

A hattrick to forget



LUQUE, Paraguay, July 5: Argentina striker Martin Palermo looked like he wished Nostradamus' prediction that the world would end Sunday had come true after missing an astonishing three penalties during his side's 3-0 defeat by Colombia in a Copa America Group C match here Sunday, reports AFP.

The Boca Juniors striker must have wished the earth would part and swallow him up after recording an unwanted hattrick that left football statisticians around the world reaching for the record books.

Palermo is known as 'El Loco' (the madman) in Argentina. And few would dispute that nickname after his bizarre performance against the Colombians.

Despite his triple bungle Palermo is seen as one of the brightest stars in the Argentine game and had made a superb start to the Copa America with two goals in his side's opening victory against Ecuador.

The player was earlier this year voted the best footballer in South America -- no mean feat.

His consistency for Argentinian champions Boca has earned him many admirers and Spanish Primera Liga side Atletico Madrid are one of many top European sides to have been linked with the well-built forward.

But his unpredictable behaviour has landed him in trouble in the past with referees. He was reported to the police after an unusual goal celebration with Boca teammate Juan Riquelme. Palermo dropped his shorts and simulated a lewd act with his teammate.

Palermo did not take long to make his somewhat idiosyncratic mark on what turned out to a thrilling match with Colombia.

After four minutes Argentina were awarded the first penalty of the match when the dangerous Palermo panicked Colombian defender Alexander

Viveros into handling needlessly. The striker placed the ball on the spot but his powerful left-shot crashed against the crossbar.

Five minutes later Colombia's Ivan Cordoba converted the only successful penalty of the match -- five were awarded in all with Cordoba's teammate Hamilton Ricard also missing from the spot.

After 75 minutes another penalty was awarded to Argentina -- the score was still 1-0 at that stage.

Viveros again handled under pressure from Palermo all though this time it was doubtful if there was any intent.

Palermo took responsibility for the kick again but this time blasted the ball over the bar.

In injury-time Paraguayan referee Ubaldo Aquino awarded

a third penalty to Argentina -- somewhat harshly -- after Palermo tumbled in the box.

Creditably Palermo again showed willing with none of his teammates making any effort to persuade him to relinquish the task.

This time he went for placement instead of power but Colombian keeper Miguel Calero dived to his left and pushed the ball out.

Palermo hung his head in despair.

However, the only predictable thing about Palermo is his unpredictability. It remains to be seen whether it is the Dr Jekyll or Mr Hyde side of his character that will be the fore when Argentina tackle Uruguay in their last Group C match.

But Palermo is quite capable of confounding his critics yet again.



Argentina's prolific striker Martin Palermo is furious after missing the second penalty shot against Colombia on July 4.

Ferdinand Roma bound?

ROME, July 5 (Reuters/Internet): Roma hope to complete the signing of West Ham's England international defender Rio Ferdinand this week, a spokesman for the Italian Serie A club said on Monday.

The deal should be concluded within a couple of days, he said, adding Roma chairman Franco Sensi would travel to London for talks with West Ham on Monday or Tuesday.

Roma have offered about 21 million dollars for the 20-year-old, who has been capped six times by England, according to media reports.

Sports daily La Gazzetta dello Sport even reported on Monday that Ferdinand had already agreed to a five-year contract worth about 1.1 million dollars a year. Roma declined to discuss financial details.

Roma turned to Ferdinand after Tottenham Hotspur blocked Roma's approach for skipper Sol Campbell.

They tell me that Ferdinand is better than Campbell, but the reason we are not doing it is not to do with money, but because Tottenham did not want to sell him, Sensi said.

Although Ferdinand, whose cousin Les plays for Spurs, is only 18 months into a seven-year contract worth 20,000 pounds (31,530 dollars) a week, West Ham would not stand in his way of a transfer if Roma offered enough money.

He was developed by the Hammers as a trainee and although he has played less than 100 league matches since making his debut in the 1995-96 season, has the potential to be a fixture in the England team for many years.

However his transfer is bound to be very unpopular with West Ham's supporters for whom he is a huge favourite.

World Student Games US natants profit on Day Two

PALMA DE MALLORCA, Spain, July 5: The United States dominated events in the swimming pool on the second day of the World Student Games on Sunday, reports Reuters.

The Americans won three of the six titles on the opening day of the six-day swimming programme, thanks to Cara Lane, Mark Warkentin and the women's 4x200 metres freestyle relay.

Lane, a University of Virginia student, picked up the first swimming gold by winning the women's 800 metres freestyle in eight minutes 42.62 seconds from Jana Pechanova of the Czech Republic.

Warkentin, who has just finished his freshman year at the University of Southern California, scored a narrow win in the men's 200 metres freestyle, leading all the way but touching just 0.08 seconds ahead of Frenchman Lionel Poirot in 1:51.30.

Warkentin was ironically a late entrant in the event. He is scheduled to swim in four more events and will be favourite to complete a freestyle double in Wednesday's 400.

"It was the first time I've ever had the Stars and Stripes raised for me. I've only ever seen it happen for others on television, it was quite an emotional moment," he said.

The US quartet in the women's 4x200 metres freestyle relay ended the night on a high note, winning by nearly five seconds in 8:13.41.

After a good start by Rada Owen they were unchallenged when Kimberley Black swam her second leg in 2:01.10, more than a second faster than anyone else on the night.

Caroline Kilian and Kathryn Zimbardo brought the Americans home way ahead of Italy, who won the silver medals ahead of Britain.

Hana Cerna of the Czech Republic achieved an impressive victory in the women's 400 metres individual medley, fighting off an early challenge by Romania's Catalina Casaru to win in four minutes 46.03 seconds. Casaru was second in 4:48.52.

David Burroni won Italy's first gold medal of the games and the first title in the fencing tournament by beating Ukraine's Oleksandr Gorbachuk 15-12 in the final.

TODAY'S MATCHES

Bolivia vs Japan
5:00 am (BST)
Paraguay vs Peru
7:00 am (BST)

Colombia crush Argentina



LUQUE, Paraguay, July 5: Sixteen-year-old Jhonatan Montano scored for Colombia while Martin Palermo missed three penalties for Argentina as the Colombians won an amazing Copa America game 3-0 while Marcelo Zalayeta's double strike gave Uruguay a crucial win over Ecuador in Group C matches on Sunday, reports Reuters.

COLOMBIA-ARGENTINA

Montano scored his team's first goal with a spectacular dipping shot from 25 metres in the 82nd minute but his incredible effort, one of the best of the tournament, would never have been possible without Palermo's wayward shooting.

Palermo two-goal hero of Argentina's 3-1 win over Ecuador on Friday, missed a penalty which would have given his team an early lead and another which would have given them a second-half equaliser.

He completed an unfortunate hatrick by seeing a third effort saved in the last minute, by which time Colombia were three goals ahead in the group C games.

Colombia were also awarded two penalties, Ivan Cordoba converting one and Hamilton Ricard missing the other. Edwin Congo scored Colombia's second goal two minutes after coming on as a second half substitute with Montano providing the coup de grace.

Argentina's frustration was complete when Javier Zanetti was sent off for a crude body check on Rubiel Quintana in the 67th minute.

Colombia went top of the group with a maximum six points from two games, while Argentina, with three points, are behind Uruguay, who they meet Wednesday in their final group game, on goal difference.

The match got off to an electric start with two penalties in the first ten minutes.

The first went to Argentina for handball in the fifth minute but Palermo blasted his shot against the crossbar.

Five minutes later, it was Colombia's turn after Roberto Ayala fouled Arley Betancourt. Defender Ivan Cordoba stepped forward and calmly scored with a shot into the far corner.

After that initial exchange, Argentina enjoyed long periods of possession and created several good chances but excellent defending by Jorge Bermudez and Ivan Corboba kept them at bay.

Bermudez, in particular, won the duel with Palermo, his team-mate at Argentine champions Boca Juniors.

Colombia, who achieved their first win over Argentina since their historic 5-0 triumph in Buenos Aires six years ago, showed plenty of neat footwork in midfield and had a goal disallowed for a foul just before halftime.

Three minutes into the second half, Colombia were awarded their second penalty for a foul on Hamilton Ricard. Ivan Cordoba stepped up again but Middlesbrough striker Ricard, who has yet to score in the tournament, sent Cordoba back, took the kick himself and saw his weak shot saved by German Burgos.

Argentina continued to press until Zanetti was sent off. Shortly afterwards, in the 75th minute, they were awarded a second penalty when Alexander Viveros handled but this time, Palermo fired his shot high over the crossbar.

Two minutes later, Congo, who had just come on as a substitute, scored Colombia's second to effectively seal the points.

But the drama did not end there. With three minutes left, Montano, who had caused the Argentines continuous problems since coming on, scored his first international goal.

Finally, Argentina were awarded the game's fifth penalty. Palermo immediately offered to take it and this time hit the target, only to see Miguel Calero save his effort.

URUGUAY-ECUADOR

Zalayeta scored twice in three minutes to give Uruguay a 2-1 win over Ecuador in the day's opening fixture.

Zalayeta took advantage of a simple chance in the 72nd minute when the Ecuador defence failed to clear a cross from the right to score his team's first goal of the competition in an evenly balanced game.

The 20-year-old striker, the only foreign-based player to start the game for Uruguay, headed a second from a similar position in the 74th minute from a cross by Leonel Pili.

Anand outwits computer

FRANKFURT, July 5: Indian Grand Master Viswanathan Anand, known as the 'tiger of Madras', today beat Fritz, the programme in Siemens computer on the last day of the chess classics here, reports AFP.

Number two in the world classification, Anand, 29, first drew twice against Fritz before achieving victory.

Then, playing black, he managed to mate Fritz in 46 moves. A draw in the fourth game ensured victory.

Anand's victory on behalf of the human race offset a defeat of world champion Garry Kasparov by the super-computer Deep Blue in May 1997.



Uruguay's Gabriel Alvarez (R) and Ecuadorian Holger Quinonez (C) fight for possession during their Copa America clash in Luque, Paraguay on July 4.

STANDINGS

ASUNCION, July 5 (Reuters): Copa America standings after Sunday's games:

| Team | P | W | D | L | GP | GA | Pts |
|----------|---|---|---|---|----|----|-----|
| Peru | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| Paraguay | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Bolivia | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Japan | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 0 |

Results: June 29 — Paraguay 0 Bolivia 0, Peru 3, Japan 2; July 2 — Paraguay 4 Japan 0, Peru 1 Bolivia 0.

Remaining fixtures: July 5 — Bolivia v Japan, Paraguay v Peru.

| Team | P | W | D | L | GP | GA | Pts |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|----|----|-----|
| Brazil | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 1 | 6 |
| Chile | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| Mexico | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Venezuela | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 10 | 1 |

Results: June 30 — Mexico 1 Chile 0, Brazil 7 Venezuela 0; July 3 Chile 3 v Venezuela 0, Brazil 2 Mexico 1.

Remaining fixtures: July 6 — Venezuela v Mexico, Brazil v Chile.

| Team | P | W | D | L | GP | GA | Pts |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|----|----|-----|
| Colombia | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 6 |
| Uruguay | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Argentina | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Ecuador | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 0 |

Results: July 1 — Colombia 1 Uruguay 0, Argentina 3 Ecuador 1; July 4 — Colombia 3 Argentina 0, Uruguay 2 Ecuador 1.

Remaining fixture: July 7 — Ecuador v Colombia, Uruguay v Argentina.

Note: Top two in each group plus the two best third-placed teams qualify for the quarter-finals. Peru and Brazil already qualified.

COPA CAPSULES

UNDATED, July 5 (Reuters/AP): Latest Brazilian sensation Ronaldinho is hoping to follow his famous namesake Ronaldo and play for Spanish champions Barcelona.

Ronaldinho, full name Ronaldo Assis, sprang to world attention last week with a stunning goal in Brazil's 7-0 victory over Venezuela in the Copa America.

And the 19-year-old, whose brief substitute appearance saw him upstage the likes of Ronaldo and Rivaldo, was today quoted as saying he is ready to follow the same path to European soccer riches.

"I can't afford to miss out on the opportunity of playing in Europe," Ronaldinho told Barcelona-based newspaper Sport. "My future after the Copa America has to be in Europe."

"At the moment it would be better to play in Spain than Italy. Many of my teammates are already playing in Spain."

"I'm sure that choosing Barcelona would be a great opportunity because Romario, Ronaldo and Rivaldo have all been there. They've always had Brazilians in their team."

The confident youngster added: "I don't think I'm too young to play in Europe. I'm already used to playing abroad with my club, Grenio."

"I could play for any team... I'm certainly brave enough to play at the Nou Camp."

POOR SALAS!

Chile striker Marcelo Salas was given a two-match Copa America suspension on Sunday

after being sent off for diving in Saturday's 3-0 win over Venezuela.

Organisers also said that Brazilian playmaker Rivaldo, sent off for a violent tackle in the 2-1 win over Mexico, had been given a one-match ban along with midfielder Emerson Ferreira, who picked up his second yellow card in the same match.

Salas' punishment appeared harsh while Rivaldo seemed to get off lightly.

Salas received his marching orders after twice being shown the yellow card for diving, although replays suggested that in the first case he had been genuinely fouled while on the second occasion he had his hair pulled by a Venezuelan defender.

Rivaldo, on the other hand, was guilty of a vicious challenge as he picked up his second red card in four internationals.

His ban is also meaningless as it will be for Brazil's final Group B game against Mexico and his side are already through to the quarter-finals.

ALVAREZ KNEW IT

Colombian coach Javier Alvarez confidently predicted victory against rival Argentina. On Sunday, Alvarez's look into the future proved correct as his team beat Argentina 3-0.

The stakes were high: Bragging rights and an early chance to move into the Copa America quarter-finals. And as happens in games between two heated adversaries, the match turned on some unexpected plays.

Colombia got their second

straight win on goals by Ivan Cordoba, Johnnier Montano, and Edwin Congo to gain a spot in the quarterfinals.

Alvarez boldly predicted the win on Thursday, after Colombia edged Uruguay in their opening match, 1-0. Even his players joined assured victory and promised no respect for any opponent.

Alvarez heaped praise on his players after the win. "They made it real clear they came to score, enjoy themselves and put on a show for the people," he said.

The win was big news back home. Colombian television replayed images of the team's 1993 victory over the Argentines, a 5-0 drubbing during 1994 World Cup qualifying.

Even President Andres Pastana weighed in, offering his own post-game analysis to Colombian radio station Radionet.

"This is a national team that isn't defensive, but offensive, one that is thinking of winning and always looking to score," Pastana said.

Sunday brought a dramatic turnaround for Argentina's Martin Palermo.

The Boca Juniors star forward seemed to have put mediocre performances on Argentina's national team behind him with a two-goal showing in Argentina's opening 3-2 win over Ecuador.

Sunday was different. Palermo missed all three of his penalty kicks, including one errant shot that sailed over the goal.

Pele's nightmare for MU

UNDATED, July 5 (Internet Report): Pele last night exposed the foolishness of Manchester United's decision to pull out of this season's FA Cup in favour of the World Club Championship in Brazil.

The most famous footballer in the world joined the row which is splitting English football when he claimed his own country is incapable of staging a major tournament.

In a grim warning to United manager Alex Ferguson, Pele said: "We do not have one stadium which is up to World Cup standard or could even meet the minimum conditions laid down by FIFA. Not even the Maracana. It's in a terrible state."

The row over United's decision to play in Brazil next January reached boiling point as Fergie's Treble-winning squad prepared to return to pre-season training today.

Sports Minister Tony Banks claimed he did not force United to withdraw from the FA Cup - while Ferguson insisted their hand was forced in order to help England's 2006 World Cup bid.

Banks said: "Ultimately it was United's decision to take part in world club competition." But Fergie retorted: "It was clear that what the FA and Government wanted was for us to be in Brazil next January."

United's move may be a source of huge regret when they hear a list of chilling warnings for their stars. They Safety fears about the world famous Maracana Stadium which "should be blown up," according to Brazil's former FIFA president Joao Havelange, who says it is "falling apart."

Major security risks as the murder rate in Sao Paulo was 7,500 in 1995 - which is 50 times the rate in London.

Foreign Office advice to tourists not to resist muggers as many are armed, and to "avoid the central area after dark".

Reports of widespread credit card fraud and drug trafficking. News that cholera is close to epidemic levels as mosquito-borne diseases are on the increase.

Quotes from 1970 World Cup winner Tostao describing Brazilian football as "the most violent in the world". Two Brazilian teams - Vasco da

Wanderley pulls for Ronaldo

FOZ DE IGUAZU, Brazil, July 5: Brazil coach Wanderley Luxemburgo defended star striker Ronaldo Sunday after the Inter Milan forward was criticised by some Brazil fans for his performance in the team's Copa America matches with Venezuela and Mexico, reports AFP.

Ronaldo scored twice in the 7-0 win over Venezuela and set up the opener for Amoroso in the 2-1 triumph over Mexico but has still come under fire.

Luxemburgo said: "Against Mexico Ronaldo played one of his best matches in a Brazil shirt since the World Cup."

Ronaldo himself drew a positive lesson from the flak and said: "I prefer hearing reactions like that because the fans still expect a lot from me. Of course I always try to do what I can."

Gama and Corinthians - will be playing in the eight-team tournament.

Pele is furious that the Brazilian government should even consider holding this event and bidding for the 2006 World Cup while the nation is in such demise.



PELE

Pele said: "I don't think Brazil is capable now of hosting a World Cup. It really is time to stop deceiving the people."

"Look at the battle going on between England and Germany. We couldn't compete with that."

"I don't think Brazil could be ready for ten years. We don't have one stadium which is up to the minimum conditions laid down by FIFA." The Maracana could hold 200,000 fans when it

was built to stage the 1950 World Cup - but now it is not considered safe to house half that number.

The Dutch international team were horrified by the lack of facilities they encountered at the stadium when they played two friendlies in Brazil in May.

It left Holland boss Frank Rijkaard declaring: "We took every possible precaution but still the heat, the food and the water got to us."

"It's not healthy for highly-trained European athletes. The Dutch took all their own food and a personal chef but ten players were still struck down by stomach bugs. Six of their stars had to flee the pitch during the game - and the match was delayed for 25 minutes while they rushed to the filthy toilets as they suffered stomach bugs."

The Dutch stars also warn of pitch invasions from fans among the 100,000 flare-firing crowd, which sparked a brutal response from armed riot police.

Holland skipper Frank De Boer said: "I've been all around the world to Asia, America, Europe and Russia with Ajax and the national side, but I've never experienced a trip like that."

"It wasn't just the food, water and hygiene - other conditions do not make it easy either. United will have to face temperatures of up to 112C during the height of the day."

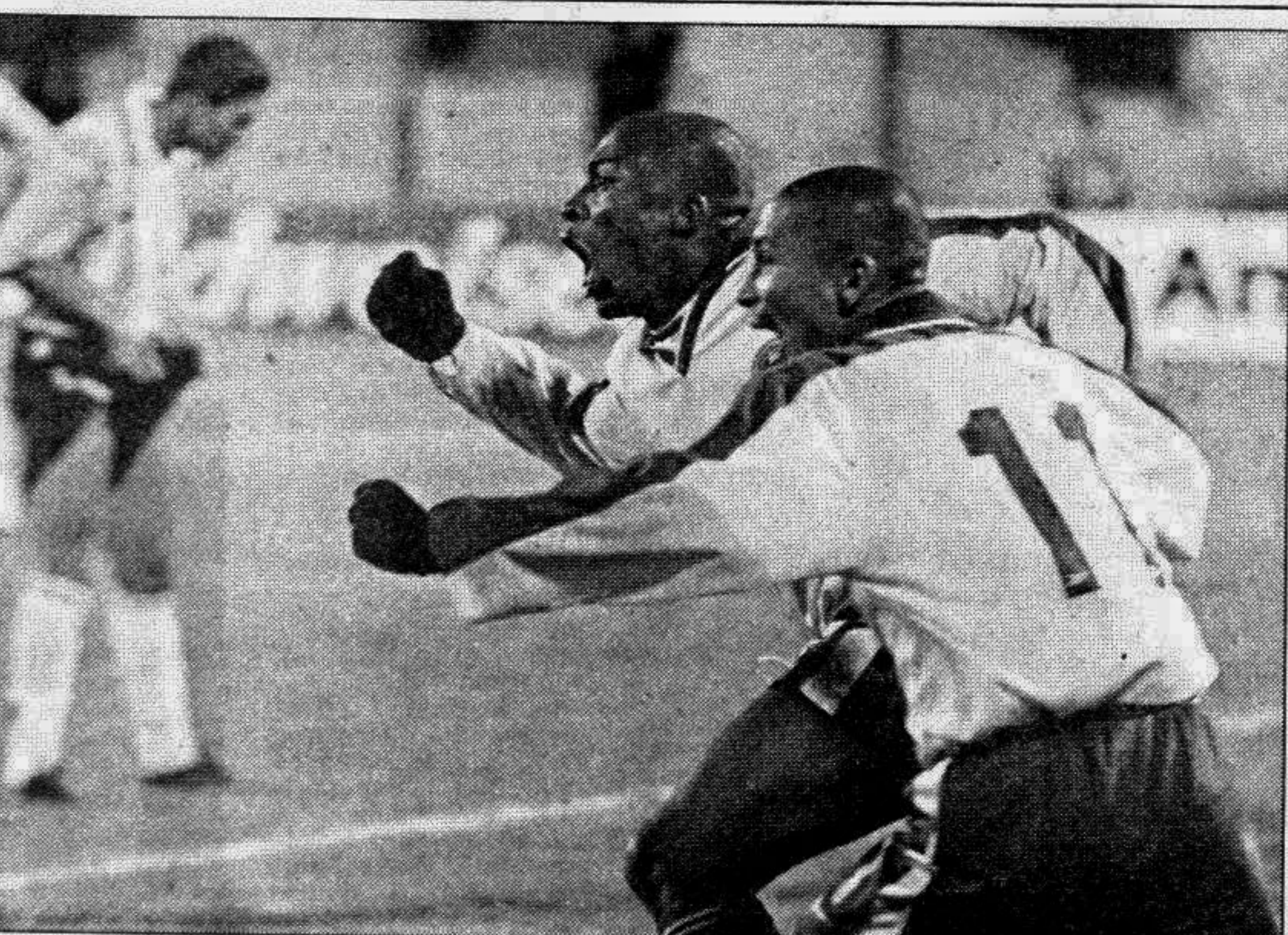
"Players get so dehydrated in those conditions and overall the hygiene standards are difficult."

"I wouldn't like to go there in the middle of a European season because it takes such a long time to get over it."

Ferguson last night admitted he is concerned about the health and security fears.

He added: "We are looking at everything we can to make the trip a success. We are looking at the food, medical care and travel arrangements."

"We'll ensure everything is done to ease the strain."



Colombians Henry Zambrano (R) and Edwin Congo are ecstatic after their team's second goal against Argentina in the Copa America on July 4.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

- Dog's dogs
- Method
- Navigator's
- Theater
- Lemieux
- milieu
- Beelzebub's
- specialty
- McCarm
- bridge or
- Ruehl
- Gambing
- city
- Thickness
- Pantheon
- Piece of
- hardware
- Do
- yardwork
- Address
- Furies
- Sought
- one's hand
- Finished
- Whale
- group
- Title
- Compo-
- ment of
- Across
- Sluggo's
- friend
- B & B
- Guy's

DOWN

- and
- Circum-
- stance"
- First victim
- Lean and
- 24 Ms.
- Gardner
- Solidity
- Rotating
- part
- 27 Heavy
- weight
- 28 List-ending
- abbr.
- 29 Hudson
- co-star
- 31 Holster
- occupant
- 34 Squid squirt
- 35 DEA
- employee
- 37 injured in
- the bulling
- 38 Bloke
- 39 Stash
- 40 Acknowl-
- edge
- 41 Goat's-
- milk
- cheese
- 42 San -
- 43 Jason's
- ship
- 44 Visibility
- hindrance
- 46 Pie filling?
- 47 Mork's
- home
- planet

Solution time: 27 mins.

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

1. Dog's dogs 2. Method 3. Navigator's 4. Theater 5. Lemieux 6. milieu 7. Beelzebub's 8. specialty 9. McCarm 10. bridge or 11. Ruehl 12. Gambing 13. city 14. Thickness 15. Pantheon 16. Piece of 17. hardware 18. Do 19. yardwork 20. Address 21. Furies 22. Sought 23. one's hand 24. Finished 25