



PHOTO: AFP

BORN IN THE USA: A tiny American boy wraps himself with a national flag at Jeonju before the start of the match against Mexico yesterday.

Mexican misery

REUTERS, Mexico City

Thousands of Mexicans, heads in hands, are cheerlessly trying to shrug off another World Cup failure, made worse because the team's exit came with a defeat by arch-rival and neighbour the United States.

Against all odds and the majority of predictions in Mexico, the United States reached the quarterfinals of the World Cup with a 2-0 upset of a below-par Mexico on Monday, whose attractive first-round performances had promised so much more.

"Our dreams talk to us more than our reason," said 25-year-old car mechanic Fernando Sanchez, who watched the game between yawns and cups of coffee in the early hours of the Mexican morning with other sleepy-eyed members of his family.

"We have the better players and

better technique, the U.S. players have their defensive counter-attacking strategy and it worked and the United States won," said Sanchez. "I honestly thought we'd at least reach the semi-finals."

Mexico had more possession and the United States soaked up long periods of pressure. But two quick-fire counter attacks brought two well-taken goals to send Mexico out of the second round for the third successive World Cup.

It was the first World Cup defeat of Mexico by the United States and only the 10th defeat against their northern neighbours in 47 games. But the United States has had the upper hand recently, winning five of the last six meetings.

President Vicente Fox, speaking

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

ITALY VS KOREA

Remember 1966

REUTERS, Taejon

South Korea will look for inspiration both past and present as they bid to continue their World Cup adventure with a victory over the mighty Italians in Tuesday's eagerly-awaited second round clash.

Italy's worst World Cup experience came at the hands of unfancied North Korea, who humiliated them with a 1-0 win in the first round of the 1966 World Cup, and though the current South Korean side are much more sophisticated, it would still be a huge shock if the triple world champions were to fall to the co-hosts.

Poland, the United States and even Portugal are one thing, World Cup heavyweights Italy, the masters

of controlled defending, are quite another.

However, it is impossible to predict how high this energised South Korean team can ride the incredible emotional wave of national support that has carried them into the last 16.

So, in this tournament of shocks, nobody is writing off Korea's chances, particularly as Italy look to have lost the heart of their defence to injury and suspension and have stuttered their way into the second round.

South Korea's coach Guus Hiddink says his greatest achievement in 18 months in charge has been to convince the players to believe in themselves and Tuesday's

game will fully test that self-confidence.

After failing to win a game in five previous World Cups they reached the knockout phase of this tournament as group winners and seem to have finally overcome the inferiority complex that always seemed to undermine their chances.

Hiddink has now taken the mind games a stage further. Aware that Italy's experienced players will deal with the crowd noise and high-speed attacks far more easily than Korea's first-round opponents, the Dutchman has been trying to tempt them to attack.

"They don't care so much about the beauty of the game and they know how to bring about a result. How they achieve it is not important," he said.

Such a psychological approach is doomed to failure against the Italians, however, who indeed would be delighted to progress to a quarter-final meeting with Spain on the back of a 1-0 win in the most boring game of the tournament.

"We know we are playing away from home but it's not a problem. They might have an advantage with the crowd, but they will still have to

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

PLUS-MINUS

Following is an analysis of the comparative strengths and weaknesses of South Korea and Italy:

SOUTH KOREA STRENGTHS: Speed is South Korea's greatest asset. They are quick to the ball in defence and in midfield challenges. In attack, they have speed down the flanks. They move the ball quickly, with precise passing. Midfielders Song Chong-gug and Lee Young-pyo pump in deft long passes, crosses and corner kicks. The squad also plays a physical game, showing tenacity to win aerial challenges and impose their own rhythm on their matches.

SOUTH KOREA WEAKNESSES: Hiddink has stressed a need to tighten up on

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Boon or bane?

REUTERS, Kobe

Former Brazil coach Mario Zagallo says the four times champions will beat England if they meet in the World Cup quarterfinals, and then go on to win a fifth title.

The Old Wolf, who won the World Cup as a player in 1958 and 1962 and as coach in 1970, said England were Brazil's "lucky opponents."

"I was fortunate to face them three times," said Zagallo.

"As a player, we drew (0-0) in 1958 and beat them (3-1) in 1962. As a coach, a 1-0 win in 1970. In each of the three Cups, we were champions," he wrote in his column in the Rio de Janeiro daily O Globo.

"England are our lucky opponents...Brazil will win their fifth world title."

Zagallo, who ended his coaching career late last year at the age of 70, said Brazil must improve their defence.

"We have entered that period of

SEE PAGE 14 COL 8

Looking ahead

REUTERS, Kobe

There may be the trifling matter of a match against Belgium in the way, but Brazil's fans are already booking their train tickets and licking their lips at the prospect of a quarter-final showdown with England.

A reprise of the 1970 meeting between the two nations that produced one of the best World Cup games in history is still one win away for Brazil, who take on the Belgians in Kobe later on Monday, but memories of that famous encounter are already being dusted down.

"I've already got my match ticket, booked the train ticket, hotel, everything," said Altino Leitao, a fan from Rio who was just 14 when Brazil beat England 1-0 in Mexico but remembers it like it was yesterday.

"I watched the game on TV and it was the most nervous moment of my life," said Leitao, now an IT company director. "It was a very tough game, very tactical, but England aren't as good now as they were then."

After limping into the World Cup with a dismal qualifying campaign by their standards, Brazil's three wins and 11 goals in the first round have helped to rekindle the usual enthusiasm -- and high expectations -- from their colourful fans.

The lobby of the team's hotel in Kobe has been buzzing with yellow-clad fans in recent days, while crowds have waited outside for hours for a glimpse of heroes like Ronaldo, Rivaldo and Cafu.

But even the most fervent Brazil fan admits that the current team does not compare to their great predecessors of the 1970s and

1980s, or even to the less exciting but effective World Cup winners of 1994.

Their defence has looked wobbly and, assuming they make it past the Belgians, England's speedy attacking duo of Michael Owen and Emile Heskey will pose problems.

"The England game will be more complicated," said 20-year-old student Tony Figueira, also from Rio. "They have a compact team, a great defence and a fast attack with Owen, and Brazil's defence is weak."

Win or lose, a match with England is seen as something special. For Brazilians, it brings back memories of a victory that spurred them on to win the Cup in 1970 when legendary players like Pele were in their prime.

"England are a very strong team and it will be something special. It will be the first time we've played a major European team in this tournament but it's better than playing Italy and Germany," said Clovis

SEE PAGE 14 COL 8

Erratum

Due to an oversight in an AFP report printed on Monday under the heading 'Bangladesh united', it was mentioned that Bangladesh President Shahabuddin Ahmed also regularly watches World Cup matches. In fact, the line should have read ex-President Shahabuddin Ahmad. The error is regretted.

--Sports Editor



PHOTO: AFP

SON, I'M COUNTING ON YOU: Italy coach Giovanni Trapattoni (R) and superstar Alessandro Del Piero during practice at Daejeon yesterday.

Politics can wait

AFP, Seoul

Sport and politics do mix if the World Cup is anything to go by as presidents and prime ministers alike gush over their teams' successes and shed tears with them after their losses.

Some like Britain's Tony Blair cannot bear to miss the action even if

it means scuttling official agendas.

Blair, along with 14 other European leaders is due in Seville, Spain at the weekend for a European Union summit it seems he can do without, given that England could well go up against Brazil on Friday in a classic match-up.

"I have to say unfortunately I have got to attend an international confer-

ence and so I'm desperately trying to scramble around looking for how I can refix the times," said Blair following the 3-0 thumping of Denmark.

And with one eye on Anglo-Irish relations, he also had words of encouragement for Ireland following their penalty shoot-out heart

SEE PAGE 14 COL 6



PHOTO: AFP

THAT SEALS IT: US forward Landon Donovan scoring his team's second goal against Mexico with a header at Jeonju yesterday.

Smiling Uncle Sam

REUTERS, Chonju

United States coach Bruce Arena has described his side's advance to the quarter-finals of the World Cup as a great day for U.S. soccer and another sign that the world of soccer is shrinking.

"Our guys left everything on the field today. I'm very proud of them," he said after his team beat regional rivals Mexico 2-0 to reach the last eight of the tournament.

"It's a great day for U.S. soccer," he said on Monday.

"There's no longer an established football world. The world of soccer, the world of football is shrinking."

He said that the big teams like Brazil, Germany, England and Italy were still there, but he added: "We can compete with those countries on a given day."

"Have we arrived? No...but the gap is closing."

Arena said it was difficult bouncing back from Friday's 3-1 defeat by Poland in their final group game.

"It was tough getting our guys back from the game on Friday after losing to Poland," he said. "We only had a short period to recover physically."

He said Mexico, who won group G, were a strong team.

"It was a hard fought match... They played well against a great Mexican team, who have impressed everyone at the World

Cup.

He rejected suggestions the United States had been lucky in the tournament, saying that Mexico had been a group winner and his team had beaten Portugal in their opening game.

"We beat one of the top five teams

SEE PAGE 14 COL 5



PHOTO: AFP

THIS ISN'T FAIR! A Mexican fan(C) gets on her feet in exasperation while her other compatriots realise that their World Cup mission is over at Jeonju yesterday.

CUP CORNER

AP, Lexington

Two cousins were charged with murder in the stabbing death of a 19-year-old man after an argument about a World Cup soccer wager.

Eduardo Velasquez was stabbed in the upper chest at his home Saturday night, Lexington County Sheriff James R. Metts said. Velasquez died shortly after family members brought him to the Lexington County Medical Centre.

Metts said 28-year-old Jamie Cruz Palma and 24-year-old Jerado

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

TODAY'S MATCHES

<p>Japan vs Turkey Venue: Miyagi Time: 12:30 pm</p>	<p>Italy vs Rep of Korea Venue: Daejeon Time: 5:30 pm</p>
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