



DENNIS GETS ROLLING: Dutch superstar Dennis Bergkamp (C) opens his account against South Korea at Marseille on June 20. — AFP photo

Gritty Germans fight back

LENS, Jun 21: Germany came from 2-0 down to draw 2-2 in a dramatic World Cup clash with Yugoslavia today, reports Reuters.

Lothar Matthaeus also made soccer history when he came on as a second half substitute to play in his 22nd World Cup final game—a record. He is also the first outfielder to play in

five World Cups.

The first round Group F draw left both level on four points. Neither side wanted to go through to the second round as runners-up to face probably the Dutch.

It would have been the first time Germany had lost a World Cup first round group match since being beaten 2-0 by Denmark in 1986 and that looked likely until the 79th minute when Oliver Bierhoff grabbed the vital equaliser.

Yugoslavia's 19-year-old attacking prodigy Dejan Stankovic claimed the opening goal in the 13th minute.

The claim, initially at least, looked debatable. Although FIFA agreed with the youngster, television replays suggested he might not have touched the ball.

The cross was provided by Predrag Mijatovic, the ball hitting goalkeeper Andy Koeckpe on the leg and spinning towards the goal. It bounced off the post and on to the chest of Jens Jeremies, who may already have been over the line.

That goal may have been debatable but there was no uncertainty about the second.

Darko Kovacevic banged a shot in from the right wing. Koeckpe failed to hold the ball and Dragan Stojkovic was there to pounce from close range with an empty net beckoning.

Germany narrowed the gap in the 74th minute when substitute Michael Tarnat had a free-kick deflected into the net by Sinisa Mihajlovic, the man who scored his team's winner against the Iranians in the 1-0 opening victory.

Then Oliver Bierhoff hit the bar in the 78th before heading in the equaliser a minute later.

German striker Juergen

Klinsmann was stretchered off grimacing in pain in the closing minutes.



Matthaeus makes history

LENS, June 21 (Reuters): German veteran Lothar Matthaeus made soccer history today when he played his 22nd World Cup game, more than any other player in history.

The 37-year-old libero, Germany's most capped player, came on as a substitute at the start of the second half of his country's Group F clash with Yugoslavia.

Earning his 126th cap, he has now played one more game in World Cup finals than German Uwe Seeler, Poland's Wladyslaw Zmuda and Argentina's Diego Maradona.

Matthaeus, who played in the 1982, 1986, 1990 and 1994 finals, equalled Mexican goalkeeper Antonio Carbajal's record of playing at five finals. Carbajal played between 1950 and 1966.

Ronald, who scored the fifth and final goal of the match. The slick and speedy South Koreans caused a few problems for the Dutch in the first half, but the Netherlands maintained control and finally took the lead in the 38th minute when Cocu broke the ice.

Cocu was only promoted to the striker's role after Patrick Kluijvert's was suspended for two matches.

"It was the first time in two and a half years that I played this position," said Cocu. "It was a big change but we have so much talent on our team I was just happy to be playing all the

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Colombia's back against the wall

MONTPELLIER, France, June 21 (AFP): The pressure on Colombia to beat Tunisia in their second World Cup game here on Monday is overwhelming and the team that face an early departure from the World Cup had better deliver.

Captain Carlos Valderrama has insisted that the squad will not allow the absence of banished striker Faustino Asprilla to affect their performance here on Monday.

Tunisia lost 2-0 to England in their opening Group G tie in Marseille and the north African side's Polish-born coach Henri Kasperczak believes Colombia's recent off field distractions may make his task all the easier.

"The Colombians were a dangerous proposition, he said "it remains to be seen whether they still are."

Asprilla the gifted former Newcastle striker now with Parma in the Italian league was so appalled at the lack of service he received from the ageing Valderrama and teammates when he was posted as the lone striker against Romania, that he staged a public revolt after being substituted.

Coach Herman Dario Gomez in the wake of the Asprilla affair that he was resigning after the World Cup did nothing to lift the poisoned atmosphere.

Some players thought that Asprilla who later apologised should have been given a second chance.

Valderrama says the Tunisia match in win or bust. "If we lose on Monday its all over for us," the flamboyant 36-year-old said.

Colombian fans back home will agree. They had to watch

the team's failure in the United States four years ago when they were among the favourites but eliminated in the first round.

The subsequent murder of defender Pablo Escobar scorer of an own goal, by hitmen for a betting syndicate only served to blacken the name of Colombian football further.

Part of the problem against Romania who won the match 1-0 was that Valderrama and Freddy Rincon, veteran midfielders in the evening of their careers were in effective.

Colombia will probably play Anthony de Avila in Asprilla's place against Tunisia with Adolfo Valencia taking the other striking role ahead of Victor Arstizabal.

For Tunisia their hope is that recent distractions will affect Colombia on the field.

Colombia have some very classy players said playmaker Skander Souayah. "They can cause problems to any side."

Coach Kasperczak identified the midfield as their chief weakness against England and will field Zoubier Beya who plays in Germany with Freiburg alongside Souayah to forge an attacking midfield partnership. "We complement each other and we can play very well together," said Souayah.

Striker Mehdi ben Slimane, Beya's Freiburg teammate will lose his place after a lacklustre showing against England and Imed ben Younes will come in to partner Adel Sellimi in attack.

Central defender Khaled Badra will miss the match after pulling a thigh muscle against England and his place is likely to go to understudy Farid Chouchene.

Bafana Bafana plan in advance

VICHY, France, June 21: Talk around the South African camp Saturday focused on referees and a possible encounter with rivals Nigeria—just about everything but the must-win match against Saudi Arabia next week, reports AP.

Several players mentioned defeating Saudi Arabia as almost an afterthought when talking about South Africa's chances of advancing to face the Nigerians.

A second-round appearance in South Africa's first World Cup would be a significant accomplishment for Bafana Bafana, who were thumped 3-0 by France in their inaugural match before tying Denmark 1-1 on Thursday.

To make it, South Africa must beat the Saudis and France must beat Denmark in the final Group C matches on Wednesday, and South Africa must overcome Denmark's four-goal advantage in scoring differential.

It is unlikely, but not impossible, and players said Saturday they believed they had a realistic chance.

medal in 1996.

"Maybe we can meet the Nigerians," defender Mark Fish said Saturday. "It will be the match the whole of Africa has been waiting for."

Fish noted South Africa need luck to advance, but he and other players sounded like they expect to beat the Saudis and only need France to provide the necessary help.

"We certainly believe that we'll go through and we want to," said Fish, who plays for Bolton Wanderers. "South Africa wins but misses the second round due to goal differential. "We'll be disappointed but I think we'll look back with pride on our first World Cup," he said.

Midfielder Quinton Fortune of Atletico Madrid said the South Africans were confident, but not over-confident, about the Saudi match.

"I think everyone has got respect for Saudi Arabia," he said. "At the moment, everyone is very positive. That's a good thing. We believe if we play the same kind of game as we did against Denmark, we'll have a good result."

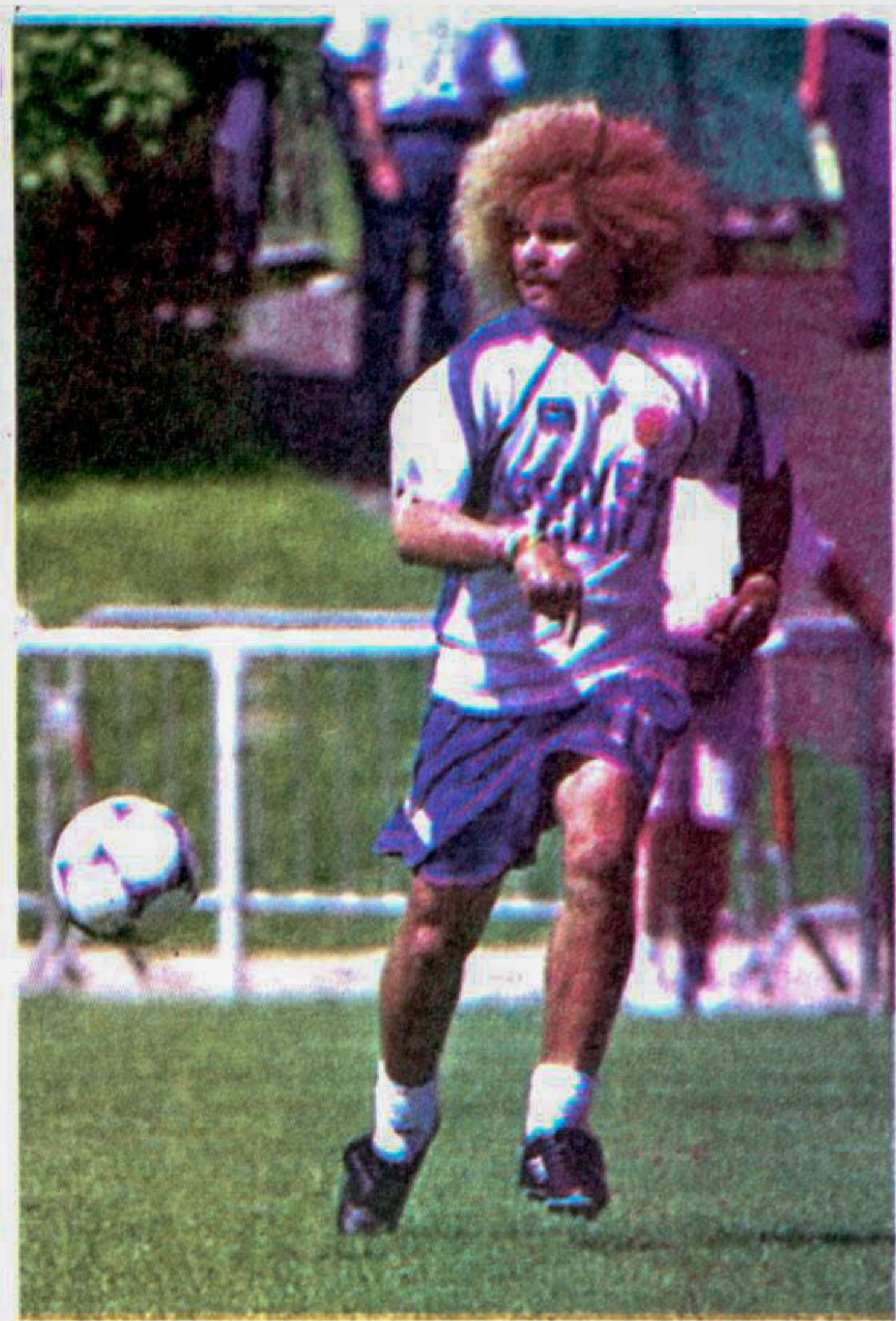
Heatstrokes hits WC

BORDEAUX, Jun 21: About 100 people were treated for heatstroke at Saturday's World Cup match between Belgium and Mexico, police said three people were taken to hospital, reports Reuters.

Temperatures rose to about 37 degrees centigrade—unusually high for southwestern France.

Players also suffered during the match and at the game between Japan and Croatia in Nantes about 200 kms (130 miles) north of Bordeaux.

Coaches at both venues said players had lost between four and six kgs.



Colombia's captain Carlos Valderrama trains at La-Tour-du-Pin on June 20. — AFP photo

Valderrama vindicates Tino's ban

LA TOUR DU PIN, France, June 21 (Reuters/Internet): Colombia's veteran skipper Carlos Valderrama said on Saturday he fully backed Faustino Asprilla's exile from their World Cup squad after the striker openly criticised their coach.

"He violated the code of the squad," said Valderrama after a training session. "Asprilla knows he made a mistake. Now we have to move on, that's the main thing for us."

Asprilla was thrown out on Wednesday for criticising the tactics of coach Herman Dario Gomez in a radio interview after he was substituted in Colombia's opening 1-0 defeat by Romania.

Asprilla, whose ban was openly deplored by some other Colombian players, had suggested others had played worse than him and clearly targeted Valderrama when he referred to "untouchables" in the squad.

Valderrama, 36, insisted that his relations with Asprilla were "normal."

He added he had not received a phone call from the striker to apologise. "I haven't talked to him," he said.

Gomez has refused to take Asprilla back despite pleas by Colombia's President and public apologies by the former Newcastle United player.

Colombia play Tunisia on Monday in arguably their easiest first round match. "If we lose

on Monday, it's all over for us, said Valderrama.

Gomez, who will quit his job at the end of the tournament, said: "The team is motivated even more than before. They are very serene and we have no problems for the moment."

"The important thing is that there's unity... We've been judged as not being good and that has united us more." The coach is likely to make three changes for Monday's game.

Asprilla has left for Bogota after his plea on Thursday for reinstatement fell on deaf ears. But some players regretted his leaving.

Veteran striker Anthony de Avila, possibly Asprilla's replacement when Colombia play Tunisia Monday, said if he scored he might dedicate the goal to Asprilla.

Adolfo "The Train" Valencia said: "We're sad... we wanted him to carry on with us. Gomez has said he will quit his job after the tournament is over."

Meanwhile, Jorge Bolano of Atletico Junior is expected to make his debut in midfield in place of Maurizio Serna, who had pulled a muscle in his right leg, although he said on Saturday he had recovered and was ready if needed.

Gomez will also field a new pair of attackers with the diminutive Anthony de Avila and Adolfo Valencia taking over from out-of-form Victor Aristizabal.

Maldini keeps 'em guessing

SENLIS, France, June 21: Coach Cesare Maldini is to keep everyone guessing for at least another 24 hours over the World Cup prospects of Alessandro Del Piero, reports Reuters.

The Juventus striker scored a hat-trick in the first half hour of a practice match against a local French side on Saturday and looked ready to claim a place in Maldini's starting lineup for Tuesday's final Group B match against Austria.

But he faded badly in the second half, played in front of around 700 fans in sweltering heat at Italy's training base at Senlis, 60 km north of Paris.

Maldini had arranged the relaxed kick-around to allow his highly-prized striker to stretch his legs before the match in the Stade de France.

Del Piero missed Italy's World Cup opener against Chile with a groin injury and played only the final 25 minutes of Wednesday's 3-0 defeat of Cameroon in Montpellier.

But in a news conference after Saturday's game, Maldini acknowledged Del Piero had wilted in the French sunshine and added he had not yet decided whether to field him

against the Austrians.

"He played a very good first half hour but then, it's true, he was conserving his energies later in the match," Maldini said. "I don't know if he's ready to play a full 90 minutes yet."

"I still have a few days to decide. I have an idea in my head which could become a reality within the next 24 hours."

Needless to say, Maldini did not expand on his "idea."

The Italian coach likes to keep his compatriots and others guessing about his starting line-ups and refused to be drawn last week on who would play in attack against Cameroon until the night before the match.

"I'd actually decided on my line-up three days before but I didn't tell anyone," he beamed afterwards.

If Del Piero starts against Austria, Roberto Baggio will almost certainly be dropped, despite his fine performances against Chile and Cameroon.

"Italy need a point from the match to ensure qualification for the second round of the tournament but a victory would leave them top of the group and save them from a last-16 clash with Brazil."

Dutch touch leaves Korea in the lurch

MARSEILLE, France, June 21 (AP/Reuters): It was a Dutch treat at the World Cup, with all of the Netherlands players pitching in for a 5-0 win over South Korea.

Philip Cocu and Mark Overmars shot the Netherlands into a 2-0 halftime lead Saturday night before Dennis Bergkamp, Pierre van Hoojdonk and Ronald de Boer added three more in the final 18 minutes to restore the Dutch team's second round hopes, and destroy the South Koreans.

The Koreans, co-hosts with Japan in 2002, depart the South coast still without a World Cup win and knowing that in five

days time France '98 will be over for them.

Victory is all the sweeter after the depressed scenes in the Dutch camp last Saturday when they failed to score against Belgium and had Patrick Kluijvert sent off. The overwhelming win has also sent the Dutch to the top of Group E ahead of Mexico on goal difference which could be important in the final count.

"We had many goals and it is good to know you don't have to depend on just one player to score goals," said Netherlands coach Guus Hiddink. "Our first goal by Cocu was an important one. It broke the impasse, and the other players then began

scoring."

Hiddink's starting lineup raised a few eyebrows, with an unexpected shuffling of positions that saw Cocu promoted to striker from midfield, Ronald De Boer shifting to right wing and the addition of midfielders Edgar Davids and Wim Jonk.

But the role swapping hardly appeared to ruffle the squad, as the team went on to record the biggest score of the tournament, and further whittle down South Korea's hopes for a first win in five World Cup appearances.

"Our strength is that we have 22 very good players, all very talented with many qualities," said Frank de Boer, brother to

ENGLAND VS ROMANIA
POWERPLAY OR POWERCUT?

JOHN PLAYER
GOLD LEAF LIGHTS