



THANKS FOR NEVER DOUBTING ME: Superstar Ronaldo acknowledges the cheers from the crowd after the semi-final at Saitama on June 26.

## A ghost buried

AP, Saitama

Magic does not come with an expiration date.

The best player in the world at age 21 does not forget how to play four short years later.

That is not the first point Ronaldo threw back at his critics as the cool summer night drew to a close.

But maybe it should have been.

"We have won nothing yet," he said. "Now we have to go after the real trophy. We have to keep our feet on the ground."

Before this World Cup campaign started, before Brazil began playing once more like Brazil, before he scored the goal that finished Turkey and put his team in Sunday night's final against Germany, Ronaldo first had to prove he deserved a place on the squad.

A few years ago, anybody who suggested that day would come so

soon would have been laughed out of soccer.

Ronaldo was still a prodigy back then, even by Brazil's demanding standards. He started out being compared to Pele at age 16, a kid who climbed the ladder at premier clubs PSV Eindhoven and Barcelona before burnishing his star with Inter Milan.

Back-to-back seasons as FIFA Player of the Year made Ronaldo's over-the-top nickname -- "Il Fenomeno (The Phenomenon)" -- seem like an understatement.

But then came the mysterious convulsions just hours before the 1998 World Cup final and the disappointing 3-0 loss to France. Soon after that came the third knee operation, the one few thought Ronaldo would ever recover from.

The first time he tried to come back, Ronaldo was on the field for seven minutes before the ligament

snapped. The second time, just weeks before the start of the World Cup began, he stumbled through a series of exhibitions, blowing easy chances and struggling to regain his fitness.

A month later, those days seem long gone.

"The nightmare is over," Ronaldo said. And as he basked in the afterglow of Wednesday's victory, his happiness was mixed -- maybe enhanced -- by the ordeal he'd been through. He said quietly, "Now it's time to enjoy my happiness."

He is leading all scorers in the tournament with six goals. He is leading Brazil again, more mature and comfortable in the role than the last time around. He knows now the magic was never gone, only misplaced.

"I won't go into detail about my two years of suffering," Ronaldo said, "but every goal I score is a victory. It's a great joy just to play."

A day earlier, Brazil's team doctor wasn't sure Ronaldo would play, let alone start. A month earlier, he wasn't even assured of a spot on the team.

SEE PAGE 14 COL 2



NON-STOP DELIGHT: A Brazilian in Rio de Janeiro exults after her team made it to the final on June 26.

## 10 Golden men

REUTERS, Yokohama

Four Brazilians including the three Rs -- Ronaldo, Rivaldo and Ronaldinho -- and two German players are among 10 players nominated for the best player's award at the 2002 World Cup.

Wing back Roberto Carlos makes up the Brazilian quartet in line for the "Golden Ball" while goalkeeper Oliver Kahn and playmaker Michael Ballack are the Germans named. Ballack will miss Sunday's final against Brazil because of suspension.

Co-hosts South Korea are represented by captain and centre back Hong Myung-bo who is playing at his fourth finals.

**THE FULL LIST IS**

Roberto Carlos, Rivaldo, Ronaldo, Ronaldinho (Brazil)  
 Oliver Kahn, Michael Ballack (Germany)  
 El Hadji Diouf (Senegal)  
 Fernando Hierro (Spain)  
 Hasan Sas (Turkey)  
 Hong Myung-bo (South Korea)

The 10 have been nominated by FIFA's technical committee but the winner will be decided by voting by

SEE PAGE 14 COL 8

# Redemption Road

REUTERS, Tokyo

Nine months ago any thoughts Brazil and Germany were having about the World Cup did not involve a possible meeting in the final but whether they would even qualify for the tournament.

In the space of five September days Germany suffered their worst ever qualifying result when they were thrashed 5-1 at home by England while Brazil went down 2-1 to arch-rivals Argentina.

With only a few qualifying games remaining, the two most consistent countries in World Cup history were both in real danger of missing out.

The idea of their absence from the finals seemed inconceivable. Brazil are the only team to have played in every tournament since the

first in 1930 while Germany's only absences came in 1930, when they opted not to take part, and 1950 when they were banned by FIFA.

However, it looked even more ominous for Brazil when they suffered a humiliating defeat in November -- 3-1 to Bolivia.

Incredibly it meant they had lost six qualifiers -- after losing just one in all their previous campaigns put together -- and only Colombia's slump kept them in the fight.

They eventually secured their place in the finals with a 3-0 win over Venezuela in their final game, finishing just three points ahead of the non-qualifying Colombians.

The feeble campaign was accompanied by stunning defeats to the likes of South Korea, Australia and Honduras and it would have

been a long search to find anyone suggesting the South Americans would be on the brink of a fifth World title a few months later. On the other side of the world Germany were in similar disarray.

Following their first-round elimination from the 2000 European championships, the England defeat rocked what had been a solid World Cup qualifying campaign.

A failure to beat Finland in their final game condemned them to a play-off against Ukraine -- a tie described by coach Rudi Voeller as the most pressurised he had ever been involved with in his entire playing and managerial career.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

## 170 million motivators

REUTERS, Yokohama

Germany will face 170 million Brazilians in the World Cup final on Sunday.

Brazil coach Luiz Felipe Scolari has used photos of fans crying, cheering and celebrating to motivate his team and remind them they are playing for their compatriots back home as well as themselves.

"It's 90 minutes in which not just we, but the entire population, are

playing so there is nothing more just than winning the World Cup," said goalkeeper Marcos.

"Before every game, we watch a tape showing Brazilians on the streets, the people celebrating when we score, the Brazilian people suffering when we concede a goal.

"There's nothing better to encourage you than to see the Brazilians who are suffering with you.

The move appears to be another

psychological masterstroke by Scolari who is determined to banish the in-fighting and control the towering egos which have wrecked past Brazilian campaigns.

Scolari has carefully controlled his players' comments to the media, so much so that they often appear to be reading a script he has prepared when they give interviews.

Players invariably repeat comments about respecting the opposition, playing for each other and taking each game as it comes.

Belittling the opposition is expressly banned and criticising a teammate would almost certainly lead to an early flight home.

Although Scolari rants at his players during the match, he defends them to the hilt in front of the media.

Scolari has also advised his players not to read Brazilian newspaper sites on the internet so they are not exposed to the criticism often heaped upon them, even when they win.

SEE PAGE 14 COL 4

## Trust 'lucky penny'

REUTERS, Berlin

Millions of superstitious Germans who have watched their longshot side grapple and claw their way to the World Cup final are convinced the powers of a tiny talisman planted on the pitch are bringing good fortune.

A "lucky penny" that has been buried on or near the field by journalists from Bild newspaper at every Germany match since a decisive World Cup qualifying playoff match in Kiev last year has gone unbeaten in its eight outings: six wins and two draws.

"Everyone in Germany believes in the magic of the 'Glueckspennig'," said Klaus-Peter Witt, deputy editor of Bild newspaper that has kept readers regularly informed on the

lucky penny's status and whereabouts.

"We came up with the idea in the newsroom before the crucial playoff against Ukraine," he added, referring to the two do-or-die matches in November. "We buried the penny in the penalty area there and it has worked like a charm ever since."

Germany managed a 1-1 draw in Kiev before winning 4-1 at home to clinch a spot in the World Cup finals.

Bild, continental Europe's best-selling paper with four million copies printed each day, put the penny (worth about half a U.S. cent) into a safe after the November playoff and did not put it back on to a field until the World Cup started.

Germany played poorly in several friendly matches in the meantime, losing to France, Argentina and even

Wales, before the tournament began -- defeats that considerably lengthened the odds for the three-times champions.

With the penny on the field again when the World Cup began -- buried five centimetres below the surface -- Germany destroyed Saudi Arabia 8-0, drew with Ireland 1-1 and beat Cameroon 2-0 in the opening round before ousting Paraguay, the United States and South Korea by identical scores of 1-0 in the knockout stage.

U.S. coach Bruce Arena was even asked about the "lucky penny" by German journalists after Germany had won their quarter-final despite being completely out-classed.

SEE PAGE 14 COL 6

### CUP CORNER

REUTERS, London

World Cup fans did not get the big picture of their teams in action because widescreen images of matches have only been broadcast in host nations Japan and South Korea.

Most matches were shot with the newer widescreen cameras but New Scientist magazine said on Wednesday most football fans didn't see them.

"A New Scientist investigation points to a combination of appalling planning and penny-pinching by the world's broadcasters," it said.

A spokeswoman for Britain's ITV commercial network told the maga

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

NO MATCH TODAY

Third place decider tomorrow  
Final June 30



EXTRATERRESTRIAL! World's most respected referee Pierluigi Collina warning somebody during the Japan-Turkey Round Two match on June 18.

## Collina, who else?

REUTERS, Yokohama

Italy's Pierluigi Collina will referee Sunday's World Cup final between Brazil and Germany.

His linesmen will be Leif Lindberg of Sweden and Philip Sharp of England, FIFA announced on Thursday.

The appointment of the 42-year-old financial adviser from Viareggio is no surprise. Over the last five years he has firmly established himself as the best in the world, a fact recognised by FIFA who voted him its top referee for the fourth time in January.

Earlier in the tournament he was

the natural choice for what was the most eagerly anticipated -- and potentially most volatile -- of the first round matches between England and Argentina.

Typically, Collina was perfectly positioned to award England the penalty that David Beckham converted to clinch the game.

Equally typically, the Argentinians did not bother disputing the spot-kick with the Italian who brooks no threat to his authority on the football pitch.

With his distinctive bald head, intense grey-blue eyes and commanding presence, Collina simply

SEE PAGE 14 COL 5



ONE & ONLY: Brazil captain Cafu celebrating the win over Turkey at Saitama on June 26.

## Hattrick hero

INTERNET, Saitama

Brazil's wing-back and inspirational skipper Cafu will become the first player in history to take part in three World Cup finals if he plays for the national team in the championship match Sunday in Yokohama.

Cafu, whose real name is Marcos Evangelista de Moraes, appeared in the finals in the United States in 1994 and France in 1998, and he now hopes that nothing hinders his playing

in a third final in a row -- an unprecedented soccer feat.

Cafu, who was born June 19, 1970, in Sao Paulo, played in only three games in the 1994 World Cup, including the final, and in six matches in France '98.

In total, the defender, who is under contract with Italian Serie A club AS Rome, has played in 114 games with the Brazilian national team and scored five goals.

SEE PAGE 14 COL 5