

## Confederations Cup Leao looking for boost

### Football

REUTERS, Tokyo

Brazil coach Emerson Leao says he is confident his side can give their morale a valuable boost by winning the Confederations Cup next month.

Leao made his claim after Brazil's first training session in Japan before the May 30-June 10 tournament.

which, like the 2002 World Cup, is being co-hosted with South Korea. Leao, whose team have struggled unexpectedly in their qualifying campaign for next year's finals, said on Wednesday:

"Our recent games haven't been fantastic, but I'm confident the players will pick themselves up."

"Victory here would be a big confidence boost," said the coach, who targeted Cameroon as Brazil's main rivals in Group B.

Though his makeshift squad is missing a number of Brazil's top players, Leao said that whoever played would be out to settle a score

against Cameroon in their group opener.



EMERSON LEAO

"The first game is very important to the outcome of the group. We also see Cameroon as a rival because they beat us at the Olympics," said Leao, referring to Cameroon's 2-1 extra-time win over Brazil in the Olympic quarter-finals last September.

Leao, who managed J-League

clubs Shimizu S-Pulse and Verdy Kawasaki, now known as Tokyo Verdy, in the early 1990s, also predicted a tough scrap with Japan in their final group game.

"Japanese football has made real progress and Japan will have huge support from the home fans," he said. "I think it will be a great game."

Asked about Japan coach Philippe Troussier's recent pledge to play attacking football against Brazil, Leao praised the Frenchman for attempting to play the game in "the right spirit."

"I'm very happy to hear that because that's the way to play football and win matches. I don't think Brazil and Japan will be a 0-0 draw."

Brazil will play a friendly against Tokyo Verdy on Saturday before their opening Confederations Cup match in Kashima on May 31.

The four-times world champions will then face Canada at the same venue two days later, before meeting Japan, also in Kashima, on June 4.

tenced in 1999 in a court in Essen, Germany, for the attack, which caused widespread public outrage



MARKUS WARNECKE

France as well as in Germany.

One of the Germans tried in Essen was given a 10-year sentence.

According to testimony, Warnecke was the ringleader of the hooligans who ripped off Nivel's helmet, kicked him and beat him about the head with a wooden board

and left him lying in a pool of blood. Warnecke testified that at the time of the attack he had used a wooden board to force his way through a group of three policemen, including Nivel, and was not behind the blows that seriously injured the officer.

After the sentencing, both sides expressed some satisfaction with the outcome.

Antoine Vaast, a lawyer for the Nivels, said he was "quite satisfied how this affair has ended. After this decision, the accused will not appeal, and the Nival family can turn a page."

Jean-Michel Zajac, a former police colleague of Nivel who was jostled by the hooligans, said: "We cannot have the whole world. He has ruined part of a man's life and it is for him to come to terms with it... For me, justice is done."

Bertrand Wambeke, Warnecke's lawyer, also said he was "happy, even if I do not completely agree" with all the court's decisions. "There was some uncertainty, and in general when there is some uncertainty the sentence is less severe."

Warnecke was one of several Germans who committed grievous assault on the officer, Daniel Nivel, after a match between Germany and Yugoslavia in the northern French town of Lens on June 21, 1998.

Nivel spent six weeks in a coma and was left with permanent brain damage.

"I welcome the verdict," said Nivel's wife, Lorette. "We have reached the end." But she added that "the length of the sentence for us would never be enough."

Four other Germans were sen-

## Fowler sings the Owen song

### Football

REUTERS, Derby

Robbie Fowler has paid tribute to club-mate Michael Owen, admitting he's the international standard bearer to whom the rest of the country's marksmen have to aspire.

After emerging as the bright young thing in the mid-90s, Fowler has hardly set the international game alight but after a stunning end to the season the Toxteth-born striker is keen to establish himself and Owen as the spearheads of the national side.

Fowler, 27, grabbed a stunning goal in the UEFA Cup final victory over Alaves and scored goals 16 and 17 of an injury-hit campaign in the weekend victory over Charlton.

Despite his efforts Fowler believes Owen is the man of the moment.

"I think Michael's recent form has been exceptional," he said. "He's scored a lot of important goals and I think we are looking to work with him at the minute."

Coach Sven Goran Eriksson has already indicated that the team that starts Friday's Pride Park friendly against Mexico is likely to be the one that takes to the field for the vital

World Cup qualifier in Greece and that bodes well for Fowler who's certain to feature alongside his Anfield team-mate at Pride Park.

Fowler is itching to prove his



ROBBIE FOWLER

pedigree in the upcoming matches: "I've not done as well as what I would have liked at international level."

"I've been unfortunate in that the squads I have been in the forwards have always been very settled and it's been hard to break up partner-

ships. They have all done very well."

"Chances have been limited. I have started seven games and scored three goals, which isn't bad, but I would like to add to it."

Five Liverpool stars are expected to start Friday's friendly and the quintet have been joined in training by coach Sammy Lee who's replaced Steve McLaren in Eriksson's backroom team.

Although it's been suggested that Liverpool's players may be drained physically and emotionally after a dramatic conclusion to their triumphant season, Fowler reckons life couldn't get much better at present.

He added: "Personally, I wish the season could have gone on for ever. And the Manchester United players here, after winning another title, will be buzzing."

"I think it's a good time to be playing for England full stop."

"We've got a new manager, we're in the middle of the World Cup campaign and we've got a good chance of qualifying. It's pleasing to be part of that squad."

"If you keep playing well at club level your confidence is bound to be sky-high and that means when you go and play for England it is going to be right up there as well."

"We finished the game with Emile out there and me and Robbie up front."

"Emile first played for Leicester as a left winger - obviously he's a great striker as well."

"It's not unusual for him to play there and to see any Liverpool players playing in that team on Friday would be great."

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