

Saudis for supper?

FROM PAGE 13
reckons Cameroon need to pace themselves in the humid conditions better than they did against Ireland.

"We will try to calm down because we now know that it is hot here," he said.

The Saudis are still in a state of shock following their thrashing on Saturday, a result that undid years of steady soccer progress by the Middle East nation.

Saudi striker Al-Hasan Al-Yami described the Germany result as a "tragedy" and promised better against the Africans.

"We were all terrible. It can't get as bad as this again. We let our supporters down but we will do much better against Cameroon. We couldn't do any worse."

As if things weren't bad enough, captain Sami Al-Jaber, the most experienced outfield player in the squad, is doubtful for the Cameroon clash with an ankle injury.

If he is not fit, then Abdullah Jumaan, who played the last 13 minutes of the Germany game, is the most likely replacement.

Saudi coach Nasser Al-Johar must decide whether to stick with goalkeeper Mohammed Al-Deayea, who looked out of his depth on Saturday.

Al-Johar may also make changes to his defence and Fouzi Al-Shehri, who turned 22 last month, is likely to start.

But it is the midfield area which is set for the biggest shake-up after Saturday's rout.

Youngster Mohammad Al-Shihob, the left winger known as "Baby Maradona" in Saudi Arabia, and defensive midfielder Omar Al-Ghamdi could form part of the starting line-up at the expense of Khamis Al-Owairan and Abdallah Al-Waked.

Guus God!

REUTERS, Seoul

When striker Hwang Sun-hong reeled away from Poland's goal after putting South Korea ahead in their World Cup match on Tuesday, he sprinted straight to embrace coach Guus Hiddink rather than his team mates.

South Koreans -- from oncesceptical reporters to corporate management gurus -- are now looking at Hiddink's magnetic style and charismatic touch to see what there is to learn for one of Asia's most vibrant economies as well as future soccer success.

"Guus Hiddink is an executive manager of soccer. He is not a 'soccer engineer' who only knows skill," said the daily newspaper Donga Ilbo.

"Soccer is management," it said in a banner headline the day after co-hosts South Korea beat Poland 2-0 in their opening World Cup group D match. "Forever soccer CEO."

Hiddink is firmly in the spotlight for his management style as much as for the sporting task of rebuilding the team in 18 months to achieve South Korea's first win in five World Cup tournaments.

"Strategy genius Hiddink, we love you!" said a headline from another daily Maeil Business Newspaper, revels Tuesday's victory.

Whistle wizard

AFP, Kameari

Some people think that all you have to do is blow into a whistle to emit a shrill peep that can be heard above the roar of thousands of fans, but Kazuhiro Noda, a Japanese craftsman who claims to produce "the best whistles in the world," thinks differently.

"Referees care about the quality of whistles because they are partly judged on the way they blow up," Noda, 71, explained to AFP in an interview at his home-cum-workshop of his company, Noda Kakuseisha, ("Crane's Voice") north of Tokyo.

"Sometimes, the referee has to blow three times, two short bursts, then a third after taking another breath. If the quality (of the whistle), isn't good, he won't be able to do it," said Noda.

"That's why referees often have two whistles," he added.

Noda's whistles the Rolls Royces of this niche market: cast in nickel, then repeatedly chrome-plated to withstand long use and polished to a mirror finish. The most expensive model in a gold finish with a serial number costs 8,400 yen (68 dollars), although prices start around 3,000 yen.

While not an official supplier to the 2002 World Cup, Noda, a canny marketing man, is hoping the tournament will prove a showcase for his whistles just as France 98 was after the sound of his craftsmanship seduced the ears of Masayoshi Okada, the first Japanese to referee a World Cup game.

Noda gave him 70 pairs of whistles (one gold, one silver) to hand out to other FIFA referees. This year, he presented 120 pairs to the Japanese organising committee, JAWOC in the hope that many of the referees for matches both in Japan and South Korea would choose his "babies."

He is not the only manufacturer to employ this strategy, with rivals including Canada's Fox 40, and whistles from Taiwan and Italy, but Noda is confident he has a superior product.

"The Canadian whistle has a low note which the players hardly react to, while the Italian one is too tremulous and the Taiwanese one is of poor quality," he said.

The secret of a good whistle, according to Noda, who has been practising his trade for 34 years, lies in the size of the opening and the 'pea' inside. If the hole is too large, the air is lost soundlessly, while Noda treats his 'peas' -- actually tiny balls of cork -- to close the pores and prevent them becoming saturated with saliva.

"Before going into whistle-making in 1968 at the request of our American clients, we had been exporting har-

mony, ranks South Korea 40th internationally but they played impressively against Poland and in recent friendlies after receiving Hiddink's advice.

Media and management experts have tried to find the reasons for Hiddink's success. They point to what they see as his impartiality in assessing strong points and his own ability to manage a team efficiently on the top.

"Koreans generally like his (Hiddink's) leading style, his discipline, his impartiality and an eye for a good talent," said Kim Do-hoon, industrial policy analyst with the Korea Institute for Industrial Economics and Trade, a government think tank.

"He is independent and impartial because he is European, completely un-Korean. He is not involved in any political intrigues here," he said.

"If we apply Hiddink's leadership to other areas, maybe we can even change our society."

South Korea is one of the best performing economies in Asia and is looking to develop further by co-hosting the World Cup with Japan.

The governor of the central Bank of Korea said on Wednesday he was expecting 6-7 percent growth this year compared with three percent last year.

South Korea had economic problems when it had to go cap-in-hand to the International Monetary Fund during the 1997-98 financial crisis. In soccer, the South Koreans returned from the 1998 World Cup in France after a dismal showing that included a 5-0 drubbing by the Netherlands -- then coached by Hiddink.

Former South Korea head coaches, who were all Korean, were not free from outside pressures in selecting players.

Culturally, South Koreans heavily rely on private relationships based on family, school and hometown ties.

Hiddink's style of sticking to his principles and believing in himself was also noted in newspapers. He pushed for basic physical training right up to the big match.

"He was not moved at all by all those media criticisms of his way of training," said Donga Ilbo.

"He's a great leader. Since we didn't have a good director, we hadn't won any game before, even with all the talented players. But Hiddink proved to be the most appropriate leader for the team," said Choi won-hee, a 23-year-old female student in Seoul.

"I hope he will stay in Korea to initiate a power programme designed to develop new football players," said Kim Yong-suck, a 38-year-old salesman.

Kanu battling to get fit

AFP, Kobe

Nigeria's Nwankwo Kanu is doubtful for the Super Eagles' crucial group of death clash with Sweden here on Friday as he battles to recover from bruised ribs and a twisted ankle.

Kanu had to go off early in the second half of the 1-0 defeat by Argentina on Sunday and says he is not sure if he will be able to play on Friday.

"My ribs are still very sore and my ankle is quite swollen," he said. "They are getting better but I really do not know if I will make it in time."

Nigeria go into Friday's game knowing another defeat will mean an early flight home and Sweden are bracing themselves for a tough battle in the Kobe Wing stadium.

Ode to Ronaldo

REUTERS, Ulsan

Ronaldo's explosive World Cup comeback in Brazil's 2-1 win over Turkey is a cause for celebration for everyone in the game, Spanish striker Diego Tristan said on Wednesday.

The 25-year-old Brazilian put three years of career-threatening injury problems behind him against the Turks, capping a fine performance with his side's equaliser on 50 minutes.

It was his first World Cup match since the final in France four years ago, when his dazed display reportedly came a few hours after he had suffered a convulsive fit.

"It's a joy for football that he's come back in such style, after the operations he's had and all the time he's been without playing," Tristan said.

"He's come back in great form and fans, players and everyone who likes football should be happy about it."

Tristan highlighted Christian Vieri, who scored both Italy's goals in their 2-0 win over Ecuador, as the other outstanding striker at the tournament.



PHOTO: AFP
Cameroon defender Lucien Mettomo (L) and midfielders Pierre Njanka Beaka (C) and Joel Epalle during their team's training session at the Saitama Stadium yesterday.

Fearless Totti & Co

REUTERS, Sendai

Italy playmaker Francesco Totti says his team fear no-one and can go all the way in the World Cup.

Totti was one of the inspirations behind Italy's comfortable 2-0 win over Ecuador in their opening group G match on Monday, setting up the first of Christian Vieri's two goals and showing that he is close to being back to his best after two months out with injury.

The Italy number 10 said he has not had the chance to see much of the World Cup so far, but believes his side have everything in place to make it to the final.

"I haven't seen many matches but Italy shouldn't fear anyone because we can go all the way," Totti told reporters after training on Wednesday.

Ominously for Italy's opponents, Totti said that he was not yet firing on all cylinders.

"I am not at full power yet, but I am well, physically and mentally well, that is the important thing for a player," he said.

Totti's talent first emerged to an international audience at the 2000 European Championships and the

memory of Italy's 'golden goal' defeat to France in the final is clearly an extra motivating factor for the striker.

"After Euro 2000 I want to prove myself to the world with a win," said the forward, whose reputation has continued to grow since he helped his club AS Roma to win the Italian title in 2001.

"I think I have done well in Europe, in the Champions League and in those European Championships, and I have gained a bit more consideration outside Italy," Totti said.

Totti's precise role in the team is one of the factors being considered by Italy coach Giovanni Trapattoni ahead of Saturday's second game against Croatia.

But the player says whether he plays as a striker again or in his more familiar role behind the front two is not a worry, although he clearly prefers the freedom of the playmaker position.

"Maybe the coach will want to change something but I am happy whatever role I play -- I hope to be in full form," said Totti.

"I definitely like to play behind the two forwards but the important thing

is to play. Trapattoni has a lot of forwards and can choose whatever formation he wants."

Vieri is certain to be one of those chosen against Croatia after his impressive opening showing against Ecuador, and Totti was full of praise for the burly target man.

"Vieri has charisma he has the desire to make himself felt. I think Bobo is in good shape and will be hard to stop. He really is an impressive force," said Totti.

Totti's glamorous TV celebrity girlfriend Ilary Blasi and his mother have travelled to Sendai to support the player, something that clearly pleases him.

"I have people beside me who love me. I'm happy they are here with me, they are people I care about," he said.

Totti laughed off a suggestion that the presence of his mother could lead to him being labelled a 'mummy's boy'.

"There is no problem. Mamma is always Mamma," he said.

Champs' fingers

FRONT PAGE 13

That France cannot really cope without their playmaker.

Since the start of the year, the French have never won when their talisman has been sidelined. They were held to a draw by Russia and lost to Belgium at home in warm-up friendlies before slumping to the highly organised Senegalese.

They now have just a hard-fought victory over World Cup co-hosts South Korea to show for their last four games, a record hardly worthy of world champions. Zidane started that match but was substituted after 38 minutes with his thigh injury.

Thuram suffered a minor shin bone injury when he slammed into goalkeeper Fabien Barthez in training Monday.

Always very discrete when asked about strategy, Lemerre has for once given some tips about his probable starting line-up.

The cunning French strategist has also hinted that the old 4-3-3 formation favoured by former coach Aime Jacquet in the victorious 1998 World Cup campaign could be an

option.

"Having three defensive midfielders is something I'm considering too. Claude Makelele is with us," said Lemerre.

He stressed that France had developed a winning mentality and were not familiar with defeat.

"Over the last four years we have been used to this culture of victory," Lemerre said. "It's something new for us."

France are heading into unknown territory as they know very little about Uruguay, a side they have not played since 1985.

"We don't know them well. But we know that we have always found it hard to cope with South American football," said Argentina-born Trezeguet. "We lost to Chile last year and we had had to struggle to beat Paraguay in 1998."

Uruguay's influential midfielder

Fabian O'Neill has still not recovered from an Achilles tendon injury. He has not trained for over two weeks and sat out the Denmark match.

They responded to O'Neill's absence by playing two strikers, with Alvaro Recoba playing as an attacking midfielder behind them, and are likely to opt for the same tactics in Pusan.

Uruguay coach Victor Pua was not too dispirited after the Danish defeat.

"Our remains high, we are still in the competition and we are looking ahead to the next two matches."

But he knows they must be at their best to avoid a French backlash and that means avoiding the defensive errors that allowed Denmark striker Jon Dahl Tomasson to score twice.

WC STANDINGS

World Cup tables after Wednesday's matches:

(Played, won, drawn, lost, for, against, points)

GROUP A

Denmark	1	1	0	2	1	3
Senegal	1	1	0	0	1	3
Uruguay	1	0	1	1	2	0
France	1	0	1	0	1	0

GROUP B

Spain	1	1	0	0	3	1
Paraguay	1	0	1	0	2	1
South Africa	1	0	1	0	2	1
Slovenia	1	0	1	1	3	0

GROUP C

Costa Rica	1	1	0	0	2	3
Brazil	1	1	0	0	2	3
Turkey	1	0	1	1	2	0
China	1	0	1	0	2	0

GROUP D

South Korea	1	1	0	0	2	3
United States	1	1	0	0	3	3
Portugal	1	0	1	2	3	0
Poland	1	0	1	0	2	0

GROUP E

Germany	2	1	0	9	1	4
Ireland	2	0	2	0	2	2
Cameroon	1	0	1	0	1	1
Saudi Arabia	1	0	1	0	8	0

GROUP F

Argentina	1	1	0	0	1	3
England	1	0	1	0	1	1
Sweden	1	0	1	0	1	0
1	1	0	0	1	0	1
Nigeria	1	0	0	1	0	1

GROUP G

Italy	1	1	0	0	2	3
Mexico	1	1	0	0	1	3
Croatia	1	0	1	0	1	0
Ecuador	1	0	1	0	2	0

GROUP H

Russia	1	1	0	0	2	0
3	1	0	0	2	2	1
Japan	1	0	1	0	2	1
Tunisia	1	0	0	1	0	2

SCORING CHART

AFP, Seoul

Leading World Cup scorers after Wednesday's matches:

4 - Miroslav Klose (Ger)
2 - Jon Dahl Tomasson (Den), Christian Vieri (Ita)

1 - Niclas Alexander (Swe), Francisco Arce (Par), Michael Ballack (Ger), Gabriel Batistuta (Arg), Beto (Por), Oliver Bierhoff (Ger), Cuahtemoc Blanco (Mex), Sol Campbell (Eng), Sebastian Cmiric (Slo), Pape Bouba Diop (Sen), Fernando Hierro (Spa), Quinton Fortune (Rsa), Ronald Gomez (Crc), Hasan Sas (Tur), Matt Holland (Irl), Sun-Hong Hwang (Kor), Junichi Inamoto (Jpn), Carsten Jancker (Ger), Valery Karpin (Rus), Thomas Linke (Ger), Brian McBride (USA), Teboho Mokoena (Rsa), John O'Brien (USA), Patrick Mboma (Cmr), Raul (Spa), Rivaldo (Bra), Dario Rodriguez (Uru), Ronaldo (Bra), Roque Santa Cruz (Par), Bernd Schneider (Ger), Takayuki Suzuki (Jpn), Egor Titov (Rus), Valeron (Spa), Peter Van der Heyden (Bel), Marc Wilmots (Bel), Mauricio Wright (Crc), Sang-Chul Yoo (Kor), Robbie Keane (Irl).

TVangel

FROM PAGE 16
lobbed the ball beautifully over Narazaki, and we were tied at 2-2. The action did not end there though, as Inamoto had what seemed like a perfectly good goal disallowed very late in the game. In the end, both sides had to settle for a point each, and it was probably a fair result, since neither side deserved to lose.

South Korea's performance against Poland was reminiscent of the football Holland played under Guus Hiddink in France '98, built around pace down the flanks and the midfielders being able to interchange positions with ease. They completely dominated the Poles from start to finish, and probably deserved to win by a bigger margin. The goal came relatively early, courtesy of some good work down the left flank and an expert finish from Lee Eul-yong. Yoo Sang-chul was pulling all the strings in midfield, spraying the ball around the park beautifully. If one criticism could be pointed at the rampant Koreans, it was possibly the fact that they were taking too many shots from long range. But it was one of these shots that resulted in the next goal for them. Yoo's shot had a lot of power in it, but Dudek should have kept it out. Even after that cushion of a second goal, Korea continued to attack, hungry for more. Poland were in disarray at the back, overrun in midfield, and their highly rated striker Olisadebe only stood out for his colour up front. A third goal did not eventuate however, and the Koreans had to be satisfied with 2-0. Asia's pride had been restored. Thank you South Korea!

South Korea's performance against Poland was reminiscent of the football Holland played under Guus Hiddink in France '98, built around pace down the flanks and the midfielders being able to interchange positions with ease. They completely dominated the Poles from start to finish, and probably deserved to win by a bigger margin. The goal came relatively early, courtesy of some good work down the left flank and an expert finish from Lee Eul-yong. Yoo Sang-chul was pulling all the strings in midfield, spraying the ball around the park beautifully. If one criticism could be pointed at the rampant Koreans, it was possibly the fact that they were taking too many shots from long range. But it was one of these shots that resulted in the next goal for them. Yoo's shot had a lot of power in it, but Dudek should have kept it out. Even after that cushion of a second goal, Korea continued to attack, hungry for more. Poland were in disarray at the back, overrun in midfield, and their highly rated striker Olisadebe only stood out for his colour up front. A third goal did not eventuate however, and the Koreans had to be satisfied with 2-0. Asia's pride had been restored. Thank you South Korea!

South Korea's performance against Poland was reminiscent of the football Holland played under Guus Hiddink in France '98, built around pace down the flanks and the midfielders being able to interchange positions with ease. They completely dominated the Poles from start to finish, and probably deserved to win by a bigger margin. The goal came relatively early, courtesy of some good work down the left flank and an expert finish from Lee Eul-yong. Yoo Sang-chul was pulling all the strings in midfield, spraying the ball around the park beautifully. If one criticism could be pointed at the rampant Koreans, it was possibly the fact that they were taking too many shots from long range. But it was one of these shots that resulted in the next goal for them. Yoo's shot had a lot of power in it, but Dudek should have kept it out. Even after that cushion of a second goal, Korea continued to attack, hungry for more. Poland were in disarray at the back, overrun in midfield, and their highly rated striker Olisadebe only stood out for his colour up front. A third goal did not eventuate however, and the Koreans had to be satisfied with 2-0. Asia's pride had been restored. Thank you South Korea!

South Korea's performance against Poland was reminiscent of the football Holland played under Guus Hiddink in France '98, built around pace down the flanks and the midfielders being able to interchange positions with ease. They completely dominated the Poles from start to finish, and probably deserved to win by a bigger margin. The goal came relatively early, courtesy of some good work down the left flank and an expert finish from Lee Eul-yong. Yoo Sang-chul was pulling all the strings in midfield, spraying the ball around the park beautifully. If one criticism could be pointed at the rampant Koreans, it was possibly the fact that they were taking too many shots from long range. But it was one of these shots that resulted in the next goal for them. Yoo's shot had a lot of power in it, but Dudek should have kept it out. Even after that cushion of a second goal, Korea continued to attack, hungry for more. Poland were in disarray at the back, overrun in midfield, and their highly rated striker Olisadebe only stood out for his colour up front. A third goal did not eventuate however, and the Koreans had to be satisfied with 2-0. Asia's pride had been restored. Thank you South Korea!

South Korea's performance against Poland was reminiscent of the football Holland played under Guus Hiddink in France '98, built around pace down the flanks and the midfielders being able to interchange positions with ease. They completely dominated the Poles from start to finish, and probably deserved to win by a bigger margin. The goal came relatively early, courtesy of some good work down the left flank and an expert finish from Lee Eul-yong. Yoo Sang-chul was pulling all the strings in midfield, spraying the ball around the park beautifully. If one criticism could be pointed at the rampant Koreans, it was possibly the fact that they were taking too many shots from long range. But it was one of these shots that resulted in the next goal for them. Yoo's shot had a lot of power in it, but Dudek should have kept it out. Even after that cushion of a second goal, Korea continued to attack, hungry for more. Poland were in disarray at the back, overrun in midfield, and their highly rated striker Olisadebe only stood out for his colour up front. A third goal did not eventuate however, and the Koreans had to be satisfied with 2-0. Asia's pride had been restored. Thank you South Korea!

South Korea's performance against Poland was reminiscent of the football Holland played under Guus Hiddink in France '98, built around pace down the flanks and the midfielders being able to interchange positions with ease. They completely dominated the Poles from start to finish, and probably deserved to win by a bigger margin. The goal came relatively early, courtesy of some good work down the left flank and an expert finish from Lee Eul-yong. Yoo Sang-chul was pulling all the strings in midfield, spraying the ball around the park beautifully. If one criticism could be pointed at the rampant Koreans, it was possibly the fact that they were taking too many shots from long range. But it was one of these shots that resulted in the next goal for them. Yoo's shot had a lot of power in it, but Dudek should have kept it out. Even after that cushion of a second goal, Korea continued to attack, hungry for more. Poland were in disarray at the back, overrun in midfield, and their highly rated striker Olisadebe only stood out for his colour up front. A third goal did not eventuate however, and the Koreans had to be satisfied with 2-0. Asia's pride had been restored. Thank you South Korea!

South Korea's performance against Poland was reminiscent of the football Holland played under Guus Hiddink in France '98, built around pace down the flanks and the midfielders being able to interchange positions with ease. They completely dominated the Poles from start to finish, and probably deserved to win by a bigger margin. The goal came relatively early, courtesy of some good work down the left flank and an expert finish from Lee Eul-yong. Yoo Sang-chul was pulling all the strings in midfield, spraying the ball around the park beautifully. If one criticism could be pointed at the rampant Koreans, it was possibly the fact that they were taking too many shots from long range. But it was one of these shots that resulted in the next goal for them. Yoo's shot had a lot of power in it, but Dudek should have kept it out. Even after that cushion of a second goal, Korea continued to attack, hungry for more. Poland were in disarray at the back, overrun in midfield, and their highly rated striker Olisadebe only stood out for his colour up front. A third goal did not eventuate however, and the Koreans had to be satisfied with 2-0. Asia's pride had been restored. Thank you South Korea!

South Korea's performance against Poland was reminiscent of the football Holland played under Guus Hiddink in France '98, built around pace down the flanks and the midfielders being able to interchange positions with ease. They completely dominated the Poles from start to finish, and probably deserved to win by a bigger margin. The goal came relatively early, courtesy of some good work down the left flank and an expert finish from Lee Eul-yong. Yoo Sang-chul was pulling all the strings in midfield, spraying the ball around the park beautifully. If one criticism could be pointed at the rampant Koreans, it was possibly the fact that they were taking too many shots from long range. But it was one of these shots that resulted in the next goal for them. Yoo's shot had a lot of power in it, but Dudek should have kept it out. Even after that cushion of a second goal, Korea continued to attack, hungry for more. Poland were in disarray at the back, overrun in midfield, and their highly rated striker Olisadebe only stood out for his colour up front. A third goal did not eventuate however, and the Koreans had to be satisfied with 2-0. Asia's pride had been restored. Thank you South Korea!

South Korea's performance against Poland was reminiscent of the football Holland played under Guus Hiddink in France