



Diego Maradona

(Argentine soccer legend)

"It is hard to say the word, 'favourite,' because anything can happen in soccer. But Argentina is very strong these days as it showed during the South American qualifying series."



Did U Know?

Japan's Shizuoka Stadium Ecopa is able to have green grass all year round. Even in the winter, the field does not become yellow, as it is made from a blend of five different types of grass. Experiments have been conducted on the field to see how it reacts to different amounts of sunlight and different temperatures, and it has passed every test. No matter what the time of year, players and spectators will be able to enjoy a green field.



ESPN

Western Union World Football

Repeat at 1:30 pm

Sportscentre Hindi

Sport News

Live at 8:30 pm

STAR Sports

Harsha Online

Cricket Talk Show

Repeat at 11:00 am

Cricket Programming

Super Selector

Repeat at 12:00 pm

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PHOTO: AFP

JUST CHECKING! Danny Mills (R), the England defender pulls the shorts of Cameroon's Pierre Njanka during their World Cup warm-up match at Kobe, Japan on May 26.

Heskey in, Becks doubtful



AFP, Tsuna

David Beckham's hopes of making England's World Cup opener against Sweden received a boost when the Manchester United midfielder came through a tough workout, but team officials admitted he is still a doubtful starter for Sunday's crucial match.

Beckham, who has not played for nearly seven weeks, again trained alone with physiotherapist Alan Smith on Monday while most of the

rest of the squad enjoyed a day off at the five-star Westin resort which is to be England's base camp for as long as they last in the tournament.

"He is working according to a recovery programme that has been laid down for him and it is going well," Football Association spokesman Paul Newman told.

"As part of that programme, today he had another session with the physio, running and kicking the ball in a controlled fashion. He came through that very well and he is making good progress."

Newman dismissed reports that the broken bone in Beckham's left foot was not healing as fast as had been hoped for.

"The bone has healed," he said. "David has been kicking the ball for the last few days and running hard. He would not be doing what he is doing if the bone had not healed."

The England spokesman said coach Sven-Goran Eriksson had not set any deadline for Beckham to be ready to play.

"It could be left right to the last minute," he said, adding that England were still working to a target of having Beckham complete a full training session by the middle of the week.

If Beckham loses his race against the clock, Eriksson is leaning towards using Bayern Munich youngster Owen Hargreaves as his replacement on the right side of midfield.

The England coach has also

announced that he intends to name Liverpool striker Emile Heskey in his starting line-up against Sweden.

The powerful forward has not scored for his country since the 5-1 hammering of Germany in Munich in September. But Eriksson dismissed concerns over his form. "I'm not concerned about Heskey at all, he will play against Sweden," he told reporters.

"Maybe I should not come out at this time and say that but I believe in Heskey and what he can do for England."

The current form of Darius Vassell, who has scored three times in four international starts, suggests Heskey is more likely to be played down the left. Vassell looked sharp in Sunday's 2-2 draw with Cameroon,

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Italy open minus Inzaghi

REUTERS, Sendai

Italy striker Filippo Inzaghi is set to miss his side's opening group match against Ecuador on June 3 with a knee injury, a team official said.

"Our objective is for him to be ready for the second game. It will be difficult for him to be ready for the first game," Italian team doctor Andrea Ferretti told reporters.

Italy coach Giovanni Trapattoni also said he was only expecting the AC Milan forward to be in contention for their second group G match against Croatia on June 8.

"Even though it is probable that he won't be ready for the first game, it is very likely that he will be ready five days later for the second match," said Trapattoni.

Inzaghi had tests on his injured left knee at the local hospital after the team returned to base in Sendai on Sunday and the scan showed no torn ligaments.

But while the tests ruled out serious damage and there is no swelling around the knee, the player remains in pain and needs seven to

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CUP CORNER

INTERNET

Mick McCarthy has reported a worrying amount of weight loss among his players after the weekend tussle with Hiroshima and will tell his players to take on more fluids at every opportunity.

"The only thing you can do is drink and eat to replenish the body."

"With all the players, I'm afraid less is sometimes better than more."

"There's a good number of them lost more than 2% of their body weight their function is reduced by 20%, their physical function. Some of them have not put that back on yet."

"The warm-ups they do and the amount of time they spent sweating means they are losing more and more weight."

"We might just have to err on the side of doing less and produce it in the games rather than on out there on the training field."

British actor Roger Moore arrives in South Korea to promote World

007'S WC MISSION!

AP, Seoul

British actor Roger Moore, best known for his movie roles as the international secret agent James Bond, has arrived in South Korea to promote the World Cup finals.

He will attend the World Cup's opening ceremony as Seoul's goodwill ambassador.

Moore, also a goodwill ambassador for the U.N. Children's Fund, will go on a boat ride on the Han River with children from 50 countries on Thursday to celebrate the soccer tournament which kicks off Friday, said the Seoul Metropolitan Government. Moore arrived in South Korea on Sunday.

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Leboeuf saves the blushes



REUTERS, Suwon

Zinedine Zidane sustained a thigh injury as France completed preparations for their World Cup defence by beating South Korea 3-2 in a friendly on Sunday.

Zidane was substituted in the 38th minute after complaining of a problem in his left thigh, just five days before France play Senegal in the opening match of the World Cup. "He has a small tear, a little pain in his thigh muscle," France coach Roger Lemerre said. "When it's muscular, you are always worried because you never know how long it is going to take to heal."

France defender Frank Leboeuf slotted home the winning goal with just one minute remaining in a tight game against South Korea, who suffered their first defeat in eight matches in front of 43,000 fans.

"When a side like Korea is backed by their public, they become very dangerous," Lemerre said. "We have suffered a lot."

"We have had to fight hard to cope with the skills, with physical challenge proposed by the Koreans and with their strong will. We have been very often outpaced. But we never gave it up and we managed to win in the end."

France, who lost 2-1 at home to Belgium last week, knew they could not afford another setback and they made a fast start.

Striker Thierry Henry, back from a knee injury, passed the fitness test, setting up the first goal for David Trezeguet who volleyed home from close range in the 15th minute.

Far from being stunned by the goal, though, South Korea fought back swiftly.

Striker Park Ji Sung side-stepped captain Marcel Desailly in the 25th minute before unleashing a powerful cross shot which gave goalkeeper Fabien Barthez no chance.

France, who crushed the World Cup co-hosts 5-0 in the Confederations Cup last year, then saw first hand how much progress the Koreans have made.

Five minutes before the interval, Choi Tae Uk headed home a free-kick by Lee Young Pyo to put the home side in the driving seat.

Christophe Dugary replaced Henry, who was still struggling for his best form.

The Girondins Bordeaux striker headed home a free-kick by Youri Djorkaeff to equalise in the 53rd minute but it was not enough to discourage the Koreans.

The hosts created several opportunities as the French central defence, blamed for the defeat by the Belgians, looked shaky.

But South Korea proved too naive for the world and European champions and one minute from time Leboeuf blasted a shot in off the crossbar from inside the penalty area.



PHOTO: INTERNET

WHAT HAVE I DONE TO DESERVE THIS? Zinedine Zidane is devastated after suffering a thigh strain at Suwon on May 26.

France prices drop



INTERNET, undated

The contract for France to win the World Cup fell after news that Zinedine Zidane was substituted in France's final warm-up game with a muscle injury.

The PIX for France to win the World Cup fell 2 points to 18. The PIX for Italy rose by one point to 16, while the PIX for Argentina remained unchanged at 17.

Traders believe that France have an 18 percent chance of winning the World Cup. Italy are believed to have a 16 percent chance, while Argentina are believed to have a 17 percent chance of success.

A preliminary test revealed that

Zidane's injury may not be as bad as first feared. The injury is thought to be a small tear in his left thigh.

"As of this evening, there are only 12 players in my squad and the team is weaker," admitted coach Roger Lemerre.

"We think that some muscle fibres may have been damaged and, when it is a muscle, we are always very worried because we don't know how long it will take to recover," he added.

Zidane is expected to miss the tournament's opening game against Senegal. A scan will be carried out today. "The clinical results and analysis of the complementary examinations will allow an evaluation of the duration of unavailability," according to France doctor Jean-Marcel Ferret.

Mr X wants to fix WC!



AFP, New Delhi

World Cup coaches beware. Football matches may be easier to fix than cricket, according to India's notorious gambling syndicates.

But the illegal bookmakers, who wrecked havoc with the careers of top cricket stars in the match-fixing scandal, have no plans to pounce on players during football's World Cup starting this week.

"No Indian, at least, will be trying to fix the World Cup," said an Indian punter, who, in true Bollywood style, wanted to be called Mr X.

"Indians love to gamble and I am sure millions of rupees will be bet during the World Cup, but fixing ... I don't think so," Mr X told AFP.

The Delhi-based Mr X spelt out why football matches could be easier to fix than cricket internationals.

"Look I have never attempted to fix cricket or football or any other

sport," he said.

"But knowing how this business works, anyone who wants to fix a World Cup match can do it easily."

"You can only fix a team to lose, not to win. In cricket, you need to arrange at least six or seven players to ensure the team loses."

"But in football, I suppose having the star striker or the goalkeeper on your side can work."

"If the striker does not score and the goalkeeper keeps letting in goals, what else will a fixer need," Mr X said.

Three former cricket captains -- Mohammad Azharuddin of India, Hansie Cronje of South Africa and Salim Malik of Pakistan -- were thrown out of the game on the testimony of Indian bookmakers.

Mr X confessed the business of illegal betting on sport had "suffered" after the cricket scandal came to light, but huge amounts were still bet.

"One has to be very careful these days," he said. "The police raids homes and offices regularly to catch the culprits."

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Pleasure and pain



REUTERS, Ulsan

Spain's World Cup squad found their workload doubled as they returned to training following a day of rest and recuperation.

The players, who took their first chance to look round the south-eastern port city of Ulsan on Sunday, were back bright and early the following day for a session of fitness work, followed by repeated practice of set-piece plays.

With less than a week to go before the first group B game against Slovenia, coach Jose Antonio Camacho then organised a second 90-minute session, including an hour-long practice game.

"It's important that we work on getting the ball into the middle," left winger Javi de Pedro said after the

morning work-out.

"We've got a lot of good, in-form forwards well capable of finishing as long as we keep them supplied."

Valencia midfielder David Albelda, still suffering the effects of a groin strain, sat out the practice match in the second session.

His place was taken by a 16-year-old from a local school side.

The Spanish team have their own chef in their hotel but the players had their first taste of the local cuisine when they stretched their legs outside the camp on Sunday.

"It was good to get out and see the city," Valencia fullback Curro Torres told reporters on Monday.

"I can't say I understood what anyone was saying but it was interesting."

Apart from Albelda, Spain have another minor injury concern ahead of their first World Cup Group B match against Slovenia on 2 June.

Fellow midfielder Luis Enrique

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PHOTO: AFP

KOLKATA SPEAKS WORLD CUP: A house in Indian city of Kolkata painted with the mural of Brazil superstar Ronaldo and other Cup features. Football is extremely popular in this part of India but the national team has never even gone close to qualifying for the World Cup finals.

WHIZZ KID

COMPETITION 172

Tick the correct answers, post to The Daily Star

Win attractive prizes

Competition closes at 8 pm June 7, 2002 and draw shortly afterwards

1. Serena Williams lifted the Rome Masters Series title defeating: Venus Hingis Henin

2. What was the result of the World Cup warm-up match between England and South Korea: 1-0 2-1 1-1

3. West Indies won the fifth and final Test against India by: 150 runs 155 runs 140 runs

4. Name the Irish football captain who was sent home from the World Cup: Harte Jones Keane

5. BKSP won the CityCell national youth cricket title

Name

Class. Roll No.

School Address

Phone: (If any)