



Share The Passion



Nigeria ignite Africa's flame

BOSTON, July 9: Nigeria cut a trail blazing path through the 1994 World Cup, fielding some of the tournament's most inspired players and winning the respect of top coaches like Italy's Arrigo Sacchi, reports AFP.

For Africa, Nigeria's end is only the beginning. In the villages across the continent barefoot kids, Roger Milla look-alikes, are emerging by the dozen.

"We are well aware that we are the ambassadors for Africa, a continent whose time has come in world football," said Nigeria's coach Clemens Westerhof.

Dan Amokachi, Nigeria's attacking midfielder, said: "I can't remember. We go out on the streets and kick stuff. Every kid in Africa does that. We don't start playing, we are born playing."

If Brazil is the spiritual home of Pele's beautiful game, Africa is its kindergarten.

Westerhof, who guided Nigeria to victory in the African Championship and qualification for the World Cup finals, said: "Football is like a drug in Nigeria."

Nigeria is the giant of African soccer, but talent is on tap across the continent.

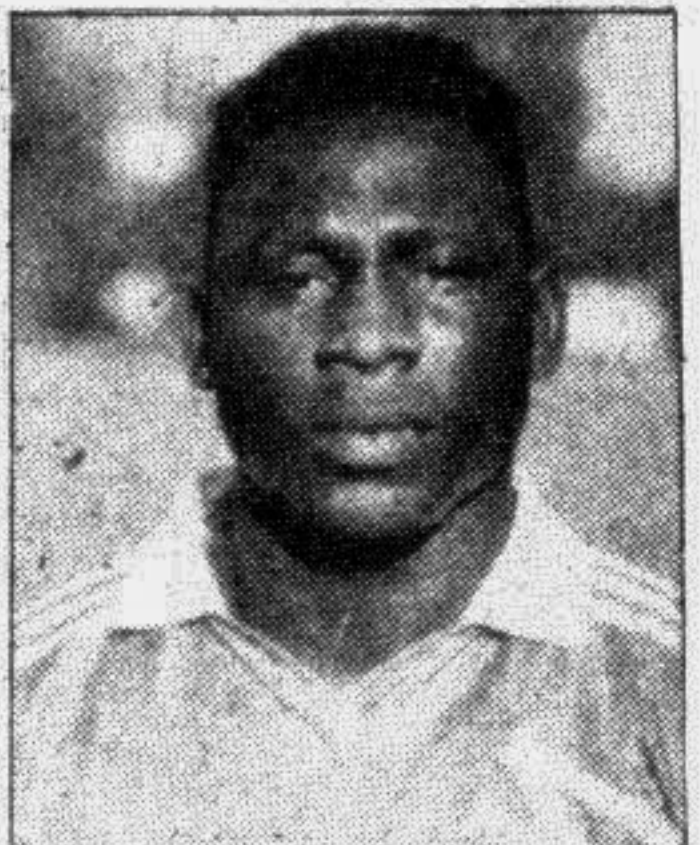
"Watch the barefoot kids play in Africa," said Nigeria sports journalist Ose Oyamen-dan. "But take a video. No-one will believe what you say you have seen."

Zambia's Englishman Ian Porterfield, who is playing great football. Rebuilding after a plane crash wiped out the first team, the former Chelsea

manager survived a coup attempt after the side failed to reach the World Cup finals.

Ghana were the most developed football nation when Westerhof came to Nigeria in 1990. "They were doing many things right, so I copied from them," he admits.

Nigeria won the under-17 World Championship in Tokyo in 1993, beating Ghana 2-1 in the final. In April this year they were crowned African champi-



D AMOKACHI

ons. Emeka Omeruah, former sports minister and chairman of the Nigerian Football Association, sees a new African dawn.

"Africa will overshadow Latin America. It will be much better than Brazil," he predicted.

A Nigerian football academy is under development, with branches opening in all 589 local government regions of Africa's most populous country.

"We are going down to the grass roots," he said. "Once you tap this talent, you will be seeing a lot more top Nigerian players."

A government grant of six million dollars has been made available for the project, and private donations are flooding in.

"Football is like a religion in Nigeria," he said. "We are looking at how we can harness it." Contacts with football federations in Britain, Belgium, Norway and Holland provide a stream of coaching expertise, he said.

England's former manager Graham Taylor caught the mood when he coached in Zambia in 1968. He felt that an African side could be world champion, possibly by the year 2000.

"And if and when they do," he said, "I have a funny feeling that the rest of the world can forget about doing likewise for some considerable time."

Roger Milla's Cameroon blazed the trail for Africa at the 1990 World Cup, but flopped here, failing to get past the first round.

Westerhof said: "I was very surprised. I have no idea what happened to Cameroon."

"At their best they were wonderful, but we have stronger players."

Nigeria lost narrowly in the second round to Italy and bade goodbye to Dutchman Westerhof, who is looking for a fresh challenge.

Nigeria, too inexperienced to beat the likes of Italy and Argentina, return home to absorb their lessons.

"We will be back in four years time," said striker Rashidi Yekini.

Sacchi is hoping he avoids Nigeria next time.

"They put us through torment, not just suffering," he said.

Belgians lead fairplay race

NEW YORK, July 9: Belgium are now leading the fair play rating given by the international football federation on Friday after the round of 16 at the ongoing World Cup finals, reports Xinhua.

The Belgians scored 35.50 points, followed by Switzerland on 34.65, the Netherlands with 34.00, the United States on 33.75 and defending champions Germany at 33.50 points for the respective ratings.

The FIFA fair play assessment is based on five criteria of cautions, positive play, respect toward opponents, behaviour of team officials and behaviour of crowds.

The main factors for consideration are the yellow and red card cautions and approach to playing the World Cup games.

Teams are encouraged by FIFA to increase actual playing time, speeding up game, and trying hard to win.

The World Cup host United States had led the ratings after the group preliminaries but lost the leaders' position to Belgium while Switzerland remain unchanged in the rating.

Skah steals limelight

VILLENEUVE D'ASCQ, France, July 9: Midweek record-breakers, Leroy Burrell and Irina Privalova won their events while Morocco's Khalid Skah took the limelight in the men's 5,000m at the IAAF Grand Prix here Friday, reports AFP.

Skah, who set a new personal best when he stormed home in 13 mins 04.67 secs, looked for a long time as though he was on target to break the new world record of Ethiopia's Haile Gebrselassie (12:56.96).

His time was full of promise however — the sixth fastest ever for the distance — with only Gebresilasie, compatriot Said Aouta and Britain's David Moorcroft having produced better.

Leroy Burrell, the fastest man on earth since his new world record 9.85 secs performance in Lausanne, dominated the event Friday in 10.12 secs ahead of compatriot Andre Cason.

"You can't break world records every day. I'm just pleased I won. It was too cold for records," he said.

Privalova, who set a new European women's 100m record of 10.77 secs in the Swiss meeting, won the women's sprint in 11.00 secs.

Algeria's Noureddine Morceli, making his first 1500m appearance of 1994, clocked the best world time of the year when he came home in 3 min 30.61 sec, and Kenya's Richard Koskei did the same when he recorded 8 min 13.77 sec for the 3000m steeplechase.

SA-Gloucester match drawn

BRISTOL, England, July 9: Furious South African coach Mike Procter ordered extra batting practice after Gloucestershire denied them a second innings in their drawn challenge match here on Friday, reports AFP.

Gloucestershire finished the day on 201 for seven after the tourists declared 149 runs behind on 129 for six.

Acting Gloucester skipper Jack Russell's refusal to set a victory target left South Africa, who wanted batting practice prior to this weekend's one-day match with Scotland in Glasgow, fuming.

But Russell said: "If they had declared early in the morning I would have closed our innings at lunch time but there was no point in declaring later."

Procter, who had no wish to be drawn into a row against the county he played for between 1965 and 1981 said: "We need to get in more batting before we fly up to Scotland. All I will say is that on this wicket getting 200 would have been difficult enough."

Gloucestershire took their lead to 350 by the close with Russell, who blocked his way to six runs in 29 overs, being barracked by a group of home supporters.

Gloucestershire's chief executive Philip August said: "I am not surprised by the reaction. It was very disappointing for the public but I agree with Jack, the South Africans didn't make a game of it."



Brazilian striker Romario gives a thumbs up to the adoring crowd during the team's practice session at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas on July 8. — AFP photo

Guardians of a marvel in agrostology

BIRMINGHAM, Ala., July 9: They're the Roughnecks, the Grasshoppers and the Bluegrass Bandits. They're

bankers, bartenders and college kids entrusted with eventually producing America's true "miracle on grass" — keeping soccer popular after the World Cup packs up and leaves, reports AP.

On little-known fields from Radnor, Pa. to Chico, Calif. players on 72 semipro teams in the United States Interregional Soccer League hope the World Cup wave doesn't get wasted.

"The World Cup has done more for soccer in this country than any single event ever," said Preston Goldfarb, coach of Birmingham's USISL team, the Grasshoppers. "It's very important that we ride that crest."

The USISL, founded in 1986 by Portuguese native Francisco Marcos, are supposed to be a Third Division somewhere below Major League Soccer (MLS), the proposed First Division that is

scheduled to start next April. Previous top-flight failures, like the North American Soccer League, had to reach overseas to fill its roster.

"I'm going to be the developer," Marcos said. "I'm not going to be the Broadway producer. I'm off-Broadway. If I do that, I'll have done my part and I'll be happy."

Marcos, returning from the United States' respectable 1-0 loss to Brazil in the World Cup, scoffed at those who say soccer is boring, that there's not enough scoring, and that it needs a few TV time outs.

"Do we want to accept this sport as the worldwide phenomenon that it is, or do we want to keep bashing it like we have?" he said. "Hopefully enough defenders have come out and said this is OK. This is not just 22 foreigners in funny shorts."

The USISL are addressing some of those American complaints. Each of the eight divisions is experimenting this season with different rules designed to increase scoring. The short corner kick occurs when the defensive team

plays the ball out of bounds near the goal. Instead of kicking from the far corner, the offensive team sets up much closer, at the edge of the penalty area, creating a better scoring chance.

Another change is the shootout, which replaces the traditional penalty kick. Instead of breaking a tie by booting a stationary ball past a goal tender, players start from 35 metres out and dribble in on the keeper, like a penalty shot in ice hockey.

There are also larger goals, kick-ins instead of throw-ins, and expulsions for five fouls.

FIFA gave its approval to experiment with the rules, some of which — like expulsions for cumulative fouls — were suggested by international stars like Marco Van Basten. After the season ends in the fall, FIFA and the US Soccer Federation will review the results and decide which of the rules, if any to incorporate into MLS.

Crowds have been enthusiastic. But small. So what's missing?

Boston happy with figures

BOSTON, July 9: Local tourism officials scoffed Friday at economic figures showing the World Cup has brought millions of dollars less than expected to the state of Massachusetts, reports AP.

Saying Boston "showed the world it is a world-class city, and is now poised to be host of international and national events in the future, the Greater Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau claims the games generated more the \$170 million in Massachusetts.

While the figures are about \$85 million lower than anticipated, they were enough to boost hotel occupancy and rates, making the games the second-biggest event ever staged here, according to officials.

"We've proved to the world that Boston can host world-class events... bureau president Patrick Moscaritolo said. "Has the World Cup been everything it was promised to be? My answer is yes... but we shouldn't be measuring only by economic impact."

The \$170 million included \$70 million of direct spending by visitors, \$15 million in taxes, \$17 million from sponsors and \$15 million to pay for the actual operation of the games. The numbers are doubled to take into consideration indirect spending.

The initial estimates come from a study done by two economics professors at the University of Southern California on behalf of the World Cup. Dr Peter Rosendorff, one of the professors, said the same formula was used for each of the nine cities serving and host for the games.

The successful sale of World Cup tickets resulted in Boston being awarded one of 12 franchises in Major League Soccer, the proposed US First Division, said Robert Caporale, chairman of the local World Cup Committee. MLS is scheduled to begin playing in April 1995.

Boston's Shawmut Center, scheduled to open in January 1996, recently was chosen to hold the 1996 US Olympic gymnastic trials.

The World Cup games helped boost hotel occupancy to 89 per cent for June, according to the Massachusetts Lodging Association, up from 83 per cent last year. That makes this the best June for hotels in the Boston area since 1988.

That estimate was based on responses from 32 of 39 hotels in Boston and Cambridge.

One more World Cup game was scheduled for Foxboro Stadium, a quarterfinal match-up between Italy and Spain on Saturday.

Forget, Bruguera in Swiss Open final

GSTAAD, Switzerland, July 9: Frenchman Guy Forget will take on Spain's top seed Sergi Bruguera in Sunday's final of the Swiss Open here, reports AFP.

Forget continued his 1994 comeback from knee trouble today by beating Russian sixth seed Yevgeny Kafelnikov 7-5, 6-3, while defending champion Bruguera beat Italian Andrea Gaudenzi 6-4, 6-1 in other semifinals.

Bruguera won a tight 15-minute final game of the first set which stretched through six set points for the Spaniard and seven game points for the Italian.

Gaudenzi frustratingly doubled his chances to take the game on his sixth and seventh attempt. But once Bruguera had a glimpse of victory, there was no holding him back.

The Spaniard, who is looking for a hat-trick of victories in the clay-court tournament, is getting re-acquainted with his favourite surface after a surprise fourth-round performance at Wimbledon.

"Grass makes you lose your tennis a little bit," said the 23-year-old. "I would only want to play on it once a year. You can't feel the ball and there are always bad bounces."

"The only thing to do is to come to the net on everything," he said.

"I expect a tough match from Guy," he said. "The way that he has played here, beating Andrei Medvedev and Kafelnikov, he doesn't look like a guy who was out with injury for a year."

WC, Orlando don't always mix?

ORLANDO, Fla., July 9: The World Cup has produced both winners and losers in Orlando, with downtown bars, restaurants and hotels

profiting — some of them hugely, reports AP.

But the Orlando area's world famous theme parks and family-oriented attractions saw few boosts in lower-than-normal summertime attendance. Sales of Heineken, a Dutch brew, were up 440 per cent for Wayne Densch Inc, the area's largest beer distributor. Church Street Station, a downtown nighttime entertainment complex, sold about 2,000 kegs of beer and reported 50 per cent higher profits.

Preliminary figures show that about 45,000 foreign visitors came to central Florida during the five World Cup soccer matches held in Orlando, spending about \$13.5 million. Those figures do not count soccer fans living in the United States who travelled here.

But what that shows, according to Joe Mittiga, spokesman for the Orlando-Orange County Convention and Visitors Bureau, is that the World Cup crowds were not especially free-spending.

Many of the mostly male

fans bunked four and five to a room and didn't visit theme parks much, preferring to party near the Florida Citrus Bowl Stadium both before and after each game.

"They were here for World Cup and they brought with them a party atmosphere," Mittiga said.

Cheryl Taubensee, executive director of the Central Florida Hotel and Motel Association, said the tournament probably boosted June hotel occupancy in metro Orlando to about 80 per cent, an improvement of several percentage points over the same period last year.

Businesses and attractions in the tourist corridor of International Drive, experiencing a lull in tourism over past years, saw little change. "World Cup has really screwed up traffic," said Alvaro Ferreira, co-owner of Amec Centre, and electronics store in that part of town. "It hasn't done much of business."

But Wet 'N Wild, a water park in that area, was a hot spot for hot and weary soccer fans. General manager Michael Black said attendance in the past two weeks was the strongest since a similar period in 1987.

The City earned \$130,000 from food and drink sales at the stadium, but its shuttle bus service lost thou-

sands of expected riders and up to \$120,000 after traffic snafus on the first day.

The city's estimated overall loss of \$130,000 will be offset by the concession sales and a \$120,000 state grant.

The Orlando police department spent about \$125,000 in overtime pay for officers assigned to security details at the stadium and downtown, said spokesman Mike Holloway. About half of that is paid by tournament organizers.

At Orlando International Airport, 91 specially chartered World Cup flights brought in 23,855 foreign visitors, officials said. There was no estimate of how many fans came on regularly scheduled flights.

Mayor Glenda Hood was upbeat Wednesday about the city's role as one of nine World Cup sites in the nation. The long-term benefits in business, trade and available publicity are immeasurable, she said.

The five soccer matches raised Orlando's image to a new height, making the area "a part of the global market, an international city," said the mayor.

Neighbourhoods and minority vendors generally profited from sales of T-shirts, hats and souvenirs, and the rental of parking spaces.

Will fun end for Americans?

UNDATED (AP): Now that the United States are out of the World Cup, will American sports fans still pay attention?

"I think people will stay interested," US defender Alexi Lalas said. "People have discovered that it's a month-long party, and the party's still going on."

While the ABC television network estimated that 32 million people tuned in for the Americans' 1-0 loss to Brazil on Monday (about 8.5 million homes, depending on the final rating due out Friday), ratings for games not involving the United States have been substantially lower.

ABC hasn't gotten higher than a 4.0 (3.77 million homes) for its four games not involving the Americans. The top rating for ESPN, the cable channel carrying most of the games, for a match not involving the US team was 2.9 for Ireland's 1-0 victory over Italy (1.83 million homes).

"Hopefully, we convinced people this is an attractive game, one worth watching," US goalkeeper Tony Meola said. "I hope that because we are out, the excitement doesn't end here in the United States."

During the first two rounds, a record 2,952,023 fans attended 44 games, an average

of 67,091. The previous record of 2,517,348 (an average of 48,411) was set four years ago in Italy. The average for this year is sure to break the record of 60,772, set in Brazil in 1950.

"I think Americans want to see some more soccer now," US midfielder John Harkes said.



ALEXI LALAS

said. "Just like America is a melting pot, fans from different nations, different backgrounds are getting together now and enjoying the sport."

FIFA general secretary Joseph Blatter said the organization believes American fans will pay attention for the final 10 days. Three of the quarter-finals this weekend will be televised by ABC, which also will broadcast the final on July 17. ESPN will televise Sunday's game between Germany and Bulgaria, both semifinals.

next Wednesday and the third-place game on July 16.

"The very good effort of the US against Brazil and the good games we've had so far in the tournament on the field will keep the viewers interested," Blatter said.

Alan Rothenberg, the head of the American organisers, said before the tournament that ABC expected a rating of between 4.0 and 4.5 for its 11 telecasts. Its average probably will be about 5.0 for seven games telecast in the first two rounds, so the remaining games will determine whether the network exceeds its projections or merely meets them.

"I believe a lot of people have seen that soccer is an exciting game," US defender Marcelo Balboa said. "I think this has been the best World Cup ever and there is a lot of exciting soccer left to be played."

Bychovets new ROK coach

SEOUL, July 9: South Korea, who failed to get through the World Cup first round, have named Ukrainian Anatoly Bychovets as head coach of their national side, soccer officials said today, reports Reuters.

Bychovets, 47, has worked as a technical adviser to South Korea's world cup team since last February.