

FACTSHEET

PARIS, July 8 (AFP): Factfiles of 1998 World Cup semi-finalists France and Croatia: CROATIA Population: 4,780,000 Area: 56,538 sq km Capital: Zagreb Colours: Red and white checked jersey, white shorts, white socks. World Cup record: 1998 is their 1st finals appearance. European Championship record: Quarterfinalists 1996. How they qualified: Defeated Ukraine in play-off having finished 2nd in European Zone Group 2. Qualifying results: Bosnia 1 Croatia 4, Croatia 1 Greece 1, Croatia 1 Denmark 1, Croatia 3 Slovenia 3, Greece 0 Croatia 1, Croatia 3 Bosnia 2, Denmark 3 Croatia 1, Slovenia 1 Croatia 3. Play-off: Croatia 2 Ukraine 0, Ukraine 1 Croatia 1. Goalscorers: 5-Davor Suker, 4-Alen Bosic, 3-Slaven Bilic, Zvonimir Boban, 2-Goran Vlahovic, 1-Robert Prosinecki, Silvio Maric, Zvonimir Soldo. Coach: Miroslav Blazevic. France '98 record so far: Runners-up of Group H v Jamaica 3-1, v Japan 1-0, v Argentina 0-1, 2nd rd v Romania 1-0, quarterfinals v Germany 3-0. Goalscorers: Suker 4, Stanic, Prosinecki, Jaarni, Vlahovic. FRANCE Population: 58,000,000 Area: 550,000 sq km Capital: Paris Federation: Federation Francaise de Football founded 1919. Colours: Blue jersey, white shorts, red socks. World Cup record: 10th appearance (1930, 34, 38, 54, 58, 66, 78, 82, 86, 98) 3rd 1958, 86. European Championship record: Winners 1984. How they qualified: As hosts. Coach: Aimé Jacquet. France '98 records so far: Winners of Group C v South Africa 3-0, v Saudi Arabia 4-0, v Denmark 2-1, 2nd rd v Paraguay 1-0 in extra time (Golden Goal). Quarterfinals v Italy 0-0 (AET), vnd 4-3 on penalties. Goalscorers: Thierry Henry 4, Zinedine Zidane 2, Djorkaeff, Petit, Blanc, own goal 1.



DOOMED: Philip Cocu (L) contemplates his penalty miss while teammates Clarence Seedorf (No 10), France de Boer (No 4) and Patrick Kluivert tensely observe the action. — AFP photo

Tougher on tackling in 2002

PARIS, July 8 (AFP): The findings of the widest medical study into sports injuries ever undertaken will be released after the World Cup and could result in further restrictions on tackling for the next tournament in Asia in 2002. Controversial guidelines introduced at France '98 cracking down on the tackle from behind could be widened to include side-on tackling just beyond the player's field of vision. The study was set up with the backing of Sepp Blatter in 1994 and is the largest ever undertaken in sports medicine, according to Jiri Dvorak, the Swiss professor of neurology who heads the project. Blatter, elected FIFA president at the start of the World Cup, is a strong backer of tighter tackling laws and throughout this tournament he has defended referees seen as harsh on offenders and criticised others for being lax. The study includes 700 soccer players aged 14 and up in France, Germany and the Czech Republic who are visited every week by qualified FIFA medical

personnel who document every injury they sustain. "This is a very precise injury assessment," said Dvorak. After a preliminary analysis of the findings, FIFA's sports medical committee recommended the controversial crackdown on the tackle from behind introduced for France '98. "The next issue is the tackle at an angle slightly from behind," said Dvorak. He explained that tackling a player just outside of his field of vision could be just as dangerous as an ill-timed tackle from behind. "There is a 10 to 25 degree blind spot in the players field of vision," he said. "This is not a tackle from behind but it can be just as dangerous." The study shows that soccer players sustain 0.45 serious injuries a year. He said a programme set up as a result of the project undertaken by FIFA's medical assessment research centre in Zurich would aim at reducing that figure by half. The findings are to be re-

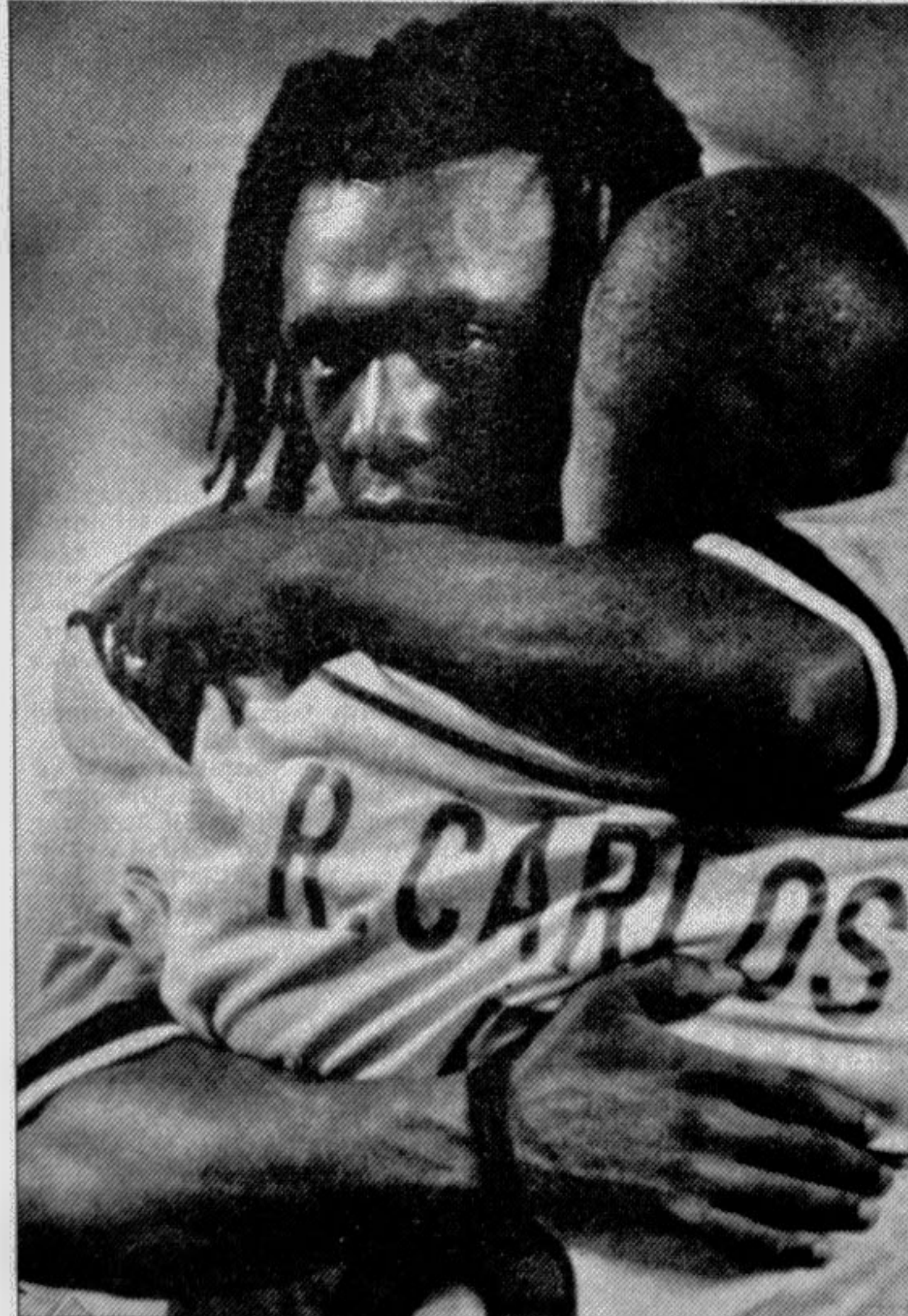
leased to the scientific community and to FIFA in the autumn, he said. If FIFA takes up the recommendations, further tightening of the controversial tackle laws will result. Critics accuse FIFA of trying to turn soccer into an on-field version of basketball. "Tackling is a very important part of the game and the skill involved should not be underestimated," said German coach Bert Vogts in response to the new laws. "I do wish that these old gentlemen would talk to the players before they change the rules." Referees have been confused and inconsistent in applying the tackle from behind rule, but it has worked up to a point. Many goals, including England striker Michael Owen's remarkable score against Argentina would never have been possible without it. "Defenders would have hacked Owen down in the past," said Sir Bobby Charlton, who won the World Cup as an England centre forward in 1966.

Purging Gaulish ghosts

PARIS, July 8 (Reuters/Internet): The ghosts of Seville and other footballing cities will only stop haunting France if they win a World Cup semifinal for a change. Three times already France have fought for a place in the final and on every occasion their dream has been shattered. Brazil's 5-2 win in 1958 in Sweden sounded inevitable and a 2-0 defeat by Germany in 1986 in Mexico was logical. But what happened on a hot summer night in Andalusia 16 years ago remains one of the greatest moments in French soccer and certainly the most tragic. With Germany goalkeeper Harald 'Toni' Schumacher flustering French defender Patrick Battison, France opening up a 3-1 lead in extra time and Germany fighting back to level the tie before winning a tense penalty shootout 5-4, the Seville match had it all. The only way of leaving it all behind, according to current defender Marcel Desailly, is to beat Croatia at the Stade de France on Wednesday. "We want to go further than the French teams of the past," said the defender. "We want to go down in history, we want people to remember our names." Emmanuel Petit, who was told off by his parents because he was jumping frantically on the sofa while watching the

1982 semifinal, is glad France avoided another showdown with Germany. "We've seen enough of Germans," he said. Even young striker Thierry Henry, who was only four in 1982, still sees flashes of the brilliant volley by Marius Tresor which put France 2-1 up. "I lived then in La Desirade, in Guadeloupe," said the 20-year-old Henry, remembering his childhood in the French West Indies. "We only had a black and white television so we went to watch it at the house of a friend of my father, who had a colour one. "I was not even five but I remember clearly that after Tresor's goal, everybody in the house went mad. They were dancing on the table, yelling, Tresor is from Guadeloupe, that's why." Don't ask Bixente Lizarazu about the 1958 match against Brazil at Stockholm's Rasunda stadium. "We lost three semifinals already, really," he asked. "I thought there were only those two against the Germans." Lizarazu might not be a specialist of soccer history but he has heard about the 17-year-old teenager who scored a hat-trick for Brazil in that match. His name was Pele. Brazil conceded their first goal in the tournament that day, when Just Fontaine, beau-

tifully set up by Raymond Kopa, levelled the tie at 1-1. But Brazil soon recaptured the lead through Didi and the Pele, festival followed, the youngest player to ever take part in World Cup finals showing his class by scoring three times in 23 minutes to put the issue beyond doubt. Roger Piantoni reduced the arrears eight minutes from time but Brazil were already on their way to the final, in which they crushed Sweden 5-2 with Pele scoring twice. The 1986 semifinal in Guadalupe, Mexico, came too late for France in more ways than one. Michel Platini was hampered by injury, Alain Giresse was getting old and the French squad had left too much energy behind in a memorable battle against Brazil. "I remember the ball rolling under Joel Bats," said France keeper Fabien Barthez, feeling sorry for his predecessor. "He had been so great against Brazil. It must have been awful for him. I hope such a thing will never happen to me." That was in the ninth minute when a low shot by Andreas Brehme, fumbled by Bats allowed Germany to go 1-0 up. In the very last minute, Rudi Voeller ran on to lift the ball over Bats before scoring to give his side with a 2-0 win. The French players were preparing for a third semifinal clash against Germany when Croatia crushed Berti Vogts' aging troops 3-0 on Saturday in Lyon. "Psychologically, it might have been easier to face Germany," said French coach Aimé Jacquet. Petit said he was perfectly aware of the importance of Wednesday's game. "This could be a new page in the history of French soccer," he said. "All we've got to do is write it."



Dutch midfielder Clarence Seedorf being comforted by his Real Madrid teammate Roberto Carlos of Brazil after the epic semifinal at Marseille. — AFP photo

Croat police won't spoil it

ZAGREB, July 8: Police are promising to cut fans some slack if Croatia beats France on Wednesday for a place in the World Cup finals, intervening only if celebrations threaten lives and property, reports AP. Tens of thousands of Croats are expected to watch the semifinal contest on giant TV screens set up in the capital's parks and squares. Few restaurants, cafes and bars are without a television set. The winners face four-time champions Brazil on Sunday. The loser will have to settle for the third-place match Saturday against the Netherlands. "Until now, police have not and will not act to spoil the spontaneous festivities," Zagreb's police chief, Ivan Stanko, said. Many Croats still view police with fear and apprehension — a legacy of the country's years of Communist rule when it was part of Yugoslavia. But Stanko says he wants to change that image.

Cocu curses his luck

MARSEILLE, France, July 8 (AP): Phillip Cocu finally found a position where he didn't look comfortable: The penalty spot. His saved spotkick Tuesday signalled the end of the World Cup for the Dutch as they lost an enthralling semifinal to reigning champions Brazil in a penalty shootout. Cocu's penalty, the Netherlands third, was saved by Taffarel. It meant that Ronald de Boer had to score with his. But De Boer's was saved too to consign the Dutch to a 4-2 penalty defeat after the match had ended 1-1. Ordered by referee Ali Mohamed Bujain to respect the ball because it was placed too far forward, Cocu looked nervous as he walked back to start his run up. He struck the ball well but Taffarel reached it easily diving to his right. It was a sad end of an otherwise outstanding World Cup for Cocu who moves from PSV Eindhoven to Barcelona next season. He started the tournament in midfield, shifted to the forward line in the absence of suspended striker Patrick Kluivert and then returned to midfield for the quarterfinal victory over Argentina. He looked solid in midfield and scored twice as a makeshift striker. On Tuesday, the versatile left footer was in defence, plugging a gap left by the suspension of Arthur Numan and an injury to Winston Bogarde, who broke his leg in training on Sunday. For the first time, Cocu looked vulnerable and his two mistakes cost the Dutch the match. First Ronaldo muscled past him in the Dutch penalty area to squeeze a low shot under keeper Edwin Van der Sar for Brazil's goal in the first minute of the second half. Cocu recovered and played well for the rest of the match and in extra time. But then came the penalty shootout and the Dutch were left to go home instead of to the final.

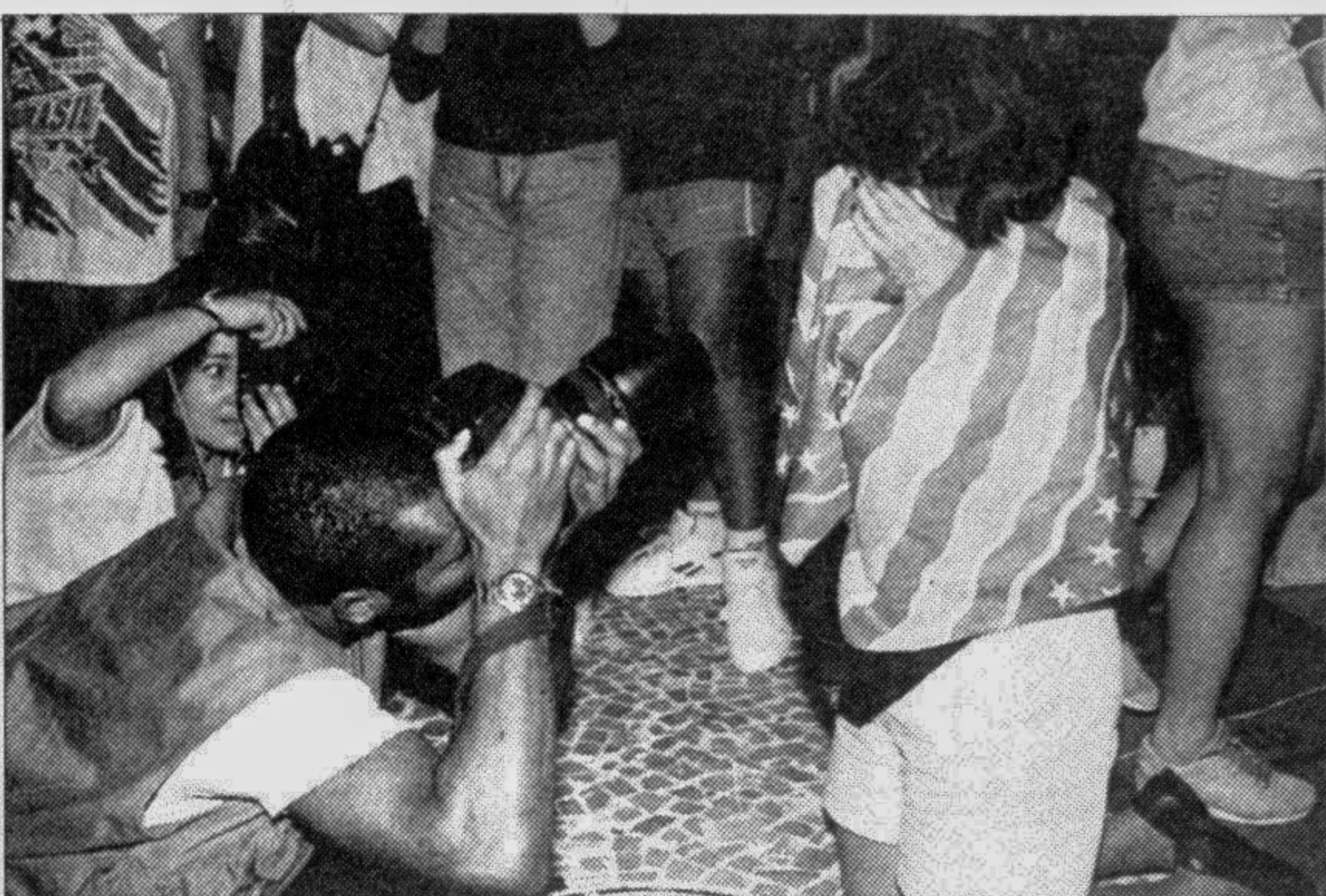
Referees have been confused and inconsistent in applying the tackle from behind rule, but it has worked up to a point. Many goals, including England striker Michael Owen's remarkable score against Argentina would never have been possible without it. "Defenders would have hacked Owen down in the past," said Sir Bobby Charlton, who won the World Cup as an England centre forward in 1966.

Watershed

From page 13 Blazevic. He calls it "not that strong" and "vulnerable." France's defensive midfield features Didier Deschamps and Emmanuel Petit tirelessly working to feed playmaker Zinedine Zidane. It is up front that the problems lie. Everything works perfectly until the ball has to be put into the net. There, everything has stalled for the last two games. The sudden-death winner against Paraguay last week was scored by Blanc, a defender. The situation is so bad that forwards such as Djorkaeff are driven to bold predictions. "I know I will score. I feel I will score against Croatia," he said. For other strikers, only the result counts. "It doesn't matter if I don't score. The most important is the defence and the title," Stéphane Guivarch said. Croatia hasn't allowed a goal through a 1-0 second-round win over Romania and the demolition of Germany, with Igor Simic, Slaven Bilic and Dario Simec providing a rock-solid base. The heart of the team is captain and central midfielder Zvonimir Boban, who may be less elegant than Zidane, but who also spreads the ball around with great efficiency. Wingers Mario Stanic and Robert Jarni keep play open wide as much as possible with deep runs providing space for Boban and the forwards. Suiker already has four goals and can equal or surpass the top scorers of the tournament - five goals by Christian Vieri of Italy and Argentine Gabriel Batistuta - with two games to go. "They have great individuals," French coach Aimé Jacquet said.

Red card

From page 16 change things," Baharmast said. "They need to give credit where credit is due. It's time they start playing the Fair Play. It applies to everybody." FIFA, soccer's world governing body, emphasises and rewards sportsmanship through its Fair Play program. The stereotyping in the media Baharmast mentioned was apparent during the Brazil versus Holland semifinal match on Tuesday. ESPN commentator Mike Hill questioned the ability of the referee, who was from the United Arab Emirates, to handle such an important match. "If Mike Hill had done his homework he would have known that the referee from the UAE officiated in World Cup '94," Baharmast said. "He did the third place match. He has also officiated in the CONCACAF Gold Cup, has been a referee in matches with Brazil before. He's done African Nations' Cup matches and important Asian matches. Just because he is from the UAE doesn't mean he doesn't know the laws of the game or how it's played." "Every referee at the World Cup is not there by chance. We earned the right to be there," Baharmast said. FIFA had been supportive of the referees throughout the tournament. "It's the media that needs to back off and let the referees do their jobs," Baharmast said. "If we started picking on reporters for the mistakes they make, well the amount is large in comparison to what we do." Score one for the man in the middle.



TOO TENSE TO WATCH: A Brazilian fan at Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana beach prays with her face hidden during the heart stopping penalty shoot-out against Holland on July 7. — AFP photo

Three Tenors sing for soccer

PARIS, July 8 (Reuters/Internet): Their own national teams may be out of the running but the Three Tenors aim to bring the tears to everyone else's eyes on Friday in a grand World Cup finale concert at the foot of France's Eiffel Tower. The concert, which aims to show to a global television audience of two billion, is being billed as the biggest of all time and will be the third by Jose Carreras, Plácido Domingo and Luciano Pavarotti for a soccer World Cup. From beneath a massive arch on the Champs de Mars park, the Spanish-Italian trio's classical repertoire, spiced with a few surprises as they render their own versions of more popular hits, will be broadcast live to over 75 countries. As they rehearsed in overcoats and hats and scarves on a chilly Tuesday evening, their voices occasionally soared over the rooftops of the streets around the tower, wafting a breath of sweetness over the traffic jams. Football is a common passion for the tenors, whose lofty arias have since 1990 been

married with television images of the game's moments of high skill and intense emotion. Their Los Angeles World Cup concert in 1994 showed to 1.3 billion television viewers worldwide. They all went to the 1990 and 1994 World Cup finals, and Carreras has said they were coming to Paris because "We want to get good tickets for the final." Although about 12,000 ticket-holders will have seats close to the set, much of the park will be open to all comers -- who will have no competing football match to watch -- in what is intended as a mainly free performance. Organisers hope to recoup the \$8-10 million cost of the concert through audio and video rights -- the two albums so far released by the tenors have sold over 23 million copies. Speakers and television screens will carry images of the singers -- who all look tiny under the span of the Eiffel Tower's feet -- and their songs, should carry about two miles. Nearby residents, unless

they object on grounds of taste, should not have too much cause for complaint. Sound expert John Fellowe said the sound would be "by no means disco level." The repertoire of Friday's concert will be new, and is being kept as tightly under wraps as the singers themselves until Friday. There will be songs in six languages -- French, Italian, English, German, Spanish and Portuguese -- to tweak as many sentimental strings as possible. One probable bet for inclusion is a deep, rich version of "You'll Never Walk Alone," its quality infinitely superior to the sound familiar on England terraces. And to judge from the fragment of the rehearsal to which reporters were admitted on Tuesday night, the programme will have a lyrical build-up towards an increasingly rousing tone. When the orchestra strutted through the opening chords of the Spanish song, "Granada" at Tuesday's run-through, even jaded reporters started striking bugle poses and making flamenco sweeps.

Guardian of Croatian ambitions

PARIS, July 8 (AFP/Internet): Drzen Ladic is the guardian of Croatian ambitions as the skillful Eastern Europeans chase a place in the final on their World Cup debut with hosts France standing in their way Tuesday at the Stade de France. The Croatia Zagreb goalkeeper, a veteran at 35, is his country's most capped player, having racked up 44 caps since making his international debut in 1990 in a 2-1 win over the United States. At that stage, Croatia hadn't officially even gained independence, but already the seeds were being sown to produce a side capable of beating the world's best. Ladic and his teammates showed they had really arrived last Saturday in beating three-times champions Germany in their quarter-final at Lyon, and Ladic himself was one of the stars of the show, making a stunning reflex save from Oliver Bierhoff with the game finely-balanced at 1-0. And after keeping a clean sheet to help pull off a major shock, Ladic can proudly point

to the fact that he has conceded just one goal in the whole tournament -- to Argentina's Hector Pineda in the first phase. The statistic makes Ladic, one of nine Croatian ever-present, the meanest keeper at the World Cup -- along with Fabien Barthez of France. That doesn't impress former Scotland keeper Bob Wilson, who rated him the worst of the four goalkeepers left after Holland's Edwin van der Sar, Brazil's Claudio Taffarel and France's Barthez. Said Wilson, goalkeeping coach at Arsenal: "Ladic is perhaps the most flawed of the remaining four keepers. Goalkeeping is about consistency and it is the crucial feature which he lacks." Ladic, who has played all his club career either in Croatia or in the former Yugoslavia, will look to hit that criticism for six on Wednesday. Last year, he earned 1.5 million dollars as Croatia Zagreb raced to the league and cup double. But Ladic can't put a price on a place in the World Cup final which is now within his grasp.

ISL no more in French hands

PARIS, July 8: The marketing consultant for FIFA said Wednesday it would take control of a French subsidiary involved in World Cup ticket scandal, reports AP. ISL Worldwide of Switzerland will buy out the remaining 51 per cent of ISL Marketing France and assume day-to-day management of the Paris-based company, according to Glen Kirton, senior vice president of the international firm. Kirton said the action was a direct response to the scandal, in which three people, including the president of ISL France, were arrested in connection with alleged ticket fraud. The World Cup organising committee also has filed a formal complaint with prosecutors against the French branch of ISL. ISL Worldwide, which has handled international marketing for FIFA since 1982, contends it was victimised by a consultant who frequently sold thousands of tickets to which he had no access. Taking direct control of ISL France was the fastest way to limit damage to the international firm's reputation and make sure that both companies shared more than just a name, Kirton said.

FIFA stand by their men

MARSEILLE, July 8 (AP): In a World Cup marked by some brilliant goals, dramatic penalty kick shootouts and the sudden emergence of Croatia, too often the focus has been the officiating. And, too often for the liking of coaches and players, the refs have reached into their pockets for yellow and red cards. "Sometimes, FIFA puts referees on the field who have only officiated second-rate matches," said Germany's Lothar Matthaeus, who has appeared in more World Cup games than anyone. All during this Cup, which has reached the semifinal stage, the refs have been centrestage. Already, a record 20 red cards ejecting players have been handed out. There have been 238 yellow-card warnings, including three cases where a player drew two in a game and was expelled. The ejection leader in the homestretch is Mexico's Arturo Brizio, who threw out three players in one game in the first round, two more in the Netherlands-Argentina quarterfinals (Dutch defender Arthur Numan drew two yellows) and, with seven reds in six matches, already has set a record. He is not scheduled to work in either semifinal. "He has put himself ahead of the pack," FIFA spokesman Keith Cooper said. While he said the statistic was released "reluctantly," Cooper said it did not reflect poorly on Brizio or the state of

refereeing. "I don't think it has anything to do with the referee. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time, or the right place at the right time," Cooper said. "He was in a game that developed to the point where he had to take that kind of action." Such a drastic action usually changes the landscape of the game. England outplayed Argentina for nearly the entire first half of a second-round game. But when David Beckham was ejected at the start of the second half for a retaliatory kick at an opponent, the English had to pull back into a defensive shell, rarely moving upfield and hoping to get to a shootout. They did, but they lost that, too. "It is extremely difficult to play 11-on-10," England goalie David Seaman said. "It changes the game entirely." The Germans were incensed about a red card given to their best defender, Christian Werners, by Norwegian referee Rune Pedersen in the 40th minute for a foul on Croatian striker Davor Suker. Until then, Germany, the European champion, had controlled the quarterfinal match, but it wound up losing 3-0. "The red card was a joke," Werners said. "I am aware of no guilt. It was the decisive moment of the game. The team still fought well. In your career, you have the chance to play perhaps only one World Cup, therefore it's especially disappointing."

FIFA apparently now is satisfied with the officiating. Twenty games into the tournament, that wasn't the case, and president Sepp Blatter called on the refs to be less tolerant of fouls from behind -- in keeping with the governing body's pre-tournament edict that red cards be given for such hand fouls. That brought a sea of red cards, including Brizio's hat-trick in the South Africa-Denmark game. FIFA then met with the referees and things toned down a bit, but strict attention still was made to the tackles from behind. "I am sure the referees were confused by what FIFA said," American Cobi Jones said. "The players and the coaches didn't know what they wanted." What they want, simply, is clean, wide-open soccer. "We can tell them, 'pay attention to this. This will not be tolerated,'" Cooper said of a typical pre-game meeting between referees and the teams. "Are we worried (at so many red cards)? No. That's the decision and we'll stand by that."

Nelson to join Villa

LISBON, July 8 (Reuters/Internet): Portuguese champions Porto said they had reached an agreement with English club Aston Villa on Wednesday to bring international defender Fernando Nelson back home.