

Clemente holds his chin up

CHANTILLY, France, June 21: Despite team morale being in shreds and the squad on the verge of first-round elimination, Spanish coach Javier Clemente assured all Saturday he had no thoughts of resigning, reports AP.

"If you had to step down just for not getting certain results then this World Cup would see at least 10 resigning," Clemente told reporters a day after Spain struggled to a 0-0 draw against Paraguay.

"But then one thing is resigning and another is that they remove you," said Clemente in response to the storm of criticism that Spain's performances have solicited back home.

"Let Us Pray" read the headline in Spain's El Mundo Deportivo sports paper while its competitor asked: "What have we done to deserve this?"

Friday's result, on top of the 3-2 come-from-behind victory by Nigeria in their opening game, left Spain with one point and totally dependent on the final Group D games Wednesday when the Spanish play Bulgaria and Paraguay face Nigeria.

Spain, among Europe's perennial powers, are one of the great enigmas of international soccer and have traditionally disappointed in the World Cup, having never advanced past the quarterfinals. This year seems no different.

"Spain fails again" read the banner front-page headline in El Pais, which suggested this could be the end of an epoch, a clear reference to Clemente's future.

"We're still not dead," Clemente argued. "It doesn't just depend on us, but given that we still have a chance, we will fight to the bitter end."

Back at the team's training headquarters just north of Paris on Saturday, Clemente held a 30-minute chat with those who played against Paraguay while the rest of the squad trained lightly. The team was then given a 24-hour break and will resume preparations Sunday evening.

The loss to Nigeria and draw with Paraguay surprised many considering that since Clemente took over the team in 1992, Spain have only lost five times in 60 games.

Dutch touch

From page 13

time. "At first I underestimated what I had to do," said Cocu. "With Bergkamp up at the top of his physical level, I had to work harder. I had to for the team, as the more time Bergkamp spent in the pitch, the more chances we had."

"I suffered for it but in the end it paid off," added the Dutch star, who is moving from PSV Eindhoven to Barcelona.

Cocu's fine individual effort came just a minute after an Overmars goal had been ruled offside. Cocu worked the ball along just outside the box and unleashed a thundering left-foot shot.

Overmars made it two four minutes later when Wim Jonk fed him, he rounded his marker Choi Sung Young and fired home an unstoppable shot.

But the biggest cheers from the massed orange ranks were reserved for a goal from Dennis Bergkamp.

Starting his first match in seven weeks, he made his mark in the 71st minute taking an Aron Winter pass and slipping between two Korean defenders to slot the ball home.

"At first we had difficulty scoring but we played well," said Bergkamp. "In the end the South Koreans went down mentally and that was the difference."

Indeed, as the South Koreans appeared to give way under pressure, most of the second-half action took place in front of Kim Byong-ji's net.

"I was very tense in the second half and I was under a lot of pressure," said the South Korean netminder. "Of course as a goalkeeper I'm always ready to stop goals, but it was still a lot of hard work and quite stressful."

Bergkamp was replaced by Nottingham Forest striker Pirre Van Hoojdonk who made an instant impression. In almost his first touch of the game in the 79th minute he headed in from an Overmars cross.

Ronald de Boer's strike four minutes later was the icing on the cake for the Dutch.

Overmars' speed down the left again proved damaging and led to the replacement of his marker, as it had done a week ago against Belgium.

Despite the Dutch domination, South Korea appeared far from overawed against the group favourites and created three or four chances contrary to Hiddink's predictions the Koreans played with two forwards not one and occasionally looked dangerous, especially in the first half.

"In our first match against Mexico we were poor, in our second, the Dutch were invincible," coach Cha Bum-Kun said.

"I think if they continued to play like they did tonight they could win the final, he added.

COMPARATIVE STATS

	Netherlands	South Korea
Goals	5	0
Shots on target	17	4
Shots off target	10	8
Corners	6	3
Fouls	11	16
Offsides	5	1
Red Cards	0	0
Total Yellow cards	0	2

South Korea Yellow cards: Choi Yong-Soo 27, Ko Jong Soo 90. Estimated attendance: 60,000 (no official figure released)



English wonder kid Michael Owen (C) in practice at La Baule on June 20. — AFP photo

FIFA say refs okay

PARIS, June 21: Referees erred at some World Cup matches by failing to show cards for violent fouls, but the standard of officiating at France '98 has been generally good and referees aren't facing undue pressure to be tougher, FIFA asserted Saturday, reports AP.

Each referee's performance is judged on a 10-point scale after each World Cup match. The average score for the 24 matches was 8.1, with the lowest 6.4 and the highest 9, officials of the world soccer body said.

FIFA stressed that the high number of red cards flashed on Thursday — three in the Denmark-South Africa match and two in the France-Saudi Arabia game — was not a response to pressure from World Cup organisers for a crackdown on rough

play. The five expulsions were ordered a day after new FIFA president Sepp Blatter complained that referees weren't doing their job properly, after showing only four red cards in the first 20 games.

This prompted a chorus of complaints from players, coaches and soccer analysts. But Michel Zen Ruffinen, acting general secretary of FIFA, said Thursday's flurry was "not a reaction" to Blatter's statement.

"It means that referees are becoming more consistent ... more careful about application (of rules) in the World Cup finals."

"We're happy so far with refereeing" Michel Zen Ruffinen said. He called the "technical" aspect of refereeing — recognising

and calling fouls — generally "good and even very good" through the first third of the 64 matches.

But Zen Ruffinen acknowledged that some referees had problems with "disciplinary actions" after calling a free kick — "Whether to show a red card, or a yellow card or no card," he said.

The 34 referees and 33 assistants chosen from the 32 nations at the World Cup and other countries in FIFA attended special seminars on applying consistent standards in their game officiating — specifically, abiding by FIFA's Rule 12 forbidding violent tackles from behind.

"A red card is a must when there is a tackle from behind and there is danger to the opposing player," said Gen. Farouk Bouzo of Syria, of the FIFA refereeing committee.

FIFA studies have shown that 66 per cent of severe injuries throughout the sport resulted from tackles from behind.

Bouzo said World Cup referees were also obliged to send off players for violent tackles from the front or side, as well, if the action could endanger the opposing player.

But he also acknowledged that referees overlooked some obvious cases of flagrant fouls, particularly Morocco 3-0 on Tuesday.

In the 18th minute, Morocco's Said Chiba slid in with cleats high, ripping Ronaldo's shorts and leaving a gash on his left thigh. But Russian referee Nikolai Levnikov didn't show even a yellow card.

"The game (of soccer) is a game of mistakes... human errors by coaches, players, referees," Bouzo said. "This mistake was analyzed by the commission and we gave advice to the referee involved."

Asked what could be done if a referee's poor judgement in a World Cup match resulted in a team being unfairly eliminated, Bouzo said, "There is no compensation for losing a football game." But he added that the referee would face FIFA discipline if he was at fault, including being sent home from the tournament.

In the first 24 matches of France '98, referees issued 101 cards, including nine red-card expulsions. The average number of cards per match is 4.2. In the first round of the 1994 World Cup, the average was 3.5 cards per match.

The record number of red cards was 18 at the 1990 World Cup in Italy. Twelve were issued at the 1994 World Cup in the United States.



Carlos Cordoba (R), the Colombian goalkeeper discusses team coordination with coach Hernan Gomez at La-Tour-du-Pin on June 20. — AFP photo

What's cooking?

LYON, June 21 (AP): An exile Iranian opposition group on Sunday accused French authorities of working hand-in-hand with the Iranian government to prevent Iranian refugees from attending the big World Cup match between Iran and the United States.

Mohammad Mohaddesin, head of the foreign relations committee of the Mujahdeen Khalq, said that the French government had turned down a visa request for one of its members on political grounds.

He said that Eskandar Filabi, a popular wrestling champion who left Iran after its 1979 Islamic revolution, had applied for a visa in the United States.

"This is part of the political dealing with the mullahs in Iran," Mohaddesin told reporters in Lyon, where media attention is focused on a big game later Sunday between the United States and Iran.

"Isn't this an act of politically staining sports?" said Mohaddesin.

FIFA has said it has received calls and written statements from Iranian opposition groups threatening to disrupt the Iran-US match. The Mujahdeen have said they do not intend to do so.

Mohaddesin said that, at the request of the Iranian government, French authorities also had denied entry to thousands of Iranian refugees. He said many were waiting at French borders to get in.

"Is this the claim that 'football is not political,'" said Mohaddesin.

"It seems, that so long as football serves the interest of the murderous mullahs in Iran, it can be political," said Mohaddesin.

French and Iranian authorities were not immediately available for comment. The Mujahdeen group, the largest Iranian opposition group with headquarters in Iraq, is committed to the overthrow of Iran's religious government.

Yes shirt swopping!

PARIS, June 21: Players at the World Cup can swap their shirts on the pitch after the match if they want to — but FIFA would prefer them to do it in the changing room, its spokesman said on Saturday, reports Reuters.

Rumours had been circulating at the World Cup that FIFA planned to discipline players who stripped to the waist while still on the pitch to have a souvenir of the match. The shirts all bear the World Cup logo, which makes them especially prized.

Spokesman Keith Cooper said the world soccer body had for years requested, but not demanded, that shirts be kept on for reasons of decorum — "to have a unified, organised image at the end of the game."

"But if the players want to change shirts on the pitch, we are certainly not going to prevent them from doing so. It's the players' World Cup," he said.

"The idea that there's a going to be some kind of disciplinary measures against them is nonsense."

Words of wisdom for hooligans

LA BAULE, France, June 21: England soccer hooligans should think of the sacrifice of Britain's war dead before resorting to further violence, an English World Cup official said after visiting a British war cemetery.

"We owe the fact that we are participating in this tournament to the courage of those who gave their lives to defend our freedom," team spokesman David Davies said after visiting the cemetery near England's World Cup training base.

"This place humbles me. Those who put our nation to shame would do well to think about that," Davies added.

Rioting England fans brought mayhem to the streets of Marseille last weekend when England played Tunisia and security has been stepped up in Toulouse where England were playing Romania on Monday.

England officials placed a wreath on the grave of a soldier killed when German dive-bombers attacked the British troopship Lancastria anchored in St Nazaire Harbour on the western coast of France in 1940. More than 2,500 died in the attack.

RESULTS UPDATE

M	Gr	Brazil 2	Scotland 1
2	A	Morocco 2	Norway 2
3	B	Cameroun 1	Austria 1
4	B	Italy 2	Chile 2
5	C	S Arabia 0	Denmark 1
6	C	France 3	S Africa 0
7	D	Paraguay 0	Bulgaria 0
8	E	Holland 0	Belgium 0
9	E	S Korea 1	Mexico 3
10	D	Spain 2	Nigeria 3
11	F	Jamaica 1	Croatia 3
12	F	Yugoslavia 1	Iran 0
13	H	Argentina 1	Japan 0
14	F	Germany 2	USA 0
15	G	Romania 1	Colombia 0
16	G	England 2	Tunisia 0
17	A	Scotland 1	Norway 1
18	A	Brazil 3	Morocco 0
19	B	Chile 1	Austria 1
20	B	Italy 3	Cameroun 0
21	C	S Africa 1	Denmark 1
22	C	France 4	S Arabia 0
23	D	Nigeria 1	Bulgaria 0
24	D	Spain 0	Paraguay 0
25	H	Croatia 1	Japan 0
26	E	Belgium 2	Mexico 2
27	E	Holland 5	S Korea 0

Korea to give kids a break

MARSEILLE, France, June 21: Teenage striker Lee Dong-gook, dubbed the "Ronaldinho of Korea," will lead a face-saving operation when the 2002 World Cup co-hosts taken on Belgium in their final group game, reports AFP.

The 5-0 defeat at the hands of Holland has rocked South Korea back on their heels and prompted calls for the sacking of coach Cha Bum-kun, the country's most successful footballer.

Cha refused to discuss his personal future after the humiliating loss to the deadly Dutch but said that he would give youth a fling against the Belgians in the hope of restoring some of the team's lost pride.

South Korea are playing in their fifth World Cup finals and

have failed to win any of their 13 matches. They were beaten 3-1 by Mexico in their opening game and the 5-0 hammering by Holland was their worst defeat in the World Cup finals since 1954 when they went down 9-0 to Hungary and 7-0 to Turkey.

Cha sees 19-year-old Lee Dong-gook, fellow teenager Ko Jong-soo and midfielder Lee Sang-hun, 22, as the backbone of the 2002 squad and wants to give them World Cup experience.

Cha still has a few cards which I have not played yet in this World Cup and I'll use them against Belgium," said Cha. "I will bring in my young players and give the team a dual goal to win Korea's first game in the World Cup finals and start the preparation for 2002."

Cha faces the chop

SEOUL, June 21: South Korean coach Cha Bum-Kun may be sacked for leading his World Cup team to a humiliating 5-0 defeat against the Netherlands



CHA BUM KUN

which knocked South Korea out of the contest, reports said today, reports AFP.

Korea Football Association (KFA) officials will meet in Paris on Monday to determine Cha's fate. Seoul's Yonhap news agency and television stations said.

Yonhap quoted one KFA official as saying that South Korea would need shock therapy to appease angry soccer fans who stayed overnight in front of giant screens mounted across the capital on the sides of

skyscrapers. Millions of Seoul residents were glued to their televisions, with expectations of South Korea's first-ever victory in the World Cup finals.

But the capital was shrouded in gloom and silent resentment following their worst World Cup defeat since 1954 when South Korea lost to Hungary 0-9.

KFA officials said that Cha showed mismanagement of players just ahead of South Korea's first Group E match with Mexico, Yonhap said.

They were also concerned about Cha's comments that he would employ young players for the final match with Belgium to prepare for the 2002 World Cup, which will be co-hosted by Japan and South Korea, it said.

Cha admitted his side never had a chance against the rampant Dutch.

"Against Mexico we simply weren't good enough, but here we came up against a Holland team who were just invincible," he said.

But he said his team would not give up in their final match even though the winless Koreans were already out of competition.

"I promise that against Belgium we will try and win our first ever match in the World Cup."

"We are organising the tournament in 2002 and I vow that we will have a team that will perform well then," the Korean coach said.



SEEING RED: Gert Verheyen (No. 18) turns around in dismay as referee Hugh Dallas (L) shows him the red card against Mexico. — AFP photo

Parreira the scapegoat

MELUN-SENART, France, June 21 (AP): From World Cup record breaker to first-round victim.

Distressed over being fired by the "very demanding Saudis" Saturday, coach Carlos Alberto Parreira, who guided Brazil to their record fourth World Cup triumph four years ago, said he had been a scapegoat in Saudi Arabia's early exit from the 1998 championship.

"Obviously... they were looking for someone to blame and I guess in this case the coach will get it," Parreira said a few minutes before he left his hotel to get the news of sacking.

Looking weary after returning from an hour's meeting with Saudi sports officials, Parreira told reporters at the team hotel: "The Saudis were expecting a better result."

"As of now we are no longer with the Saudi team."

Saudi Arabia lost their first two matches, 1-0 to Denmark and 4-0 to host France to become the first of the 32 nations to go out. The team has one more game Wednesday against South Africa and Mohammed al-Khuraishi, a Saudi coach, will direct the team at that match.

Parreira was the eighth coach to be sacked by the Saudis in less than four years. He signed a one-year contract with the Saudi federation in December for a reported 3 million dollars.

The decision to fire him was taken by the Saudi soccer federation, which met in an extraordinary session in Paris last Friday.

"I don't feel happy and I don't feel comfortable with the decision taken by the Saudi offi-

cials. At least they should have let us continue until the end of the World Cup," Parreira said, adding that "I did not do it just for money."

Saudi officials "should at least give more time for the coach and players to get used to each other," he said.

Parreira was not the first Brazilian coach to be fired by the Saudis. Zagallo, who is currently coaching the Brazilians had an unsuccessfully stint in 1984.

Parreira said he had "very good relations with the Saudi players." Several were seen hugging him just before was driven to a Paris hotel to get the word on his sacking. But none was available to comment after he returned to the team hotel.

Parreira said he planned to stay in Paris until the end of the World Cup on July 12, then would be on vacation through December.

He said he would weigh offers from three national teams and several clubs, but he didn't name any.

The Brazilian said the reason given for his dismissal their "very high expectations — at least to repeat what they had done in the last World Cup, to reach the second round."

Since the team failed to achieve the goal, he said, "they have taken the decision to cancel my contract and not to coach the Saudi team any further."

The Saudi federation, headed by Prince Faisal bin Fahd, Saudi King Fahd's son, discussed the performance of the national team and its early exit from the finals, the Saudi Press Agency said.

In its six-hour meeting, the federation decided to call Al-Khuraishi to take charge of the team in its last match against South Africa on Wednesday. A committee also was formed to investigate the poor showing of the players.

On the eve of the match against France, Prince Faisal confidently told reporters that his country would win and move on to the second round to match its performance in 1994. In 1994, Saudi Arabia became the only Gulf team to reach the second round of the World Cup.

Parreira led Kuwait in 1982 and the United Arab Emirates in 1990 to the World Cup finals, Saudi Arabia won the Asian Cup in 1988 under him.

ALBERTO PARRERA