

Will Angel Gabriel use the 'Hand of God' tonight?

JOHN PLAYER GOLD LEAF LIGHTS

## Yugoslavia & Iran: Waking up from nightmares of history

SAINT ETENNE, France. June 13 (AP/Reuters): While NATO threatens air strikes inside their country, the Yugoslav World Cup team plans another kind of bombardment: the Iranian goal.

Highly favoured Yugoslavia, led by star striker Predrag Mijatovic, meets injury-stricken Iran in their opening Group F game Sunday.

The Yugoslav players seem unaffected by ethnic clashes back home in Kosovo, and NATO threats of air strikes inside the troubled Serbian province unless a Serb offensive there against ethnic Albanian separatists is stopped.

"We are here to play soccer, score goals and forget about politics and wars," said Yugoslav star midfielder Vladimir Jugovic. "Our first priority now is to 'bombard' the Iranian goal," he added, laughing.

But Yugoslavia and Iran will both be closing unhappy chapters in their soccer history when they take the World Cup field at Saint-Etienne's Geoffroy-Guichard Stadium.

Sanctions imposed against Belgrade during the violent break-up of the Balkan state meant the Yugoslavians were excluded from the finals of the European Championship in 1992 and were barred from even qualifying for USA '94, Euro '96.

And after dominating Asian football in the seventies, Iran, rocked by revolution and then war, have missed out on the last four World Cup finals. But the similarities between the two Group F sides end.

While Yugoslavia can choose from a squad of players drawn from some of the biggest clubs in the world, Iran rely on players from their domestic competition.

"For us as a semi-professional Asian team it is a victory to be here," said Iran's coach Jalal Talebi.

Yugoslavia have higher aims. A 12-1 aggregate win over Hungary in their qualification play-off sent a warning to the world Yugoslavia are back.

The man who scored seven of those 12 goals, Predrag Mijatovic, is one of the most in-form strikers in Europe.

He recently reminded the world of his deadly finishing, when he scored the goal that gave his club side Real Madrid victory over Juventus in the European cup final.

In Dragan Stojkovic, Sinisa Mihajlovic and Vladimir Jugovic Yugoslavia have a midfield brimming with top flight quality and experience.

While the Yugoslav substi-

tutes bench will feature players from Italian and Spanish clubs, the Iranians rely on their three full-time professionals, Karim Bagheri, Khodadad Azizi and Ali Daei — who play in the German Bundesliga.

For Sunday's match Iran's choices could be even more limited.

Goalkeeper Ahmad Abedzadeh is doubtful and will likely be replaced by his club understudy Nima Nakisa. Pacey winger Satar Hamecani could

also be ruled out with a knee ligament problem.

For Yugoslavia, Dejan Savicevic faces a late fitness test on a knee problem — if he doesn't make it the exciting teenager Dejan Stankovic could be drafted in.

Even without Savicevic, Yugoslavia should be able comfortably to outclass the Iranians.

"Any team that qualified for these finals is a good team, so we have to respect Iran," said Yugoslav coach Slobodan Santrac.

Iran's Talebi is hoping that teamwork will help his side create an upset.

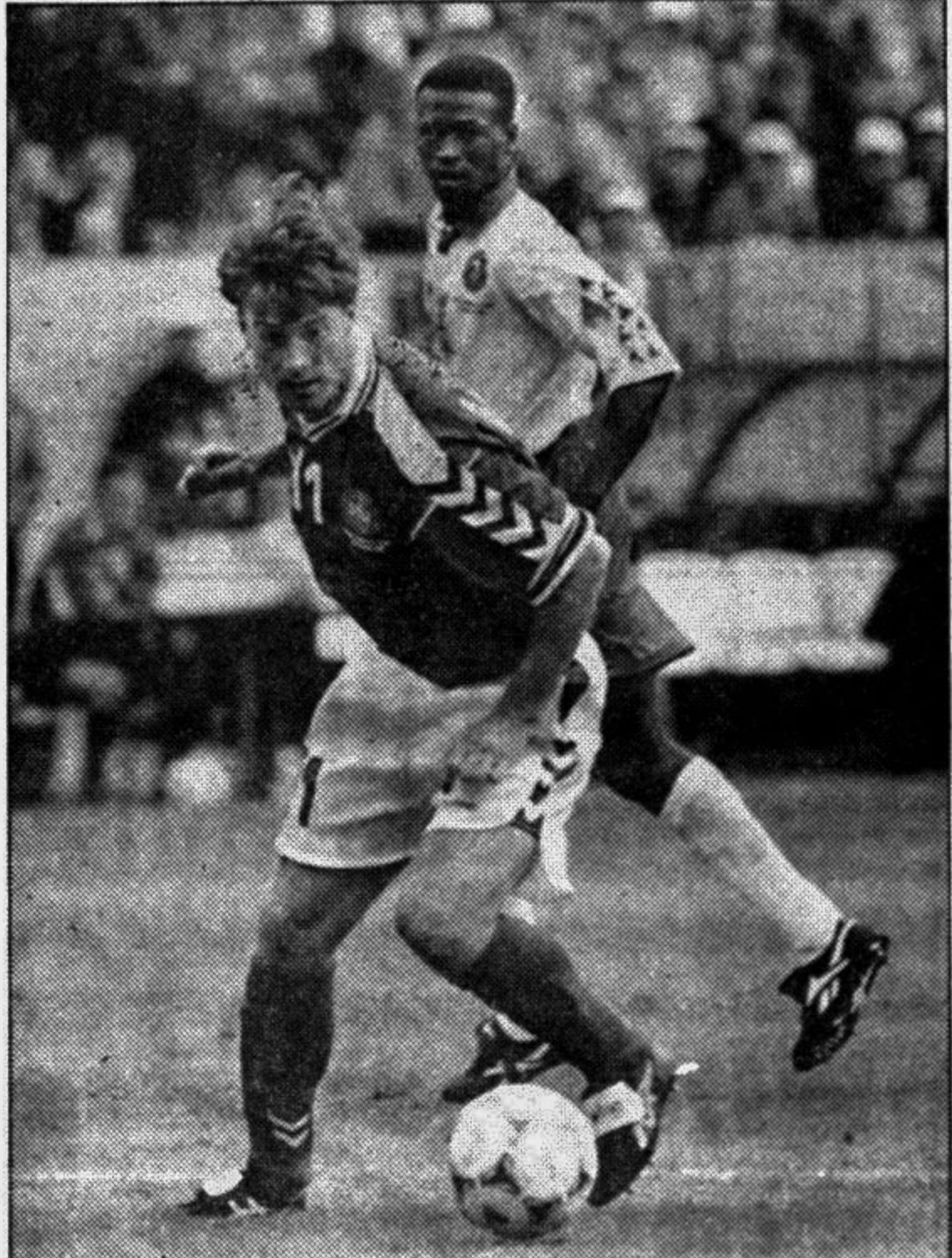
"Individually the Yugoslav players are better than the Iranian players," he said, "but our strength is as a group."

Throughout qualification the Iranians played attractive, attacking football but often neglected defence.

"Our nation wants us to play attacking football but I know that if we just go forward blindly we will be punished. But it is difficult for me to convince the players that the game has precise rules," said Talebi.

If those "rules" are ignored by Iran on Sunday then Talebi can be sure that Mijatovic and company will have no hesitation in punishing them.

**POSSIBLE LINE-UPS:**  
**IRAN:** 12-Nima Nakisa, 4-Mohammad Khakpour, 5-Afshin Peyravani, 15-Ali Ostadasadi, 18-Satar Hamedani (or 7-Ali Reza Mansourian), 6-Karim Bagheri, 9-Hamid Estili, 2-Mehdi Mahdavi, 21-Mehrdad Minavand Chal, 10-Ali Daei, 11-Khodadad Azizi.  
**YUGOSLAVIA:** 1-Ivica Krulj, 2-Zoran Mirkovic, 5-Miroslav Djukic, 11-Sinisa Mihajlovic, 3-Goran Djorjic (or 4-Slavisa Jokanovic), 6-Branko Brnovic, 10-Dragan Stojkovic, 7-Vladimir Jugovic, 8-Dejan Savicevic (or 20-Dejan Stankovic), 9-Predrag Mijatovic, 22-Darko Kovacevic (or 17-Savo Milo-sevic).



Brian Laudrup of Denmark makes a move during the match with Saudi Arabia at Lens on June 12. —AFP photo

### ABSORBING ANECDOTES

PARIS, June 13 (Reuters): Facts and figures from World Cup matches played on Friday:

France became the first team to score three goals at the finals when they beat South Africa 3-0. It was also their first win in the finals since beating Belgium 4-2 to take third place 12 years ago in Mexico. The French failed to qualify in 1990 and 1994.

Unlucky South African defender Pierre Issa became the third player to score an own goal in France in seven matches. Tommy Boyd of Scotland and Youssef Chippo of Morocco both put into their own net on the opening day.

But Issa may find some consolation in the fact that his goal was the 1,600th in the history of the World Cup finals.

Paraguay and Bulgaria fought out the first goalless draw of the finals in the fourth consecutive match at the tournament to finish in a tie.

Although Bulgaria were semifinalists four years ago in the United States, the draw was their third consecutive finals game without a win. They lost the 1994 semifinal to Italy 2-1 and were beaten 4-0 by Sweden in the playoff for third place.

Denmark, who beat Saudi Arabia 1-0, continued a sequence of winning every first round group game they have ever played in World Cup finals. In their only previous appearance in 1986, they beat Scotland, Uruguay and (West) Germany to top the so-called "group of death" but went out 5-1 to Spain in the second round.

Saudi Arabia failed to score in a World Cup finals match for the first time. In their only other finals appearance in 1994, they scored in all four matches.

### THE SCORERS

PARIS, June 13: Goalscorers in the 16th World Cup after Friday's matches:

Two goals: Marcelo Salas, Chile

One goal: Roberto Baggio, Italy (penalty), Cesar Sampaio, Brazil, John Collins, Scotland (penalty), Dan Eggen, Norway, Moustafa El Hadji, Morocco, Abdeljilil Hadda, Morocco, Pierre Njanka, Cameroon, Anton Polster, Austria, Marc Rieper, Denmark, Christian Vieri, Italy, Christophe Dugarry, France, Thierry Henry, France.

Own goals: Tommy Boyd, Scotland (vs. Brazil), Youssef Chippo, Morocco (vs. Norway), Pierre Issa, South Africa (vs. France).

## Bafana baptism of fire

SOWETO, South Africa, June 13: South Africa's first-ever World Cup game ended in disappointment for the country's avid football fans on Friday as they vowed their beloved Bafana Bafana (the boys) would defeat Denmark next week, reports Reuters.

South Africa, in their first World Cup since the end of apartheid, lost 3-0 to host country France in a windswept match in Marseille.

"We've been isolated for so long, but we will take the world by surprise. The new South Africa is a soccer nation," said Stephen Mokoena after watching the game with other drinkers at a shebeen in Soweto, 15 km (10 miles) from Johannesburg.

Fans hung their heads briefly after the defeat, which some blamed on French-born coach Philippe Troussier.

"It was all the coach's fault. We didn't use the bench when we should have," said shebeen owner Sipho Livingstone, whose bar was packed with Bafana Bafana fans.

"This is only the first game and the wind made it difficult. We just conceded unlucky goals," said fan Alan Makomela.

An estimated two of every

three South Africans were glued to television and radio sets on Friday night as their cherished national team launched its most ambitious campaign yet.

The streets of Soweto were deserted an hour before the game as fans piled into shebeens to watch the game.

In Johannesburg, thousands of fans crammed into a drive-in theatre overlooking the country's biggest city to view the match on a giant movie screen.

A big screen was also set up in Cape Town's gangland area in a bid to bring bafana bafana fans together.

Earlier this week, South African President Nelson Mandela sent personal notes of inspiration to each member of the team.

Mandela is a keen sports fan and a former amateur boxer. With his efforts to reconcile South Africans through sport, and public encouragement of sporting heroes.

The South Africans have had much impact on African football since the end of the country's political and sporting isolation under apartheid.

The team has been to two successive African Nations' Cup finals, winning at home in 1996 and then finishing runners-up to Egypt in Burkina Faso in

February.

Soccer is also one of the few areas of a success in transforming South African sport, which was divided along ethnic lines for years and suffered international boycotts as a result.

"It is truly a national team and I would urge the country to unite behind Bafana Bafana," Sports Minister Steve Tshwete wrote in the forward to a brochure on the team and its World Cup competitors.

The last time sports mania gripped South Africa was in 1995 when the Springboks won the Rugby Union World Cup at home, a year after majority rule arrived.

Mandela gave the Springboks his seal of approval at the time, walking into the Johannesburg pitch wearing a green and gold team jersey.

But rugby's image as a nation-building force was short-lived and is now in tatters.

Last month, the head of South Africa's Rugby Union, Louis Luyt, was forced to resign after dragging Mandela through the courts in a bid to short-circuit a judicial probe into the organisation that still shows signs of white domination.

The court action enraged many South Africans and led to a vigorous campaign against Luyt and his association.



INTER CONTINENTAL SMOOCH! A South African man and his French partner show-off their affection at Marseille on June 12. —AFP photo

### QUIPS & QUOTES

UNDATED, June 13 (AFP/Reuters): Here is a selection of World Cup quotes on Friday:

Bulgarian coach Hristo Boney put a brave face on his side's 0-0 draw with Paraguay in which his midfield star Anatoli Nankov was sent off.

Boney said nothing about the sliding tackle that earned Nankov his marching orders after a prior yellow card.

But he had harsh words for Saudi referee Abdul Rahman al Zeid for denying the Bulgarians a penalty.

"We are very disappointed about this result because we were the better side."

"That was very obvious during the first half when we did whatever we wanted except scoring goals."

"We created a lot of chances but didn't finish them off. That's all."

"The referee missed a penalty for us in the first half and that affected the game."

The coach was referring to the tackle by Pedro Sarabia which brought down Hristo Stochkov with only four minutes of the match gone.

Paraguay's Brazilian coach Paulo Cesar Carpegiani, who led the side to second place behind Argentina in the South American qualifying zone, said he was pleased with his team's commitment, but disappointed with the result.

"I thought we played quite well but we lacked someone to put their foot on the ball in the first half, when we made tactical mistakes."

"We calmed things down and closed down the flanks. But although we got better, the final pass was missing."

"I think it was an unfair result, I thought we deserved to win."

Paraguay's goalkeeper and captain, Jose Luis Chilavert, who likes to take shots at the opposing goal and came very close with a second-half free-kick, agreed that his side deserved to win and said he thought he had scored the winner himself.

"I thought the free-kick had gone in — it was so close," he said.

No goalkeeper has scored in a match in a World Cup finals. "What a moment that would have been," he added.

### Sophia in love with Roberto!

ROME, Jun 13: Fashion is one thing, said Sophia Loren, wearing an electric blue Armani dress. But soccer's another, and her heart is with Roberto Baggio, reports AP.

In her role as ambassador-at-large for the city of Rome to promote fashion in the Eternal City, the actress met with the media Friday to present the high fashion schedule for next month.

She also confessed she followed Italy's World Cup thriller Thursday against Chile with "trepidation" and said she would readily have given Italian hero Baggio "a big kiss."

Baggio set up Italy's first goal and tied the game at 2-2 with a penalty kick with just minutes remaining.

## Fans' favourites face critics' choice

PARIS, June 13 (Reuters): Croatia and Jamaica make their World Cup debuts against each other on Sunday with very different goals in mind.

While the Reggae Boyz defied probability to qualify for France at all and will be lucky to go home with even a point, Croatia boast some of Europe's most creative players and are probably capable of beating anyone on their day.

Croatia's coach Miroslav Blazevic is on record as saying his side can reach the semifinals or the final but has already suffered a cruel blow from the injury which forced his top striker, Lazio's Alen Boksic, out of the squad.

Nevertheless, if the side maintains its discipline, playmakers of the class of Robert Prosinecki and Zvonimir Boban ought to possess too much sophistication for a Jamaica side which makes a virtue of athleticism and directness.

Both sides went to some trouble to set up their training camps in France's rural east — Croatia in Vitte and Jamaica in Arc-en-Barrois, about as far as it is possible to be from the reporters in the main match venues.

But the teams, who have never met, finished up close to each other. Croatia tried unsuccessfully to send spies to a Jamaican training session after Jamaica's Brazilian coach Rene Simoes attempted some of his own intelligence work.

"Simoes disguised himself in a baseball cap and came to watch our warm-up game (on June 9)," Blazevic said. "But I recognised him and congratulated him. I gave him a video tape of the match as a token of my respect."

Simoes for his part has put this team through a punishing warm-up programme including 0-0 draws with Brazil, Sweden and Nigeria that ought to mean they do not pay anyone too much respect.

Neutral fans will hope Jamaica can grab at least a point to shake up an apparently clear-cut Group H, where favourites Argentina should on paper qualify easily alongside Croatia, leaving Jamaica and Japan to dispute the wooden spoon.

"If the Croatians aren't careful, on Sunday they'll be learning to dance Reggae," Simoes said.

Whether he will risk his most twinkle-toed striker, sometime bad boy, Walter Boyd, is still unclear.

Boyd, a national hero with 17 international goals to his name, paid his own way to Jamaica's warm-up tour in the United States to persuade Simoes to take him back after being dropped for lapses of discipline.

But Simoes may instead prefer to field some English-based players with more experience of the big time, notably Derby county's Dean Burton, scorer of four goals in four successive games in the qualifying competition.

Blazevic said on Thursday he wanted to move Parma's right-sided midfielder Mario Stanic up front to partner striker Davor Suker who has spent much of the season on the Real Madrid bench.

But the plan depended on the fitness of regular right back Slaven Bilic, who suffered a groin strain in a friendly last month and had only just returned to full training. Bilic's presence would allow Dario Simic to stand in for Stanic on the right side of midfield.

**PROBABLE TEAMS**  
**CROATIA:** 1-Drazen Ladic, 4-Igor Stimac, 5-Goran Juric, 6-Slaven Bilic, 17-Robert Jarni, 14-Zvonimir Soldo, 8-Robert Prosinecki, 20-Dario Simic, 10-Zvonimir Boban, 13-Marlo Stanic, 9-Davor Suker.

**JAMAICA:** 1-Warren Barrett, 5-Jan Goodison, 21-Durand Brown, 4-Linnall Dixon, 15-Ricardo Gardner, 7-Peter Cargill, 6-Fitzroy Simpson, 11-Theodore Whitmore, 19-Frank Sinclair, 22-Paul Hall, 18-Deon Burton.

## Cesare working on a formula for his star forwards

SENLS, France (AP? Internet): With Roberto Baggio in top form and Alessandro Del Piero ready to return to the team, coach Cesare Maldini on Friday was thinking the unthinkable.

Can the two Italian star forwards play together?

A heresy until a few days ago, the possibility of starting the former Juventus teammates in Wednesday's match against Cameroon was being considered. This year, the two scored a total of 43 goals on different teams.

"I must understand if they can play together, and in which way. I have several days for deciding, before the next match," Maldini said at Italy's training camp in Senls following a dramatic 2-2 draw against Chile at Bordeaux.

Baggio, a 31-year-old veteran on his third World Cup, was taken to France as Del Piero's substitute and fielded against Chile because the younger teammate still is in questionable form following a right thigh strain.

Baggio was the best player on the Italian side in Bordeaux and salvaged Italy from a sensational upset by earning and converting a late penalty.

"I fielded only one of them [against Chile] because the other had physical problems..."

I don't know if they are compatible. I'll think of it. I had thought of this also before the World Cup," Maldini said.

Italy may need to field a third forward against the African team in Montpellier as Baggio and Christian Vieri looked quite isolated in front against Chile.

"That was a tactical problem [against the Chileans]. We must improve cohesion between midfield and the attack," the Italian coach explained.

He rejected criticism of young defenders Alessandro Nesta and Fabio Cannavaro, who had a difficult match against Ivan Zamorano and

Marcelo Salas in Thursday's match of Group B.

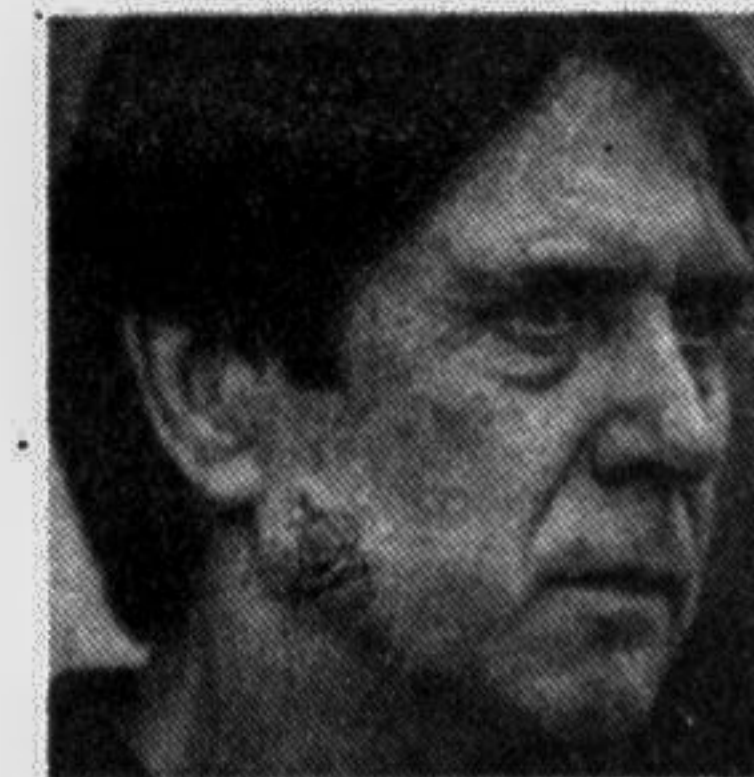
Salas scored both Chile's goals while Zamorano was a steady threat with his headers.

"Zamorano is one of the best world players in aerial play and is difficult to stop. I can say both Nesta and Cannavaro will start against Cameroon," Maldini said.

"We are aware that Cameroon is very strong athletically. We will study the tape of its last match against Austria tonight," he said.

Del Piero, 23, practiced all out on Friday and said he felt ready to play against Cameroon.

"It's up to Maldini to decide if I can be started. I am ready. I see no problem in playing with three forwards, along with Roberto [Baggio]. Del Piero said."



CESARE MALDINI



Christophe Dugarry (C) of France scoring the opening goal with a header against South Africa in Marseille on June 12. —AFP photo