



BACK FROM THE DEAD: Norway players acknowledge the fans' ecstatic response after beating Brazil. —AFP photo

Flying Dutchmen face Mexican matadors

SAINT-ETIENNE, France, June 24 (AFP): Mexico's prospects of standing up to rampant Holland here on Thursday have been dealt a severe blow by the likely absence of their "matador" striker Luis Hernandez.

The blond forward, who scored twice in the opening 3-1 defeat of South Korea, has struggled to shake off an ankle injury incurred during Mexico's stirring fightback to draw 2-2 with Belgium and was expected to sit out Thursday's crucial Group E clash.

With or without their "matador", all the odds must be on the Mexicans being trampled on by a Dutch side that coolly took the Koreans to the cleaners on Saturday.

Pavel Pardo, suspended after being sent off against Belgium, Salvador Carmona is the most likely replacement.

The Dutch will be again without Patrick Kluivert, serving the second match of a ban imposed for striking Belgium's Lorenzo Staelens in the bruising 0-0 opener.

Latest odds

LONDON, Jun 24: Norway were cut from 150-1 to 50-1 after beating Brazil 2-1 on Tuesday and qualifying for the second round of the World Cup, reports Reuters.

Latest William Hill odds: 5-2 Brazil

11-2 Argentina, France, Netherlands

7-1 Germany

8-1 Italy

14-1 England

25-1 Nigeria, Yugoslavia

28-1 Spain

33-1 Croatia, Romania

50-1 Norway

66-1 Chile 100-1 Mexico 125-1 Denmark 150-1 Belgium, Paraguay 200-1 Colombia 500-1 Bulgaria, South Africa.

But with Arsenal forward Dennis Bergkamp getting back close to full fitness, Kluivert was not missed against South Korea and may struggle to get back in the side.

The Dutch may also be without experienced midfielder Wim Jonk, whose speculative long range shot was infamously turned into his own net by goalkeeper Packy Bonner thus ending the republic of Ireland's interest in the 1994 finals, as he wants to return to Holland for the funeral of his best friend, who was killed in a car crash.

With the Dutch aware that defeat is likely to see them out of the tournament, the clash with Mexico will be a tough test of whether they possess the nerve to match their billing as potential World Cup winners.

Dragan Stojkovic, the captain of Yugoslavia, who the Dutch could well end up meeting in the second round, rates Holland the best team so far in France '98.

Hiddink's squad have also been given the stamp of approval by Johan Cruyff, the star of the great Ajax and Dutch national sides of the early 1970.

They have some very good individual players and are playing a good passing game, most importantly at pace," he said.

Cruyff believes the current crop of players is good enough to emulate Holland's 1974 and 1978 runs to the final, although he still sees Brazil as the most likely winners.

Crucially for the Dutch, there have been no signs here of the internal squabbling that has handicapped their campaigns at the last two World Cups.

"That is normally our main opponent but here the team spirit is very good," said Arsenal winger Marc Overmars.

Holland had the players to win the 1990 World Cup but Ruud Gullit and Marco van Basten's attempts to impose their choice of players on coach Leo van Beenhakker destroyed team morale.

Preparations for USA '94 were torpedoed by Gullit's late decision not to go after another row and claims Hiddink favoured white players marred the Dutch campaign in Euro '96.

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Wiking Victory

MARSEILLE, June 24: Norway pulled off one of the most remarkable World Cup escape acts of all time on Tuesday, scoring two late goals to come from 1-0 down to beat champions Brazil 2-1, reports Reuters.

An 89th minute penalty from Kjetil Rekdal gave Norway a place in the last 16 when it had looked utterly beyond them.

Norway seemed doomed when Bebeto rose to head home a cross from the left by Denilson in the 78th minute to make it 1-0 for Brazil as Group A rivals Morocco were racing towards a 3-0 win over Scotland and apparently destined for a place in the second round.

But the Norwegians refused to be buried and, in an extraordinary turn of fortune, beanpole striker Tore Andre Flo equalised seven minutes from the end of normal time and then Rekdal banged in a last-gasp penalty in a thrilling finale.

It seemed to some a harsh penalty decision but Rekdal made no mistake. "This is the biggest sporting event in Norwegian history," he enthused.

For the equaliser, Flo who had come close with a header in the 73rd minute, latched on to a long through-ball and beat big marker Junior Baiano in a dual inside the penalty box on the left to stab a right-foot shot into the far corner.

Flo and Baiano tangled again in the area six minutes later and this time American referee Esfandiar Baharmast judged the Brazilian had tugged the Norwegian's shirt and awarded a penalty.

With his country's World Cup survival hanging on the outcome of the spot kick, the bearded Rekdal held his nerve and crashed a magnificent right-foot drive just inside the upright beyond goalkeeper Taf-

farel's dive to the right.

"I felt the pressure, but I was not nervous," Rekdal said later.

Four minutes into injury time Brazil's formidable set-piece specialist Roberto Carlos hammered a free-kick goal-wards and keeper Frode Grodas saved with immense relief at the foot of his left post.

Norway, against all the odds, had survived and the red-clad Norwegian contingent in the 60,000-capacity Velodrome Stadium erupted when the final whistle of deliverance blew. Players and fans bowed to each other in mutual homage to hail a historic win.

Norway, who had drawn 2-2 against Morocco and 1-1 against Scotland finished with five points, one point behind Brazil, who had beaten Scotland 2-1 and Morocco 3-0. Morocco had four points and were cruelly denied by the astonishing turn of events in Marseille.

It was Brazil's first defeat in the World Cup finals since Argentina beat them 1-0 in the second round of the 1999 tournament in Italy and embelished Norway's remarkable unbeaten record against the world's number one team.

The Norwegians drew a friendly in Oslo 1-1 in 1988 and defeated Brazil 4-2 in another in their capital in May last year when Flo scored twice.

But this feat was on a totally different plane, propelling Norway beyond the first round of the finals for the first time after early exits in their only previous appearances in the finals in 1938 and 1994 and giving them an appointment with Italy here next Saturday.

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FRUSTRATED AND ANGRY: A visibly upset Brazil coach Mario Zagallo watching his team's struggle against Norway from the sidelines. —AFP photo

Zagallo slams 'anti-football'

MARSEILLE, June 24: Brazil coach Mario Zagallo accused Norway of playing "anti-football" after his world champions lost to the Scandinavians in the second time in little over a year on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

The veteran coach had praised Morocco's style last week but the irony of Brazil's 2-1 defeat, which put Norway through at the expense of a team he admires, appeared lost on him.

"What they (Norway) play is anti-football," said Zagallo, who has been locked in a war of words with his Norwegian counterpart Egil Olsen since the world champions lost a friendly 4-2 in Oslo just over a year ago.

"They play with one line of defence of four, and then another line of defence of five," he said, referring to the way the Scandinavians pack their midfield with almost the entire team for much of the game.

"They played the same system when it was 0-0, they played the same system regardless of the result in the other game and they still played the

same system when we scored our goal," Zagallo added.

"I relaxed and gave them a chance to play their high crosses into our penalty area, which is their tactic and one they use with efficiency. I congratulate them," he said tersely.

When Brazil lost last year's friendly, Zagallo blamed jet-lag, lack of time for preparation and a bad pitch.

This time, he said Brazil, who led 1-0 with seven minutes left before conceding two late goals, had relaxed after playing better football.

He said the world champions would learn the lesson from which they would benefit — but did not mention that it was Morocco who paid the price.

The run up to the game had been preceded by a war of words between "the old wolf" and Olsen, a sharp-witted character who is enjoying himself immensely at the World Cup.

Olsen sparked the trouble when he said that Brazil would play better with his system.

Zagallo, intensely proud of his record in international soccer, replied by saying that Olsen's only tactics were high crosses into the penalty area.

After Norway drew their first two World Cup games he added that the Scandinavians would have already qualified if he were their coach.

This week, he refused to name his team until just before kick off "To stop Olsen from sleeping a bit."

"Let him lie on his pillow thinking about it," he said.

After the game he said, "No, this wasn't about revenge. They players celebrated a lot because they had qualified."

Brazilian players were more sympathetic to the Moroccans.

"It's a very sad situation," said midfielder Leonardo. "They won 3-0, they play nice football but they have been eliminated."

Stupid!

Buenos Aires, June 24 (Reuters): Argentina whipped Jamaica 5-0 at the World Cup on Sunday, but the result did not appease one Argentine fan who shot three of his neighbours to end an argument over the team's performance, police said on Tuesday.

The three victims were talking about Argentina's game on a street in the city of La Plata on Monday when a neighbour approached them and began to argue furiously.

He pulled out a gun and shot them in the legs and arms before running off, police told the state Telam news agency.

Police still have not found the fugitive.

Penalty robs Morocco

MARSEILLE, Jun 24 (Reuters): The penalty that gave Norway victory over Brazil and a first-ever place in the last 16 of the World Cup looks destined to be debated for many a day — not least in Morocco.

With a minute left in Marseille's Velodrome on Tuesday, Norway were on their way home, despite fighting back from a goal-down-to-be-level-at-

1-1 with Brazil.

Two hundred miles away Morocco were leading Scotland 3-0 and on course for a last 16 clash with Italy — until American referee Esfandiar Baharmast changed everything.

Awaiting a cross, Norway's Tore Andre Flo was jostling for position in the box with his marker Junior Baiano, as they had been for much of the previ-

ous 89 minutes.

Baiano clearly had hold of the big Chelsea striker's shirt and although the tug barely seemed strong enough to bring Flo to ground, Baharmast decided it merited a penalty.

Kjetil Rekdal stepped up to strike the ball confidently past Tafarel and give Norway a scarcely believable 2-1 victory over the world champions.

TV replays of the incident appeared to show that little contact had been made.

But Flo, who had grabbed the equaliser six minutes later, said: "It was definitely a penalty. Baiano was pulling my shirt and if the referee hadn't given it I would have been furious."

Teammate Stig Inge Bjornebye agreed. "The only surprise was that the referee took so long to give it," he said.

Others were not so sure.

Brazilian wing-back Cafu said: "It is very unusual for a referee to give a penalty in that situation."

And one Brazilian journalist described the decision as "the second terrible penalty for a European team," referring to Italy's fortunate spot kick for handball against Chile earlier in the tournament.

The Moroccans are likely to be of similar mind, once they have got over the stunning disappointment of having their second-ever last-16 place ripped from their grasp and view the video.

Brazil's Leonardo said: "I didn't see the incident but I feel sorry for Morocco."

Flonaldo outshines Ronaldo

MARSEILLE, France, Jun 24 (AFP): Whenever Ronaldo's Brazil faces Norway, that tall striker called Flonaldo steals the show from the world's best soccer player.

Tore Andre Flo, nicknamed Flonaldo after scoring twice in a 4-2 exhibition win over Brazil a year ago in Oslo, did it again Tuesday.

First, he got the Norwegians back into the game they needed to win by netting the equaliser with seven minutes left.

Taking a long pass from defender Stig Inge Bjornebye, Flo dribbled around defender Junior Baiano and shot into the left corner past a diving Tafarel to make it 1-1.

"I got the ball. I was lucky I guess," said Flo, who has the same jersey number, 9, as Ronaldo.

"I took a shot and it went into the corner. It was a good goal, but we knew we needed one more. Then we got the penalty and it was very cool finish by Kjetil (Rekdal)."

With a minute left, Junior Baiano collided with Flo in the penalty area, and American referee Esfandiar Baharmast whistled the foul. Rekdal fired it into the left side for the clincher, taking Norway to the second round for the first time.

Flo, at 193 centimetres (six

foot three inches) one of the tallest strikers in the World Cup, helped Chelsea win the Cup Winners' Cup last month.

Goalie Frode Grodas won the English FA Cup final with the London side last year.

But beating Brazil, which has already clinched first place in Group A, was even bigger for the Norwegians.

"I've never been happier than tonight," said Flo. "I won the Cup Winners' Cup and other prizes, but you just can't compare it with this."

Grodas agreed.

"Finally we had some luck in the World Cup," he said. "This was probably our best performance in a match when it really counted."

Flo, whose brother Jostein also saw action for the first time in this tournament as a substitute late in the second half, failed to score in the two previous matches against Morocco (2-2) and Scotland (1-1).

For Brazil, it was the first defeat in this World Cup and their first loss in the tournament's preliminary round in 32 years.

"It's incredible. I'm amazed at what happened," said Norwegian coach Egil "Drillo" Olsen, whose team is unbeaten in their last 17 matches and was ranked

Lady luck's liaison

PARIS, June 24 (AFP/Internet): The record books will show Kjetil Rekdal's late penalty earning Norway a World Cup victory over Brazil but some would say it was yet another example of how lady luck can become a major ingredient at World Cups.

In the dying seconds, American referee Esfandiar Baharmast pointed to the spot after judged Junior Baiano to have fouled Tore Andre Flo, dubbed Flonaldo.

Chelsea striker Flo, who claimed afterwards Baiano was tugging his shirt, said: "The referee was right."

But video playbacks have not given solid evidence that Baharmast, who like all World Cup referees have a tough and thankless task, made the right decision.

And perhaps Morocco coach Henri Michel would be forgiven a little disillusionment after his team beat Scotland 3-0 only to be eliminated from the competition.

Brazil coach Mario Zagallo did not want to get involved and would only say: "Refereeing is FIFA's problem not Brazil's."

Hertha Berlin midfielder Rekdal placed the ball on the spot before rifling it home for a 2-1 win to begin a night of cele-

brations in the Norwegian camp.

The festivities were given even more spice as Brazil led 1-0 with just 13 minutes left.

Controversy and refereeing seem to go hand in hand.

Swiss referee Kurt Rothlisberger did not award Belgium a late penalty in the second round of USA 94 when referee looked to have clearly fouled Weber to give Germany that bit of fortune.

Rothlisberger may have been sent home by FIFA but that didn't help Belgium who also packed their bags for the trip home.

Cameron's progress in 1990 was due to an early slice of luck when Colombia's goalkeeper Rene Higuita somehow allowed himself to get caught with the ball by Roger Milla in the centre circle. The gift enabled Cameroon to qualify for the quarter-finals where their luck ran out against two-penalty England.

And of course had England's controversial third goal in extra time in the 1966 final not gone in, perhaps Germany would now be going for a record fifth world title.

Andreas Brehme's late penalty to earn victory over Ar-



TRAGIC: Moroccan booters seem beyond consolation after finding out their World Cup has ended despite a 3-0 thrashing of Scotland at Saint Etienne. —AFP photo

Goodbye Uncle Sam!
Have a safe journey back home!

JOHN PLAYER GOLD LEAF LIGHTS