbach; 22; most prominent of new young backs; already public favourites; safe, active and good prospects for move to midfield.

Joachim Bjorcklund, 23, IFK Gothenburg; 21; fast, aggressive lynchpin of the IFK Gothenburg defence which often fielded en masse for Sweden; can get moody and pass badly.

Roger Ljung, 28, Galata-saray; 46; played in strong Malmo FF side with Schwarz then and Dahlin in late 1980s; injured face in may friendly and may not want to use head much.

Mikael Nilsson, 25, IFK Gothenburg; 13; late name in squad, much-criticised by Swedish press; unreliable in recent friendlies; was promising golfer, still plays with low (seven) handicap; works as tobacco dealer; loves eating meatballs.

Pontus Kaamark, 25, IFK Gothenburg; 11; reliable substitute who always willing to stand in if first choices not available or injured; will probably replace Ljung initially.

Jan Eriksson, 26, Kaiserslautern; 33; fast libero-type; dogged by injury, but a Svensson favourite who has struck four goals for Sweden; out of contract and looking for new club.

MIDFIELDERS:

Stefan Schwarz, 25, Benfica; 28; sharp, swift and tough; with an accurate pass and a huge

left foot, Schwarz is teams "hard man"; five international goals but yellow cards include four in the 10 World Cup qualifiers; joining Arsenal.

Klas Ingegnon, 25, PSV Eindhoven; 41; a lumbering giant, like the elk that smashed into his car and gave him whiplash in May; not fully fit; mild-mannered but no beauty; works hard to push game forward; many of 10 goals headers.

Jonas Thern, 27, Napoli; 46; strong and silent, a typecast Swedish captain; playmaking most effective when paired with his former Malmo striking partner Dahlin; six goals.

Anders Limpar, 28, Everton; 50; injury-prone near-veteran who grumbles about sitting on bench; at best a light, agile sprinter who can save a game; at worst, nervous and volatile.

Stefan Rehn, 27, IFK Gothenburg; 39; unexciting but technically strong so solid backup when Sweden under pressure with calm temperament and good vision.

Haakan mild, 22 (23 on June 14), Servette; 12; in first season at Servette the work-horse from IFK Gothenburg hit the pro jackpot as club won Swiss league; experienced substitute.

Jesper Blomqvist, 20, IFK Gothenburg; 7; Sweden's young-gest player is joker in the pack; fast-rising star at home after first season in first division; still doing national service.

FORWARDS:

Henrik Larsson, 22, Feyenoord; 7; fast attacking right winger has made strong sixth-month debut in national side with four goals already; voted top player in Joe Robbie friendly tournament in Miami in February; not yet fully battle-tested.

Martin Dahlin, 26, Borussia Moenchengladbach; 28; pure striker has topped Brolin as Swedish public pin-up idol; scored six of 19 goals in Sweden's 10 qualifiers and is squads equal top scorer with Brolin on 16.

Tomas Brolin, 24, Parma; 30; 16 goals; baby-face but mature playmaker who moves smoothly from midfield to attack found success with rising Italian stars Parma after debut in 1990 World Cu; owns trotting horse and loves the races.

Kennet Andersson, 26, Lille; 23; heaviest (91 kg) and tallest (93 cm) Swede on the field; veteran of 1990 World Cup nightmare; brought back to squad deliberately for US as solid sub; good header, less reliable passing; 11 goals.

Magnus Erlingmark, 25 (26 on July 7), IFK Gothenburg; 24; started football career as a back and now a regular and exciting goal scorer for his club; may be Svensson's super-sub.

