

# Will Roberto or Dino Bag(gio) the winner tonight?

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## Pele laments over the days gone by

PARIS, June 16: Four decades to the day after making his World Cup debut, Brazilian legend Pele said Monday that fan violence and negative coaches were debasing the game, reports AFP.

Pele made his entrance on the world stage as a 17-year-old on June 15, 1958, in a 2-0 win over the then Soviet Union. He hit the crossbar early on and went on to score twice in the final when Brazil won 5-2 against Sweden.

Pele, now 57, helped Brazil to defend the title in 1962 and scored the opener in the memorable 1970 final against Italy. In all he scored more than 1,000 goals for Santos, Brazil and New York Cosmos.

But he lamented how football had changed since — in his view generally for the worse.

"When fans come to matches to fight that is just disgusting," said Pele, referring to the outbreak of hooliganism by England fans in Marseille.

He added that on the playing side coaches had become too negative, obsessed with the fear of losing.

"Many coaches are afraid to play the beautiful game," said Pele, who recently stepped down as Brazil's sports minister. And he said that could stifle talents such as his footballing heir Ronaldo.

## Blatter stands by S Africa

PARIS, June 16: England's hopes of hosting the 2006 World Cup received a setback here when newly elected FIFA president Sepp Blatter gave his support to an African bid, reports AFP.

"An African country would have a very strong chance of winning the right to hold 2006," Blatter said.

He added that as long as the country met the standards set down by FIFA, then the sport's governing body would favour an African bid.

With the decision to allow Korea and Japan co-host 2002, Africa is the only continent not to have held a World Cup.

So far there are only three serious contenders for 2006 — England, South Africa and Germany.

Blatter's comments will only add to English ears that their campaign may fall short.

## Thai bribery?

BANGKOK, June 16: Thailand will fire up the Nigerian soccer team with a meal of fiery Thai curry ahead of the African nation's World Cup clash with Bulgaria this week, reports AP.

The Thai foreign ministry confirmed Tuesday that the meal would mark a gesture of friendship for a country that is a chief buyer of Thai rice. Thailand is the world's number-one rice exporter.

The Thai Embassy in France, where the World Cup is being played, will prepare complimentary rice curry for the Nigerians sometime this week before their match Friday with Bulgaria.

Nigeria buys 500,000 tons of Thai rice annually and was the Southeast Asian country's biggest customer before Indonesia passed it with an order of 1 million tons.

Nigeria, the current Olympic champions, beat Spain 3-2 in their opening match last week. Thailand does not have a team in the month-long soccer tournament.

## "Romario could've played from qtrs"

BRASILIA, June 16: A French doctor who examined Brazilian striker Romario before his exclusion from the World Cup squad through injury said Monday the star would have been able to play from the quarterfinals, reports AFP.

"With a normal recovery period he would have been able to play without problems from the quarterfinals," said Bernard Roger, chief radiologist at the Les Lilas Clinic outside Paris which carried out tests into the extent of a calf muscle injury.

As a result of the tests, Brazilian officials decided the team should replace the 1994 World Cup winner with Emerson, a 22-year-old midfielder who plays for German side Bayer Leverkusen.

Roger told Globo newspaper that the treatment was working and Romario's injury was clearing up.

"From the first test the treatment was correct and there was an improvement as expected," he said.

Romario's club doctor at Flamengo, Jose Luis Runco, and physiotherapist Nilton Petroni meanwhile declared that the player was already much better.

Romario, who had been in good form prior to his injury, described his failure to make the squad as the "biggest disappointment of my life," but he said he agreed with the decision to leave him out.



LOVE IN LYON: A Colombian fan kisses her girlfriend at the Gerland Stadium, Lyon during the June 15 match with Romania. —AFP photo

# Salas gives Austria the creeps

SAINT ETIENNE, France, June 16 (AFP): Marcelo Salas, the Chile striker who has been the sensation of the World Cup so far, resumes his goal quest against Austria on Wednesday, looking to add to the double he notched up against Italy.

The South American player-of-the-year frightened the life out of Italy's experienced defence and the Austrians know a repeat performance could deal a fatal blow to their prospects of advancing to the second round.

"After his showing against Italy, Chile must be the favourites against us," admitted Toni Polster, the striker whose last-minute equaliser earned Austria a 1-1 draw in their Group B opener against Cameroon.

Against Chile's "magic twins" Salas and Ivan Zamorano, the Austrians fear their own campaign in about to be derailed.

Salas, nicknamed 'the matador', suffered a reaction in the Italy game and was unable to train at the weekend with a groin strain, but Chilean coach Nelson Acosta confirmed Salas would play.

"Marcelo Salas is fine. He will be playing against Austria, and I hope he'll again turn it on the way he did against Italy," Acosta said.

Despite his team's stirring performance against the Italians, Acosta was playing down suggestions that his team were clear favourites to overcome the Austrians.

"I watched Austria against Cameroon and they've altered their game since the qualifiers. They're very strong and good of-

fensive players," Acosta said. "Whatever happens, in a World Cup we respect every team — we saw the way Japan stood up to Argentina," he added.

Polster has a special reason for wanting to outshine the



Polster knows all about Zamorano as the two played together at Seville in the 1992-93 season. "It was a great experience to play alongside Ivan. I learned to value him both as a sportsman and as a person. I'm looking forward to seeing him again," Polster said.

Austrian coach Herbert Prohaska will have a full complement to choose from as midfielder Heimo Pfeifenberger, defender Wolfgang Feiersinger and reserve keeper Alefgang Knaller have all recovered from minor knocks.

But Polster remains their best hope of glory, having scored a record 40 goals for the national side. He flitted in and out of the side to begin with but secured his place in 1989 after blasting a hat-trick in a World Cup qualifier against East Germany.

The last time the Austrians met Chile on the World Cup stage, in 1982, Austria won 1-0, when Prohaska was playing. "A repeat would do nicely," quipped Polster. But Salas has other ideas.

## Aime on the alert

CLAIREFONTAINE, France, June 16 (AP/Internet): The brief respite from the World Cup, spending time with the wife and family, is over, and the French know they must be wary of a motivated Saudi Arabia on Thursday.

"We have to be on guard. It's like this that the worst accidents happen," coach Aime Jacquet said Monday.

On top of that, starting striker Stephane Guivarc'h is certain to miss the game with a knee injury.

France is coming off a comfortable and confidence-building 3-0 victory over South Africa while Saudi Arabia already have their back against the wall following an opening 1-0 loss to Denmark. Two of four teams advance from Group C.

"We shouldn't have the idea that the match against the Saudis is already won," defender Laurent Blanc said.

The Saudis know about coming back. In their World Cup debut four years ago, they allowed two second-half goals in a 2-1 loss to the Netherlands, but followed with a shocking 1-0 victory over Belgium that allowed them to reach the second round.

So France have to stay at their physical peak throughout the first round, said Jacquet. "If you're below your best, you can get a slap in the face from anyone," said the coach.

So it's up to Jacquet to keep the team alert — and insisting on running in the driving rain and cold at their training camp certainly has kept everybody awake.

"The value of training can make the difference here. This weather is good for us," he said. Tactical preparations for the Saudi game will start Tuesday, two days ahead of the clash at the 80,000-seat Stade de France.

While Jacquet considered the two days since Friday's victory over South Africa a nice break to meet up with family and friends, his players begged to disagree.

"We were training the next day. That's no break, we hardly had time to catch our breath," Blanc said.

Guivarc'h didn't train with the squad Monday, nursing his left knee with some bicycle exercises. He is expected back at the earliest for the Denmark game on June 24.

And they came close to making history when Jose Luis Chilavert had a 35-metre free-kick tipped over the crossbar, nearly becoming the first goal-keeper to score at a World Cup.

Chilavert, who has scored more than 40 goals in his professional career, has at least two more games to leave his indelible mark.

Mexico's Luis Hernandez, last year's top scorer at the Copa America with seven goals, once again saved his best for a major event as he emulated Salas with a brace against South Korea.

Like Paraguay, Mexico had suffered a miserable warm-up campaign and Hernandez had wasted the best part for a year on the substitute's bench at Boca Juniors in Argentina, where he was victim of a limit on foreign players.

Argentina suffered a difficult last 20 minutes as they overcame Japan 1-0 but like Brazil they appeared merely to be warming up for more challenging matches ahead.

## Colour-coded boots

MONTPELLIER, France, June 16 (AFP): Don't be surprised if Christian Vieri spends part of Italy's clash with Cameroon looking at the opposition's boots.

He'll just be working out which of the indomitable lions is trying to stop him from scoring on Wednesday night, when the two sides look for their first victory in Group B.

Vieri and the rest of the Italian squad have spent a morning going over Cameroon's 1-1 draw with Austria, working out the Africans' tactical moves and identifying the key players.

However, it didn't all seem to register with the Atletico Madrid ace.

Asked how he would deal with the gifted defender Rigoberto Song, who will be playing Serie A football in Italy with Salernitana next season, Vieri answered: "Who? Song?"

"I don't recognise the Cameroon players. I identify them by their boots," he said. "One of them's got yellow ones, another's got a red pair and someone else has a blue pair."

"If you tell me what colour boots this Song wears, I'll tell you what I think of him."

What he thinks of the side as a whole is that Italy could be heading for trouble.

"They have a great rhythm to

Moreno feels fit

SENILIS, France, June 16: Italy's World Cup defender Moreno Torricelli said on Saturday he was fit to play again after injuring his right foot in a practice match last month, reports Reuters.

Torricelli bruised his foot on May 28 while training with Cesare Maldini's squad at a pre-World Cup base in Italy.

The injury took longer to heal than expected and Torricelli missed Italy's opening Group B match against Chile.

But as the Italians prepared for their second match against Cameroon next Wednesday, the tall, bearded right-back said: "The injury's come along well and I'm ready to play again, hopefully I'm back in contention again."

Torricelli is not a first choice player for Italy despite a fine season for Juventus, the right back berth against Cameroon is likely to go to his Juve teammate Angelo Di Livio.

# Understanding the 'English disease'

LONDON, June 16 (AP): The front-page headlines said it all. "A Disgrace for England." "Fans Shame England." "Shamed Again by the Louts."

The soccer hooligans are back — causing havoc at the World Cup in France, bringing shame to their country and reviving a scourge that some call the "English disease."

Rioting in Marseille before and during Monday's England-Tunisia game was the latest example of a bent for violence that has been associated with English fans for decades.

"England seems to have invented (hooliganism), exported it," said Keith Cooper, spokesman for the international soccer federation FIFA.

"Other people have picked it up and run with it. But England seem to be intent on remaining world champions at this sort of problem."

Prime Minister Tony Blair condemned the fans responsible for the Marseille violence as "a complete disgrace to England" and said their actions could harm the country's bid for the 2006 World Cup. Sports Minister Tony Banks attacked

the troublemakers as "drunken, brain-dead louts."

On the streets of London, ordinary fans were ashamed and appalled.

"They're wrecking the good character of the normal football fans who pay to go and support our team play," said newspaper vendor Tony Seopardi, who believes the offenders should receive mandatory jail terms.

Jeremy Langman, wearing a wig in the colors of the England flag after the 2-0 victory over Tunisia, said the violence was a product of English society's repressed attitudes.

"There aren't too many outlets for people in England to release their emotions and this football hooliganism is a product of that," he said. "I think English people tend to be obsessive about football — and about other things like Princess Diana — and because of that certain people seem to go to extremes."

Soccer violence has been a problem in many countries, with Germany, the Netherlands and Argentina among the worst hit. But what is it about English fans which causes them to

booze and brawl their way into so much trouble whenever they travel abroad for a soccer game?

Experts cite alcohol, xenophobia, extreme nationalism, class and cultural reasons. Hooligans have also been tied to right-wing political groups, with evidence of ringleaders coordinating the violence with military-type precision.

In addition, the reputation of English fans precedes them, and they are often targeted by foreign fans and police.

But, mostly, the troublemakers are viewed as drunken thugs just looking for an excuse to fight.

"I don't want to hear any kind of examination of whether these people had bad childhoods, or were dropped on their head when they were kids," Home Secretary Jack Straw said Monday.

"I've seen football hooligans myself. I notice that they always have a huge amount of money, both to travel and to buy large amounts of alcohol, get completely drunk and then commit this kind of act and then offer excuses."

By contrast, Scottish fans, who also like their drink, have a reputation for merriment rather than mayhem. That's why hooliganism is considered an "English" problem, not a British or Scottish one.

The lowest point came in 1985 when 39 people, mostly Italian fans, died at Heysel Stadium in Brussels after English fans rioted before the European Cup final between Liverpool and Juventus. English clubs were subsequently banned from European competition until the 1990-91 season.

Since then, soccer violence has been largely contained at matches in England, but fans continue to stir up trouble when they travel abroad.

Graham Kelly, chief executive of the English Football Association, said the problem will continue "as long as people are allowed to leave the country, singing and drinking in bars for 24 hours."

But Banks, the sports minister, said it's impossible to impose a blanket ban.

"We cannot confiscate passports on the grounds of suspicion," he said. "We have to find away of dealing with them without curtailing the freedoms of the majority."

Richard Fenton, a sociologist and lecturer at Southampton Institute, described hooliganism as "a cultural thing — predominantly the male, working class culture, where the macho image prevails."

Fenton said there were "dedicated hooligans" who come from political extremes but who fit in under the banner of the Union Jack and can steer a crowd in a bad direction.

"The flip side on patriotism is an intolerance of foreigners — we need to show them who is best," he said.

## When politics takes a back seat

BOGOTA, June 16 (Reuters): Colombian leftist guerrillas toasted Brazil's and Mexico's World Cup victories and vowed to fight for the right of every Colombian to enjoy "happiness, fiesta and football."

"Soccer must be like true democracy. Either there's football for everybody or for nobody," said a statement issued late Sunday by the National Liberation Army (ELN).

But there wasn't much fiesta in Bogota on Monday after Colombia lost 1-0 to Romania in their opening match, casting a pall of silence over the city's deserted streets.

The guerrilla statement, distributed via internet, saluted victories by Colombia's Latin American brothers Brazil and Mexico, who defeated Scotland and South Korea 2-1 and 3-1, respectively.

It also saluted Chile's and Paraguay's "draws with a taste of triumph."

There was no explanation why ELN did not also salute Argentina's 1-0 victory over Japan on Sunday.

Those Colombians who hoped to find some solace in drink after their team's defeat were frustrated after city hall slapped a 24-hour ban on alcohol sales.

Plenty of Colombians had explanations for the defeat, including presidential candidate Horacio Serpa of the ruling Liberal Party who blamed Colombia's defeat on lack of mobility.

"We need more mobility, more dynamism and we must chase the ball more," said Serpa, who faces a runoff election contest against opposition conservative party-backed Andres Pastrana on Sunday. Few sports commentators expected the national side to make it to the second round of the World Cup.



CHRISTIAN VIERI

"It seems a banal thing to say but there aren't any small teams anymore. Did you see Japan? And even Jamaica weren't bad in my opinion."

What clearly is bad in Vieri's opinion is the obsessive interest in whether he will be playing here along side Roberto Baggio or Alessandro Del Piero, or both. In Italy, views on the subject have been aired by literally everyone from the prime minister downwards.

"It seems ridiculous to me to be just talking about these two men," he declared. "They are two great players, but we have a very important match coming up and it's not going to be easy."

"Instead, it seems that the whole of Italy are discussing the Baggio Del Piero question for 24 hours a day. I think the coach has already made a decision. But I don't know what it is. And I don't even want to know."



FUTILE OPTIMISM: US fans seem full of spirit before the clash with Germany at the Parc des Princes in Paris on June 15. —AFP photo