Target top spot



A BREATH OF BRAZILIAN AIR: A Brazilian supporter holds her national flag at the stands in Suwon yesterday.

POLAND VS USA

Americans stay focused

AFP/REUTERS, Daejeon

The United States, a far cry from the rabble of France '98, are leaving nothing to chance against eliminated Poland on Friday as they bid for only their second appearance in the knockout rounds of the World Cup.

The Stars and Stripes didn't win a match at the last World Cup amid bitter internal recriminations, but under coach Bruce Arena, they are proving a well-organised and tena-

They stunned Euro 2000 semi-

finalists Portugal 3-2 and then held on for a fighting draw against co- and we have to go in with the same hosts South Korea before a parochial home crowd.

A point might be enough to get them into the last 16 as Korea attempt to fend off Portugal's lastditch attempt to stay in the tournament in the other simultaneous Group D game in Incheon.

Europe is one you have to respect, it's the hardest continent to qualify from," US skipper Claudio Reyna told a press conference Thursday.

"Any team that qualifies from

"They won their qualifying group approach as we had for our first two

games. "Poland is a strong physical team and their players will be playing for

"We saw it yesterday, Nigeria (against England) and Slovenia (against Paraguay) both went out to win even though they were both eliminated, so we've seen it already.

"Just because you're out it does SEE PAGE 15 COL 2



PHOTO: AFF

WINGS FLAPPING! Poland striker Emanuel Olisadebe (Front) leads teammates during warm-up at Daejeon yesterday.

Ronaldo's goal?

AFP, Suwon

Brazilian striker Ronaldo savs an own goal credited to Costa Rica's Luis Marin was his and he has approached FIFA to have it changed.

"I have no doubt that I scored the first goal but I don't want to say too much about it because FIFA are going to study the video," he said after Brazil's 5-2 victory.

"The norm is that when a striker kicks a ball, even if it comes off a defender, it is given to the striker because the striker has the intention Ronaldo nipped in ahead of two defenders in the 10th minute to poke

home Brazil's opening goal. Video replays showed it was deflected off Marin and it was credited as an own goal on the official scoresheet. A FIFA spokesman confirmed the

video evidence would be viewed and a final decision made on Friday. The Inter Milan sharpshooter, who played the full 90 minutes for the first time in the tournament,

scored again to make it 2-0 when he shook off his marker to whip the ball through the legs of a hapless SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Thursday with their elimination from a World Cup into which they had come as joint favourites with fellow flops France.

advance from the Group of Death, survived, the squad were reluctantly holding a post-mortem into their first opening-round exit from the event since 1962.

Coach Marcelo Bielsa told journalists it was too early to make snap

"At the end of June my contract runs out with the national side. Only then will I reveal my decision on my future - if necessary.'

towel by then - or be pushed through

president of the Argentine Football Association (AFA), said Wednesday he hoped Bielsa would stay "as he has shown ... he is a capable stew-

season, when Argentina will look to re-establish themselves by winning the Copa America next summer - a potential crumb of comfort compared with the World Cup - doubts surround the long-term future of senior players such as a distraught Juan Sebastian Veron.

"Last night I cried a lot," admitted Veron, who was dropped for the Sweden match after an almost invisible 45 minutes against England.

"I wanted to lift the Cup, playing or not. It was for the glory of the group, not on a personal level. I just can't explain why it's come to this. We came here to don the national SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



WILL TOMORROW'S RISING SUN SHOW THE DAY? Hidetoshi Nakata, the Japanese star practises at Osaka's Nagai Stadium yesterday.

Prisoners' WC!

Thai and foreign inmates swapped prison stripes for football kits Thursday as they kicked off the inaugural prisoners World Cup staged to coincide with the tournament in South Korea and Japan.

JAPAN VS TUNISIA

World Cup co-hosts Japan, already

one of the biggest stories of the finals, have set their sights on finish-

ing top of group H by beating Tunisia

in their final first round match on

drawing 2-2 with Belgium and then

beating Russia 1-0 to head the group and erase the memory of losing all three games on their World

Cup finals debut four years ago.

Japan made national history by

But the Asian champions, who

only need a point to progress to the

knockout stage, are in no mood to

suffer a let-down against a Tunisian

side who will advance at their expense if they win by a two-goal

"We can't be satisfied with just

one win. We want three points to

finish top of the group. Tunisia are an

unpredictable side, so we can't

REUTERS, Osaka

Friday.

Over 400 inmates and 100 journalists -- as well as 200 guards, many of them armed with machine guns -- gathered at Klongprem Central Prison in Bangkok to witness seven-a-side teams Nigeria and Japan lace up for the opening match.

With pomp and pageantry rarely witnessed at a Thai jail, 100 prisoners paraded onto the half-size pitch hoisting flags and placards of country teams Japan, Nigeria, England

Italy, France, Germany, the United States and Thailand.

defender Tsuneyasu Miyamoto.

need four," Troussier said.

terms, playing our style of football."

in attack mode.

The main objective for our first World Cup was to decrease tension among prisoners, to teach them about unity, and to decrease conflict," the director general of the corrections department, Siva Saengmanee, said at a 'pre-match' press conference.

"We chose Japan for the opening match because they represent Asia." Nigeria, the country with the largest number of foreign prisoners at Klongprem, then promptly defeated a largely Thai Japanese

squad 6-1 in a match whose goals

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



DEPRESSING RETURN HOME: Distraught Argentines Claudio Lopez (L) and Juan Sebastian Veron on board a train from Hirono to Tokyo yesterday.

Picking up the pieces

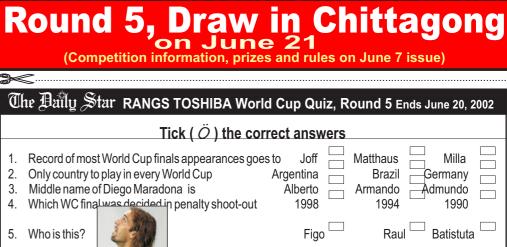
Argentina were struggling to cope ard of the team."

A day after their draw with Sweden proved insufficient to where only the Swedes and England

decisions - but indicated it was possible he would step down in the coming weeks.

The final "if necessary" appeared to imply that he might throw in the However, Julio Grondona, the

But whoever is in charge next



Name (Mr/Mrs/Ms).....Occupation Father's name Address

Write with a ballpoint pen in clear BLOCK letters. Cut along the dotted lines and mail to OR drop in the Quiz Box at The Daily Star You may send as many entries as you like. Envelopes of entries must be clearly marked "Star World Cup Quiz 5."

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