Inzaghi on

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form.

The practice involved those players who did not start in a training match the previous night against Vegalta Sendai.

Alessandro Del Piero of Juventus and Vincenzo Montella of AS Roma, who are both pushing for a spot in the lineup, also appeared. Del Piero scored twice and Montella once.

Inzaghi said Wednesday that he didn't dismiss the idea of playing in Italy's first match against Ecuador on Monday. But that seemed unlikely, with coach Giovanni Trapattoni indicating he'd use just two attackers -- Inter Milan's Christian Vieri and Francesco Totti of AS Roma -- in that match.

Inzaghi could appear in Italy's second match, against Croatia on June 8.

Shock no fluke

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Bouba Diop.

"We've taken a big step forward. But there are two big mountains to climb," said the coach. "We're going to think about recovering because we've got to keep up this level of play against Denmark and Uruguay.

"This result will be no use if the results don't follow. The players must know now they have a chance of reaching the next round. Now they've got to confirm that.

The long-haired Frenchman said he would however allow himself a short celebration.

"As coach, this gives me great pleasure. In football you don't always get luck and I don't think I'm a better coach today than I was yesterday. I dedicate this win to all the coaches who are having a tough time."

Metsu was a player with Belgian club Anderlecht and French outfits Dunkirk, Valenciennes, Lille, Nice and Beauvais and then coached modest French club Sedan before accepting a role with west African minnows Guinea.

He fell in love with the region and jumped at the chance to take the Senegal job last year and has married a Senegalese woman.

Metsu steered the Lions of Teranga to their first ever ticket to a World Cup finals and led them to the final of this year's African Nations Cup, where they lost on penalties to Cameroon.

No nonsense

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The 28-year-old Vieri was born in Bologna and nicknamed "Bobo" in honor of his father Roberto, who was also a successful soccer player. His father moved the family to Australia when Christian was four, and the young Vieri lived there until he was 15.

He then returned to Italy, and soon got started in professional soccer. He was with third-division Prato at 16, but he never saw play there. He switched the following year to top-division Torino _ one of many team changes that the hired gun was to see over the years.

He went on to Pisa, Ravenna, Venezia, Atalanta, Juventus, Atletico Madrid, Lazio, and finally in 1999-2000 to his current club, Inter.

Vieri first made big international news just before France '98, scoring 24 goals in 24 games for Atletico Madrid in 1997-98.

He seems to have settled in with Inter now after changing teams nearly every year and recently extended his contract with the Milan club through 2004.

His only hindrance has been injuries.

Vieri has rarely played a full season for his club team. While scoring 22 goals on Serie A Sundays for Inter this year, he skipped midweek European competitions to nurse a sore leg.

But his leg now seems fine and his mind is on the fights ahead.

"At the World Cup, there are never easy teams. Ecuador, Croatia, Mexico -- we have to concentrate against all of them."

PHOTO: AFP

NOTHING'S GONNA HOLD US BACK! The Brazil squad test their strength while being pulled by ropes strapped to their bodies at Ulsan yesterday.

They couldn't care less?

REUTERS, *Ulsan*

Four times champions Brazil say they are unruffled about playing the unfamiliar role of dark horses in the run-up to the World Cup.

Traditionally considered hot favourites to win the title, Brazil are this time playing second fiddle to arch-rivals Argentina and defending champions France who beat them in the final four years ago.

An unprecedented run of defeats in the past year against modest opponents such as Australia, Paraguay, Ecuador, Honduras, Bolivia and Chile, combined with Congressional investigation into the affairs of the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF), has dented Brazil's prestige.

But, with the worst apparently behind them, the players say they are not bothered if the football world is talking about other teams and warn they are out to prove the pundits wrong.

Real Madrid's Roberto Carlos believes that being considered favourites is a big headache.

"Being favourite in a World Cup just brings all sorts of problems," he said. "But when you talk about who is going to be champion, Brazil is always mentioned. It doesn't worry us."

"If you start as favourites, the marking is tighter and the difficulties are even greater. Sincerely, I think Brazil are among the four (favourites), we'll certainly get to the semi-finals. I also include Italy, Argentina and England," he said.

Diminutive midfielder Juninho was bolder.

"Brazil are always a favourite. People are saying that we're not but deep down I think they know that we are and everybody wants to beat Brazil," he said. "Brazil are always favourites, whatever competition we enter."

Ask if he agreed that Argentina were more likely champions, Juninho replied: "I don't think so. They are one of the favourites, alongside Brazil.

"It's better to do the talking at the end, not at the start. (In 1994), people talked a lot about Colombia and they went out in the first round. We have to talk about the team at the end (of the competition)."

Coach Luiz Felipe Scolari has rescued Brazil from the doldrums since taking over last year, avoiding the ultimate disaster, which would have been failure to qualify for the finals.

Brazil are unbeaten in their last seven matches and, after using around 60 players and four coaches in their 18-match qualifying campaign, are at last looking more like a settled team.

However, the off-the-field chaos, which led to a two-pronged Congressional inquiry into the CBF last year, continues back in Brazil, with a plethora of confusing competitions and a continuing exodus of top players abroad.

CBF president Ricardo Teixeira, a member of FIFA's executive committee, has clung on to his post despite the inquiry producing a devastating report.

Teixeira was accused of using the CBF's money to fund political funds, living in luxury at the organisation's expense and leaving the confederation's finances in ruins.

"For the first time, in many cups, the Brazilian team is not among the favourites," wrote veteran commentator Armando Nogueira.

"In Asia, as in Europe, people are talking about France, Argentina and Italy: they are even talking about England, who arrived in Japan with the worry about the injury to their top player."

"(Football) is a matter which has become an embarrassment. The whole world knows that Brazilian football has turned into dubious business concern.

"Brazil's lack of prestige is not just a result of their miserable campaign in the qualifiers. The wear and tear on our football is, in the main, moral.

On the pitch, however, the players believe they are peaking at the right time and aim to forget, temporarily at least, the boardroom chaos.

"It's very difficult to say who is a favourite at the World Cup and who isn't, you often find the favourites getting knocked out early on," defender Edmilson said. "I think this World Cup will have many surprises."

"Even if people we don't think we are favourites, we are always a force to be reckoned with at the World Cup and it won't be different this year."

"We have gone through very difficult times, now we are much stronger."

Aging Germany

FROM PAGE 13

clubs."

Key playmaker Michael Ballack, who carries much of Germany's hopes in the absence from the squad of fellow creative midfielders Sebastian Deisler and Mehmet Scholl, should start the match on the roof-covered pitch of the futuristic Sapporo Dome despite being still hampered by a bruised foot.

Voeller, whose two main central defenders, Jens Nowotny and Christian Woerns, have been ruled out of the World Cup by injury, will have to leave Marko Rehmer on the bench. The right back hurt a thigh muscle when Germany crushed a regional junior side 10-0 in their final warm-up game last Sunday.

Talented young forward Miroslav Klose, who has scored eight goals including two hat- tricks in 12 outings for Germany, should start up front alongside Carsten Jancker.

Saudi Arabia, who reached the knock-out stage on their World Cup debut in 1994 but failed to survive their group four years ago, will rely chiefly on their spectacular goalkeeper, Mohammed al-Deayea, and veteran striker Sami Al-Jaber.

"Our secret weapon is the Saudi attitude -- our refusal to lose," said Prince Turki bin Khalid, head of the national team delegation.

"We consider the World Cup to be our stage to show the world our football and we have good faith in our players."

But if they can use their physical superiority to the full and stamp their authority on the game from midfield while making the most of set pieces and high balls, Germany should have the edge.

"I am convinced that we are capable of playing at a high tempo for 90 minutes and of winning this game," Skibbe said.

Remember last time?

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from free kicks.

The Danes will probably be the more offensive of the two sides, pushing Dennis Rommendahl and Jesper Gronkjaer down the flanks to stretch the Uruguayan defence.

But it will not be easy.

Los Celestes (the Sky Blues) conceded just 12 goals in their 20 qualifying matches -- fewer than any of the four sides who qualified above them, including Argentina and Brazil.

Paolo Montero is a rock at the heart of their defence, despite his recent knee injuries, while his Juventus team mate Fabian Carini is emerging as one of the world's best goalkeepers.

The Danes are at full strength, but Uruguay are missing midfielder Fabian O'Neill, out with an Achilles tendon injury, and likely to be replaced by Gianni Guigou.

As ever, Uruguay bring with them a reputation for gamesmanship and rough play, which could keep Kuwaiti referee Saad Mane busy.

Montero has been sent off more times than any player in Serie A history, while two members of Victor Pua's squad spent a week behind bars for their part in a huge brawl at a league match 18 months ago.

The Uruguayans, eager to make a good impression in their first World Cup appearance since their 1986 debacle, say their ugly reputation is undeserved.

On Saturday they have a chance to prove it.

TEAMS

Uruguay (Formation 4-3-1-2; Jersey numbers in the beginning): 1-Fabian Carini; 2-Gustavo Mendez, 3-Alejandro Lembo, 4-Paolo Montero, 6-Dario Rodriguez; 8-Gustavo Varela, 5-Pablo Garcia, 7-Gianni Guigou; 20-Alvaro Recoba; 13-Sebastian Abreu, 9-Dario Silva.

Denmark (Formation 4-4-2; Jersey numbers in the beginning): 1-Thomas Sorensen; 6-Thomas Helveg, 4-Martin Laursen, 3-Rene Henriksen, 5-Jan Heintze; 19-Dennis Rommendahl, 2-Stig Tofting, 7-Thomas Gravesen, 8-Jesper Gronkjaer; 9-Jon Dahl Tomasson, 11-Ebbe Sand.

Referee: Saad Kamel Mane (Kuwait)

Blatter gets rid of Zen-Ruffinen

AP, *Seoul*

FIFA president Sepp Blatter succeeded Friday in removing his most dangerous critic and forced the withdrawal of legal action against him by members of his executive committee.

Michel Zen-Ruffinen, who accused Blatter of corruption, financial mismanagement and steering FIFA toward bankruptcy, agreed to quit as FIFA general secretary on July 4. He'll continue in the job through the end of the World Cup, which kicked off later Friday with defending champion France playing Senegal.

Blatter, re-elected for a second four-year term Wednesday despite a scandal-plagued campaign, also won a crucial battle for control of the executive committee at Friday's emergency meeting. He blunted the prospect of criminal action against him as some of the 11 committee members who initiated legal action in a Swiss court earlier this month agreed to drop the charges immediately.

Antonio Matarrese of Italy, one of the complainants, has already resigned from the executive committee. FIFA officials couldn't immediately confirm how many of the remaining 10 involved in the lawsuit attended Friday's meeting. The FIFA executive committee comprises 24 members.

FIFA spokesman Keith Cooper said Zen-Ruffinen and the FIFA executives had agreed terms on terminating his contract.

Zen-Ruffinen will "continue to be in charge of the operations of the World Cup," said Cooper, reading from a statement. "The two parties expressed their satisfaction at the decision and the meeting was held in a positive atmosphere.

Raul not relaxing

AP, *Ulsan*

Real Madrid ace Raul Gonzalez expects a difficult World Cup opener when Spain plays Slovenia, and says patience and ball possession will be the keys.

"Slovenia is a team we know," Raul said Friday. "It's going to look for the counterattack. I believe they will gather many players in the midfield and at the back.

"We'll have to have a lot of patience and try to keep possession. It will be a game won on the wings," the 24-year-old striker added.

Spain met Slovenia once before in the opening round of Euro 2000. The Spaniards won that match 2-1 but had to fight bitterly to do so.

Raul, one of the potential stars of this year's tournament, believes Slovenia's strength is collective, not individual.

"It has not got any great individual players besides (Zlatko) Zahovic," the Spaniard said. "But they are a very strong team and very physical, too."

Spain will be looking to end its 50-year spell of not winning its tournament openers, but Raul doesn't believe it will be a disaster if his team loses Sunday.

"If we suffer a defeat we know the next two games will be the finals for us," he said.

Spain plays its second Group B match on June 7 against Paraguay and wraps up the first round against South Africa on June 12.

The Spanish team received massages Friday morning and had the rest of the day off. It is to travel Saturday to Gwangju in southwestern Korea to train at the World Cup stadium in the evening.

Known as the great underachiever, Spain's best finish in a World Cup was fourth place in 1950. But Raul, who boasts 25 goals in 51 matches for the squad, is convinced this will be Spain's year.

"I think in this World Cup, we're going to shine," he said. "This time we're going to show ourselves to the world. I think everyone is convinced.

"It's not going to be an easy path. First we have to win the first game and secure a place in the second round."

Team coach Jose Antonio Camacho has called on the Madrid youngster to ensure the team maintains a winning spirit, but Raul believes it must be a joint effort.

"I believe in a team we all need each other and we all help each other," he said. "No one player wins a World Cup or a match."

Voted by many coaches as likely to be the second star of the 2002 tournament after France's Zinedine Zidane, Raul says he has no personal ambitions.

"First, I want Spain to go as far as possible. I have no other objective," he said. "As a striker, I will try to score goals and create danger."

Self-control

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"Perhaps the federation can organize a trip at that stage," he said.

Italy also has banned players from seeing their partners before the end of the first round to avoid sapping the team's strength.

Waseige said that keeping the partners away as long as possible only had positive sides.

"It would mean we got very far into the tournament and it would make the reunions all the better," he said.

CUP CORNER

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matism, has acted more on the basis of emotion and intuition than reason and planning.

"You simply can't follow Felipao. I still haven't discovered whether he is very confused or very self-assured with his experiments. Let's wait and see."

Scolari stunned Brazilians this week when he suddenly abandoned his favoured formation, which includes three central defenders, two full-backs and two tackling specialists in midfield.

Instead, he has brought in former Atletico Madrid and Middlesbrough player Juninho as a second creative player in midfield at the expense of one of the markers.

"Scolari seems motivated and overcome with so many choices, something he didn't have in the clubs that he coached. With the national team, he changes the parts as if he were a child discovering the world," said Tostao, who added he had become more optimistic about the chances of a fifth world title.

"With the two Ronaldos, Rivaldo and the emergence of Lucio, Brazil are much better off than they were in the qualifiers. It will not be a surprise if they win the title."

Fernando Calazans, who writes a column in the Rio de Janeiro daily O Globo, commented: "Juninho gave life and movement to a team which was needing an injection of enthusiasm."

"Forgetting the names of who came in and who was dropped, the coach has temporarily brought an end to the system with two defensive midfielders. Instead, he now has two playmakers, Juninho and Ronaldinho. It seems too good to be true.

"The national team has become more Brazilian and we now have four players who can change the outlook of a training session, of a match and even of a World Cup in which there is no great favourite."

He added: "We have become so stuck into a defensive and mediocre mentality that, at the time the coach unshackles himself, reporters ask him and Juninho if the change will not leave the defence unprotected."

"It's difficult to believe."

KEANE A DISGRACE TO IRELAND

AFP, *London*

Former Republic of Ireland manager Jack Charlton has branded skipper Roy Keane "a disgrace to his country" after the Manchester United star's dramatic World Cup bust-up with manager Mick McCarthy.

Charlton, who achieved iconic status in Ireland after leading them to two World Cup finals' in 1990 and 1994, said Keane had been solely responsible for the furore with McCarthy.

McCarthy dramatically booted Keane out of Ireland's World Cup squad last week after a confrontation between the two degenerated into a slanging match.

The decision to axe Keane has been questioned in some quarters - but Charlton is adamant that his successor made the right decision.

"His attitude has been appalling and all week we've had to listen to talk of whether or not he's going back out to play for his country in the World Cup," Charlton wrote in a column published in Friday's Daily Mirror.

"I'm sick and tired of it and I'm sick and tired of hearing his name.

"Have the Irish people who support this person on this lost all sense of reason? Have they lost all sense of decency?

"This person has been at fault in all of this from start to finish, there is no escaping that. Can the people not see that?

"He had his chance to go back and he didn't do the decent thing. I know I wouldn't have taken him back...ever," Charlton said.

"The people of Ireland may forgive him but I never will. He is a disgrace to his country and yet he is being feted like a hero," he added.

Keane earlier this week said there was no chance of him returning to help Ireland, whose Group E campaign gets underway on Saturday when they face African champions Cameroon in Niigata, Japan.

"I do not consider that the best interests of Irish football will be served by my returning to the World Cup. The damage has been done," Keane said.

Keen to forget Keane

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helped inspire Ireland to a quarter-final place at the tournament in Italy in their best-ever World Cup showing.

A similar display of collective responsibility could save Ireland's blushes, and the possibility has not been lost on their opponents.

"Roy Keane is one of the best midfielders in the world," said Cameroon's German-born coach Winfried Schaefer.

"But it might not be an advantage for us that he is not here. Without him the Irish players might stick together even more."

The 1990 finals also signalled the rise of African football in the shape of Cameroon, who progressed to the last eight.

Two successive first round exits in 1994 and 1998 may have stymied their progress, but few critics, having seen the Indomitable Lions earn creditable draws with Argentina and England recently, would belittle their lofty ambitions 12 years on.

"Our players are more disciplined now," said Schaefer. "But they are also talented with some natural leaders who are idols to the other team members."

Integral to his plans is a defence built around Geremi and Rigobert Song, who must avoid the ignominy of being sent off in three successive World Cups.

Keane's absence could be exploited by Lauren, who impressed as Cameroon triumphed at the African Nations Cup in Mali this year, while the forward line will be led by the exciting Samuel Eto'o and, providing he recovers from a foot problem, Patrick Mboma. Ireland's Mark Kinsella rested a knee injury in midweek and will be paired in central midfield with Matt Holland.

However, it is in attack -- through Damien Duff and Robbie Keane -- that Ireland will look to shine. McCarthy has even said that Duff, the quicksilver forward with an eye for goal, could be the "sensation" of the finals.

Having eliminated the Netherlands in a qualifying campaign that drew praise from all quarters, McCarthy's stock could not have been higher.

But he has learnt the harsh realities of frontline management in cruel fashion this month, and Saturday's events at Niigata's Big Swan stadium should help determine whether he sinks or swims.

PROBABLE TEAMS

Ireland (Formation 4-4-2; Jersy numbers in the beginning): 1-Shay Given; 2-Steve Finnan, 14-Gary Breen, 5-Steve Staunton, 3-Ian Harte; 7-Jason McAteer, 8-Matt Holland, 12-Mark Kinsella, 11-Kevin Kilbane; 9-Damien Duff, 10-Robbie Keane

Cameroon (Formation 4-4-2; Jersy numbers in the beginning): 1-Boukar Alioum; 2-Bill Tchato, 5-Raymond Kalla, 4-Rigobert Song, 8-Geremi; 12-Lauren, 17-Marc-Vivien Foe, 2-Salomon Olembe, 3-Pierre Wome; 9-Samuel Eto'o, 10-Patrick Mboma

Referee: Toru Kamikawa (Japan)

Number 10, an attacking myth

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wear it?

Some of the number 10s at the 2002 World Cup are recognisably strikers -- England's Michael Owen or Spain's Diego Tristan for example.

But more usually, the number 10 is a free spirit, roaming the space between midfield and attack, seeking to tease open the opposing defence with an unforeseen run on goal or a pinpoint pass to the strikers.

Michel Platini, Zico and Roberto Baggio performed that role at past World Cups -- Zinedine Zidane is their natural heir this time round.

Zidane's much-publicised thigh injury has caused consternation in France and his absence could be a major factor in Friday's clash with the Senegalese in Seoul.

Raised on a diet of Platini, the current generation of French fans know the importance of number 10s, and what it means to be without one.

Although Ronaldo grabs the headlines for Brazil with his goals when fit, it's Rivaldo in the number 10 shirt who pulls the strings behind the forwards with his tireless running and clever passes into space to create numerous chances.

Luis Figo is the biggest name in the Portuguese squad but for many his team mate and number 10 Rui Costa is the more exciting player -- a footballing aristocrat who can turn a game with a backheel, a flick of his boot or a 40-metre pass.

Italian club Napoli have "retired" the number 10 shirt in honour of Maradona.

Argentina would happily do the same were it not for a ruling from FIFA this week that bars them from doing so.

But Pele, Baggio, Zico, Platini and Maradona have had their day and, for some, the magic of the number 10 is on the wane.

Number 10s don't always fit in -- neither midfielders nor forwards, they are often a strange and sometimes disruptive hybrid of the two.

"The role of the number 10, or creative midfielder, has undergone a transformation," Argentine World Cup winner Jorge Valdano said in an interview with FIFAworldcup.com earlier this month.

"Sometimes he plays as an extra striker... Look at the Italian example: (Alessandro) Del Piero or Totti, both modern midfielders, play in attackers' roles.

"What I am saying is that the number 10, who represents the most creative and romantic part of the game, is becoming an endangered species. It is a real cause for concern."

Zidane, as Valdano recognises, proves that while possibly under threat, the creative number 10 is by no means extinct.

"But even then," the Argentine said, "as we saw at France in 1998, if you're going to play a Zidane-type player, you have to sacrifice a forward and play with just one up front."

CROSSWORD *By Eugene Sheffer*

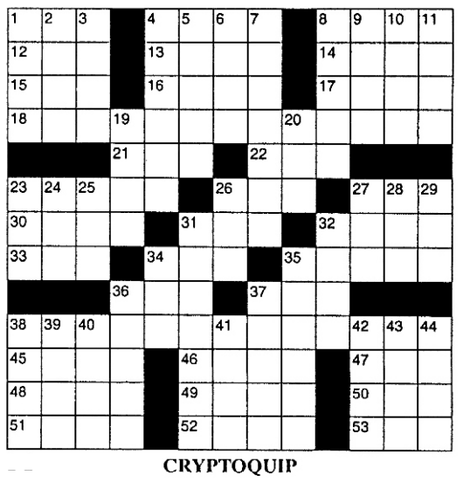
ACROSS

1 Comprehend
4 "Jabberwocky" start
8 Pretense
12 Commotion
13 Guadalajara greeting
14 Fleet member
15 Predetermine
16 Dr. Seuss' "If — the Zoo"
17 Hertz competitor
18 Mag that debuted in 1922
21 Wall climber
22 Commit perjury
23 Tremor
26 Mainlander's memento
27 Favorite
30 Incite
31 Standard
32 Show moxie
33 Inseparable
34 "Alley —"
35 Take a load off
36 Will Smith portrayal
37 Groundbreaking device
38 What to drink when reading 18-Aerooa?
45 Footnote abbr.
46 Mah-jongg piece
47 Hr. fraction
48 Color quality
49 TV's Jeannie
50 Employ
51 2002, e.g.
52 Pop Broadway musical
53 Spotted

DOWN

1 Keaton's "Mr. Mom" co-star
2 Falco of "The Sopranoa"
3 Forum fashion
4 Pilfer
5 Fret
6 "Oh, woe!"
7 "Happy Gilmore" star
8 Old West transport
9 Possess
10 WWII losers
11 Drizzle
19 Amsterdam structure
20 Sundial notation
23 Status follower
24 Decorative vase
25 Candle count
26 Onoe around the track
27 Chum
28 Detergent brand
29 A Ritter
31 Piece of advice
32 Consider
34 Flamenco cheer
35 Gnawing critter
36 Serpent
37 Paris' captive
38 Metropolis
39 Musical instrument
40 1492 vessel
41 Faction
42 Don of radio
43 "Friends" Kudrow
44 Recognized

Solution time: 23 mins.



CRYPTOQUIP

O V X Z F S V X W O F D R X X G W D Y X D G X F P Z F W C F X . H O G Z X W R ' O M R Z U V Z U O Z S Z R G C S O H O W X Y P .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN PRISONERS WANT TO CALL EACH OTHER UP, THEY PROBABLY USE THEIR CELL PHONES.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: S equals C

The Cryptoquip 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.