



WHEN ZIDANE CAME CLOSE: A long range effort from French playmaker Zinedine Zidane travelling towards the Croatian goal with custodian Drazen Ladic getting into position on July 8 at Saint Denis. The ball eventually just curled clear of the post. - AFP photo

# Vive Les Bleus

field, raised his arms and

cheered delightedly. "This is

For France, the country that

But some saw it as more: the

invented the World Cup, it was

an exquisite moment of soccer

most unifying thing that's hap-

pened here in a long time, bringing together old and

young, men and women, and

different social groups in a

Roming Paris Wednesday, it

was hard to imagine that at the

beginning of the tournament,

some French were less than

thrilled about the extravaganza

that would bring unruly crowds,

high prices and even worse

bands of kilted, singing Scots or

chanting south American fans.

But there were lots of Parisians

white and blue of the French

flag — even if for some, the rest of their attire was more suited

Philippe Vallot, 36, a com-puter executive, was headed for

with cheeks painted the red.

On the metro, there were no

traffic than usual.

for the office.

burst of patriotic enthusiasm.

final!" he said.

history.

PARIS, July 9 (AP): French fans poured out of cafes and bars, screaming with triumph and sheer delight late Wednes-day after their beloved "Blues" made history by reaching the World Cup final with a 2-1 victory over Croatia.

"It's a complete euphoria taking over France," yelled Geraldine Lessieux, 20, as she and hundreds of others ran into a small bar-lined street in Paris' Left Bank. "Each time France wins it's like a shot from a cannon."

"And I don't even like soccer that much."

France may not have the most diehard soccer fans in the world, but with the amazing success of their team, they have definitely caught World Cup fever. On Sunday, they will play in the final for the first time ever against defending champion Brazil. "We're going to the final!"

shouted hordes of fans pouring out of the stadium at Saint-Denis, a northern suburb, their faces smeared with paint. But first, they said they were headed for a night of partying.

"I'm going to the Champs-Elysees," shouted Thierry Menetrier, his face in red, white and blue of the French flag. "We're gonna party all night!"

The famous boulevard was already clogged with revelers minutes after the victory, with their numbers growing by the minute. The avenue was closed off to

traffic as thousands of fans marched triumphantly toward - what else - the Arc de Triomphe. Small clusters of riot po-

the game after work, in an elelice stood by. painted cheeks.

Draped in flags, the fans yelled in both French and English: "We won!" They were drowned out by a cacophony of "I don't know how long this feeling will last, but let's enjoy it now," he said acknowledging that many French are not the diehard fans found in South honking horns. "It's amazing" said Jerome Vive, 27, covered with war

America or some European countries, like Italy.
"At least we're all behind the paint. "The most beautiful final we could have hoped for — France and Brazil." French team for now," he said. After the final whistle at "Let's hope they win. It may Stade de France, President pass, but we'll have our memo-Jacques Chirac strode onto the

"We are going to party all night. And if we have to work truly the most beautiful day in French sports — France in the tomorrow, we'll work," said engineer Jean-Pierre Lebrun.

"Where are, where are, where are the Brazilians?" groups chanted defiantly, yelling louder as fans in Brazil's yellow and green colours walked by.

"We'll beat them," said a man playing his according on the

Dozens embarked on hazardous climb's up scaffolding. taking over balconies for a better view. A fan, his face wearing Tricolor war paint, stood on top of a telephone booth chanting to a crowd: "If you are proud to be French, clap your hands." Everyone clapped.

Chants of "we're in the final. we're in the final, we're, we're we're in the final," echoed all over the city. Car horns blared and smiling people of all ages danced in celebration.

Scenes of joy, too, in Montreal, Canada, where hundreds of French supporters invaded the streets singing the Marseillaise and waving flags.

"Long live Lilian Thuram," See page 14



IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES: Parisians go wild at Champs Elysees after the semifinal - AFP photo win over Croatia

# Bilic is a cheat?

raised his hand, but it is never a

sending-off. He (Bilic) went

down as if he'd punched him

Craig Brown believed the

France defender deserved to be

dismissed for raising his hand,

although he added that inci-

dents of play-acting were be-

the time," Brown said. "Bilic

made the most of that, but he

was man-handled. And you cer-

tainly can't touch someone's

it deserved to be an ordering-off

"Although it was a soft one,

"I do think it's happening all

coming the order of the day.

However, Scotland coach

and it's not that bad at all."

LONDON, July 9 (AFP/ Internet): Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson has led the criticism of Everton defender Slaven Bilic following Laurent Blanc's controversial red card during France's 2-1 World Cup semi-final victory over Croatia in Saint Denis.

Blanc will miss Sunday's final against Brazil following an incident with Croatian Bilic late in the second half.

Bilic fell to the ground clutching his face in the 74th minute after Blanc had pushed him on the chin.

"Bilic went down as if he'd been killed," said Ferguson. "Laurent raised his hand and some might say he had no excuse after doing so. But I don't go

along with that. "It's part of the Croatian culture to do that kind of thing and he won't worry about it for a second. There's no way he'll regret his actions, it's not in his nature.

"I do feel sorry for Laurent Blanc though. And I would let the lad play in the final." Ferguson also called for a

change in FIFA's disciplinary procedure. He said: "I've never known a

World Cup like this for cheating. Something has to be done about it and I would say that as a result of this, a panel should sit in judgement to look at the big decisions.

"If that means using video evidence, then so be it.

"He raised his hand, but the play-acting of Bilic was dreadful - but everybody is doing it."

Scotland international striker Ally McCoist claimed he was "embarrassed" for Blanc. "I was embarrassed for him watching that," McCoist said.

"Rules are rules and he

with one draw.

face like that.

Nantes in 1988.

Nantes, on the other hand. were living in the past and had and, unfortunately for Laurent Blanc, it was the biggest day of his life which will be ruined." Meanwhile, France coach Aime Jacquet is to lodge an ap-

pulsion. "We still hope Blanc can play in the final," Jacquet said Thursday. "He's been an exem-

peal against Laurent Blanc's ex-

plary leader for four years." But FIFA said Spanish referee Jose Garcia-Aranda's deci-

sion will stand and Blanc will be banned for the final. Communications director Keith Cooper said the sanction

would be decided by FIFA's dis-See page 14

## Jacquet 2, Blazevic 0 ST DENIS, France, July 9

(AFP/ Internet): France and Croatia had never met in an international match, let alone at the World Cup, but their respective coaches knew each other

Aime Jacquet of France and Miroslav Blazevic of Croatia came face to face on three occasions in the rough and tumble of French first division football, with Jacquet winning 2-0.

As Croatia teetered on the brink of a war of independence from Yugoslavia, Blazevic was

exiled in France as coach of Jacquet at the time was a former player who had won a few international caps and was

considered one of France's most successful club coaches after leading Bordeaux to three French championships.

yet to become the exciting force that won the championship in

Under bespectacled, chainsmoking Blazevic they never rose above mid-table. Jacquet had just guided Bor-

deaux to a third French championship when Blazevic crossed his path for the first time in October 1988.

The result was a 5-0 defeat for Blazevic's Nantes. A year later, after Jacquet

had quit Bordeaux and took over at Montpellier, the two met This time Blazevic had more

success but a lowly Montpellier still managed to hold Nantes to a 0-0 draw. Jacquet had again switched

clubs for their next encounter. He had taken over Nancy for the 1990 season and in September of that year. The third match between the two coaches ended in a 3-2 win for Nancy.

# Suker: The lucky loser

Croatia striker Davor Suker can still come out of the World Cup a winner despite his side losing 2-1 to France in their semifinal on Wednesday. Suker's strike 28 seconds af-

ter the break made him joint top-scorer in the competition with five goals. Gabriel Batistuta of Ar-

gentina and Christian Vieri of Italy share the top spot in the scoring charts with the Croat.

the competition, they could be overtaken by Suker if he can find the net in the 3rd place play-off with the Netherlands on Saturday.

"It's not important for me at the moment," said Suker, "the most important thing is that we beat the Netherlands. Suker said the key to his

scoring success in the tournament has been the service provided by the Croatian midfield.

day I got a great ball from Aljosa (Asanovic) which really should count as half a goal. My left foot just finished off the work," he added.

ing the number one scorer in the tournament is Brazil's Ronaldo.

### LATEST ODDS

LONDON, July 9 (Reuters): Brazil were still strongly favoured to win the World Cup final on Sunday despite France's victory over Croatia in the semifinals on Wednesday.

> 13-8 France Brazil are even money to win



GET UP: French goalkeeper Bernard Lama (R) lifting a visibly disappointed Croatian striker Davor Suker after the semifinal. - AFP photo

## "Ronaldo proved he is a great player. He was without a doubt the man-of-the-match," Pele

added. Brazilian appeals for a penalty were turned down minutes later when Ronaldo sprung the Dutch offside trap, but was tackled from behind by Edgar Davids just as he prepared to shoot with Van Der Sar at his

have given away a spot kick with a last-minute tackle that ended Ronaldo's run from the halfway line, albeit to frantic penalty appeals by the Brazil-

Ronaldo also hit home the first penalty in the shoot-out to set the tone for four perfect penalty kicks to put Brazil into their sixth World Cup final.

Ronaldo's skills have been with Barcelona and now Inter Milan, who paid the Catalan club a world record 30 million dollars for the striker last summer.

well as score them.

their pulsating 3-2 quarter-final victory over Denmark, and just as pleasing."

credentials to continue his scoring feats, with a near goal-

and international level. started.

In 1997, he found the back of the net in Brazil's 3-1 Copa America victory over Bolivia and also won the European Cup

Phillip Cocu, put the ball through the legs of keeper Edwin van der Sar for his 30th goal in 41 matches for Brazil. Sunday will be his fourth final "That was the most beautiful and the French defence will moment of the match," said need to be on their guard.

# France's public enemy No. 1 Banned Blanc's brave face

PARIS, July 9 (Reuters): Laurent Blanc tried to put on a brave face after seeing his dream of playing in the World Cup final shattered by a red card on Wednesday.

"Victory is the only thing that really counts," said Blanc, whose dismissal in France's 2-1 win over Croatia meant he will have to sit and watch when the host nation take on Brazil on Sunday as they aim to win the World Cup for the first time.

The 32-year-old libero, playing in his first and probably last finals, received his marching orders in the 74th minute of Wednesday's game at the Stade de France for pushing Croatian defender Slaven Bilic's chin with his open hand.

"I'm the only one who's punished and that's good," Blanc said. "The whole team might have been punished if we had lost the match because of me being sent off. It would have been awful. I would have felt guilty." Blanc said he had reacted

angrily after Bilic had let himself fall to the ground when the two went for the ball. "It was tense between us for

the whole match," he said. "I pushed him a bit but it was not nasty. He had tried to make the referee think that I had committed a serious offence and I was afraid I might get sent off. That's why I reacted like that. It

was silly but I don't think it deserved a red card." Bilic offered a different ver-

sion: "I tried to block him and he punched me in the face," he said. "I don't care about him. I didn't want him to be sent off but it was his stupid mistake. Let him be punished for it." French captain Didier De-

schamps, who was close to the incident, said he felt the sanction was severe. "He pushed him on the chest,

maybe on the chin, and the guy held his forehead as if he had been punched," he said.

"Bilic managed to convince the referee but really it wasn't worth a red card. We lose a great player who would have deserved

# Karembeu. doubtful

PARIS, July 9 (Reuters/ Internet): France's defensive midfielder Christian Karembeu is a doubtful starter for Sunday's World Cup final against Brazil because of a strained left ankle. a team spokesman said on Wednesday.

Karembeu sustained the injury in Wednesday's 2-1 victory over Croatia in the semifinal. He had to be substituted in the 31st minute of the game at the Stade de France.

to play a final and who will probably never get another chance," Deschamps added. "All we can do now is win it for him." After France failed to qual-

ify for the 1994 finals in the United States, Blanc considered ending his international career but changed his mind after some persuasion from coach Aime Jacquet. "The whole team did a fan-

tastic job and I played my part,"

Blanc said on Wednesday.

"Playing the final would have been the icing on the cake but never mind." The libero slot may now be filled by Frank Leboeuf and Deschamps said he had no doubt about the Chelsea player's abil-

"Frank's brilliant player and he gets on well with (stopper) Marcel (Desailly)." Deschamps said. "We all trust him and we're not worried.' But Jacquet said the absence

ity to take over Blanc's role.

of the towering Blanc might be a problem.

"It will be tough for us without him," he said. "I can't comment on the sending off because I haven't seen the video but I must say that, knowing the man and they player, I'd be surprised if he did anything really reprehensible."

Frank de Boer also could

PARIS, July (AFP/Internet):

The 'gendarmes' may be leaving

him alone, but Ronaldo will be

France's public enemy number

one in Sunday night's World

ties against Holland, the twice

world footballer of the year is

finally living up to his pre-

tournament hype after becom-

ing Brazils top scorer on the way to the World Cup final.

frenzied expectations with per-

formances on the pitch has

placed alarming pressures on

the shoulders of his 21-year-old

any doubts of his star quality in

their penalty shoot-out victory

over Holland where he had the

Dutch defence on red alert.

But Ronaldo surely dispelled

The Dutch rearguard were

continually having to deal with

his skill and pace with Frank

de Boer and Michael Reiziger

having most of the work in

second half as he was playing

too deep in the first period in

trying to get the service Bebeto

agonal ball from the left from

Rivaldo and, bustling past

was failing to provide.

Brazil legend Pele.

He was more effective in the

Ronaldo latched on to a di-

International Press Centre in Paris.

stopping the talented maestro.

Ronaldo's task to match

Arguably denied two penal-

Cup final.

frame.

on show in Europe's top flight

But if the Serie A has honed his ability to score goals under tight marking Zagallo has taught him to make goals as The Brazilian set up two in

admitted: "I like scoring. That's what people expect of me but helping team-mates score is Ronaldo clearly has all the

a-game average at both league What's more, he has scored in every cup final he has

winners final for Barcelona. And two months ago, he rounded off Inter Milan's UEFA Cup triumph with their third goal against Lazio in Paris.

UP FOR GRABS: A July 4 photo of (L-R) Adidas golden, silver and bronze boots to be

awarded to the best player and top goalscorer of the World Cup, on display at the

## Cheers from jail BORDEAUX, July 9 (Reuters/

Internet): French football fanaticism entered a solemn courtroom when the last words of a man being led away for a jail sentence were to cheer on the national side.

Court officials in this southwestern city said the 25year-old was sentenced to eight months imprisonment on Wednesday for theft, five of them suspended, just as France was settling down to watch the

semifinal. As he was being led out in handcuffs between two policemen, the man turned around and shouted to the court: "Allez la France" (Let's go France).

on Thursday.

were shown. France-Croatia World Cup

Iran were the cleanest side at the finals.

- AFP photo

13 -- and the highest average per match with a figure of 3.3. Cameroon were unrivalled when it came to sendings off,

The Netherlands were second best with 1.2 followed by Belgium, England, Jamaica, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Scotland and the United States on

Vogts stays put

coach of Germany with the mission of rebuilding the team, German football federation president Egidius Braun said Thursday. "We aim to find a new way of

Vogts, World Cup team chief Franz Bohmert and federation vice-president will be called in for a brainstorming session next week.

### Bad Boys of France '98 the biggest World Cup ever did PARIS, July 9 (Reuters/ In-

ternet): Chile and Cameroon came out worst in World Cup disciplinary records released

The figures showed that proportionally fewer yellow cards were handed out in France compared to the last tournament in the United States in 1994, but more reds

Chile, beaten 4-1 by Brazil in the second round, had the highest number of cautions --

with three from three matches. Iran, who also went out after the first round, had just three cautions from their three

an average of 1.3. Seventeen of the 32 teams in

BONN, July 9 (AFP/ Internet): Berti Vogts will stay as

working together to rebuild the team and there's no-one better to do that than Vogts," Braun

"We have to keep nothing back, to sat what we think worked and what didn't," Braun

not pick up a single red card in the tournament.

With two matches yet to be played -- Sunday's final between hosts France and champions Brazil and Saturday's third place playoff between the Netherlands and Croatia -bookings are down slightly.

making an average of 3.9. This compared to 228 issued in 52 matches of USA '94, an average of 4.4 that stands as the highest in World Cup history. By comparison, just 66 yellow cards were given out in 52

matches at the 1982 finals in

Spain, an average of 1.3.

were handed out in 62 matches.

A total of 241 yellow cards

The number of red cards crept up, with a record 21 players sent off in the 62 matches -including French defender Laurent Blanc in Wednesday's semifinal with Croatia. The average was 0.34, up

from 0.29 four years ago when 15 players were ordered off the

field. That compared with a re-

LONDON, July 9 (AP): No one

### cent low of eight reds at the 1986 finals in Mexico. Florist's touch!

will be rooting for Brazil to win Sunday's World Cup final more than Adrian Fitzpatrick. The Birmingham florist stands to become the biggest ever winner from a British

If Brazil win, it will bring his total World Cup winnings from bookmakers William Hill to 939,500 pounds (1.5 million dollars).

boókmaker.

lars) when Brazil won the Cup. having staked a 13,000-pound (20,000 dollars) accumulator bet. Now, he will land 544,500 pounds (871,200 dollars) if the Brazilians win again.

PARIS, July 9 (Reuters):

But with their teams out of

Suker said individual glory came second to team success.

"You can't score unless you get a chance," said Suker. "To-

The only other player with any realistic chance of becom-

In 1994, Fitzpatrick won 395,000 pounds (632,000 dol-Latest William Hill odds: 4-11 Brazil

> in 90 minutes play. A draw is 2-1 and France are 5-2 to win.