



# WORLD CUP USA '94



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## What Colombians really are?

LOS ANGELES, June 17: Whether Colombia really are potential World Cup champions or just unworthy pretenders to the thrown is still a matter for considerable debate, reports Reuter.

But by the time the weekend is over, the world will have a far better idea of just how seriously to take Francisco Maturana's squad.

And while it is dangerous to read too much into any team's debut in such a grueling tournament, a strong showing against Romania on Saturday will underline the feeling that the South Americans can mount a realistic challenge for the title.

Many observers favour them to top Group A, which also includes the United States and Switzerland.

But Romania will be no pushovers. Their coach Anghel Iordanescu may not be as flamboyant as his Colombian counterpart, but his team are capable of producing attractive, high-quality soccer when the pressure is on.

They proved that when they beat Wales 2-1 away from home in their last qualifying match in November to clinch their place in USA '94.

Performing well and winning under pressure is something Colombia have rarely done, and although their 5-0 win over Argentina in September was an astonishing victory, it was the exception rather than the rule.

So the stage is set for what should prove to be an absorbing first encounter between two countries who come from very different worlds but who

both play with a Latin temperament and style.

The game will focus on how the defences handle two highly volatile and dangerous attacking forces and whether the Colombia midfield of Carlos Valderrama and Fredy Rincón can dominate the likes of Dorinel Munteanu and Ionut Lupescu in what has the mak-



FAUSTINO ASPRILLA

ings of a skilful midfield battle. Colombia will pin their hopes up front on the tournament's possible golden boy Faustino Asprilla and Adolfo 'The Train' Valencia who will, if the heat doesn't derail him, spend most of the match trying to charge his way straight through the middle of the Romania defence.

For their part the Colombian defence will have their work cut out trying to prevent Florin Radučiu bewildering them with his magic — or the irrepressible Gheorghe Hagi pepping in shots from almost anywhere in the last third of the field.

Iordanescu closed his training sessions to the media after a Colombian television crew

tried to film his players in their hotel rooms and eating their lunch, but Romania showed just enough in a low-key friendly with Sweden in Mission Viejo on Sunday to prove just how seriously they should be taken.

Maturana joyously summed up the feeling in his camp for reporters on Thursday.

"Colombians like to dance, and we always like to dance with the prettiest girl at the ball. We are ready for the ball to start. The players are all fit, they are all ready to go and we feel confident we can do well."

"You know it would be a very good thing for soccer if we won the World Cup. We are going to bring some joy back to the game," he said.

But Iordanescu's highly motivated, well-disciplined players will bring their won version of the Carpathian two-step to the Rose Bowl dance floor, and the result could be anything but joyous for the South Americans.

### PROBABLE LINE-UPS

**COLOMBIA:** 1-Oscar Cor-doba, 4-Luis Herrera, 15-Luis Carlos Perea, 2-Andres Es-cobar, 20-Wilson Perez, 14-Leonel Lavarez, 6-Gabriel Gomez, 10-Carlos Valderrama, 19-Fredy Rincon, 21-Faustino Asprilla, 11-Adolfo Valencia.

**ROMANIA:** 12-Bogdan Stelea, 2-Dan Petrescu, 3-Daniel Claudiu Prodan, 14-Gheorghe Mihali, 4-Miodrag Belodedici, 7-Dorinel Munteanu, 6-Gheorghe Popescu, 5-Lourenco Lupescu, 11-Ilie Dumitrescu, 10-Gheorghe Hagi, 9-Florin Radučiu.

**Referee:** Jamal Al-Sharif, Syria

**Kickoff:** 2330 GMT

## FIFA in a tricky position

CHICAGO, June 17: FIFA came close to covering itself in ridicule on the eve of the World Cup finals on Thursday when a damaging split between the old and new continental soccer powers emerged at its two-day congress, reports Reuter.

The resistance of Europe and South America to claims for better representation by Africa, Asia and North and Central America produced a deadlock which left FIFA in the bizarre position of continuing to recognise the defunct Soviet Union.

A personal intervention by FIFA president Joao Havelange, who was re-elected unopposed for his sixth four-year term, failed to resolve an impasse involving the world body's Russian vice-president Vyacheslav Koloskov.

Koloskov's place on the FIFA executive stemmed from a 1946 decision to give the Soviet Union a permanent seat as one of eight vice-presidents. Egypt proposed the Soviet

place should go to Europe but that FIFA's executive should expand at the same time from 21 to 25 members with extra representatives for Africa, Asia and North and Central America.

But the idea was rejected by traditional soccer powers Europe and South America, with a vote of 90 for and 63 against failing to reach the necessary 75 per cent majority.

The move angered the Africans, who proceeded to block an executive committee proposal simply deleting the Soviet Union from FIFA statutes and awarding an extra place on the executive to Europe.

FIFA vice-president David Will of Scotland, head of the Juridical Commission, said Europe had decided to give the place to Koloskov so the net effect would be the same which every way the Congress voted.

Even if the Soviet Union no longer existed Koloskov, as a sitting member, could not be removed from office unless the

FIFA are thus left with a Soviet vice-president until the next congress in two years' time. Havelange called for a meeting of confederation presidents in October to work out a compromise to present in 1996.

Will said this meant players who had appeared only in friendly games for one country could go on to play for a second.

New members of FIFA's executive were presented to Congress, including Havelange's son-in-law Ricardo Teixeira of Brazil.

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