

WORLD CUP USA '94



THE IRRETRIEVABLE: One that pipped US goalie Meola and a prostrate defender Alexie L alas to the post. Brazilian forward Bebeto showing signs of delight in anticipation put paid to hosts' ambition of the greatest upset in the history of the World Cup with this strike on at the Stanford Stadium on July 4. — AFP photo

Brazil still on top of Sprint Soccer Poll

KANSAS CITY, Mo, July 5: Brazil stayed on top of the Sprint Soccer Poll for the eighth straight week, but Germany were close behind in the weekly survey of international soccer journalists, poll organisers said Tuesday, reports AP.

Brazil, who advanced to the World Cup quarter-finals with a 1-0 victory over the United States on Monday, received 41 out of a possible 51 first-place votes for 500 points.

Germany had 10 first-place votes and 468 points. The Netherlands fell back into third place with 383 points. Nigeria were in fourth with 6 points, followed by Italy with 299.

Romania were voted sixth with 264 points, while Spain were seventh with 164. Mexico were close behind in eighth with 160 points. Rounding out the top 10 were Bulgaria with 69 points and Sweden with 58.

Argentina, in second place last week, dropped all the way down to the 11th spot with 31 points after being eliminated from the World Cup by Romania on Sunday.

Asian snooker semifinals today

Sports Reporter

Somporn Kantawang and Preecha Sae Be of Thailand, Chan Wa-Tat of Hong Kong and Ooi Chin-Kay of Malaysia advanced to the semifinals of the 11th Asian snooker championship after recording victories in their respective quarter-final matches at the ballroom of Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

Kantawang, who set a new Asian record for the highest break of 139, had to rally from 1-3 down before finally clinching the best-of-nine frames match 5-3 against Yong Kien-Foot Malaysia. Kantawang, who lost his final preliminary group match to Sri Lankan Indika Dodangoda on Monday, produced some of his best in the last four frames to stop Yong running away with a shocking victory.

Kantawang's compatriot Preecha Sae Be, a silver medalist in the Manila Southeast Asian (SEA) Games, overcame Filipino Marlon Manalo 5-2.

Wai-Tat stifled Dodangoda's spirited charge with some solid showing and booked his place in the last four with a 5-3 triumph.

Dodangoda, who caught the pundits by surprise when he beat Kantawang in his last group match, began the day with a clear intention of pulling off another sensational win but his determined efforts fell a bit short against the cool Hong Kong cueist.

Chin-Kay, meanwhile, had the easiest ride to the semifinals against Chan Kwok-Min of Hong Kong with the Malaysian racing to 5-1 victory.

The best-of-11 frames semifinals will be played today, starting at 2 pm.

Bangladesh Television will cover tomorrow's final live. The best-of-15 frames match will begin at 10 o'clock in the morning.

Brazil free US from WC

PALO ALTO, July 5: Brazil, reduced to 10 men for the entire second half, beat the United States 1-0 on Monday, to reach the World Cup quarter-finals and spoil the Americans' Independence Day celebrations, reports Reuter.

Bebeto coolly drove the ball home in the 74th minute after Romario split open the defence with a darting run and found his striking partner in space.

Brazil will now play the Netherlands in Dallas on Saturday.

Disaster had appeared to be beckoning for the Brazilians after defender Leonardo was sent off in the 43rd minute for elbowing American midfielder Tab Ramos in the face. Ramos was concussed and had to be replaced by Eric Wynalda at halftime.

But the dismissal jerked the Brazilians into life after a goalless first half in which the Americans packed their defence and kept the South Americans at bay.

The United States backed by a partisan crowd of more than 84,000 on their national holiday went close on only one occasion.

Thomas Dooley's low shot drifted just past the post in the 12th minute after Ramos sliced a pass through the Brazilian defence.

But they can be pleased with reaching the second round, their aim at the start of the tournament.

The Americans also had a player sent off — but by then their cause was almost lost. Defender Fernando Clavijo received his marching orders for a second bookable offence in the 85th minute after he brought down Romario.

At the final whistle the Brazilian players threw up their arms in relief while the Americans hung their heads in despair knowing that their dream — alive for three quarters of the match — had died.

Romario failed to get on the scoring sheet for the first time in four matches at these finals but gave an inspirational performance in which he went close several times.

He hit the post in the last minute of the first half and provoked a superb diving save from goalkeeper Tony Meola at the end of the second after dancing his way through the US defence.

Brazil started to put some good moves together only after a nervous first 20 minutes.

Defender Aldair went close after beating the Americans' offside trap in the 23rd minute

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"There was no pressure on them, in this game. Anything that happened would be a bonus for them."

He praised his team for keeping their cool after the dismissal of Leonardo. "We did not lose our heads and even with one man less we created more chances than the Americans. We played to qualify and that's what we did."

"Speaking of the Leonardo incident, he said: "Unfortunately people can't always control their reactions. If they could the world would be perfect and nobody would ever make mistakes."

US coach Bora Milutinovic said he was sad to go out of the tournament but happy with the efforts put in by his players. "It's not the first time a team one man down has beaten us."

"But we said our goodbyes in a great atmosphere and I think the players have done something truly spectacular."

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The Americans relied on packing their defence and hoping for a goal on the counter attack. Marcelo Balboa, playing a record 94th international, ably marshalled the defence with the bearded Alexi Lalas.

Their hopes were raised when French referee Joel Quiniou had no hesitation in producing a red card after Leonardo had sent Ramos reeling. The two players had tangled near the touchline.

But the Brazilians led by captain Dunga in midfield and Romario in attack, continued to come at the Americans and gave their forwards hardly a sniff of goal.

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ROMARIO

High stakes!

TIRANA, July 5: An Albanian short of cash for gambling lost his wife after betting her on the outcome of a World Cup soccer match, the daily newspaper Koha Jone (Our Time) said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

The unidentified gambler was so sure that Argentina would beat Bulgaria that he staked his spouse, who disappeared with the winner when Bulgaria won 3-2. The loser complained to police.

Zagalo predicts Brazil-Germany final

PALO ALTO, July 5: Brazil will meet champions Germany in the World Cup final, Brazil's assistant coach Mario Zagalo predicted on Monday, reports Reuter.

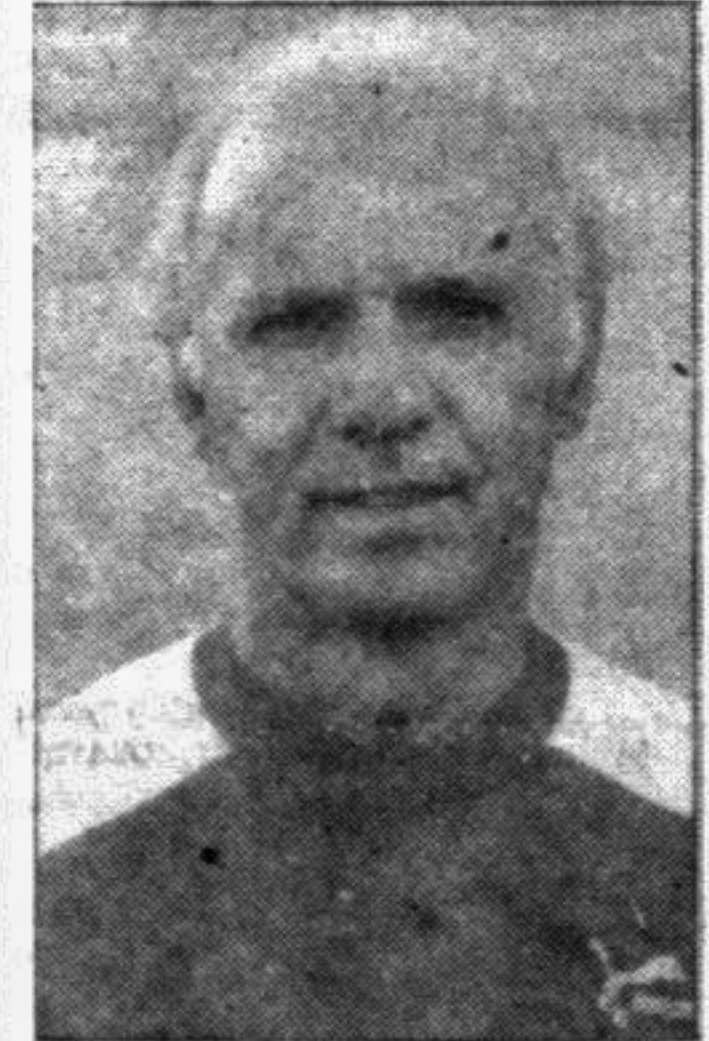
Zagalo, who on Saturday will face a rematch with the Netherlands, the side who knocked his team out of the World Cup 20 years ago, said "I have maintained all along that Brazil will win the World Cup for the fourth time."

"I don't have a crystal ball but my tip is that the final will be between Brazil and Germany." The two countries have never met in the World Cup.

Monday's quarter-final will be the first meeting of the two countries in the World Cup since the game in 1974 when the Dutch dumped Brazil out of the competition with a 2-0 win.

Zagalo was Brazil coach at the time.

He said he hoped the Dutch would attack Brazil just as they had done 20 years ago with the memorable team that included



MARIO ZAGALO

players of the calibre of Johann Cruyff, Johann Neeskens Ruud Krol, Wim van Hanegem, Johnny Rep and Arie Haan.

"If they want to win the World Cup, they'll have to come out and attack."

"The Dutch have never repeated their performance of 1974. Even with the same trainer (Rinus Michels) they couldn't repeat it. It was a generation of players who moved on the field as if they were using the same brain."

"This time it will be different. You can't compare the two teams," Zagalo said.

Belgians back home early

BRUSSELS, July 5: Belgian players returned from the World Cup on Tuesday, complaining they were home a week early, reports Reuter.

"We had hoped to play at least the quarter-finals. So I think we're back home one week too soon," goalkeeper Michel Preud'homme said.

"Personally and as a team, we've had some good moments, but unfortunately one bad game against Saudi Arabia cost us dearly," the goalkeeper added.

Belgium lost 1-0 to Saudi Arabia, a crushing psychological blow after its 1-0 victory over much tougher opponent, the Netherlands.

"We were a bit unlucky to finish only third in our group, despite our six points, and to get current world champions Germany as an opponent," Preud'homme added. Germany beat Belgium 3-2 last Saturday.

After all immortal

MADRID, July 5: The missing arm of a landmark Madrid statue, ripped off by soccer fans during wild celebrations to mark a weekend World Cup win by Spain, was found on Monday, reports Reuter.

Police said a young couple found the left arm of the goddess Cibele in a plastic bag in a city centre street.

Around 2,500 soccer fans swarmed around the statue, which dominates a fountain in the tree-lined Paseo De La Castellana, after Spain beat Switzerland on Saturday to secure a place in the World Cup quarter finals.

However, outspoken striker Romario who never minces his words, admitted that the admitted that the team has to do more.

"We showed guts and determination," he said. "But we're not playing half as well as we're capable of."

Heralding doom of an era

PASADENA, Calif, July 5: Argentina enter a new era after their early elimination from the World Cup and they face a difficult road without their top player, reports AP.

For 17 years Diego Maradona was the central figure of an Argentine squad that won several tournaments around the world.

Maradona made his mark early. He led Argentina to the World Under-20 title in 1979 and later to the World Cup title in Mexico in 1986, and to a second-place finish in Italy in 1990.

During that time Argentina developed a notorious "Diego-dependency" and had little success without him, except when they finished second in the Copa America in Chile in 1991 and Ecuador in 1993.

"The Maradona era is over... Now we'll have to reshuffle the deck," said Julio Grondona, president of the Argentine Football Association, shortly after Argentina lost to Romania 3-2 on Sunday.

"Someone like Maradona comes along only once in a blue moon. It'll be decades before Argentina and the world will see his like again," he said.

The 33-year-old player announced his retirement from soccer soon after being suspended by the Argentine association Wednesday for failing a drug test.

Maradona has done retirement-return routine several

times, but this time his retirement may be for good. AFA was severely criticized back home for allowing an unruly Maradona back in the team in the first place.

And FIFA has yet to announce its own punishment, but it's expected to be severe considering Maradona was suspended once already for testing positive for cocaine.

Argentina became so dependent on Maradona that even during his 15-month suspension for a positive drug test for cocaine they didn't seek an adequate replacement. Instead, it came to rely on two first-rate strikers — Claudio Caniggia and Gabriel Batistuta — but neither has Maradona's extraordinary ability to take control of a match.

Leonardo Rodriguez and Joss Basualdo replaced Maradona for Argentina's last two matches in the World Cup, but both were little more than spectators in those losses.

Meanwhile, an AFP report from Buenos Aires said: Argentine Football Association president Grondona, coach Basile and Maradona are not expected to survive the double world champions' worst World Cup for 20 years.

Grondona and Basile have been blamed for lack of discipline in the squad, which led at one point to some players fighting, and for not keeping a closer watch on Maradona.

Daniel Passarella, Argentina's captain when they won in 1978, is already being talked of as Basile's successor.

Argentine President Carlos Menem, who denied he had tried to persuade FIFA to let Maradona off his drugs charge, said problems of management and team selection would have to be looked at.

He added that Italian referee Pierluigi Pairetto's failure to give a penalty for a foul on Diego Simeone could have proved decisive in Sunday's 3-2 defeat to Romania.

An Argentine Football Association source said: "It would be better if he (Basile) went now so his successor can get on with the job."

Basile, who took over after the 1990 World Cup, won two South American Championships and for his first 33 matches in charge Argentina were unbeaten.

But a humiliating 5-0 World Cup qualifying defeat at home to Colombia forced him to re-think and an unfit Maradona was brought back. Argentina survived a play-off against Australia and for the first two matches in the United States they looked possible finalists.

Then Maradona was banned. Claudio Caniggia was sidelined by a broken toe and everything seemed to fall apart.

Passarella was a tough defender when Argentina triumphed in 1978 and is an even tougher coach with Buenos Aires club River Plate.

Carlos Bianchi, a former international forward and now Veloz Sarsfield coach, is another candidate.

Delight of a timely duet

SAN FRANCISCO, July 5: Brazil's attacking artists Romario and Bebeto complemented each other perfectly as they created and scored the single goal which beat the United States and put Brazil into the World Cup quarter-finals, reports AFP.

Romario, who had scored in all three of Brazil's group matches, said he did not mind that his streak had ended.

"I feel so happy, as if I scored the goal myself," he said. "That Bebeto did it makes no difference to me. When we embraced, the words that he uttered to me were like those from one brother to another."

Romario showed continual flashes of genius, mainly in the second half, providing his potency in attack. He missed at least four other chances to score.

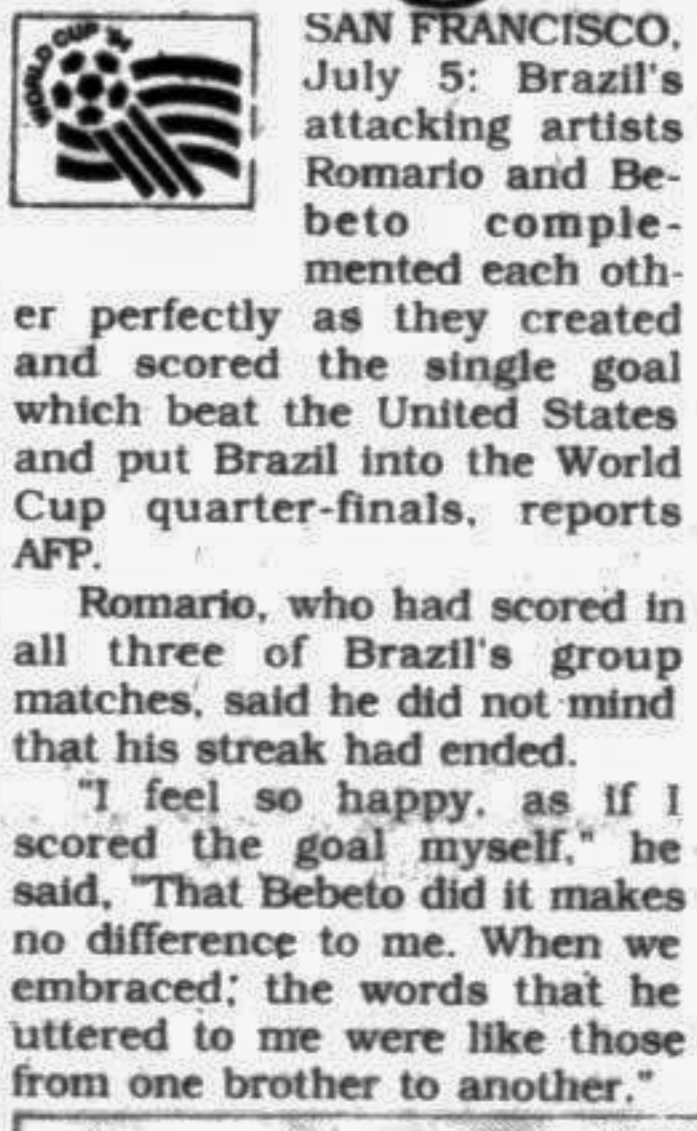
Just one ball went in to earn the quarter-final match with Holland. "With a little luck, two or three others could have too," Romario said.

"I'm so proud and happy to have contributed to the victory of the Brazilian team."

Bebeto also spoke with emotion of his embrace with Romario following the goal.

"I ran to Romario and gave him a hug and said, 'Thank you for giving me that pass.'"

He added he also needed a bit of luck to get the ball in the net.



Brazilian striker Bebeto (L) is warmly embraced by Mazinho after he scored the all-important goal against hosts United States during a World Cup second round game at Stanford Stadium on Monday. The three-times world champions play Holland in the quarter-finals in Dallas on July 9. — AFP photo



JACK CHARLTON

For Charlton, that's life

ORLANDO, Florida, July 5: Jack Charlton is not your typical World Cup coach, reports AFP.

The straight-shooting, 59-year-old makes the perfect figurehead for the Republic of Ireland's national team, even if he is English.

It is probably his success with the Irish squad that made him the most popular man in Ireland in a recent poll.

But when the Republic's World Cup run ended with a 2-0 defeat by Holland here on Monday, Charlton's grace in defeat showed another reason the Irish have taken him to their hearts.

He even got a rare ovation from the hard-to-charm football press corps after his post-match conference, held against the backdrop of chanting Irish supporters who were

still inside the Citrus Bowl singing an hour after the match.

Standing on the podium, puffing intermittently on a fat cigar, Charlton was rueful about the end of Ireland's campaign, regretting that Holland's goals were both set

up by Irish errors. "We're going home. We're enjoyed the tournament, it's been very exciting for us, and the lads have learned a helluva lot here. It's sad that we couldn't have gone out in a different way."

Charlton, who along with his footballer brother Bobby formed part of England's victorious 1966 World Cup team, has less affection for World Cup hype as seen from the touchline.

His carping about the heat and humidity of Orlando and New York, followed by some intemperate remarks to a FIFA official over a player substitution, earned him a ban from the touchline for Ireland's final group game.

Looking back on the two-and-a-half weeks in the United States, divided between New York and Orlando, Charlton said: "We've enjoyed it... well, they did. I didn't."