



Les Bleus' blues

AP/REUTERS/ AFP, undated

Wails of disappointment echoed through France on Tuesday after its beloved "Les Bleus" were knocked out of the World Cup and dethroned as world champions with a 2-0 loss to Denmark.

Nearly all of France was transfixed by the team's last-gasp effort to qualify -- it needed to win by at least two goals in order to advance beyond the first round of play.

The humiliating loss for France, which won the 1998 World Cup, came even though its superstar midfielder, Zinedine Zidane, returned from a thigh injury to join the team. He had missed the team's first two World Cup matches.

In front of Paris City Hall, where a giant television screen was set up, tears ran down some fans' faces painted in red, white and blue -- the colours of the French flag.

"It's a nightmare," said Paris student Jean-Baptiste Golled, 21, as he watched the game. "In three matches, France did nothing. They were far too confident at the start."

"I'm disgusted. They are the defending champions, and for four years they bragged and did nothing," said architect Alain Goust, 32, as he held a French flag -- which he wasn't waving.

"When they arrive back at the Champs Elysees, they're going to have tomatoes thrown at them."

Attempting to put a brave face on the loss, one group of students yelled "we have lost, we have lost" -- and one shouted out "let's go have a drink!"

It was a huge contrast with the scene four years ago, when delighted French fans filled subways, cafes and boulevards, chanting: "We are the champions!" and chanting the score by which they defeated Brazil in the final: "one, two, three, zero!" A million people streamed onto the Champs-Elysees on the night of the victory at the Stade de France.

At the Danish House, a Danish cultural centre on the Champs-Elysees, fan Mikael Jakobsson celebrated with a beer despite the early-morning hour. "Nobody suspected the Danes would win 2-0," said Jakobsson. "I think France came to the World Cup with too much assurance. They were too relaxed," he said.

Anticipation for Tuesday's match

had eclipsed nearly all other news in France for the last several days, including Sunday's first round of legislative elections, which was marked by a record low turnout.

In Paris, televisions in storefront windows drew large groups of spectators, and much of France came to a standstill. Among the more than 1,000 people gathered at City Hall, boos erupted when coach Roger Lemerre, in a live satellite hookup from South Korea, appeared on French television to comment after the match.

Some second-guessed Lemerre for his selections for the squad. Goust faulted him for choosing midfielders Youri Djorkaeff and Johan Micoud for the match against Senegal.

"Lemerre made bad choices," Goust said as many people quickly left the City Hall square after the match. "We don't recognise the team."

Away in Incheon, Lemerre admitted his side deserved to be knocked out of the World Cup.

Lemerre said his side had never managed to fire on all cylinders during the tournament and could have no complaints with an early exit, finishing bottom of Group A.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



GET UP YOU LAZY BOY! Argentina coach Marcelo Bielsa walking past playmaker Ariel Ortega who is stretching at J-Village Naraha on June 10.

World champs Denmark!

REUTERS, Yokohama

Denmark's 2-0 victory over world champions France suggests the Danes should go on to win the World Cup, if the odds are to be believed.

Before this tournament, Denmark and France had met each other in four World Cup or European championship finals and, on each occasion, the winner of their direct encounter went on to capture the trophy.

Until Tuesday, France had led this series 3-1 with victories in the 1984 and 2000 European Championships and the 1998 World Cup. Denmark's sole win was at the 1992 European Championship.

Even more curiously, these four tournaments are the only world and

European titles France and Denmark have ever won.

FOLLOWING ARE THE RESULTS OF THESE MATCHES:

1984 European Championship in France
France 1 Denmark 0 (opening match)

1992 European Championship in Sweden
Denmark 2 France 1 (group match)

Final - Denmark 2 West Germany 0

1998 World Cup in France
France 2 Denmark 1 (group match)

Final - France 3 Brazil 0

2000 European Championship in Belgium/Netherlands
France 3 Denmark 0 (group match)

Final - France 2 Italy 1

AGONY OF THE YEAR: Anguish and disbelief written on the faces of two French fans watching their national team's ignominious exit on a giant screen in Paris yesterday.

Upside down

AFP, Seoul

France finally relinquished their crown as world champions with more of a whimper than a bang, having failed to score a single goal in three games, when they lost 0-2 to Denmark on Tuesday.

It was a fittingly abject end to a three-match opening round campaign which never really took flight, largely due to the absence of Real Madrid playmaker Zinedine Zidane with a thigh injury.

But now that the inquest into France's elimination begins, someone will have to address the question of why the squad was involved in a

highly competitive match with hosts South Korea barely a week before their opening game against Senegal.

It was in that match which the side's inspiration Zidane picked up the injury, just 36 hours after he arrived in Asia, which eventually cost France the refinement and incision his presence brings in the crucial games against Senegal and Uruguay.

By the time he was back in action for the Denmark game, it was already too late.

Even without Zidane, this French squad looked stronger on paper than the one whose victory four years ago on home soil brought one million

people on to the streets of Paris in wild celebration.

For all the talk about the absence of Zinedine Zidane, the plain fact is that France's expensive strike force let them down and led to their elimination from the World Cup.

Arguably three of the best strikers in Europe failed to deliver even once in three games, in sharp contrast to the 1998 World Cup-winning squad, which actually lacked a recognised scorer.

The combination of Thierry Henry, leading scorer in the English Premiership last season with 24

SEE PAGE 14 COL 5



CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS SENT CRASHING: Superstar Zinedine Zidane falls flat on his face during the match with Denmark at Incheon yesterday.

ARGENTINA VS SWEDEN

Death or delight?

REUTERS/AP, Miyagi

Argentina refuse to contemplate a premature World Cup funeral in their decisive group F match against Sweden on Wednesday.

The pre-tournament favourites must beat the Swedes to ensure they progress to the second round from a tough pool often referred to as the 'Group of Death'.

Having made a good start with a 1-0 win over Nigeria, Argentina find themselves in third place, one point behind both Sweden and England with one match to go.

"I don't even look at my suitcases," said forward Ariel Ortega, summing up the mood of confidence among the Argentines.

Gabriel Batistuta said that if Argentina's well-organised attacking style failed them, they would have to grind out a victory by sheer guts.

But Ortega added: "To have guts is to play (good) football."

Argentina coach Marcelo Bielsa on Tuesday said he had yet to decide his line-up for the must-win match.

"This is my most important match as manager," Bielsa said, but predicted that Argentina would get the

necessary three points. He nevertheless acknowledged he would feel "great sadness" if Argentina is knocked out.

Bielsa said Argentina had "got over" the pain of losing to arch-rivals England.

But the normally placid coach got clearly irritated when asked repeatedly about last Friday's 1-0 defeat.

He accused England of killing the game by defending en masse after scoring a 44th minute penalty.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Senegal surge ahead

AFP, Suwon

Debutants Senegal fought their way into the second phase of the World Cup here Tuesday despite throwing away a three-goal lead to draw 3-3 with Uruguay in a thrilling final Group A pool match.

The eliminated Latin Americans were furious after a controversial penalty aided their downfall, while even the third Senegalese goal had more than a hint of offside about it - and Uruguayan officials had to be restrained from jostling the match officials as they walked off at half-time.

Incredibly, after trailing 3-0 at half-time, Uruguay saved a point with a furious fightback.

But Senegal just held on to take their points tally to five - enough to advance behind Denmark, who eliminated reigning champions France by beating them 2-0 at Incheon.

The Africans were delighted to

Hear Africa roar

AFP, Suwon

Senegal's passage into the last 16 of the World Cup is a great result for the continent of Africa and world football, star striker El Hadji Diouf said here Tuesday.

The west Africans were irrepressible in a vibrant opening 45 minutes storming to a 3-0 lead by halftime, yet they needed all hands to the pump to keep Uruguay from winning the Group A encounter.

The Uruguayans, two-time winners yet playing in the finals for the first time in 12 years, roared back to draw the match 3-3, but the point was enough to clinch Senegal a place in the second round of the tournament.

Senegal finished behind Denmark and they will now play the winner of Group F - either Sweden, SEE PAGE 14 COL 5

have made it to the knockout phase after a heart-stopping second period.

Coach Bruno Metsu said: "To make it into the group of the 16 best teams in the world is extraordinary."

"The goal they got just after half-time really hurt us and it turned into a heart-stopping match."

"But the players showed they are capable of doing great things."

Senegal's two-goal hero Pape Bouba Diop said the side had deserved their qualification.

"It's a great feeling for us and a great achievement. It was tough for

SEE PAGE 14 COL 6



SAMBA SENEGALESE STYLE: Ecstatic Senegal booters celebrate their passage into the second round at Suwon yesterday.

CUP CORNER

AP, Wellington

New Zealand gamblers have already placed more money in bets on soccer's World Cup than they did in the entire last tournament in France four years ago, officials said Tuesday.

Joe Locke, a spokesman for the government's TAB betting agency, said the New Zealand equivalent of nearly 3.7 million dollars had already been bet on teams competing through the latter stages of the preliminary rounds in South Korea and Japan.

In 1998, about 2.5 million dollars was gambled on the entire World Cup.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

TODAY'S MATCHES

Sweden vs Argentina Venue: Miyagi Time: 12:30 pm	Nigeria vs England Venue: Osaka Time: 12:30 pm	South Africa vs Spain Venue: Daejeon Time: 5:30 pm	Slovenia vs Paraguay Venue: Seogwipo Time: 5:30 pm
--	--	--	--