



RESTORING THEIR PRIDE A LITTLE: South Korean booters leave the field after holding mighty Belgium to a 1-1 draw in their last group match at Parc des Princes, Paris on June 25. — AFP photo

## World under WC spell

FRANCE, June 26 (AFP/Internet): Auto plants and stock trading are idled in Brazil. An orchestra in Norway cut short a performance. Thailand's army commander is allowing conscripts to stay up after lights-out. Millions of sleepless Asians show up red-eyed for work in the morning.

What's going on? It's World Cup fever, a globe-spanning affliction that grips billions of soccer fans every four years. From a field of nearly 200 national teams, 32 made it through the qualifying rounds to earn a berth in soccer's nirvana - the World Cup finals in France.

With the biggest World Cup field ever, TV audiences are gigantic. The organisers estimate that 2 billion spectators tuned in for the opening match June 10 to watch defending champion Brazil beat Scotland 2-1. Cumulative TV audiences could hit 4.0 billion before a champion is crowned July 12.

The financial implications are dizzying. Billions of dollars will be spent on World Cup merchandise, promotions and advertising during the month-long tournament.

Thanks to the media blitz and the world's fascination with the game, the impact of the World Cup on average people is like no other sports event: Governments and industries are idled so bureaucrats and workers can watch; students skip classes or watch on TV sets in classrooms; cities become deserted at kickoff as fans rush inside to televisions.

Let's postpone this discussion, Zurab Zhvania, speaker of the Georgian parliament, said in adjourning a debate before the opening match while only 24 of 240 deputies remained.

The World Cup, it seems, overshadows daily tribulations of modern life.

When uncertainty swept Nigeria after its military ruler, General Sani Abacha, died early this month, Africa's most populous nation found respite from politics in the national team's 3-2 upset of Spain.

"On a day like this, you're going to have a hard time getting anyone to talk about politics," said Edet Ojo, as Nigeria's victory resonated to cheers in the streets of a crumbling Lagos neighbourhood.

In Iran, the corruption trial of Tehran's mayor had to wait until after the country's match against the United States.

Matches also can trigger destructive passions. After a controversial refereeing decision resulted in a 1-1 draw between Cameroon and Chile, residents of Yaounde called it an anti-

French plot and attacked the businesses and vehicles of white expatriates. No injuries were reported.

Crime doesn't take a holiday during the World Cup. While bank employees in Santiago, Chile, watched the national team qualify for the second round, four bandits decked in red and white national colours made off with \$4,400. They escaped into huge crowds celebrating Chile's best performance in 36 years.

To catch the action, there isn't much people won't do. Chinese stayed up half the night, drawn to Beijing bars by cold beer, spiced mutton and soccer. "If I get one or two hours of sleep, it's enough," said Sheng Zhifeng, 30.

The big worry in some countries was whether power or TV reception would fall altogether. In Haiti, where 12-hour-a-day blackouts are common, Port-au-Prince residents were asked to turn off air conditioners to ease the strain on power consumption during broadcasts.

In Australia's outback, some die-hard fans drove hundreds of miles for a TV because broadcast coverage didn't reach them. "The guys on the Mir space station can watch it and we can't," Ian Cuthbertson grumbled to an Australian newspaper.

TV salesmen couldn't be happier.

"I wish the World Cup were held every year," said Nguyen Viet Hung, who more than doubled TV sales to 50 a day at his Hanoi shop.

Sets even appeared in some classrooms in Lima, Peru, where teachers feared a dramatic drop-off in attendance.

"The World Cup is what's on the mind of the students, so why not use it as a teaching tool?" explained Arturo Sanches, principal at the Republic of Paraguay elementary school.

Students were asked to write reports on the World Cup and study the history and geography of the teams. They even learned some French, saying "bonjour" and "au revoir" to one another.

In some factories and workplaces, soccer stopped production.

Brazil's main stock market vowed to fight the tide and remain open. But it ended up suspending trading during Brazil's first-round matches. Foreign investors "can complain all they want, but it won't change anything," said broker Alberto Alves Sobrinho.

Four big automakers in Brazil interrupted production during that country's games. Workers are making up for lost time by working through lunch breaks, on Saturdays or adding

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### World Cup suicide

HANOI, June 26 (AFP/AP): A Vietnamese man in central Kontum province committed suicide after losing his motorcycle in a World Cup bet, a local hospital source said today.

Bui Van Dang, 24, was found dead by "self strangulation" after Yugoslavia and Germany drew 2-2 on Sunday the Kontum hospital source said, confirming a local report.

Dang had wagered his new Honda Dream 2 motorcycle on the match, Vietnam news reported.

Dang's family paid to get the motorbike back, but he killed himself after he was cursed by relatives.

Soccer-crazy Vietnam has become obsessed with the World Cup, even though the country never has qualified for the sport's biggest event.

All matches are being shown on state television, and streets are virtually deserted when they are aired.

Betting on World Cup matches has been so furious in other areas of Vietnam that national lottery ticket sellers have suffered a serious slump in sales.



LOOKING UP: Brazilian players practice at Oziro-la-Ferriere on June 25 ahead of their crucial second round game against Chile today. — AFP photo

## Brazil: Back to basics

PARIS, June 26 (AFP): They were touted as near superhumans at the outset, but much of Brazil's gloss was stripped away by Norway's artisans in the 2-1 defeat at Marseille.

After that surprise reverse, the defending champions must step up several gears if they are to beat a Chile side burning to show that there is more to South American football than the samba and tango rhythms of Brazil and Argentina.

Although they had already won the group with wins over Scotland and Morocco, coach Mario Zagallo had insisted he wanted his men to retain the habit of winning.

Now he instead has to demand the team pull itself together to win a battle royal at the Parc des Princes, where Ronaldo, the best player in the world, will pit his wits against Chile's own two princes, Marcelo Salas and Ivan Zamorano.

And he does so with a Brazilian media still far from convinced the team was pulling its weight even before the Norway hiccup.

Just after the squad arrived, popular daily Lance suggested they needed a shake-up.

"Give them viagra," the paper demanded, alluding to the pill supposed to cure male impotence.

"They're without leadership, determination and the will to win... and in the last month or so Zagallo has indulged in a veritable festival of incoher-

ence," Lance charged.

And given that in the words of former keeper Barbosa, a losing finalist in 1950, "coming second in Brazil is worse than nowhere at all," Zagallo is well aware that only the best is good enough.

Zagallo was insisting Thursday that the Norway defeat — their first in a World Cup finals since Argentina beat them in the second round of the 1990 edition — was a blip and could not derail Brazil's campaign for a fifth title.

But with Bebeto, their top scorer with two goals here not certain to have recovered from a knock suffered in training Thursday, their task could become all the more difficult.

Of the Norway game Zagallo said: "we lost concentration in the final seven minutes and paid the penalty. I know the players have taken it to heart and I think this defeat will end up doing us a lot of good."

"We will not make those mistakes again," Zagallo insisted.

The "auriverde" will make some changes for the game as Aldair returns to link up with Junior Baiano in central defence while Cesar Sampaio is back from his one-match ban to form a defensive shield in midfield with captain Dunga.

Leonardo will move further upfield to link with Rivaldo.

With Baiano having struggled against the muscular Tore Andre Flo, the defence will need all hands on deck to deal with Salas and Zamorano.

The Za-Sa twins, as they

have been dubbed, wreaked havoc with opponents' defences in Chile's first-round games, with Salas scoring three times to help his country into the second phase for the first time since 1962 when they lost to Brazil in the semi-finals.

Salas needs just one more goal to become Chile's all-time record scorer with 28 and there could be no better time than Saturday to get it.

Yet defender Javier Margas was at pains to say there is more to the team than the deadly duo who blasted 16 goals in the South American qualifiers — ten of them going to Zamorano.

### Bebeto scare

OZOIRO-LA-FERRIERE, France, June 26: Brazil coach Mario Zagallo has ordered an early morning fitness test for striker Bebeto after he broke down in training here Thursday, reports AFP.

The co-star of USA '94, and Brazil's top scorer here with two goals, limped off and immediately sent alarm bells ringing in the Brazil camp.

"We must have a fully-fit Bebeto," said Zagallo. "We'll give him a full check up in the morning after he has had a good night's sleep to see how he is."

The absence of the 34-year-old Bebeto for the second round match with Chile here on Saturday would be a blow for Brazil who are still smarting after going down 2-1 to Norway on Tuesday.

"We are united. We play as a team and egos don't get in the way," says Margas.

"Salas and Zamorano are excellent strikers and their presence lifts the rest of us psychologically, but they are part of the team," added Margas, who is dying his hair blood red for the occasion.

Nelson Acosta's side are hampered by the loss through suspension of Nelson Parraez, Francisco Rojas and Moises Villaruel.

But defender Pedro Reyes says the squad has the strength in depth to cope.

"The suspensions will give other squad members a chance to show their worth," said Reyes, while midfielder Jose Sierra added: "I don't think it will disadvantage us too much. We have 22 great players in our squad."

Captain Zamorano is particularly relishing a meeting with the Brazilians and Ronaldo — his teammate at Inter Milan.

Paraguay-born Acosta, while already delighted to have taken Chile through the opening phase for the first time in 36 years, now hopes for a huge upset which would give him hero status.

"I think it will be the best match of the World Cup," Acosta forecast.

"Everybody knows Brazil are a great team who are capable of winning a fifth World Cup. But win, lose or draw, we will make it hard for them."

## Matthaeus makes Vogts eat his words

MONTPELLIER, France, June 26 (AFP/Internet): Hats and humble pie are on the menu for coach Bertie Vogts after Germany stumbled into the last 16 of the World Cup — thanks largely to veteran midfielder Lothar Matthaeus.

Only a few months ago Vogts said he would eat his hat if he ever recalled the 37-year-old former world player-of-the-year to the national side after a very public war of words with the Bayern Munich star.

Matthaeus's international career seemed over when he was dropped after USA 94 and accused of stirring up bad feeling in the camp.

But the long-term injury to Borussia Dortmund Matthias Sammer and fitness doubts over Olaf Thon forced the German coach into an embarrassing U-turn as Matthaeus returned to the squad after a four-year absence.

His return from the international wilderness has been greeted with delight by the

tabloid Bild — Germany's best selling paper with 10 million readers — who have run a long campaign for the recall of the former European player.

"Matthaeus is in the midfield! ran the simple and triumphant headline in Thursday's edition.

Matthaeus was brought to France 98 more as cover for Thon, but with Germany struggling against Yugoslavia last week and against Iran on Thursday, Vogts threw on his ageing trump card — with dramatic results.

Against the Yugoslavs, the former Inter Milan idol seized control of the game and rescued what seemed a hopeless cause, inspiring Germany to come from two goals behind for a 2-2 draw.

Matthaeus was named in the starting line-up for Germany for the first time in four years for the match against Iran, after setting a new record of 22 appearances in the World Cup finals when he came on as a

substitute against Yugoslavia.

But once again the Germans struggled to impose themselves on the game — until the 1990 World Cup winning captain dropped back into a sweeper role and began to dictate the pace of the game.

After an abject first-half display, Germany quickly found themselves two goals to the good and all but assured of a last 16 clash with Mexico back in Montpellier on Monday.

And it was his vision which set up the crucial second-half goal for three-times world champions when he spotted the forward run of Jorg Heinrich and lofted an inch perfect 50-yard ball.

Heinrich headed the ball into the path of Olivier Bierhoff whose shot cannoned off the post for Jurgen Klinsmann to scramble in a header.

And Vogts was forced to acknowledge the crucial influence of the player — just as he was after the Yugoslav game.

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An aerial duel between American Cobi Jones (L) and Yugoslav Dejan Stankovic (C) at Nantes. — AFP photo

## Better luck next time

PARIS, June 26 (AFP/Internet): It was a match that put UEFA President Lennart Johansson soundly to sleep but South Korea were wide awake to the implications of their 1-1 draw with Belgium.

As Johansson snoozed in the stands the Koreans regained some of their lost pride against a team who were fighting for World Cup survival.

Belgium, along with Austria, may have been among the dullest sides in the World Cup but South Korea came into the game with backs firmly against the wall and national disgrace just over it.

Cheered on by drum-beating, slogan-chanting supporters they were quick on the break, solid in tackles and determined in character. If Choi Yong-Soo, top scorer in qualifying with nine goals, had been sharper in the box the Koreans would have clinched that elusive first World Cup win.

They have now played 14 matches in five World Cup finals without a victory, but the 1-1 draw was greeted as one by stand-in manager Kim Pyong-Sok, players and supporters alike.

"This was our last chance to show our true form in the World Cup and give our supporters a morale boost," he said.

"We prepared for this World Cup with particular tactics and strategy in mind but after two defeats were demoralised and had to change our approach."

## Yugoslavs settle for second

NANTES, June 26: Slobodan Komljenovic headed in a rebound off a free kick just over three minutes after the opening kickoff Thursday night and Yugoslavia struggled to a 1-0 victory over the United States in a World Cup match that turned out to be meaningless for both sides, reports AP.

The Americans, who already had been eliminated, merely were playing for pride. As it turned out, so were the Yugoslavs, who already had clinched a place in the second round, hoped for a big victory to overtake Germany on goal difference and advance as the winner from Group F.

But a 2-0 victory by Germany over Iran in Montpellier squelched those hopes and the second half turned into a mid-field quagmire.

For the second straight game the match had political overtones for the Americans, who were coming off a 2-1 loss to Iran.

It was also the second straight game the Americans dominated possession early and hit the post quickly only to be frustrated.

Frankie Hejduk sent a falling cross that got over the head of goalkeeper Ivica Kralj and struck the far post after 24 seconds, but the Yugoslavs cleared and absorbed several American forays in the first 45 minutes.

"Goal scoring opportunities aren't easily created at the World Cup, and goals have to be scored," said US coach Steve Sampson. "Precision in front of the goal is something we'll have to correct if we want to get good results in the future."

The Yugoslav goal came on their second shot and first threatening chance in the US half. Sinisa Mihalovic blasted a curling 35-metre free-kick that American goalkeeper Brad Friedel two-handed away, but the rebound bounced to Komljenovic, who despite standing almost on the end line headed the ball back down behind a recovering Friedel.

The Americans played well tonight, like in their previous two matches. Yugoslav coach Slobodan Santrac said, "But they simply didn't convert their chances."

The goal didn't seem to slow the Americans who continued to push forward and got a powerful header from the top of the box out of Brian McBride that Kralj handled in the 15th minute.

Hejduk put another shot on goal with a scissors kick in the 25th and the Americans generally created more chances than the Yugoslavs.

One of Yugoslav's serious chances came in the 28th minute when Savo Milosevic blasted a shot from the right that Friedel had to punch away.

Yugoslavia's star striker Predrag Mijatovic had to leave the field in the 31st minute because of a knee injury. He was replaced by 20-year-old Perica Ognjenovic, who wasted several Yugoslav chances in the closing minutes of the match.

Santrac said he had to make the change because he didn't want to risk Mijatovic worsening his injury ahead of the single-elimination phase of the tournament.

The Yugoslavs slowed the American offence in the second half, limiting them to a handful of serious chances, but not creating much more themselves.

About the only excitement for either side came in the way of substitutions. Yugoslavia saw AC Milan forward Dejan Savicovic for the first time in two months and Yugoslav native Preki Radosavljevic came on for the United States.

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