

Vogts gets the nod

FRANKFURT, Germany, July 17: Berti Vogts, under fire for Germany's World Cup failure, was confirmed Friday as national coach and given the task of rebuilding the side which lost to Bulgaria in the quarter finals, reports AFP.

The German Football Federation said in a statement that the "final decision" had been agreed between Vogts and federation president Egidius Braun.

The coach's first task will be to qualify Germany for the 1996 European Championships in England.

"I consider it an enormous personal challenge to have responsibility for rebuilding the team," said Vogts.

"It will be a difficult job, because young talent is a bit thin in the Bundesliga."

Vogts took over from Franz Beckenbauer who led the side to victory in the 1990 World Cup in Italy.

He has been under fierce attack from the public and the media, with the mass-circulation Bild typically headlining one recent issue. "On your bike Berti."

Powers of WC

NEW DELHI, July 17: India's notorious power corporations pledged on Friday to provide uninterrupted electricity to football-mad Indians during the live broadcast of Sunday's World Cup final, reports AFP.

Power corporations in Bombay, Calcutta and New Delhi vowed there would be no blackouts when Italy and Brazil kick-off at the Rose Bowl at 1:00 am Indian time on Monday.

"We are ready," said a spokesman for the Calcutta electric supply board. "There will be no problems."

The overcrowded eastern metropolis, the hub of Indian football, has been festooned with posters of Brazilian players ahead of the final between the south Americans and the Italians.

The Delhi electric supply undertaking has also made preparations to ensure that screens do not suddenly go blank during the match.

"If necessary, we will divert electricity from other states on Sunday," a spokesman said.

In Bombay, engineers were keeping their fingers crossed after several days of fierce monsoon thunderstorms.

Irate television viewers have vented their anger on power stations in the past following outages during broadcast of cricket or field hockey matches.

Technicians at the state-run Doordarshan television network, which has broadcast all of the World Cup matches live without a hitch so far, have been ordered not to "permit a single moment's disruption," station sources said.

Several television companies have set up mobile repair centres and some have even offered to provide free tune-ups of hazy sets ahead of Sunday's final.

"This is purely a humanitarian mission," said the chief executive of a leading television manufacturer.

India ranks 120th in international soccer and has never made it past the qualifying stages of the World Cup.

Aussie eves on brink of elimination

DUBLIN, July 17: Australia faced elimination from the women's World Cup on Saturday after a 1-1 draw with Olympic champions Spain, reports Reuters.

The Australians took an early lead and dominated for most of the match but conceded a late Spanish goal and are now in danger of missing the semifinals.

With two Group A matches remaining, against Ireland on Monday and South Korea, the group leaders, on Wednesday, the Australians have now dropped three points in three games.

South Korea lead with five points, Argentina have four and Australia and Spain three each.

The South Koreans maintained their point advantage in the group by defeating hosts Ireland 2-0 and a beautifully taken goal by Argentine centre forward Vanina Oneto took Argentina ahead of Australia with their 1-0 victory over Russia.

For Spain, Saturday's match was the third successive draw and the team who have been out of form since the Barcelona Olympics, are not yet out of the reckoning.

The Australians took the lead in the 15th minute against Spain when Juliet Haslam's corner shot hit a defender's foot and Jenny Morris tucked the resulting penalty stroke into the top corner of Spain's goal.



Brazilian striker Bebeto juggles with a ball during a training session at the California State University at Fullerton on July 16. — AFP photo

Bebeto basks in success

PASADENA, July 17: Brazilian striker Bebeto has finally laid to rest the ghosts which have haunted him for the last four years, reports Reuters.

Since 1990, the feather-weight forward had to live with the nightmare of his experience at the World Cup in Italy.

Expected to be one of the revelations of that tournament, Bebeto was relegated to the substitutes' bench, played in just seven minutes of one game and was then injured in a training session.

It was a bitter experience and one which has been nagging at the back of his mind ever since.

Four years on, he has finally proved that he can perform on the World Cup stage.

His partnership with fellow striker Romario has been one of the talking points of the 1994 finals. Although Bebeto has three goals to Romario's five, his movement off the ball, clever flicks and sheer speed make him a huge handful for defenders.

"I had a duty to myself following my experience in 1990," he said, adding that he never feared a repeat of the failure. "I knew that this time everything would work out. I have a lot of faith in god, I knew he wouldn't let me down."

Brazil coach Carlos Alberto Parreira has described the Bebeto-Romario partnership as

the best Brazilian attack since Pele and Tostao in 1970.

"They are both enormously gifted players with tremendous ball skills," he said.

A quiet person off the pitch who likes to spend his time at home with his wife, three children and a collection of parrots and pedigree dogs, Bebeto began his career with the Rio de Janeiro club Flamengo in 1983.

He was so lightweight that he needed six months of muscular exercises to build up his frame.

But his goal scoring ability quickly became apparent and he became a protégé of former international Zico, the club captain at the time.

He shot to international fame with his performance in the 1989 Copa America where, he was top scorer, scoring six goals in seven games as Brazil won the title.

After that, however, his career appeared to be on a never-ending downhill slide.

He transferred to Flamengo's bitter rivals Vasco da Gama in a move which infuriated the Flamengo faithful. Bebeto, who at that time had a reputation as a moaner, found it hard to settle at his new club and was sent off in his first game against Flamengo for fighting.

He lost his form and, just weeks before the 1990 World Cup finals, his place in the Brazil team to Muller. His only appearance in the tournament was when he came on in the

83rd minute of the match against Costa Rica.

Two days later, he was injured in a clash with goalkeeper Carlos in a training session and his World Cup was over.

Injuries troubled him for the next few months but in 1991 he finally began to recover his old fitness. On the eve of the 1991 Copa America, however, he stormed out of the Brazil squad, claiming he was suffering discrimination from coach Paulo Roberto Falcão.

Critics wondered where he would go from there. The answer was upwards, as quickly as he had come down.

At club level, he finally began to replay the investment Vasco had made in him.

Meanwhile, Falcão resigned after a disappointing performance in the Copa America, opening the Brazil door for Bebeto once again. He hasn't looked back since, scoring 18 goals for Brazil since 1992.

In 1992, he was bought by Spanish club side Deportivo La Coruna. Critics, predicted a rapid return to Brazil, saying he would not adapt to life thousands of miles from home and that his slender frame would not survive the constant kicking of Spanish league defenders.

Bebeto confounded them all, and in the two seasons since he joined them, his previously unrated team have come within a whisker of winning the Spanish title.

Gomez won't step in Maturana's shoes

BOGOTA, July 17: Colombia's assistant coach looks unlikely to take over the national soccer team from Francisco Maturana and will probably stay with Medellin's Atletico Nacional, a club spokesman said on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

Maturana quit after Colombia were knocked out of the World Cup finals in the United States and is going to run Atletico De Madrid in Spain. The Colombian Soccer Federation offered assistant coach Hernan Dario Gomez the job.

Juan Guillermo Montoya, spokesman for the city team, told Reuters that Gomez would probably stay at Atletico Nacional, one of the best teams in the country.

"It's true but it's not official," said. "He won't be going to Spain or stay with the national team."

Earlier news reports had said Gomez was thinking of following Maturana to Spain. He was understood to be reluctant to take the national job because of the murder of one of the team's players, apparently for conceding a World Cup own goal.

"He's taking the week to think about it and will probably make a definite decision next Monday," said Montoya.

The national team were one of the favourites to win the tournament but were eliminated after the first round.

Police investigating the shooting of defender Andres Escobar have arrested three suspects, one of whom has confessed to having done it.

Japan to go all out for 2002 WC

PASADENA, July 17: Japan, bidding to host the World Cup in the year 2002, would build 15 all-seater stadiums if it won the right to stage the event, the chairman of the bidding committee said on Friday, reports Reuters.

"We strongly wish to host the first World Cup ever to be held in Asia at the turn of the century and we will make an all out effort to provide the stage for the competition," Takashi Ishihara, told a news conference.

"To upgrade facilities 15 new, world-class football stadiums with capacities of between 50,000-70,000 are due to be completed by the year 2000 in 15 cities in Japan," he said.

At this early stage in the bidding, Japan's only serious rival appears to be South Korea. The two countries are the only Asian nations to have staged the Summer Olympic Games — Tokyo held them in 1964 and Seoul in 1988.

FIFA will decide the host nation for the 2002 World Cup in two years' time.

The Japanese bid is being supported by Bobby Charlton, a member of the England team that won the World Cup in 1966.

He said because France was staging the World Cup in 1998 and because the next finals could not be staged back in Europe he was convinced the 2002 finals would be held in Japan.

"I am dedicated to the idea that the finals should not be monopolised by Europe and South America," he said. "It is a world game as teams from Africa and Asia have proved."

"As far as Japan is concerned, I have never seen the game grow so quickly anywhere in the World. Young people in Japan have taken to the game in such a way — it's frightening."

Japan is basing its bids on the success of the two-year-old professional J-League, which has been playing to full stadiums around the country. It also points to the 1964 Olympics and the 1991 World Athletics Championships as proof it can handle major events.

Japan has staged minor FIFA tournaments in the past and is due to host the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano.

The lack of a football culture in a land where baseball, golf and sumo wrestling have traditionally dominated is not seen as a set-back.

Charlton said: "The government is backing football 100 per cent in Japan as a very clean, cheap and safe game to play. The United States has no football culture as such either, but people see it as their duty to support major events such as the World Cup and this world Cup has been a resounding success."

Japanese people would feel honour-bound to support the World Cup in the same way and I am sure the stadiums would be 100 per cent full for all the matches."

Moment belongs to Brazil?



FULLERTON, Calif., July 17: Mario Zagalo has been on enough World Cup champions to recognise the

special scent. It's the smell of a winner, he says.

"This team has the smell of the 1970 team," Zagalo, Brazil's assistant coach, said Saturday. "The good fluids can descend on us again."

Not a very scientific attitude, to be sure. But Brazilians feel a mystical optimism as they head into Sunday's Cup final against Italy in the Rose Bowl, reports AP.

It was 24 years ago that Brazil faced Italy in a Cup final, battling for the Jules Rimet trophy and a record third world title. Pele and company won it 4-1. The coach was Mario Zagalo.

Now the teams meet again in the final, each competing for an unprecedented fourth championship.

It all adds up, said Zagalo. "Look, the game is on the 17th day of the seventh month, and seven is lucky," he explained. "It's the last game of '94. Nine plus four is thirteen, my lucky number. Thirteen — three plus one? Four. The fourth world title."

For the less numerologically inclined, he was more prosaic. "It's a feeling," said Zagalo, who also was a star on Brazil's world champion teams in 1958 and 1962. "Winning teams grow during the competition. They develop personality and morale, like this one has."

The captain of the 1970 team, Carlos Alberto Torres, also feels the magic. He celebrates his 50th birthday on Sunday.

"It's as if my life is coming full circle," he said in Rio de Janeiro. "If we win it again on Sunday, my birthday, why, it would be almost like a dream."

Of course, it also took hard work and talent. Three years of planning and preparation went

into the Cup team. And it helps to have strikers like Romario and Bebeto.

The fundamental thing was continuation," coach Carlos Alberto Parreira said. "It was extremely difficult. We had no conditions to work in and had only 20 days to get ready for the Cup."

Yet even when disaster seemed to strike, Brazil found, well, providential help.

Starting fullbacks Ricardo Gomes and Ricardo Rocha were injured at the start of the Cup. But their last-minute replacements, Aldair and Marcelo Santos, played brilliantly. The 24-year-old Santos was named to FIFA's All-Star Cup team, along with three other Brazilians.

Like millions of Brazilians, Santos is a Roman Catholic and a believer in spirit religions.

He wears a deep blue ribbon tied around his waist, a symbol of a promise and a request for grace from a spirit deity. Around his neck is a gold chain with a cross and an amulet.

"Someone gave it to me early in my career for luck," said Santos fingering the small brown cylinder. "I guess it works."

Another blow was the loss of defender Leonardo. Knocked out of the Cup in the second round with a four-game suspension. Veteran Branco, returning from a back injury, stepped up and scored the game-winning in a dramatic 3-2 quarterfinal victory over the Netherlands.

"It was predestined," Branco said simply.

That's no surprise to his countrymen, who like to say that God is Brazilian. The Italians may have the Pope, but his boss is rotting for Brazil.

Even the practical Parreira relected on the odd twists of fate. His life changed in 1970, when he was the physical trainer for the world champion team.

"I was a dreamer, just a kid of 27 years," he recalled. "I never passed through my mind that one day I would be a football coach. I only expected to be a trainer. But that World Cup opened doors. It just happened naturally."

Now, the Brazilian team is on an ascending curve as it heads into the decision. Parreira said.

"We arrive in the final at our best moment," he said. "We are relaxed, confident and determined."

Goalkeeper Claudio Taffarel echoed his coach's confidence. "We respect Italy," said Taffarel, "but the moment belongs to Brazil."

At 21, a tender age for goalkeepers, he was the starter for three-time Brazilian champion Intercao.

His first international stage was the 1988 Seoul Olympics.

But in Italy, things went wrong. Taffarel was platoon in Parma and lost his conditioning and reflexes. He was benched, then, dealt to tiny Reggina.

Parreira had faith in his goalkeeper and called him back for the World Cup qualifying games last year.

Taffarel was less than spectacular. Brazil lost 2-0 to Bolivia — their first loss ever in qualifying — and Taffarel knocked in the second goal himself. Brazilians bowed for his head, but Parreira stuck by him.

"I'll never forget that," Taffarel said, his voice growing husky. "I was in bad shape, but he brought me back anyway. He believed in me."

Now I'm back, as good as I ever was."

Christie to miss Goodwill Games

LONDON, July 17: World and Olympic 100 metres champion Linford Christie withdrew late Saturday from the Goodwill Games in St Petersburg which start this week, reports AP.

Christie suffered a slight hamstring tear when he was beaten by Jon Drummond at the London Grand Prix meet on Friday night.

His withdrawal means the Games will miss Christie's much anticipated clash with new 100m world record holder Leroy Burrell and his predecessor Carl Lewis on July 25.

The British track team captain is due to fly to Munich Tuesday to visit his specialist and ascertain whether the injury threatens his bid for a third successive European title in Helsinki, Finland, in three weeks time.

"Linford still doesn't know the full extent of it, but he is hopeful of being ready for Helsinki," his agent Sue Barrett said.

Even if Christie is fit for the European championships starting August 8, the injury will seriously hinder his preparations for Helsinki and for the Commonwealth Games in Victoria, Canada, which get under way on August 18.

His confrontation with Burrell and Lewis was billed as one of the major races of the season, with the Americans having no major championship to contest this summer.

Christie was looking forward to proving a point after being accused of avoiding Burrell at the London meet.

But he has always insisted that titles mean more than times and said his main targets for the year were defending his European and Commonwealth crowns.

"A world record can be taken away from you," he has said. "But a championship gold medal is yours for ever."



under their feet. They're talking about the scuffed up turf near the net — and the drama of a player who is most in the spotlight when he fails, reports AP.

Brazil have allowed three goals, the fewest of any team to get out of the first round. And even quick-to-blame Brazilians say none was Taffarel's fault.

He dismisses the numbers. "It's not Taffarel, it's the whole defence that's good," he said. "Anyway, statistics don't matter much. In the finals, you play with your heart."

He also plays with experience. He was Brazil's starter in 1990 and has spent four seasons in the Italian First Division with Parma and Reggina.

Taffarel recalled his Italian league encounters with Roberto Baggio, a star with Juventus of Turin.

"They were always negative," Taffarel said with a laugh. "He plays for a big team and I play for a small one."

Fielding questions from reporters, Taffarel exuded a cool confidence. But his road to the final was anything but smooth.

Taffarel burst onto the soccer scene 10 years ago when he instantly considered a phenom.

Two nuns, working as interpreters in the World Cup USA '94, take photographs of the Brazilian squad during a practice session at the California State University at Fullerton on July 16. Brazil face Italy in the final. — AFP photo



Two nuns, working as interpreters in the World Cup USA '94, take photographs of the Brazilian squad during a practice session at the California State University at Fullerton on July 16. Brazil face Italy in the final. — AFP photo

Inspired or indifferent?

LONDON, July 17: Americans still prefer watching celebrity murder cases to 90 minutes of 22 men in shorts kicking a round ball but the rest of the world believes the United States overcame ignorance to become an inspired World Cup host, reports Reuters.

On a day when an expected two billion people were gathering in front of television sets to watch Brazil and Italy battle for soccer's greatest prize, Britain's Sunday Telegraph newspaper called the USA's '94 tournament a "smash-hit success."

Fervent fans across the globe were prepared to forgive Americans an overriding obsession with the OJ Simpson murder trial and show gratitude for the efficiency, friendliness and enthusiasm with which the tournament was staged.

European newspapers remarked that initial predictions of poor crowds, weak organi-

sation and irreverence towards a sport many hold sacred have been defied with this year's competition, bringing record attendances and a feast of goals.

Good natured policing, stadiums where rival fans sit side by side and cheerful razzmatazz were virtues celebrated in countries where the national sport is often blighted by hooliganism among fans segregated by police in riot gear.

There was a festive atmosphere of which we have no idea in Europe. The American public vibrates, encourages, participates, it even becomes part of the spectacle," said the French sports daily L'Equipe.

Italian journalists were taken by surprise by the enthusiasm of local fans. On June 17 La Repubblica newspaper said: "It seems just a bit excessive to expect Americans to get excited en masse about this event."

A week later the headline "Soccer discovers America" ran in the Gazzetta Dello sport

newspaper after the US won an upset victory over Colombia to ignite a wave of American interest in their national team.

In Britain sports writers gently mocked American ignorance of the game with newspapers quoting spectators confusing Disgrace Argentinian soccer star Diego Maradona with pop star Madonna.

But there has been reluctant praise for the naive enthusiasm of fans, with one leading sports columnist marvelling at the huge home crowds watching "a game they do not understand between two nations of which they have not heard."

British journalists, used to working in draughty, alcohol-free stadiums where the catering is legendary for its awfulness relished the commercial initiative of wandering hot-dog and cold beer sellers in comfortable US grounds.

Criticism was reserved for match tickets deemed too expensive for the average pocket and for the heat, which commentators agreed could not be blamed on the Americans.