

WORLD CUP USA '94



Romania's playmaker Gheorghe Hagi (R) is tripped up by Sweden's Klas Ingesson during their quarter-final match at the Stanford Stadium on July 10. — AFP photo

WC DIARY

LOS ANGELES, California, July 11: Today's World Cup diary.

PARREIRA FIGHTS BACK

No sooner had Brazil beaten Holland to reach the World Cup semifinals than coach Carlos Alberto Parreira was again fending off suggestions that his side had gone European.

"There has been a great deal of misunderstanding," a miffed-looking Parreira said. "We have never played and we do not pretend to play European style. We play with a flat back four. We don't use the long ball. We don't use man to man making. The only thing we try to do is organise the team when it doesn't have the ball. Anything else is just a lot of stories."

BOOT WARS

Nike and Reebok are gaining on Adidas in the football boot wars. While Adidas still clothes the German, Romanian and Bulgarian teams, the Wall Street Journal reports that Adidas' share has dropped from 85 per cent of all players in the 1970 World Cup to 54 per cent in 1994.

Brazilians Romario and Bebeto, and Sweden's Tomas Brodin are fitted out by Nike, and Swedish striker Martin Dahlin is with Reebok.

BOSSY, MAYBE

Spanish coach Javier Clemente ran a foul of his nation's press several times before his side were eliminated in the World Cup quarter-finals.

"But he took real exception to being labeled a dictator. 'You should never say that about somebody from Spain,' Clemente told the reporter in question. 'Or somebody from Italy. Italy had Mussolini, we had Franco, those are bad memories. Please, I cannot be a dictator.'"

LOVE 'EM IN LOS GATOS

The newly converted football fans in Los Gatos, California, were celebrating Brazil's quarter-final victory over Holland on Saturday.

The mountain town of 28,000 was Brazil's first-round base, and residents took the Brazilians to their hearts.

"This is very exciting," Los Gatos resident Judy van Kampen said of the samba dancing multitudes. "It is totally different than what you normally see in Los Gatos, which is people walking down the street with dogs and strollers."

Gunners, Rovers race for Sutton

LONDON, July 11: Blackburn Rovers and Arsenal are expected to make bids for Norwich striker Chris Sutton, who has been put on the transfer market for a record 5 million pounds (\$irs 7.5 million).

Norwich chairman Robert Chase said Monday that anyone seeking to buy Sutton — in a deal which would smash the British transfer record — would have to put up the money by Wednesday.

That will earn the club the right to speak to the 21-year-old player, but a transfer will only go ahead if Sutton agrees to the terms and the whole fee is paid by Friday.

Swedes ride on a roulette



PALO ALTO, California, July 11: Thomas Ravelli made two penalty shoot-out saves on his record-equalling 115th appearance for Sweden on Sunday to earn his side a place in the semifinals of the World Cup for the first time since 1958, reports Reuter.

Sweden, who finished their quarter-final against Romania with 10-men after Stefan Schwarz was sent off in extra time, secured a meeting against Brazil on Wednesday with a 5-4 win on penalties after the sides finished 2-2 after extra time.

In what ultimately proved to be one of the most dramatic matches of the tournament, fortunes ebb and flowed.

Ravelli eventually tipped the balance Sweden's way.

His saves from Dan Petrescu and Miodrag Belodedic in the shoot-out gave Sweden victory after Hakan Mild got the penalties underway by blasting the ball high over the Romanian bar.

After saving Belodedic's penalty to clinch the win, Ravelli was embraced by his ecstatic teammates who had seen victory snatched from their grasp a minute from the end of normal time when

Musings in stupor

STANFORD, Calif, July 11: "Fate," "luck," and "psychology" were the words most often heard in the Romanian locker room after their penalty shootout loss to Sweden in the World Cup quarterfinals Sunday, reports AP.

"The fact that we were in this phase of the tournament for the first time gave us great psychological pressure," said Romanian coach Anghel Iordanescu after his team lost 4-5 on penalty kicks following a 2-2 extra-time draw.

"This was a heart-attack match," visibly depressed Iordanescu said. "Maybe this was our fate. We could have been the winner too, but soccer has no mercy."

"What can I say?" said Belodedic who for a while stood alone at one end of the field after his miss, while all other Romanian players collapsed in shock. "We should have won after extra time. We were not lucky."

"My teammates are not blaming me for the miss, but I know how they feel," Belodedic said. "I feel even worse, but this is soccer."

Some of the Romanian players had tears in their eyes as they walked off the pitch.

"It's not a matter of tears. It's a matter of sorrow," said Romania's star midfielder and captain, Gheorghe Hagi.

"The sorrow is because we lost on penalties. If we had lost in the 90 minutes, it would have been much better," said Hagi, one of the best players at the tournament.

"It's hard to take a goal like we did in the last minutes of extra time," Hagi said. "Because of this, we lost concentration on the penalty kicks."

But, Hagi said, he was leaving the tournament in peace because Romania demonstrated at the World Cup that it can play good soccer.

Florin Raducioiu equalised. Tomas Brodin had put the Swedes ahead in the 79th minute.

Romania were the better side during extra time and looked to have done enough to win when Raducioiu scored his second goal, and his fourth of the tournament, in the 101st minute.

But with just five minutes of extra time remaining Sweden pulled themselves back from the brink when Kenneth Andersson headed home a speculative cross at the bar post.

"It was a bit unprofessional of us not to finish it off in 90 minutes," said Ravelli. "But I knew that if I saved the last penalty we would win it. There was no pressure on me. I had everything to win."

The match failed to live up to expectations until almost 10 minutes from the end of normal time.

Although Romanian skipper Gheorghe Hagi prodded and probed, he could find no way through the Swedish defence.

The Romanian backline held firm against some largely ineffective Swedish attacking and unimaginative approach work which consisted largely of long, high balls to the strikers.

Sweden, missing their injured captain and playmaker Jonas Thern, went close when Martin Dahlin hit a post with a fifth minute header and again in the 66th minute when Florin Prunea made an outstanding save to tip a Brodin drive over the bar.

But there were few clear-cut chances for either side until Sweden took the lead through Tomas Brodin.

His goal came from a free-kick which coach Tommy Svensson revealed afterwards he had rehearsed in secret training during the week.

Svensson said: "I saw something in the organisation of the Romanian defence in their earlier matches that I thought could give us an advantage and you saw what that was when we scored from the free-kick."

Mild's short pass to Brodin from the free-kick set the Parma attacker free, wide of

the Romanian wall, and he scored from an acute angle.

Romania equalised when Hagi took a free-kick wide on the Swedish left with a minute to go. The ball found Raducioiu who scored from close range.

Hagi was also instrumental in Raducioiu's second which came when the AC Milan striker blasted home from the edge of the box after 101 minutes.

A minute after that goal Sweden's cause looked lost when English referee Philip Don sent off Stefan Schwarz for his second yellow card of the match.

But Sweden battled back with Andersson's late equaliser — his fourth goal of the tournament — to take the match to penalties.

The shoot-out heartache for the Romanians left them ejected from the finals by penalties for the second successive tournament. Four years ago they lost by the same 5-4 scoreline after a 0-0 draw with Ireland.

They were inconsolable then and just as devastated again on Sunday.

Referee: Philip Don (England).

Red card: Sweden — Stefan Schwarz (102).

Yellow cards: Romania — Gheorghe Popescu (22), Tibor Selyme (35), Basarab Nica Panduru (109).

Sweden — Klas Ingesson (71), Stefan Schwarz (43).

TEAMS

Romania: 1-Florin Prunea, 2-Dan Petrescu, 3-Daniel Prodan, 4-Miodrag Belodedic, 6-Gheorghe Popescu, 5-Ionut Lupescu, 7-Dorinel Munteanu (15-Basarab Nica Panduru 84), 10-Gheorghe Hagi, 13-Tibor Selyme, 9-Florin Raducioiu, 11-Ilie Dumitrescu.

Sweden: 1-Thomas Ravelli, 2-Roland Nilsson, 3-Patrik Andersson, 4-Joachim Bjorklund (14-Pontus Kaamark 84), 5-Roger Ljung, 6-Stefan Schwarz, 8-Klas Ingesson, 18-Hakan Mild, 11-Tomas Brodin, 19-Kennel Andersson, 10-Martin Dahlin (7-Henrik Larsson 107).

Fiery toast

SARAJEVO, July 11: The hills around Sarajevo echoed with rhythmic gunfire on Sunday as Bosnian Serb soldiers celebrated news of Bulgaria's victory over Germany in the World Cup soccer competition, reports Reuter.

The Serbs, who have surrounded the Bosnian capital since April 1992, share linguistic, religious and ethnic ties with Bulgaria and are generally hostile towards Germany, against whom they fought in World War Two.

Serb soldiers on the hills above Sarajevo fired into the air at each of the Bulgarian goals.

More from Maradona's world

BUENOS AIRES, July 11: Diego Maradona failed a drugs test at the World Cup because his diet contained prohibited substances, Argentine Football Association president Julio Grondona said here Sunday.

Grondona said the ephedrine-related drugs Maradona was thrown out of the World Cup for were neither stimulants nor for a cold.

"He had been following a vegetarian diet which contained herbs and substances prohibited by FIFA," he said. "It was the sort of diet people follow to get into peak fitness."

He hoped that as the drugs were not intended as a stimulant, football's governing body would act leniently when they meet to consider Maradona's case after the World Cup.

AFP adds from Seville: Sevilla is demanding 1.5 million dollars compensation from disgraced Argentinian World Cup star Diego Maradona, the club revealed on Monday.

WC doesn't amuse Cruyff

BARCELONA, July 11: Barcelona trainer and former Dutch legend Johan Cruyff branded the World Cup "boring" on Monday, reports AFP.

Cruyff, quoted in the Spanish newspaper, "El Periodico de Catalunya", argued the competition needed a complete overhaul, accusing winning semi-finalist Italy of "negative" tactics and Bulgaria of "chaotic" football.

Cruyff, a former Dutch captain who looked set to manage Holland at the United States



JOHAN CRUYFF

finals until he fell out with the Dutch Football Federation, said Bulgaria's victory over Germany convinced him of the need for change.

"The Bulgarians are the first to recognise their limits. They have got two good organisers in Balakov and Lechkov, two good forwards in Stoichkov and Kostadinov."

"As for the rest of the team, there's nothing special."

From Romania with revelation



SAN FRANCISCO, California, July 11: Yet again, Romania excited the World Cup on a penalty shoot-out, but not before they had a chance to show just how far Romanian football has come in four years, reports AFP.

Swedish keeper Thomas Ravelli's speed denied Romania in the quarter-final penalty shoot-out putting an end to a run that included victories over South American powerhouse Argentina, the United States and Colombia.

Romania's fast-breaking game was less effective against the defensively minded Swedes, who kept close tabs on midfield play-maker Gheorghe Hagi as well as forwards Ilie Dumitrescu and Florin Raducioiu.

The loss echoed their second-round defeat four years ago in Italy, when Jack Charlton's Ireland beat them in a shoot-out.

But Romanian Manager Anghel Iordanescu, who saw his team take a 2-1 extra-time lead only to give it back, was philosophical.

"We could not just play this game forever," he said, almost laughing at the question. "A decision had to be made. I could not say that this was a disadvantage. Maybe this is our fate."

"At this time, we could have been the winners, too."

"Soccer has no mercy, so I don't think it's worth discussing."

At least the Romanian players had the satisfaction of reaching the quarter-finals of the World Cup for the first time.

In the process, they showed how Romanian football has blossomed in the more liberal atmosphere that followed the December 1989 revolution that ended in the execution of Nicolae Ceausescu.

"Our country has always possessed talented players," Iordanescu said. "In the past political system, players could not cultivate their own image and personality. Now they are showing what they can give."

Hagi, in particular, has earned kudos for his ability to feed Raducioiu and Dumitrescu.

He has also gone some way toward silencing critics who have accused him of failing to live up to his potential.

"He can have his bad days," Iordanescu said. "I was not happy with his performance in the second half against Switzerland and I spoke to him about it."

"But what he means to the team is something like what Maradona or Cruyff meant to their national teams."

Hagi was one of the first

Romanian players to seek his fortune overseas after the 1990 World Cup.

His first foray in western Europe was an unsuccessful stint at Real Madrid.

A move to Italian club Brescia has proved more fruitful, and now eight of Iordanescu's first-choice players compete abroad, in Spain, Italy, Germany, Belgium and Holland.

Though many of the players play their trade outside Romania, their success here has galvanised a nation plagued by inflation, unemployment and ethnic tension.

The second round victory over Argentina prompted the biggest street demonstrations since the revolution.

Now the challenge facing Romanian football is to make the success work for them, rather than letting it cannibalize their best talent.

While Iordanescu admits that playing in competitive leagues abroad breeds competitive players, he is critical of Romanian clubs who sell players cheap to clubs in neighbouring countries.

He has also warned Romanian football officials against neglecting youth programmes.

If they heed him, Iordanescu's optimistic look toward the 1996 European Championships and beyond may prove to be justified.



UNITY IS STRENGTH: The Swedish soccer team acknowledge the applause of their supporters after recording a memorable 5-4 win in the tie-breaker against Romania at the Stanford Stadium on July 10. Sweden will meet Brazil in the first semifinal on July 13. — AFP photo

Celebration, Swedish way



STOCKHOLM, July 11: Thousands of young soccer fans charged on to the streets shouting, dancing,

drinking and stripping off their clothes in the first light of Monday, celebrating Sweden's best soccer performance since 1958, reports Reuter.

As a sudden death penalty shoot-out against Romania in San Francisco on Sunday took Sweden into the world cup semifinals around 3,000 supporters poured out of Stockholm's bars into the capital's central Sergel Square.

After a sweltering weekend in most major cities, with temperatures around 30 degrees Celsius, a bath in the city centre fountain was a welcome. "They are drunk with joy," a policeman said.

In downtown Stockholm, fans danced and waved Swedish flags to be tune of drums, car horns and trumpets.

celebrating the country's greatest soccer feat since finishing runner-up in the 1958 World Cup finals.

Some of the happy fans rejoiced, chanting "Sweden, world champions," although their semifinal opponents are three-times world champions and leading favourites Brazil.

Enthusiastic fans climbed onto the roof of a local commuter bus and almost rocked it over. Police had to intervene to help a pregnant woman who felt labor pains get through the milling crowd and traffic jam.

Similar scenes were reported from Goteborg and Malmo, Sweden's second and third largest cities.

In Goteborg, fans celebrated veteran keeper Thomas Ravelli a little extra. Ravelli, who saved two penalties in the shootout, plays for IFK Goteborg.

The emergency service operator in Malmo said that no phone calls were made during the match. But after Ravelli

saves his second penalty, ensuring Sweden a place in the top four, a woman called to say her husband was suffering from chest pains and needed assistance.

"I wanted to call earlier, but he forbade me," the woman told the emergency operator according to the national news agency TT.

"Newspapers devoted entire covers and supplements to the save."

"Now you are the greatest of them all Ravelli," the tabloid Aftonbladet wrote across an enormous colour photograph of the sprawling keeper wrapped over both front and back pages.

Even coach Tommy Svensson, whom most level-headed Swedes consider the most measured man in the world, was amazed.

Few wanted to remind Svensson that Sweden has never beaten Brazil, but he looked like a man ready to set that historical record straight.

A farceur's flight to fame



PALO ALTO, California, July 11: The ageing comedian of Swedish soccer had the last laugh, reports Reuter.

Goalkeeper Thomas Ravelli, known for his practical jokes off the field, has been under fire from Sweden's media all season for his faulty form for club and country.

But the critics were silenced on Sunday when the 34-year-old IFK Gothenburg keeper's saves in a penalty shoot-out clinched Sweden victory over Romania and a place in the World Cup semifinals for the first time for 36 years.

Staying cool in the heat and drama of the shoot-out, Ravelli managed to get his left hand to save Romanian defender Miodrag Belodedic's sudden-death penalty and seal the shoot-out for the Swedes 5-4.

Ravelli equalled the Swedish record of 115 international appearances in the dramatic quarter-final clash, which went to penalties after extra time finished at 2-2. It

was his experience under pressure that saved the day in the shoot-out.

"I was not nervous at all (for the last penalty). I knew I had nothing to lose and everything to win," he said. "I was just thinking that I would be a hero if I could save it."

"I think he was very nervous and under a lot of pressure. But I must admit I don't like the penalty shoot-outs. I would rather we had sudden death (normal play). It is not the right way to decide a game."

Ravelli's 115 appearances take him closer to the world record of 125 caps held by former England goalkeeper Peter Shilton. With Germany captain Lothar Matthaus, Ravelli has a chance to challenge Shilton's mark if he keeps to his goal of competing for another two seasons.

Work might get in the way of the semi-professional player's hopes of writing his name further in the history books, however. The former high jumper, who had a twin brother Andreas who also won 41 caps for Sweden, works as an electronic goods salesman.

But, never mind the long-term future, Ravelli was not capable of thinking a few days ahead to Wednesday's semifinal with Brazil in Los Angeles as he headed off to the dressing rooms to change after the match.

"I didn't think about the record today at all. If the match had been a friendly maybe I would have thought about it," he said. "Now I am just so tired, I will start thinking about Brazil in a few hours."

Ravelli's escapades on Sunday had an uncanny parallel with German keeper Bodo Illgner's performance in the semifinals of the 1990 tournament.

After being under intense pressure to be dropped before the tournament, Illgner bounced back to make a key save in a penalty shoot-out to give Germany victory over England in Turin.

On a day when the Germans went out of the 1994 tournament at the hands of Bulgaria, it was Ravelli's turn to thumb his nose at the critics and take his team one step closer to the final.



A FLYING RAVELLI: The Swedish goalkeeper stretches to his left for the match-winning save against Romania's Miodrag Belodedic shot in the sudden death penalty shoot-out at the Stanford Stadium on July 10. Sweden booked a passage into the semifinals defeating Romania 5-4 in the tie-breaker after the match was locked 2-2 during the 120-minute marathon encounter. — AFP photo