

Europe's 'Brazil' aims

PARIS, June 10 (AFP) — Portugal, known as the "Brazilians of Europe", have a chance to match reputation with results in Euro 2000 and thereby recoup the status of a whole generation of players who promised so much.

Portugal have never had the soaring success of their colonial cousins in South America who have won a record four World Cup titles and competed in every finals since the tournament's conception.

Portugal's under-20 world title wins in both 1989 and 1991 however gave the impression a whole new batch of players would come through to the se-

MANAGER: Humberto Coelho

Benfica legend Humberto Coelho is the man entrusted with pulling Portugal out of the nearly-men category and into the class of world beaters in the image of their 1966 Eusebio-inspired team which came third in the World Cup.

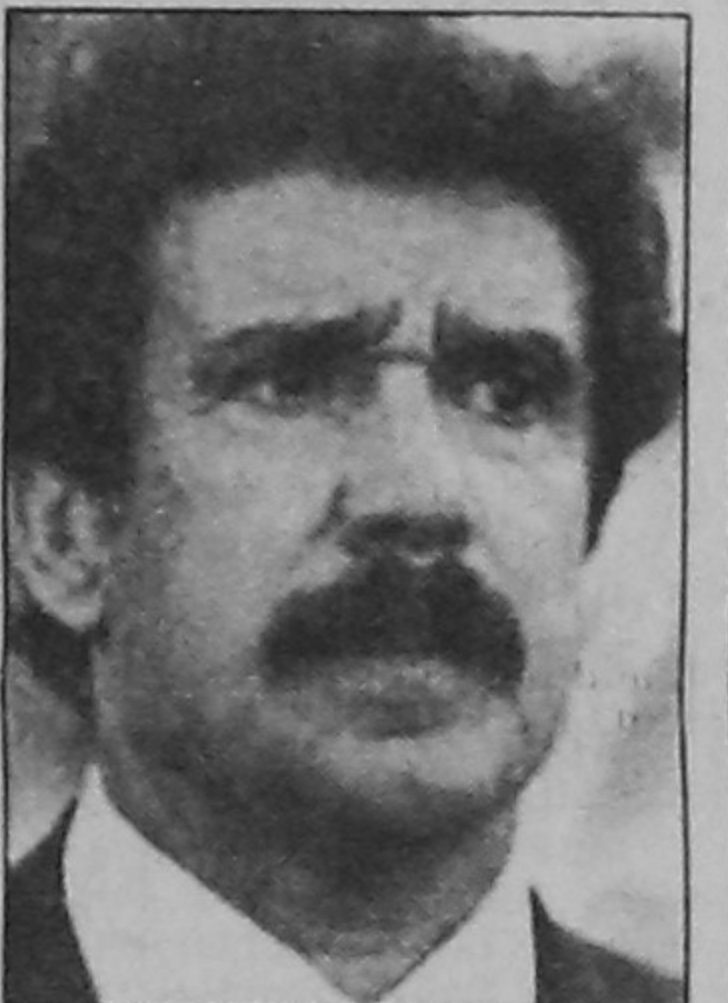
England, Germany and Romania form a tough Euro 2000 group and Coelho would admit to suddenly find themselves champions of Europe would be a major surprise.

But with the hosting of Euro 2004 just around the corner, pressure is mounting in the country for good things to come out from the football extravaganza in Belgium and Holland.

Coelho has made it clear he wants to see more character and spirit in the side. "Team spirit is the key," he told reporters the day before their March 29 international against Denmark in Leiria, to the north of Lisbon.

"Often against a team like the Germans we think we are beaten before the start and then we lose. That sort of attitude will be unacceptable at Euro 2000."

Coelho certainly played with a lot of spirit. An outstanding centre back for Benfica lasting 14 seasons, he won eight Portuguese league championships and played 64 times for his country, and became known as the "Portuguese Beckenbauer."



He had spells as a coach with Salmaguetos and Braga after his career was cut short by a leg injury in 1983 but he left the coaching profession and set up a soccer school and became a media analyst.

He was appointed coach of Portugal in December 1997 in replacement of Artur Jorge who failed to get Portugal through the 1998 World Cup qualifiers.

Humberto remained confident about Euro 2000. "England have good individual players but are inconsistent and can be beaten. Germany are always tough and Romania are famous for their talented players. I am convinced, however, that we can beat all three."

Brave words for a man in charge of a team many believe are without any real world-class players but for attacking midfielders Luis Figo and Rui Costa. "We are ready for the tournament," Coelho added. "And I don't think it will end after the first round group."

nior side and might just win at least one major trophy.

Coach Humberto Coelho has the task of trying to wring results out of what could be the last finals of many of his talented squad, many of whom played well in reaching the quarterfinals at Euro 96 in England.



Players such as keeper Vitor Bala, defenders Fernando Couto and Secretario, midfielders Paulo Sousa, Rui Costa, Luis Figo and striker Joao Pinto will all be nearing or past 30 by the time the 2002 World Cup comes round and surely past their

best.

Speaking the day after their Euro 2000 warm-up against Denmark in the north of Lisbon, Coelho said: "I agree there are a lot of my players' complicity in their last finals and I will give them a final chance to win a major trophy."

"I have no doubts that



believing it to be their last could increase their commitment and motivation can only be a good thing for them."

Portugal were settled selves up to go all the way to Euro 96 when a 3-0 th

STARWATCH

Rui Costa (Portugal)

PARIS, June 10 (AFP) — Portugal's chances of making their mark in Euro 2000, considered vital in the country which is hosting the 2004 finals, rest to a large part on the shoulders of playmaker Rui Costa.

His dribbling down the left flank or deft and incisive passing from just behind the front two strikers, make him the key man linking midfield and attack.

Costa's technical abilities mirror the image Portugal has abroad - talent in abundance in attacking midfield, but lack of defensive strength and thrust up front.

To say Portugal only have talented midfielders who can pass is just not true," he told reporters at Leiria the day before their match against Denmark on March 29, Costa's 28th birthday.

"We have great players in all departments. But this criticism can only fire us up to do better when we get to Belgium and Holland."

"Our group is a tough one including England, Germany and Romania but I am convinced we will have a great tournament."

History is not on Portugal's side because in 10 competitions, they have been eliminated in the qualifying stages eight times. Admittedly they did feature in one of the best matches in the competition's history when losing 3-2 to France in the 1984 semi-final in Marseille.

However the team is still seen as a side featuring Fiorentina's Costa and Barcelona star Luis Figo, recently voted Portuguese player of the year for the fifth consecutive time, as the only real serious world class players in the side.

"We have good pedigree in the side," countered Costa. "Portuguese players are sprinkled among Europe's top clubs and Porto have done tremendously well to qualify for the Champions League quarter-finals. People would be ill advised to write

us off."

Portugal's best ever performance on the world stage came from their Eusebio-led side who finished third in 1966 World Cup and Mozambique-born forward largely considered the greatest ever player.

Eusebio said: "Coelho proved to be one of the best managers at Euro 2000. His s



see attacking opportunities before opposing defenders, he is extremely dangerous."

"His dribbling ability is excellent but I cannot stress enough he must play right behind the strikers. His effectiveness would be wasted if he played too deep."

The former Benfica star, who made his debut against Switzerland in March 1993, scored six times in the qualifiers as Portugal went on to go through automatically as the best group runner-up.

Florentina went out of the European Champions League in the second round group phase and they are out of the hunt for the Italian title, in contrast to last season when their challenge faltered in the closing weeks.

Costa's industry matches his talent and Fiorentina's loss is Portugal's gain with their talented playmaker likely to be fresh and ready for Euro 2000.

(Vitoria Guimaraes), Joaquim Silva "Quim" (Sporting Braga)

DEFENDERS: Roberto Severo "Beto", Rui Jorge (both Sporting Lisbon), Carlos Secretario, Jorge Costa (both FC Porto), Abel Xavier (Everton/Eng), Fernando Couto (Lazio/Ita), "Dimas" Teixeira (Standard Liege/Bel)

MIDFIELDERS: Paulo Sousa (Parma/Ita), Rui Costa (Fiorentina/Ita), Luis Figo (Barcelona/Spa), Sergio Conceicao (Lazio/Ita), Francisco Costa "Costinha" (Monaco/Fra), Paulo Bento (Real Oviedo/Spa), Jose Vidigal (Sporting Lisbon)

FORWARDS: Joao Pinto, Nuno Gomes (both Benfica), Ricardo Sa Pinto (Real Sociedad/Spa), Pedro Resendes "Pauleta" (Deportivo La Coruna/Spa), Nuno Rocha "Capucho" (FC Porto)

coach to French club Nancy.

Undoubtedly, Jenei's impressive and somewhat long honours list weighed largely in his favour.

National team coach from September 1986 to July 1990, he led Romania to the last 16 of the 1990 World Cup in Italy, a stage of the competition that had not been reached by Romania since 1938. During that initial period he only conceded 9 defeats out of 40 matches.

Previously, Jenei made his own mark in history by becoming the first ever coach of a Romanian team to taste victory in the European Cup, with Steaua in 1986.

Thanks to Jenei the capital club filled its trophy cabinet with numerous trophies, including four league titles and three domestic cups. A permanent presence around the Bucharest stadium for close to 17 years, on several occasions Jenei attempted to repeat his successes abroad, but to no avail.

His popularity in Romania elevated him to such a level that he was named Secretary of State for Sport in 1997-1998. Today, returning as national team coach, "uncle Imi" will be hoping to get the best out of his experienced group of thirty-somethings in the forthcoming Euro 2000 finals.

Lothar's money on France!

KERKRADE, Netherlands, June 10: Lothar Matthaeus, facing a struggle to be fit in time for Germany's first Euro 2000 match against Romania on Monday, named France as his favourites to win the tournament, reports Reuters.

"We're not the favourites, the French are," Matthaeus, nursing a muscle strain on his right thigh, told reporters on Friday.

"France won the World Cup two years ago and I think they have an even better team now," he added. "The veteran libero, who sustained his injury in the European champions' final warm-up, a 8-2 demolition of Liekekeinsten on Wednesday."

Matthaeus, eager to extend his world record to 148 caps, has trained only lightly since Germany arrived at their Dutch base of Vaals on Thursday.

He kicked the ball for the first time, but only tentatively, in the second of Friday's two sessions in Kerkraade, on the home ground of Dutch side Roda JC.

"I don't know whether I'll be able to play on Monday," he said. "I'll undergo more tests tomorrow (Saturday) morning and after that I'll try to train properly with the team."

three league titles and one cup



with Steaua Bucharest, and the UEFA Cup Winners' Cup, the FA Cup and League Cup with Chelsea.

He joined Chelsea FC in 1995 from Sheffield Wednesday, having earlier played in Italy with Genoa 1893 and Foggia Calcio.

Adept in defence, magnificent raiding forward, Petrescu is a tremendously versatile player who can play in defence

and it's too early to say if he is ready or not."

Portugal's assistant coach Rui Cadador said: "We still have 48 hours to go and tomorrow night we have our final training session and after that all the selection decisions will be taken."

Portuguese journalists believed Sousa who won consecutive European Champions league finals in 1996 for Juventus and in 1997 for Borussia Dortmund would very likely not play.

They added that Portugal would likely play a 4-2-3-1 system with either Sa Pinto or youngster Nuno Gomes the lone striker in front of an impressive midfield of Luis Figo, Rui Costa and Joao Pinto going from right to left.

Hard working Paulo Bento would be alongside Vidigal, just behind, with a back four of Secretario, Fernando Couto, Jorge Costa and Dimas in front of keeper Vitor Baia.

Cadador added that they had had tactical training, speed drills and an 11-aside game during their Saturday session.

erkusen, after playing for Brazilian club Santos last year, was a major factor in their almost capturing the national championship.

He has tough competition for the strikers' positions with Ulf Kirsten, Olivier Bierhoff and Carsten Jancker but he sees it as something positive rather than a setback.

"We have four very good strikers and that's a good problem to have although it makes it difficult for me to get in the side," Rink told reporters at the Roda Kerkraade pitch moments after Friday evening training.

He agreed that Ulf Kirsten in theory would be the best strike partner for him because they both play at Leverkusen.

Rink's career at Leverkusen mirrors that of his international activities. Originally called up by Berti Vogts, he was then cast aside until his good showings for Leverkusen this year caught the eye of coach Erich Ribbeck.

Maynard leads Glamorgan bid

LONDON, June 10 (Internet report): Glamorgan captain Matthew Maynard struck his second successive Benson and Hedges Cup century in the Lord's final last night.

But Gloucestershire will still feel they have a good chance of landing a record third successive one-day trophy.

Glamorgan were dismissed for 225 from 49.3 overs, fewer than once appeared likely, in spite of Maynard's 104 from 118 balls which featured 10 fours.

The Welsh county lost their last six wickets for 33 runs, to take some value off Maynard's top class effort.

Gloucestershire's Australian all-rounder Ian Harvey followed a fine opening burst with a typically effective one at death, to finish with five for 34 from his 9.3 overs.

Maynard's was only the fifth hundred in a Benson and Hedges final, and Harvey's the third five-wicket haul.

Maynard, who scored 109 against Surrey in the semi-final, was last to fall, run out by a direct hit from Kim Barnett.

Harvey had Glamorgan in some difficulty by removing both openers, Robert Croft and Matthew Elliott, for 24 but Maynard instantly assumed an air of authority.

He struck the ball cleanly to get the Welsh fans waving their daffodils in the crowd and was assisted in a third-wicket stand of 137 in 189 balls by Mike Powell (48 from 97 deliveries).

It enabled Glamorgan to dominate from the seventh over to the 40th until Powell knocked back a return catch to Jeremy Snape in the 40th at 161.

French press snub Lemerre

OSTEND, Belgium, June 10: The entire French press corps Saturday boycotted a press conference held by France coach Roger Lemerre in protest at the attitude of 14 of the national team's playing squad of 22, who are refusing to meet journalists, reports AFP.

On Saturday skipper Didier Deschamps and defender Lilian Thuram joined Sylvain Wiltord, Patrick Vieira, Thierry Henry, Nicolas Anelka, Christian Karembeu, David Trezeguet, Frank Leboeuf, Jean-Marc Gervais, Bernard Lama, Vincent Candela, Ulrich Rame and Marcel Desailly, who have all been refusing to deal with the media.

Lemerre seemed hurt by the snub, saying to the press: "Things have got better over the last four years. I have neither the power or the right to impose anything on the lads. That's the way it is. I have always offered my hand of friendship and now you have sent me back to my penalty area."

The coach then departed. Deschamps did not explain his decision to join his teammates in non-cooperation but his move comes the day after an Italian publication Panorama published allegations about doping in the Juventus team while the Chelsea player was at the Italian club.

Lemerre, a genial figure, seemed hurt by the protest although journalists were keen to stress that the coach was not the target of the action.

Thuram was the most reluctant absentee and did briefly emerge to say: "I have got noth-

ing in particular against journalists but I don't want to come here alone." The Parma defender then left.

UEFA director of communi-

Barthez thinks highly of Schmeichel

WAVRE, Belgium, June 10: France goalkeeper Fabien Barthez paid tribute to Denmark's Peter Schmeichel on Friday, calling him the best 'keeper-of-the-20th-century', reports Reuters.

Barthez signed a six-year contract with Manchester United, last week and will face him in France's first Euro 2000 match in Bruges on Sunday.

"What can I say about Schmeichel? His record speaks for itself. He has 121 caps and he certainly is the greatest goalkeeper of the century", Barthez said. "He is a superstar."

"I met him once and we got along well together. He is a nice fellow. We'll shake hands and have a few words before the kickoff."

Barthez said he had not thought too much about leaving Monaco for England.

"The only thing I know is that there is a bakery there and nice countryside", he joked. "I'm also aware it rains a lot and it will be a great change from the Riviera weather."

"But I'm not going there for the sunshine. I'm going there for the football."

cations Chris Cooper told AFP: "UEFA by definition does not give advice (about media relations) to the teams. It's the organising committee of the tournament that defines a protocol of good conduct."

French Football Federation (FFF) spokesman Gerard Enault said he believed in the liberty of an individual to participate in press conferences or not but also said he respected the freedom of the press.

"The players were in the coach for an hour and a half this morning. They are training this evening and are playing (against Denmark) tomorrow and don't want to reply to the press' questions," he explained.

Lemerre's hitherto good relations with the press are in marked contrast to those of his World Cup winning predecessor Aimé Jacquet - Lemerre was Jacquet's number two during the World Cup.

Jacquet in particular had a long-standing war of attrition with sports daily L'Equipe and in the minutes after France beat Brazil 3-0 in the World Cup Final launched a diatribe against the paper that has become legendary in France.

While the rest of the country was taking to the streets in celebration Jacquet turned his fire on L'Equipe journalists at the post-match press conference, saying: "I will never forgive, never."

In his autobiography published last year Jacquet kept the feud running, devoting a whole chapter to his battles with the paper and concluding: "They don't deserve anything."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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Thursday's answer

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CRYPTOQUIP

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A Z Q W C T D C Q O I N U H B W
Z I T G G E W Z I T N U I X
C T E " N Q T X G E T D I C Q O I !"
Yesterdays Cryptopquip: SELF-CONSCIOUS PHOTOGRAPHER'S PROBLEM: FEELS TOO MUCH CONCERN ABOUT HIS IMAGE.
Today's Cryptopquip Clue: A equals F
The Cryptopquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.