

Swedes fault Russian tactics

PONTIAC, June 23: Sweden face Russia on Friday hoping their World Cup opponents remain stunned by their comprehensive 2-0 defeat to Brazil, reports Reuter.

Swedish coach Tommy Svensson said the Russians mistakenly opted for man-to-man marking against the South Americans — tactics that could only help his team.

Sweden drew 2-2 with Cameroon in their first Group B game and need to beat Russia because they meet Brazil last.

Svensson's players are unused to the hot and humid conditions inside the unventilated Pontiac Silverdome and are likely to spend some of the first half acclimatising.

"Our priority is to defend the goal in the first half and go more onto the offensive in the second," said midfielder Anders Limpar.

"The Russians have a good defence but they leave too many openings at the back. They play man-to-man too much," said striker Martin Dahlin, scorer against Cameroon.



TOMMY SVENSSON change it," he said.

The Russian forwards performed lamentably on Monday and Sadyrin may well be tempted to drop either Dmitry Radchenko or Sergei Yuran in favour of second-choice strikers Oleg Salenko or Alexander Borodyuk, who both came on as substitutes.

"We had problems with our

attack against Brazil and we will have to improve on that," said Sadyrin.

Defender Viktor Onopko, suspended for the Brazil game, is available, but Russia's player-of-the-year in 1992 and 1993 has suffered a loss of form.

In any case, Sadyrin might well be tempted to drop defender Vladislav Ternavsky, who allowed Romario to score Brazil's first goal and later gave away a penalty.

PROBABLE TEAMS

SWEDEN: 1-Thomas Ravelli, 2-Roland Nilsson, 3-Patrik Andersson, 4-Joachim Bjorklund, 5-Roger Ljung, 6-Stefan Schwarz, 8-Klas Ingvesson, 9-Jonas Thern, 21-Jesper Blomqvist, 10-Martin Dahlin, 11-Tomas Brodin.

RUSSIA: 16-Dmitry Kharin, 2-Dmitry Kuznetsov, 3-Sergei Gorlukovitch, 5-Yuri Nikiforov, 6-Vladislav Ternavsky, 21-Dmitry Khlestov, 18-Viktor Onopko, 10-Valery Karpin, 7-Andrei Pyatnitsky, 17-Ilya Tsybalar, 15-Omrity Radchenko, 22-Sergei Yuran, 9-Oleg Salenko, 13-Alexander Borodyuk.

Referee: Joel Quiniou (France).



Diego Maradona hurriedly finishes his breakfast before going to his morning training session at the Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts on Wednesday. His wife Claudia Villafane stands next to him. — AFP photo

Batistuta — half way there

WELLESLEY, Massachusetts, June 23: Argentina's hat-trick hero Gabriel Batistuta said on Wednesday that if recent World Cups are a guide he is already halfway to winning the leading scorer's award at the US finals, reports Reuter.

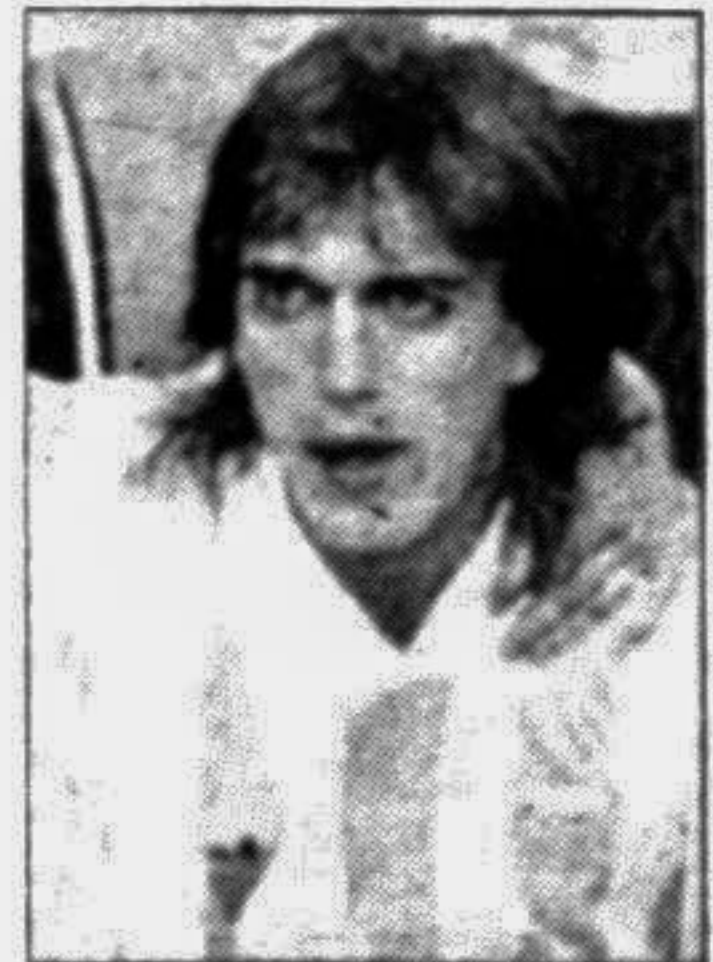
"I didn't come here to be the top scorer, but to help Argentina win the World Cup," Batistuta said. "I was only doing my job."

"But if it only takes six goals to become top scorer then I'm already halfway there," he said of his three goals against Greece in Argentina's 4-0 Group D victory on Tuesday.

The top scorers in the last four tournaments all netted six each: Italy's Toto Schilaci in 1990 and Paolo Rossi in 1982. Gary Lineker of England in 1986 and Batistuta's childhood hero Mario Kempes in 1978.

Batistuta, who scored twice in the first half, completed his hat-trick by blasting home a second-half penalty.

Had Diego Maradona, who had already been substituted, taken the penalty he would no doubt have placed the ball with a gentler touch.



BATISTUTA

"Our order for penalties is Maradona first, Batistuta second, Batistuta said. "But Diego told me later he would have let me anyway to get the hat-trick."

Batistuta's hat-trick on his World Cup debut took his Argentina goals tally to 23 in 33 internationals since his debut in the 1991 Copa America when he was top scorer with six.

His 16 goals in Italy's Serie B last season helped Fiorentina bounce straight back into the top flight after their relegation from Serie A, where he also hit 16 in the 1992-93 season.

Batistuta, spotted by Newell's Old Boys of Rosario in street kickabouts as a youngster, says he owes his success mainly to coach Marcelo Bielsa at his first club.

After an unhappy spell at River Plate, his career took off at their arch rivals Boca Juniors early in 1991 where he developed a brilliant understanding with midfielder Diego Latorre.

Ironically, the place Latorre was meant to fill at Fiorentina after the Copa America that year in Chile was taken by Batistuta, with the Italian club soon releasing the midfielder to Tenerife of Spain.

Germans stick to old recipe

CHICAGO, June 23: The traditional German recipe for success at past World Cups has been to start the first stage slowly, let the team simmer gently for a few rounds and turn up the heat when the crucial rounds begin.

Coach Bert Vogts and his team seem to be following the cook book closely, judging by their far from impressive performances against Bolivia and Spain in their opening two group games. Whether it works or not is another matter, reports Reuter.

"You can't be 100 per cent from the start. It is better to produce 60 to 70 per cent at the start and improve from game to game," midfielder Stefan Effenberg said on Wednesday. "You see that with all the top favourites."

"People always expect superlatives from the Germans and it is not always possible."

Two cheers for pro soccer in US

WELLESLEY, Massachusetts, June 23: Argentine Football Association head Julio Gronzona said on Wednesday he could not see professional soccer taking root in the United States after the World Cup, reports Reuter.

"I hope football, succeeds in the United States after the World Cup, but can't see it," he said.

"There's World Cup climate only in the stadiums, due mainly to the ethnic communities. North Americans themselves go to the matches because they take them as a show," added the FIFA vice-president.

Vogts added: "We know we must get better and we will."

The Spanish made the German defence look hesitant in the first half an hour of their 1-1 first-round draw in Chicago on Tuesday. The world champions seemed to lack creativity in midfield until the later stages.

But Vogts does not seem to be worried. His team have four points from two games and look set to win Group C with a good result against South Korea next Monday. A glance at the past recipes of predecessors Franz Beckenbauer and Jupp Derwall shows the ingredients are there for success.

Apart from the 1990 World Cup when they opened with a 4-1 win over Yugoslavia, the Germans are notorious for their slow starts. In 1986 they managed only a draw with Uruguay and in 1982 they suffered an embarrassing 2-1 defeat at the hands of Algeria before reaching the final of both tournaments.

Vogts admitted his team was not playing as well as it could. But he showed no sign of panic, giving his players 24 hours off on Wednesday before they come together for a team meeting at noon on Thursday to discuss the Spanish match.

"The players must have the chance to think about something else (apart from soccer)," Vogts said. "Then we will look at the video of the match and look at the mistakes."

"There were too many mistakes, especially in midfield where we lost the ball to much. We need to talk to each other more on the pitch."

Vogts, however, may be looking at life like a cook who thinks he has produced a chef d'oeuvre, only to find the customers sending the waiters back into the kitchen with complaints that the food is

cold and tasteless.

Whether the German media matter, and whether those at home accept the fare on offer is another matter. There is a good chance Thursday's German newspapers will be full of criticism for Vogts and his team.

It may not be too long before the players start to get nervous and criticism comes from inside the German camp which is notorious for its internal bickering during World Cups.

Vogts was even confident to say on Wednesday that he would look forward to playing teams like Argentina and Nigeria who have played some exciting soccer in their opening matches and looked much more impressive than his side.

"I would be happy to play teams like that because Nigeria and Argentina play attacking soccer," he said. "We have had to play against two teams who are strong on the counter attack."

Simeone to join Atletico Madrid

WELLESLEY, Massachusetts, June 23: Argentina midfielder Diego Simeone said on Wednesday he had signed a five-year contract with Atletico Madrid, reports Reuter.

Simeone, who has played for fellow Spaniards Sevilla for the last two seasons, said the deal was reached before Argentina's opening World Cup match, a 4-0 victory over Greece on Tuesday.

The transfer fee was set at 5 million dollars, the players' agent Roberto Settembrini said.

Simeone began his career at Buenos Aires club Velez Sarsfield, moving to Italy's Pisa in 1990.

Berthold speaks out against Vogts' style

CHICAGO, June 23: The first bickering broke out in Germany's World Cup camp on Wednesday when defender Thomas Berthold called for a shake-up of the team and said coach Bert Vogts has been conservative with his criticism of the world champions despite two below-par perfor-

mances in the group stage, Berthold said, reports Reuter.

"It can't be right when the trainer says after every game that we are playing well when all the world can see it is not true."

"I have told him that. We should call a spade a spade. We have to do much more to win the World Cup. What we have produced so far has been terrible."

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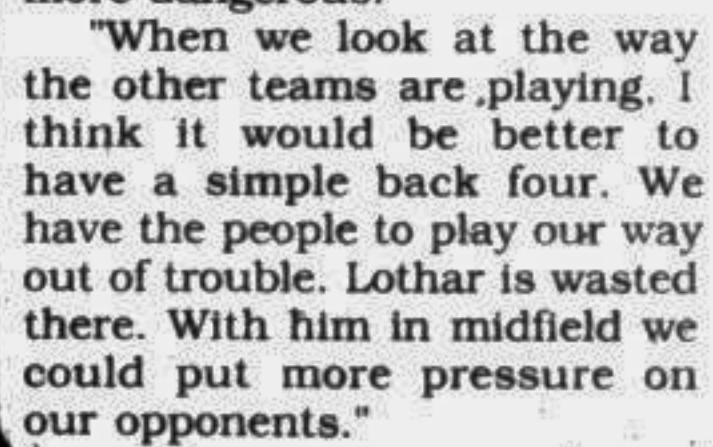
Berthold said he would prefer captain Lothar Matthaeus to move forward from libero to his old position in the midfield of the park where he could be more dangerous.

"When we look at the way the other teams are playing, I think it would be better to have a simple back four. We have the people to play our way out of trouble. Lothar is wasted there. With him in midfield we could put more pressure on our opponents."

After being in the 1990 World Cup-winning side, he lost his place after being sent off in a European championship qualifier against Wales in Cardiff in June 1991. But he won it back with good club form this season and was one of Germany's better players against Spain.

While other players were being diplomatic with the press on Wednesday, Berthold let fire.

"Every player has their job to do. Not everyone is doing it," he said. "We haven't played so many (aimless) high long balls forward for a long time."



LOTHAR MATTHAEUS

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While Moelle, is certainly talented, he has not yet shown the same inspiration which Matthaeus has provided in the past when the Germans were in trouble.

Matthaeus, the most capped German player of all time, has looked dangerous at times when he has gone forward but he does not get into attacking positions very often because of his defensive commitments.

With the Germans almost certain to win Group C despite their far from impressive form — their last first-round game is against South Korea in Dallas on Monday — it is unlikely Vogts will change his tactics at such a late stage.

But Berthold's comments may cause some tension when the team meet to discuss the Spanish performance on Thursday.

Berthold has a reputation for being outspoken and his career has often been surrounded by controversy.

Once called "a clown" by former coach Franz Beckenbauer, the 29-year-old VfB Stuttgart player has been in and out of favour in the national team but always seems to hit his form at the right time.

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That's better!

NEW YORK, June 23: Nearly eight out of ten Americans are aware of the World Cup and nearly one in two plan to watch a game on television, according to a telephone poll carried out this week, reports AFP.

The poll, based on a random sample of 1,034 people, found 90 per cent were aware of the World Cup. Ninety per cent of people familiar with the tournament knew it was a soccer event and 84 per cent knew it was in the United States.

"We are ecstatic," USA 94 chairman Alan Rothenberg said. "These figures confirm the United States is ready for world class soccer."

The poll, which has a three percent margin for error, comes after the release of better-than-expected television audiences and confounds the pessimism created by pre-tournament polls.

Last November, at the time of the World Cup draw, only 13 per cent of Americans had any idea of what the World Cup was and even fewer knew it was going to take place in their country.

By last month awareness and barely struggled above 30 per cent but the surprising high media profile of the tournament has obviously had a significant impact.

Argentines upbeat

WELLESLEY, Massachusetts, June 23: A mood of optimism unthinkable just two weeks ago pervaded Argentina's World Cup camp on Wednesday — tempered with words of caution after just one resounding victory, reports Reuter.

"It's a great start, but we've got to keep our feet on the ground," captain Diego Maradona said after Argentina's 4-0 win over Greece in their opening Group D game on Tuesday.

It was a far cry from Argentina's 5-0 defeat at home by Colombia during the qualifiers and their poor performances in warm-up matches.

Coach Alfio Basile and his players said the work they had put in since arriving in the United States two weeks before their first finals match had changed the mood of the squad, who were being heavily criticised back home.

"If you are calmed everyday it affects you," Basile said.

The Argentines face Nigeria, 3-0 winners over Bulgaria in Tuesday's other Group D match, on Saturday.

"The Nigerians are very fast," Maradona warned. "But Bulgaria should have settled

the match in the opening 15 minutes.

"If those chances had fallen to Cani (Claudio Caniggia) or Bati (Gabriel Batistuta), we would have thrashed them."

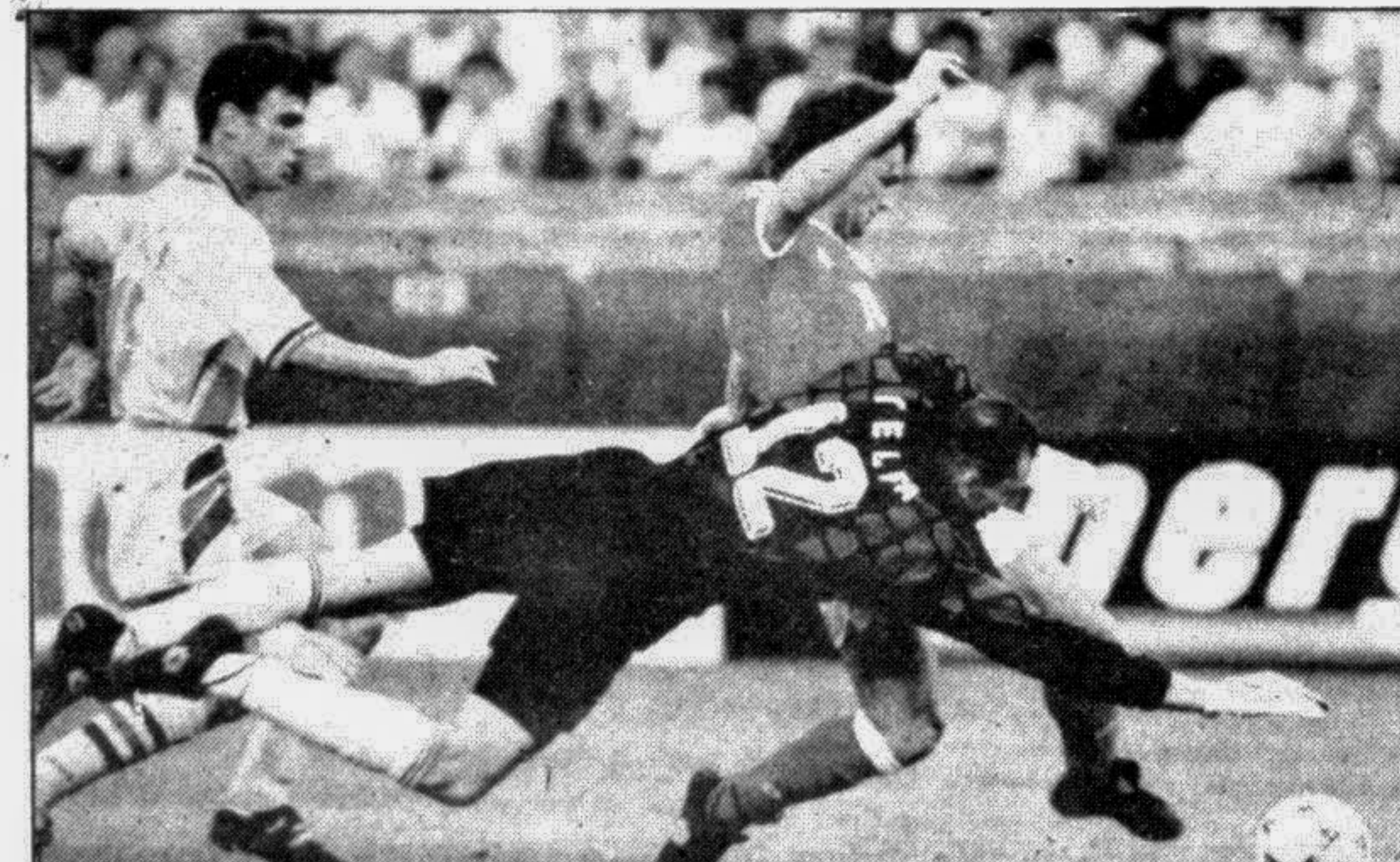
Batistuta, who opened the scoring in the very second minute, became the tournament's top scorer after his hat-trick against the Greeks.

Looking back on his brilliant 60th-minute goal, Argentina's third, Maradona said: "I ran towards a big camera I saw to shout my joy and also my anger."

"Before the match there were doubts. The path has been very hard. There were people who thought they owned my life," the former Napoli star, back from a doping ban, rows with his clubs and threats of retirement, said of his critics.

Defender ISCA Ruggeri, Argentina's most capped player and one of the senior voices in the squad, said: "This has only just started. Teams will find ways to get round us and it's going to get more difficult."

Looking ahead, the veteran Argentina's 1986 triumph said the match against Greece was "Only the first of seven finals. The doubts only go away when you lift the World Cup."



Stephane Chapuisat gets round a stretching Romanian custodian Stelea to score Switzerland's second goal. The Swiss outclassed Romanians 4-1 during a World Cup Group A match at the Rose Bowl Stadium on Wednesday. — AFP photo

Big loser!

LONDON, June 23: An Australian punter lost a total of 67,500 pounds sterling, 103,800 dollars as Romania and Colombia crashed to shock World Cup defeats on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Switzerland's odds to win the tournament were cut from 80-1 to 25-1 after their 4-1 victory, with the US reduced from 100-1 to 33-1 after beating Colombia 2-1.

Wrath of soccer

SAO PAULO, Brazil, June 23: Police reinforcements were sent to a small Brazilian Amazon town after its inhabitants went on a rampage when a power blackout prevented them from watching Brazil's first World Cup soccer game, the local police chief said Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Police reinforcements were called in to help local officers control the riot. Six people were arrested.

Tide turns against Romania

PONTIAC, Mich., June 23: At the World Cup, it's a short road from glory to disaster. Romania proved it on Wednesday, reports AP.

First, the Romanians earned massive praise for their 3-1 opening victory against pre-tournament favourites Colombia. Then they received a huge slap in the face when Switzerland, considered an underdog, trounced them 4-1.

"It's like we have two teams at the World Cup," sweeper Miodrag Belodedici said. Belodedici played despite an injured knee but there were

no excuses for other players on the Romanian team, which has a tradition of failing to realise its potential at big championships.

Before Wednesday's defeat, Romania were a contender for one of the top two places in their Group A, who would ensure a second-round spot.

Now they face a do-or die match Sunday against the United States, who beat Colombia 2-1 Wednesday.

"It was truly a very bad result for us," said Romanian coach Anghel Iordanescu. "Now we have a hard task in our game against the Americans," he said even before

the US-Colombia game was played.

"We made several bad, unforgiving errors," the grim-faced Iordanescu said, blaming his defence for the "terrible" result against the Swiss.

Romania has one of the most experienced teams at the World Cup, consisting of world-class internationals who play for top European teams. But their temperament and commitment were always questionable.

After Switzerland took a 2-1 lead in the 53rd minute, the Romanians gave up the fight. Their play crumbled and the Swiss easily added two more goals.

BEFORE THE KICK-OFF, ARGENTINA INDULGE IN SOME PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE. THEY KEEP HOLLAND WAITING AND THEN OBJECT TO A SMALL PLASTER ON THE HAND OF RENE VAN DE KERKHOFF.



IN THE 38TH MINUTE, ACE-IN-THE-PACK KEMPE MAKES THE BREAKTHROUGH FOR ARGENTINA. HE DODGES KROL'S TACKLE AND ROLLS THE BALL UNDER JONGBLOED.



HOLLAND HAVE THE BETTER OF THE SECOND HALF. A LONG-THREATENED EQUALISER FINALLY ARRIVES FROM THE HEAD OF TOWERING SUBSTITUTE NANNINGA.



IN THE DYING SECONDS, RESENBRINK COMES TANTALISINGLY CLOSE TO AN HISTORIC WINNER WHEN HE HITS THE POST FROM JUST FIVE YARDS. THE MATCH GOES INTO EXTRA-TIME.



THE POWERHOUSE STRIKER IS RAMPANT NOW. SIX MINUTES FROM THE END HE CLEAVES ANOTHER HOLE IN THE DUTCH DEFENCE AND BERTONI DELIVERS THE COUP DE GRACE.



HOLLAND'S SECOND-HALF EXERTIONS HAVE LEFT THEM DRAINED. AFTER FOURTEEN MINUTES KEMPE WRIGGLES PAST THREE DUTCHMEN TO FORCE ARGENTINA BACK INTO THE LEAD.



HOLLAND ARE THE NEARLY-MEN AGAIN. THE ARGENTINIANS MEANWHILE CAN FORGET ALL THEIR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND RELISH IN WORLD CUP VICTORY AT LONG LAST.



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