



All quiet on Turk front

AP, Istanbul

The streets of Istanbul and the capital Ankara were swarming with red and white Wednesday, but they fell largely silent as Turkey lost to Brazil 1-0 in the World Cup semi-finals.

Braving heavy rain in Istanbul's central Taksim Square, crowds listened to match commentary broadcast from giant speakers. State employees had been given the afternoon off, and no one else seemed to be working either.

There was no repeat of the scenes of jubilation that had marked Turkey's progress through the tournament. A few fans waved giant Turkish flags, but the majority stood in thoughtful silence.

"They played really well, they fought really hard, but it wasn't to be," said Gulsum Yilmaz, 22, a student. "I'm very sad, but it's made us all really happy to get this far. Now Turkish soccer is in a better place."

It is the best sports performance for Turkey, which travels to co-host

South Korea for Saturday's third-place game in Daegu.

"Turkey played above its strength, but Brazil is a great team. If you want to be realistic, Brazil is a world giant, and the result is about right," said Erdal Savas, 32. "To get here was a great achievement and from now on everyone will be scared to play against Turkey."

In Ankara, almost the only people visible on the streets during the game were selling Turkish flags. After the game, the thousands of people who gathered in Kizilay Square in anticipation of a party began to disperse.

"We've been unsuccessful with our economy, and our victories in the World Cup made us happy for a little while," said Umit Ozbey, 24, an engineer. "It made us forget the crisis. I'm upset we didn't win ... but now we have to get back to the real world."

Turkey's coach Senol Gunes said

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RUMBLE IN RIO: Rio de Janeiro residents take to the streets as they party to celebrate Brazil's entry in the World Cup final on June 26.

PHOTO AFP

Watertight fort

REUTERS, Seoul

Germany coach Rudi Voeller thought his defence might be their Achilles' heel before the tournament kicked off - they have ended up matching a World Cup record for meanness.

Voeller had lost his two most valued defenders, Jens Nowotny and Christian Woerns, through injuries in the build-up to the finals, and was clearly worried his side might leak goals.

But they have conceded only one en route to the big match, a feat achieved previously only by the Netherlands before they lost 2-1 to West Germany in the 1974 final.

"Almost the entire defence went missing and I had to experiment a bit," said Voeller, who also had problems with regular defender Marko Rehmer, far from his best after

fighting injuries. 'I took a few risks but it worked out well and the players I chose did what I expected them to.'

Captain Oliver Kahn, arguably the best goalkeeper in the world, was essential to that achievement with brilliant saves, but his defenders, none of whom appear in FIFA's all-star side 33-strong shortlist, deserve a lot of credit.

Dedicated workers with few frills, they provide a symbol for the virtues that helped Germany recapture their winning ways.

Christoph Metzelder, the youngest player in the squad at 21, started all Germany's matches at the back, confirming he had the potential to become the latest in a proud series of great German defenders featuring

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ON YOUR KNEES, THE BOSS IS HERE! Germany coach Rudi Voeller stands while custodian Oliver Kahn ties his shoe laces during practice at Seoul yesterday.

PHOTO AFP

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Extrasensory Scolari

REUTERS, Saitama

Brazil coach Luiz Felipe Scolari said he felt positive energy emanating from his country during his team's 1-0 World Cup semi-final win over Turkey.

The man known as Big Phil, who gave a typical performance as he prowled up and down the touchline during the game urging on his players, dedicated the win to Brazil's supporters.

"On the pitch, I felt a positive energy coming from Brazil and the Brazilian supporters who, it seemed, were together with us here," he said.

"The big winners are the supporters who have understood the spirit of our team."

"I imagine the people back home are happy, content and jumping with

happiness just as we will be later on."

"I think we could have won by more with the chances we had," he said.

"But it didn't happen. I want to congratulate the Turkish players and coach. For Turkey, to reach the last four of the World Cup is not easy. I really do congratulate them."

Brazil won with a single goal from Ronaldo in the 49th minute.

"We knew they would be tough

opposition," Scolari said. "They're strong, they have good technique, especially from the midfielder forward."

The coach said Ronaldo, who had been doubtful before the start with a thigh injury, gave no rise for concern, even though he was substituted in the 68th minute.

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...AND YOU ALL THOUGHT I WAS CRAZY! A member of Brazil's technical staff congratulates coach Luis Felipe Scolari after the final berth was ensured on June 26.

PHOTO AFP

TVangle

SHAYAN KHAN

Brazil have crossed another hurdle towards their date with destiny. On Wednesday, they dispatched Turkey, and on Sunday, many of these players will have a golden opportunity to erase the memories of that horrific night in Paris four years ago. And no one has been hungering for that chance more than Ronaldo.

Turkey once again played fluent football. They really have displayed the essence of the European style better than any other team in this World Cup. Their game is fast, efficient, organised and yet flexible,

with a touch of flair. If only we had seen the real Hakan Sukur in Korea and Japan, this team could have been even better, and possibly put the Brazilians under considerably more pressure Wednesday. Brazil by and large enjoyed the upper hand throughout the game, but could not afford to relax for a moment. After a quiet start, the game exploded into life after a third of the first half. Ronaldo and Ronaldo started to combine, and with the wingbacks joining in, Brazil laid siege to Rustu's goal. But the Fenerbahce keeper guarded his castle manfully, pulling

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Jiving on samba beat

REUTERS, Sao Paulo

Feverish celebrations broke out across Brazil on Wednesday as the national soccer team reached the World Cup final for the third consecutive time in their bid for a fifth world championship.

The first reaction to the 1-0 semi-final win over Turkey in Saitama was relief. Ronaldo scored early in the second half, but Turkey kept up the pressure until the final whistle.

After Brazilians caught their breath, shouts of "Penta" -- Fifth in Portuguese -- erupted in bars and on factory floors equipped with big screens.

"The game was one more test for my heart, but I continue to believe in a 'Penta'," said Oseas de Jesus Santos, a parking attendant on Sao Paulo's main strip, Avenida Paulista.

"Only one left," said former national coach Mario Zagallo, whose team lost in the 1998 final to France.

On Sunday in Yokohama, Brazil will face Germany who have won the World Cup three times but have never met the record holding four-time champions in the finals.

"Our big advantage is the power of creativity and that is why I believe in victory," said Carlos Alberto Parreira, who coached Brazil to their last World Cup final win in 1994.

"It is good to remember that they

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Recognition at long last?

REUTERS, Tokyo

Sunday's World Cup final offers Rivaldo the chance once and for all to convince the doubters he deserves his place among the all-time greats of Brazilian soccer.

Despite a sparkling CV with a terrific return of 32 goals in 61 full internationals -- including eight in the qualifiers and five in the current finals -- club honours in Brazil and Spain and the World Player of the Year award in 1999, the 30-year-old playmaker somehow still finds himself with something to prove.

It is nothing new, however, for a player, and a man, who has spent his entire life struggling for recognition.

Born into poverty in the north-eastern city of Recife, Rivaldo had the archetypal Brazilian boyhood of scraping a meagre income selling souvenirs to tourists by day, then playing football on the beach after they had moved on.

But the well-trodden path into the national team from Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo was not so accessible for a poor boy from the north.

The death of his father when Rivaldo was 16 spurred him to greater efforts as he fought to give life to the parental dream that he would become a professional.

He managed it, joining Paulista a year later then moving to Santa Cruz and Mogi Mirim, all the time battling to prove his worth.

"Nobody believed in me then," he said. "They said the others would be the stars, but I did not let that get me down."

So came a move to Corinthians in 1993 and then to Palmeiras a year later.

Never the most stylish of players, the tall, gangly midfielder who relied entirely on his left foot, still struggled to convince the Brazilian public, despite notching a remarkable 50 goals in 86 games for the Sao Paulo club in two years.

After helping Brazil win the world youth championship in 1993 he

made his international debut in December that year, but then-coach Carlos Alberto Parreira was not convinced enough to include him

the squad that went on to win the 1994 World Cup.

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TEST OF A SUPERSTAR KIND: Rivaldo practicing in Saitama on June 24.

PHOTO AFP