



RED RIOT! South Koreans in their thousands enjoy the match against United States on a giant screen in downtown Seoul yesterday.

FRANCE VS DENMARK

Get it or go out

REUTERS, Incheon

Struggling champions France will chase for inspiration and hope their luck changes on Tuesday when they take on Denmark needing a two-goal victory to qualify for the World Cup's last 16.

A 1-0 defeat to Senegal in the opening match and a goalless draw against Uruguay have left the title holders bottom of the group A with one point.

If they stumble again, France will become the first reigning champions since Brazil in 1966 to fail to reach the second round.

The likely return of playmaker Zinedine Zidane has raised French spirits but even with their talisman midfielder they will have their work cut out in Incheon.

"We are in a very simple situation. We must beat the Danes by two goals," said midfielder Emmanuel Petit, who will miss the game through suspension.

"We won't have any pressure. We are going to play just like we always do. It's not because we have failed to win a match so far that we are going to change our whole strategy."

Coach Roger Lemerre appears keen to stick to his highly sophisticated 4-2-3-1 line-up which has been made to measure for Zidane, the world's most expensive player.

"I could have done many things after the opening match. But the right option was to keep faith with the way we play," Lemerre said. "We'll see if I'm wrong."

Zidane, who tore a left thigh muscle during a warm-up friendly against co-hosts South Korea on May 26, resumed training with his teammates on Saturday.

The team doctor said Zidane could be fit for Tuesday's match, conceding that he would not be at his best.

"He will not be 100 per cent fit," said defender Bixente Lizarazu, adding: "If he can't run, we will run for him."

France still have to win a match without Zidane this year and hope his presence will be enough to change their luck.

"We have created dozens of opportunities to score in these two games," skipper Marcel Desailly said. "And on the scoreboard we have nothing."

Petit and striker Thierry Henry are both suspended for this match. Sweeper Frank Leboeuf is doubtful with a groin injury.

Denmark only need a draw to qualify, but coach Morten Olsen says they will not play for a draw.

"We must enter this game with the will to win," he told a news conference at Denmark's base camp on the island of Nahmae.

"The situation in the group is particularly tricky and anything can happen. The most important thing is to score the first goal like the match between Argentina and England has proved," he said.

Olsen said the return of Zidane would be a boost for France. "Of course, Zidane is an ace up France's sleeve, but will he be himself and what about his shape?" he asked.

Since 1984, France and Denmark have met four times in an international tournament and each time the winner of the match has gone the all way through to the title.

"This match is going to be like a final for us," said Lizarazu.

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A NATION'S HOPES ON HIS STRAPPED THIGH! French superstar Zinedine Zidane with his injured left thigh still bandaged, trains at Incheon yesterday.

Sea of Red

AFP, Daegu

They were in their seats long before kick-off, cheering, chanting and banging drums fit to raise the stadium roof, which they very nearly did when Ahn Jung Hwan headed South Korea level in the 78th minute.

After all, they were the lucky ones, the 65,000 Koreans privileged to have acquired, often at great expense, tickets for the World Cup match with the United States.

Across the country, the streets were deserted as people clustered around giant television screens or stayed indoors with friends to watch the nation's greatest sporting occasion.

But here in Daegu's futuristic

stadium, they had ringside seats; they were part of the occasion, generating the white-hot atmosphere, which crackled with pride and patriotism and a latent anti-Americanism which found its outlet in loud booing and jeering as the US players trotted on to the pitch for a pre-match warm-up.

This was always going to be as much a political event as a sporting one, charged with resentment at the 37,000 US troops still camped on Korean soil and despite pleas from President Kim Dae-Jung for the fans to behave themselves with dignity, the emotion was just too much.

A pair of American supporters sat beneath a banner forlorn appealing "No politics only football", but no-one

paid them much attention.

The announcement of each American player's name over the tannoy system was greeted with resounding boos and a unanimous thumbs-down gesture.

But the threatened silent anti-American protest with thousands of Korean fans turning their backs on the pitch as the "Star-Spangled Banner" played failed to materialise.

The stadium was a giant swathe of red T-shirts, banners, hats, even bodies painted in the red of the national team.

Only an occasional Stars and Stripes was draped limply, almost apologetically, over a wall from an upper stand, and a small banner proclaimed, in red, white and blue lettering, "In a Sea of Red, United We Stand".

Support for the Koreans was on such a deafening scale it was designed to be intimidating in the extreme and had to be worth a goal start, as this was the very epitome of the "Korea Team Fighting" spirit which has gathered momentum and

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France focused on one man

AFP, Paris

Only Zinedine Zidane, it seems here, can save defending champions France from the ignominy of an early exit from the World Cup finals.

And all the signs are that he will be back in time for the do-or-die Group A finale against Denmark in Incheon on Tuesday.

France must win by two clear goals if they want to maintain an interest in a tournament that they started as joint favourites with Argentina.

"The force is with them," ran the optimistic headline in Monday's L'Equipe alongside a photo of Zidane.

"Zidane, the return of the saviour," echoed the headline inside Le Parisien.

But despite Zidane's much-anticipated return, the odds are stacked against the World Cup holders and the consequences

could be dire both on and off the field. It would signal the end of France's reign as the Kings of world football, and there would be questions marks against Lemerre despite him recently signing a new contract taking up to the Euro 2004 finals in Portugal.

Many of the players would also likely retire from international football or be jettisoned.

Outside of football, a defeat would also see shares plummet in TF1, the television channel which has poured millions into the French team.

Commercial damage is also predicted. After the World Cup win in 1998 the French team, to a man, began endorsing a wide range of products and services, which boosted the country's commercial

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GERMANY VS CAMEROON

Machines, men face off

REUTERS, Shizuoka

Germany have little doubt they will tame the Indomitable Lions of Cameroon in Tuesday's World Cup clash between the top two in group E to escape an historic failure.

"I like the position we're in," said Germany coach Rudi Voeller, looking cool despite the risk of seeing the triple world champions disappear in

the first round of the showcase tournament for the first time since 1938.

"It's better than that of many other teams," added the former World Cup striker, whose side need a draw to make sure they reach the knock-out stage -- their minimum aim after a shaky run in qualifying and a string of injuries in the build-up to the finals.

"We're unbeaten and our fate is in

our hands. We have every reason to be confident."

Cameroon, second to Germany in the group on goal difference, realistically have to win -- since Ireland are quite likely to beat Saudi Arabia by two clear goals in Yokohama at the same time -- and their German coach, Winfried Schafer, believes they can. "I have said before that I would have preferred to avoid playing Germany in the first round but this is not Schafer against Voeller," said the Cameroon coach, a popular figure in Germany after a long playing career there and coaching spells with

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BIG GERMAN GUNS: Germany's top stars Michael Ballack (R) and Miroslav Klose in practice at Shizuoka yesterday.

Diego due in Japan

AFP, Buenos Aires

Football legend Diego Maradona is expected to arrive in Japan after the Argentina versus Sweden World Cup game on Wednesday, Argentina's Secretary of State for Tourism and Sports said.

The 41-year-old 1986 World Cup winner had been earmarked to work for Mexican television for the game but Japanese authorities refused him a visa because of his drug-tainted past.

The Japanese finally went back on their decision on the grounds Maradona would be representing the Argentine government.

Minister Daniel Scioli said formalities for Maradona's trip would be finalised on Monday in Havana where Maradona is still undergoing rehabilitation from cocaine addiction.

"Going to Tokyo is not an easy thing to arrange. We have to organise everything and that is why Diego is not arriving till after the Sweden game," Scioli told Argentina's Radio 10.

Maradona will be hoping his country win their final Group F game because defeat would spell the end of their campaign.

CUP CORNER

REUTERS, Kabul

The Afghan capital is to start screening World Cup soccer matches in a stadium used by the former ruling Taliban as an execution ground.

One match a day will be broadcast on three giant screens at the 25,000-capacity Kabul Stadium, the International Organisation for Migration said.

"An area in the audience is to be reserved for female spectators," the group said. "Within the stadium, Kabul police will assure security, while the ISAF (international security force) will establish peripheral security."

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TODAY'S MATCHES

Denmark vs France Venue: Incheon Time: 12:30 pm	Senegal vs Uruguay Venue: Suwon Time: 12:30 pm	Cameroon vs Germany Venue: Shizuoka Time: 5:30 pm	Saudi Arabia vs Rep. of Ireland Venue: Yokohama Time: 5:30 pm
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SOMETHING TO SMILE ABOUT: Tunisian fan in a cheerful mood during their country's draw with Belgium at Oita yesterday.