



Brazil shoot out Holland

MARSEILLE, France, July 7 (AP/Reuters): Taffarel stopped both Phillip Cocu and Ronald de Boer and Brazil defeated the Netherlands 4-2 on penalty kicks Tuesday night to reach the final and a chance at a fifth World Cup title.

The Brazilian goalkeeper dove to his right to stop Cocu and then to his left to deny De Boer on consecutive penalty tries to clinch the victory after the two countries fought to a 1-1 draw in extra time.

The victory puts the defending champions into their sixth final on Sunday against the winners of Wednesday night's other semifinal between hosts France and upstart Croatia.

Ronaldo, Rivaldo, Emerson and Dunga all drove superb spot kicks past the helpless Edwin van der Sar.

De Boer and Dennis Bergkamp kept it level at 2-2 but Cocu, possibly distracted by being ordered to place the ball properly on the spot, enabled the keeper to save his left.

Ronald de Boer, needing to score to keep the Dutch in the match, checked on his approach but couldn't fool Taffarel who went full length to his right to push it to safety.

The match, hailed as the final before the final between two of the tournament's great attacking sides, only came alive in the second half but then produced a stirring finale.

Ronaldo had opened the scoring after just 24 seconds of the second period of normal time to give Brazil the lead.

The world player-of-the-year had seized on a through ball from Rivaldo and showed great strength and balance to



UNDOUBTEDLY THE BEST: Superstar Ronaldo (L) outfoxes Holland's Boudewijn Zenden during yesterday's semifinal at Marseille. — AFP photo



hold off the challenge of Cocu and slot the ball under Van der Sar for his fourth goal of the tournament.

But with only three minutes of normal time remaining Patrick Kluyvert finally hit the target, heading home a Ronald de Boer cross unchallenged in the heart of the Brazilian penalty area to send the match into extra time.

The Dutch had scrambled the last-minute wins against Argentina in the quarterfinals and Yugoslavia in the second round, and fully deserved their equaliser after pouring forward in the last 15 minutes.

The game never reached the

heights neutrals had hoped for but Brazil, after a slow start, showed they would not give up their title without a fight.

The best chance of the disappointing first half came when Boudewijn Zenden beat debutant Ze Carlos in the 29th minute and clipped in a great cross that Kluyvert headed over. Kluyvert again headed too high in the dying seconds of the half.

After the Brazilian goal the Dutch took a while to regroup and found the champions to be much keener for the fight than they had been in the first half. But the Brazilian defence was never happy in the air and it was after the lanky Pierre

van Hooijdonk came on as substitute that Kluyvert scored. The AC Milan striker had missed three great chances earlier in the match.

Brazil keeper Taffarel had to show great reactions in the 52nd minute to palm clear as Ronald de Boer diverted Kluyvert's header.

Van der Sar was equally sharp as he raced from his line to smother at the feet of Ronaldo on the hour after a great touch by Bebeto.

The Dutch suffered a blow when they lost Michael Reiziger with a shoulder injury — the Barcelona right back had shut out the overlapping threat of Real Madrid's Roberto Carlos.

The reshuffle, bringing on Aron Winter, caused confusion and allowed Ronaldo a clear run on goal in the 73rd minute. He seemed certain to get his second goal but Edgar Davids made up five metres and put in a great challenge. Rivaldo went close in the 78th minute in a goalmouth scramble but Van der Sar even-

tually emerged with the ball. Kluyvert then blew a great chance 10 minutes from time when he played a one-two with Van Hooijdonk but blazed high from the edge of the box with just Taffarel to beat.

After the game moved into extra time, Ronaldo shimmied through to the edge of the area and shot hard but Van der Sar flew to his left to save after five minutes.

Taffarel saved a Van Hooijdonk free-kick soon afterwards and Kluyvert almost scored his second in the 103rd minute when his left foot shot shaved the far post after he latched on to a huge clearance from defence.

Frank de Boer saved the Dutch with a last-minute tackle early in the second period of extra time which stopped Ronaldo getting in a shot as he advanced towards Van der Sar in the area.

Brazil will be trying to extend their record for World Cup titles to five, two more than any other nation. They have only lost once when they reached the final, that being at home in 1950 to Uruguay.

The Dutch were hoping to reach the final for the first time since 1978.

TEAMS

BRAZIL: Taffarel; Ze Carlos, Junior Baiano, Aldair, Roberto Carlos; Dunga, Cesar Sampaio,

Leonardo (Emerson, 85th minute); Rivaldo; Ronaldo, Bebeto (Denilson, 70th).

NETHERLANDS: Edwin van der Sar; Michael Reiziger (Aron Winter, 57th), Jaap Stam, Frank de Boer, Wim Jonk (Clarence Seedorf, 111th); Ronald de Boer, Phillip Cocu, Edgar Davids, Boudewijn Zenden (Pierre van Hooijdonk, 75th); Dennis Bergkamp, Patrick Kluyvert.

Referee: Ali Mohamed Buj-saim, United Arab Emirates.

Samba in Dhaka!

Hundreds of Brazilian supporters in the capital took to the streets after the defending world champions reached the final defeating Netherlands in a penalty shootout last night, reports UNB.

They shouted in the name of Brazilian stars, embraced each other and enjoyed the much awaited victory immediately after the nerve wrecking 120 minutes game and the tie-breaker.

Reports from various areas of the capital said the Brazilian supporters danced, sang and honked to celebrate the win to reach the final to face the winners of second semifinal between France and Croatia.

Brazil's Road to Finale

PARIS, July 7 (AFP) - Brazil's path to the 1998 World Cup final:

First Round: Group A
Saint Denis, June 10

Brazil 2 - Cesar Sampaio, Tom Boyd (own goal); Scotland 1 (John Collins 38)
Nantes, June 16

Brazil 3 (Ronaldo 9, Rivaldo 45, Bebeto 50); Morocco 0

Second Round: Paris, June 27
Brazil 4 (Cesar Sampaio, Cesar Sampaio, Ronaldo 45pen, Ronaldo); Chile 1 (Marcelo Salas)

Quarter-finals:
Nantes, July 3

Brazil 3 (Bebeto, Rivaldo, Rivaldo); Denmark 2 (Martin Joergensen, Brian Laudrup)

Semi-finals:
Marseille, July 7

Brazil 1 (Ronaldo); Holland 1 (Patrick Kluyvert); after extra-time Brazil win 4-2 on penalties.

Brazil's penalty scorers: Ronaldo, Rivaldo, Emerson, Dunga

Brazil's penalty misses: None

Holland's penalty scorers: Frank de Boer, Dennis Bergkamp.

Holland's penalty misses: Phillip Cocu, Ronald de Boer.

Chirac & Jospin play political football

PARIS, July 7 (AFP/ Internet): Will President Jacques Chirac have the nerve? Will he shun traditional attire to turn up for Wednesday's France-Croatia semi-final clash wearing his team's blue jersey?

Midfielder Robert Pires has urged Chirac to don the national shirt and the world members the 1995 rugby final when Nelson Mandela urged on the Springboks wearing the captain's green jersey and cap.

Whatever Chirac's decision, with France playing its first World Cup semi-final in 12 years, the politicians are cashing in on the glory and the VIP benches are already booked out for the Wednesday match.

Befitting his rank and his politics, the Gaullist head of state will be seated to the right of former French international midfielder Michel Platini, who will have Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin to his left.

With the nitty-gritty affairs of state sidelined by World Cup mania, France's two rival political leaders are unabashedly playing to shoot inside the stadium.

"Inside every football fan slumbers a voter," said the satirical weekly Le Canard Enchaîné this week. "Chirac and

Jospin are playing it out on the field."

Chirac cornered the first ball when he sat down to dinner with the team on the eve of the launch of the tournament and said he believed he might be handing them the cup the following month.

Jospin immediately shot back with a pledge to attend all France matches and a confession that before playing basketball, he too had played soccer.

But the first real goal went to Chirac after France's 2-1 defeat over Denmark in the first round.

Chirac, no longer a frontline player in French politics since his side's blistering defeat in general elections last year, confessed he would have liked to have been a goalkeeper on the soccer field.

"They're the last resort in case of difficulties," Chirac said on television after the match. "They can see it all."

Jospin's response surprised everyone. A self-professed rugby fan and erstwhile basketball player, he said: "Unlike Jacques Chirac, who would've liked to have been a goalkeeper,

See page 2



Fabien Barthez, the French custodian, practicing at Clairefontaine. —AFP photo

Stade de France braces for battle

From Dr Nizamuddin Ahmed

PARIS, July 7: Hosts France are uneasy as they brace themselves to face grown-up "babes" Croatia in the second semifinal of World Cup '98 at the 270 million pound, 85,000 seater Stade de France at St Denis near Paris tomorrow.

Outsiders Croatia, the surprise entrant into the final quartet, stormed into the world class football in Euro '96. Although none but themselves considered Croatia as worthy qualifiers, the French today reckon them as worthy opponents.

Croat manager, ex-Nantes boss, Miroslav Blazevic has promised that the semifinal will be a "grand spectacle".

Aime Jacquet, who has been indifferent to the claims of David Ginola and Eric Cantona, himself a player of "unexceptional" quality, admitted nervously on French TV that the French "lose their lucidity in big occasions."

Both Blazevic and his good friend Jacquet are aware that this could be the biggest occasion of their life. A win would mean the right to play either Brazil or Holland, more significantly it would give either a crack at the Cup for the first time.

France's previous best performance at this level has been third position in 1958 and 1986. For Croatia this has been a honeymoon, their first World Cup qualification and a deserved berth in the semi-finals.

Croatia agree that France are favourites but, says Blazevic, "not with us". The Croat manager can afford to be arrogant because he has built a "complete team".

But for Zvonimir Boban of Milan, whose performance leaves much to be desired, each player has the technique, intelligence, power, athleticism and the experience to reach a superior level.

For all those who cared to observe, Croatia has been a side improving for the last three matches. They will want to forget their embarrassing 2-1 win against French third division side Vitell in a practice match before the finals.

Croatia top scorer Davor Suker was considered at best a romantic when before the World Cup began he said "Croatia are able to beat any team in the world, including Brazil". The Real Madrid striker did keep a safety net by quickly adding that they could also "lose to weaker opponents".

In group matches Suker proved right on both counts. Croatia won 3-1 against Jamaica and 1-0 against Japan. The conquerors of weaker teams in the group, both newcomers, went down to fancied Argentina 0-1.

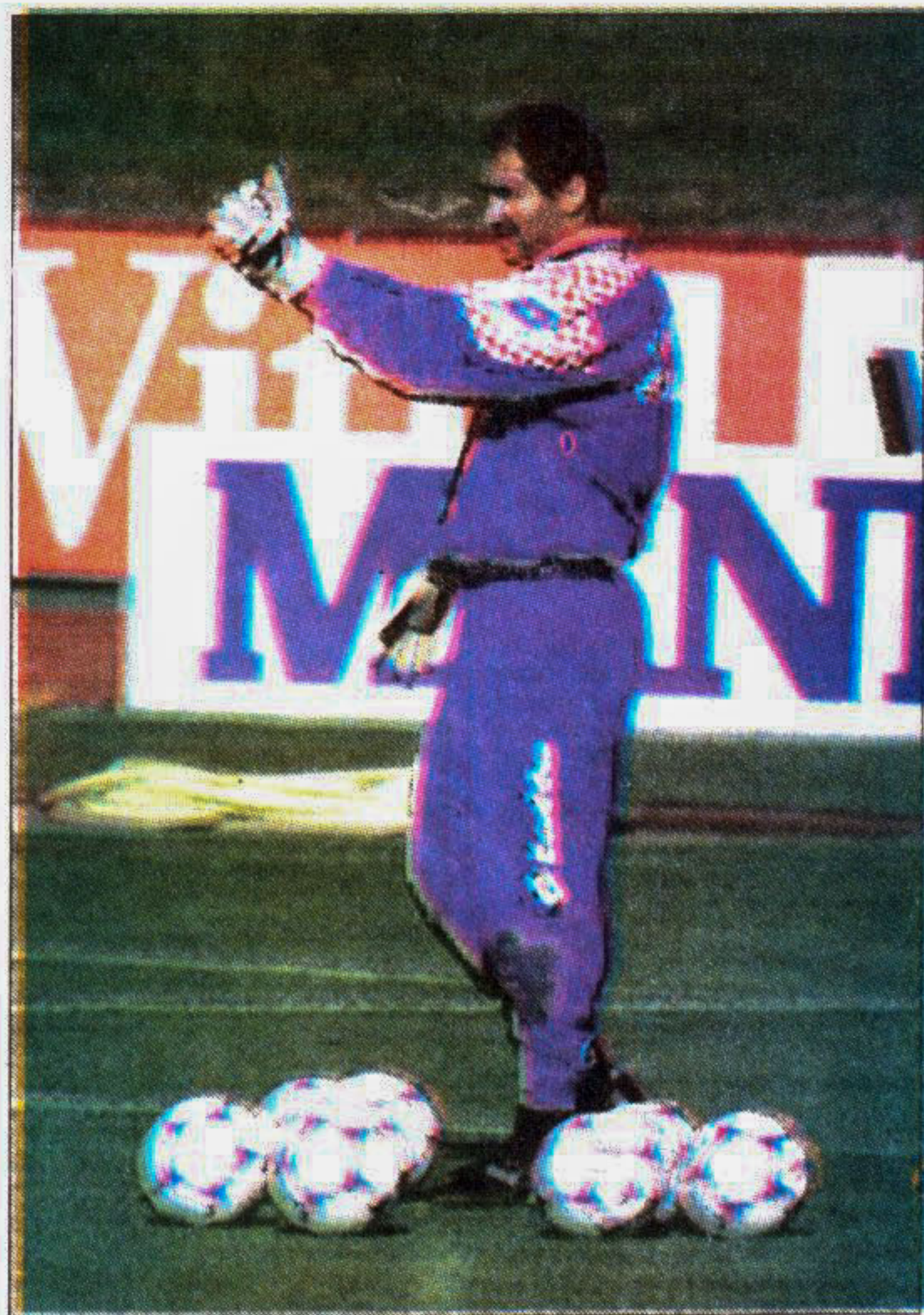
Croatia's first test was against Romania in the pre-quarters and they flattered

themselves by burying Germany in style in the quarterfinals. They have been successfully adopting tactics to the measure of their opponents. Against Germany last Saturday, they played like the Germans. Although maintaining their 3-5-2 formation, they went for individual marking; Bilic on Bierhoff, Stimac on Klinsmann and Soldo on Haslsler.

Croatia, like any other team, has its weaknesses, prime among them being their inconsistent rhythm over the ninety-minute period and the inability of Boban and Asanovic to recover after being beaten. The crucial midfield is where the Deschamp-Petit French duo is likely to dominate.

Other problems that might bog the Croats include the ripe age of their players, a little over 29 years. They might be caught gasping if the match extends to

See page 2



Croatia's goalkeeper Drazen Ladice, who had a brilliant game against the Germans, adjusting something during training at Vitell. —AFP photo

Agony & Ecstasy

MARSEILLE, France, July 7 (AFP/ Internet): Brazil beat Holland 4-2 on penalties after a nailbiting semi-final here Tuesday and Brazilian midfielder Rivaldo admitted that the four-times World champions had a scare.

"It was a very hard match. But we were confident throughout that we would reach the final," he said.

"There were times when we were afraid and Holland were afraid also. That's why the match went to penalties. Of the final against either Croatia or France, he said: "Croatia are not an easy side to beat. They are very difficult."

"France will have to prove themselves on the field against Croatia before they can meet us in the final."

Goalkeeper Taffarel, who saved two spot kicks, said: "That was God helping me."

"I am very happy to have contributed to this victory. It was a really tough game but Brazil can be proud of its team."

"Brazil is ready for the final."

Holland's midfielder Ronald de Boer said he was devastated to lose.

De Boer, who missed Holland's final penalty, said: "Penalties are like a lottery. It's a dreadful feeling. We played less well than we did against Argentina. We did our best, but the dream is over, it's a pity."

The management of The Daily Star extends its heartfelt thanks to BSS, UNB and AFP for their cooperation in bringing out this special issue on World Cup, 1998.



TODAY'S MATCH

2nd semifinal
France vs Croatia
1900 GMT (1 am BST)

PREPARING TO PROTECT: Brazil's record breaking custodian Claudio Taffarel making saves during practice at Ozoir la Ferriere on July 5. —AFP photo

FRANCE
GUNNING FOR GLORY!

JOHN PLAYER
GOLD LEAF
LIGHTS

