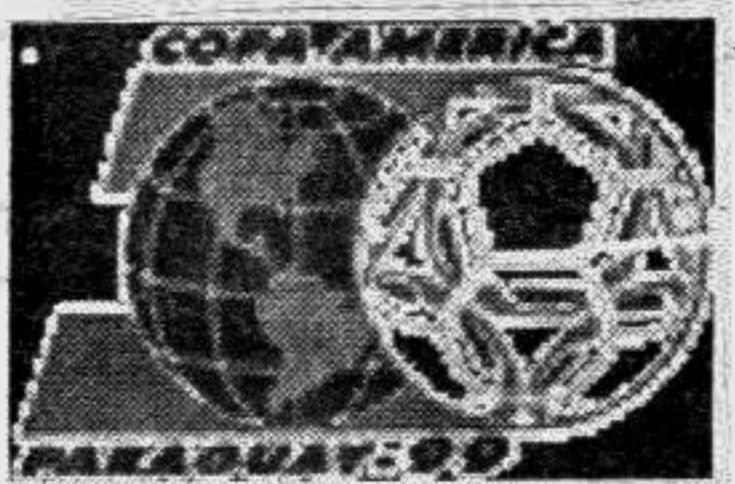


Managers' moment of truth



CIUDAD DEL ESTE, Paraguay, July 10 (AFP): Wanderley Luxemburgo and Marcelo Bielsa lead eternal rivals Brazil and Argentina into Copa America quarterfinal battle Sunday night, knowing that a hitherto gentle introduction to international management is about to turn into a white knuckle ride.

Luxemburgo took over the hottest seat in international football last year from Mario Zagallo in the wake of Brazil's 3-0 World Cup Final defeat by France, which was seen as a national disaster.

Zagallo, uniquely, was the one man to have been associated with all four of Brazil's World Cup triumphs.

A player in 1958 and 1962, Zagallo was coach to the legendary 1970 winners and was technical adviser to the 1994 champions coached by Carlos Alberto Parreira.

So Luxemburgo's appointment was truly a new start for the most successful team in World Cup history.

But now as the team enters the knockout stages of the Copa America — against their biggest rivals to boot — Luxemburgo knows he is doing the football equivalent of dipping his toe in the nearby Parana river.

If Argentina prevail in this clash of the continent's big fish Luxemburgo will undergo the media equivalent of being

thrown to the piranhas that infest the rivers in these parts.

The former Corinthians boss saw his team win all three Group B matches (against Venezuela, Mexico and Chile) but has enjoyed frosty relations with the ever-critical media.

But Luxemburgo has shown himself to be an assertive coach.

He has swept away the USA '94 old guard in the shape of Romario, Dunga and Taffarel. And he has dumped troublemakers such as Edmundo, Leonardo and Edilson without ceremony.

He has put his faith in youth by pitching in newcomers such as Palmeiras midfielder Alex and Gremio striker Ronaldo Gauchao (also known as Ronaldo Assis or Ronaldinho).

But for the titanic encounter with Argentina he brings back experienced trio Rivaldo, Emerson and Cafu.

Skipper Cafu was bullish going into the clash, saying: "It is a classic, an eliminator and we want to win it."

Striker Ronaldo was equally determined, adding: "We know that there will be much provocation but we have been trained to avoid them and leave the picture."

The Boca Juniors said: "It is a special feeling to play in this encounter and furthermore we know it is crucial because who ever loses will go home."

Palermo partly atoned for his triple trauma with a goal against Uruguay but the Brazil clash provides him with a real opportunity to silence his critics — and put two of his rivals for Copa America top scorer out of the picture.

The Boca Juniors said: "It is

the comprehensive 3-0 Group C defeat by Colombia.

But history is on the side of Bielsa. While Brazil's record at world level is unmatched Argentina have eclipsed their rivals at continental level. Argentina have 14 Copa America titles — a figure matched only by Uruguay, while Brazil can boast only five.

Standing next to Bielsa in the sights of the critics is Argentine striker Martin Palermo.

Palermo is joint top scorer of the Copa with three goals so far alongside Brazil duo Ronaldo and Amoroso and Paraguay's teen wonder Roque Santa Cruz.

But his unpreceded three penalty misses against Colombia has earned him an unwanted place in the record books and has made him famous around the world for all the wrong reasons.

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a special feeling to play in this encounter and furthermore we know it is crucial because who ever loses will go home."

Palermo sustained a black eye in the Uruguay match but Bielsa and the Argentinian doctors have indicated he will play.

Another boost for Bielsa is that playmaker Ariel Ortega is once again available for selection.

Ortega missed the group matches as he was serving a ban after being sent off in 1998's World Cup quarterfinal defeat by Holland.

Bielsa has already had to don his flak jacket once after

defeat by Colombia.

Colombia, meanwhile, are strongly fancied to beat Chile in Sunday's other quarterfinal match.

Chile will have to do without suspended striker Marcelo Salas, who was sent off against Venezuela.

Colombia won Group C — "the group of death" — with style and have produced some of the best football of the tournament so far.

Young substitutes Johnnir Montano, only 16, and Edwin Congo and playmaker Arley Bentancourt have produced some of the most creative moments of this Copa.

Coach Javier Alvarez has acknowledged his side are favourites and said: "We want to justify this condition and prove it with goals and football of the highest level and have a memorable evening."

SUNDAY'S MATCHES

Chile vs Colombia 12:30am BST

Argentina vs Brazil 3:30am BST

Star Sports television will be covering both of the matches live.

Three changes on Brazil side

FOZ DE IGUAZU, Brazil, July 10: Brazil coach Wanderley Luxemburgo announced three changes to his team on Friday for Sunday's Copa America quarterfinal against Argentina, reports Reuters.

Luxemburgo said Joao Carlos would replace Odvan in the centre of the defence for Sunday's game. Flavio Conceicao would stand in for the injured Vampeta in midfield and Alex would lose his place to Ze Roberto, who played well in the team's final first round match against Chile.

Emerson Ferreira and Rivaldo, who missed the game against Chile through suspension, will return to the midfield while Ronaldo and Amoroso will again play up front.

Ronaldo, who was marked out of the game last time he played Argentina in a friendly just over a year ago, described South America's biggest international as "just another game."

Highly-successful youth coach Pua - he led Uruguay to the 1997 under-20 World Cup Final in Malaysia where they lost, ironically, to Argentina - has been working with a very young team in Paraguay to blood many of the youngsters at senior level.

Passarella explained: "We have tried to give experience to the young footballers who have been working with Victor for some years, we have qualified (for the second phase) and now we play on a level playing field with everyone - with the aristocrats." But Passarella confirmed the Copa was only a means to an end, saying: "The risk for us is not qualifying for the World Cup. This is the objective."

Looking forward to the quarterfinal with Paraguay, Passarella said: "They are missing their most important player, the goalkeeper Jose Luis Chilavert (who refused to play in the Copa).

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