

Philips Lighting — Official Sponsor of WorldCupUSA94

PHILIPS

Maldini, defender of a class and pedigree

LOS ANGELES, July 15: If there is one thing Paolo Maldini is not it is shy in coming forward — both as one of the world's best defenders, and as a person, reports AFP.

Most football critics agree the 25-year-old is the finest left-back playing the game today, but when he takes to the field on Sunday in Italy's World Cup final against Brazil, he will carry an extra burden.

It will be Maldini who will fill the gap left by injured Italian captain Franco Baresi, the veteran who is not expected to be fit enough to play after undergoing arthroscopic knee surgery late last month.

The fact that Maldini has become such a brilliant player comes as no surprise when one considers his pedigree.

His father was the legendary Cesare Maldini who played for the great Milan teams of the 1960s and is now coach for the Italian under-21 side.

Young Paolo made his mark quickly. He was only 16 when he made his first Italian league appearance for AC Milan.

A year later he was a regular and has never looked back as his shelves at home continue to gather more trophies.

Earlier this year Maldini played a key role in AC Milan's resounding 4-0 win over Barcelona and their two star strikers — Brazil's Romario and Bulgaria's Hristo Stoichkov — in the European Championship.

But it is not just his defensive qualities that make him such an asset. It is his ability to quickly move up and join the



PAOLO MALDINI attack that makes him such a threat to any opposition.

He has been a permanent fixture in the Italian team since his debut against Yugoslavia as a 19-year-old, and he played a major role to help Italy finish third in the 1990 World Cup.

For coach Arrigo Sacchi, Maldini's greatest asset is his ability to play any position on the field. That plus the fact that he shut Romario down in the European Championship.

Vogts gets the nod

FRANKFURT, July 15: Germany's soccer coach Bert Vogts, under acute pressure after the World Cup defeat by Bulgaria, will keep his job, soccer authorities said today, reports Reuters.

The decision came in a telephone conversation between Vogts, on holiday in the United States, and German Soccer Federation (DFB) president Egilidius Braun, sports news agency SID quoted DFB officials as saying.

Vogts told Braun he regarded it as a "great personal challenge" to assume responsibility for the rebirth of the national squad.

He said the job would be difficult because young, talented players in the German first division were not exactly queuing up to join the national team.

Since the stunning defeat, Vogts has said he still enjoys his job and wants to go on.

In this weekend's edition of the Welt Am Sonntag newspaper, the national coach reiterated that resolve.

"I will not resign. I will fight," he was quoted as saying in excerpts released in advance. "As a player, I have often been brought low but I have always stood up again."

He put Germany's defeat down partly to bad luck. "Since 1982, we have had a lot of luck. Perhaps the luck ran out."

Italy have a score to settle

Tawfiq Aziz Khan

Brazilians must be licking their lips in the hope of a repeat performance of 1970. And they have more than one reason to relish this feelings. Italians must be keeping their fingers crossed.

On June 21, 1970 in the sweltering heat and high altitude of Mexico City, a crowd well over 100 thousand jammed the huge Aztec stadium in high expectation to watch and enjoy a classic battle between these two giants of world football. But as the date suggests it was the longest day for Italy. They had the ignominy of suffering one of the biggest defeats in World Cup final. After a 1-1 first session the Italians cracked under tremendous pressure in the second and the crafty Brazilians put the ball past a hapless Albertosi thrice, the first of Brazil's 4 goals was by Pele — his last in World Cup final.

In 24 years this will be the fourth meeting of the two countries in World Cup finals for Brazil it is their first in FIFA trophy. After the battering in 1970 the teams fought out a play off for the third place in 1978 in Buenos Aires. The format was different then. In the second round 8 teams were divided into two groups and the champions played the final and runners-up played for the 3rd and 4th places.

Holland led the Group A while Argentina topped Group B. Argentina under Kempes defeated Holland 3-1 to lift the FIFA trophy for the first time.

In that playoff Brazil got better of Italy by the odd goal in 3. So in 8 years Brazil were 2 up on Italy in as many times they had met. But the scales tilted in favour of the European Knights in 1982 in Spain. In the second round match on July 5 at the seaside grandeur of Barcelona the Italians avenged their earlier defeats by an impressive 3-2 victory that defied Brazil's hopes. The wily Italian Paolo Rossi, playing his second and last World Cup final, spinned in a smart hat-trick. Italy eventually won the final against a strong German outfit by a gaping 3-1 margin, even after missing an early penalty. It was Italy's third Cup victory.

Tomorrow will be another day, another place but the same enemies. Twelve years is a long time. Many of the stars have glowed in extraordinary fitness illuminating the frontiers of the game. Many have removed themselves from the glare of the floodlights, many are still active on the sidelines giving the game whatever they have to make the game of soccer the King of Kings. But the friendly rivalries go on unabated. Brazil have the distinction of lifting the Jules Remet trophy forever. The chance was equal for Italy also but the

western media made it so hot for Italy that it was almost a foregone conclusion that Brazil would lift the trophy without any fuss. Italy got a raw deal.

In the land of plenty Brazil so far have shown that they are still the best combination anyone can ever wish for. They haven't lost a match yet. Yet their marginal victories against the so-called 'novices', the United States and a 10-man Swedish outfit point to the weaknesses of this South American Samsons.

Italy's performances are unbecoming of a team of such stature. It is true they are not as strong as they were in 1990. They lost their opening match to Ireland but gradually consolidated their position. Their win against Bulgaria, a team that gave a heart-attack to many officials, must have instilled the required confidence to the Italians. But tomorrow they will take the field as a weaker side because of the Red and Yellow Cards and the absence of Baresi. And if Roberto Baggio is sidelined Brazil can expect a cakewalk.

For Italy this is one chance of getting even with Brazil, which may not come this century again. So far the scales are even. 3 wins and one runners-up position for each team. Let us wait patiently and see the 'mercenaries' who lend glamour and excitement to European football or their 'masters', have the last laugh.

Of rivals' swords & shields

UNDATED (AP): A look at the matchups for Sunday's World Cup final between Italy and Brazil:

ITALY
The Italians would be the first European team to win a World Cup staged in the Western Hemisphere. To do so, they must control the midfield and disrupt Brazil's sharp short passes that build the attack.

Italy could do it, because they have a strong group of halfbacks, led by Nicola Berti, Dino Baggio and Demetrio Albertini. They can get in the way of Brazil's advancing defenders and, especially, limit the room strikers Romario and Bebeto have to get things started.

Where Italy could suffer is on defence. Alessandro Costacurta is suspended, and he was the team's most consistent defender throughout the tournament. Veteran Franco Baresi, sidelined by arthroscopic knee surgery in the first round, might be back, but if he isn't at full speed, he could be a detriment.

Acting captain Paolo Maldini was sensational against Bulgaria. The weak link on the backline might be the inexperienced Roberto Mussi, but he also played well in the semifinals.

The key for Italy, of course, will be the condition of star

striker Roberto Baggio, the 1993 world player of the year. Baggio injured his hamstring in the semifinals and is listed as "50-50" by team doctors.

Rarely does Brazil adjust to what the opposition does, confidently (perhaps vainly) believing it is the other team that must adapt. The South Americans can afford such a strategy because of their balance.

While Brazil are and always have been known for their offensive flair, this is the strongest defensive squad to represent the land of Pele since that soccer legend led the nation to its third championship in '70. The Brazilians are especially effective in the air, particularly Aldair, and win most loose balls.

Romario's piercing runs down the middle gave Brazil numerous chances against Sweden in the semifinals. If he gets that much room Sunday, Italy will be in deep trouble. Look for someone always to be shadowing Romario when he doesn't venture outside.

And watch for Bebeto, who might be more of a threat in the final than his prolific partner, Bebeto has the speed and passing skills to force defenders away from Romario, and he has the finishing talent to make teams pay if they relax on him.

Taffarel has the best goals-against mark (0.5) of any goalie to make it past the first round. He's especially good against high shots.

Mazinho to midfielders Zinho, Dunga and Rai to Bebeto and Romario.

Rarely does Brazil adjust to what the opposition does, confidently (perhaps vainly) believing it is the other team that must adapt. The South Americans can afford such a strategy because of their balance.

While Brazil are and always have been known for their offensive flair, this is the strongest defensive squad to represent the land of Pele since that soccer legend led the nation to its third championship in '70. The Brazilians are especially effective in the air, particularly Aldair, and win most loose balls.

Romario's piercing runs down the middle gave Brazil numerous chances against Sweden in the semifinals. If he gets that much room Sunday, Italy will be in deep trouble. Look for someone always to be shadowing Romario when he doesn't venture outside.

And watch for Bebeto, who might be more of a threat in the final than his prolific partner, Bebeto has the speed and passing skills to force defenders away from Romario, and he has the finishing talent to make teams pay if they relax on him.

Taffarel has the best goals-against mark (0.5) of any goalie to make it past the first round. He's especially good against high shots.

'Odd Couple' at Rose Bowl

LOS ANGELES, July 15: Hollywood will love it. Sunday's World Cup final at the Rose Bowl, just a short drive up the road from the studios and stars of the silver screen, is getting ready to stage soccer's version of "The Odd Couple", reports Reuters.

The film's leading men were Walter Matthau and Jack Lemmon. In the leading roles at the Rose Bowl will be Italy's Roberto Baggio and Brazil's Romario, two strikers whose characters could not be further apart but whose individual skill can turn the course of a match

re-match of the 1970 final. Both players have five goals and a chance to take over from Russian Olek Salenko and Bulgarian Hristo Stoichkov as the tournament's leading scorer. Salenko and Stoichkov both have six goals.

"Without a doubt we've been the two players who have scored the decisive goals," said Romario whose late header against Sweden in Wednesday's semifinal put the Brazilians through to their first final for 24 years.

"The team that emerges as the champion will probably have the top scorer and the top player," Romario said.

Past World Cup finals have often been marked by the clashes of contrasting key personalities on opposing teams.

The 1986 and 1990 finals pitted Argentina's gifted Diego Maradona against the composed and methodical German midfielder Lothar Matthaus.

In 1974 Germany's tall, elegant captain Franz Beckenbauer took on the wiry, former chain-smoking Dutchman Johan Cruyff.

Small town Baggio and city kid Romario will continue the trend in Sunday's showdown at Pasadena.

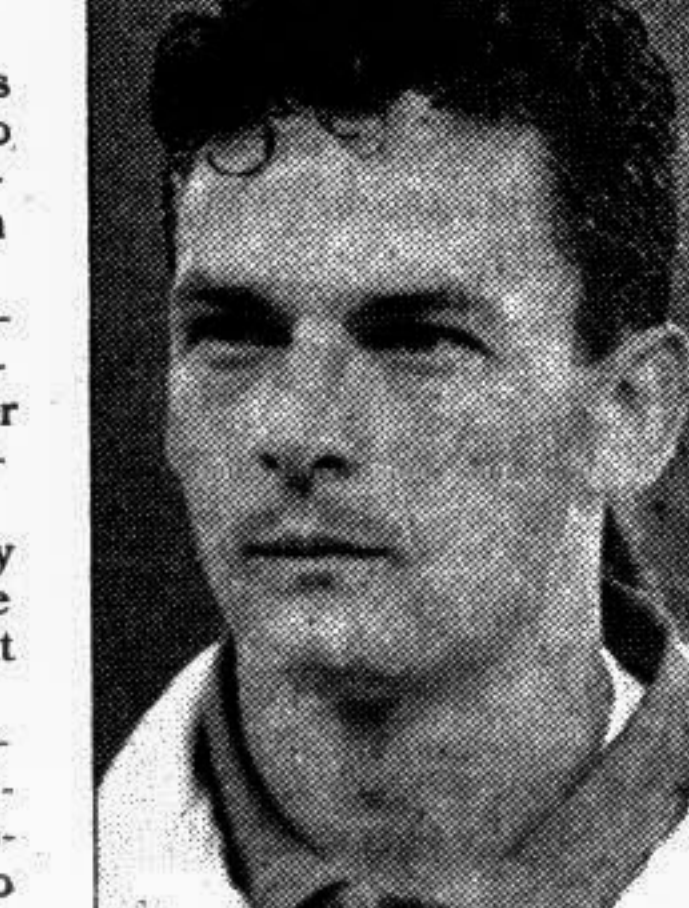
One of eight children brought up in the small northeastern Italian town of Caldoro, Baggio converted to Buddhism during a tough two years on the sidelines in the early part of his career when he suffered a serious knee ligament injury.

"I had suffered a serious injury and needed something deeper than the Catholic religion," the 27-year-old Baggio recalled. "Today Buddhism helps me control my mind."

pre-match ritual' includes prayer recital. A reserved man, he shed tears after Wednesday's 2-1 semifinals victory over Bulgaria in New York when he scored two first-half goals.

Romario, 28, was born in a poor neighbourhood in the northern suburbs of Rio de Janeiro. He is softly-spoken with a lisp but has gained a reputation in the past for arguing with coaches and making critical comments about his teammates.

In "Odd Couple" style the two players would probably not survive five minutes sharing a flat together. Both will fight for every piece of space in their



ROBERTO BAGGIO

opponents' penalty area in the most important game of their careers on Sunday. The one thing they do have in common is respect from footballing experts. "In a game which is increasingly uniform Baggio is one of the few who can tip the balance," said Michel Platini.

About the other Baggio

LOS ANGELES, July 15: While Roberto Baggio may be the better known it was the other Baggio — Dino — who scored the goal that booked Italy's place in the 94 World Cup finals, reports AFP.

Needless to say the pass in the clinching match against Portugal in Milan last November came from Roberto.

In the run up to the World Cup finals the two combined to score eight goals — Roberto five and Dino three.

Their success prompted Roberto to say: "We have set up a good venture which I hope can keep scoring goals in the coming games."

The Baggio boys, good friends but not related although they were born in the same northeast region, have developed into the cornerstone of an Italian side trying to become the first team in history to win a fourth World Cup.

Unlike his namesake, Dino is strongly built and powerful and nowhere near as well-known.

But the 22-year-old midfielder, who had problems early on trying to secure a place in the Juventus line-up and has now moved to Parma, is a firm favourite of coach Arrigo Sacchi.

Sacchi named Dino his player-of-the-match in Italy's quarter-final against Spain. He scored a stunning first half goal when he let loose from 30 metres.

Roberto got the winner with only two minutes to go.

Dino, like Roberto, has also had to overcome a serious knee injury that threatened to halt his career before it had really started. It has given him a determination to make the most of chances.

Much of their understanding on the pitch has been strengthened by their close off-the-field friendship. The pair go hunting and skiing together.

For Dino, Italy's World Cup success has come as a welcome relief after the trials and tribulations he offered last season at Juventus which led to his transfer.

Much of the blame for Juventus falling to win a trophy fell unfairly on Dino.

There are no such complaints about his play here, even on Italy's fickle fans.

Baggio, one game away from sainthood

LOS ANGELES, July 15: For a man who prefers to shun the limelight, Roberto Baggio has an amazing knack of finding himself in centre stage, and always before a packed house.

Already a star before the World Cup finals began here, the 26-year-old Juventus striker is now only one game away from sainthood.

Having already got Italy into the final to face Brazil with a series of last minute goals, the diminutive 1.74 metre (5 foot 8 ins) and 72 kilos (156 pounds) 1993 world player-of-the-year, carries his country's hopes on his slender shoulders.

Before Italy's disastrous opening group match against Ireland, Baggio announced: "I hope to help Italy to do well in the World Cup, and possibly win the title."

The player who moved for a staggering 15 million dollars from Fiorentina to Juventus in 1990 has done more than just help.

Baggio, whose place in the team was in doubt after his disappointing first round display, now has five goals in his last three games and everyone of them was crucial.

Against Nigeria he scored an equaliser two minutes from time. He then converted an extra time penalty to put Italy in the quarter-finals where he killed off Spain with another last-gasp winner.

"No doubt he's our best man, who can solve every match," declared Italian coach Arrigo Sacchi.

But for Baggio, born in the Veneto region, the fact that he ever became one of the world's highest paid players, is in itself a minor miracle.

As a teenager he suffered a career-threatening injury to his right knee. So severe was the damage that one doctor declared he would never play football again.

But the doctor did not take into account Baggio's fierce determination.

Two years and three operations later he was back doing what he loves best, scoring goals.

Since joining the national squad he has notched up 24 goals in 42 games. In the defence dominated Italian league he has managed to score 109 times in 219 appearances.

The enforced rest dramatically changed Baggio. It gave him a powerful inner strength and saw him embrace Buddhism.



Peter Max, the official artist of the World Cup USA '94, hallowing his own handy-work, putting a signature on a roadside fresco at the Los Angeles Convention Centre on July 15.

No dolce niente for Sacchi

WARREN, N.J., July 15: Coach Arrigo Sacchi wasted no time in celebrations.

Hours after Italy's 2-1 semifinal victory against Bulgaria, the Italian began focusing on Sunday's World Cup final against Brazil with a major worry — striker Roberto Baggio's right-leg injury, reports AP.

Baggio, the star forward who tallied five of Italy's eight goals in the World Cup, is nursing a light hamstring strain and team doctors said he's a questionable starter.

"At the moment his chances to play are 50 per cent. He will be rested for 48 hours. We hope of a positive evolution," said doctor Andrea Ferretti.

The Italians left Thursday for Los Angeles for the Brazil final at Pasadena.

Sacchi, tense for Baggio's injury and apparently annoyed with the quick switch of Italian media from bitter criticism to adulation, said it was not time for celebrations because the team must concentrate on the game against an extremely tough opponent.

"The less you speak, the less you praise before the World Cup final, the better. We have won nothing. We are in the running for the title and must not lose our determination, our winning charge," Sacchi said.

"While he said he was not thinking of Baggio's substitution, he admitted that the absence of Italy's top striker in the crucial game would be a bad blow to Italy's hopes of victory.

Parma's Gianfranco Zola, who has served a two-game suspension, is Baggio's most likely substitute.

"We risk to lose Roberto in the moment we had just recovered him, in the moment he had reached his peak condition," Sacchi said before the team's departure.

The Italian party will stay at Torrance, just outside Los Angeles, and will train at the

Loyola University. The final will be a repeat of the 1970 title game in Mexico that Brazil won 4-1. Both Italy and Brazil shoot for a record fourth World Cup title.

Baggio, shut out in the first three games of the tournament and criticised for his less-than-impressive performances, tallied two goals against Nigeria in the second round, one against Spain in the quarterfinals and two against

Italy will miss two disqualified key defenders — suspended AC Milan teammates Mauro Tassotti and Alessandro Costacurta.

Tassotti was given an eight-round suspension for an elbow which broke the nose of Spanish forward Luis Enrique during Saturday's quarterfinal. Costacurta received his second yellow card during Wednesday's match with Bulgaria and faces automatic suspension.

Sacchi will have to "invent" a new defence, with Paolo Maldini the only survivor of the original defensive backbone formed by AC Milan players.

Sacchi and team doctors were cautious about a possible return to action of captain-sweeper Franco Baresi, who has been sidelined for three weeks following arthroscopic right knee surgery to remove some cartilage.

Baresi, 34, was injured during the game against Norway in the preliminary round.

"Baresi can kick and run, but may risk not to finish the game. It's a difficult decision to take," doctor Ferretti said.

Skuhravy scoffs Leeds' offer

PRAGUE, July 15: Czech international striker Tomas Skuhravy said he had rejected a reported 4.6 million-dollar offer to transfer from his current club Genoa to English Premier Division club Leeds United, reports Reuters.

"We did not agree on the financial terms. The offer was not what I had expected," the Czech news agency CTK reported.

"We think we can control their impressive offence. But

PROFILES: ITALY

LOS ANGELES, July 15, (AFP): Following are the profiles of Italians likely to play in Sunday's World Cup final against Brazil.

Gianluca Pagliuca: Age: 27, 22 caps. Height: 1.76 m, weight: 72kg. Sent off in Italy's second group match against Norway. Pagliuca ceded his place in goal to Luca Marchegiani, but returned in superb form in the 2-1 quarter-final victory over Spain, stopping certain goal from Julio Salinas.

Roberto Mussi: 30, 4 caps. 1.8m, 73 kg. The Torino fullback missed quarter-final win over Spain but was recalled at right-back for the 2-1 victory over Bulgaria in the semifinals on Wednesday in place of banned Mauro Tassotti.

Franco Baresi: 34, 79 caps. 1.76m, 70kg. The AC Milan sweeper could return to the side after missing most of the tournament with a knee injury suffered in the second match. Baresi has an uncanny ability to read and anticipate plays.

Paolo Maldini: 25, 57 caps. 1.85m, 77kg. AC Milan defender is considered one of the best fullbacks playing today. Can mark effectively but can move into attack very quickly. Still only 25, he is a veteran of the 1990 World Cup team.

Luigi Apolloni: 27, 3 caps. 1.84m, 76 kg. Solid, dependable central defender, helped Parma reach back-to-back Cup Winners Cup finals, winning in 1993.

Antonio Benarrivo: 25, 13 caps. 1.70m, 65kg. Nicknamed Tom Thumb. Benarrivo is a workhorse in defence and attack. Made his international debut in September, 1993. He was a key figure in Parma's 1994 European Supercup victory over AC Milan.

Demetrio Albertini: 22, 21 caps. 1.76 m, 72kg. Though he limped off at half-time against Spain, the AC Milan midfielder recovered in time to play against Bulgaria in which he was one of the stars.

Dino Baggio: 22, 19 caps. 1.85m, 72kg. The 22-year-old midfielder, not related to his more famous namesake Roberto, has played a crucial role in Italy's move to the final. He scored in Italy's 10-man victory over Norway in the first round, gave Italy an early lead against Spain and worked effectively in midfield before being substituted against Bulgaria.

Roberto Donadoni: 30, 56 caps. 1.73m, 68kg. A fixture at AC Milan since his arrival in 1986 and was one of the stars of their 4-0 victory over Barcelona in the 1994 European Cup final. Good at setting up chances in the last third of the field.

Antonio Conte: 24, 3 caps. 1.76m, 71 kg. A hardworking midfielder who can play on the right side to lend support to the offence or positioned in front of the defence. He shot to prominence in his first season with Juventus, helping them to the 1993 UEFA Cup. Not flashy but productive.

Nicola Berti: 27, 32 caps. 1.86m, 79kg. Recently rejoined the national team after a long absence due to injury. Replaced the less experienced Conte on the right of midfield in the semifinals.

Roberto Baggio: 27, 42 caps. 1.74m, 72kg. Getting better and better after a disappointing start to the World Cup but now his appearance in the final is threatened by injury. The 27-year-old came to life in the second round, scoring both goals in the 2-1 victory over Nigeria. His 87th minute strike against Spain let the exhausted Italians avoid another extra-time battle, and he scored both goals in the space of five minutes in the 2-1 triumph over Bulgaria.

Daniele Massaro: 33, 14 caps. 1.77m, 74kg. AC Milan forward scored two goals in the European Cup final victory against Barcelona.

Pierluigi Casiraghi: 25, 19 caps. 1.82m, 78 kg. Lazio forward brought in to partner Roberto Baggio up front against Bulgaria.

Giuseppe Signori: 26, 22 caps. 1.71m, 68kg. Leading scorer in Italy for Lazio. Signori has yet to hit the mark in the World Cup, perhaps because of nagging injuries that plagued him all spring.