

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 in the United States.

FIFA increased Africa's allocation from two to three places after the 1990 tournament when Cameroon became the first African country to reach the quarter-finals.

Unexpectedly, it is not Europe which is suffering from the advance of the outsiders but South America.

Europe has 10 teams in the last 16, as it did in 1986 and 1990, but South American representation has dropped from four in both of those tournaments to two this time with only Brazil and Argentina carrying the flag.

The real test of soccer's Third World aspirations to be placed on a par with the old guard comes in the second round.

Impressive Nigeria, who meet an off-colour Italy, and Mexico who face a Bulgarian side depleted by suspensions, look to have the best chances of a quarter-final place.

But Saudi Arabia, whose two victories were the only ones ever recorded by an Asian side at the finals apart from North Korea's 1-0 win over Italy in 1966, plan to upset the Swedes and the Americans have not abandoned all hope against Brazil.



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 humiliating 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." He 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 favourites 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 when 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.

of Bangladesh agency reported.

They also pledged to boycott viewing the World Cup games, most of which are being broadcast live on state-run Bangladesh Television, until Maradona returned.

FIFA said Friday that they would not hear an appeal in the case, while Buenos Aires radio carried another telephone interview with Maradona in which he denied taking drugs.

Julio Grodona, president of the Argentine Football Association, said he believed Maradona took the drugs inadvertently.

"Surely Diego did not know anything," he said, but he denied that there was any conspiracy of FIFA's part.

"It is not a matter of life and death, but something that happens in sports with certain rules. You have to comply with the rules."

Meanwhile, Maradona was apparently still in Boston Friday evening, but hoped to link up with the Argentine team before their second round match in Los Angeles.

His wife, Claudia, who had been staying near the team's Cup headquarters here, picked him up at the airport, where the distraught star arrived after a night that included only two hours of sleep.

Maradona was not listed as a passenger on any international flights out of Boston's Logan airport.

He could make reservations to travel within the United States under an alias.

He said he hoped to be able to join up with his erstwhile teammates, who arrived in Los Angeles Friday morning to prepare for their second round match with Romania on Sunday.

The Argentine squad trained at a Los Angeles University behind closed doors on Friday afternoon.

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 Jeddah 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 has 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, Raul 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



DALLAS, 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.

But Dahlin, who returns up front alongside Kennet 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."

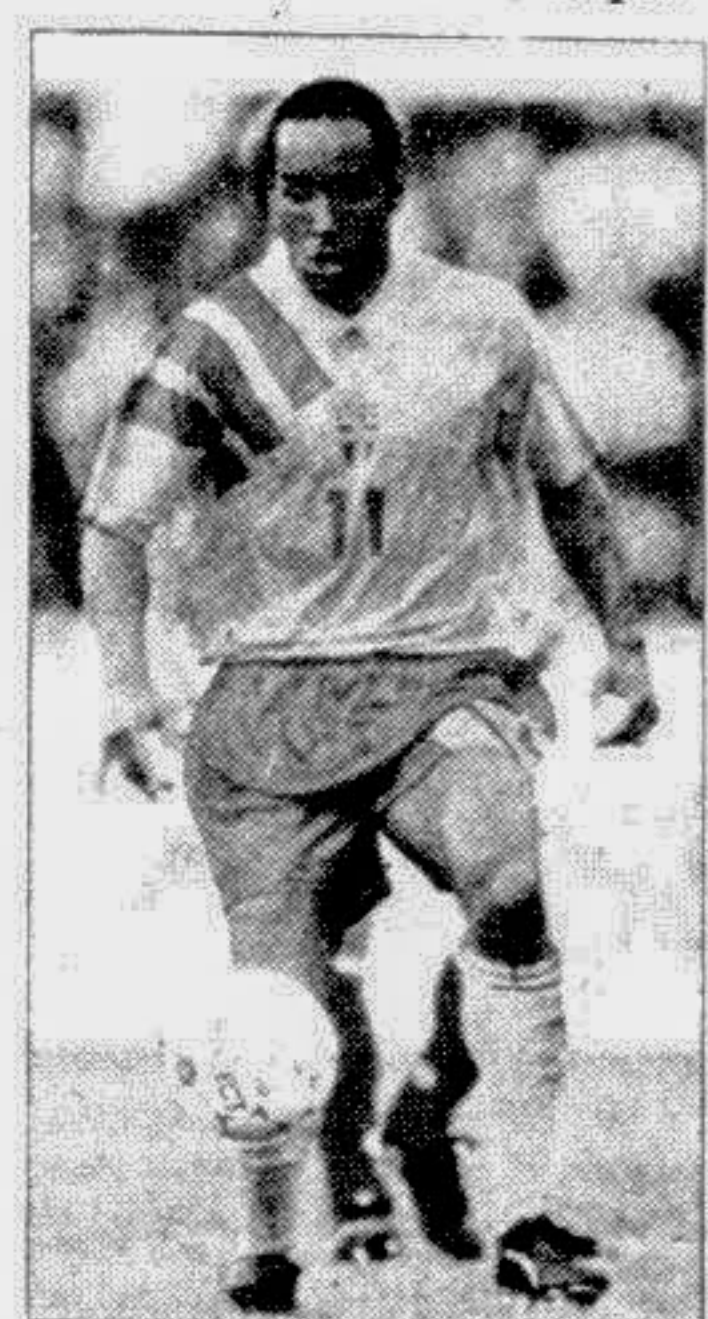
It's been a long time. In 1950 Sweden finished third in Brazil, and as hosts eight years later, runners-up after losing the final to Pele's Brazil.

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 lineup against Saudi Arabia means the versatile Tomas Brodin will move back to midfield.

Brodin, 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



MARTIN DAHLIN

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 lost 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 65-metre dash, then beat goalkeeper Michel Preud'homme, who had not allowed a goal in this World Cup.

"Allah is with us, and so victory will come to us," Owairan said after helping the Saudis

become the first Persia Gulf nation to reach the second round.

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 Ingegnor, 9-Jonas Thern, 19-Kennet Andersson, 10-Martin Dahlin, 9-Tomas Brodin.

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-Talal Jabrin, 9-Majed Abdullah, 10-Saeed Owairan, 20-Hamza Saeed Eplatah.

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.

But the Swedes did well without their ace striker, tying pre-tournament Brazil 1-1 Tuesday in the Silverdome. Andersson gave the Swedes a 1-0 halftime lead — the only goal Brazil has conceded in the tournament.

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.

But Dahlin 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. "The Saudis have small, fast and technical players."

They have a good team but I think it's time for Sweden to really be successful in a major tournament."

It's been a long time. In 1950, Sweden took the bronze medal in Brazil. As hosts eight years later, the Swedes lost 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.

His breakthrough came in the qualifying phase for this World Cup. He scored seven goals in nine qualifiers, including vital equalizers against France and Bulgaria.

Dahlin's latest scoring — his two headers against Russia were games — earned him not only respect but a nice pay raise with Bundesliga club Borussia Monchengladbach.

Dahlin opted last week to stay in Germany after receiving an offer from England's Everton, which had proposed Borussia a reported transfer fee of dfls 3 million.

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 Patrick 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

Norway on Tuesday, will miss out.

But Charlton will not name his team until the day of the match and is still waiting for skipper Andy Townsend to resume training after damaging a hamstring in the goalless draw against the Norwegians.



RONALD KOEMAN

"It is just a precaution that he missed the session," said Charlton, who could also have

striker Tony Cascarino available on the substitutes' bench for the first time in the tournament.

The player faces a long haul back from a torn calf muscle, however, and Charlton admitted: "We might just get 15 minutes out of him at the end of a game if we need his heading ability."

The Irish are aiming to meet favourites Brazil in the quarter-finals but Charlton said: "Nobody should take anything for granted. Everyone expects them to beat the United States and Holland to beat US but that might not be the case."

He added: "We know the Dutch as well as anyone in Europe and they have to be respected because they still have very good players, even though they might have slipped a bit in the world ratings."

Charlton is still worried about the regulations on giving water to players during matches and revealed it needed the intervention of a FIFA official for players to drink during the Norway clash.

Dutch coach Dick Advocaat has banned all talk of the heat in Orlando, where his team have already played twice.