

Leao announces Brazil's 22 for friendlies

AFP, Sao Paulo Brazil coach Emerson Leao on Wednesday named the squad of 22 for two international friendlies against the United States and Mexico on March 3 and 7 respectively.

Midfielders Rivaldo, who plays for Spanish side Barcelona and Robert Silva Almeida (Santos), along with defenders Anderson Lima (Gremio) and Roberto Carlos (Real Madrid) were added to the original 18-man squad.

However both Rivaldo and Roberto Carlos will only play in the Mexican match, as Barcelona and Real Madrid are playing each other on Saturday.

The match could well decide whether Barca remain in the title race as they are currently nine points adrift of Real.

The friendlies are in preparation for the 2002 World Cup qualifying tie on March 27 against Ecuador in Quito.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Rogerio Ceni (Sao Paulo), Bosco (Sport Recife)

Defenders: Cafu (AS Roma/Ita), Anderson Lima (Gremio), Silvinho (Arsenal/Eng), Roberto Carlos (Real Madrid/Spa), Lucio (Bayer Leverkusen/Ger), Roque Junior (AC Milan/Ita), Edmilson (Lyon/Fra), Cris (Cruzeiro)

Midfielders: Emerson (AS Roma/Ita), Vampeta (Paris Saint Germain/Fra), Ronaldinho Gauchao (Gremio), Robert Silva Almeida (Santos), Juninho Paulista (Vasco da Gama), Ricardinho (Cruzeiro), Rivaldo (Barcelona/Spa)

Striker: Romario, Fuller (both Vasco da Gama), Christian (Paris Saint Germain/Fra), Luizao (Corinthians), Edilson (Flamengo).

Lennon feels the wrath Norway rout N Ireland

AFP, Belfast

A double strike from Thorstein Helstad helped Norway to a comfortable 4-0 victory over Northern Ireland in their friendly international here on Wednesday at Windsor Park.

The match was over as a contest before half-time with Norway 3-0 up but more worrying for the home side was the sectarian abuse handed out by some of the crowd to Celtic and Northern Ireland midfielder Neil Lennon.

Lennon was operating in the middle and his first touch was booed by the bigots in the crowd who objected to the former Leicester player's move to Parkhead.

Loyalists had daubed 'Neil Lennon RIP' on a wall in Lisburn, but the Catholic midfielder was determined to ignore the threats.

Opinion in the stands was clearly split and seconds after the booing a chant of 'One Neil Lennon' broke out.

However, Northern Irish coach Sammy McIlroy had had enough and took Lennon off at half-time.

Gerry Taggart captained the side to mark his 50th appearance and the Leicester defender missed a great chance to open the scoring in only the second minute.

Norway opened the scoring in the 20th minute when a weak back header from Aaron Hughes let in Helstad and he slotted the ball home.

John Carew, who had returned to goalscoring form with a hat-trick for his Spanish side Valencia last Sunday, then popped up in space on the edge of the Irish box only for the lanky striker to shoot weakly at keeper Maik Taylor.

But then Helstad set up Carew and he fired a right-foot drive into the corner of the net to crown a fine passing move.

Northern Ireland's experimental defence was clearly not working and the Norwegians were exploiting the huge gaps left down each flank.

In the 37th minute it was 3-0 when Carew turned provider to tee up Stale Stensas to score from an almost identical position on the left.

The Northern Ireland boss made two other changes as he also brought on Mark Williams and Stuart Elliott and switched to flat back four.

The tactical switch made little difference as within four minutes of the restart Norway netted a fourth goal when Helstad ran through the non-existent Irish backline to score with a right-foot shot.

The Irish were in pieces as Norway attacked at will and Jeff Whitley hoofed the ball away from his own goal to prevent a fifth.

It was now just a question of how many Norway would score and Manchester United striker Ole Gunnar Solskjaer blazed over from six yards out after Carew's effort had been blocked.

Northern Ireland did not concede again but that was little consolation for a comprehensive defeat.



Kily Gonzales (R) of Argentina tackling Italy's Damiano Tommasi from behind during their friendly at Rome on February 28.

Argentina tame Italy

AFP, Rome

Argentina pulled off a historic 2-1 victory over Italy at the Olympic Stadium here on Wednesday in a friendly international, their first outright win over the 'Azzurri' in 35 years.

It was the first match between the two countries since the 1990 World Cup semi-final in Naples where Argentina won on a penalty shoot-out after a 1-1 draw - technically that result counts as a draw.

But there will be no arguments about the legitimacy of this triumph after goals from Kily Gonzales and Hernan Crespo deservedly gave the visitors the spoils after Stefano Fiore had put Italy in front.

Excluding the Naples result it was also the Latin American country's first win on Italian soil - there only previous outright triumph was in 1956 in Buenos Aires.

'We began in a very stable way but then we dominated the game,' said Argentinian coach Marcelo Bielsa.

'Of my four matches in Europe with the team (against Holland, England, Spain and Italy) this has been the best performance by my own team.'

'We created many opportunities than we normally do and we

could have scored more.' His Italian counterpart Giovanni Trapattoni said: 'I know this was a friendly but we knew Argentina were not treating like this. I know how the South Americans approach this type of match - they are very motivated.'

After an early offensive by Italy when Filippo Inzaghi twice went close - first firing wide and then forcing a save from German Burgos - Argentina took control of the match and a one-two between Pablo Aimar and Juan Pablo Sorin ended with Aimar's lob drifting over Gianluigi Buffon's bar.

But against the run of play Italy took the lead after 25 minutes.

With Inzaghi in an offside position the Argentinian did not play to the whistle and Vieri played a ball through to the inside Fiore who drilled the ball through the legs of Burgos, who had rushed out of his area, to open the scoring.

But nine minutes before the interval Argentina got back on terms. The Italian defence was caught out of position and Crespo fed an unmarked Kily Gonzalez who placed a measured shot in Gianluigi Buffon's top right-hand corner.

The Latin Americans finished the first half on top and Sorin's header from a Javier Zanetti cross forced a fine save from Buffon and then with the goalkeeper stranded

Paulo Maldini headed a Kily Gonzalez lob away from under his own crossbar.

Three minutes into the second period Argentina took the lead with a fine move. Aimar fed Kily Gonzalez on the left and his cross was sidefotted home first time by Crespo.

Crespo had two good chances to put his side 3-1 up but Buffon made two fine saves and then the Lazio forward had a goal disallowed for handball in the build-up but with Italy hardly mounting an attack in the second period the Argentinians never had cause to regret it.

The only notable attempt on goal after the break from the Italians was a Luigi Di Biagio freekick saved by Burgos in injury time.

Both Trapattoni and Bielsa made several second half substitutions but the shape of the game never changed with Argentina always on top.

Trapattoni had given Fiorentina defender Alessandro Pierini and Atalanta's Christian Zenoni their first caps for Italy in the starting line-up.

Bielsa included three Lazio players - Diego Simeone, Juan Sebastian Veron and Crespo - in his starting line-up and one AS Roma player in defender Walter Samuel for this match at the home ground of the two Roman clubs.

Simeone was winning his 99th cap for his country.

Figo inspires Portugal Belgium on a rampage

AFP

Two World Cup qualifiers ended in expected victories for Belgium and Portugal who played minnows San Marino and Andorra respectively.

Belgium thrashed whipping boys San Marino 10-1 - a record win for the hosts in a competitive match - at Brussels to move above Scotland at the top of Group 6.

The Belgians beat Zambia by the same margin in 1994 but that was in a friendly.

A hat-trick by substitute Bob Peeters in 12 madcap minutes in the second-half rounded off the rout after the hosts led 3-0 at half-time through goals by Yves Vanderhaeghe, Emile Mpenza and Bart Goor.

But they added a further seven after the break before San Marino claimed a last minute goal thanks to Andy Selva, their only full-time

professional. While Peeters went on the rampage for probably the easiest hat-trick of his career, Vanderhaeghe and Goor also added to their tally with a goal apiece while Walter Basseggio and veteran Marc Wilmots were also on target.

The win leaves Belgium level on seven points with Scotland but ahead on goal difference, with both having played three games.

Belgium now have seven points from three matches, the same as Scotland, but with a vastly superior goal difference of 14-1 compared to Scotland's 4-1. Scotland meet Belgium in Glasgow on March 24.

Portugal also picked up three points with a straightforward 3-0 win over Andorra at Funchal to stretch their lead at the top of

Group Two. Luis Figo, the world's most expensive player, put Portugal ahead after only one minute, but the expected rout never took place.

Figo added one more and Pauleta also scored as Portugal strengthened their group position.

They now have 10 points from four matches, ahead of Cyprus (6 from 3), Estonia (6 from 4), Ireland (5 from 3), Netherlands (4 from 3) and Andorra (0 from 5).

The Dutch had a disappointing night, drawing 0-0 at home against Turkey in a friendly while Cyprus showed signs of their slow improvement with a 4-3 win over Ukraine in the third-fourth place match of the Cyprus four-nation tournament.

Romania won the cup with a 3-0 win over Lithuania in the final.

STANDINGS

Table with 2 columns: Group and Standings. Includes Group Two and Group Six with teams like Portugal, Cyprus, Estonia, etc.

INTERNATIONAL FRIENDLY RESULTS AT A GLANCE

AFP, Paris

International friendly results on Wednesday:

At Birmingham, England England 3 (Barbry 38, Heskey 54, Ehiogu 70) Spain 0

At Belfast Northern Ireland 0 Norway 4 (Helstad 20, 49, Carew 30, Stensas 37)

At Rome Italy 1 (Fiore 26) Argentina 2 (Kily Gonzalez 36, Crespo 48)

At Amsterdam Holland 0 Turkey 0

At Luxembourg Luxembourg 0 Finland 1 (Forsell 80)

At Nicosia Poland 4 (Olisadebe 21, Karwan 45, Hajto 60, Krzynowek 90) Switzerland 0

At Vaduz, Liechtenstein Liechtenstein 0 Latvia 2 (Miholaps 63, Verpakovskis 66)

At Nicosia Romania 3 (Ganea 12, 40, Contrea 57) Lithuania 0

At Heraklion, Crete Greece 3 (Charisteas 2, 32, Batsinas 90-pen) Russia 3 (Buznikin 34, 70, Khokhlov 48)

At Nicosia Cyprus 4 (Okkas 17, Engomitis 39, Malekios 81-pen, Charalambous 104) Ukraine 3 (Melashenko 9, Vorobei 57, 63)

At Koper, Slovenia Slovenia 0 Uruguay 2 (Olivera 20, Zalayeta 86)

At Skopje Macedonia 1 (Hristov 35) Czech Republic 1 (Kuka 43)

At Zenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina Bosnia-Herzegovina 1 (Barbarez 22) Hungary 1 (Horvath 13)

Weah assault trial postponed

AFP, Lisbon

A court case concerning a head-butting incident involving former world footballer of the year George Weah was postponed here Wednesday after the Liberian star failed to show at court.

FC Porto player Jorge Costa has launched a lawsuit against Weah, accusing him of head-butting him after a champions League match between FC Porto and AC Milan in 1996.

Weah, currently on the books at French first division giants Marseille was away on international duty with Liberia on Wednesday. The case was postponed until March 28.

England make Eriksson proud

AFP, Birmingham

Sven Goran Eriksson's reign as England coach got off to a dream start here on Wednesday with an impressive 3-0 win over Spain in a friendly international at Villa Park.

Liverpool duo Nick Barby and Emile Heskey scored either side of half-time and Middlesbrough defender Ugo Ehiogu - who used to play here for Aston Villa - added a third with 20 minutes to go to round off an excellent night for Eriksson.

Second-half substitute Javier Moreno of Alaves compounded Spain's misery by missing a penalty 10 minutes from time.

Eriksson was delighted with his side's performance - despite making a shaky start.

'It was a good result and a good performance, beamed Eriksson. 'Take away the first 15-20 minutes and I think we deserved to win. It's always a good result when you beat Spain.'

Asked what he had learned

from his first game in charge Eriksson said: 'I know the players much better now. I am proud of them all and the spirit is very good within the squad.'

Spain coach Jose Camacho was disappointed with the way his side capitulated after starting brightly.

'We started well with plenty of good passing but England were far more decisive. Too many times we had possession without much effect.'

There was a one-minute silence before kick-off in memory of the 13 people who died earlier on Wednesday in a train crash near the northern English town of Selby.

The tribute was also for Stan Cullis, the great Wolves coach of the club's European glory days in the 1950s, who died aged 85 late on Tuesday.

On a bitterly cold night England were the first to threaten when Barby's low drive blashed wide of the post and at the other end Ismael Urzaiz headed wide for Spain from Manuel Garcia's probing cross.

After the opening exchanges

Spain enjoyed a spell of possession with Valencia playmaker Gaizka Mendietta pulling the strings and England struggling to move beyond their own half.

Real Madrid's Ivan Helguera struck a sweet half-volley from 25 yards after 19 minutes which James saved comfortably in the England goal.

Six minutes later Charlton defender Chris Powell, given his international debut at 31, evaded a couple of challenges before feeding Andy Cole who set up Paul Scholes, but the Manchester United midfielder's low shot was easily dealt with by Spain goalkeeper Iker Casillas.

Nicky Butt went close with a far post header on the half hour and a minute later Scholes' cheeky backheel almost put Michael Owen through but the Liverpool striker was marginally offside.

England grew in confidence and after 38 minutes they took the lead thanks to Barby.

Rio Ferdinand's defensive clearance found Cole whose flicked header directed the ball into Owen's feet.

Owen chipped a delightful ball through for his Liverpool colleague and Barby went in bravely to flick the ball past the onrushing Casillas and into the back of the Spanish net.

Eriksson used six substitutes at half-time and one of them, Frank Lampard, almost doubled England's lead a minute after the break but he failed to find the target with his blistering drive.

Moreno, a half-time replacement for Urzaiz, then had Nigel Martyn - a substitute for David James between the England goalposts - at full stretch from his lowering header.

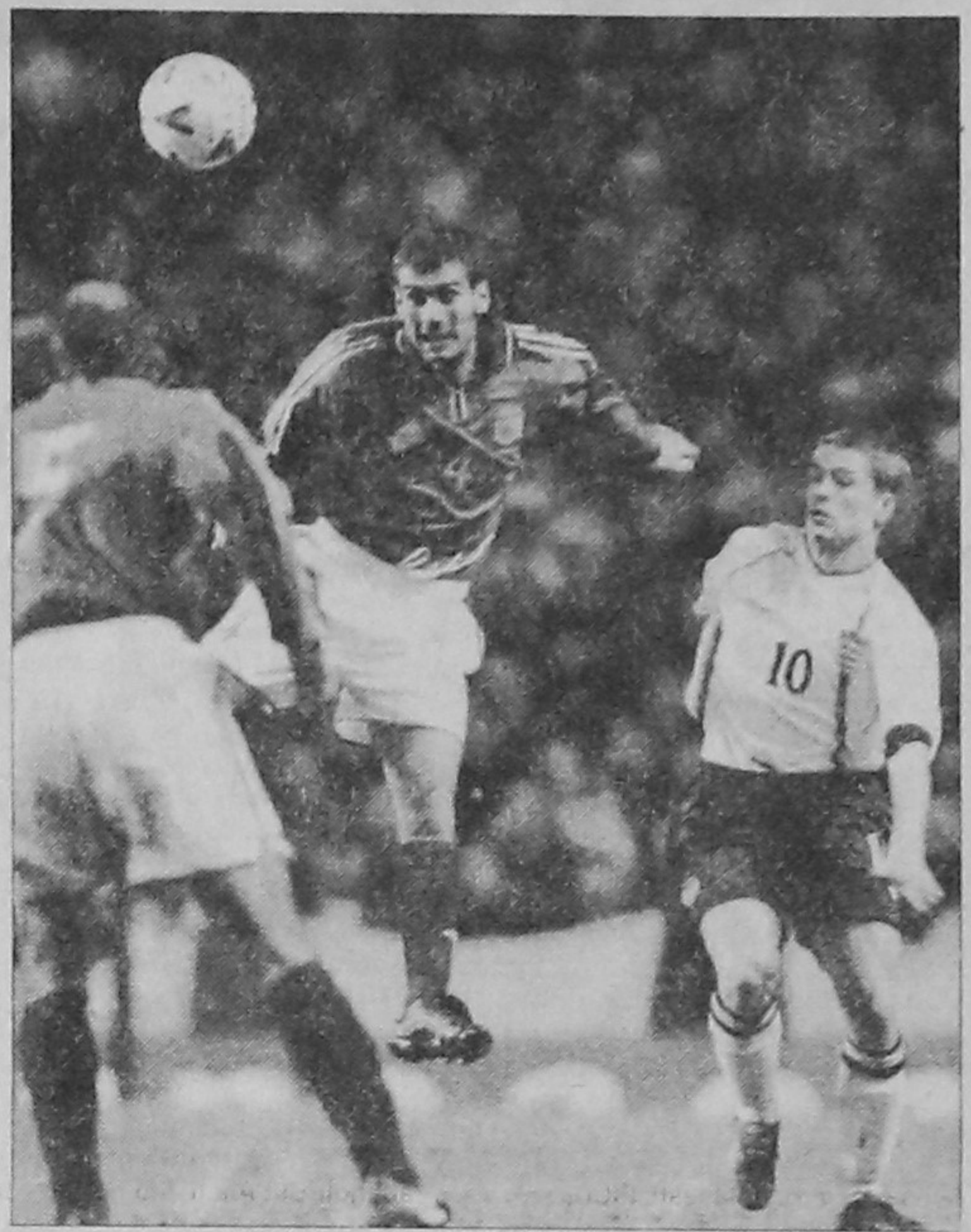
England took full control of the match after 54 minutes by increasing their lead through Heskey.

Lampard's teasing corner was met by fellow substitute Ehiogu who caused confusion in Spain defence by clattering into Casillas and the ball fell kindly to Heskey - who also came off the bench - and he slammed home from close range.

Heskey almost doubled his tally moments later but his bullet header was cleared off the line.

Ehiogu got in on the scoring act himself after 80 minutes rising unchallenged to meet Barby's curling corner with a bullet header.

Much to the delight of the home crowd Moreno then had his spot-kick brilliantly saved by Martyn after being hauled down by Ehiogu.



Josep Guardiola (C) of Spain makes a headed clearance while England star Michael Owen (R) looks on during their international friendly at Villa Park, Birmingham on February 28.

USA, Jamaica set the pace

AFP



group. Jose Luis Pineda opened the scoring for Honduras in the second minute, with a powerful header from a corner kick.

The visitors' 1-0 lead lasted through the first half as Honduras dominated midfield against Costa Rica's ineffective attack and weak defence.

In the second half, Costa Rican manager Alexander Guimaraes reinforced his attack with Alexander Suning, and in the 69th minute the hosts' new aggression paid off when Rolando Fonseca beat Honduran Noel Valladares with a header.

Despite a frenzied effort, Costa Rica couldn't further penetrate the Honduran defence.

Against the run of play, it was the visitors who broke the deadlock through Milton 'Tyson' Nunez in the 85th minute.

Cordero salvaged the draw.

and an important point, when he claimed the ball on the edge of the area and slotted his shot home.

Josh Wolff scored 64 seconds into the second half and set up the second goal in the waning minutes to lift the United States to a 2-0 victory over archrivals Mexico at Columbus, Ohio.

The win, only the third time the US had beaten the Mexicans in World Cup qualifying, gave the Americans three points and a share of the lead in the final-round CONCACAF group along with Jamaica.

The loss, which extended Mexico's winless streak to six games (0-5-1), could cost coach Enrique Meza his job.

That's when Wolff came into the game, replacing Brian McBride, the host's most dangerous scoring threat in the 15th minute. McBride had suffered a

swollen right eye after he was elbowed in the face. The United States then lost playmaking midfielder Claudio Reyna to a moderate left groin strain in the 43rd minute and was replaced by Clint Mathis.

With the key players out of action, Wolff took centerstage in the second half.

With the second half barely a minute old, defender Jeff Agoos cleared a Mexican shot out of the penalty area to Joe-Max Moore, who knocked the ball to Mathis. Mathis launched a 30-yard pass to the streaking Wolff, who beat

wandering goalkeeper Jorge Campos outside of the penalty area. The ball bounded off Campos's knee and Wolff twirled around and found himself with an empty goal to shoot at from 16 yards for his second international goal and a precious 1-0 lead.

Wolff, one of the heroes of the United States' fourth-place finish in the Sydney Olympics, turned playmaker in the 88th minute. He beat defenders Claudio Suarez and Alberto Macias on the right side of the box and found Earnie Stewart, who slotted it home from 12 yards.

At Kingston, a brilliant first-half goal from Tyrone Marshall was enough to give a grieving Jamaica side a win over Trinidad and Tobago.

The US-based Marshall gave the hosts the advantage in the 16th minute, latching onto a loose ball some 30 yards out and heaving a thunderous shot that hit the underside of the crossbar and crashed into the back of the net.

Jamaica's Brazilian coach Clovis De Oliveira said this victory, achieved under very trying circumstances, will further motivate the team in the remaining qualifiers in the North and Central American and Caribbean region.

'This victory means a whole lot to us. We have gone through a lot. We lost Stephen Malcolm tragically. In addition to that, our two top goalkeepers were not available because of injuries and our top striker Onandi Lowe, was unavailable because of a ban.

Malcolm, a 30-year-old midfielder capped 91 times, was killed in a car accident in January.

In the next round of games, Costa Rica next hosts Trinidad and Tobago on March 28 while Honduras takes on the United States. Mexico will host Jamaica on March 25.



USA defender Tony Sanneh (C) holds off Mexico dangerman Luis Hernandez (R) while custodian Brad Friedel scampers for the ball during their World Cup 2002 CONCACAF Zone qualifier at Columbus on February 28