

Brazilian belief back

AFP, Seoul

The drums are beating again in Rio de Janeiro as Brazil are back as World Cup favourites.

In stark contrast to France, Argentina, Germany and Italy who all have their backs to the wall ahead of their final group games, the Brazilians have turned on the style with six straight goals after going behind to Turkey in their opener.

In the 4-0 win over China in Seogwipo late Saturday there were signs that all the old confidence and arrogance was flowing back, albeit against a Chinese side clearly out of their league.

Not only did the new triple-R attack of Ronaldo, Rivaldo and Ronaldinho all score, but there was another "R" on the scoresheet in the form of attacking wing-back Roberto Carlos, who had an outstanding game.

Brazil's fanatical football fans are also starting to believe in their side and after months of self-doubts and recriminations, the partying has begun with carnival-like celebrations in the streets of the South American giants' major cities.

One of the biggest was in the Tijuca district of Rio de Janeiro near the famous Maracana stadium, the spiritual home of Brazilian football.

As soon as the match finished in Seogwipo on the southern Korean island of Jeju half a world away, thousands of fans took to the streets to celebrate drummed on by "bateria" percussion bands beating out pounding samba beats.

Confidence is growing in Luiz Felipe Scolari's side to the extent that the latest opinion poll carried out by the Folha de Sao Paulo daily has 57 percent of people saying that Brazil will win an unprecedented fifth title.

Caniggia

FROM PAGE 16 Group F after losing 1-0 to England. The South Americans must now beat first-placed Sweden on Wednesday to avoid a shock elimination in the first round.

Defender Roberto Ayala seems unlikely to make the match. The team captain suffered a thigh injury minutes before Argentina's opening 1-0 victory against Nigeria and has yet to make an appearance at the World Cup.

Best friends

FROM PAGE 16 tedly broadcasting segments rallying fans behind the Red Devils, as the South Korean team in known, and the streets are filled with people in red T-shirts that say "Be the Reds."

South Korea President Kim Dae-jung held a luncheon for supporters Saturday, and the prevailing opinion among Koreans is the home team will wear down the Americans in the afternoon heat and humidity. They point to how the U.S. team slowed down after taking a 3-0 lead in the first 36 minutes against Portugal.

"We definitely have to possess the ball for longer periods, make them run after the ball," Reyna said. "Portugal is about great individual players. Korea is in a way similar to us - they play as a team."

Temperatures have hit 35C (95F) in Daegu, South Korea's hottest city and largest World Cup venue with a capacity of more than 65,000. The forecast for the match on Monday afternoon is 31 degrees Celsius (88 Fahrenheit).

"Let it rain," Dutch-born coach Hiddink told reporters on Saturday.

A moist surface would make for an exciting game with two sides that are both quick on the break.

"There are on both sides speedy players," Hiddink said. "What is important is to maintain the style we have and try to get a grip on the dangerous American counterattack."

The two sides have a win apiece from their last two clashes.

"It was always a 50-50 situation," Hiddink said of previous encounters. "That's a condition for a spectacular game, I think."



PHOTO: INTERNET

Belgium midfielder Marc Wilmots (R) controls the balls during a training session at the Big Eye Stadium in Oita, Japan yesterday.

BELGIUM VS TUNISIA

Talk less, perform

REUTERS, Oita

It took one indifferent performance from Belgium for the sniping and bickering to start but a group H victory over Tunisia on Monday would act as a unifying force and move them one step closer to the second round.

Their 2-2 opening game draw with Japan was met with derision from the Flemish media and satisfaction elsewhere in Belgium, an antagonism that prompted Francophone coach Robert Waseige to ignore reporters from the

north of the country earlier this week. "When I see what people are saying about us, I think silence is golden," he said. "But my players are certainly growing up in all of this."

While Waseige's side were not at their best against the co-hosts, even their fiercest of critics would expect nothing less than three points -- an important foothold on their way towards qualification -- against the north Africans.

Tunisia lost 2-0 to Russia in their opening game and are aware that another defeat is likely to consign them to their third phase exit in

as many appearances at World Cup finals.

Coach Ammar Souayah, as well as his players, is on a steep learning curve. "Against a strong and proven team, the smallest error costs dear," Souayah said.

Goalkeeper Ali Boumnijel ruined his solid performance against Russia by making the mistake which led to their opener. Shortly afterwards Russia doubled their lead.

"Those are the kind of damaging situations we have to avoid," Boumnijel said.

Souayah is set to show faith in the starting line-up which succumbed to Russia, with Slim Ben Achour trusted with supplying the ammunition for strikers Ziad Jaziri and Adel Sellimi.

The Belgians suffered internal tensions at the 1998 finals, but Waseige's team must quickly put any bitterness to one side.

To that end, striker Wesley Sonck could become the perfect symbol for renewed optimism if he earns a recall.

Left out of the Japan clash, he also slammed the media this week, saying his comments on a lack of strikers in Waseige's initial lineup were taken out of context and used against him and the squad.

Tactics are what trouble Waseige on the eve of the Tunisia game. Does he stick to his guns and continue with midfielders Marc Wilmots and Gert Verheyen as a makeshift strike duo?

Or will he bow to pressure and draft in Sonck, the Belgian player of the year for 2001 who impressed as a substitute in Saitama?

Waseige has hinted he will go for Sonck. "I have an idea about what the line-up will be, but it will probably not be identical to the line-up against Japan," he said.

If Sonck does start, it will allow one of either Verheyen or Wilmots to drop back into midfield.

There are also suggestions that midfielder Johan Walem, disappointing against Japan, will be dropped for Sven Vermant.

Central defender Glen de Boeck is likely to reclaim his place after recovering from a heel injury, although Nico van Kerckhove could miss out again with a hamstring problem.

Group H rivals Japan and Russia meet in Yokohama on Sunday. Belgium play their final game against Russia on Friday.

SCORING CHART

AFP, Seoul

World Cup scorers after Sunday's matches:

- 4 - Miroslav Klose (Ger)
3 - Jon Dahl Tomasson (Den), Christian Vieri (Ita)
2 - Fernando Hierro (Spa), Junichi Inamoto (Jpn), Henrik Larsson (Swe), Fernando Morientes (Spa), Rivaldo (Bra), Ronaldo (Bra)
1 - Julius Aghahowa (Ngr), Niclas Alexandersson (Swe), Francisco Arce (Par), Michael Ballack (Ger), Gabriel Batistuta (Arg), David Beckham (Eng), Beto (Por), Oliver Bierhoff (Ger), Cuauhtemoc Blanco (Mex), Jared Borgetti (Mex), Sol Campbell (Eng), Sebastian Cmiric (Slo), Agustin Delgado (Ecu), Salif Diao (Sen), Pape Bouba Diop (Sen), Emre Belozoglu (Tur), Samuel Eto'o (Cmr), Quinton Fortune (Rsa), Ronald Gomez (Crc), Hasan Sas (Tur), Matt Holland (Irl), Hwang Sun-Hong (Kor), Carsten Jancker (Ger), Valery Karpin (Rus), Robbie Keane (Irl), Thomas Linke (Ger), Brian McBride (USA), Teboho Mokoena (Rsa), Siyabonga Nomvethe (Rsa), John O'Brien (USA), Ivica Olic (Cro), Winston Parks (Crc), Patrick Mboma (Cmr), Milan Rapaic (Cro), Raul (Spa), Roberto Carlos (Bra), Dario Rodriguez (Uru), Ronaldinho (Bra), Roque Santa Cruz (Par), Bernd Schneider (Ger), Takayuki Suzuki (Jpn), Egor Titov (Rus), Gerardo Torrado (Mex), Valeron (Spa), Peter Van der Heyden (Bel), Marc Wilmots (Bel), Maurizio Wright (Crc), Yoo Sang-Chul (Kor).

Spanish fiesta

AP, Ulsan

The Spanish squad let their hair down this weekend, dancing and singing flamenco-style folk songs as coach Jose Antonio Camacho gave them some free time before their last group match against South Africa.

Watched by more than 100 invited guests including many of the players' wives or girlfriends, striker Diego Tristan and defender Juanfran Garcia took to the stage Saturday night to dance and sing Sevillana songs at the Casa de Espana restaurant which has been specially set up in Ulsan for the World Cup.

The dinner reception was sponsored by the regional Spanish government of Andalusia, the home of flamenco and birthplace of Tristan, Juanfran and many other squad members.

Real Madrid stars Raul Gonzalez, Fernando Morientes and Fernando Hierro and half a dozen other players mingled with the guests laughing and joking and moving and clapping in rhythm to the songs played by a Sevillana musical trio.

The dinner, with Spanish wine, typical Andalusian gazpacho cold soup and fried fish, started at 10.30 p.m. By 1 a.m. most of the players had been taken back to their hotel.

After winning their second match in Group B and clinching a berth in the second round, the Spanish players were given most of the weekend off. They have to report back for training Sunday evening.

Sami undergoes surgery

AP, Miyagi

Saudi Arabia captain Sami al-Jaber underwent an appendix operation Saturday hours after being rushed to a Tokyo hospital, a team official said.

Team spokesman Soliman al-Nasa said the Saudi captain had complained of stomach pains Friday and was unable to lift himself out of bed the following morning.

The Saudi star is expected to be released from the Tokyo University hospital in two or three days, al-Nasa said. He will then travel home with the rest of his team.

CUP CORNER

FROM PAGE 13 to play in the finals since the country made its World Cup debut in 1958 when he came on as a substitute on Wednesday, helped create both Russian goals.

Officials are not sure whether Sychyov has a driving licence but he will get the car anyway.

ODDS ON

REUTERS, London

How sure were bettors of Brazil beating China, which they did Saturday 4-0? British bookmakers William Hill indicates there was little doubt.

William Hill spokesman Graham Sharp said one English punter won 5,000 pounds (7,300 dollars) after staking 50,000 pounds (73,000 dollars) on Brazil at 1-10 to beat China. He said another man emptied his savings account of 30,000 pounds (43,800 dollars) to win 3,000 pounds (4,380 dollars).

Brazil is now the 3-1 favourite with William Hill to win the World Cup. After that the odds read: Spain (9-2), Italy (5-1), England (6-1), Argentina (8-1), France (10-1), Germany (14-1), Portugal (25-1), Cameroon, Denmark, Russia and Senegal (40-1), Mexico and South Korea (50-1), Croatia and Ireland (66-1), Sweden and Turkey (80-1), United States and Belgium (100-1), Japan, South Africa and Uruguay (125-1), Costa Rica (150-1), Ecuador and Poland (250-1), Paraguay (500-1), Tunisia (2,500-1).

FEWER GOALS

INTERNET, undated

In spite of Germany's 8-0 drubbing of Saudi Arabia and the United States' 3-2 victory over Portugal, the number of goals scored in the tournament is down on previous events.

In the first 26 matches there were 67 goals, an average of 2.58 per match, according to FIFA. In France 1998 the average was 2.67 and in the United States in 1994 it was 2.71.

But if goals are down, so are bookings. There have been 95 yellow cards issued -- an average of 3.7 per match. That compares with 4.0 in France and 4.5 in the United States.

There have been five red cards, a rate of 0.19 per match -- or about one every five matches. In France the figure was 0.29 and in the United States 0.34.

China find positives

REUTERS, Sogwipo

World Cup debutants China can hold their heads high after a spirited performance against Brazil even if the four-time world champions walked away with an easy 4-0 win, coach Bora Milutinovic said on Saturday.

"Brazil is Brazil," said the Serbian after China's second defeat in Group C. They lost 2-0 loss to Costa Rica on Tuesday.

"Of course no one likes to lose, but I am very happy with the way we played. We only need to repeat the way we played tonight and I think we have a chance to win the Turkey game."

Cheered on by about 20,000 Chinese fans, beating drums and draped in national flags, China made a bold start, piling the pressure on the Brazilians in the first 20 minutes and pulling off some slick moves in midfield.

But they failed to capitalise on the few opportunities they created up front and were soon outclassed by the Brazilians, who cruised to a 3-0 halftime lead.

China's defence was clearly

weakened by the absence of injured defenders Fan Zhiyi and Sun Jihai, their most experienced players.

Milutinovic said his team had learnt valuable lessons from its encounter with some of the world's top footballers, which they would put to use against Turkey in Seoul on Thursday.

"I think they had a very excellent experience," he said. "This is so exciting for them. They learned. They played against the best players in the world and they see they can play. This is important."

Captain Ma Mingyu was pleased with China's performance despite the result and thanked the fans for their continued support despite two consecutive defeats.

"Whatever happened, we were determined not to give up," he said. "In the end we lost, but we kept fighting until the 90th minute."

"The difference (between the teams) is so great. But I think we played well, we made some good moves, we just couldn't maintain the pressure."

Ma had China's best first-half chance in the 37th minute but his shot deflected off a defender's head

and sailed over the bar.

He had another opening in the second half when he was sent clear but could not control the ball. A minute later, midfielder Zhao Junzhe hit the post from the edge of the penalty area.

Chinese fans said they were disappointed their team had not scored a goal, but were satisfied that the result was not too humiliating.

"You know it's quite something for China just to be here. Of course, we dreamed of a victory, but I think the players did their best today," said Huo Yuanjia, 35, a business man from Beijing.

"The atmosphere was great. I am still glad I came even if we can't reach the second round," he said.

China's 80 million-odd soccer fans were hoping Milutinovic could spirit his team into the last 16, as he did Mexico, Costa Rica, the United States and Nigeria in previous World Cups.

But China have no points from two games and need an unlikely combination of results to proceed.

Great deeds on great day?

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the tighter formation could mean leaving out either forward Joao Pinto or midfielder Rui Costa, whose distribution was notably below his usual standard against the U.S.

"The fact that whoever loses will go home is tough," midfielder Rui Costa said after a final training session at Seoul's Military Academy before heading south for Chonju.

"There's no point in sitting here crying here over what is done. We have two chances to qualify. We have in mind that it is possible, if we manage to play as we have done so far," he added.

Also crucial to Portugal's chances will be the much-discussed form of FIFA player of the Year Luis Figo, who lacked his usual creativity and explosive attacks against the U.S., but says he has finally recov-

ered from a persistent ankle injury. Figo often starts on the left, but can easily switch to the right and change places with Sergio Conceicao, as he did against Poland, and attack when needed.

He was the key player as Portugal reached the last four of the 2000 European Championship only losing to eventual winners France on a "golden goal" penalty.

Poland can hardly be as ineffective as they were against South Korea, but coach Jerzy Engel's options for personnel changes are limited.

He started against the Koreans with Maciej Zurawski up front alongside Emmanuel Olisadebe but pulled him off at half-time to bring on Pawel Kryszalowicz.

However, neither combination made any headway and Engel will be demanding more from whichever

pairing he goes for this time.

Midfielders Piotr Swierczewski and Radoslaw Kaluzny will also have to find a massive improvement to make any headway a talented Portuguese side.

"After qualifying, the players thought we could go very far," Engel told reporters.

"We were dreaming about first place in the group but now we must have realistic expectations.

"We have to improve everything now, particularly our mental strength.

"We must fight for second place but I still believe we will reach the second round."

Italians drop

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the dressing room of English referee Graham Poll to ask for an explanation for the two disallowed goals - both of which had been signalled by Poll's Danish linesman.

"Poll told me that the first was for offside against (Christian) Vieri and the second was for shirt pulling against (Filippo) Inzaghi," said Ranucci.

Vieri's header was ruled out in the 50th minute with the scores level while the second goal was disallowed in the final minutes with Italy trailing 2-1 after a 60-metre long ball from defender Marco Materazzi.

Hotspot

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South Korean air force jets will patrol the skies, anti-aircraft missiles will be deployed on the stadium roof and key buildings around it. More than 900 South Korean troops will be stationed around the stadium alongside more than 10,000 police.

The US team is already the most protected one of the 32 at the World Cup in Korea and Japan. US coach Bruce Arena even has a security "shadow" even when he walks around the team hotel in Seoul.

But with the Group D match now under way an appendix operation Saturday hours after being rushed to a Tokyo hospital, a team official said.

Team spokesman Soliman al-Nasa said the Saudi captain had complained of stomach pains Friday and was unable to lift himself out of bed the following morning.

The Saudi star is expected to be released from the Tokyo University hospital in two or three days, al-Nasa said. He will then travel home with the rest of his team.

beat Poland 2-0, has been told to stay away from Daegu in case of anti-American gestures, media reports said.

The presidential office insisted though that there was never a plan for Kim to go.

There will also be extra security around the US embassy in Seoul, which will close Monday afternoon, and other US targets. And the government has warned that it will act against anti-US protests.

"The government will crack down hard on any attempts to create trouble in order to ensure safety during the World Cup and to prevent incidents that could damage South Korea-US ties," government spokesman Shin Jung-Sik told AFP.

About 150 students chanted anti-US slogans when they staged a demonstration march through Daegu on Saturday which ended peacefully, police said.

South Korea has been a key military ally of the United States since the 1950-53 Korean War when US forces fought with the capitalist South.

The 37,000 US troops in South Korea are still the target of sporadic

protests and President Kim has expressed concern about anti-American sentiment in recent weeks.

South Koreans were infuriated in February when speed skater Kim Dong-Sung was disqualified from the men's 1,500 metres short final at the Salt Lake City Winter Olympics.

The South Korean skater was punished for speeding in front of US star Apolo Anton Ohno who was awarded the gold medal.

The incident triggered a massive anti-US campaign on the Internet.

The American coach said he knew nothing of the pent-up hostilities.

"My impression is that we're allies with the South Koreans," he told a press conference Saturday. "I don't know where its coming from."

The US team went to the demilitarised zone between South and North Korea in one symbolic gesture after arriving in the country. "We are not aware of any political issues, we consider the South Koreans our friends," Arena said.

Samba on song

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the Chinese, said there would be no relaxing against Costa Rica in their final first round match on Thursday despite all but being guaranteed a place in the round of 16.

"For us it is very important to beat Costa Rica and get nine points," he said after scoring his seventh international goal and his first from a freekick since 1997.

"It will help the confidence of the team. That's why Costa Rica is the more important match."

While they can never be written off, Brazil were wearing the underdog tag before the tournament started after barely stumbling through qualifying, losing an unprecedented six games.

But Roberto Carlos is also growing to believe that they are now capable of winning the Cup.

"Game by game, we will show improvements and will eventually make it to the round of 16 and the final too," he said.

Despite the confidence bubbling back to the surface, coach Luiz Felipe Scolari urges caution, saying that while he was pleased with the progress Brazil were making they

had yet to meet world class opposition.

"Brazil has not played such difficult opponents so far," he said. "That's why we have been getting better results than say France, Argentina or Italy."

"But I know the team is improving. We know that our team is getting better each match and we can still improve for the next match."

Roberto Carlos said they would work in training this week on tightening up their passing after too many went astray against China.

"We still have problems with the quality of our passing but we now have three or four days to work on it before the next match," he said.

Rivaldo also pleaded with Brazilians to think positive after being questioned about his team's allegedly poor passing.

"People always find something wrong," said the forward after being asked by reporters why the four-time champions kept giving the ball away in midfield.

"People are never satisfied when we win. They always look for what went wrong."

"It's normal to make mistakes.

We're doing our best, we're improving bit by bit and I hope that, in the next game (against Costa Rica on Thursday), we can improve a bit more."

"Next time, we'll try and get it right but I don't think we should keep looking at the negative side. I think we should look positively because I think all the players deserve congratulations for our win today."

Rivaldo, who is playing in his second World Cup, has been a regular international for the last five years but has often been accused of saving his best for his Spanish club Barcelona.

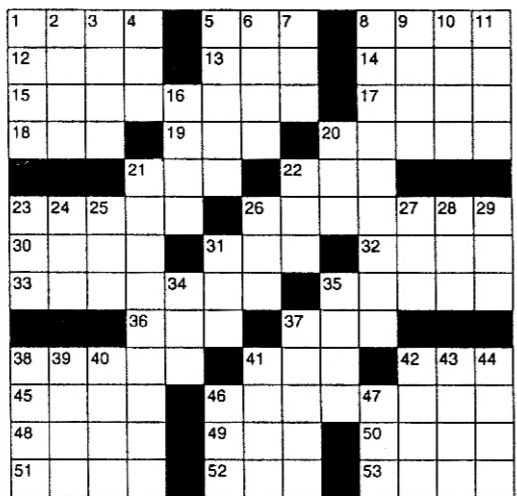
He agreed that Brazil had made a slow start before full-back Roberto Carlos opened the scoring against World Cup debutants China with a spectacular free kick in the 15th minute.

"It was a difficult game until Roberto (Carlos) scored the first goal and that made our lives a lot easier," he said.

Brazil head back to their training base in Ulsan Sunday to prepare for the clash with Costa Rica in Suwon.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS 38 Fast 41 --- 42 The 8 "Xanadu" river 12 Nile bird 13 Anonymus John 14 Exhaust 15 Highly tasty 17 Picnic problem 18 LAX info 19 "Survivor" network 20 Nestling's diet 21 Churchill's gesture 22 --- semper tyrannis 23 Thespian 26 Emeritus 30 Sow's mate 31 Crafty one 32 Charlie's widow 33 Uniformly 35 Pal 36 Coquet-ish 37 Two, in Tijuana
DOWN 1 Marathon fraction 2 Touch 3 Bart's sister 4 Computer button 5 Pueblo material 6 We? Ouil 7 "Of course!" 8 Horrible 9 Fibber 10 --- and proper 11 Coop group 16 Chamagne bucket 20 Humor 21 Greedy
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CRYPTOQUIP

Q G R C B W I M H E B M W B O F
B O J O Q W M N O B O M E O O N
X E T V C G W B M G V C O J X G I C

C W F B U U Q W S T C W S R - H X E ?
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: TRAFFIC WAS SO BAD TODAY, MY FAST CAR BECAME NOTHING MORE THAN A STATIONARY WAGON.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals H
The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal Q throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.