



STATUE OF SAMBA LIBERTY! A replica of New York's Statue of Liberty wearing a Brazilian jersey being placed at the 'New York City Shopping Mall' in Rio de Janeiro. This photo was taken yesterday.

Penta prayers

AFP, Rio De Janeiro

Brazilian fans are summoning up prayers and lucky charms in a bid to help the football-crazy nation bring home the World Cup for a record fifth time.

It seems as if all 173 million Brazilians believe that "a penta" - that fifth triumph - is at hand in Sunday's final against Germany and optimism has rocketed since Wednesday's semi-final win over Turkey after fears that the team would flop after a poor qualifying campaign.

"We are currently selling an average of 1,000 metres worth of Brazilian flags per day," says Oswaldo Turuna, who owns "Casa Turuna", a traditional style shop in Rio which sells all kinds of carnival items.

"People are coming to buy candles and clay dishes to make offerings to their saint. The idea is to help the Brazilian players to play well or 'tie together' the legs of the players from the other team," Turuna said.

Turuna, whose family have owned the shop for 90 years, said that sales had started to rise

strongly once Ronaldo, Rivaldo and co. reached the quarter-finals or as he put it "when Brazil started playing better football."

"The supporters got all enthusiastic and came to buy yellow and green material to make T-shirts and banners.

"They're also buying firecrackers, whistles and trumpets," he explained as the fiesta-loving nation gears up to throw a big party in the expectation that the "auriverde" will beat the Germans in Yokohama, Japan.

But sales are still lame compared with some previous World Cups.

"There's unemployment and an economic crisis but it's also to do with the kickoff times," says Turuna. Some matches have kicked off as early as 3 a.m. while the final starts at 8 a.m.

"So a lot more people stay at home," Turuna explains.

"And a lot of Brazilian people wait until the last minute. I'm sure that come Saturday the supporters will come and have a rush on candles and incense to pray and ensure that no evil eye falls on the side."

The Cup legend

REUTERS, Yokohama

Ronaldo will flash his trademark gap-toothed smile in delight if he wins it and Oliver Kahn will take off his treasured gloves just to get his hands on it -- Silvio Gazzaniga's beauty remains the ultimate possession for the soccer superstars who have everything.

Except, of course, that the FIFA World Cup trophy, the masterpiece creation of the Italian sculptor, will never belong to any man, team or country.

It has passed through the hands of football greats such as Franz Beckenbauer, Dino Zoff and Diego Maradona but will not be awarded permanently to any country lucky -- or talented -- enough to win it three times as was the fate of the Jules Rimet.

Only 36 centimetres high, it is made of solid, 18-carat gold and weighs 4,970 grams. Two rings of semi-precious malachite stones adorn the base. The insurance value is about 100,000 Swiss francs -- the reality is that it is priceless.

Gazzaniga, now 81, won the FIFA competition to design the cup 31 years ago after the Pele-inspired Brazilians of 1970 took possession of the Jules Rimet Trophy with their third World Cup triumph, a 4-1 victory over Italy in Mexico.

"My inspiration for the design came from two basic elements -- the athlete and the world," Gazzaniga, who will be in the Japanese port city of Yokohama to watch Sunday's final between Brazil and Germany, said in a recent FIFA interview.

"I had it in my mind to create something that symbolised effort and exertion, while at the same time expressing harmony, simplicity and peace."

He came up with two celebrating athletes, apparently lifting the world itself in a moment of sublime triumph. For FIFA, led by its English president Sir Stanley Rous, it was no contest and Gazzaniga beat 52 other designs to win the commission.

"The fact that my trophy has weathered many trends over the past 30 years bears witness to the fact that I allowed myself to be inspired by principles that are not eroded by the passing of time," said

Count on culture

REUTERS, Seoul

Germany will rely on their traditional virtues when they face Brazil for the first time in World Cup history in Sunday's final.

"Plenty of order and discipline are required," coach Rudi Voeller said on Friday, just before the triple champions left their Seoul base for Yokohama which hosts the final.

"We must switch to the attacking mode but we must do it carefully because Brazil have players capable of using any opportunity to counter-attack," added the former World Cup striker.

nothing to worry about.

"The goalkeepers' training is so intense that such things happen," the coach said. "He's still alive."

There was a question mark over Carsten Jancker, who was fighting a

bout of fever, but the Bayern Munich striker plays only a secondary part in Voeller's plans.



WILL YOU RESPOND MR. KAHN? A fan of German custodian Oliver Kahn holds a poster proclaiming 'We Love You, Olli Kahn!' as the German team arrives at Haneda Airport near Yokohama yesterday.

Voeller lifted the trophy in 1990 after losing in the final four years earlier. Brazil have won four times.

Nothing fancy should be expected from the Germans, who have advanced to the big game in unspectacular fashion and realise they are blessed with less talent than their opponents.

"In terms of individual players they have more class than we have but that's not something we should be ashamed of," Voeller said. "All the other teams are in the same situation when compared to Brazil."

As always, Voeller declined to drop any hints on his starting line-up but he said all his preferred players were ready to go despite minor injury worries.

"I could feel in training yesterday (Thursday) how impatient they were to set foot on the pitch," he said. "They would rather play straight away than having to wait another day."

Top striker Miroslav Klose, who has scored five goals in the tournament, trained fully on Thursday despite a sore hip and should start up front alongside Oliver Neuville.

Goalkeeper and captain Oliver Kahn, who was instrumental in his side's run to the final by conceding only one goal, had to receive treatment on a painful neck during the session but Voeller said there was



WHO WILL BE THE LUCKY ONES? Brazil fans stand in a queue for tickets for the World Cup final at FIFA ticketing Kiosk terminal in Tokyo yesterday.

Ticket to samba

AFP, Tokyo

Hundreds of Brazilians, most of them of Japanese descent were queuing Friday, some overnight in the hope of buying a ticket for their country's Sunday's World Cup Final against Germany.

"Several hundred people were already there when I arrived at seven o'clock this morning," at the main ticketing centre in Yurakucho, central Tokyo, a member of the ticketing office staff who requested anonymity, told AFP.

About 1,000 were waiting by the time the ticket windows opened at 8:00 am, according to police sources quoted by Jiji Press agency, and the number quickly reached 2,000.

Football's governing body FIFA announced on Thursday that Brazil supporters would be able to buy up to two tickets each priced from 300 to 750 dollars on Friday if they held a Brazilian passport. German fans will be able to buy tickets under the same conditions on Saturday.

In just over two hours, all the 300-dollar tickets had already been sold, a ticket sales official said, adding he knew how many tickets were available but could not say more precisely than "several thousand."

According to FIFA regulations, eight percent of seats at the final must be allocated to supporters of

Final of hearts

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

World football at least until 2010.

The man who scored that Romario-esque strike to dump Turkey 1-0 and put Brazil on the brink of five titles, Ronaldo, was hailed a re-born hero.

In its editorial the Une O Globo said: "The good star Ronaldo, with a new haircut and new pair of boots, shone and pushed aside his physical problems to assure a 1-0 win over Turkey."

"A rehabilitated hero," read the headline of the Jornal do Brasil which added: "Ronaldo had confessed that he feared he would never play again (after years of knee problems)."

Popular O Dia also backed Ronaldo to shoot Brazil to a record five titles.

Alongside a picture of that goal against Turkey it wrote: "A goal by the Phenomenon, the best goalscorer and fans can now bank on le penta."

Under a headline of "Simply The Kings" Sports paper Lance insisted: "Brazil head towards the le penta (fifth title) to reign-supreme over



IS THIS MY SIZE? A Rio de Janeiro resident takes a look at a Brazil jersey at a cloth store yesterday.



LEGENDS JOIN THE PARTY: Former World Cup superstars Yugoslav Dragan Stojkovic (2nd from L), England's Bobby Moore (3rd from L), Michel Platini of France (4th from L) and Brazil's Zico join a chorus at a pre-final function in Yokohama yesterday.

The appetiser

AFP, Yokohama

Thousands of fans turned out under leaden skies here Friday for a celebration of football featuring living footballing legends and other celebrities at a harbour concert two days before the World Cup final kicks off.

Some 15,000 people sang and danced as pop singers, including vocal group Boyz II Men, belted out their hits at the 2002 FIFA World Cup Pre-Final Event held on a giant floating stage next to the Osanbashi Pier in Yokohama Port.

Participants were also treated to a pulsating performance of Japanese traditional "taiko" drums by the Kodo drum troupe and "shamisen" (Japanese three-stringed guitar), while highlights of the last four weeks were replayed on two huge screens.

The evening was due to end with a bang with a spectacular fireworks display over the harbour.

Three of football's greats - Brazil's Zico, Sir Bobby Charlton, the former Manchester United and England star and France's Michel Platini - were scheduled to take part in a talk show at the event.

Mates make it easy

AFP, Yokohama

Brazil star Ronaldo believes the secret of his success at the World Cup has been the sparkling form of his team-mates.

Ronaldo, who has scored six goals in six games to help Brazil reach Sunday's final against Germany, said he did not feel other members of the squad were relying on him to win matches.

Four years ago, Ronaldo suffered a mysterious fit in the hours before the World Cup final against France, which reports have speculated was the result of too much pressure being put on him.

But a relaxed Ronaldo said after training here Friday that he felt no added burden going into his second final.

"The most important thing is that the team does not make me feel as if I'm a saviour, and that takes the pressure off me," Ronaldo told reporters.

"I'm calm. Everyone keeps asking me about 1998 but I honestly am not thinking about it," he said. "I'm trying not to make any link between this game and four years ago. That's another story and I'm hoping that the

end will be different this time.

"The match against France was the most important of our lives, this time we want to be the winners. I always knew I would play another World Cup final and I have worked hard to achieve that."

"All I am focused on is playing a good game against Germany and hopefully winning the title with the team."

The return of Ronaldinho, back in the Brazil starting line-up after serving a one-match suspension, had also given the South Americans a lift.

"That is a big plus for us," Ronaldo said. "We have replaced him very well, but he is a match-winning player."

Ronaldo said Brazil were now focused on finding a way past Germany's goalkeeper and captain Oliver Kahn, who has been in superb form.

"So far he has proved he is the hardest goalkeeper to score against," Ronaldo said. "But a final is a different thing and we are going to find a way past him."

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