

Say a little prayer!

LONDON, June 26: Britain's biggest selling tabloid daily the Sun - circulation around four million copies - provided its readers with a prayer mat to pray for an England victory over Colombia in today's World Cup match, reports AFP.

The prayer mat comprises a photographed patch of hallowed green Wembley turf divided by the cross of St George, England's patron saint, with circles marked where to kneel and another circle showing where to place a bottle of beer.

It tells readers to place the mat facing the television, and if England look in trouble to "get down on your knees, place beer in area provided and pray."

Matthaeus

From page 13 "We were not good in the first half and I had to re-organise the midfield," he said. "So I decided to take off Thon and use the experience of Matthaeus who dropped deeper. It seemed to work."

Before announcing Matthaeus' return to the national squad, Vogts told him he would only be recalled if he kept his more controversial opinions to himself - and so far he has been as good as his word.

WC spell

From page 13 hours during the week.

Even highbrows in Norway couldn't resist their nation's opener: the Trondheim symphony orchestra sold only 50 tickets for an evening of Schubert - until it promised the performance would end by game time. Then about 200 people showed up.

"This way, fans of music and soccer could enjoy both," said Siri F. Mathisen, the symphony's managing director.

Vikings

From page 16 curta to Cover central defence and skipper Paolo Maldini to take the left side.

Pagliuca will be between the posts this time on his best behaviour.

That would leave three men in midfield and two more on each flank capable of running tirelessly between all three departments: Juventus men, like Gianluca Pessotto on the left and Angelo Di Livio on the right.

Whatever he decides, coach Maldini is expected no quarter at the Stade Velodrome.

"Norway are very strong physically and they hardly ever let go their grip on a game," he said. "They haven't lost for 17 matches and that says a lot about what they can do, as does the fact that they've beaten Brazil twice."

"They are going to be difficult opponents."

Germans

From page 16 Iranian goalkeeper Ahmad Abedzadeh didn't have a difficult save in the first half, while counterpart Andreas Koepcke had to dive to his right to stop Karim Bagheri's 35-meter drive off a set play.

The Germans stepped up the pace after the interval and it soon paid off.

Thomas Haessler and Bierhoff, the combination that worked so well when Germany won the European title two years ago, connected again to open the scoring in the 50th minute.

Haessler made a clinical right-wing cross to Bierhoff, who left defenders Mohammad Khakpour and Mehdi Pashazadeh bumping into each other as his header bounced high into the net from eight metres.

"We tried hard in the first half, but it didn't work," Bierhoff said. "We were always afraid that Iran would somehow score."

"We played better in the second half and we scored the first goal, things opened up a bit. We tried to come over the flanks and cross and finally it worked when Thomas crossed the ball over to me."

The second goal, in the 58th minute, was also a well-crafted piece of soccer. Joerg Heinrich chased down a long pass and one-touched the ball right to Bierhoff, who one-timed his shot off the left post. Klinsmann was there for the easy rebound, putting it in with an acrobatic, diving header.

Klinsmann's goal was his eighth in World Cup first-round play. He scored four times in Germany's three opening round games in the United States four years ago, twice in the 1990 group matches in Italy, and also netted in the Germans' France '98 opener.

Baggio eyes

From page 16 in this World Cup, I certainly thought of the mistake (in the Pasadena final) four years ago as I prepared to kick. I hope not to go through shootouts again," Baggio said.

Beginning with the second round, matches go to extra time in case of ties. If the teams remain tied after the additional time, penalties will be kicked to decide the team moving to the next round.

Baggio, whose career has been jeopardised by serious knee injuries, said he was used to overcoming difficult times and has learned to "fight my way up."

"Luckily everything went smoothly so far. If I reach the quarterfinals then we can think to make it to the final. The important point is to give your all on the field. If you have done your best you can lose without regrets."



Slavisa Jokanovic (R) of Yugoslavia puts USA's Ernie Stewart off balance during their June 25 meeting at Nantes. — AFP photo

Cameroon cry foul play

TOULOUSE, June 26: One of the most spectacularly unsuccessful managerial gambits of this World Cup was Claude Le Roy's decision to make his Cameroon players learn the name of the match referees, reports Reuters.

"By doing that you give the referee an identity and that makes him respect you more," he explained.

But three red cards in two games shows the men in black were paying more attention to a lamentable lack of discipline which cost the exciting youngsters a second round place.

As the squad prepared to leave their hotel today, the wiser players must have realised the team will never fulfil its enormous potential unless some cooler heads are found.

Time and time again the Africans scythed down opponents, amassing a sea of cautions and giving hope to any side with a decent free-kick specialist.

"The trouble with the Cameroon players is that they are all warriors. They act instinctively with no thought for the consequences. The Nigerians will always be more successful because they are disciplined," said an African soccer writer.

It was always thus. The Cameroon team, which beat Argentina in the first match of the 1990 World Cup finished with nine men. The side which went on to lose the quarterfinal against England was missing four key players through suspension.

In 1994, defender Rigobert Song was the youngest player ever sent off in the World Cup. On Tuesday against Chile, he became the first to be dismissed in two different World Cups.

"I told them to stay calm after the first yellow card against Chile because we had 90 minutes to play, but it only takes a couple of seconds to lose control," lamented veteran captain Francois Omam-Biyik.

Cameroon say they were cheated against Chile when the referee ruled out what looked to be a good goal by Omam-Biyik.

Cameroon were down to 10 men by then but played Chile off the park, neutralising the vaunted strike force of Marcelo Salas and Ivan Zamorano. The side had also outplayed Italy for

25 minutes in the second half when a man short before losing 3-0.

The team's performances were testimony to the work done by Le Roy, who took over in April and quickly pulled together a squad featuring 11 players aged 23 or under.

Some, like 23-year-old defender Pierre Njanka, were playing for local sides and had never left Cameroon before. Yet most of the youngsters blossomed against more experienced opponents and Njanka himself scored one of the goals of the tournament.

"I laugh when people go on about (Brazil's) Roberto Carlos finding people with 50 metre passes on the pitch because Joseph Ndo and Pierre Wome do it the whole time," said Le Roy, who took over as at French club Strasbourg.

"What we need now above

anything else is a good experienced manager. The sports ministry must find one," said Omam-Biyik.

Le Roy, who coached the side to an African Nation's Cup win in the 1980s, has promised not to abandon his charges.

"All of them came up to me and said 'Please stay.' I'll go to Cameroon for a few days twice a year to see what's happening. I'll still keep an eye out on them," he said.

Whoever takes over will need nerves of steel and great patience, since the history of soccer in Cameroon is littered with fights over money and influence.

The main problem facing Africa is economic. If we'd had just 10 per cent of the money the Asian sides were given to prepare for the World Cup we'd have had an African world champion," said Le Roy.

Africans not at all amused

PARIS, Jun 26: The African Football Confederation (CAF) claimed on Thursday African sides were being discriminated against in the World Cup, reports AFP.

"Special treatment seems to have been reserved for the African teams," CAF general secretary Mustapha Fahmy said.

"We hope FIFA will take the necessary measures to rule out prejudice caused by one-sided refereeing of which our representatives have been victim," he added.

However, David Will, president of the FIFA referees' commission, dismissed the charges.

"The referees are not the slightest bit interested in the political situation. They are simply refereeing the game," he said.

FIFA had already publicly backed two referees at the centre of controversy, which saw Cameroon and Morocco disappear from the World Cup on Tuesday.

"We are confident the referees take their decisions in good faith and those decisions are

definitive," FIFA press chief Keith Cooper said Wednesday. "FIFA is satisfied with the way the new rules are being applied and feels the refereeing is of a high standard," he added. "There's a very low error-rate and there have been no official protests."

Cameroon were eliminated when they drew 1-1 with Chile after having two players sent off and two goals disallowed. Hungarian referee Laszlo Vagner refused Francois Omam-Biyik two goals against Chile, either of which would have qualified Cameroon, playing with nine men, for the second round.

Morocco's World Cup ended when Norway beat Brazil with a dubious penalty. That win meant Norway qualified ahead of Morocco, who had just beaten Scotland 3-0.

Cameroon Sports Minister Joseph Owona said: "The refereeing usually seems to go against us but yesterday was the final straw. Not only were our players sent off but they refused us perfectly valid goals."

Iran: Defeated not disgraced

MONTPELLIER, France, June 26 (AP): Iran are going home from the World Cup smiling.

Ousted Thursday on a 2-0 loss to Germany, Iran exited the tournament after the first round feeling successful. After all, Iran won the big one, defeating the United States 2-1 in a match of honour, between nations that have been hostile for two decades.

"That victory set off wild celebrations in Tehran, where the United States has been 'The Great Satan' since the Islamic Revolution toppled the US-backed Shah in 1979."

In their opening match, the Iranians lost only 2-1 to Yugoslavia, showing their competitiveness after an absence of 20 years from the World Cup. They also refused to crumble against Germany, the three-time world champs.

"This World Cup was a great experience for us and I hope it did a lot for the future of soccer in our country," said Iran coach Jalal Talabi.

"I am pleased with the players and I congratulate them and the Iranian nation," he said. When Iran clinched the last World Cup berth by edging Australia in the playoffs, millions in Tehran poured into the streets in celebration.

Then Iran were drawn into the tough Group F with powerful Germany and Yugoslavia and arch-foes United States, and many in the soccer-mad nation feared their team could end up being humiliated. Instead, the three-time Asian champions did well in the global spotlight.

"We are going home happy. We did our best, and we know

that our people also are happy with us," said midfielder Ali Reza Mansourian.

"These games showed us that the difference between Asian Ashamed of Red Devils

BRUSSELS, June 26: Belgium's ouster from the World Cup sparked a chorus of criticism in the Belgian media Friday, with commentators seeing nothing good in a team that won not a single opening round match, reports AP.

Banner headlines proclaiming shame on Belgium's Red Devils competed with huge photos of dejected players or fans after Belgium's 1-1 tie against South Korea on Thursday.

Earlier, the Belgians drew against the Netherlands and Mexico.

Against Mexico and South Korea, they took 2-0 and 1-0 leads respectively yet allowed their opponents to pull even.

The current cup event marked the first time Belgium failed to reach the second round since 1982.

After failing to beat the Dutch and the Mexicans, said the Brussels daily Het Nieuwsblad caught the national mood by declaring:

"The Belgian players became the laughing stock of the whole world by drawing against South Korea. The weak Koreans even went looking for a victory in the final stages of the match."

Belgium entered the World Cup with a relatively old team. National coach Georges Leekens now must find young talent in a country that has a poor youth training record.

Strikers All Dael, Karim Bagheri and Khodadad Aziz all play in Germany's Bundesliga, and a fourth player, Alireza Mansourian, says he also has an offer from a German club.

Mehdi Mahdavi, a rising star who scored the winning goal against the United States, has an offer from Italy's Inter Milan.

More Iranian players are expected to be in demand with European clubs after showing off their talent at the World Cup.

"We did the best with the minimum facilities available to us back home," said Talebi.

Happy Birthday Paolo!

MARSEILLE, June 26: Italy captain Paolo Maldini turned 30 today and celebrated his third World Cup birthday with his teammates, reports Reuters.

Maldini, who will win his 91st cap in tomorrow's second round clash against Norway in Marseille, turned 22 in Rome the day after Italy beat Uruguay in the second round of the 1990 tournament.

He hit 26 in the United States, three days after the Italians beat Norway in the first round of the 1994 finals.

If he plays through to the final in France he will become the most-capped outfield player in the history of Italian soccer.

Extra tickets for qualifiers

PARIS, June 26 (AFP): Teams who reach the second round of the World Cup are entitled to an extra 2,000 tickets over and above their previous allocation, FIFA revealed on Friday.

The tickets are being distributed via the national federations of the 16 countries left in the tournament at the end of the group phase.

In addition, 1,000 tickets are on sale at the Parc des Princes for Saturday's second round clash between Chile and Brazil after Chile returned 1,000 of their allocation from FIFA.

And some 4,000 tickets are available for Nigeria's match against Denmark on Sunday at the Stade de France.

Tragic

PORT ELIZABETH, South Africa, June 26 (AFP): A man was shot dead here after he made a derogatory comment about the South African football team's performance against Saudi Arabia, which saw them dumped out of the World Cup, police said Thursday.

During a heated after-match dissection of Bafana Bafana's, or the boys, game in Bordeaux Wednesday, in which the squad drew 2-2 with Saudi Arabia, a man pulled out a gun and shot his 37-year-old friend three times in the neck.

The man died instantly and his attacker handed himself to the police.

Zubi calls it a day

VINEUIL-SPAINT-FIRMIN, France, June 26: Veteran Spanish keeper Andoni Zubizarreta announced Thursday he was retiring from football, reports AFP.

THE SCORERS

PARIS, June 26 (AP): Goalscorers in the 16th World Cup through Thursday's games (penalties in parentheses):

Four goals: Gabriel Batistuta, Argentina (1), Christian Vieri, Italy.

Three goals: Thierry Henry, France, Luis Hernandez, Mexico, Marcelo Salas, Chile.

Two goals: Roberto Baggio, Italy (1), Salaheddine Bassir, Morocco, Bebeto, Brazil, Oliver Bierhoff, Germany, Phillip Cocu, Netherlands, Ronald de Boer, Netherlands, Abdelhili Hadda, Morocco, Fernando Hierro, Spain (1), Juergen Klinsmann, Germany, Kiko Narvaez, Spain, Ariel Ortega, Argentina, Ricardo Pelaez, Mexico, Davor Suker, Croatia, Marc Wilmots, Belgium.

One goal: Sami al-Jaber, Saudi Arabia (1), Yousef Al-Thinyani, Saudi Arabia (1), Mutiu Adepoju, Nigeria, Celso Ayala, Paraguay, Miguel Benitez, Paraguay, Dennis Bergkamp, Netherlands, Cuauhtemoc Blanco, Mexico, Craig Burley, Scotland, Jose Cardozo, Paraguay, Cesar Sampaio, Brazil, John Collins, Scotland (1), Luigi Di Biagio, Italy, Youri Djorkaeff, France (1), Christophe Dugarry, France, Robbie Earle, Jamaica, Hamid Estili, Iran, Dan Eggen, Norway, Tore Andre Flo, Norway, Alberto Garcia Aspe, Mexico (1), Moustafa El Hadji, Morocco, Havard Flo, Norway, Ha Seok-ju, South Korea, Andreas Herzog, Austria (1) Victor Ikpeba, Nigeria, Adrian Ilie, Romania, Slobodan Komljenovic, Yugoslavia, Emil Kostadinov, Bulgaria, Michael Laudrup, Denmark (1), Garba Lawal, Nigeria, Bixente Lizarazu, France, Luis Enrique, Spain, Mehdi Mahdavi, Iran, Patrick Mboma, Cameroon, Brian McBride, United States, Benni McCarthy, South Africa, Sinisa Mihajlovic, Yugoslavia, Andreas Moeller, Germany, Viorel Moldovan, Romania, Allan Nielsen, Denmark, Luc Nilis, Belgium, Pierre Njanka, Cameroon, Sunday Oliseh, Nigeria, Wilson Oruma, Nigeria, Marc Overmars, Netherlands, Michael Owen, England, Predrag Mijatovic, Yugoslavia, Emmanuel Petit, France, Dan Petrescu, Romania, Anton Polster, Austria, Leider Preciado, Colombia, Robert Prosenicki, Croatia, Raul Gonzalez, Spain, Kjetil Rekdal, Norway (1), Marc Rieper, Denmark, Rivaldo, Brazil, Ronaldo, Brazil, Paul Schocher, England, Jose Sierra, Chile, Mario Stanic, Croatia, Dragan Stojkovic, Yugoslavia, David Trezeguet, France, Pierre van Hoojdonk, Netherlands, Ivica Vastic, Austria, Yoo Sang-chul, South Korea.

Own goals: Sinisa Mihajlovic, Yugoslavia (vs Germany), Tommy Boyd, Scotland (vs Brazil), Yousef Chippo, Morocco (vs Norway), Pierre Issa, South Africa (vs France).

Costly over-confidence

SAINT ETIENNE, France, June 26 (AFP): It was back to school on Friday for Holland's World Cup squad as they set out to ensure there was no repeat of the mistakes that cost them a win over Mexico in their final group match.

After spending an hour giving the Mexicans a lesson in football technique, the Dutch let their concentration slip and conceded two late goals to draw 2-2 here on Thursday.

Goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar, who saw his France '98 clean-sheet stained because of the defensive blunders against Mexico, said: "It was a good lesson for us. We will have to be much sharper for the second round."

The result did not prevent Holland, who hammered five goals past South Korea last week, topping group E.

But coach Guus Hiddink knows the price of similar mistakes in the second round clash against Yugoslavia in Toulouse on Monday will be an

early departure from a tournament that the Dutch believe they can win.

"The players do not have to be told that, from now on, mistakes like that will have a much higher price," Hiddink said.

Arsenal winger Marc Overmars admitted that over-confidence after the trouncing of the Koreans might have contributed to the collapse under pressure from a Mexican side which, apart from its battling spirit, is short on quality.

"In the first half we played very well and we had a lot of chances," Overmars said. "But in the second half they came back strongly and we took things too easy."

"Let's hope that we learn from this and it does not happen again."

Overmars' comments were echoed by Ajax defender Frank de Boer.

"Mexico gave us a useful reminder that we have to work for the full 90 minutes," de Boer told the news agency. "As long

as we do that we are capable of beating anyone."

In comments that underlined Holland's continuing commitment to the 'total football' philosophy that took them to the 1974 and 1978 World Cup finals, de Boer rejected any suggestion that the defence should take the blame for the Mexican comeback.

"Defence does not always start at the back. If you do not do the work in midfield or up front then you get problems behind and I think that was the problem against Mexico," he said.

"But hopefully we will learn our lesson. We know what we are capable of and if we find ourselves 2-0 ahead in the 2nd round I do not think we will make the same mistake."

The clash with Yugoslavia will bring together two of the most skillful sides in European football.

But de Boer believes the talented Yugoslavs' erratic tendencies will give the more disciplined Dutch a valuable edge.

"If they are on form, Yugoslavia are a very hard team to beat," he said. "They can play such good football."

"But if they have a bad day it is really bad."

The Yugoslavs made no secret of the fact that they would have preferred to avoid the Dutch in the second round and their frame of mind will not have been helped by the injury Predrag Mijatovic suffered against the United States.

The striker who won this year's European Cup for Real Madrid limped off after aggravating a knee injury and faces a race-against-time to be fit for Monday's clash.

The second-half appearance of Dejan Savicevic will have compensated to some extent. The AC Milan player, rated by many as the best European playmaker since French great Michel Platini, missed Yugoslavia's first two matches because of a problem with the ligaments in his left knee.

But despite his appearance against the United States, there are continuing doubts about his overall fitness and the Dutch, who will have Savicevic's Milan team-mate Patrick Kluijver back from suspension, know they will start as favourites on Sunday.



Cuauhtemoc Blanco (R) of Mexico is being challenged from behind by Dutch defender Michael Reiziger during their Group E Clash at Saint Etienne on June 25. — AFP photo

Americans point fingers

NANTES, Jun 26: US coach Steve Sampson, angered by criticism of his World Cup leadership, announced Friday that "significant fines" would be levied against players who complained, reports AP.

There will be fines imposed against those individuals who spoke out against the federation as a way of directing a message to younger players that this is

not professional behavior," Sampson said. "These will be significant fines."

Sampson would not elaborate on the amount, as the team left its base camp near Nantes en route back to the United States after being ousted in the first round. Team general manager Tom King said two or three players would be fined.

The Americans lost all three

matches, including the shocking 2-1 defeat by Iran in their first soccer meeting in the two decades of hostility between Washington and Tehran.

The Americans were blanked in their two others outings - 2-0 by Germany in Paris and 1-0 by Yugoslavia on Thursday in Nantes to finish bottom of Group F with no points.

The US experience was summed up by two conclusions - they played badly and they hated their coach.

Sampson in limbo

NANTES, France, June 26 (AFP/Internet): Under-siege United States coach Steve Sampson was left in limbo Thursday when USSF president Alan Rothenberg said it could be a month before a decision was made on his future.

"Within a 30-day period we will make the important decisions," he said.

Rothenberg praised Sampson for his efforts during France '98 and the coach may be in line for a spot as head of Project 2010, the USSF program to develop a World Cup-winning squad.

Scifo shot down

PARIS, June 26 (AFP/Internet): Enzo Scifo's silence spoke volumes after Belgium's dismal departure from the World Cup.

It said what a sad way to finish a World Cup career that has spanned 12 years, four tournaments and a glorious run to the semi-finals in 1986's.

Scifo, the elegant midfielder who has been at the heart of Belgium's team since making his debut against Holland 14 years ago, was substituted after 65 minutes in the desperately disappointing 1-1 draw with South Korea.

Captain for the day, it was noticeably painful for Scifo to hand over the yellow armband to regular skipper Franky Van der Elst.

It must have been more painful to watch from the sidelines as Belgium, sorely missing the craft for which Scifo is famed, hit speculative long balls into the Korean box in a vain attempt to score goals.

Scifo was in no mood to talk after the match. With his baseball cap pulled down over his forehead, he marched to the team bus without acknowledging shouted questions from journalists.

If Scifo had any lingering doubts that he had played in his last World Cup match, they would have been dispelled on hearing coach Georges Leekens' reasoning for his substitution.

"We needed people to chase back and get behind the ball but Enzo Scifo was not doing that. I needed to give the side balance so I brought on Franky. This was not the game for Enzo - it did not suit his style of play," he said.

"At that moment I thought Franky could do a job for us by bringing balance to the midfield - we tried everything but for nothing."

"Overall in this World Cup we did not have enough quality. We will have our critics in the next few days, that I know."

The one-time midfielder general, who accepted the role of a humble foot soldier for the 1998 campaign, had been removed from the front line for firing blanks.

When Belgium took the lead through Nilis after just seven minutes the game should have been tailor-made for Scifo's skill and vision. But the 32-year-old has lost the acceleration of his youth and he failed to cope with the speed of the Korean midfielder.

Scifo, a proud man born to Sicilian parents, has quit the national team before and being substituted against South Korea will bring the curtain down for good.

The Anderlecht player was left out of the side by Leekens for a friendly against the United States in February and reacted by retiring from inter-



ENZO SCIFO national football.

Sponsors, supporters and his club side were instrumental in his return to the fold two months later and both player and coach put the feud behind them.

Scifo was not in the starting line-up against Holland but returned to face Mexico and, with the team hit by injuries and suspensions, retained his spot against the Koreans.

But he failed to turn the clock back to 1986 when he helped Belgium to the World Cup semi-finals where they were beaten by eventual winners Argentina.

When he looks through his scrapbook in years to come that's the World Cup that Scifo will cherish most with France '98, and his part in Belgium falling to reach the second round for the first time in five finals, an empty page.

RESULTS UPDATE

M	Gr	Score	Score
1	A	Brazil 2	Scotland 1
2	A	Morocco 2	Norway 2
3	B	Cameroon 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	H	Jamaica 1	Croatia 3
12	F	Yugoslavia 1	Iran 0
13	H	Argentina 1	Japan 0
14	F	Germany 2	USA 0