

WORLD CUP USA '94

Parreira robbed of peace

SAN FRANCISCO, June 15: Defence never was Brazil's strong suit. Now, on the eve of the World Cup, it's suddenly weaker, reports AP.

Fullback Ricardo Gomes, who pulled a thigh muscle in Brazil's final tune up game against El Salvador on Sunday, was dropped from the team Tuesday and replaced by Ronaldo, who formerly played for Sao Paulo and now is with the Stimza club of Japan.

The loss of Gomes so close to Brazil's opening cup game Monday versus Russia at Stanford Stadium leaves coach Carlos Alberto Parreira with a defensive gap for the match he calls the toughest of the first round.

Gomes was suffering from a lesion in his left thigh muscle, team doctor Lidio Toldeo said, which would have kept him sidelined for at least a couple weeks during the June 17-19 tournament.

Gomes, 29, had undergone magnetic resonance imaging

and ultrasound testing Monday at the Samaritan Hospital in Santa Clara to determine the severity.

Gomes' absence will be felt. Cool, imposing, with excellent technique, he was the cornerstone of the defensive line.

Gomes was only 19 when he became national champion for Fluminense of Rio de Janeiro in 1984. Courtied by top European clubs, he transferred to Benfica of Portugal and later to Paris-Saint Germain, and was consistently voted among the top defenders in his league.

Since 1987, Gomes has been a star on the national team and was captain of the Brazilian team at the 1990 World Cup in Italy.

Yet Gomes is merely the latest in a series of casualties that have riddled the Brazil defence.

Veteran fullback Mozer was cut last month, on the eve of training camp. Doctors said he had hepatitis caused by an excess of anti-inflammatory medicines taken during recovery for knee surgery.

Mozer was replaced by Aldair, who also has a surgically repaired knee.

The litany of misfortunes continued at training camp. Branco complained of mysterious back pains and collapsed during practice. He missed two of Brazil's final exhibition games; his status still is questionable.

Starting fullback Ricardo Rocha also was sidelined for two warm up games with muscle pains.

Ironically, coach Parreira has structured his cautious tactical plan around defence. Starters Taffarel, Jorginho, Rocha, Gomes and Branco are all veterans of the 1990 World Cup with ample international experience.

Parreira was determined to avoid past mistakes, when sloppy defence cost the team dearly. Brazilians still wince when they recall the 1982 World Cup, when an exceptionally talented team, needing only a tie to qualify for the semifinals, lost 3-2 to Italy and was eliminated.



Diego Maradona skips over teammate Dario Franco's tackle during a practice session in Wellesley, Massachusetts on Tuesday. — AFP photo

Bebeto concerned about his family

SAN JOSE, California, June 15: Brazil striker Bebeto said he would hire security guards to look after his family in Rio de Janeiro after his wife and brother were mugged there Sunday night, reports Reuter.

"Of course, I'm going to take action," he said in announcing the decision after a training session Tuesday. "I can't let things go on as they are."

Bebeto's wife, Denise de Oliveira, and his brother, Wilson Carvalho de Oliveira were robbed in Rio de Janeiro on Sunday by two men, team sources said.

The men, armed with guns, went up to their car when they stopped at a traffic light, ordered them out and then stole the vehicle.

Bebeto, training with the Brazil World Cup squad near San Jose, said he had overcome the episode emotionally and promised it would not affect his performance on the pitch.

But he expressed sadness at the way Rio de Janeiro had turned into one of the crime capitals of the world.

"I'm sad at the situation Rio is in. It used to be a marvellous city and now look," he said. "You can't live under these circumstances."

"Here we are making a huge effort to bring some happiness to the Brazilian people — a people who suffer too much — and this happens."

He added: "The car means nothing to me. I'm not worried about material matters."

Because grass was dying

SAN FRANCISCO, June 15: Officials have placed new turf in the centre of the pitch at San Francisco's Stanford Stadium, one of the World Cup venues, because the grass was dying, reports Reuter.

Officials found the grass was dying across a large area after a stage was erected at the centre of the pitch for Stanford University graduation ceremonies last Sunday.

"We have some of the best agronomists in the country working on it and we're confident the field will be in good shape next Monday for Brazil against Russia," said Peter Bridgewater, executive director for the San Francisco venue.

He said the operation required digging down to a depth of about 10 cm and laying strips of turf 180 metres long and 12 metres wide.

The Brazil-Russian clash is the first of four first round matches to be played at Stanford. It will also stage one second round match and a quarter-final.

The stadium, which has a capacity of 86,000, is usually the home of the Stanford University American football team. It has also hosted US international soccer matches.

PROFILES: BOLIVIA

LA PAZ, June 15: Following are brief profiles of Bolivia's World Cup squad:

GOALKEEPERS:
Carlos Trucco. Age 35. Club Bolivar; 22 caps; known among his fellow goalkeepers as "Madman" but style more orthodox than nickname implies; Argentine-born player who moved to Bolivia in 1985; played in all but one of Bolivia's qualifying matches.
Dario Rojas. 34. Oriente Petrolero; 15; originally first choice until mistake that gave Venezuela 1-0 lead in Bolivia's opening qualifying game last year. Bolivia recovered to win 7-1 but for Rojas mistake proved costly.
Marcelo Torrico. 22. The Strongest; 1; third choice keeper.

DEFENDERS:
Marco Sandy. 22. Bolivar; 25; though tackling central defender who takes few prisoners; played in all qualifying games.
Gustavo Quinteros. 29. The Strongest; 21; forms backbone of defence with Sandy.
Miguel Rimba. 26. Bolivar; 16; quick and versatile full-back nicknamed "Roadrunner" in Bolivia.
Luis Cristaldo. 24. Bolivar; 26; tough, uncompromising and fast left-back with powerful shot; one of several squad members to have graduated from Tahuichi Youth Academy.
Modesto Soruco. 28. Blooming; 19; usually deployed as a replacement for Rimba.
Juan Manuel Pena. 21. Santa Fe (Colombia); 19; tough defender suspended for two games after being sent off during 2-1 qualifying defeat against Uruguay.
Oscar Sanchez. 22. The Strongest; 2; reserve central defender.

MIDFIELDERS:
Erwin Sanchez. 24. Boavista (Portugal); 31; nicknamed "Platini" for his resemblance to former French international; creative midfielder with a powerful shot.
Marco Etcheverry. 23. Colo Colo; 23. "The Devil," as he is known, is Bolivia's top player; talented and skilful player who runs team from midfield; still not clear if he will be fully recovered after suffering knee injury during Chilean league game with his club in November; began career with Bolivar, spent unsuccessful year in Spain on loan to Albacete. Then returned to Bolivar, who sold him to Colo Colo last year.
Milton Melgar. 34. No club; 35 lightweight player who has played for Argentina's top two clubs Boca Juniors and River Plate during career; good passer of ball and an inspiration in midfield.
Ramiro Castillo. 28. Platense; 18; has valuable experience in tough Argentine championship, having played for River Plate, Argentinos Juniors and Rosario Central before joining Platense; injury has slowed down his career recently.
Carlos Borja. 36. Bolivar; 75; a stalwart for country and club, where he has spent entire career; tireless, hard-working player, the lung of the team despite his age.
Julio Cesar Baldivieso. 22. Bolivar; 30; in same mould as Etcheverry; took part in all qualifying games.
Mauricio Ramos. 25. Guabira; 10; tricky, left-footed player, the usual substitute for Etcheverry.
Vladimir Soria. 32. Bolivar; 15; like Trucco, was born in Argentina but naturalised Bolivian; restored to squad after missing World Cup qualifying matches after row with coach Xabier Azkargorta.
Mario Pinedo. 30. Oriente Petrolero; 16; often used by Azkargorta as a second half option.

FORWARDS:
Alvaro Pena. 29; Temuco (Chile); 39; opportunist goalscorer with powerful shot which has earned him nickname "Cannon"; often brought on during second half to disconcert opposing defences; scored second goal in dramatic 2-0 World Cup qualifying win over Brazil in La Paz last year.
William Ramallo. 30 (31 on July 4). Oriente Petrolero; 24; nicknamed "Phantom," Ramallo is squad's only out and out goalscorer and has become used to playing on his own in attack; scored goal in 1-1 draw away to Ecuador which guaranteed Bolivia's place at World Cup.
Jaime Moreno. 20. Blooming; 20; promising young player with speed and deft touch.

Maradona—old self again

BOSTON, June 15: Diego Maradona, of the exquisite ball skills and stinging word, is his old self again.

"It looks like we're waiting for a player's heart to burst before forming a players' association," Maradona said after coming through in good form a demanding Argentina World Cup practice on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

"Something similar happened in Formula One. Everyone waited for (Ayrton

Senna to get killed before they reformed a drivers' union."

Maradona, back to near top fitness as he prepares for his fourth World Cup finals, coped admirably with the 45-minute test of continuous man-to-man marking in a practice game against Argentine youth team Renato Cesarini.

He even escaped the close marking of fellow midfielder Dario Franco, who lined up with Cesarini, to score one of four goals notched by coach Alfio Basile's first team in the first half of the practice at the squad's Babson College base

outside Boston.

Basile's practice was staged at midday, the time when Argentina are due to play their opening Group D game against Greece next Tuesday at the nearby Foxboro Stadium.

Maradona said he felt he had come through the test well, but complained the players suffered from kick-off times in the midday heat and other organisational disadvantages set by world soccer's authorities and the demands of television.

"We, the footballers, lost our chance of forming our association and putting across our views on the ways of playing and the timetables," Maradona said.

"We lost our great opportunity in 1986."

Players, with Maradona and his Argentine teammate Jorge Valdano to the fore, complained against having to play in the midday sun at altitude during the Mexico World Cup that year. He said their motion did not meet with enough support from fellow footballers.

Maradona said it was very hot, "I lost my breath a couple of times and felt the tiredness of physical demands in the past week."

Since Argentina arrived at Babson College last week they have worked hard on their fitness, not least skipper Maradona, who left Buenos Aires overweight and slow.

He said the tall Franco, who has stayed with the squad despite being dropped from the provisional 23-man selection for the World Cup, had tested him fully in preparation for a possible man-to-man marking job by one of Greece's big defenders.

Asked if he was worried about rough play from the underdog Greeks, Maradona said he hoped the referee would deal properly with any fouls.

Maradona sent a message to Joao Havelange and Sepp Blatter, president and secretary general of the sport's governing body FIFA with whom he has often had rows, asking them to ensure ball players are protected during the tournament.

"In Italy they talked of fair play and all that, but fair play nothing, because Cameroon killed us in the opening game and no-one said anything," Maradona complained.

"Now Havelange and Blatter have the chance to give people what they go to see, which is football."

Despite the catastrophe against Cameroon, Maradona coaxed holders Argentina all the way to a second successive final against Germany, who beat them 1-0 in Rome, in a tournament that was not memorable for its football.

World Cup briefs

UNDATED, June 15: It seems like old times in international sports, with the United States and Russia caught in a diplomatic tussle, reports AP.

The Russian soccer team Tuesday accused US authorities of delaying visas of a dozen members from their World Cup delegation, mostly players' wives.

"This is not understandable," Russian coach Pavel Sadyrin said. "It's irritating."

Alexander Turkmanov, head of the Russian delegation, said the dozen members were to join the team in the United States starting Thursday. However, the US embassy in Moscow had not yet issued them visas.

There was no immediate comment from US immigration authorities, who are known to apply rigorous visa procedures to those from the former Soviet Union.

"There is no explanation for such a delay," Turkmanov said. "It makes us very nervous."

Russia opens against powerful Brazil on Monday in Stanford, Calif. Turkmanov said some Russian fans wanted to make the trip but were either denied visas or still awaiting them.

"Which explains why we don't see Russian fans in California," he said.

Claudio Reyna, the youngest player on the US team, appears likely to start Saturday in the Americans' opener against Switzerland. The 20-year-old midfielder hasn't worked out since last Wednesday night, when he pulled his right hamstring.

"It's no problem," he said. "Mentally, I'm not even thinking about whether I'm ready or not."

The US team breaks camp from Mission Viejo, Calif, today and is to fly to Pontiac, Mich.

In World Cup tuneups, Switzerland, who play the United States on Saturday, routed the Milwaukee Kicks club team in Birmingham, Mich. Argentina, preparing for Greece, won 12-0 in Boston against Renato Cesarini, an amateur team from Argentina.

Nigeria's soccer team received a meager sendoff, with not even the players' families attending the airport farewell.

"This is very sad," star scorer Rashidi Yekini said Monday from Lagos International Airport. "I have never seen this kind of departure before."

The players waited for four hours on the runway while the flight crew got US visas for the team.

Opposition groups this week have called for protests and strikes against the military government.

Nigeria, appearing in their first World Cup, open against Bulgaria on June 21 in Dallas.

The whole world's watching, and Pasadena, Calif, wants its due. City officials were insulted when World Cup organizers put up a giant sign at the Rose Bowl indicating the site of the tournament final is part of Los Angeles. Pasadena is a half-hour drive from Los Angeles.

"The audacity to put that sign up at the site of the Pasadena Rose Bowl goes beyond the pale," Pasadena City Councilman Bill Thomson said.

If rankings could tell

- DALLAS, June 15: Germany open the defence of the World Cup on Friday back at number one in the FIFA world rankings, reports Reuter.
- They replaced Brazil at the top of the standings issued on Tuesday despite losing one of their last three games — the shock home defeat by fellow finalists Ireland on May 29.
- Brazil dropped to third below the Netherlands despite convincing recent victories over Honduras and El Salvador.
- The Dutch leapt nine places into their highest position since the rankings were introduced last August. Italy jumped from 16th to fourth.
- Top 20 plus other World Cup finalists (previous positions in brackets):
- Germany (2)
 - Netherlands (11)
 - Brazil (1)
 - Italy (16)
 - Spain (9)
 - Norway (4)
 - Romania (10)
 - Argentina (6)
 - Denmark (5)
 - Sweden (3)
 - Nigeria (7)
 - Switzerland (8)
 - France (17)
 - Ireland (12)
 - England (15)
 - Mexico (13)
 - Colombia (18)
 - Uruguay (14)
 - Russia (20)
 - Zambia (19)
 - United States (23)
 - Cameroon (24)
 - Belgium (34)
 - Morocco (30)
 - Bulgaria (29)
 - Greece (32)
 - Saudi Arabia (35)
 - South Korea (37)
 - Bolivia (43)

PROFILES: GREECE

ATHENS, June 15: Following are brief profiles of Greece's World Cup squad:

GOALKEEPERS:
Antonis Minou. Age 36. Club Apollon Athens; 15 caps; most consistent Greek goalkeeper in past five years, he helped AEK Athens to league championship successes in 1992 and 1993; big, strong player who inspires confidence in defence with good positioning and reflexes.
Christos Karkamalis. 24. Aris Salonika; 5; inexperienced reserve who made national team debut in September 1992.
Illias Atmatsides. 24 (25 on July 4). AEK Athens; 4; joined AEK from small amateur team two years ago and helped them to third consecutive title this year after taking over in goal from Minou, who moved to Apollon.

DEFENDERS:
Stratos Apostolakis. 30. Panathinaikos; 59; one of most dynamic Greek players; explosive on right flank where he often attempts rapid overlaps; known for strong shot and pinpoint long throws; made debut in 198 scored twice in qualifiers.
Vaios Karayannis. 27 (28 on July 4) AEK; 6; fast, hard tackler, who joined Greek squad after qualifiers.
Thanasis Kolitsidakis. 27. Panathinaikos; 13; best Greek stopper, distinguished for effective and fair play; played in three of Greece's qualifying games but missed last against Russia through leg injury; was recovered and is expected to be a key player in finals.
Yanis Kalitzakis. 27. Panathinaikos; 35; dynamic stopper who tackles strongly and decisively; another important member of squad and one of best performers in qualifiers; made debut in 1987.
Stelios Manolias. 32 (33 on July 17). AEK 69; Greece's top sweeper, leads defence with rapid interventions and powerful tackling and often joins attack; top-paid Greek professional — his contract is worth 500,000 dollar for one year.
Kyriakos Karataides. 28 (29 on July 4). Olympiakos Piraeus; 14; tough defender who usually plays on left and marks man to man.
Alexis Alediou. 30. Paok Salonika; 8; fast sweeper stronger on fighting spirit than technique; defends well in the air and often scores with his head.

MIDFIELDERS:
Minas Hatides. 28. Olympiakos; 7; ethnic Greek from Germany, dubbed "Madman" for his long hair and unorthodox style; good organiser and excellent dribbler; covers lots of ground but irregular performer; learned to play in Germany, where he had a spell with Bayer Leverkusen.
Fanayotis Tsalouhidis. 31. Olympiakos; 59; talented defensive midfielder who stand out for his selfdiscipline, strength and competitive spirit; often joins attack, scoring 11 goals for his country, mostly headers, and 60 for club.
Nikos Nioplas. 29. Panathinaikos; 36; Greece's most valuable player, according to coach Alketas Panagoulas, who calls him the "brain" of the team as almost every attack starts from him; made debut in first division at 17.
Savvas Koffides. 33. Aris Salonika; 62; made comeback to national squad in last year's qualifiers after long absence.
Spyros Marangos. 27. Panathinaikos; 21; left footer who has strong long-range shot.
Alexis Alexandaris. 25. Olympiakos; 10; top scorer in league last season with 23 goals; one of Greece's best hopes for goals in finals; fast, at home anywhere in field; brilliant passer.

FORWARDS:
Nikos Machlas. 20 (21 on June 16). OFI Crete; 12; Greece's most promising player for his ability to move well in area and take up scoring position; scored twice in qualifiers including the winning goal against Russia last October.
Nikos Tsiantakis. 31. Olympiakos; 45; Greece's best left-footed player who usually plays on the wing and mostly scores from long distance with shots, played in all the qualifiers.
Tasos Mitropoulos. 36. AEK; 74; nicknamed "Rambo" for his explosive team captain and top scorer, who hit two in qualifiers and first played for Greece in 1978; good header.
Alexis Alediou. 21 (22 on June 20). OFI Crete; 3; new member of squad called up since qualifiers.
Vassilis Dimitriadis. 28. AEK 26; one of Greece's leading goalscorer with two in recent colours.
Dimiris Saravakos. 3. /AEK; 76; Greece's best known player in past decade; driving force in attack who holds the record of Greek international appearances; has scored 21 goals since 1982 national team debut; lethal freekicks outside penalty area.

THE OTHER SEMI PROMISES AN INTRIGUING PERSONAL DUEL BETWEEN GRITTY ENGLAND MARKER NOBBY STILES AND THE GIFTED EUSEBIO. CAN THE 'TOOTHLESS TIGER' TAME THE 'BLACK PANTHER'?



11 MINUTES FROM TIME, CHARLTON'S BLISTERING SHOT HITS PAST KEEPER PEREIRA TO GIVE ENGLAND WHAT LOOKS LIKE AN UNASSAILABLE LEAD.



IN A HIGHLY-SPORTING CONTEST, EUSEBIO IS STRANGELY SUBDUED AND IT'S BOBBY CHARLTON WHO TAKES CENTRE-STAGE IN THE 30TH MINUTE. HE POUNCES ON A REBOUND TO SIDE-FOOT THE OPENER.



ALTHOUGH HE SCORES A CONSOLATION PENALTY, EUSEBIO'S WORLD CUP IS OVER HE DEPARTS THE WEMBLEY TURF IN TEARS.



FOR THE FINAL ENGLAND ARE MARGINAL FAVOURITES BUT IT'S BEEN 32 YEARS SINCE A MOST NATION HAS WON THE TROPHY.



IN AN EDGY OPENING PERIOD, A GOAL ALWAYS LOOKS LIKELY. AN UNCHARACTERISTICALLY SLOPPY HEADER FROM ENGLAND FULL-BACK WILSON DROPS TO HALLER WHO GLEEFULLY ACCEPTS THE CHANCE.



WITHIN SIX MINUTES, ENGLAND ARE LEVEL. A QUICKLY-TAKEN FREE-KICK FROM CAPTAIN BOBBY MOORE FINDS HURST IN SPLENDID ISOLATION. 1-1



GRADUALLY ENGLAND GET ON TOP AND IN 78 MINUTES, THEY TAKE A DESERVED LEAD. PEREIRA FINDS HOME A DEFLECTED SHOT AND THE CROWD PREPARES TO PROCLAIM VICTORY.

