

WORLD CUP USA '94



THE AGONY OF DEFEAT: Argentine striker Gabriel Batistuta (9) is comforted by assistant coach Carlos Merlo (2nd R) and trainer Ricardo Echavarría (L) after his country lost 3-2 to Romania in a World Cup second round match in the Rose Bowl Stadium on Sunday. — AFP photo

Today's World Cup Fixtures

Italy vs Nigeria
Mexico vs Bulgaria

(For details see Page 1)

Romanians rejoice

BUCHAREST, July 4: Romanians thronged the streets of central Bucharest early today in jubilant and noisy scenes to celebrate Romania's 3-2 win against Argentina in a World Cup second-round match, reports AP.

"Farewell Argentina, Sweden you're next to go," the crowds shouted. Romania take on Sweden in the quarter-finals in San Francisco — next Sunday.

The Bucharest crowds hugged policemen and commandeered cars and trucks, draping them in huge tricolour flags, acclaiming: "Glory to them, glory to the (Romanian) tricolour team."

The crowds sang and danced to the rhythm of the local two-step dance "hora" as firecrackers went off with deafening noise. Witnesses estimated the size of the crowd at several hundred thousands. A police figure was not immediately available.

Local radio commentators reported with gusto the street fiesta, saying the joyous crowds in Bucharest's Central Victory Square was "ten times more than those who went out on Romania's streets during the 1989 revolution."

Bucharest police chief General Nicolae Nitu, out with his troops to keep an eye on the crowds, said: "We are here in the street to savour the sweet happiness of this victory."

Colombians don't want to return

MEDELLIN, Colombia, July 4: The killing of star defender Andres Escobar has sent a chill through the Colombia's World Cup team, reports AP.

Some players say they don't want to return, and the man who was to replace coach Francisco Maturana says he no longer wants the job.

Hernan Dario Gomez, who had been an assistant coach, announced his decision Sunday, only 46 hours after agreeing to become head coach.

Gomez said he told Maturana he decided to accept an offer to coach Atletico Madrid of the Spanish League and he will go to Spain in the next few weeks.

Maturana and Gomez received death threats during the World Cup, forcing them to scratch Gomez's brother, midfielder Gabriel Jaime Gomez, from the game against the United States.

The players no longer feel secure in the aftermath of the parking-lot shooting Saturday in which six bullets were pumped into their teammate, Escobar accidentally kicked the ball into his own net during Colombia's 2-1 loss to the United States on June 22.

"I don't want to return to the squad if it means an error on the field will cost me my life," forward Ivan Valencia said.

Dumitrescu, Hagi throttle Romania through Argentina out of World Cup



PASADENA, Calif., July 4: Ilie Dumitrescu and Gheorghe Hagi masterminded the downfall of two-time champions Argentina Sunday as Romania gained a thrilling 3-2 triumph to reach the World Cup quarterfinals for the first time, reports AP.

Dumitrescu scored twice and Hagi hit the other in a match packed with thrills, goalmouth action and outstanding moves from both teams.

Gabriel Batistuta scored for Argentina from the penalty spot and Abel Balbo's 75th minute strike for 3-2 set up a tense finish.

But Argentina, who had reached the final in three of the previous four World Cups, went out at the second round this time.

Diego Maradona, banned from the World Cup after a positive dope test, watched the game from the TV commentary box and several times threw up his hands in emotional displays of frustration.

Dumitrescu's goals came in the 11th and 18th minutes while Hagi's came after 58. Romania now will meet Sweden in the quarterfinals July 10 at Stanford.

The tragedy for Argentina was that it had both Maradona and Claudio Caniggia, another standout player, watching and unable to take part. In Caniggia's case, it was because of a toe injury.

The game was only 50 seconds old when Balbo powered in a long-range shot that Romanian Florin Prunea clutched low in front of goal.

And in the eighth minute, Batistuta tried to surprise Prunea with a powerful, swerving drive the keeper saved at the foot of the near post.

Argentina should have gone ahead in the 10th minute after a move the watching Maradona would have been proud of.

Diego Simeone swerved and dribbled past three Romanians to move into shooting range and set up the chance for Balbo, who was unable to beat the goalie.

The ball was quickly switched the other end where Argentina conceded a free kick that led to Romania's first goal.

Dumitrescu had plenty of colleagues to aim at but fired a curling, angled right foot from 35 meters that flew past Islas into the far corner of the net.

Argentina levelled five minutes later from the penalty spot.

The lively Batistuta turned two Romanian defenders wide on the left and was heading for goal when one of them, Daniel Prodan, pushed him over.

Batistuta took the penalty and drove it low and hard past Prunea.

Before the Argentines had the chance to take hold of the game, they were behind again.

Hagi sliced a pass between two defenders to the in-running Dumitrescu, who side-footed the ball first time between Islas the near post.

The Romanians went for Argentina's throat with a series of moves that would have brought more goals but

the brilliance of goalkeeper Islas.

He stuck out a foot to block a goalbound shot from Gheorghe Popescu and dived to his right to fist away a powerful shot from Ion Lucescu.

At the other end, Batistuta fired wide of the target from a good position in front of goal and then Balbo flung himself at a right wing cross to send a



ILIE DUMITRESCU

low, diving header just past the post.

Maradona, watching from the TV commentators zone, flung his arms up in the air in despair.

A minute before halftime, Hagi split open the Argentine defence and Dumitrescu should have made it 3-1. After rounding the goalkeeper and shooting goalwards, he could only watch as his miscued effort was cleared off the line by Fernando Caceres.

A minute after halftime, Prunea produced a blocking save to keep out Batistuta's short-range shot after Argentina had found a hole in Romania's defence.

The Argentines kept pressing for an equalizer but tended to try and walk the ball into

goal instead of shooting from further out.

And, in the 58th minute, they fell further behind.

Argentina lost possession in Romania's half and Dumitrescu latched onto the ball.

The Argentines chasing back and struggling to close the gaping holes in their defence, Dumitrescu held on to the ball until Hagi arrived from midfield. The two goal strikers slid the ball outside to Hagi who hit the ball first time past Islas into the net.

Argentina claimed a penalty in the 68th minute when Simeone went down. But Italian referee Pierluigi Pairetto, who controlled the game well, gave a free kick outside the area and Batistuta's free kick was comfortably held by Prunea.

Fifteen minutes from the end of this pulsating game, Argentina scored again.

Caceres moved forward to fire a 30-meter shot that whistled through the Romanian defence and was too hot for Prunea to handle. The ball squirmed out of his hands and Balbo was there first to bulge the net with his followup shot from five meters.

TEAMS

ARGENTINA: Luis Islas, Jose Chamot, Roberto Sensini (substitute: Ramon Medina Bellow, 63rd minute), Jose Basualdo, Fernando Redondo, Oscar Ruggeri, Fernando Caceres, Diego Simeone, Gabriel Batistuta, Abel Balbo, Ariel Ortega.

ROMANIA: Florin Prunea, Dan Petrescu, Daniel Prodan, Miodrag Belodedici, Gheorghe Popescu, Ion Lucescu, Tibor Salymes, Gheorghe Mihali, Dorinel Monteanu, Gheorghe Hagi (Constantin Galga, 90th), Ilie Dumitrescu (Cornel Papura, 89th minute).

Referee: Pierluigi Pairetto, Italy.

Defence mechanism

BUENOS AIRES, July 4: Argentines clutched at conspiracy theories on Sunday as they searched in consternation for excuses for their second-round knockout from the World Cup finals, reports AP.

Commentators and other Argentines blamed their 3-2 defeat by Romania on FIFA, soccer's governing body, after their inspirational captain Diego Maradona was booted out of the tournament for taking banned drugs.

"They didn't beat us on the pitch. We were beaten off the pitch, and that is what hurts my soul," said Maradona, who was commenting from Pasadena for Argentina's Channel 13.

Maradona took up commenting three days after FIFA ejected him from the tournament after finding traces of five performance-boosting drugs in a urine sample.

"You heard what Diego said, we were beaten off the pitch, somebody nobbled us," said Juan Carlos Morales, a commentator for Radio America, which re-broadcast Maradona's words.

"I'm left with the feeling that we lost to a worse team, Morales said. "I can't believe it."

Speaking to Argentine television, coach Alfio Basile said the team was packing its bags to go home.

"This isn't the time to speak. It's over. The saddest moment is right now. In two days, this team has been wiped out," Basile said.

The comments echoed national disbelief that Argentina, twice world champions, had been knocked out so early in the tournament.

Minutes after the match, dejected fans slunk away from a plaza in downtown Buenos Aires where they normally gather for celebrations when their side wins.

"It's very quiet here. Everyone is going home to try to swallow this defeat," a fan said.

Argentina was almost shut down during the game. The streets of Buenos Aires were deserted, and parks that are normally full on Sunday's emptied as families hurried home to their television sets.

21 Argentine fans held

PASADENA, July 4: Two Argentine fans face deportation from the United States after being arrested when fighting broke out following their team's 3-2 World Cup defeat by Romania at the Rose Bowl on Sunday, reports AP.

Twenty-one other people were arrested for ticket touting, one for being drunk and one for trying to steal a beer off the head of a security guard at the match.

A small fight started behind one of the goals at the end of the second-round match which saw Argentina eliminated from the finals.

Empty water bottles, sticks were thrown at police and security officers, but no one was hurt in the incident.

A spokeswoman for the Pasadena Police Department said: "Luckily the disturbance was contained quite quickly and no one was hurt. But two Argentine fans were arrested, and depending on their status, face deportation."

Dahlin's dream comes true



DALLAS, July 4: Martin Dahlin has battled all his life to triumph over adversity.

And now the Swedish striker, who as a 10-year-old boy dreamed of playing in the World Cup finals, has reaped the rewards worthy of the sweat he spilled and the heartache he endured on his route to the top, reports AP.

In his first World Cup finals Dahlin has moved off the sidelines of hopefulness onto the centre stage of the world's great strikers.

Four superb goals in three games have thrust him into the spotlight as he dazzled the world with the scoring talent that only Swedes knew he possessed.

His sixth-minute opener against Saudi Arabia in Sunday's 3-1 second-round victory took him level with three former internationals at the top of Sweden's overall World Cup finals goalscoring list.

And as he continues his run of a goal a game, he could yet challenge for the ultimate distinction of the world's number one striker.

But ever since he watched Mario Kempes score six goals as he led Argentina to the world title in 1978 and dreamed of scoring in the World Cup, Dahlin has had to

become the best," said Dahlin.

The key to success if you have some talent is to train hard and have a strong mentality, it is very difficult to cope under pressure at the top."

Dahlin has had the advantage of learning how to cope with pressure from his psychologist mother. But he has also had to learn the hard way.

He was star of Swedish soccer, in 1988 when he led Malmö to the national title with 17 goals, topped the scoring list and earned his international debut against Brazil.

But Dahlin struggled to cope with the sudden stardom at 20, and the first black Swedish international lost his form and his place in the national team. With it disappeared the dream of playing in the World Cup finals in Italy in 1990.

Only when Tommy Svensson took over after Sweden's dismal showing in Italy '94 did Dahlin earn a recall.

He went into a trough again in 1991 when he signed for German Club Borussia Mönchengladbach and struggled in a new environment as injuries and poor form restricted him to a handful of appearances and two goals.

He was still selected for the 1992 European championship finals in Sweden and, although he never scored in their run to

as a footballer, and has gained experience playing in Germany. All have made him a better player.

"When he started scoring goals, that increased his self-confidence, and that's very important for him."

Dahlin, his spirits revived by Euro '92, scored 10 goals in a good season for Mönchengladbach in 1992-93 and hit 12 last season in the Bundesliga.

His seven goals in qualifying earned Sweden a place in USA '94 as well as Sweden's coveted player-of-the-year title in 1993. It also brought him to the World Cup finals.

"It's a dream come true to play in the World Cup and score some goals," said Dahlin, who missed the 1-1 draw against Brazil through suspension. "Ever since I saw the 1978 finals on television I have wanted to play in them."

His goalscoring streak appeared to dry up in four games without a goal leading up to finals. But Dahlin admitted he wasn't trying.

"After two years hard qualifying I had at last reached the World Cup finals. I had my place in the team and I was not going to do anything stupid like getting injured in a friendly," he said.

"I have to be aggressive, work hard and give everything to score goals, but I was not going to make a stupid chal-



Swedish forward Martin Dahlin exults after scoring the opening goal against Saudi Arabia during a World Cup second round match in the Dallas Cotton Bowl Stadium on Sunday. Sweden won 3-1. — AFP photo

fight to overcome innumerable obstacles.

The son of a Venezuelan musician who left his Swedish mother when he was a small child, Dahlin has dragged himself to the top through hard work.

"A lot of players have talent, but it's not always enough. Nine out of 10 don't make it, only those who train the most

the semifinals, he caught the eye as he set up two goals.

Svensson considers it a turning point in Dahlin's career.

"That was the start of the new era for Martin Dahlin. He had a couple of good performances even if he did not score," said the Swedish coach. "He has worked hard, matured as a human being and

challenge that could have cost me this dream."

Dahlin, who is Sweden's leading goalscorer on 20 — one more than Brolin from three fewer games, has become neither bitter nor selfish in his transition into a world beater.

"The important thing is always to do your best for the team. It's a team sport," he said.

After Basile, Passarella?



PASADENA, July 4: The president of the Argentine Football Association said after his team went out of the World Cup on Sunday that sweeping changes could be made to squad and he would not guarantee coach Alfio Basile's future, reports AP.

Julio Grondona put it bluntly after watching his team lose 3-2 to Romania to make their earliest exit from the tournament since going out in the second round in Spain in 1982.

"I cannot tell you that I am satisfied with that," he told reporters. "On the way back to Buenos Aires I'll think about what went wrong, what could have been done differently, if anything. We'll evaluate the coach's situation and the team's."

"I am prepared for any decision we might have to take," Daniel Passarella, Argentina's 1978 World Cup winning captain and now coach of River Plate, seems to be the favourite to guide Argentina to new horizons.

It has been common fare in Buenos Aires for months that Grondona wants Passarella as national team coach.

Basile, 40, was bidding to become the third coach to lead Argentina to victory in the World Cup following Cesar Menotti in 1978 and Carlos Bilardo in 1986.

But after a bright start which saw Argentina beat

Greece and Nigeria, his World Cup turned into a nightmare.

On Thursday, Diego Maradona, the player he nurse-maided back into the national side, was expelled for a positive dope test. Hours later Argentina lost to Bulgaria. Finally on Sunday they lost to Romania and were eliminated.

Argentina had never previously lost to either eastern European nation.

Basile, who took over from Bilardo following the 1990 finals in Italy, is under no illusion that his term as national coach was guaranteed to survive failure at these finals.

Before they began he said.



DANIEL PASSARELLA

"If you make a mistake at club level, it is serious but it is multiplied 10 times over when

it is the national team."

Grondona, AFA president since late 1978, has allegedly been unhappy with Basile, whose side barely scraped into the World Cup. But he did not want to rock the boat.

Passarella was a leading candidate to succeed Bilardo. Weeks before Bilardo's side lost the 1990 final, Passarella won the first of three league titles with River Plate.

But the former River Plate, Fiorentina and Inter Milan defender was too closely identified with the type of football preached by Menotti.

Passarella has, however, steered a middle road between the Menotti and Bilardo schools as River Plate coach over the last few seasons. He is said to admire AC Milan's game.

A sticker for discipline, Passarella would bring a strong new brush into the Argentina set-up.

An enemy of Maradona's, he would not have tolerated having the superstar into his squad and ruling the roost.

Very few of the 1994 squad would probably find a place in an Argentina coached by Passarella, partly because so many of them play their club football in Europe.

Passarella would be likely to try to build a side with home-based players and only call up exiles if he could not find a player good enough to fill a given position.



MOMENT OF JOY: Romanian captain Gheorghe Hagi celebrates after teammate Ilie Dumitrescu scored the first of his two goals against Argentina during their World Cup second round match in the Rose Bowl Stadium in Los Angeles on Sunday. Argentina bowed out of the competition. — AFP photo