



GERMANY VS PARAGUAY

Mercedes' quality check

REUTERS, Sogwipo

If Germany beat Paraguay in the World Cup's second round on Saturday it will confirm their emergence from the worst crisis in their glorious football history.

Playing in the second round was once business as usual for Germany but a series of dreadful results, culminating in a 5-1 thrashing by England in a World Cup qualifier in Munich last September, rocked the team's confidence.

"We want to win back the credit that we have lost," said former Germany striker Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, making clear that a lot more than a quarter-final place will be at stake against the South Americans at the futuristic Sogwipo arena.

Fellow traditional favourites Argentina and France have already gone home but Germany, written off by many after struggling to qualify, are still very much alive and kicking.

After disappearing from the last two World Cups in the quarter-finals, and making an embarrassing first-round exit from Euro 2000, Germany had entered this year's tournament with lower expectations than usual, and coach Rudi Voeller named the opening knock-out stage as their minimum aim.

But they are more ambitious after

surviving the first round undefeated and netting plenty of goals -- including five from top scorer Miroslav Klose.

The squabbling that marred their runs in recent major tournaments has been absent and although they might not have a true leader, as German all-time great Franz Beckenbauer put it, they also have no troublemakers for a change.

"Team spirit is essential and is one of the reasons why I believe we can go far in the tournament," said Germany captain Oliver Kahn.

Nobody was under-estimating Paraguay, who battled through the first round not unlike the Germans themselves as both teams conceded a late equaliser in their penultimate group match before fighting with 10 men for victory in the deciders.

"I think it will be very tight," said midfielder Jens Jeremies, who added that he was already dreaming of seeing Germany play in the Yokohama final on June 30.

Few would have put money on the South Americans after a shaky build-up featuring a 4-0 drubbing by England, but assistant Germany coach Michael Skibbe recalled that they had qualified for the finals in style.

"They beat Brazil and drew with Argentina twice, which says a lot

about their ability," he said.

Paraguay's Italian coach Cesare Maldini, who came under fire after replacing the popular Sergio Markarian, showed he still knew a few tricks by bringing on Nelson Cuevas as a substitute in Wednesday's must-win game against Slovenia.

Making his World Cup debut, Cuevas scored twice for a 3-1 victory that set up Saturday's showdown.

"We showed great character and determination," said Maldini, who could only be hoping that Cuevas will have recovered from the injury he picked up in the dying moments of the Slovenia game.

"We now have Germany. It will be a very difficult match as are all matches in the World Cup."

Voeller was equally pleased after his side overcame the sending off of key defender Carsten Ramelow to tame the Indomitable Lions of Cameroon 2-0 on Tuesday.

"We stepped up a gear when we had to," said the former Germany striker. "That's how new teams are born."

Germany paid a high price for the win as Ramelow, Dietmar Hamann and Christian Ziege are all suspended for Saturday's match also

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PHOTO: AFP

IT SURE WOULD BE WORTH IT! Two USA fans hang a banner at Incheon's Munhak Stadium yesterday narrating what it would mean to them if their country goes on to win the World Cup.

Many clean returns!

AP, Seogwipo

There is only one way Oliver Kahn can have a happy birthday -- by keeping a clean sheet against Paraguay in Germany's second-round match Saturday.

The German captain and goalkeeper will turn 33 on the day of the match.

"It's pretty obvious what I can wish

for my birthday," Kahn said Friday.

Kahn also had a message for Roque Santa Cruz, his Bayern Munich teammate who is Paraguay's striker.

"I've always said that he is one of the most talented players in the world, with great pace and ability to play high balls," Kahn said. "But I know that he won't make the mistake of scoring against us."

"Otherwise, he would never be able to show his face in our locker room again," Kahn said.

Up front, Germany has striker Miroslav Klose, the World Cup's leading scorer with five goals. In the back, Germany has Kahn -- the chief reason the three-time champion has conceded only one goal in three

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Moscow mourns

AFP, Moscow

Thousands of Russian soccer fans watching the crunch World Cup tie against Belgium on a giant screen opposite the Kremlin greeted their team's ignominious exit Friday from the tournament with bitter resignation.



PHOTO: INTERNET

WHY US? A devastated Russian fan at Moscow yesterday after watching his team go out of the World Cup.

The mood in Moscow's Manezh Square was totally different from the rioting sparked by Russia's previous defeat to Japan last Sunday when hundreds of drunken supporters went on the rampage.

Two people were killed, and five Japanese musicians were attacked by angry fans in Manezh Square, who burnt cars and smashed shop windows after Japan scored the winning goal.

But the reality of elimination Friday from Group H, widely seen the easiest in the competition, seemed to direct the Russian fans' anger not at foreigners, but at their own national trainer and football stars.

Russia lost 3-2 to Belgium, who join Group H winners and World Cup

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Lucky you, USA

AFP, Daejeon

The United States crashed to a 3-1 defeat against Poland here Friday -

but scraped into the World Cup second round after South Korea's upset of Portugal.

The Americans had looked to be

tumbling out of the tournament after two goals in the first five minutes from Emmanuel Olisadebe and Pawel Kryszalowicz and a second-half strike by Marcin Zewiakow put Poland 3-0 up.

An 81st minute goal by Landon Donovan was a consolation strike for the Americans who never looked like saving the game against a Polish side who had already been eliminated.

But Korea's remarkable 1-0 win over Portugal in Incheon meant the Americans sneaked into a second round meeting with CONCACAF rivals Mexico. The South Koreans face Italy.

Relieved US skipper Claudio Reyna admitted his team owed "a big thank you" to the Koreans for pulling off their shock win over the Portuguese.

"We're through to the second round because of what they did. We owe them a big thank you - we're just happy to be through," the Sunderland midfielder said.

"The way we lost tonight we're not going to be celebrating. But a lot of teams got through to the second round thanks to a bit of luck - look at Italy," Reyna said.

"Only 16 teams made it through to the second round and we're one of them. That's all that matters," he added.

Earlier Poland's opening goal came from a corner. Olisadebe attempted a header and when his effort was half-blocked the Nigerian-born striker bludgeoned a half-volley high into the net past keeper Brad Friedel.

Within seconds the United States had gone sweeping up the pitch and had the ball in the Polish net, only for Donovan's header to be ruled out for a shove on Arkadiusz Glowacki.

As the Americans protested, Poland poured forward and scored their second. Jacek Krzynowek

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PHOTO: AFP

GOAL IMMINENT: Poland striker Emmanuel Olisadebe (No 11) about to score past US custodian Brad Friedel (C) and midfielder Frankie Hejduk at Daejeon yesterday.

TVangle

SHAYAN KHAN

Italy's great escape was overshadowed by the disgraceful scenes at the end Thursday. Why Mexico decided to do what they did for the last five minutes is beyond us. If there was a genuine chance that they would be eliminated, it would have been understandable, if not commendable. But everybody in the stadium seemed to know that Croatia were losing, so why play around with the spirit of football like that? FIFA tried to stamp out the possibility of this type of situation arising, but they have failed. Surely if they are really serious about it, this game should be looked into by a committee, and Mexico should be penalised. No, we

are not saying they should be thrown out of the World Cup, because that would be too harsh, but a very heavy financial penalty at least should be in order.

The Mexicans play a good brand of football though. Players like Luna and Blanco added a lot of flair to the organisation instilled by coach Carlos Aguirre in the side. And their goal against Italy showed their quality and teamwork. Magnificent build-up and equally good finish. Italy looked for a long time like they may join Argentina and France, but Del Piero saved them and took a huge step towards erasing some of


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Round 5, Draw in Chittagong on June 21

(Competition information, prizes and rules on June 7 issue)

The Daily Star RANGS TOSHIBA World Cup Quiz, Round 5 Ends June 20, 2002

Tick (Ö) the correct answers

- 1. Record of most World Cup finals appearances goes to Joff Matthaus Milla
- 2. Only country to play in every World Cup Argentina Brazil Germany
- 3. Middle name of Diego Maradona is Alberto Armando Admundo
- 4. Which WC final was decided in penalty shoot-out 1998 1994 1990
- 5. Who is this?  Figo Raul Batistuta

Name (Mr/Mrs/Ms).....Age.....
 Father's nameOccupation
 Address
 Telephone (if any)Signature Date.....

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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