

Les Bleus

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youths chanted as they acclaimed France's hero, full-back Thuram who scored both goals.
"Thuram, president," and "Jacquet, president," some shouted, bestowing the top job on previously criticised coach, Aimé Jacquet. Onlookers cheered from balconies.
"Release Laurent Blanc," was another of the chants.
The fever seemed to be spreading to women, too.
Danielle Trepant, a 46-year-old housewife from northern France, looked as properly French as they come, with carefully coiffed hair and a soft voice. But she was dressed head-to-foot in tricolor-flag jacket and pats, all saying "Allez la France!" — and a jester hat with pom-poms and bells. Her cheeks, needless to say, were multicolored.
"I have to admit, I didn't really watch soccer much before this," she said, her husband nodding in amused agreement. "Actually, hardly at all. But this is different — it's in France, and the World Cup. It's just another spirit."

Bilic

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disciplinary committee and there was no chance the red card would be revoked.
"As usual in these cases, the committee will look at the video replay of the incident, but will not reverse the referee's decision," he said.
A one-match ban, at least, is automatic and will apply for the final as for any other match.
Blanc has never been sent off in his football career, either at club level or in his 73 previous internationals. But he was under no illusions.
"We must not give ourselves false hopes," he said. "When a player is sent off, he does not play in the next match."

Samba set to

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one of their key players, the Brazilians welcome back one of their stars.
Cafu will return to the right flank of the Brazilian defence in place of the inexperienced Ze Carlos to add speed and guile to the attack and stability to a back four that has looked shaky at times.
Dunga and Cesar Sampaio have been solid in midfield and will allow the creative players to wreak havoc in the French penalty area. At the same time, they take pressure off Junior Baiano and Aldair in the Brazilian defence.
They also wish to battle with the gifted French midfielders: hard-working and efficient Didier Deschamps, smooth running and ever-accurate Emmanuel Petit; and one of the best playmakers in soccer, Zinedine Zidane.
Zidane holds the key to unlocking the Brazilians. He will run at the heart of the defence and open up spaces for his teammates to shoot at Claudio Taffarel, who was the hero of the shootout victory over the Netherlands.
Youri Djorkaeff, a club colleague of Ronaldo, teams up well with the midfield three to keep the flow of moves going toward goal. But that's where the French fall flat.
A French striker hasn't scored since the 2-1 victory over Denmark in the first round two weeks ago. That could be a deciding shortcoming Sunday.

Out but

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The fans now believe the team has to go on and beat the Netherlands in the third-place play-off to round off their campaign in style.
"We are not sad, we are happy — after all, we are among the four best in the world," screamed 18-year-old Jani, wrapped up in the Croatian flag. "My cap is off to our team for getting that far, playing in the semifinals of the World Cup."
"We really must think only about winning this third place because such a chance comes to you only once in a lifetime and it must be taken," striker Davor Suker told Croatian television after the game.
"It's hard for me to speak to you now. But we must face you when we lose, too."
"We have to think what they can do now but tomorrow will be a very hard day, they'll be conscious of what they squandered. How do you lift them up?" said disappointed coach Miroslav Balzevic.
"We squandered something very precious. It would have taken so little to get to the finals. It was our own fault."

It's Cafu time

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competition but has turned out to be one of Brazil's most important players.
His debut in a World Cup semifinal. It's a very difficult and to come in at but he played through the 120 minutes without any problems.
Until this time last year, Ze Carlos was an unknown player who had spent his career playing for a number of small provincial clubs, where wages are so low that many players supplement their incomes elsewhere.
The cheapest player in the side, he was bought by Sao Paulo, one of Brazil's top clubs, in July last year for 300,000 dollars and quickly shot to national prominence.
Cafu, who made his name at Sao Paulo and now plays for AS Roma, will be playing his second World Cup final if, as seems certain, he returns on Sunday.
He came on as a substitute in the 17th minute against Italy four years ago after the regular choice Jorginho limped off injured.



Thierry Henry (2nd from L), the French striker climbs on Lilian Thuram after the latter had scored a goal during the July 8 semifinal. — AFP photo

Dutch stars gunning for the Gunners

AJC EN PROVENCE, France, July 9 (AFP/Internet): Patrick Kluyvert and Ronald de Boer are keen to join Holland teammates Marc Overmars and Dennis Bergkamp at English champions Arsenal.
Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger has been given clearance to launch an 11 million dollar bid for AC Milan's Patrick Kluyvert.
Kluyvert, 22, still has three years left on his contract at the San Siro but admitted: "I have not worked out for me at Milan. I don't know why but Italy has an effect on some players and it was the same for Dennis Bergkamp when he was with Inter."
"But he and I have both played well in the World Cup and together we have power. Nobody else can out me in on goal with a pass like Dennis can. If I can move from Milan my best choices would be England or Spain."
"Dennis has won the championship in England and also been named as the best player there last season. I believe I could be successful there too."
Midfielder Ronald de Boer also admits he would love to become a Gunner, but Arsenal will not pay the eight million dollar

Ajax of Amsterdam want for the 28-year-old.
The twin brother of Dutch captain Frank de Boer said: "I know they have made one offer which Ajax would not accept. Now I am just hoping Arsenal increase it or that Ajax accept the lower figure."
"I would love to go to High-bury and not just because Dennis Bergkamp and Marc Overmars are there. It is my own ambition. I have been with Ajax for 12 years and need a new challenge now."
"The Premier League in England is obviously a great place to play and I am hoping Ajax will recognise the loyalty I have shown to them and let me go."
Wenger - who wants at least two new top-quality players to boost his squad for next season's European Champions League challenge - has also been linked with Argentina's midfielder Marcello Gallardo after failing to land French star Robert Pires who is set to move from Metz to Olympique Marseilles.
Overmars quelled fears that his World Cup injury frustration could spill over into the start of the Premiership season. Overmars, a revelation in

his country's France 98 campaign, was forced out of the semi-final against champions Brazil on Tuesday.
He had received intensive treatment on a damaged hamstring which had restricted him to just a 16-minute spell as a substitute in the dramatic 2-1 win against Argentina four days earlier.
But the 25-year-old flyer, who scored a career-best 16 goals during Arsenal's triumphant Premier League and FA Cup Double season, said: "I'll be fit in plenty of time for the new season."
He admitted: "It started off as a small injury and got worse when I tested it in training for the Argentina game. I was not quite ready to start that match but the coach sent me on in the last few minutes and the hamstring pulled again."
"But there was never any chance I would be able to take any part against Brazil. If there had been even a ten per cent chance I would have done but I just had to sit there without any hope of helping the team."
"The injury is getting better and the next few days will tell if I play in the third-place play-off match against Croatia on Saturday."

Moroccan ref for World Cup final

PARIS, July 9: Said Belqola of Morocco was picked Thursday to referee the World Cup championship game between Brazil and France, reports AP.
Linesmen for Sunday's match will be Mark Warren of England and Achmat Salle of South Africa. Abdul Rahman Al Zeid of Saudi Arabia is the alternate.
For Saturday's third-place game between the Netherlands and Croatia, the referee will be Paraguay's Epifanio Gonzalez. Linesmen will be Emanuel Zammit of Malta and Lencie Fred of Vanuatu. Urs Meier of Switzerland is the alternate.
Belqola, 41, is the father of four children and a customs inspector in the Moroccan city of Fes. He began refereeing in 1983 and moved up to the international level 10 years later. His biggest match prior to the World Cup was the third-place game at the FIFA Under-17 World Championships in 1995.

Punters place bets

HANOI, July 9 (AFP/Internet): Vietnamese punters have shown great ingenuity since the start of the football World Cup finals, even placing bets on which team would get the first yellow card or what the colour of the players' jerseys would be.
"Several forms of betting have emerged," Courier du Vietnam daily said, adding: "Many people have had to sell their houses, motorcycles or take to theft and crime because of the betting craze."
Vietnamese punters, who have displayed great passion for both football and betting, have not been confined to mere match results. Keen bets are placed on which team gets to take the kick off, which would score first, get the first yellow or red card or get the first penalty corner.
The colour of players' jerseys, socks and the nationality of the referee are all grist to their mill.
At home, among friends, in cafes or in offices, the Vietnamese stay up late to devour the televised action and bet anything from a glass of beer or a bowl of pho -- the traditional soup -- to huge sums, stretching to thousands of dollars at one go.
"Some of the losers and unfortunately have had to raid the family heirlooms so as to pay up," the daily said.

Aussies hope to host WC

MELBOURNE, Australia, July 9 (AFP/Internet): It is only a matter of time before Australia wins the right to host a World Cup, Soccer Australia (SA) chairman David Hill said Thursday.
"SA has formally advised soccer's world governing body FIFA that it intends to bid for the 2006 or 2010 World Cup."
Hill said hosting a World Cup would provide Australia with benefits 50 per cent greater than those from the Sydney 2000 Olympics.
A formal bid would cost about 20 million dollars (12.2 million US) but Hill rejected suggestions Australia's hopes for 2006 had been boosted by the hoologian element of fellow bidders England and Germany at France '98.
South Africa has also officially bid for the 2006 World Cup.

"Our view is we won't win the right to host a World Cup because of the deficiencies of oth-rers, we must demonstrate we are the best to host it," he said.
"There will be a World Cup in Australia, it's just a matter of when."
He would not rule out 2006 but "certainly indications are 2010 is a better chance."
Hill said a bid document would be released soon containing what hosting a World Cup would mean to Australia.
"It's 50 per cent again bigger than the Olympics," he said.
"The first sale we have to make is to Australia, the people, the governments, the sponsors. It will be a partnership between Soccer Australia and all participating states and territories and national government."
Australia would need a minimum of eight international

standard stadiums to hold a World Cup.
Hill said South Africa, England and Germany were "more advanced" in bids for the 2006 World Cup, adding he feared historical factors could come into play when a decision was made.
He said historically every second World Cup was held in Europe while in South Africa's favour was the fact the tournament had never been staged in Africa.
"But both England and Germany have already hosted a World Cup."
Hill revealed South Africa's organisers had pledged to support Australia's bid for 2010 if Soccer Australia backed their bid for 2006.
But the South Africans could not guarantee that position if they failed in 2006.

Taffarel blessed

RIO DE JANEIRO, July 9 (Reuters/Internet): Parents named their newborn babies after him, newspapers hailed him as a soccer saint and his critics ate their words on Wednesday after goalie Taffarel's two penalty saves put Brazil into the World Cup final.
"Saint Taffarel" said the banner headline on leading sports newspaper Lance, showing a halo above the veteran player.
The morning after their side's victory on penalty kicks over the Netherlands, Brazilians awoke -- if they went to bed at all -- to find nearly all newspapers with pictures of the tall, blond Taffarel across their front pages and headlines proclaiming him a national hero.
"Our sincere thanks to Taffarel in the name of every Brazilian," wrote President Fernando Henrique Cardoso in a letter of congratulations to the team.
"For millions and millions of Brazilians, today shows that from the first game we kept believing in this warrior spirit that is such a good portrait of Brazil."

But there were only prayers of thanks for him Wednesday.
One news broadcast had a solo female voice singing "Hallelujah, Hallelujah" over slow-motion footage of Taffarel diving for the ball.
Angel wings were shown sprouting off the goalkeeper as he knelt in victory.
A baby born in Brasilia at the moment Taffarel made his first save was named Bruna Taffarel de Carvalho and another born in Belo Horizonte at the moment of the second, match-winning save was named Igor Taffarel Marques.
"Taffarel copies Taffarel of '94 and carries Brazil to the final," was the banner headline in Rio de Janeiro's Jornal do Brasil newspaper, referring to the 1994 World Cup final when Brazil won a shoot-out against Italy with a save by Taffarel.
Fireworks, horn-bonking and wild street celebrations carried on through the night in Brazil, where the old cliché that soccer is a religion is as true as ever.
Even Brazil's Pele, one of the world's greatest players, saw a spiritual element in the outcome of the match.
"God made sure that the best team won," he told Globo Television after the match. "I always said that whoever won this match would go on to be champion."

The defending champions Brazil, who play the winner of Wednesday's semifinal match between France and Croatia, are heavily favoured to carry home a fifth World Cup title.

World Cup helpline

BANGKOK, July 9 (AFP/Internet): Thailand's health ministry Wednesday said it had set up special helplines for people suffering stress or other problems because of the World Cup finals in France.
"Dial 3735 if your husband is more interested in the World Cup than you," female callers are told after dialling the main ministry help number, a ministry statement said.
"Dial 3745 if your family is suffering from stress from watching the World Cup or is addicted to World Cup gambling."
Football-mad Thais were earlier forecast to wager some one billion dollars during the finals.
The health ministry said about 8,000 people per day were dialling its main helpline, which also offers assistance for more common problems, and adding most callers had difficulties stemming from the economic crisis which has gripped Thailand for the last year.
The statement did not say how many callers were beset by World Cup woes.

A survey released Wednesday found 95 per cent of Thai men were watching World Cup matches on television, despite some being screened live as late as 2:00 a.m.
The poll by advertising company Ammirati Puris Lintas said 77 per cent of Thai women were watching the games. A total of 86 per cent of 320 respondents of both genders were tuning in.
The survey also found big brand-name companies advertising during World Cup matches were drawing the ire of Thai fans devouring television coverage of the tournament.
The poll conducted concluded that some 59 per cent of Thai men and 35 per cent of women found ads during the games to be "annoying."
The most mentioned ads by those surveyed were softdrink-maker Pepsi, at 25 per cent recall on first mention, and sportswear giants Adidas and Nike, at 16 per cent and 10 per cent respectively.
Pepsi rival Coke came in fourth, with some eight per cent of those surveyed mentioning the ad first.

Transfer roundup

LONDON, July 9 (The Guardian/Internet): Teddy Sheringham's brief and undistinguished Manchester United career may be about to end with a move to Middlesbrough.
United's manager Alex Ferguson has always publicly backed the £3.5 million striker but, if he could recoup around £2.8 million, he would probably sanction the sale.
Although the 33-year-old Sheringham arrived from Tottenham little more than a year ago as a replacement for Eric Cantona, he had a disappointing season and was dropped on several occasions.
Middlesbrough's manager Bryan Robson, who has just completed the £2.3 million signing of Gary Pallister from United, is keen to add guile and experience to his squad in a bid to avoid a repeat of the relegation suffered in 1997 after only one season in the top flight.
Sheringham may welcome a change. If Ferguson's pursuit of Ariel Ortega proves successful he would probably be consigned to the reserves. United should learn its lesson -- a million has been accepted by Valencia.
But Dwight Yorke, mooted as a partner for Andy Cole, has been offered a new five-year contract, thought to be worth £25,000 a week, at Aston Villa, where Julian Joachim has now

signed a five-year deal.
The Cameroon midfielder Marc-Vivien Foe, meanwhile, has been told to prove he has fully recovered from a broken fibula before United consider resurrecting a £4 million deal to sign him from Lens.
Blackburn, who earlier this week let Stuart Ripley go to Southampton for £1.5 million, are expected to sell the reserve striker James Beattie to Saints for £1 million.
Newcastle yesterday blamed agents for trying to drum up an interest in Barcelona's £4 million-rated Oscar Garcia, but the Spanish midfielder is claiming that he has talked over a move with Kenny Dalglish in La Manga.
Dalglish will be back behind his manager's desk next week and, although his club has confirmed an interest in Monaco's £2 million-rated John Collins, they deny an interest in Garcia. But the 25-year-old told the Spanish press: "Newcastle's interest is very flattering. My thought is to stay with Barcelona but the decision may not depend on me."
Kevin Keegan is hoping to sign the former England winger John Salako. The 29-year-old free agent was released by Coventry last season and had talks with the Fulham manager yesterday.

THE SCORERS

PARIS, July 9 (AP): Goalscorers in the 16th World Cup after Wednesday's 2nd semifinal (penalties in parentheses):
Five goals: Christian Vieri, Italy, Gabriel Batistuta, Argentina (2), Davor Suker, Croatia (1).
Four goals: Luis Hernandez, Mexico, Ronaldo, Brazil (1), Marcelo Salas, Chile.
Three goals: Bebeto, Brazil, Dennis Bergkamp, Netherlands, Oliver Bierhoff, Germany, Cesar Sampaio, Brazil, Thierry Henry, France, Jurgen Klinsmann, Germany, Rivaldo, Brazil.
Two goals: Roberto Baggio, Italy (1), Shaun Bartlett, South Africa (1), Salaheddine Bassier, Morocco, Phillip Cocu, Netherlands, Ronald de Boer, Netherlands, Abdeljlil Hadda, Morocco, Fernando Hierro, Spain (1), Patrick Kluyvert, Netherlands, Slobodan Komljenovic, Yugoslavia, Brian Laudrup, Denmark, Kiko Narvaez, Spain, Viorel Moldovan, Romania, Fernando Morientes, Spain, Ariel Ortega, Argentina, Michael Owen, England, Ricardo Pelaez, Mexico, Alan Shearer, England (1), Marc Wilmots, Belgium, Theodore Whitmore, Jamaica, Thuram, France.
One goal: Mutiu Adepoku, Nigeria, Sami al-Jaber, Saudi Arabia (1), Yousef al-Thinyani, Saudi Arabia (1), Darren Anderton, England, Celso Ayala, Paraguay, Tijani Babangida, Nigeria, David Beckham, England, Miguel Benitez, Paraguay, Laurent Blanc, France, Cuauhtemoc Blanco, Mexico, Craig Burley, Scotland, Jose Cardozo, Paraguay, John Collins, Scotland (1), Luigi Di Biagio, Italy, Edgar Davids, Netherlands, 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 Fjo, Norway, Ha Seok-ju, South Korea, Thomas Helveg, Denmark, Andreas Herzog, Austria (1), Victor Ikpeba, Nigeria, Adrian Ilie, Romania, Robert Jarni, Croatia, Martin Jorgensen, Denmark, Emil Kostadinov, Bulgaria, Michael Laudrup, Denmark (1), Garba Lawal, Nigeria, Bixente Lizarazu, France, Claudio Lopez, Argentina, Luis Enrique, Spain, Mehdi Mahdavi, Iran, Patrick Mboma, Cameroon, Brian McCarthy, United States, Benni McCarthy, South Africa, Sinisa Mihajlovic, Yugoslavia, Andreas Moeller, Germany, Peter Moeller, Denmark, Masashi Nakayama, Japan, Allan Nielsen, Denmark, Luc Nilis, Belgium, Pierre Njanka, Cameroon, Sunday Oliseh, Nigeria, Wilson Oruma, Nigeria, Marc Overmars, Netherlands, Predrag Mijatovic, Yugoslavia, Emmanuel Petit, France, Dan Petrescu, Romania, Hector Pinga, Argentina, Anton Polster, Austria, Leder Preciado, Colombia, Robert Prosniecki, Croatia, Raul Gonzalez, Spain, Kjetil Rekdal, Norway (1), Marc Rieper, Denmark, Ebbe Sand, Denmark, Pier Scholtes, England, Jose Sierra, Chile, Skander Souayah, Tunisia (1), Mario Stanic, Croatia, Dragan Stokovic, Yugoslavia, David Trezeguet, France, Pieter van Hoofdonk, Netherlands, Ivica Vastic, Austria, Goran Vlavovic, Croatia, Yoo Sang-chul, South Korea, Javier Zanetti, Argentina.

Own goals: Sinisa Mihajlovic, Yugoslavia, Tommy Boyd, Scotland, Yousef Chippo, Morocco, Pierre Issa, South Africa.

Chirac invites new Hungary Premier

BUDAPEST, July 9: Hungary's new Premier Viktor Orban will take his seven-year-old son Gaspar to watch with him the World Cup final on Sunday at the invitation of French President Jacques Chirac, reports AFP.
"This invitation is a vast honour, not only for me, but for Hungary as well," the 35-year-old said in a TV interview Wednesday hours after his new rightwing government was sworn in.
Orban, who himself regularly plays football in a Third-league Hungarian team, said his son "already understands a lot of this game and keeps his fingers crossed for the Brazilians."
Orban did not say which side he would be supporting in the match between Brazil and France.

Satisfied with security

PARIS, July 9 (AP): Security at the World Cup has been a success despite street violence that left a police officer in a coma and ravaged an historic section of France's third-largest city, officials in charge of order keeping said Thursday.
Dominique Spinosi, head of security for the French organising committee, and Horst Schmidt, her counterpart with FIFA, said there had been no trouble in stadiums and that violence in World Cup cities had been limited to two main confrontations.
They said years of planning and coordination with police and other government agencies in a 20 million dollars security programme involving 6,000 workers had assured a safe environment for the more than 2.5 million fans who peacefully attended the matches.
"We know it was a success, even though we acknowledge there have been incidents," Schmidt said.
Spinosi said organisers had

hundreds arrested.
At the other end of the country, the small city Lens was invaded the day of the Germany-Yugoslavia match by neo-Nazi groups from just across the border. Daniel Nivel, a 44-year-old police officer and father of two children, was beaten into a coma by a German thug wielding an iron bar.
Officials said that Nivel remained in a coma Thursday while "continuing day to day to show slight improvement in his condition."
Three Germans have been arrested in connection with that crime, the worst violence associated with the World Cup since 250 fans were arrested in fighting in Rimini, Italy, in 1990.
Schmidt and Spinosi repeated the position taken by other tournament officials that they could do only so much to secure areas away from the stadiums.



SUKER SPECIAL: Croatia's super striker Davor Suker (R) celebrates his fifth World Cup goal on July 8. — AFP photo