for Sunday.

finals.

them," he said.

team," he said.

Pele's forecast

PARIS, July 7 (AFP): Brazilian legend Pele predicts a

"The last final of this cen-

"I'm confident in Brazil be-

Brazil-France World Cup final

tury will be France-Brazil," he

told French television Monday.

cause they have the individual

players who can make the dif-

ference even if Ronaldo has yet

to play at his best, even if Hol-

land are a better-organised

side," he said of Tuesday's semi-

been a surprise but believed

France would reach their first

final after reaching four semi-

goal chances a game and their players are in form. They must

be favourites but the favourite's

role is hard to live with. They will have a lot of pressure on

pressed by defenders Marcel De-

sailly and Lilian Thuram and

prised by Germany's elimination. "They didn't have a good

Argentines

back home

striker David Trezeguet.

He added he had been im-

He said he had not been sur-

He admitted Croatia had

"They are making about five

Blatter for shorter WC

BERNE, Switzerland, July 7 (AP/AFP): The length of soccer's World Cup needs to be cut, new FIFA president Sepp Blatter said in an interview published

"In the opening phase, teams had six days between matches," Blatter was quoted as saying in the Bern daily Der Bund. "That's too many. It shouldn't be longer than four days."

He conceded there was a danger of viewers being saturated with soccer if matches were played closer together, but that the danger "also exists if the World Cup lasts for 33 days."

"There's no question that changes must be made in the sale of tickets." Blatter contin-

Chirac & Jospin

From page 1

I was one!" When France ousted Paraguay with a 114th minute golden goal, a stressed-out Jospin was first on the television screens with a comment. Chirac, on a visit to Mozambique, sent a message saying: ' am the happiest of men."

At last week's quarter-finals, when France knocked out Italy on penalties after a goalless match, the two leaders. seen as rivals for the 2002 presidential race, sat nervously either side of Platini.

Since then, Jospin has stolen a beat on Chirac with a weekend interview in which he compared France's upswing in football fortunes with the country's improving economic climate since he took office a year

Saving the nation was better now than 12 months ago, he added: "It seems to me that there is a striking coincidence here with the French team's sporting and national ability to overcome their limits and move ahead"

Leaping onto the football bandwagon, one of his ministers likened him to national hero, midfielder Zinedine Zidane, and a journalist compared him to coach Aime Jacquet.

"I am a team leader," Jospin responded. "A coach and a player, a mix of Jacquet and of Zidane.'

So with Jospin currently in the lead, perhaps Chirac will don the national colours

Raring to go

From page 4

of a suddenly soccer-mad capital draped in blue did much more than any newspaper article could to bolster morale.

For Jacquet, the French are feasting in spite of the press. He has long claimed there was a media campaign against him. instituted by the widely read L'Equipe newspaper, and every victory is a bit more of sweet re-

"The public was surprised because it was disinformed. Jacquet said Tuesday. "They wanted to make the public believe there was no French team. there was no tactical plan, that there even wasn't a coach.

The players have complained too. "It didn't go down well," said captain Didier Deschamps, adding "a rift was created" between the team and the public that is only now starting to heal.

An advertisement in L'Equipe suggested the changing

Satirizing a public opinion survey, the Adidas ad said: "35 per cent of the French don't care one bit about the World Cup, 30 per cent... 24 per cent... 12 per

Jean-Philippe, the painter who helped renovate the French training quarters here two years ago, remembers Jacquet as a much more pleasant men them some media made him out to be. Now he feels the public is turning to the coach's side.

"You see the attitude among the people towards Jacquet has changed," said Jean-Philippe. While French are hardly the

diehard fans of Italy or Brazil, there are concerns that the public might give the whole Coupe du Monde a Gallic shrug of indifference if the team loses Wednesday. But it France gets to the fi-

nal, Jean-Philippe can only think about the great student demonstration of 30 years ago when the capital was total

"It will be like May '68. Everybody will be in the streets,"

Balkan peace

From page 4

"We will increase area security within the SFOR mandate." said Major Richard Saint Louis of the multinational stabilisation force, which has more than 30,000 troops from 38 countries enforcing the peace in Bosnia.

Violence following Croatia's victory also flared in other parts of Bosnia. In the divided city of Mostar, a 25-year-old Muslim woman was killed and a man was seriously wounded on the Muslim side when they were hit by bullets fired in celebration from the Croat side,

Bosnian radio reported. While an investigation is underway, the top international official in Mostar Uir Martin Garrod, urged local authorities in the city - still divided between Muslims and Croats more than 2-1/2 years after the Bosnian war ended to do their utmost to avoid a repeat of the weekend violence.

Garrod held all those who took part in the shooting responsible for what happened. Spain's contingent to SFOR is responsible for day to day patrols in the Mostar area which lies within the southeastern part of Bosnia that is under French SFOR command.



(L-R) Frank Leboeuf, Christophe Dugarry and Robert Pires of France going through a -AFP photo zigzag routine during practice at Clairefontaine on July 4.

Thirty-eight masters

PARIS, July 7: Reflecting their disastrous performances at the World Cup, no African or Asian players made it to the 38strong "second selection" of the All-Star Team of World Cup '98, announced Tuesday by Mastercard, one of the sponsors, reports AP.

The three Africans included among the 61 original "finalists" announced during the quarterfinal stage. Nigeria's Sunday Oliseh and Jay-Jay Okocha and Morocco's Moustafa El Hadji, were dropped when it was trimmed to 38 before the semifinals.

So was Japan's Hidetoshi Nakata, Japan and Morocco were eliminated in the first round along with South Korea, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Cameroon, Morocco and Tunisia and Nigeria was ousted in round-of-16, beaten 4-1 by Denmark. By the time the quarterfinals

arrived, the World Cup was down to two South American teams and six from Europe.

The only player among the

37 that is not from Europe or South America was Mexican

PARIS. July 7: (AFPk Brazil-

ian superstar Ronaldo has only

two matches left to prove if he

really is the greatest thing since

Pele, warned England legend

Sir Bobby Charlton here on

would have said he was poten-

tially the only one who was go-

He has got the history that

"He has got the opportunity

Sir Bobby picks England

over the next one or maybe two

striker Michael Owen above

Ronaldo for his team of France

'98, alongside Holland's Dennis

includes three Dutch players

and three Brazilians in his

World Cup XI — but only Owen

paign for England to be given

the World Cup in 2006, has al-

ready predicted that Owen will

break his scoring record, and

believes Argentina's Juan

midfield talent of the tourna-

Veron has been the outstanding

A June 29 picture of Spanish referee Jose Maria Garcia

Aranda who will officiate in the second semifinal between

France and Croatia tonight.

-AFP photo

Sir Bobby, in Paris to cam-

from the England line up.

England's record goalscorer

games, but he has to do it then."

he can play, but unless you do it

at the World Cup level then you

ing to push himself into super-

stardom." said Sir Bobby.

have not proved it.

Bergkamp.

"Before the World Cup I

Monday.

forward Luis Hernandez.

Brazil, Netherlands, France and Croatia has the most players in the squad

The six Brazilians, who faced the Dutch Tuesday in Marseille, were defenders Cafu, Junior Baiano and Roberto Carlos, midfielders Dunga and Rivaldo and striker Ronaldo.

The six Dutch players were goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar, Frank de Boer and his twin brother Ronald, Phillip Cocu, Dennis Bergkamp and Marc Overmars. Five French players, goal-

keeper Fabien Barthez, defenders Marcel Desailly and Lilian Thuram, and forwards Thierry Henry and Zinedine Zidane, made it to the 37 and the four Croats were defenders Dario Simic and Robert Jarni, midfielder Aljosa Asanovic and striker Davor Suker. FIFA's technical study group - an 11 member panel headed

by Jurg Nepfer, head of the world body's technical department — will pare the list to 16 following the semifinals and announce the team July 10, two days before the final.

Mastercard will donate 50,000 dollars to FIFA's official

The way Sir Bobby sees it

"I have never seen anybody

He says France's defensive

strength will take them past

Croatia in the semi-finals and

they will be roared on by their

home crowd to the ultimate

feeling' Holland will get past

Brazil to take their place in the

but," he said. "However, I think

France are the only ones who

look as though they are defi-

ing that Holland will beat

Brazil, especially if Brazil

make the same mistakes that

Brazil can step up a gear — but

they may be at full throttle al-

they made against Denmark.

"I also have a sneaking feel-

"Everybody tells me that

Sir Bobby added: "France

Stade de France on Sunday.

nitely going to get there.

Sir Bobby also has 'a sneaky

"There are a lot of ifs and

that wants the ball as much as

Veron," said Sir Bobby, "It

ment.

distribution.

charity, SOS Children's Villages, on behalf of the players

Goalkeepers: Jose-Luis Chilavert (PAR), Gianluca Pagliuca (ITA), Edwin van der Sar (NED). Fabien Barthez (FRA).

Sweepers/Central Defenders: Roberto Ayala (ARG), Carlos Gamarra (PAR), Marcel Desailly (FRA), Dario Simic (CRO), Frank de Boer (NED), Junior Baiano (BRA).

Wing-backs: Roberto Carlos (BRA), Cafu (BRA), Lilian Thuram (FRA), Robert Jarni (CRO) Midfielders: Dunga (BRA),

Rivaldo (BRA), Michael Laudrup (DEN), Thierry Henry (FRA), Zinedine Zidane (FRA), Ariel Ortega (ARG), Ronald de Boer (NED), Marc Overmars (NED), Paul Ince (ENG), Phillip Cocu(NED), Aljosa Asanovic (CRO), Fernando Hierro (SPA). Strikers: Luis Hernandez

(MEX), Adrian Ilie (ROM) Gabriel Batistuta (ARG), Christian Vieri (ITA). Oliver Bierhoff (GER), Marcelo Salas (CHI), Michael Owen (ENG), Tore Andre Flo (NOR), Ronaldo (BRA), Brian Laudrup (DEN), Davor Suker (CRO), Dennis Bergkamp

have their defensive strength and they have Zinedine Zidane he makes it all happen and de fences are frightened of him."

doesn't matter where he is on WORLD CUP XI the field or if he is being marked. He also has very clever Carlos Roa (Arg) Schemichel has been outstanding too, Sir Bobby believes France but I think Roa has been the will win the World Cup — and

they will beat Holland in the fi-Lilian Thurman (Fra)- excellent World Cup and good going forward too Marcel Desailly (Fra)- has

not put a foot wrong. I have been watching him, and he has yet to make a mistake.

Junior Baiano (Bra)- I have never seen anyone jump as high as him. Roberto Carlos (Bra)- such

speed, you would like to play

Edgar Davids (Hol)- skillful and covers a lot of ground. Juan Veron (Arg)- outstanding, the best midfielder in

alongside him.

the tournament. Ronald de Boer (Hol)- has made a lot of chances and scored too.

Rivaldo (Bra)- superb left foot and has scored important goals.

Michael Owen (Eng)- incredible talent, Argentina were terrified of him.

Dennis Bergkamp (Hol)-Blotted his copybook but got away with it and has gone from strength to strength.

Complaint against Croatia

PARIS, July 7: An antiracism group demanded Tuesday that Croatia's World Cup soccer team change its shirt, saying the colours evoke the country's pro-Nazi regime during World War II, reports AP.

Croatia, in their first-ever World Cup and playing host nation France in a semifinal on Wednesday, use shirts with a red-and-white checkerboard design.

The colours "gravely undermine the duty of remembering and endanger (Croatia's) young democracy," said a statement by the European Centre of Research and Action on Racism and Anti-Semitism. Chantal Boublil, the

planned to lodge a complaint with FIFA, soccer's world governing body. She said Croatia's semifinal on Wednesday in Stade de France was the perfect opportu-

spokeswoman, said the centre

nity to press their case. "We want the team to change its shirt. We must try," she said. This is an ideal time to raise world awareness.

Darko Tironi, spokesman for the Croatian team, dismissed the statement as "a silly complaint." "Croatia has used these

colours since the 7th century,"

he said. "We won't put an end to

1,300 years of history just because we're in the semifinal." Croatia's Nazi-backed regime killed tens of thousands of Jews, Serbs, gypsies and others it considered enemies.

BUENOS AIRES, July 7. More than 500 cheering fans welcomed home their football heroes as Argentina's disappointed national team touched down Monday at this city's international airport, reports

"We are always with you, "The champion is not always the best" and "Thanks for everything" were just some of the signs waved by fans to welcome the players.

Argentina was eliminated from the World Cup of soccer by losing 2-1 to the Netherlands on Saturday.

Brian bows out too

COPENHAGEN, July 7 (AFP) Internet): Denmark's Brian Laudrup has decided to take a bow from international football at the age of 29.

"I've got a footballing hangover. It's time for a younger player to take my place," said the Chelsea winger who scored twice in France 98, including the equaliser in last week's 3-2 quarter-final defeat to Brazil.

I'm saying goodbye after Denmark's greatest match," he added, ranking their brilliant game against Brazil ahead of Denmark's 1992 Europear Championship triumph over Germany.

"I made up my mind after the match. Now I want to concentrate on my club football with Chelsea and my family," he

Brian's elder brother Michael Laudrup had already announced he was retiring from international lootball. Brian Laudrup was capped 82

times by Denmark. Braces for battle

From page 1

extra time as, unlike the French, they have not featured in any in this tournament They might be caught on the wrong foot if the semifinal is decided in a tie-breaker as only the French have the nervewking experience against the

ghty Italians; the Croats ive in Suker a missed penalty gainst Vittel. In view of their inner

strengths and despite their apparent shortcomings, Blazevic has warned the French, "You will make a big mistake if you underestimate us". On the eve of the match, no French who knows his football from boules would dare to do that. France go into tomorrow's

Croat game with an advantage or two, home bred they may be. France has enjoyed an extra day of rest having encountered Italy on July 3 at St Denis. They also played Saudi Arabia at the same venue. Provided the militaristic strategy, a passion with Blazevic, can be overcome tomorrow on the same grass, the French are destined have the extra ground experience that neither Brazil or Holland will have in the final. Whereas the Croats have never felt the grass at St Denis, the Brazilians and the Dutch have each had a group match at the futuristic stadium. The French will enjoy dis-

tinct home advantage. With the midfield under control their defence should be solid in care of Marcel Desailly and company. But, in a World Cup you need to win matches and a goal-shy offence as exemplified by pushedup Djorkaeff in the quarterfinal against Italy. The French forwards have to be more aggressive and adventurous as well develop the presently-lacking left-right understanding. Zidane should be well marked by the Croats because the new Michel Platini has a repertoire of delicate touches and a sharp

Parisians have described the Stade de France as "hellish" and "a desert" because its barren surroundings are in high contrast with the romantic alleyways and neighbourhood restaurants of the former national stadium, their beloved Parc de Princes. A journalist said it "resembles a UFO, a ghastly monument to the third millennium, a steel and glass monstrosity...". Come tomorrow night, all will be forgiven if France emerge the winners: Stade de France will appear heavenly, an oasis of football and no less.

THE TACTICIANS

PARIS, July 7 (AFP): Profile of the coaches in the Croatia v France World Cup semifinal:

MIROSLAV BLAZEVIC

(Croatia) Perhaps serving time in prison should become obligatory for all apprentice coaches if it confers the assurance and self-belief that Croatian coach Miroslav Blazevic evidently en-

Blazevic has managed to im-

thorities in 1994 for insulting the referee after Auxerre beat Croatia Zagreb in a UEFA Cup match.

The bespectacled 63-year-old is a keen follower of astrology and perhaps he already knows more than he can prudently say about the outcome of this tournament. His own future is clear as crystal

"I will be coach of this team as long as I live. It is written in the stars," he insists.

the French team the night before at the Stade de France."

The 57-year-old Jacquet took over from Gerard Houillier who departed under a cloud after France sensationally failed to qualify for the 1994 World Cup finals after Bulgaria beat them in Paris in the last minute

of their final qualifier. His predictions and his team selections have been scoffed at and Jacquet, who is not very good at thinking on his feet and



French coach Aime Jacquet (L) and Croatian coach Miroslav Blazevic.

part to his players a belief in their destiny that would defy logic in any other nation under five million population which has never played in the World Cup before.

The mystic chain smoker, who seeks comfort in his astrologer, told the players before the match against Germany that they were going to win the World Cup.

They destroyed the threetimes world champions 3-0 and Blazevic, who has been at the helm for four years, revealed: "I told the players, if you win

champions, now we have got to go on and do that." Blazevic is a personal friend of Croatian President Franjo Tudiman, and the two share a passion for football and nationalist politics. Tudiman appointed him president of Croa-

tia Zagreb in 1992 when Croatia

won independence two years be-

fore he took over the reins of

this match, you will be world

the national side. His career has taken him to success with a string of clubs outside his national borders but it was his misfortune to be in France during a match-fixing scandal involving European

champions Marseille.

Blazevic, then coach of Nantes, was implicated, and spent two weeks in prison before being released without charges being brought against

Back home in Croatia nobody believed that a man' known for his deep passion for sport could be a cheat. Impulsive, yes, he was banned for a time by Europe's football au-

Never a star as a player, Blazevic, as coach, is a great tactician with an ability to get the best out of his players. And he believes in them more than anything else.

Croatian players are the most gifted in Europe. They are the Brazilians of Europe," he

However there is one worrying note for Blazevic. An astrologer has told him that he might suffer a heart attack while sitting on the bench during the World Cup.

But Blazevic will no doubt reduce the odds by watching his side play - standing up.

AIME JACQUET (France)

Much maligned Aime Jacquet may go down in history as France's most successful coach. He may also be recognised as a true prophet.

Four years ago when he took over after France's failure to qualify for USA '94. he said he would lead France to World Cup glory on home soil four years on and then retire.

That retirement date looms much close - but so does his potential vindication. Jacquet has been a whipping

boy of the French media despite an impressive record. He was attacked savagely after France failed to reach the final of Euro '96 and his critics have been snapping at his heels ever since "My sporting life is not over,

Jacquet said more than a month before the World Cup finals kicked off "It will be perfect as I wil

have taken a lap of honour with

but it will be on July 13.

dealing with the media in a glib and comfortable fashion, bears a deep grudge against the French press corps. Football has been his life.

Jacquet played for Lyon and St Etienne in the French league during the 1960s and early 70s and won two caps for France as a midfielder. He was a modest performer rather than an exceptional player.

-AFP photo

His playing days over, his interest in football as an intellectual, rather than physical challenge grew.

He coached at Lyon, Bordeaux and Montpellier before being appointed as French coach in January 1994. Much to the dismay of his

detractors, he proved to be his own man, refusing to bow to public or media pressure and rejecting the claims of star names like Eric Cantona and David Ginola in favour of a collective work ethic that has paid handsome dividends as France approach their semifinal against He has the best defence in the

tournament and a talented midfield marshalled by one of the World Cup's greatest individual talents, Zinedine Zidane of Ju-

Perhaps his greatest failing- if it can be blamed on one man- is his inability to solve the riddle of France's front-line strikers. Most of the goals are coming from midfield and even defence and Thierry Henry of Monaco is the only attacker who has scored more than one

The Achilles' Heel of the French team could yet trigger the end of Jacquet's dream.

End of WC as we know it, says Kaiser

PARIS, July 7 (Reuters/Internet) Franz Beckenbauer on Tuesday hammered the standard of soccer at the World Cup finals and predicted the European club game would one day replace international football. Beckenbauer, who won the

Nakata Italy bound

ROME, July 7 (AFP/ Internet): Japan's World Cup midfielder Hidetoshi Nakata has signed up with Italian side Perugia for next season, the Corriere della Sera newspaper reported Tuesday.

of the year, signed a four-year contract worth six billion lira (3.5 million dollars) with the newly-promoted Italian side, the paper said. Perugia officials said they could not confirm that a deal

Nakata, the Asian footballer

had been clinched saying that they were still talking to the player about the terms of a con-The 21-year-old Nakata, with his orange-dyed hair, was

the outstanding Japanese player in the World Cup in France. He currently plays with Bellmare Hiratsuka in Japan

World Cup for Germany both as a captain and a coach in 1974 and 1990, said the probable creation of a European league could lead to a major shift in the power base in international football. "The European league will

come and the top clubs will gain in power and the importance of the German league clubs is getting big and bigger," Bayern Munich chairman Beckenbauer said in a briefing with German journalists. "One day there won't be a

national team anymore. Europe is growing together. At the moment the national team has a high value. But the influence of the clubs is getting bigger and Beckenbauer, who has not

missed a World Cup since 1966 and has been working for German television in France, said he had been disappointed by the football in the first round which was expanded because there were 32 teams, more than ever before.

"The World Cup has been OK. But it has been without big moments. Some of the games in the first round should not have taken place in a stadium but on an all-weather practice pitch.' the former libero said.

Beckenbauer also hit out at

Argentina appoints interim coach

will lead," he said. "But I don't BUENOS ARIES, July 7 intend to abandon the Under-20 (AFP/ Internet): Jose Pekerman was appointed interim coach of A number of other qualified Argentina on Tuesday followcandidates are interested in the ing the departure of Daniel Pasjob, said Pekerman. Argentisarella and is favourite to get na's 1986 World Cup-winning the post permanently. coach Carlos Bilardo is report-Argentina Football Associa-

said a replacement for Passarella would be announced later this year. "If Argentina plays between now and then Pekerman will act as caretaker coach while

tion president Julio Grondona

awaiting the official decision," Pekerman is a popular choice because of his success as coach of Argentina's Under-20 side who have won two World championships playing excit-

manager means, or where it

we had gone down playing our ing attacking football. own style," he added. Pekerman has said he still intends to take the Under-20 side to the World Youth Championships next year in Nigeria. "I am not sure what interim

"But Argentina came out playing like Germany while at the same time Holland played like Argentina and led us in a merry old dance.

Diego Maradona, 37, is not

however. But he does have a

message for the new national

coach -- abandon the European

ter-final defeat to Holland on

that our players did not play

their own game, but played like

"I would have been happy i

Analysing Argentina's quar

"What annoyed me most was

style introduced by Passarella.

edly among them.

Saturday, he said:

Europeans

the standard of refereeing in France and said world governing body FIFA was wrong to introduce tougher penalties on tackles from behind shortly before the tournament, confusing

the officials. "There were referees and linesmen at the World Cup from countries you don't normally hear much about," he said. "But all the federations want to have a say. FIFA made the mistake of having a new rule at the World

You have to do that between tournaments. The referees were unsure of what to do and that is the way they controlled the games. That has to lead to chaos and that is what happened. Nobody knew what a tackle from behind was."

West heads to Liverpool

LIVERPOOL, England, July 7 (Reuters/ Internet): English premier league club Liverpool said on Tuesday they had agreed deal with Inter Milan for Nigerian World Cup defender Taribo West.

The giant 24-year-old was expected in Liverpool later on Tuesday or early on Wednesday to thrash out personal terms with Liverpool coach Roy

The Anfield club are believed to have settled on a transfer fee of around 5 million pounds (\$8.2 million) for West. They hope to complete the transfer by the weekend. "We've agreed terms with In-

ter Milan for the player," a Liv-

erpool spokesman confirmed. "It's now a question of talking to the player himself and settling personal terms." West's uncompromising style and multi-coloured dread-

locks made him a target for attention even before the World Cup began. He made his international debut in May 1994 against Sweden, but first came under the

spotlight in the 1996 Olympics when he snuffed out the threat of Ronaldo as Nigeria went on to win the gold medal. By then West had already won the French league and cup

with Auxerre. He moved to Inter Milan a year ago. He was a prominent member of the 1998 Nigerian World Cup

side that beat Spain and Bulgaria before losing out to Denmark in the knock-out stages.

