

Hagi, Iie injured

TOULOUSE, June 17: Mid-field general Gheorghe Hagi and Etriker Adrian Iie joined a worrying list of Romanian injured Tuesday following the side's World Cup debut against Colombia...

England play a physical game but on Monday I think our technical ability will be more dangerous...

Paraguay's cause for concern

CLAPIERS, France, June 17: Worried by a weak attack, head coach Paulo Cesar Carpeggiani has several strikers to choose from for Paraguay's crucial World Cup Group D match against Spain on Friday...

So low has Cardozo's stock sunk that he didn't even train with the starters in Monday's practice. And so weak was the Paraguayan attack against Bulgaria...

Paraguay face a Spanish squad desperate for their first points of the tournament after their shocking 3-2 loss against Nigeria in their first match.

Japan's positive thinking

AIX-LES-BAINS, France, June 17: The Japanese are taking their 1-0 loss to Argentina at their first World Cup game as an almost-won, or at least a draw that slipped away, reports AP.

"We can handle either way fine," Akita said. But Japan had lacked the final touches to score. That was the difference between Argentina and us. Unless you can score at that one opportunity, you can't win at the World Cup,

'Three Musketeers' ride again

MONACO, June 17 (AP): As players, Frank Rijkaard, Ronald Koeman and Johan Neeskens were unmissable members of a combined six Dutch World Cup squads.



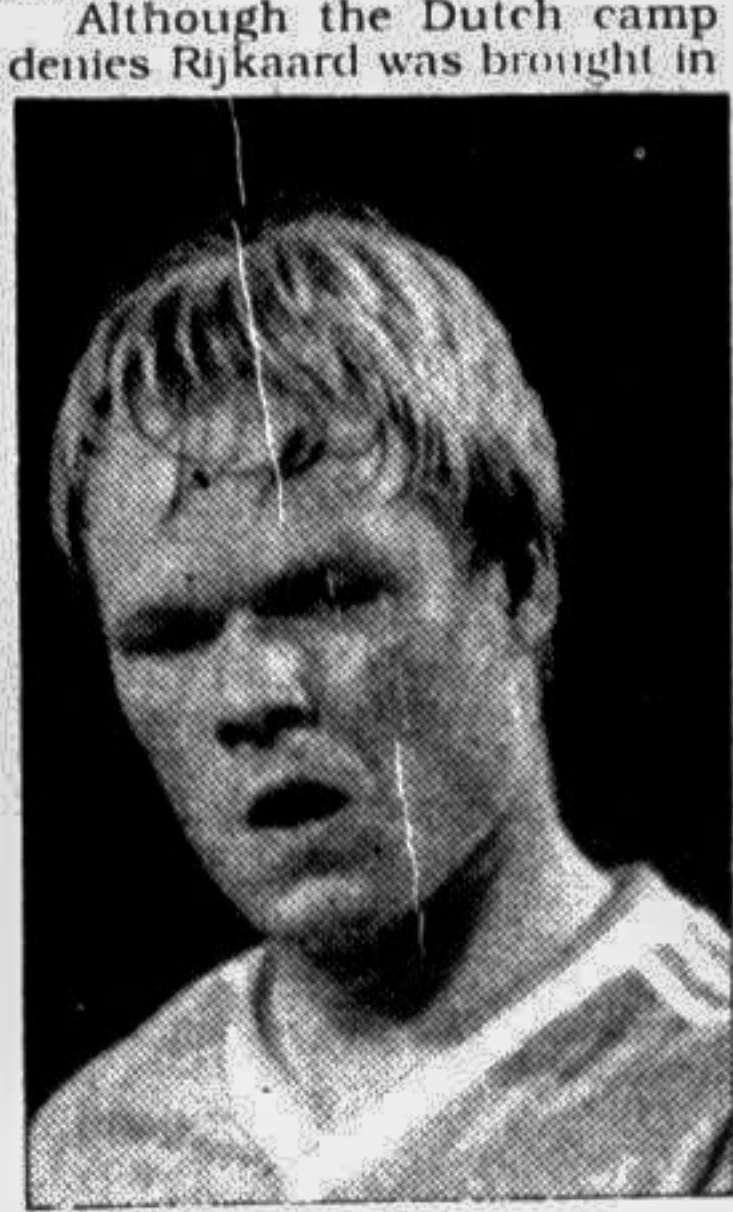
JOHAN NEESKENS

Neeskens, now assistants to Dutch coach Guus Hiddink, form a link between players and management as Hiddink tries to prevent the kind of communication breakdowns that plagued the Dutch camp during Euro 96.

Dubbed 'The Three Musketeers,' they have a wealth of experience — and, most importantly, they have the respect of this pride of Dutch lions.

It is nice to have these players. You also have respect for them. That is very important, and you can learn things from them.

Hiddink of listening only to their white teammates. As a player with Ajax Amsterdam in 1995, Rijkaard earned the trust of young black stars like Clarence Seedorf, Edgar Davids and Patrick Kluijver.

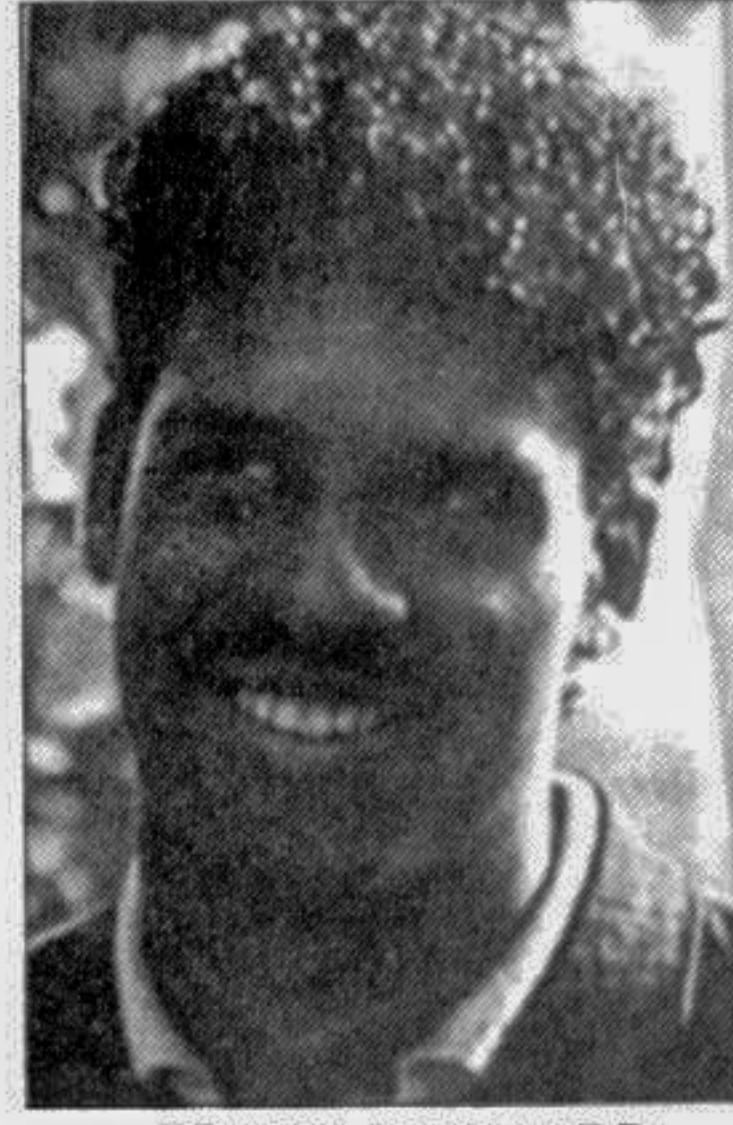


RONALD KOEMAN

specifically to improve morale among the black players, he gives the likes of Kluijver and Davids the impression that they have a friend in high places within the coaching staff.

Neeskens, one of the best Dutch midfielders ever, wrote World Cup history by becoming in 1974 the first player to score a penalty in the World Cup final.

"I think it is very good to have trainers who played at a high level," he said. "They can give the young players the benefit of their experiences in their careers."



FRANK RIJKAARD

never played for the national side. In Dutch training sessions the assistants encourage and advise players, play in scrimmages and often take part in the fitness drills.

It's good to keep in shape and to get close to the players," Koeman said. On Monday, he spent 30 minutes alone with Seedorf advising the Real Madrid star about free kicks.

Curse of being Scots

BOREDEAUX, France, June 17 (AP): Scotland's reputation as courageous World Cup losers was put on hold following an equaliser by Craig Burley which earned them a 1-1 draw against Norway to leave them in a chance of second round qualification.

Scotland must surely win to have a chance to go through. Scotland's defensive record is good and during qualifying they only conceded three goals. But they have now let in as many in just two games in the finals and will need to plug the gaps before the Morocco fixture.

Blackburn defender Colin Hendry was looking forward to playing Morocco. "We now need to beat Morocco and we know we are capable of it," he said.

Some may say that Brazil, who were also the first team to qualify for the second round in USA '94, might ease up against Norway or put out a reserve side in an attempt to recuperate players. That could prove disastrous for Scotland.

Thankful Teddy

ESCOUBLAC, France, June 17: Teddy Sheringham said on Tuesday he was relieved that Glenn Hoddle's faith in his ability had not wavered even though the England striker was caught drinking in a Portuguese nightclub two weeks ago.

Thousands of fans in Bordeaux were celebrating they were still in the competition and the town was full of blue and white flags hours after the game as it was the evening before.

It's a great we're still in and I've already had a few too many beers in celebration. "But we won't go through. I think Scotland have played in seven World Cup finals and were ousted on goal difference five times. It's just part of being Scots that we never qualify."

A pessimistic Scottish public could be just the spur Craig Brown and his players need to motivate themselves to prove the doubters wrong. Surely all Scots will be hoping for a second round fixture and hoping that fate does not intervene and cause more misfortune against Morocco.



'EL PHENOM' TURNS PROVIDER: Striker Bebeto (hidden in the centre) scores Brazil's third goal from a pin-point Ronaldo (L) pass during their June 16 match against Morocco at Nantes.

Onus on Bergkamp

MONACO, June 17: While his Dutch teammates relaxed, Dennis Bergkamp was hard at work on the training field Tuesday fighting to be fully fit for the Netherlands' next World Cup first round match, reports AP.

Bergkamp is badly needed in the lineup, with other first-string striker, Patrick Kluijver, banned on a red card. Before coming on as a second-half substitute in Saturday's disappointing 0-0 draw with low countries rivals Belgium, Bergkamp had been out of action for six weeks following a hamstring injury.

The Dutch want a big win Saturday in Marseille against Group E minnow South Korea to make up for what they see as two missed points against Belgium. Given a morning off by coach Guus Hiddink, other players were on the golf course or tennis court or browsing the chic boutiques of Monte-Carlo while Bergkamp was sweating it out in training.

"I need it," Bergkamp said of sacrificing a free morning in favor of more hard work. "But I feel good. It's going well."

Hiddink said he was working on Bergkamp's acceleration — which left English defenders floundering in his wake this season as Bergkamp scored 16 league goals for his club, Arsenal. "We are working on his explosive bursts," Hiddink said. "He trained yesterday evening behind closed doors, we're going to have a hard training session this evening and then again tomorrow."

Thais in the throes of WC fever

BANGKOK, June 17: Hundreds of youths went on the rampage at a detention centre in northeast Thailand in the early hours of today after officials prevented them from watching a World Cup soccer match on television, police said, reports Reuters.

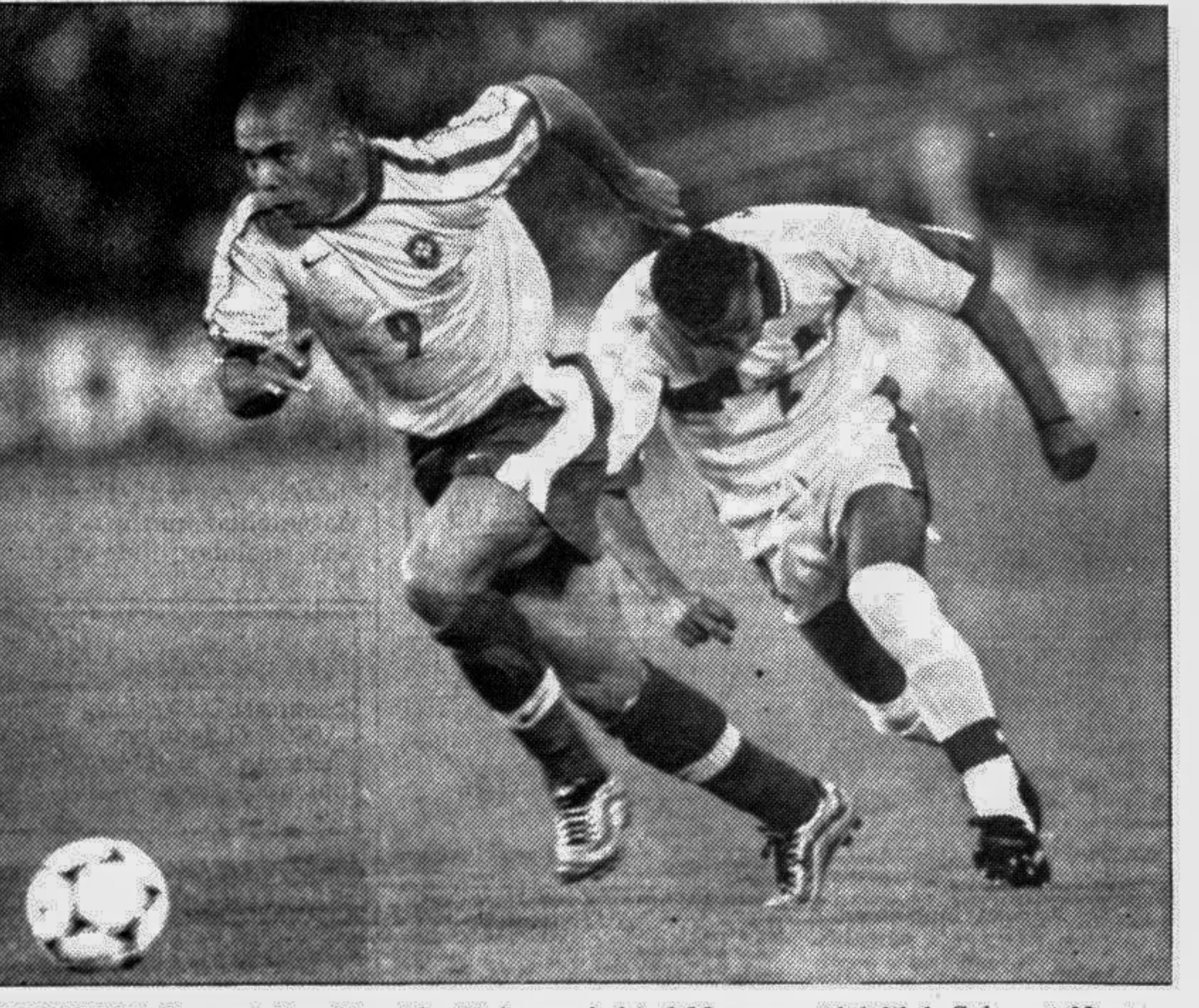
The violence eventually ended after local reporters intervened to mediate between the two sides and report the youths' grievances. The violence only calmed down after reporters were allowed into the centre for the full coverage,

Zico Akira's Idol

AIX-LES-BAINS, France, June 17 (AP): Japan defender Akira Nishizaki learned two important lessons from Zico while the Brazilian great was with his J-League team Kashima Antlers. First, to be always humble.

Second, to always keep aiming for the highest. And Nishizaki has learned them both well. In a team of nice guys, he is easily the nicest, never too busy or stuck up to answer a question. And, when World Cup novice Japan go against Croatia Saturday, Nishizaki is first to be taking a shot for his first goal as a member of the national team.

"It's going to feel so great to score on such a great international stage," he said Tuesday. "Croatia are one or two notches above us, so I plan to run, run, run for the full 90 minutes, whether the ball comes to me or not."



FOLLOW ME: Superstriker Ronaldo (L) leaves behind Moroccan Abdeilah Saber at Nantes on June 16.

FRANCE '98 SIDELINES

UNDATED, June 17 (AP): A soccer fan could win 1.2 million pounds if the Netherlands win the World Cup.

A spokesman for bookmaker William Hill said 20,000,000-pound bets had been placed at odds of 10-1 at separate William Hill shops.

William Hill and rivals Ladbrokes both said England fans were not putting money on England to win the World Cup even though the 2-0 win over Tunisia on Monday shortened the odds from 10-1 to 8-1.

In more betting news, British Sports Minister Tony Benn placed a 1,000-pound bet on England to win the World Cup. The money for the bet was supplied by Ladbrokes, and the money will go to charity if England win.

IRAN'S POLITICS

Iran has sent five generals of the Pasdaran revolutionary guards to France for the Iran-United States soccer match on June 21, according to a fax released by Iran's top exiled armed opposition group, Iraq-based Mujahedeen.

The generals are accompanied by a group of special forces from the guards corps. By sending them to France, the regime seeks to prevent extensive participation of Iranian refugees and supporters of the Mujahedeen in the World Cup games,

ITALIANS ANGRY AT HAVELANGE

Italian officials were puzzled by reports that Joao Havelange criticised the referee who awarded Italy a decisive penalty kick in last Thursday's World Cup match against Chile.

The Italian news agency ANSA on Monday quoted Havelange as saying that referee Luciano Bouchard made "an unlucky mistake" ruling that Chile's Ronaldo Fuentes deliberately played the ball with his hand. Bouchard awarded Italy the late penalty, converted by Roberto Baggio for a 2-2 draw.

BT FALL IN FOR A WHILE

British Telecom lines went quiet during Monday's World Cup match between England and Tunisia.

ABSORBING ANECDOTES

PARIS, June 17: Facts and figures from World Cup final matches Monday and Tuesday: Brazil's 3-0 win over Morocco means they have kept a clean sheet in 12 of their last 17 matches in World Cup finals.

Spain are the only top seeded team to have lost their first match. They went down 3-2 to Nigeria. The Netherlands and Italy drew their openers but the other five top seeds all won.

It was the first time Germany had won a match at the finals by a margin of two goals or more in 11 games, dating back to their 5-1 victory over the United Arab Emirates in 1990.

The United States lost their third match in a row without scoring a goal. Their last two games, when they hosted the tournament four years ago.

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"I can't believe he made such remarks, he's a very cautious man," said Italian Federation president Luciano Nizzola.

Havelange is retiring as president of world soccer governing body FIFA at the end of the World Cup.

The Chilean defender clearly hit the ball inside the penalty area," said Italian captain Paolo Maldini. "It was a kind of hands that 50 per cent of referees usually punish."

Maldini also said that the referee, on his World Cup debut, "was more nervous than we players before the kickoff."

Midfielder Dino Baggio said he was afraid that the controversy may have negative effects on Italy.

"I'm afraid that Italy risk a penalty against Cameroon in the next match as a compensation for the alleged favours received in the match with Chile," Dino Baggio said.

Christian Vieri said the controversy was groundless. "It was penalty, without any doubt. I can't understand criticism on the referee," he added.

Iran's three star strikers, Ali Daei, Khodada Azizi and Karim Bagheri, play in the German Bundesliga.

Daei has signed up to move from Armenia Bielefeld to Bayern Munich, and Azizi has said he is open to offers from a Spanish team.

It was the first time Tunisia had conceded more than one goal in a match at the World Cup. In their only previous appearance 20 years ago, they beat Mexico 3-1, lost 1-0 to Poland and drew 0-0 with (West) Germany.

France, Nigeria, Croatia and Mexico are the top scoring teams at the tournament with three goals each. Eleven of the 32 teams have still to score.

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game than were made during the same period a week ago.

However, the number of calls jumped by 100,000 when Alan Shearer scored England's opening goal in the 2-0 victory.

MANSOURIAN TO BECOME THE 4TH

Midfielder Alireza Mansourian will become the fourth Iranian player in Germany's Bundesliga, he announced Tuesday.

Mansourian, 27, said he would be joining Hamburg after the World Cup.

Mansourian, who entered Sunday's game against Yugoslavia in the 68th minute, said he had been due to join Dortmund, but that his plans had changed.

Pejman Nozad, editor of Toop, a US-based magazine that specialises in Iranian football, said Mansourian should have been more effective in the game against Yugoslavia, which Iran lost 1-0.

"I think he was trying to show off for talent scouts rather than playing for the team that day," he said.

Meanwhile Iranian goalkeeper Nima Nakissa said he was open to offers from European clubs after the World Cup.

"I will definitely leave Iran after the World Cup to play in the European league," said Nakissa, 22. "I will take every offer seriously," he said.

Nakissa stood guard at the Iranian goal for main goalkeeper and captain, Ahmad Reza Abedzadeh, who was out with a bad knee.

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LENDING A HELPING HAND: French coach Aime Jacquet practices with a squad member at Clairefontaine on June 16.