

WORLD CUP USA '94

Today's World Cup Fixtures

Sweden vs Saudi Arabia
Argentina vs Romania
(For details see page 1)

Motive, not anabolic

LOS ANGELES, California, July 2: An Olympic drugs specialist has dismissed claims that Diego Maradona's dope test proved he had taken performance-enhancing substances, reports AFP.

"If he had really wanted to improve his performance he would have taken something else," Dr Jacques Rogge told AFP from his home in Belgium.

Those five substances were not sufficient to make a substantial difference," added the International Olympic Committee Medical Commission's vice-president.

Argentina's World Cup captain was expelled from the World Cup when he failed a test which revealed five ephedrine-related drugs.

FIFA medical officials stressed they had been unable to find any medicine which contained all five drugs in an apparent attempt to rule out the possibility he took it accidentally as part of a cold or allergy remedy.

"We suppose it must be a cocktail," FIFA executive committee member Dr Michel D'Hooghe of Belgium said.

D'Hooghe who sat on the panel which heard the case, added on Thursday: "Some of the five banned substances are used in weight-reduction medication."

Maradona had shed 26 pounds in his fitness battle and rose through the drugs might have been taken as a conditioner.

"It could have been prepared by an unqualified person," he said. "And you have to remember that people sometimes disregard prescriptions and mix drugs themselves in the belief it will do them good."

FIFA has yet to decide on Maradona's future but banned him for 15 months in 1991 for cocaine use. Athletes face a two-year ban for stimulant use but labour laws prevent FIFA from adopting the same tough penalties on professional sportsmen.

Boost for

Third World

DALLAS, July 2: The unprecedented survival of four teams from outside Europe and South America after the first round of the World Cup has provided a shot in the arm for Third World claims for more places at the finals, reports Reuters.

The US tournament has produced significant evidence that a global levelling is going on in soccer, with teams from five continental federations qualifying from the group matches for the first time ever.

Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, the United States and Mexico all contributed to the first round shocks with the Nigerians and Mexicans both topping tough groups.

In previous World Cups, no more than two teams from outside the traditional soccer strongholds of Europe and South America had ever gone as far in a single final.

Africa, Asia and the North and Central American Confederations are all seeking extra berths when the finals expand from 24 to 32 teams in France in 1998 and their cause has been boosted by what has happened to them, but I do not condone for a moment what he did.

"He deserves to be sent home and he deserves not to play again for what he did."

However, Wade said the ephedrine cocktail did not appear to have had any effect on Maradona's play.

"He did not look any sharper on television, he did not seem to run more kilometres than he did against us" he said.

Former soccer captain John Kosmina said: "He is an idiot. Given his past record, whether he had a cold or not, he should have been a bit more careful."

Argentine officials dropped Maradona from their roster Thursday after he tested positive for five banned drugs, all related to the stimulant ephedrine.

They are available in over-the-counter cold remedies, but no known product contains all five.

The positive test put paid to Maradona's effort to cap his comeback from a 15-month ban for cocaine use with a triumphant World Cup performance.

Kosmina, who played for Australia in two World Cup campaigns, added: "He must have known he would be a target for testing after he had already served time for an other offence before this."

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HAND OF DESISTANCE: Disgraced Argentine soccer captain Diego Maradona accompanied by his wife Claudia (L) stretches an unwelcome wave of the hand to the prying pressmen after arriving at Logan Airport in Boston on Friday. — AFP photo

In a heap of broken images

PASADENA, Calif., July 2: Troubled Argentina, shattered by the banishment of Diego Maradona and a humbling defeat by Bulgaria, try to regroup Sunday in a second-round match against surprising Romania, reports AP.

Argentina were one of the more impressive teams in the early World Cup games, but then Maradona tested positive for ephedrine, a stimulant, and was banned by FIFA.

Deflated by the loss of the inspirational beacon and masterful playmaker, Argentina was a team in disarray in a 2-0 loss to Bulgaria hours after Maradona was barred Thursday.

"Of course their spirits were low on the field," Argentina coach Alfio Basile said. "He's a leader for our players... Maradona's presence alone lifts our players way over our rivals."

Without Maradona initiating the attack, there will be more need for strong individual performances from Gabriel Batistuta, who scored three goals in the first round, and Claudio Caniggia, who had two as Argentina opened play with a 4-0 victory over Greece, then a 2-1 win over Nigeria.

Leonardo Rodriguez started in place of Maradona against Bulgaria, and he was subbed out by Ramon Medina Bello. Neither was able to generate

an attack. Romania, a longshot that won their group, also will be missing a key player for the afternoon game at the Rose Bowl. The absence of Florin Raducioiu, however, should take considerably less of an emotional toll on Romania than the loss of Maradona did on Argentina.

Raducioiu, who had scored two goals in the first round for Romania, drew his second yellow card in Sunday's 1-0 win over the United States and thus cannot play in the second-round game.

"He is a very important player," coach Anghel Iordanescu said. "He is our striker and one of our best forwards. He will be difficult to replace."

Ilie Dumitrescu, who had five goals in Romania's eight World Cup qualifying matches, probably will move up from his midfield position to try to close out scoring opportunities.

While Argentina will be without Maradona, the Romanians will have his European equivalent — Gheorghe Hagi, known as "The Maradona of the Carpathians."

Hagi, a talented playmaker and scorer, had two goals and two assists as the Romanians went 2-1 in the opening round. They beat group favorites Colombia 3-1, lost 4-1 to Switzerland, then shut out the United States. "Without Maradona,

Argentina is still a great team," Hagi said. "But we are not afraid of Argentina. We want to remember Italy in '90 (when Romania was eliminated by Ireland in the second round) and do better."

Despite Argentina's woes, Iordanescu said that it is a good team with or without Maradona. He also said it is a World Cup where virtually every game is even.

"It is a World Cup where the values are very balanced because of the specific conditions," he said. "The heat, the traveling, the different time zones across the United States where the games are being played has contributed to this."

From a team point of view, you have to be of very strong character, have players who are like fighters. It requires a lot of physical and psychological endurance. The teams that do well also have a lot of tactical discipline and play with intelligence.

PROBABLE TEAMS

ROMANIA: Florin Prunea; Dan Petrescu, Miodrag Belodedici, Daniel Prodan, Tibor Selymes, Dorinel Munteanu, Gheorghe Popescu, Gheorghe Hagi (capt), Ionut Lupescu, Ilie Dumitrescu, Marian Ivan.

ARGENTINA: Luis Islas; Roberto Sensi, Fernando Caceres, Oscar Ruggeri (capt), Jose Chamot, Diego Simeone, Fernando Redondo, Leonardo Rodriguez, Abel Balbo; Ariel Ortega, Gabriel Batistuta.

Life sans Maradona throbs

LOS ANGELES, California, July 2: The news that Diego Maradona, arguably the best footballer in the world, is out of the World Cup has begun to sink in around the world, reports AFP.

Australian soccer captain Paul Wade, who marked Maradona in the final World Cup play-offs in November, said: "I am disappointed with what has happened to him, but I do not condone for a moment what he did."

"He deserves to be sent home and he deserves not to play again for what he did."

However, Wade said the ephedrine cocktail did not appear to have had any effect on Maradona's play.

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Kosmina, who played for Australia in two World Cup campaigns, added: "He must have known he would be a target for testing after he had already served time for an other offence before this."

"It is a shame that such a

brilliant footballer has to fall this way," added Australian assistant coach Les Scheinflug.

While Maradona quietly slipped back from Dallas, Texas, to Boston, Massachusetts on Friday, the Argentine team traveled to Los Angeles for their second-round match against Romania.

His legion of fans throughout the world voiced their support.

About 500 fans demonstrated in western Bangladesh against the decision to expel him, calling it a "conspiracy."

It was a "part of a conspiracy to discredit the superstar," the supporters alleged after marching through Pabna district's major streets, the United News

Dutch roll on

AMSTERDAM, July 2: The Netherlands maintained their unbeaten record on the seventh day of a seven nations men's tournament on Friday when they beat Argentina 3-1, reports Reuters.

The Dutch now meet Australia, who also have a 100 per cent record, in the final tournament match on Sunday. Australia must first meet Pakistan today.

Argentina, who have proved surprisingly obdurate during the week, held the world champions until the fourth minute of the second half when Taco van den Honert flicked a penalty corner into the roof of the net.

Three minutes later Leo Klein Gebbink laid on the simplest of chances for Marc Delissen and Van den Honert, with another penalty corner scored the third.

With seven minutes remaining Jorge Lombi pounced during a scramble in the Dutch goalmouth to reward late Argentinian pressure.

A topical gift

GOTHENBURG, Sweden, July 2: All 22-member of Saudi Arabia's World Cup squad will find a new Volvo 850 Saloon awaiting them on their return home, a gift from a football-fanatic Saudi businessman, reports AFP.

Wafaa Zawawi, whose Jedaqa Company imports Volvos to Saudi Arabia, bought the cars for five million kronor (660,000 dollars), Swedish financial paper Idag reported today.

The Swedish cars are an appropriate gift, as Saudi Arabia meet Sweden in the second round on Sunday.

"Regardless of how the game against Sweden goes on Sunday, I will donate a Volvo to every player," Zawawi said.

Saudi team members will now have to build extensions on their garages—the royal family gave each player a Mercedes after qualifying for the finals.

Pure mistake!

BUENOS AIRES, July 2: Diego Maradona admitted he made a mistake taking the pills that caused his expulsion from the World Cup and an end to his professional soccer career, reports AP.

The star striker said Brazil was now his pick to win the Cup, which concludes July 17 in the Rose Bowl.

In an interview with Buenos Aires daily Clarin in the Dallas airport, Maradona said he and his personal dietician Daniel Cerrini "forgot to report to (team doctor Ernesto) Ugalde that I was taking pills."

"I took those pills as if they were aspirin. Thousands of players do it; but the cost is always higher when Maradona does it," the midfielder said.

Maradona called FIFA's decision Thursday to suspend him for taking the banned substances, which included ephedrine, an asthma medication that also is a stimulant, "unfair," because they are making me pay very dearly for a tiny mistake."

"I never imagined I would be left out of the World Cup after so much sacrifice," Maradona said. "I'd like to remind the people who suspended me that I trained by myself for a long time, and above all, that I never needed drugs to play well."

Asked if his decision to retire was final, the 33-year-old said, "Yes, it's all over. I returned to play my fourth World Cup. I gave it my best effort, but it ended badly. Now I want to spend most of my time with my family. Soccer's over for good."

On Argentina's 2-0 defeat to Bulgaria in the last game of the first round, Maradona said, "before that match, we made lots of errors, but they were made up for by the strength of our forward line."

"Now it's all evened out. But I think that the boys and (coach Alfio) Basile can build a powerful team again once they recover from the emotional blow" caused by his suspension.

Tending the bar in life's game

UNITED NATIONS, July 2: Joseph-Antoine Bell, goalkeeper for the Cameroon national football team, presented the outline Friday of a global campaign against poverty supported by football players around the world, reports AFP.

Bell spoke before a UN committee to present the worldwide campaign "one goal: Human development," launched in conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme and "Survive," a non-governmental French agency.

The campaign received support from footballers on all seven continents, including Gabriel Batistuta of Argentina.

Roberto Baggio of Italy, Juergen Klinsmann of Germany, Roger Milla of Cameroon, Rai de Souza Oliveira of Brazil, Abedi Pele of Ghana and Vincenzo Scifo of Belgium.

They signed an appeal calling for "more human resources to ensure that by the end of the decade 1995-2005 no child will go without an education, no human being will be denied either primary health care or safe drinking water, no one will be condemned to go hungry and all couples who wish to determine the size of their families will be able to do so."

Following his speech to the UN committee, Bell presented UN secretary general Boutros Boutros-Ghali with footballs signed by players from every national team, bearing the campaign's logo.

Concerns of sheer contrast

DOLLAS, July 2: Saudi Arabia fear the Swedes more than the heat. The Swedes worry more about the heat than the Saudis.

Of the first-round survivors, unbeaten Sweden couldn't have asked for a better opponent in the round of 16. The only bad thing is that Sunday's game will be played in Dallas' Cotton Bowl, where the temperatures sizzled in previous World Cup games, reports AP.

"It's going to be hot, but we are well-prepared," said Swedish coach Tommy Svensson, whose team tied Cameroon 2-2, beat Russia 3-1 and then drew pre-tournament, Brazil 1-1.

"We never ask ourselves if we're going to handle the heat, only how we're going to do it."

"We'll have towels and water on the sidelines," Svensson said. "It worked real well when we practised in the heat."

The Swedes first through the noon kickoff time would be the worst possible.

"But we found out that it's even hotter later in the afternoon," Svensson said.

Martin Dahlin, one of the hottest strikers in the first round, will be back after missing the Brazil game because of two yellow cards in the earlier games.

"You bet I'm hungry to play," said Dahlin, who scored three goals in the first two games.

Bui Dahlin, who returns up front alongside Kemet Andersson, is not overconfident. He respects the surprising Saudis.

"It will be a difficult match because a lot of people expect us to win," Dahlin said. "They have a good team, I think it's time for Sweden to really be successful in a major tournament."

It's been a long time. In 1950 Sweden finished third in Brazil, and as hosts eight years later, runners-up after losing the final to Pele's Brazil.

Dahlin didn't make the roster four years ago in Italy, when Sweden went home early after losing all three games 2-1. He played but didn't score in the 1992 European Championships. The Swedish hosts finished third, losing 3-2 in the semifinals to Germany after beating eventual champions Denmark 1-0 in group play.

Dahlin's return to the line-up against Saudi Arabia means the versatile Tomas Brodin will move back to midfield.

Sweden is heavily favoured against Saudi Arabia, which upset already qualified Belgium 1-0 Wednesday to become the first Gulf nation to reach the second round.

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Ireland beware of Koeman

ORLANDO, Florida, July 2: Ronald Koeman, the Dutch master of the free kick who sent England tumbling out of the World Cup, has warned Jack Charlton's Republic of Ireland they are next on his hit list, reports AFP.

"It is about time I scored another one for Holland," said Koeman, whose professional foul on England's David Platt went unpunished in the vital qualifier, which the Dutch won 2-0.

I like Ireland's Packer Bonner. He is a very good goalkeeper. But if I take a free kick well no goalkeeper in the world is going to stop it," he added.

Koeman's deadly exploits from the edge of the penalty box — one of his free kicks was measured at 122 kph (76 kph) in Barcelona's European Cup semifinal win over FC Port — will be a major danger Ireland in Monday's second round meeting at the Citrus Bowl here. Charlton has to decide whether to recall full-backs Denis Irwin and Terry Phelan from suspension, and the signs are that Gary Keely and Steve Staunton, who played against

Brolin, the top scorer in the 1992 Europeans, played up front against Brazil, setting up the opening goal with a long looping cross to Andersson.

Except for the opener against Cameroon, which was played

in the Rose Bowl at Pasadena, Calif., the Swedes haven't felt the heat in the World Cup. Their last two games were played indoors at Pontiac's Silverdome.

Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, played their Group F games in much warmer temperatures on the US east coast, in Washington to DC and East Rutherford, NJ. It was not, but it's much hotter in Saudi Arabia, of course.

"It will be a difficult game, but we will play offensive soccer," Saudi coach Jorge Solari said.

The surprising Saudis finished with a 2-1 win last record, losing to the Netherlands 2-1 and then beating Morocco 2-1 and Belgium 1-0. But while the last result may have been surprising, remember that Belgium were already safe in the second round before taking on the Saudis.

Saudi striker Saeed Owairan ran and ran for the only score against Belgium with one of the great, long-distance scoring runs in World Cup annals. He eluded four defenders on the 55-metre dash, then beat goalkeeper Michel Preud'homme, who had not allowed a goal in this World Cup.

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While the Saudis may have one of the fastest teams in the tournament, they are still young and inexperienced. Except for the Dutch game, they haven't faced a team of Sweden's caliber yet.

This is the Saudis' first World Cup. Sweden have played nine and most of the starters played in Italy four years ago. In between, the Swedes reached the semis in the 1992 Europeans and played in a much tougher qualifying group than the Saudis, finishing ahead of Bulgaria and France. Also, 11 players on the Swedish roster are based abroad in competitive European leagues.

Sweden and Saudi Arabia have only played once before. That was two years at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and Sweden won 2-1.

"We didn't have our best team," recalled Thomas Ravelli, the most experienced goalkeeper in the World Cup who will make his 114th national team appearance Sunday for Sweden. "We had our B team and played on artificial turf."

Svensson, who spent several hours watching video tapes of the Saudis' first-round games, says he has a clear picture about Sweden's opponents.

"They have fast, technical players," Svensson said. "They play with a lot of guts. They were lucky to beat Morocco, they had bad luck against the Dutch and won deservedly over Belgium."

Sunday's winner will play either Argentina or Romania next week in the quarterfinals at Stanford, Calif.

PROBABLE TEAMS

SWEDEN: 1-Thomas Ravelli, 2-Roland Nilsson, 3-Patrik Andersson, 4-Joachim Bjorklund, 5-Roger Ljung, 6-Stefan Schwarz, 8-Klas Ingegson, 9-Jonas Thern, 19-Kennet Andersson, 10-Martin Dahlin, 9-Tomas Brolin.

SAUDI ARABIA: 1-Mohammad Al-Deayea, 4-Abdullah Sulaiman, 3-Mohammad Al-Kulawi, 5-Ahmed Jamil Madani, 13-Mohammad Abdul-Jawad, 6-Fuad Anwar Amin, 8-Fahad Al-Bishi, 16-Tajal Jabrin, 9-Majed Abdullah, 10-Saeed Owairan, 20-Hamza Saeed Eslatah.

Referee: Renato Marsiglia (Brazil). Kickoff: 1705 GMT.

Dahlin hungry for action

DALLAS, July 2: Martin Dahlin, who scored three goals in Sweden's first two games but had to watch

the Group B finale from the stands, can't wait to play again in the World Cup, reports AP.

"You bet I'm hungry to play," said Dahlin, who returns up front alongside Kennet Andersson as Sweden meets Saudi Arabia in the round of 16 at the Cotton Bowl on Sunday.

Dahlin's problem was, in addition to collecting goals, he also collected yellow cards in the first two games against Cameroon (2 2) on June 19 in the Rose Bowl at Pasadena, Calif., and Russia (3 1) on June 24 in the Silverdome at Pontiac, Mich.

Two yellow cards mean an automatic one-game suspension.