

# THE CLOCK KEEPS TICKING...

## JOHN PLAYER GOLD LEAF LIGHTS



ON A HOLIDAY? Brian Laudrup (R) expressing his feelings in an unique way after scoring Denmark's equaliser against Brazil on July 3. — AFP photo

## Out with a bang

NANTES, France, July 4 (AP): Even though Denmark lost, Michael Laudrup felt his glittering career could not have ended much better.

"It was a great experience, a great way to finish my career," Laudrup said after the Danes lost a memorable quarterfinal 3-2 Friday to defending champions Brazil that many thought was the best game of the tournament so far.

"I haven't realised that my career is over now," he said. "It will take some time... But it was great propaganda for Danish football tonight."

Laudrup, 34, one of Europe's top soccer players in the past 15 years, is the only player ever to win league titles for (European) powerhouses Juventus, Barcelona, Real Madrid and his last one with Ajax this season.

He was the only remaining player from the Danish 1986 team in Mexico, which beat Scotland, Uruguay and eventual finalist Germany before crashing out 5-1 to Spain in Denmark's only previous World Cup appearance.

After an emotional goodbye on La Beaujoire stadium's field in Nantes — at least half a dozen Danes threw their jerseys to their own loyal fans in the stands instead of swapping with the Brazilians — Laudrup was the last player to leave the locker-room.

Any regrets of leaving soccer? "No way," he said. "In only

three weeks a lot of players will gather for training camps with their club teams. Just imagine doing that again, training twice a day! But it was OK for the World Cup, of course."

Laudrup, Denmark's most famous striker ever, is unique in many ways.

Ajax tried to sign him when he was a 13-year-old wonder boy. "No thanks, too early," said his dad Finn, a former Danish national team player with foreign experience in the Austrian league.

After the Dutch side failed to sign Laudrup at age 13, he started his career in his native Denmark with Brøndby, the first team to be listed on the Danish stock exchange.

After a stint with FC Copenhagen, Laudrup went to Juven-

tus in 1983. He had a spell on loan to Lazio in Rome for two seasons before returning to Juve and winning the '86 league title alongside Michel Platini.

In Spain, Laudrup became a league champion four straight times (1991-94) with Barcelona before leaving for rival Real Madrid, where he won a fifth straight title in 1995. After a year in Japan with Vissel Kobe, he returned to Europe and Ajax, capping it with the recent Dutch double league and cup.

In the early 90s, both Michael and his younger brother Brian refused to play for their country at one point under former coach Richard Moller Nielsen. Only Brian played in the 1992 European Championship finals in Sweden, where Denmark upset Germany 2-0 in the final for their only major international triumph.

### Tragic

JOHANNESBURG, July 4: Gunmen killed eight people and wounded many more when they fired wildly into a crowd watching a World Cup soccer match in a South African township on Friday night, national radio reported today, says Reuters.

Police told the radio the attack occurred in a bar in Richmond, southwest of Durban in Kwazulu-Natal province.

The bar was packed with people watch the quarterfinal game between Brazil and Denmark.

Encouraged by new Swedish coach Bo Johansson's less rigid approach to tactics, the Laudrup brothers were back to their best in France '98.

Brian Laudrup, who scored one goal as Denmark beat Nigeria 4-1 Sunday to reach the quarterfinals for the first time, set up Martin Jorgensen's opening goal with only two minutes gone Friday and notched the equaliser 2-2 early in the second half.

After ending his remarkable career, Laudrup will return to Denmark with his family.

## Azzuri lick their wounds

SENLIS, France, July 4 (Reuters): Italy's painful progress to the World Cup quarterfinals and their defeat by France will have won them few admirers abroad and could trigger changes at home before the end of the year.

Coach Cesare Maldini insisted today he was leaving France without regrets and with statistics on his side.

"We've had a good tournament," he told a final news conference. "We've played five matches without losing in open play, we've scored eight goals and we've only conceded three."

"France only created two dangerous chances yesterday. (Your) Drjorkaeff had one at the end of the first half and another in the second. Otherwise our defence was hardly troubled."

penalty shootout denied them a place in the last four they would hardly deserved. Now decide if Maldini's "defend and prosper" approach will serve them through the qualifying campaign for the 2000 European Championship. The Azzuri kick off in September against Wales.

"I've never considered stepping down as coach," Maldini said today when asked about his future.

"I spoke to (federation president Luciano) Nizzola yesterday and he said my nomination as coach had been a happy choice. Today I only want to

discuss this World Cup, not the future. I have a contract with the Italian Football Federation until December 31."

If Maldini fails to survive the new year, Dino Zoff, Nevio Scala and Fabio Capello have all been touted as potential replacements although much will depend on results in the autumn.

France marks the end of the road for several of Italy's heroes of the past three World Cup campaigns.

Roberto Baggio has said this will be his last tournament. Alessandro Costacurta will be absent in 2002 and even Paolo Maldini, now in his 30s, may have played his last World Cup match.

Giuseppe Bergomi astonishing World Cup career also comes to a close. 16 years after it opened with triumph in Spain.

The big disappointment of the squad was Alessandro Del Piero, who never appeared to recover fully from a groin injury and failed to captivate France with the spellbinding football he played for Juventus last season.

On the positive side, centre-backs Fabio Cannavaro and Alessandro Nesta came of age in France and Cesare Maldini had discovered a new midfield talent in Luigi Di Biagio.

The AS Roma player only made his debut at the start of 1998 but was outstanding in France. How ironic that his missed penalty sealed Italy's exit from the tournament.

Di Biagio will be back for the 2000 qualifying campaign and, playing behind a revitalised Del

### Cooper corrects the Queen

PARIS, July 4: FIFA gave Britain's Queen Elizabeth II a polite wrap on the knuckles here Friday, saying her criticism of the refereeing during England's game against Argentina was out of order, reports AFP.

The Queen declared "one is not amused" when a goal scored by England against Argentina in their second round World Cup match was disallowed.

FIFA communication director Keith Cooper declared himself "a loyal subject of her majesty," before gently but firmly putting her Royal Highness in her place.

"I hesitate to reply to any of her comments," said Cooper. "However I am not sure her majesty has a better understanding of refereeing than the referee in the match. Perhaps one of her sons does."

leader of the cheerleaders: Suzanna Werner (C). Ronaldo's fiancée, is the centre of a Brazilian party in the stands of Stade de la Beaujoire at Nantes on July 3. — AFP photo

# Masters of the game

PARIS, July 4 (AFP): FIFA have whittled down to 62 the players they will select for the Mastercard World Cup All-Star team which will be announced on July 10.

Sponsors Mastercard are giving 50,000 dollars to the SOS Children's Villages.

**GOALKEEPERS:** Jose Luis Chilavert (PAR), Gianluca Pagliuca (ITA), Peter Schmeichel (DEN), Edwin van der Sar (NED).

**SWEEEPERS/CENTRAL DEFENDERS:** Tony Adams (ENG), Roberto Ayala (ARG), Carlos Gamarra (PAR), Laurent Blanc (FRA), Marcel Desailly (FRA), Dairo Simic (CRO), Jaap Stam (NED), Frank de Boer (NED), Christian Wornis (GER) Gheorghe Popescu (ROM).

**WING BACKS:** Roberto Carlos (BRA) Cafu (BRA), Lilian Thuram (FRA), Bixente Lizarazu (FRA), Robert Jarni (CRO).

**MIDFIELDERS:** Dunga (BRA) Cesar Sampaio (BRA), Michael Laudrup (DEN), Thomas Helveg (DEN), Youri Djorkaeff (FRA), Zinedine Zidane (FRA), Juan Veron (ARG), Ariel Ortega (ARG), Matias Almeyda (ARG), Sunday Liseh (NGR), Jay Jay Okocha (NGR), Luigi di Biaggio (ITA), Rivaldo (BRA), Kjetil Rekdal (NOR), Marc Overmarks (NED), Jose Luis Sierra (CHI), Alberto Garcia Aspe (MEX) Paul Ince (ENG), Philippe Cocu (NED), Gheorghe Hagi (ROM), Aljosa Asanovic (CRO), Fernando Hierro (SPA), Slavisa Jokanovic (YUG), Hidetoshi Nakata (JPN).

**STRIKERS:** Luis Hernandez (MEX), Adrian Ilie (ROM), Mustafa Hadhi (MAR), Gabriel Batistuta (ARG), Christian Vieri (ITA), Oliver Bierhoff (GER), Ivan Zamorano (CHI), Marcelo Salas (CHI), Fernando Morientes (SPA), Michael Owen (ENG), Alan Shearer (ENG), Tore Andre Flo (NOR), Ronaldo (BRA), Brian Laudrup (DEN), Thierry Henry (FRA), Davor Suker (CRO), Dennis Bergkamp (NED).

## Ode to the oldies

PARIS, July (AP): They've lifted World Cups, helped elevate their countries' soccer to new heights, and one has even been credited with starting a fad for wild on-pitch hairdos.

Now Dunga, Juergen Klinsmann, Gheorghe Hagi, Michael Laudrup and Carlos Valderrama are all saying goodbye to international soccer at the World Cup.

The five superstars are among a clutch of top players — which also include Spanish goalkeeper Andoni Zubizarreta, Colombian midfielder Freddy Rincon and Belgian captain Franky Van der Elst — who have decided to quite international soccer at the top.

Among them, those eight players have won nearly 1,000 caps and lifted countless national and international trophies at club level.

Brazilian captain Dunga savored the ultimate joy of leading a team to the World Cup title in 1994.

During his long career, the 34-year-old midfielder enforcer, who won his 93rd cap and played his 16th World Cup game in Friday's quarterfinal against Denmark, has been credited — and assailed — for integrating steel into traditional Brazilian



Italy's superstar Roberto Baggio tries to console a shellshocked teammate Demetrio Albertini (in the ground) after their quarterfinal exit on July 3. — AFP photo

## Italy feel cursed

ROME, July 4 (Reuters/AFP/Internet): Italy mourned its Black Friday and labelled July 3 as a cursed day on the sports calendar after France knocked the "Azzuri" out of the World Cup.

It was the third time in as many World Cups that Italy had lost on penalties. It was eliminated by Argentina in 1990 and sent packing by Brazil in the 1994 final.

In two of the knockouts — 1990 and 1998 — Italy was defeated on July 3.

In 1990 in Italy Aldo Serena missed the penalty that saw Argentina move into the final. In 1994 Roberto Baggio missed his penalty to present the trophy to Brazil.

On Saturday it was Di Biagio who was struck by the Italian curse.

Di Biagio, a latecomer into the Italy squad after an excellent domestic season with Roma, was the Azzuri's best player in their quarter-final against France.

The stocky, shaven-headed midfielder helped keep France at bay for 120 minutes, before it was his kick against the bar which put France on course for more glory, and Italy on the plane back home.

Di Biagio said: "I'm sorry about it. I wanted to hit the ball hard and in a central position. I could not stop crying afterwards. It was a terrible moment. I'm sorry for the other players, for the coach, for Italian Football Federation and for the supporters."

"I am all the more bitter about it because I haven't missed a penalty all season."

"It hardly seems fair to lose the World Cup in this way and

to feel in some way personally responsible is a dreadful feeling. It's been amazing taking part but it's dreadful it ended like this."

Coach Cesare Maldini also believes Italy might be cursed. "I am very sad because our players gave it their all. They played so well."

"It's a great shame but I would like to underline the fine performance my team put in. We leave with our heads held high. It seems we might be cursed but I'm satisfied with my team's performance. I can't make any predictions for the rest of the tournament but France are a good team."

Roberto Baggio said he would have preferred to have lost in normal time or on a golden goal. "Unfortunately this is the third time for me. It leaves a very bitter taste. Penalties are the worst way of all to lose," Baggio said.

Meanwhile, the silent streets of Italy were as glum as the celebrations in Paris were festive.

There was no wading in famous fountains, no parading around the Colosseum, no horns blaring.

Instead, it seemed people

wanted to go home, put their heads under a pillow and have an early night.

"Put your flags back in the drawer and abandon all dreams of glory," a newscaster told the nation's fans at the beginning of one of Italy's most watched evening news programs.

"Adieu," state broadcaster Rai printed across the screen. "This will be a sad homecoming."

Throughout Rome, fans gathered in squares had hoped against hope to the final minute for a win. Then after Luigi di Biaggio's penalty miss, they looked to the ground and walked slowly to the buses that would take them home.

"Italy and penalties and World Cups don't go well together," said one young fan who had watched the match on a screen outside Rome's Olympic stadium.

One elderly Italian took it all in his stride.

"We lost a match, not a war," he said.

Said another elderly fan: "Penalties don't mean anything. They're like traffic lights. You never know when they're going to change and go against you."

## Cruyff against wing-backs

PARIS, July 4 (AFP): Former Dutch legend Johan Cruyff says wing-backs are killing modern football.

"Brazil have two great wing-backs in Cafu and Roberto Carlos but they are only able to get up so often because no-one is attacking them," the former Barcelona coach said.

Friday night's match with Denmark proved Cruyff right about Roberto Carlos who struggled to cope with Danish winger Brian Laudrup.

"Wing-backs were brought in as a defensive measure by coaches afraid to use real wingers. The argument is that wingers cut down your options because they can't defend but if you have two good wing-men then they tie up their opposing defenders," Cruyff added.

"The whole argument doesn't stand up anyway because most wing-backs can't put in a decent cross or else they run 60 metres. Additionally, to cover for them you need to have an extra defensive midfielder in the side, usually at the expense of the creative inside forward."

In this eight years as coach of Barcelona the Spanish club won their domestic title four times and played in four European cup finals.

"The priority was to use two wide forwards, and not necessarily wingers. We used Gary Lineker, Julio Salinas and Hristo Stoichkov wide to great effect," said Holland's 1974 World Cup captain who helped develop the Dutch concept of total football in the seventies.

"Basically, you have more and more what coaches call all-

round players in the side but none of them are real forwards so you make the game less attractive.

"You certainly do need defenders who are comfortable on the ball because when you have a Franz Beckenbauer behind you then you know the forwards are going to get the ball in good attacking positions."

"But today's coaches are getting further away from one of the essentials — modern sides are not letting the ball do the work. You don't need players running 60 metres down the flanks to attack, you move the ball quickly."

"What's so silly is that it's easier to win playing attacking football than boring football. You need technical-skilled players and a team which moves up and down the field en bloc," he added.

### LATEST ODDS

LONDON, July 4: Brazil's World Cup odds have been cut from 2-1 to 13-8 favourites by William Hill following Friday night's 3-2 quarterfinal win over Denmark, reports AFP.

Hill also offer 5-2 France, penalty shootout winners over Italy earlier in the day, 5-1 Argentina and Holland, 7-1 Germany and 25-1 Croatia.

One William Hill Client meanwhile, will collect 221,200 pounds after staking 158,000 pounds on Brazil to beat Denmark in 90 minutes at odds of 2.5



LEADER OF THE CHEERLEADERS: Suzanna Werner (C). Ronaldo's fiancée, is the centre of a Brazilian party in the stands of Stade de la Beaujoire at Nantes on July 3. — AFP photo

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