

# Europe's decisive night



AFP, Paris

Strikers Carsten Jancker and Oliver Neuville are set to form a rejigged strikeforce for Germany who need only a goalless draw with Ukraine on Wednesday to sneak into next year's World Cup finals.

The three-time World Cup winners grabbed a priceless away goal by drawing 1-1 in the first leg in freezing Kiev on Saturday, setting up a decidedly more comfortable looking return match in Dortmund.

Germany, or West Germany as they have been known, have played in every World Cup finals except 1930 and 1950. They have also never failed to qualify but are now 90 minutes from a humiliating and unprecedented exit.

The three other European play-off ties are also finely poised, with Belgium leading the Czech Republic 1-0 as they head to Prague and Slovenia are 2-1 up against 1994 quarter-finalists Romania going into the return in Bucharest.

Turkey are seeking to qualify for the first time since 1954 and will fancy their chances of holding on to their 1-0 advantage as they take their tie with Austria to Istanbul.

But most eyes will be on Dortmund, where Jancker and Neuville are expected to lead a revised forward line after stand-in strikers Alexander Zickler and Gerald Asamoah failed to impress in Kiev.

Bayer Leverkusen striker Neuville was suspended and forced to sit and watch the first leg as Zickler and Asamoah failed to score, although midfielder Michael Ballack struck in the 31st minute.

"It was terrible in the stands because you simply feel powerless. I

couldn't do anything," said 28-year-old Neuville.

He was sure he could strike up an effective partnership with the giant Jancker.

"We go well together - he's big and I'm small," Neuville said. "A 0-0 draw would certainly be enough for us, but we have to play for a victory because any other approach is just too dangerous," he added.

Jancker came on for Zickler late in

## FIXTURES

### Wednesday's European World-Cup play-offs, second leg fixtures (first leg score in bracket)

- At Istanbul, Turkey
- Turkey v Austria (1-0)
- At Bucharest, Romania:
- Romania v Slovenia (1-2)
- At Dortmund, Germany
- Germany v Ukraine (1-1)
- At Prague, Czech Republic
- Czech Republic v Belgium (0-1)

the game in Kiev but has since reported himself fully fit after a foot injury and is expected to start.

Controversy that often follows the German team came in the form of comments by legend Franz Beckenbauer in Monday's edition of Bild Zeitung saying striker Oliver Bierhoff should consider retiring for good after his performance in the recent 0-0 draw with Finland.

Beckenbauer also said national coach Rudi Voller should consider fielding Lars Ricken because the match was at his home club and because he was more likely to score than Neuville.

The only other change from Saturday however, apart from the striking duo, could be the inclusion of Dortmund defender Christian Worns who has recovered from a knee injury

and is back in training. Should Voller field Worns, the signs are he would probably replace Thomas Linke.

Ukraine, whose national federation was only recognised by world governing body FIFA in 1992, will again be banking on one of Europe's most prolific goalscorers, Andrei Shevchenko, to salvage a ticket to Japan and South Korea.

Belgium were given a boost when their captain Marc Wilmots made himself available for the second leg against the Czechs after recovering from a leg injury.

Wilmots missed the match in Brussels but he trained with the national squad on Monday and convinced Belgian coach Robert Waseige that he could be considered despite missing recent matches for his German club side Schalke 04.

"Marc's in shape. All that he's missing is the rhythm of competition," said Waseige.

"He hasn't played much for the last four weeks and I will certainly consider him for my starting eleven. But his return is in itself an advantage for us," he added.

Wilmots, who plays for German club Schalke 04, said: "I've come to help the team. It's not important whether I play."

Meanwhile, Czech coach Jozef Chovanec said he had called up defender Petr Johana to replace the injured Zdenek Grygera.

Johana, a 25-year-old Slovak Liberec player, has already been picked four times for his country.

The Czechs lost Sparta Prague man Grygera to a thigh injury in the first leg and they will also be without Tomas Repka, who plays for English Premiership side West Ham, after he was sent off on Saturday for elbowing Belgian striker Bart Goor in the face.

# Baggio was threatened?

AFP, Milan

Venezia's Brazilian defender Fabio Bilica was on Tuesday quizzed by Italian football authorities over claims he threatened Brescia striker Roberto Baggio with severe physical violence prior to the two teams' meeting last month.

Baggio, who is out for two months after he was injured in a challenge by Venezia's Antonio Marasco during his side's 3-2 win, made the claims which the head of the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) 'prosecutor's office' is now looking into.

Italian international Baggio revealed that before the match Bilica told him "You are not going to the World Cup, I'm going to break your legs".

Bilica, who denies making any threat, was questioned by the football body's chief 'prosecutor' Italo Pappa who will decide if the player has a case to answer and if necessary pass the matter on to the disciplinary panel.

Sergio Campana, head of the players union (AIC), has also asked for Venezia coach Maurizio Zamparini to be asked to explain to the disciplinary committee remarks in which he called Baggio 'a little diva'.

# ROK to employ bodyguards

AFP, Seoul

Players and officials will be protected by full-time bodyguards when they play in Republic of Korea during the World Cup finals here next year, the country's deputy director of security has confirmed.

The move is all part of special security plans being put in force to prevent any possible terrorist attacks during the world's biggest sporting event.

Competing nations will also be allowed to bring their own security experts.

"Every team will be allowed to bring their own security officers. They can have 20 and we will work in close cooperation with them," said Park Sang-Hwan, deputy director of World Cup security, in an exclusive interview with AFP.

He added that some teams will have higher protection than others.

"We will assess the risk to each team on an A, B, C, D level. A being the highest risk, and apply a different level to each team," he explained.

Park confirmed that following the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington security plans for the World Cup have been reinforced.

# Brazil need to be Brazil



AFP, Montevideo

Punch-drunk Brazil need to come off the ropes and flatten Venezuela to finally book their 2002 World Cup berth on Wednesday as South America's qualifying campaign rumbles to a close.

The four-time World Cup winners have staggered from one bad result to the next throughout a dreadful qualification campaign, with last week's 3-1 humiliation by Bolivia in La Paz the latest blow.

But failure to beat Venezuela on Wednesday would represent a new low for the erstwhile heavyweights of world and South American football as they seek to claim the last automatic qualifying spot from South America.

Argentina, Paraguay and Ecuador have already claimed the top three places, with Brazil now battling against Uruguay and Colombia for the fourth spot. The team finishing fifth must play Australia in a tricky play-off.

Beleaguered Brazil boss Luiz Felipe Scolari insists his side will beat Venezuela, and in theory the Brazilians ought to be good enough to get the required result against a team they beat 6-0 away earlier in qualifying.

Yet last week's rout at altitude in La Paz has left Brazil's disconsolate fans fearing the worst.

Brazil were run ragged by Bolivia, looking unrecognisable from the legendary sides of yesteryear, and against Venezuela on Wednesday they face a team surging a wave of confidence after four wins on the trot.

While Brazil plunged to defeat in Bolivia last week, Venezuela were marking their emergence as a useful side with a well-deserved 3-1 win over second-placed Paraguay.

Scolari wants his team to get an early in Wednesday's match to alleviate the pressure from fans early on.

To that end he is pondering his attacking options, and could bring back Ronaldinho Gaucho of Paris St Germain and Hertha Berlin's Marcelinho Paraíba.

But there is still no chance of a recall for veteran in-form striker Romario, whose good displays at club level have



PHOTO: AFP

Brazil manager Luis Filipe Scolari (C), and his charges (L-R) Beletti, Rivaldo, Emerson and Denilson, share a light-hearted moment during a practice session at Granja Comari on November 12.

continued to be ignored by Scolari.

While Brazil's destiny remains in their own hands, they could still qualify automatically on Wednesday even if

they are beaten and other results go their way.

Their nearest rivals for fourth place are Uruguay, who are just a point behind.

But the Uruguayans, who have been mediocre throughout qualifying, will have a hard task trying to get a result from Argentina in Montevideo.

Argentina, far and away the class side of South America with a 12-point lead at the top of the table, are unlikely to treat a match against their historical football rivals and next door neighbours lightly.

Coach Marcelo Bielsa has however acceded to a request from Boca Juniors not to field Juan Roman Riquelme and striker Guillermo Barros Schelotto. Boca play Bayern Munich in the Intercontinental Cup in Uruguay on Nov 27.

If Uruguay lose to Argentina, Colombia could pip them for the fifth-place play-off spot if they manage to beat Paraguay in Asuncion.

STANDINGS										
Table, results and remaining fixtures in the South American qualifying group for the 2002 World Cup ahead of Wednesday's matches:										
* The teams finishing in positions 1 to 4 win automatic qualification. The fifth placed side goes into a home and away play-off against Oceania winners Australia. The winner of that match also qualifies for the finals. (Played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points)										
Argentina	17	13	3	1	41	14	42			
Paraguay	17	9	3	5	29	19	30			
Ecuador	17	9	3	5	23	20	30			
Brazil	17	8	3	6	28	17	27			
Uruguay	17	7	5	5	18	12	26			
Colombia	17	6	6	5	16	15	24			
Bolivia	17	4	5	8	20	32	17			
Venezuela	17	5	1	11	18	41	16			
Peru	17	4	3	10	13	24	15			
Chile	17	3	2	12	15	27	11			
<b>Remaining:</b>										
14/11/01: Uruguay vs. Argentina; Brazil vs. Venezuela; Paraguay vs. Colombia; Chile vs. Ecuador; Peru vs. Bolivia										

# Irish ladies not allowed?



AFP, Tehran

Iranian authorities have barred some 300 Irish women from attending this week's World Cup 2002 qualifying play-off between Iran and Ireland in the Iranian capital, Tehran, a press report said Tuesday.

"The presence of these women in the stadium has been ruled out," said Shahrokh Jahanshahi, the deputy Tehran governor quoted in the conservative Jomhuri-Eslami paper.

The confirmation of the ban for the Irish female football fans to attend

the match comes just one day after the conservative Kayhan paper, citing an unnamed informed source, said the trip by the group of Irish women to Iran had been cancelled.

The "trip by a group of Irish women to Iran to watch the return match between Iran's national football team and Ireland has been cancelled," the daily said.

At the same time, Jomhuri-Eslami on Monday said the presence of Irish women in the match may prompt "fierce reactions" from influential clerics in Iran's holy city of Qom.

But a staffer at the Irish embassy in Tehran later on Monday expressed surprise, saying no information had been received by the embassy.

"This is the first we are hearing of it," the staff member told AFP. "If it's true, it would be big news, because many of them are coming."

Ireland defeated Iran 2-0 Saturday in Dublin, with Iran facing non-qualification for the World Cup finals in Japan and South Korea.

A crowd of 110,000 is expected to turn out for Thursday's second leg of the play-off. This would have been the first time that foreign women fans would have been able to watch a match alongside men in Iran since the country's 1979 Islamic revolution.

Iranian women are however generally barred from attending football matches.

# Kaiser tells Bierhoff to leave



AFP, Berlin

German football legend Franz Beckenbauer has urged out-of-favour striker Oliver Bierhoff to hang up his international boots.

Beckenbauer, who won the World Cup with West Germany as a player in 1974, and as manager in 1990, said in his weekly column in Bild newspaper it was time for Bierhoff to go.

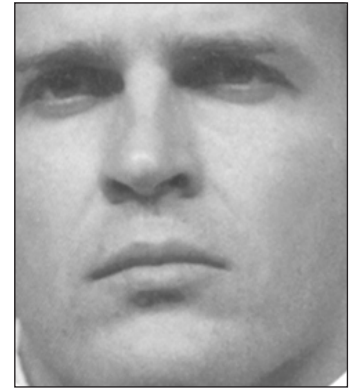
"His merits are not in question," said Beckenbauer of the Monaco forward, three days ahead of Germany's second-leg play-off match

against World Cup 2002 qualifying opponents Ukraine.

"But he should think about whether he wants to continue playing for Germany. I told him personally that as a captain without support, he has no chance," added Beckenbauer, president of Bayern Munich and vice-president of the German football federation.

Bierhoff, who moved to the French First Division side Monaco at the start of the season, has little support as captain of a national team which is dominated by the huge contingent from Bayern.

The former AC Milan forward's dire situation was underlined last week



OLIVER BIERHOFF when he spent 90 minutes of Germany's first-leg match against

Ukraine on the bench, with the captain's armband going to 'keeper Oliver Kahn.

Beckenbauer feels Bierhoff's lack of stature has led to a stalemate which is harming Germany's chances of qualifying.

"At the moment no coaches in Germany could possibly play him (Bierhoff). Since the 0-0 draw against Finland the German public have rejected him," added Beckenbauer.

German football federation (DFB) president Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder believes Bierhoff could soon resign his post as team captain.

"I think it's possible that Bierhoff will resign his position, and that's why I'm going to propose a frank meeting between Bierhoff and (Germany coach) Rudi Voller," said Mayer-Vorfelder on German television.

Meanwhile Bayer Leverkusen manager Reiner Calmund has told Voller, who took over the national squad while he was a sports director at Leverkusen, to end his spell in charge of the national team by the post-World Cup period at the latest.

"We definitely want Rudi to come back (to Bayer). If we've no news on that front by December we will be advertising his job."

# Milan giants for noble cause

AFP, Milan

AC Milan and Inter Milan are planning a friendly derby match to raise money for families of the victims of the air crash at the city's Linate airport last month, it was reported here Tuesday.

Both clubs have given a positive response to an appeal by Ivana Caffi Motta, who founded the support group "Families of the Victims of Linate" although a date has not yet been set.

The incident occurred on October 8 when a Copenhagen-bound SAS flight with 110 people on board collided on take-off with a Cessna private plane carrying four people which had strayed onto the runway.

Four airport workers were also killed when the fuselage of the SAS plane skidded into the baggage-handling area.

# Friendly Croatia draw South Korea



AFP, Seoul

Croatia and South Korea drew 1-1 in their second friendly Tuesday to inaugurate the 123 million dollar Kwangju football stadium for next year's World Cup.

Choi Yong-Soo blasted a penalty-area volley to put the home side ahead in the 42nd minute but Croatia equalized in the 62nd through defender Boris Zivkovic.

Croatia lost 2-0 in Saturday's opening friendly in Seoul due to the absence of stars Alen Boksic, Robert Prosinecki, Robert Kovac and Igor Tudor, who were not included in the squad.

Striker Davor Suker was out of action in the southern city of Kwangju with a heavy cold but his team made an aggressive start to the second friendly after the first, which inaugurated the Seoul World Cup stadium.

South Korea spent the opening 10 minutes defending their goal from a flurry of shots, with Croatian defender Josip Simunica's header hitting the bar in the 3rd minute.

But the hosts managed to take the lead when Choi kicked a cross over keeper Tomislav Butina into the net from close range.

Croatia hit back 17 minutes into the



PHOTO: AFP

Croatia's Veldin Karic (C), being chased by South Korea's Sim Jae-Won (R) during their friendly international at the Kwangju World Cup Stadium on November 13.

second period when forward Milan Rapacic sent a cross over the South Korean defense for Zivkovic to direct home a header.

The game at the 43,121-seat stadium, one of South Korea's 10 World Cup venues, drew 45,000 spectators.

In an opening speech, South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung urged fans in his home town of Kwangju to use next

June's football festival as a chance to recharge the country's sagging economy.

"The World Cup will bring additional production worth 10 trillion won (7.8 billion dollars) and added value of five trillion won while creating 350,000 new jobs," he said.

# Verona's super Sunday



AFP, Verona

The city of Verona on Monday began the countdown to Sunday's historic first ever Serie A derby with an appeal for harmony among supporters.

On Sunday Verona host city rivals Chievo who represent a tiny hamlet of 2900 inhabitants in the north of the city and are competing in the top flight for the first time.

The match at the Stadio Marc'Antonio Bentegodi, shared by both clubs, has been given extra spice by Chievo's unexpected rise to the top of the league while Verona too are exceeding expectations after only escaping relegation last season in a play-off with Reggina.

In a city most famous for the story of Romeo and Juliet, which once sparked tragic consequences, city fathers are this time appealing for unity rather than fostering disharmony.

Until now the unexpected success of the city's clubs has forged a sense of unity. Chievo fans cheer when they hear Verona have

scored and vice-versa, unusual in a country where intra-city rivalry can often be venomous.

But that pact will face the acid test on Sunday when the teams take to the field in front of a capacity 42,000 crowd - more than three times the average for Chievo - and Verona managing director Luigi Agnolin Monday appealed for calm.

"We are facing a highly-anticipated cross-city match," said Agnolin. "It is out of the ordinary. At Verona there exists a historic sporting difference between the two clubs."

"All the same, ahead of the match there are positive signs that I have not felt on other occasions. We have a chance to showcase a positive image of Verona to Italy."

One of the unusual aspects to the derby will be the staking out of fans' territory in the stadium, with Chievo's fans this time set to play second fiddle.

At Milan's San Siro AC fans always occupy the Curva Sud, Inter Milan's the Curva Nord while at Rome AS Roma fans take the Curva Sud and Lazio supporters the Curva Nord. This ensures there is

# Dump Fergie says Cragnotti

AFP, London

Top Lazio official Massimo Cragnotti believes Manchester United should replace Alex Ferguson immediately to kickstart their season, it was reported here Tuesday.

Lazio director Cragnotti, son of owner Sergio, said United's players are struggling to find their best form because they know Ferguson is retiring in May.

Cragnotti compared United's predicament to that of Lazio last year, when the then reigning Italian champions hit a form slump once it became known that Sven-Goran Eriksson was leaving to coach England.

Cragnotti told The Sun that replacing Ferguson quickly would enable the champions to put their early-season wobbles behind them.

"Ferguson is an institution and it's difficult to send away such a man," he said.

"But if they want to do the right thing for their club, United should change the manager quickly."

"The players lose their way when they know the coach is leaving. The team are like sailors on a ship who know the captain is about to jump."

"There was much to learn from our experience. United don't seem to have thought it through properly and they've done themselves damage as a result."