



THEIR GREATEST MOMENT: Ecstatic Iranian players celebrate their glorious win over USA at Lyon. — AFP photo



TRINTA'S CREATIONS: Designer Joasinho Trinta (C) shows the victory sign while being flanked by two samba dancers who are sporting his creations at Brazil's training base in Ozoir la Ferriere on June 21. — AFP photo

## Iranians hijack Yankee hopes

LYON, France, June 22 (Reuters/AP): Iran and the United States have barely spoken to each other politically 19 years, so how about this for a message loud and clear: Iran 2, United States 1.

Using a pair of goals against the run of play, Iran vanquished their 19-year adversary in the most politically charged match of the World Cup Sunday night to keep their slim hopes alive while ending the Americans' chances.

With both teams having lost their opening matches, the US-Iran game was almost exclusively for pride.

Iran took the lead after 40 minutes through midfielder Hamid Estili and doubled their tally six minutes from time when Mehdi Mahdavi sent a stinging right-foot shot past startled goalkeeper Kasey Keller.

A fumbled goal by Brian McBride just before the whistle allowed the US to claw one back but came too late to salvage a draw for the Americans who had earlier been unlucky when they hit the woodwork three times.

"I thank God for having helped US," said Iranian coach Jalal Talebi.

"Technically they were over us and dominated most of the game. They deserved to win too, but at the end of the game only one team can win and it was our chance to be the winning team," Talebi added.

It was the Iranian's first ever win in a World Cup final.

For the United States, who also lost their opener against Germany, it meant an early exit from the tournament.

The Iranians' first strike came when the unmarked Estili sent in a looping header off a perfect Javad Zarrinchen cross.

The second came after Mahdavi picked up the ball just inside the American half and ran it unchallenged to the edge of the box before crashing it home. Keller just got his fingers to the ball but could not keep it out.

The final goal was scored in a tumble of bodies with second half substitute Naim Saadavi unable to keep the ball out as the

## Tehran over the moon

TEHRAN, June 22 (AP): Iran's spiritual leader gloated about defeating an "arrogant opponent" and millions of Iranians kicked off a night long party Monday after their World Cup soccer victory over the United States.

Across the country, men and women and children yelling "Iran," rushed into the streets after the final whistle sealed Iran's 2-1 victory before midnight Sunday in Lyon, France. It was 1.30 am Monday in Iran.

For 90 minutes, fans had watched on live television Iran's fortunes dip and rise during the tournament's most politicized match, which pitted the Persian country against its most bitter diplomatic enemy. The result kept Iran's World Cup hopes alive.

Nobody is sitting at home. It is impossible for anybody to be inside their home," Human Razavi, a teen-ager, shouted above the din of honking cars and dancing fans draped in the national green-red-and-white flags.

Others shouted "We love you Ali Daie," referring to Iran's star player. Others sang: "Estili we love you." Hamidi Estili had scored Iran's first goal in the 40th minute of the game.

Sweet shops reopened in the middle of the night and distributed ice cream and candy free to revelers who packed Tehran's streets and created unprecedented traffic jams.

In a message to the Iranian team, Iran's hard-line spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said: "Tonight again, the strong and arrogant opponent felt the bitter taste of defeat at your hands.

Be happy that you have made the Iranian nation happy." The message was read on state television.

The moderate President Mohammad Khatami, however, simply congratulated the Iranian players, saying the victory is a "symbol of national unity."

Khatami's recent overtures of friendship have softened Iran's enmity with the United States. But awareness that Washington has done its best to isolate Iran internationally ensured that many Iranians saw the game as the ultimate grudge match.

## A clash of contrast

MARSEILLE, Jun 22 (AP): For Norway, the choice is simple: beat Brazil or risk elimination from the World Cup. The defending champions are out for some fun, practice — and maybe a little revenge.

Although first and second in Group A, the two teams seem headed in opposite directions as they prepare to meet Tuesday night in the group's final qualifying game.

The Brazilians are on an ascendant curve. After a shaky 2-1 victory over Scotland, they steamrolled Morocco 3-0 to clinch first place with an insurmountable six points.

The mood at training camp is contagiously upbeat. Players talk about "building momentum" and being "on a roll" as they look ahead to Italy of Chile as a possible adversary in the next round.

For the Norwegians, nothing is going right. Although unbeaten in their last 16 matches, they managed only a disappointing 2-2 tie with Morocco and a 1-1 draw with Scotland.

That means they probably have to defeat Brazil to reach the second round for the first time in their history, although they could squeak by with a tie if Scotland and Morocco also tie.

Not that a victory is unthinkable. The Norwegians beat Brazil 4-2 in a friendly match last year, and before the Cup they trounced Denmark, Mexico and Saudi Arabia by a combined 13-2. FIFA ranks them No. 4 in the world.

But first they have to find the cause of their mysterious slump. And no one seems to have a clue.

"It's not easy to explain," said Chelsea striker Andre Tore Flo, dubbed "Flonaldo" after scoring two goals in the victory over Brazil. "We're not satisfied so far either."

"I can't really find any reason," shrugged defender Dan Eggen. "There's always a danger you become bigger than you actually are because of training game results."

Norway will likely keep doing what it does best — play long balls and an aerial game keyed to the 1.93 metre (6-foot-4) Flo. It may be predictable and boring, but it works — or has worked so far.

Meanwhile, Brazil is prepar-

ing some surprises.

With the suspension of midfielder Cesar Sampaio, who picked up his second yellow card against Morocco, coach Mario Zagallo got a rare opportunity to experiment during the Cup.

"It's an atypical game," he admitted. "I can take any risk without a risk, understand?"

The formation he came up with last week was the answer to fans' prayers. Leonardo moved back to cover Sampaio's slot and Denilson, the 20-year-old dribbling dervish who is headed for Spain's Betis, moved in as a virtual third striker alongside Ronaldo and Bebeto.

Zagallo refused to confirm the change, saying he might simply use Emerson, Sampaio's immediate backup. "I won't give weapons to the adversary," he said.

But Zagallo makes no secret that Denilson will get playing time, even if it's coming off the bench. And Denilson promises he's up to the task.

"I want to make those dribbles that drive the 'gringos' crazy," he said. "Violence doesn't intimidate me. The bigger the back, the harder he falls."

Another change is likely in the back line. Starting full-backs Aldair and Junior Baiano have one yellow card, which will be erased in the next round. But if either picks up a second yellow against Norway he will miss the next game — when the loser goes home.

Zagallo's solution, also not confirmed, is to sit out one starter against Norway. In the team's final scrimmage on Sunday, Goncalves replaced Aldair alongside Junior Baiano.

Making his Cup debut against the Norwegian air game doesn't worry him, Goncalves said.

"They have the height advantage, but we have the edge in ball touch, speed, mobility," he said. "We have to use our weapons and see who's better."

And if the need to win doesn't exist for Brazil, the desire for a little paycheck does. The Norwegians' crowing after last year's win still sticks in Brazil's craw.

"They have a history with us," said Leonardo. "Maybe it's time to revert that history with a win."

## Italy: Beat Austria or face Brazil

PARIS, June 22: Italy need to show their killer instinct here tomorrow, when they take on Austria in a crucial match for their World Cup campaign, reports AFP.

"Victory will ensure they finish top of Group B and avoid Brazil in the second round, anything less, and Cesare Maldini's men risk either a tangle with the holders, or even an early flight home on Wednesday morning.

The deciding factor will be whether Italy's all-star attack led by World Cup hit-man Christian Vieri gets the right support from the rest of the side.

Italy have taken early leads in both their matches so far. But have failed to follow up with the killer blow of a second goal, instead of moving forwards, their much criticised midfield has gone into reverse gear.

As a result, they narrowly avoided defeat in a 2-2 draw with Chile and could easily have finished up drawing with Cameroon before a late double from Vieri finally sank the Africans 3-0.

The father and son team of coach Cesare and skipper Paolo Maldini have spent the past week telling the side that they just need to believe in them-

selfes to go far in this tournament.

Maldini snr warned them: "We have to keep getting better. If we don't, we'll then have no goal to achieve."

"But to do great things, a team have to feel that they are a great team."

If Italy can find that killer instinct at the Stade de France, they clearly have the players up front who can bury the unimpressive Austrians.

Vieri said: "I'm a striker and scoring goals is my job. And one thing is for sure, I'm not stopping at three goals, I've got to make the most of being on form."

To lend support to Vieri up front, Maldini has the luxury of choosing between Alessandro Del Piero and his 31-year-old understudy Roberto Baggio.

Still returning from a thigh injury, and facing a match which could well be played in sapping afternoon heat, Del Piero is unlikely to last 90 minutes.

The choice is therefore between a repeat of the Cameroon plan — an hour for Baggio and half an hour for Del Piero — or vice versa.

Del Piero wants to start tomorrow and the coach, who has long tipped the Juventus striker as a star of the tournament,

Diego going to France

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, June 22 (AP/AFP/Reuters): Diego Maradona said Tuesday he has decided to travel to France to fulfill his commitment as a television commentator.

But the former Argentine national team captain did not specify when he will arrive in France.

"At any moment I'll be in France to commentate on the World Cup," Maradona told Cablevision Noticias on Sunday, explaining that if he had not left earlier it was because he wanted to spend fathers day with his family.

"I'm going to be there as the people are, with the people. I don't want them to have a reception for me," Maradona said on a local television programme.

Last Wednesday, Maradona said on Radio Libertad that he would be going to France to watch a few matches but only in a spectator capacity. He said then that he no longer wanted the job as a commentator.

Meanwhile, the Argentine fans were missing their hero, Maradona, in Paris.

Banners at the Parc des Princes for Argentina's Group H game against Jamaica on Sunday read:

"Maradona the greatest" "Diego, thanks for everything" "El Baje with Maradona — no problem" "Diego, even if you aren't here, the felling goes on" "A World Cup without Maradona is like a dance without girls".

Maradona, who was in every Argentine squad from 1978 to 1994 although he did not play in 1978.

## Negative or positive!

JERUSALEM, Jun 22: Over a quarter of Israelis reckon the World Cup has put clams on their sex lives, reports AFP.

A survey said 26 per cent of Israelis complained that time spent watching up to three matches a day had reduced the number of times they had sex. Israeli military radio reported Sunday.

But nine per cent said all the football was actually making them feel more turned on.

Another negative World Cup side effect that emerged was an increased in tension between couples claimed by 16 per cent of those asked.

The poll surveyed the opinions of a representative selection of 500 people from the Israeli Jewish community with a 4.5 per cent margin of error.

## Blatter's rebuttal

PARIS, June 22 (AFP/Internet): FIFA president Sepp Blatter dismissed claims on Monday that Germany had offered to withdraw from the World Cup following the brutal attack on a French policeman by German fans.

"There was talk of possible sanctions and I immediately dismissed such an idea. But no one offered to withdraw. It was never even discussed," said Blatter after an emergency FIFA meeting about Sunday's violence.

## Two SA players suspended

VICHY, France, June 22: South African players Brendan Augustine and Naughty Mokoena were suspended for the rest of the World Cup after staying out until dawn Sunday. South African soccer officials said, reports AP.

"They've been suspended. South African Football Association president Molefi Oliphant told a news conference.

## A victory for everyone

An Iranian lady joins in the post-win celebrations at Tehran on June 21. — AFP photo



Another round of Brazilliance!!

JOHN PLAYER GOLD LEAF LIGHTS