

Injury list lengthens



REUTERS, London

Injury news continued to dominate the countdown to the World Cup finals on Friday, with France, England and Spain receiving depressing bulletins from the treatment rooms.

Karembou, who was in France's World Cup-winning squad four years ago, has had his hopes of playing in the tournament scuppered by a groin injury.

reported France forward Robert Pires as saying he feared many French players would boycott the World Cup if far right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen was elected president in Sunday's vote.

we will not change our basic way of playing," coach Lars Lagerback said. The experienced players include captain Patrik Andersson, the Barcelona defender, and hard-working midfielder Hakan Mild, who were both in the team that reached the 1994 World Cup semifinals.

Romario's anxious hours

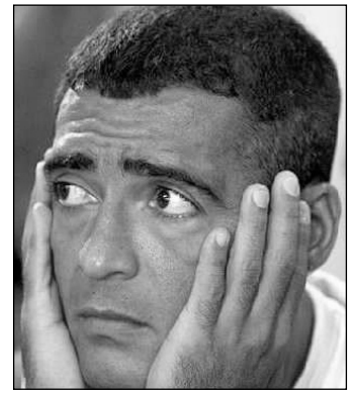


REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Veteran Brazil striker Romario's agonising wait to discover whether he is going to the World Cup will finally end on Monday when coach Luiz Felipe Scolari names his squad.

burst, in which Romario admitted that his dream was to go to South Korea and Japan, was enough to soften the heart of the man known as Big Phil.

Scolari has repeatedly said that "tactical and technical reasons" have kept Romario out of the team. Media have interpreted this as Scolari's way of saying that Romario just stands in the penalty area and waits for the ball to come to him.



ROMARIO

Meanwhile, Brazilians wonder whether a possible act of indiscipline in Montevideo or subsequent criticism in the media may be behind Scolari's Romario snub.

Security beefed up for Korea

AFP, Seoul

An armed police guard was put on the South Korean football team Saturday and players have also had their hotel telephone lines cut, according to reports.

Chung blames Blatter



AFP, Seoul

FIFA vice-president Chung Mong-joon on Saturday accused world football governing body leader Sepp Blatter of misusing a planned trip to North Korea to boost his bid for re-election.

election. "I am not accompanying him because I don't support Mr Blatter and on top of this, I was not consulted."

Chung said that he and African Football Confederation leader Issa Hayatou would stage a rival trip to



CHUNG MONG-JOON

Pyongyang this month. Hayatou is standing against Blatter in the FIFA presidential election to be held at a congress in Seoul on May 28 and 29.

Chung said he would go to the North alone if Hayatou was unable to go. Blatter will try to persuade the North Korean authorities to allow a delegation of North Korean coaches

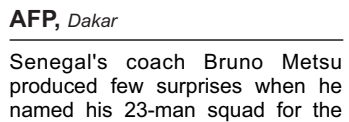
and players to watch World Cup matches in the rival South and Japan, the co-hosts. Chung said he would also discuss the invitation with North Korean sports officials.

Zidane doubtful against Mallorca

AFP, Madrid

French footballing superstar Zinedine Zidane could be ruled out of Real Madrid's crucial La Liga clash with Real Mallorca on Sunday because of the sore ribs that forced him off during Wednesday's Champions League semifinal with Barcelona.

Senegalese side named



AFP, Dakar

Senegal's coach Bruno Metsu produced few surprises when he named his 23-man squad for the World Cup finals here Friday.

The Frenchman said he was staying faithful to the squad that had won Senegal their first ever World Cup finals place and lost on penalties to Cameroon in this year's African Nations Cup final.

Second Division with Gueugnon, to Niang. "It's not a huge problem his (Traore) age. Everyone has earned his place in the team," Metsu said.

"Everyone deserves his place on account of the results they earned in the 17 months I have been in charge. "What justifies my selection above all is that the squad that got us to the Nations Cup final and qualified for the World Cup finals were named best African team of the year by both FIFA and CAF," he added.

lese take on 1998 World Cup quarter-finalists Denmark and three-time winners Uruguay in Group A. SQUAD GOALKEEPERS: Tony Sylva (Monaco/Fra), Oumar Diallo (Khourigba/Mar), Kalidou Cissokho (Jeanne d'Arc/Sen) DEFENDERS: Omar Daff (Sochaux/Fra), Lamine Diatta (Rennes/Fra), Ferdinand Coly (Lens/Fra), Aliou Cisse (Montpellier/Fra), Habib Beye (Strasbourg/Fra), Pape Malick Diop (Lorient/Fra), Alassane Ndour (Saint-Etienne/Fra), Khalidou Fadiga (Auxerre/Fra) MIDFIELDERS: Pape Sarr (Lens/Fra), Salif Dia (Sedan/Fra), Moussa Ndiaye (Sedan/Fra), Amadou Moustapha Faye (Auxerre/Fra), Pape Boubou Diop (Lens/Fra), Makhtar Ndiaye (Rennes/Fra), Sylvain Ndiaye (Lille/Fra) FORWARDS: El Hadj Diouf (Lens/Fra), Henri Camara (Sedan/Fra), Pape Thiaw (Lausanne/Swi), Amara Traore (Gueugnon/Fra), Souleymane Camara (Monaco/Fra) STANDBY: Mamadou Niang (Troyes/Fra), Mamadou Adama Sarr (AC Milan/Ita)

Policemen hurt in fans' clash

AFP, London

Up to 50 police officers were injured when supporters clashed following Millwall's English Division One play-off defeat against Birmingham City, Scotland Yard said on Friday.

Erik to give youths a go



AFP, London

England coach Sven Goran Eriksson is prepared to pick what could be the youngest squad at this year's World Cup finals when he announces his 23-man party on Thursday.

Previous England bosses have stressed the importance of experience going into a major tournament but the Swede has always been one to do things his way.

England captain David Beckham's broken foot has increased the chances of West Ham's 20-year-old Joe Cole claiming a place in a squad that would otherwise appear to be reliant on the recovering United star or Liverpool's injury-prone Steven Gerrard for

midfield creativity. "Joe Cole is a big talent and can do things which most other players can't do," Eriksson recently said. "He has a special talent with dribbling and is a fantasy player. I have always liked him, we will see on May 9 whether he is in the squad or not. "I think he's a player for the future as well. But the future could be in June." If Cole is included, he would be one of up to 13 players aged 24 or under in what would be a squad with an average age of just 26. Discarding England's likely trio of experienced keepers, there will be a maximum of three outfield players who have already celebrated their 30th birthday - 36-year-old striker Teddy Sheringham, 31-year-old Gareth Southgate and possibly his fellow defender Martin Keown, aged 35. Manchester United's 23-year-old

central defender Wes Brown might yet be chosen ahead of Keown. "I think we will have probably one of the youngest teams in all the tournament, maybe the youngest," Eriksson recently told a business lunch. "We will have many players who could be in the under-21s but I think they are ready and will do very well, even if we are a very young team. Anyway, it's very good for the future." Those potential under-21s include Cole's Arsenal namesake and full-back Ashley Cole but also Gerrard, Aston Villa forward Darius Vassell, Southampton wing-back Wayne Bridge and Bayern Munich midfielder Owen Hargreaves. England face Eriksson's compatriots Sweden, Argentina and Nigeria in group F of the May 31 to June 30 tournament in South Korea and Japan.

Argentine loves favourites tag

AFP, Buenos Aires

Director general of Argentina's football delegation Jose Pekerman said Marcelo Bielsa's side had never boasted of being the best although many have tipped them to win this year's World Cup finals.

R fans abuse Scolari

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

The demands to include veteran striker Romario in the Brazilian World Cup squad continued when coach Luiz Felipe Scolari was hounded by some 70 fans outside the headquarters of the Brazilian football federation (CBF) on Friday night.

Scolari was at the CBF's base to discuss the final squad for the May 31 to June 30 event in Korea and Japan which is to be announced on Monday.

"Ay, Ay, Ay, Romario has been picked!" he screamed in frustration at Scolari, who has continually hinted the last few weeks that Romario, Brazil's 1994 World Cup winning striker, will not be included in his final 23.

Scolari was sworn at and pushed and shoved by fans on his way to his car where the most enthusiastic protesters continued to demand Romario's inclusion.

Scolari has tried to avoid giving in to enormous pressure at including the 36-year-old former Barcelona star but according to a correspondent from the normally well-informed newspaper 'O Globo', he may change his tune and name Romario on Monday.

The press adviser of Romario, at Vasco da Gama's Sao Januario Stadium, said he was glad at the positive support but was not happy about any physical intimidation.

"Any show of support is welcome and I'm happy to see people wanting Romario's inclusion but I condemn violent protests which harm people," Romario's adviser said on the player's behalf.

Ecuador warm up well

AFP, Guayaquil

Ecuador completed a 1-0 victory over the country's popular club side Barcelona here on Friday night in their last World Cup warm-up on home soil thanks to a last-minute goal.

Striker Carlos Tenorio scored in a match marred by the sending off of Tenorio's namesake and midfielder Edwin three minutes before the break for insulting referee Pedro Ramos.

The match, in front of 45,000 fans, also served as a celebration of the club's 77th anniversary last Wednesday, the same day Ecuador fell 2-1 to Brazilian club Internacional de Porto Alegre.

Carlos Tenorio sped into the area, beat a defender for speed before winning a one-on-one situation with the keeper for the winning goal.

Ecuador meet Italy, Croatia and Mexico in first round Group G at the May 31 to June 30 football extravaganza.

The Ecuador squad now start a tour which takes them to the USA and Europe before settling into their World Cup base at Tottori, Japan on May 21.

On Wednesday they meet Yugoslavia and AC Milan on Saturday, both matches in the USA, before they fly to Europe for a May 14 friendly against Atletico Madrid in Spain. Possible matches could take place in Japan against Senegal and a local side but they are yet to be finalised.

Leeds to play down under

AFP, Sydney

English Premier League side Leeds United are scheduled to play a one-off match in Melbourne in July, according to press reports.

Opposition for Leeds, which boasts Australian internationals, Mark Viduka and Harry Kewell, is yet to be confirmed but several international and local clubs are under consideration, the Sun-Herald newspaper reported.

Leeds are believed to have promised a full-strength squad, but doubts surround Kewell's involvement, whose previous experiences with private match promoters here have turned sour.

Gary trying to get over it



AFP, London

Manchester United defender Gary Neville said Friday he was coming to terms with missing the World Cup finals because of a broken bone in his left foot.

He had earlier informed the Football Association (FA) that he would not be fit in time.

Neville's hopes of playing at the finals in Japan and South Korea were left in tatters when he broke a metatarsal bone in his left foot during Manchester United's Champions League semi-final first leg with Bayer Leverkusen last month.

The 27-year-old full-back said he was disappointed but the pain was easing as missing the finals.

"I've decided I won't be fit in time to play in the first game in June," he said.

"I've spoken to Sven Goran Eriksson and obviously I'm disappointed. But it's something I've come to terms with pretty quickly after last week after getting the injury.

"It's something I can't do anything about and it is a big disappointment.

"I've decided I won't be fit in time to play in the first game in June," he told MUTV, Manchester United's own television station.

"I had felt the injury firstly against Paraguay the week before for England," Neville explained.

"It was a strange feeling in my foot and I'd never had that feeling

before. "I then played at Chelsea on the Saturday and after 75 minutes at Chelsea I was struggling.

"After the game I lay on the treatment table in Chelsea's dress-



GARY NEVILLE

ing room and we decided then that I would go for an X-ray and a scan on the Monday morning, which I did.

"The X-ray came back showing just bone bruising so it was OK. I did a full practice match on the Tuesday morning before the Leverkusen match and there was no problem at all.

"I went into the game on Wednesday, the first 15 minutes I warmed up, no problem.

"I just went in for a challenge and people said I did it in the challenge, but I never touched him and he never touched me.

"It was just when I got up I felt a different pain from the Saturday.

"I thought it was just bone bruising and stayed on limping like a fool for three or four minutes.

"The club surgeon came down to the treatment room and said straight

taking part in. Then on Wednesday a glimmer of hope appeared when Scolari told a newspaper that he selected 22 players but still had to decide on one more.

"Perhaps I'm the missing one," Romario said. But it would still be a major surprise if Romario were to be suddenly included after so many rejections.

More likely, Monday's announcement will sound the death knell for his World Cup career.

The other major doubts concern midfielders Djalmirna and Rivaldo. Djalmirna could pay a heavy price for this week's incident in which he head-butted coach Javier Irureta during training at Deportivo Coruna.

Scolari has said repeatedly that he wants to create a family atmosphere and may decide that the risk of Djalmirna causing a family squabble is simply too high.

Rivaldo's recent injury problems could make him a liability although it is unlikely that Scolari will discard him yet.

Scolari has another month to pick a replacement should Rivaldo's troublesome knee still be playing up when the tournament gets under way.

Whether Rivaldo -- frequently accused of saving his best for Barcelona -- can produce his top form at international level is a different matter.

Irwin spurs mates on



INTERNET, London

Manchester United defender Denis Irwin claims United will give everything to stop Arsenal winning the Premiership title at Old Trafford on Wednesday, the Evening Standard reported.

The Gunners need just a point to relieve United of the Premiership

trophy, which has taken up almost permanent residence at Old Trafford.

The 36-year-old Irishman said: "We have Arsenal coming next Wednesday so we will be ready for that. Arsenal here is a big, big game for us. We want to win that and make them have to win their last game at home. That's all we can do. We don't want them to win the title at Old Trafford.

"They will be hoping to do that and they'll be thinking the sooner

they do it the better, but we'll have a go. We'll have to pick ourselves up and there's no doubt that we are down and disappointed about what's happened."

The English title-holders are destined to end the season empty-handed for only the third time in 13 campaigns, but Irwin remains defiant.

He recalled the 1997-98 season when United last won nothing and responded by winning the Treble the following campaign.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers.

CRYPTOQUIP HS HJMGDK GNL NRTNSL IDDX MDK K W I R S W H V N M W D X M . V D J V R D L N S L G D G N L N T N W V K J I R D H . Yesterday's Cryptquip: OUR SON LOUNGES AROUND THE HOUSE ALL DAY LONG. I GUESS YOU'D SAY HE'S A TEEN IDLE. Today's Cryptquip Clue: K equals R The Cryptquip 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.