

Mandela's boys take on the Great Danes tonight!

JOHN PLAYER GOLD LEAF LIGHTS

Tino heads home

FRANCE, June 17 (Guardian/ AFP/ Internet): Colombia's hopes of progressing from England's group to the second round of the World Cup suffered a blow today as Faustino Asprilla was ejected from the squad by coach Hernan Dario Gomez.

Angry at being substituted in the opening 1-0 defeat at the hands of Romania, Asprilla went public on his disapproval in a radio interview, accusing Gomez of favoritism for taking him off.

Gomez' reply was equally forceful, publicly telling the Parma man that he could go home if he was unhappy. And when Asprilla failed to turn up for today's training session at La Tour Du Pin in eastern France, Gomez said the striker's World Cup was over.

"We didn't throw him out, the decision was his," said Gomez, who cannot replace the 28-year-old in his squad. "If you don't obey the rules, you're out. We can't have that type of criticism. It's upset me that this has happened."

Asprilla's departure is a blow to a side already facing an uphill battle to qualify from group G after losing their opening game 1-0 to Romania. They face Tunisia next, and then England in the final group match in Lens a week Friday.

Earlier, Asprilla, in Paris after the whole squad were given the day off, told a Colombian Caracol radio reporter he thought he had not played badly and teammates had played worse without being taken off, apparently a making a jab at playmaker Carlos Valderrama.

Following the incident Gomez told reporters outside Colombia's World Cup hotel 60 km east of Lyon, "If he made those statements, he has to leave the national team."

"He's very mistaken, I'm going to talk to him. If he has to go, let him go," Gomez said.

Gomez's assistant Juan Jose Pelaez said the players had been given until midnight to return to the hotel. They begin preparations today for their next match against Tunisia in Montpellier on Monday.

Asprilla appeared not to have returned to the hotel by midnight. Reporters who had been there for at least two hours said they had not seen the for-



FAUSTINO ASPRILLA

He worked hard in training and did not seem to mind playing up front on his own with five men in midfield.

Asprilla had little support in the first half which Romania dominated and ended by taking the lead.

The striker has a history of tantrums, having once hit a reporter who was trying to interview him and also walking out of the national team in 1993.

Asprilla was unhappy when then coach Pacho Maturana dropped him for one of Colombia's qualifiers for the 1994 World Cup.

He sat on the bench but afterwards walked out on the team saying he was quitting for good.

The next day he returned to apologise and other players persuaded Maturana to forgive the striker.

Awaiting English invaders

TOULOUSE, June 17: In the cities where England are scheduled to play their remaining two World Cup group matches, residents are bracing themselves for the worst, reports AP.

Owners of shops, bars and restaurants say they will either close early, or completely, while the English are in town. And authorities are pressing for plans to transmit matches on giant screens to be scrapped.

What was supposed to be a bonanza for local businessmen has become a damage limitation exercise. "This is a shame," said Michel Delord, who owns a snack bar next to the stadium in Toulouse where England plays Romania June 22.

"We had a great day with the Austrian fans last week. They were full of beer, but polite."

"It's a shame that the English don't know how to restrain themselves."

Authorities have asked for an additional 160 special riot police to be deployed in Toulouse to bolster the 1,300 officers originally planned for the match.

Regional prefect Alain Bidou has ordered bars and restaurants to close at 11:00 pm as from June 18.

Officially, 3,000 English fans will be in the stadium for the Romania match, although many others are expected to arrive in coming days to seek tickets on the black market.

Police say about 500 fans have already arrived.

In Lens, in northern France, where England play Colombia on June 26, there were the same fears.

Danielle Lavogez, owner of a coffee shop, said she was "twice as worried as before" given the three days of violence involving drunken English fans in Marseille.

Lionel Laurier, owner of a cafe near the local train station, admitted he was "very scared."

"I prefer to close my shop rather than get it smashed up," he said. "But whether closed or open, I'm sure to suffer damage. But I can't afford to put the lives of my employees at risk."

Frederic Toupin, a bar owner, said he was hoping there would be a better "filtering system" by police on the borders to stop hooligans getting into France.



BRAZIL AND HAPPINESS GO TOGETHER: Supporters of the world champions having a jolly good time at Nantes before the kick-off of the match against Morocco on June 16.

Drastic measure

PARIS, June 17: Frankie Hejduk decided drastic action was needed if the United States were to beat Germany in the World Cup, so he put his shorts on back to front, reports Reuters.

The ruse followed the custom of baseball players who often wear their caps backwards when trying to make a comeback.

"It didn't work through," said the American defender who came on as a substitute during the 2-0 defeat the previous night.

ISL personnel apprehended

TOKYO, June 17: A consultant for FIFA's marketing partner ISL has been detained by French authorities over alleged fraudulent sales of World Cup tickets, reports here said today, says AFP.

The consultant, identified as Gilles Favard, was taken into custody on Monday, Kyodo News said quoting sources.

A lawyer for a Japanese-affiliated travel agency said Favard was a consultant for ISL France in Paris, affiliated with FIFA's marketing partner ISL worldwide, Kyodo said.

French authorities have launched in-depth investigation into phantom tickets sales and are expected to decide whether to press criminal charge against the consultant within the maximum allowed detention period of 18 days, Japan Broadcasting Corp. (NHK) said without mentioning his name.

Francis Devaquet, a lawyer for four Japanese-affiliated travel firms was quoted by several Japanese newspapers as saying he was suing a consultant and other officials of ISL France for fraud.

The officials of ISL France promised a total of 15,000 tickets to the four firms, including 9,000 for Japanese team's three matches in the first round. But only 400-500 tickets were delivered, Devaquet said. The 9,000 tickets account for nearly 40 per cent of the 23,000 missing tickets paid for by Japanese travel agents.

"Damage is enormous for the Japanese agencies. There is also moral damage for France itself, its image in Japan," the lawyer told NHK.

FIFA Secretary-General Michel Zen-Ruffinen has said an ISL consultant has been implicated in the sale of "tens of thousands" of Phantom, World Cup tickets.

ISL worldwide has a minority stake in ISL France.

Japanese travel agencies are still short of more than 10,800 tickets for the national team's next two matches in the World Cup soccer finals, the transport ministry said Tuesday.

Bafana boys aim to become men

TOULOUSE, France, June 17: The Municipal Stadium in Toulouse won't be a place for the faint-hearted on Thursday when Denmark lock horns with South Africa in a crunch Group C clash that both teams know they simply have to win, reports AFP.

After their 3-0 drubbing by France in their first ever World Cup finals match last Friday, anything less than a victory for Philippe Troussier's Bafana Bafana squad is likely to render their final match against Saudi Arabia a meaningless affair.

Troussier is determined to have his side pumped up for what he calls "our own World Cup final."

"I'm expecting a big reaction from the players to the France defeat," said the Frenchman, who has courted unpopularity with the South African media over his iron-fist approach to training and preference for foreign-based players.

"I want an aggressive approach. This is a World Cup final for us and we are ready to accept the challenge," he added.

The future of South African football is at stake and there can be no excuses. The time for talking is over, now we have got to go out and do it on the pitch."

Troussier must decide whether to risk first-choice strikers Benni McCarthy and Phil Masinga against what is sure to be a combative Danish defence.

Ajax striker McCarthy has been suffering from an ankle injury sustained against France, but the 20-year-old declared himself available for selection after resuming training on Tuesday.

Imposing Bari striker Masinga is more doubtful with a swollen ankle that has prevented him training since the game against France. Cape Town Spurs' striker Shaun Bartlett stands by to replace the former Leeds star.

Captain Lucas Radebe is likely to return to the defence after playing a holding role in midfield against France.

If France beat Saudi Arabia later on Thursday in St. Denis, Denmark, who beat the Saudis 1-0 in their opening game in Lens, will have clinched qualification if they can beat South Africa.

Certainly coach Bo Johansson will be looking for an improvement on the tepid display against the Saudis, when only Mark Rieper's late header prevented them drooping some valuable points.

The Laudrup brothers Michael and Brian remain their biggest threat but neither played to their full potential in Lens. Michael celebrated his 34th birthday this week but it is the jinking runs of Chelsea-bound Brian that should give the South African defence plenty to think about.

Troussier's side could also pay for their avowed intent to attack at all costs.

"It's do or die for them," he said. "They will have to come out and play which suits us perfectly because I think we are one of the best sides in the world on

the country-attack. If they come forward they will leave themselves exposed.

"We are expecting a real battle as we know they are strong defensively."

So too are the Danes, with the redoubtable presence of goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel ready to thwart whatever the likes of McCarthy and company can throw at him.

"We were quite satisfied with our performance against the Saudis but we know we have plenty of room for improvement," said the giant Manchester United keeper.



HATS OFF TO HER: Rebecca Thornton, a horse-race fan wearing a World Cup hat at the Royal Ascot meeting in Ascot, UK on June 16.

Samba time

RIO DE JANEIRO, June 17: Thousands of ecstatic Brazilians streamed on to the nation's streets Tuesday to celebrate the team's guarantee of reaching the second-round of the World Cup in raucous carnival-style parties, reports Reuters.

Reigning champions Brazil revealed moments of sheer soccer artistry as they thrashed Morocco 3-0 to become the first team to reach the tournament's second round.

"We've qualified, it's certain we're going town. Let's go, Brazil it's a party," shouted one fan at a street party in a northern Rio suburb, surrounded by dozens of screaming fans waving Beer-cans and Brazilian flags.

Television images showed separate street parties in various cities where die-hard fans have draped the yellow and green team colours everywhere imaginable — in trees, across bridges, down skyscrapers, even brightening dreary slums.

Rio's downtown was deserted as office workers either left work early or crammed into corner bars, greeting each goal with loud cheers and firecrackers. Many made a beeline for the huge screens set up in the financial district to remote suburbs.

Stock exchanges and banks closed early and the loading of boats was halted for six hours at Santos, South America's largest port, so Brazilians from all walks of life could enjoy the game.

Cup fever penetrates every corner of Brazilian society and soccer is national passion.

Japanese get royal visit

AIX-LEX-BAINS, France, June 17: Prince Takamado played a training match with Japanese team officials on Tuesday after he and Princess Hisako dropped in to watch the national squad training, reports Reuters.

The Prince played as a mid-fielder anchor with coach Takeshi Okada and his staff. Asked if he was looking to draft his imperial highness into the team for the crucial Group H match against Croatia in Nantes on Saturday Okada jokingly replied, "I'll think about it."

The royal couple are both keen football fans.

The prince is the honorary patron of the Japan Football Association (JFA). He also plays in friendly matches for his own team called Tono, or majesty, in the Tokyo area.

The princess has followed English Premier League club Chelsea since she lived in England as a student at Cambridge.

The couple arrived in France last Friday and attended Japan's first World Cup match against Argentina in Toulouse which they lost 1-0.

The Prince and Princess will remain in France to watch Japan try to stay in the World Cup by getting at least a point against Croatia. However, they will not see the team take on Jamaica in their final group match on Friday June 26.

The Prince, who is fourth in line to the throne, met the players before their afternoon training session and passed on the traditional Japanese treating of gambate (good luck).

He wore a JFA tracksuit over his Japan shirt which did not have a number or a player's name on the back.

The pair took their place in the main stand at the State Jacques Forestier alongside a crowd of about 100 people most of whom had come over from Japan to support the team.

The stand had been especially decorated with flowers to mark the royal occasion.

No tryst with technology

PARIS, June 17: World football's governing body FIFA said Tuesday it was against using video evidence to resolve contentious refereeing decisions — at least until technology was in place which could give a conclusive ruling, reports AFP.

FIFA spokesman Keith Cooper said that a debate was still raging over the legitimacy of England's third goal against West Germany in the 1966 World Cup final when a linesman ruled that Geoff Hurst's shot had crossed the line.

Nothing that several companies had developed technology to try to determine if that decision had been correct. Cooper said none had come up with "Absolutely definitive categorical evidence."

Seaman keeps 'em calm

NANTES, France, June 17 (AFP): If England achieve their goal of a second World Cup win on July 12, their success will be due in large measure to the meticulous almost fanatical — attention to detail of Arsenal keeper David Seaman.

Seaman's unflappability and confidence at the end of a double winning season has brought immeasurable benefits not only to the back four but to England's chances as a whole.

The calm exterior almost cracked for a brief moment before he stepped on to the pitch for England's opening match against Tunisia at the Stade Velodrome as Seaman frankly

admitted he was a bag of nerves in the dressing room.

But once the gloves were on and he stepped out of the tunnel Seaman said the butterflies disappeared.

And he revealed the gloves are the secret.

"I make sure I wear a new pair of gloves for every match so I've brought out enough for all the games we might play and the training sessions," said Seaman.

"When it's as dry as it is out here they can flake a bit and I hate it when they have got any scuff on them, if there's the tiniest bit on one finger I won't wear them."

"I know the gloves are all right, but what if the ball hits that bit of the glove and it doesn't stick?"

"If I pulled out a pair and it had the smallest mark I'd get a new pair out, just like that. It's just a superstition but I have to go into a game knowing my mind is right."

That sets me up, but everything has to be right. I won't wear the socks left in the dressing room if they've got a pull in them.

"I also tape together the third and fourth fingers in my right hand, after I broke the fourth one a few years ago."



An AFP file photo shows World Cup mascot Footix holding a fake giant World Cup ticket at Stade de France, St Denis on Apr 27. Yesterday FIFA secretary Michael Zen-Ruffinen disclosed that a consultant for FIFA's marketing partner ISL has been implicated in the sale of thousands of phantom tickets.

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