

IS IT A PLANE? IS IT A BIRD? IS IT SUPERMAN?
NO IT'S ZIDANE!
 JOHN PLAYER
GOLD LEAF LIGHTS

Victors & Vanquished

SAINT DENIS, France, July 13 (AFP/Reuters/Internet): France coach Aime Jacquet savored his moment of triumph after his team's 3-0 victory over Brazil here on Sunday.

"We are very proud; we worked very hard for this," said the 56-year-old who now steps down from the national coaching job.

"We didn't just want to be finalists. We have worked very hard for the last two years, and we justified everything on the pitch. We deserved to win."

Jacquet said his team improved as the tournament went on.

"We're developed a great understanding in the squad," he said. "We are all on the same wavelength, and as we got better, the public warmed to us."

"We had a stock of confidence, but we were let down by the press. I'll never forgive them."

Jacquet has been made a figure of fun by sections of the French press. The sports daily L'Equipe ran an anti-Jacquet campaign from the time he took over as national coach in 1993 after France failed to qualify for USA '94.

Disappointed Brazil coach Mario Zagallo, involved either as a player or on the coaching staff in all of his country's four World Cup wins, said his team just had not performed on the night.

"We lost to a better team," Zagallo said. "We lost it in the first half almost as soon as we went 1-0 down, and certainly at 2-0, that was virtually it."

"During the second half, we went for all-out attack, and we had the upper hand for a while."

But we weren't able to make the difference. That's the way football goes."

"A fifth title will just have to wait for another time," Zagallo said. "I would have loved it to be this time. We did everything we could, but it was not our day. France was the better side."

Zagallo, who is in his third stint in charge, is still officially the coach but, with his 67th birthday coming up in August, it is expected that the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) will bring in fresh blood.

He may be moved upstairs to act as a guide for a younger coach. "I would like to continue but let's wait and see what happens," he said.

Zagallo, who after his 1970 triumph could have become the first man to win two World Cups as coach, embraced rival trainer Aime Jacquet in a gesture of high sportsmanship.

But shortly afterwards he launched into a furious outburst at a Brazilian journalist, confirming his unpredictable reputation.

"I'm here because I am a man, I have the morale dignity to come up here and talk," he said after being asked a question he considered offensive.

"I'm trying to keep this conversation at a high level but you're trying to lower it. You (plural) owe me a lot."

Although the CBF may choose to look for a younger man, they are unlikely to find one with more enthusiasms.

Zagallo, who talks about the game and his country with a passion rare in other coaches and describes himself as being like a boy who had just started his career.

Rio reaction

RIO DE JANEIRO, July 13 (AFP/Internet): Brazil's stunning 3-0 loss to France in World Cup final Sunday was the "worst" in the country's football history, the Brazilian press proclaimed Monday.

"France is the champion; Brazil has suffered its worst defeat," headlined the daily Folha de Sao Paulo. In its sports pages, the paper ran just one photo -- its star player Ronaldo, head hanging -- on a blank page accompanied only by the despairing words "C'est la France!"

"France won indisputably, impeccably," it wrote, while criticising the home team for playing an "apathetic" game "as if they were not competing in the finals."

Rio's sports newspaper Lance featured a photo of Denilson lying on the ground, head in his hands. "Why?" it asked, mirroring the stupefaction of the football-crazy nation after their national team's unexpected "massacre."

The O Dia newspaper trumpeted "Final fiasco" across a printed copy of an invitation to a funeral.

The Tribuna da Imprensa called the defeat "Zagallo's Waterloo," referring to Brazil coach Mario Zagallo, and with withering scorn said that the Brazilian coach had "lost the decisive battle in the World Cup war."

"For the Jornal do Brasil, Brazil disappointed us and France is the victorious champion of the world."

And the Globo lamented that "France has postponed the dream of taking the penta." Brazil's much desired fifth world championship.

The daily Estado de Sao Paulo plaintively asked "What happened to Ronaldo?" The

football superstar played despite rumours that he was suffering from an injury.

In an attempt at optimism, the daily noted that the rout could have been worse if the French team had scored every time it had a chance.

But in a show of good sportsmanship, the Brazilian press unanimously agreed that "France deserved the victory."

Harsh in their criticism of Zagallo, they also said that an explanation of what had happened to Ronaldo was in order.

Twenty-four hours after the game, as hundreds of thousands jammed the Champs Elysees in Paris in celebration, the mood in Brazil was subdued, and most of the banners that had adorned towns and cities during the championship had already disappeared.

Bookie bonanza

LONDON, July 13 (Reuters/Internet): Bookmakers in Britain were celebrating their "best football result ever" after France beat Brazil 3-0 in the World Cup final on Sunday.

"That result has made us millions," said William Hill spokesman Graham Sharpe. "It must be the best football result ever, probably worth up to 10 million pounds (\$16.3 million) to the industry."

One big backer stood to make over 500,000 pounds (\$815,000) if Brazil had won. But after hedging his bets, he will still pick up more than 100,000 pounds (\$163,000).

Hill, who faced several big pay-outs had the Brazilians won, made France 10-1 to retain the cup in 2002 with Brazil as 5-1 favourite.

England is quoted at 16-1.



CHAMPS-ELYSEES' FINEST HOUR: Thousands of French fans assemble at Champs-Elysees, Paris on July 13 to celebrate the World Cup final victory over Brazil. —AFP photo

On top of the world

PARIS, July 13: France exploded into a giant street party early on Monday, recalling scenes from the 1944 liberation, as the entire country celebrated its 3-0 victory over Brazil in the World Cup final, reports Reuters.

Nearly one and a half million people packed the elegant Champs Elysees chanting, singing and dancing in a sea of red, blue and white flags, and lighting up the avenue with firecrackers.

At the top of the Champs Elysees, a big "Merci Zi Zou" bashed across the Arc de Triomphe, in recognition of France's new national hero, striker Zinedine Zidane, who scored the first two goals of the match.

Others honoured the Juventus midfielder, the poor son of Algerian immigrants, with a simple accolade, "Zidane for president."

Traffic ground to a halt, car horns blared and church bells pealed as France began a party which many said could last until the Bastille Day national holiday on Tuesday.

Some danced in fountains while others made makeshift footballs out of beer cans to imitate their heroes.

While in one bar fans danced to the wartime tunes of Glenn Miller, others jammed the mobile telephone network calling friends and family to share their joy.

Even the victorious team

had to start their dancing in the bus as crowds jamming the streets prevented them returning to their own party at their base in nearby Clarentfontaine.

"It is the best day of my life. I just want to kiss everyone," Parisian Philippe Girard said.

"We are going to party right to the end of the century," said a youth called Momo.

"You have the impression that every individual French person won the cup," French President Jacques Chirac told reporters on his return from the match. "You get the feeling that everyone was on the field kicking the ball."

Throughout the country fans draped in flags and with faces painted red, white and blue, stopped traffic and danced in the streets.

"This is unbelievable. I'm sure there weren't this many people out on liberation night," said 50-year-old Clarice Heurssen.

In Bordeaux some 30 Algerian supporters played an improvised match at half-time on victory square.

To the north in Lille, supporters waved a banner saying "We are with you, policeman," in homage to Daniel Nivel, seriously wounded after being beaten by hooligans in an earlier match between Germany and Yugoslavia. Since then the crowds have been mostly good-natured.

In Marseille, where Zidane grew up, the thousands packing the Mediterranean port reckoned it was their victory. "It was Marseille that won tonight. It was Zi Zou, he is one of us," said Abdel.

France has been traditionally reserved about supporting the national team, leaving out-

pourings of nationalism to other fans like the Scots or the Latin Americans.

At one point in the tournament, even the team was urging the fans to do better in the stadium to make their presence felt. But in the early hours of today that reserve had disappeared.

"We are full of emotion. I just can't explain what it feels like," said one young supporter, Marcel Algae.

"If we carry on like this, everything will be better," said unemployed Parisian Hervé Verite. "We know what we can do now."

Brazilians were embracing the French fans while leftover fans from other countries — from as far away as South Africa, Denmark and South America — were joining in the party.

"We are going to party all the way to Bastille Day," Mexican Jose Luis Velez said.

Earlier thousands packed into sites across the country where giant screens were relaying the match.

Outside the Paris town hall, the Hotel de Ville, thousands crammed the square, some climbing lampposts or clambering onto newspaper kiosks to see the game. A few, who had apparently fainted in the crush, were carried off by police.

Some 3,530 police had been called up to patrol areas around the four giant television screens in Paris, the metro transport system and the Champs Elysees. Hundreds more were sent to the futuristic Stade de France to watch the match where the French team was due to parade down the Champs Elysees this afternoon to celebrate its victory.

Vive la France

PARIS, July 13 (AP/ AFP/Internet): Nearly 70 years after a Frenchman created the World Cup, his countrymen finally own it.

Vive la France, champions of soccer after a stunning 3-0 rout of mighty Brazil. Jules Rimet, who came up with the idea for a world championship in this most popular of sports, would have loved it.

He would have loved Zinedine Zidane, the master playmaker from Marseille who turned into an unstoppable scorer Sunday night. He would have loved Fabien Barthez, the fierce-looking, bald-headed goalkeeper who allowed just two goals in the tournament -- and none to four-time champion Brazil.

Most of all, he would have loved joining the wild celebrations in space-age Stade de France and throughout a nation that rarely has been a sports power.

"We won the final because we wanted it the most," coach Aime Jacquet said. "It was the result

of hard work. We really worked as a team. There was good will and friendship between all of us."

Emmanuel Petit scored France's 1000th goal for the historic win in a fitting tribute to the nation.

France's victory came 94 years after FIFA was founded in Paris and 68 years after Frenchman Jules Rimet and Henri Delaunay organized the first finals.

In fact the acronym of football's world governing body FIFA stands for the French phrase Federation Internationale des Football Associations.

The 1990s has seen a growth in French football with their first ever European Cup champions Marseille in 1993 under the captaincy of Sunday night's skipper Didier Deschamps.

Then Paris Saint Germain won the European Cup Winners Cup in 1996.

Spain, Italy, Holland, Germany and England had been ruling the roost at different times in European club football

till Marseille's triumph. And on the international scene, France's 1984 European triumph apart, those European countries had generally done better at World Cup finals.

But France have now got patriotic French statisticians wringing their hands with boundless glee at the juicy figures served up by France 98.

It was France's first ever win, first ever final even, the sixth nation to win at home, only the seventh nation to claim the trophy in 16 finals.

France certainly did not slip up in the final to make up for their best ever previous performances, losing semi-finalists in 1958, 1982 and 1986.

France will also qualify automatically for the first World Cup of the third millennium when Japan and South Korea become the first Asian hosts.

Victory unites

PARIS, July 13(Reuters): If the pen is mightier than the sword, what about the football? With two goals in Sunday's World Cup final, Zinedine Zidane probably did more to damage the anti-foreigner National Front party than years of fine rhetoric from France's mainstream political forces.

The thousands of fans who parted through the heart of Paris in the early hours of today to celebrate France's dramatic 3-0 victory over Brazil had few doubts who was the nation's saviour.

"Zidane for president," they chanted, while the banner "Thank you Zi Zou" was flashed across the Arc de Triomphe, one of the most resonant symbols of the French Republic.

Yet Zidane, the son of Algerian immigrants, was one of the many players in the current French side who Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen has publicly written off for not being pure Gaul blood running through their veins.

"France has won the World Cup. Le Pen has lost," said Iticham Elmardhi, a young Frenchman from North African origin who joined the impromptu World Cup street party in the heaving Champs Elysees.

The triumphant success of France's multi-cultural soccer team over the past month has

lifted hopes that the country as a whole can patch up its deep racial divides.

"Le Pen can say what he likes but no one is listening any more. This team has shown that all types of people can win together," said Benoit Chiaramonti, a white French student proudly sporting a number 10 Zidane T-shirt.

Le Pen's National Front regularly polls 15 per cent of the vote in elections on a platform of repatriating tens of thousands of immigrants and giving preference in the workplace and social security to natural-born French.

But while most politicians have scrambled over themselves to share the glory of the French soccer team, the National Front has been uncharacteristically mute at a time of unprecedented national pride.

It is easy to see why. Besides Zidane, many of the other top team players are what Le Pen would call foreigners.

Lilian Thuram who scored both goals in France's semifinal win over Croatia is a black Frenchman from Guadeloupe. Marcel Desailly, for many the player of the tournament, and striker Thierry Henry are also

both of Caribbean descent. Midfielder Youri Djorkaeff is the descendant of Armenian refugees.

"It is thanks to us foreigners that France won tonight. We're going to need a bit more respect," said Evelyn Vergerolle, a middle-aged Frenchwoman of Caribbean ancestry.

In the southern port city of Marseille, where Zidane grew up and which suffers possibly the worst race relations of all big French towns, tensions were shunted to the sidelines -- at least for one night.

"In all the time I've lived here I've never really established any contacts with my North African neighbours," said one white local, Jean-Patrick. "But Zidane changed that tonight. For the first time I shook my neighbour's hand. I don't even know his name."

But not everyone was about to get carried away by the wave of feel-good French unity.

"They can't claim him as theirs now. You must write that Zidane is an Algerian. He is the best player in the World and he is Algerian," insisted 19-year-old Mounir Lade as he strode through Paris clutching an Algerian flag.

Adios Dunga!

PARIS, July 13 (Reuters): Brazil's captain Dunga bowed out of international soccer in the World Cup final on Sunday.

Dunga, a 34-year-old instantly recognisable by his all-black permanent snarl and a spiky haircut designed to make him look aggressive, announced during the competition that he would stop playing for the national team after the World Cup.

Dunga, who missed the chance to become the first man to lift the trophy for a second time after captaining Brazil's triumphant team in 1994, brought down the curtain on a 89-cap career which began against England in 1987.

He played in the 1990 World Cup but was made the scapegoat for Brazil's disappointing performance after they were knocked out in the second round, he did not play again until 1993.

"We've won once and reached one final in the last eight years. We hadn't been to a final in the previous 24. Football is won on small details," were his parting words.

ZAGREB, July 13 (Reuters/Internet): Croatia's jubilant soccer team returned home on Sunday to a welcome fit for heroes after winning third place in its first World Cup finals.

At least 100,000 people swarmed along the route from the airport and in a central Zagreb square, clad in red and white checkered team shirts and waving Croatian flags.

"Fiery ones, we're proud of you -- Zagreb airport," read a huge banner attached to the airport building. The team is commonly known as the "fiery eleven."

The team, which arrived nearly an hour later than expected after flight delays, was greeted by government officials.

Crowds of people lined the 20-kilometre (12-mile) route from the airport into the city and cheered ecstatically as the team was driven by in a bus, led by cars bedecked with the checkered pattern and people waving flags out of sunroofs.

Some 30,000 people warmed

up to local rock bands at the city centre party, and the players arrived to a chaotic scene. They pulled one youth after another onto the stage as they fainted in the crush and began to look nervous as it became crowded.

A placard behind the stage was decorated with a huge red and white football with the names of each player around it and "Ciro Majstovic" (Ciro the master) in big black letters, after the nickname of 63-year-old coach Miroslav Blazevic.

He has become a national hero in the past month -- in 1996 there were calls for his dismissal after Croatia lost to Germany in the quarterfinals of the European Championship in England.

For the fans, Blazevic's prediction that the players "are so brilliant that they need only a little guidance to set them off on the road to glory" has come true. They beat the Netherlands 2-1 on Saturday to take third place in the finals.

ROLL OF HONOUR

PARIS, July 13 (Reuters): Sunday's World Cup final between France and Brazil was the 16th in the tournament's 68-year history.

France became only the seventh team to have won the title and only 11 have appeared in the final, all from Europe or South America.

Year	Winner	Runners-up	Venue
1930	Uruguay 4	Argentina 2	Montevideo
1934	Italy 2	Czechoslovakia 1	Rome
1938	Italy 4	Hungary 2	Paris
1950	Uruguay 2	Brazil 1	Rio de Janeiro
1954	West Germany 3	Hungary 2	Berne
1958	Brazil 5	Sweden 2	Stockholm
1962	Brazil 3	Czechoslovakia 1	Santiago
1966	England 4	West Germany 2	London
1970	Brazil 4	Italy 1	Mexico City
1974	West Germany 2	Netherlands 1	Munich
1978	Argentina 3	Netherlands 1	Buenos Aires
1982	Italy 3	West Germany 1	Rome
1986	West Germany 3	West Germany 2	Mexico City
1990	West Germany 1	Argentina 0	Rome
1994	Brazil 0	Argentina 0	Los Angeles
1998	France 3	Brazil 0	Paris



French President Jacques Chirac (2nd from L), national team captain Didier Deschamps (3rd from L), former captain and co-president of the World Cup Organising Committee Michel Platini and suspended defender Laurent Blanc during the prize giving ceremony. —AFP photo



OUTPLAYED, OUTCLASSED: Brazilian booters contemplate what went wrong after the final at Stade de France. —AFP photo