



PHOTO: AFP

RARING TO ROAR: Superstars Ronaldo (L) and Rivaldo warming up at Yokohama International Stadium yesterday.

Show-stoppers

INTERNET

The two Ronnies play live to a television audience of billions tomorrow.

And, with apologies to all the other entertainers of the world, the stars of this global supershow will be Samba stars Ronaldo and Rivaldinho.

They are the boys from Brazil an entire nation is pinning its hopes on to blow away Germany in the World Cup final.

Or, if all goes according to plan, a case of 'Goodnight from me' and 'Goodnight from him' to Oliver Kahn and Co.

Ronaldo is leading the hunt for the Golden Boot with six goals in the

tournament so far, while Rivaldinho needs no introduction to England fans after what he did to David Seaman.

And, if the Germans are in any doubt as to what they will be facing in Yokohama tomorrow, just listen to the Brazilian legends queuing up to praise the deadly duo.

Carlos Alberto, skipper of the South Americans' 1970 World Cup winning team, said: "It would be unfair to compare either of them to Garrincha, Pelé or Zico."

But, like those players, Ronaldo and Rivaldinho have the tremen-

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Football fantastic

AP, Yokohama

Now give us a game we'll all remember.

After the deadly dull 1990 final between Germany and Argentina, the desperately tired Brazil-Italy meeting in '94 and the disappointingly one-sided France-Brazil game four years ago, it's time for something special.

Brazil and Germany should be up to the task in Sunday's final, the first World Cup game ever between the two most successful teams.

Germany are out to tie Brazil's record of four titles, while the favoured Brazilians will try to show that their flamboyant style of attacking soccer is what the game is all about.

The "Three Rs" -- Ronaldo, Rivaldo and Rivaldinho -- have scored 13 of Brazil's 16 goals and will try to unravel an well-organised German defence that has four straight shutout victories.

Behind that defence is Oliver Kahn, the best goalkeeper in the

championship -- perhaps in the world. He must watch out for the runs of Cafu on the right and the long-range shooting of Roberto Carlos from the left.

It's a classic contrast in styles, and that creates an ideal confrontation.

German great Franz Beckenbauer and Brazil's Carlos Alberto Parreira, who had connections with those 1990 and '94 finals, were brought together Tuesday for a news conference to announce the 10 candidates for the player of the tournament. Joining them was Aime Jacquet, coach of the 1998 French team that won the World Cup.

They praised the organisation of the championship and hoped for a good final.

"It's a very, very impressive World Cup so far," said Beckenbauer, who coached Germany to their 1990 victory over Argentina in the final.

"It's the first World Cup in Asia. The first World Cup to be hosted by two countries -- Japan and Korea -- and everybody, including us, were

very, very curious before the World Cup how does it work?"

"And, nearly at the end of the competition, we can say it did work. And it worked in a really great, great way."

Parreira, who led Brazil to their record-breaking fourth triumph four years later, also has been impressed.

"The football itself has proved that it's the No. 1 game in the world. It has captured all the interest in Brazil, in Europe, in Asia, in Africa everywhere as the No. 1 sport," he said.

So let's hope the final lives up to it. The return of the exciting Rivaldinho will certainly help.

While the Brazilians welcome him back from his one-game suspension, the Germans will have to do without their most influential player, midfielder Michael Ballack, suspended because he received two yellow cards in the knockout rounds. Both are candidates for player of the tournament.

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PHOTO: AFP

KAHN-TASTIC: German custodian Oliver Kahn gives back the ball during practice at Yokohama International Stadium yesterday.

Beware of underdogs

AFP, Yokohama

Brazil beware: History has an ominous knack of repeating itself where Germany and World Cup finals are concerned.

The Brazilians head into Sunday's showdown here as strong favourites to defeat the Germans and claim a record fifth World Cup crown.

But they would do well to remember that shattered reputations litter the 72-year story of the World Cup - and often it is Germany who have acted as nemesis of sides expected to win.

In the 1954 final in Switzerland, Germany were expected to be no match for a seemingly invincible Hungary inspired by the legendary Ferenc Puskas.

The Hungarians, who had been unbeaten for four years, had routed Germany 8-3 in the first round and seemed certain to seal their golden era of dominance with a World Cup triumph.

Yet Germany fought back from going 2-0 down in the opening 20 minutes to eventually win 3-2, leaving a disbelieving Hungary empty-handed.

It was an almost identical story 20 years later, when the total footballers of Holland met the Germans in the 1974 final in Munich. Holland surged into a 1-0 lead, but made the fatal mistake of trying to toy with their opponents.

At the end of 90 minutes Germany had won 2-1 and Holland were left wondering where it all went wrong.

Now Brazil are desperate to avoid a similar fate at the climax of a tournament which has shocked and surprised at every turn. According to Brazilian legend Pele, the South Americans will be heading for disaster if they do not heed the lessons of the past four weeks.

"I believe that one of the cardinal sins committed by too many coaches and players who should have known better, was to assume that a match was won before the first ball had been kicked," Pele wrote in a newspaper column for the Asahi Shimbun.

"Every match starts, however, with both teams having scored

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Onus on Kahn

AFP, Yokohama

Inspirational goalkeeper Oliver Kahn is the key to Sunday's World Cup final and as important to Germany as Ronaldo and Rivaldo are to Brazil, Rudi Voller believes.

The German coach makes no bones about the fact that only another outstanding display from Kahn will give his side a chance of stopping the Brazilians from lifting their fifth World Cup here on Sunday.

"He is our captain and in my opinion he is the world's best keeper," Voller said on the eve of the match. "He has shown that in this World Cup but he also proves it

week in, week out with his club, Bayern Munich.

"Everyone knows and he knows that he has to perform exceptionally well to get us through this final."

"He is as important for us as Ronaldo, a Rivaldo or a Zidane."

Kahn has conceded only one goal in Germany's six matches here and there was no suggestion he was at fault when Robbie Keane lashed in an injury time equaliser for Ireland in a first round group match.

And with each match, Kahn's air of invincibility seems to have grown. A string of crucial saves in Germany's last two matches, against the United States and South

Korea, have put him in the running for the Golden Ball, the trophy honouring the best player of the tournament.

Former German coach Franz Beckenbauer says the issue does not even bear thinking about.

"He has only let in one goal and is absolutely for me the best goalkeeper in the world," said Beckenbauer.

Kahn is a man after Beckenbauer's own heart with his unyielding will to win every match he plays in and he can cut a fierce figure on the pitch as his

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PHOTO: AFP

EYES SHUT TO BIAS! Pierluigi Collina at a press conference yesterday.

Mercy? No way!

AFP/AP, Yokohama

After a World Cup beset by accusations of incompetent refereeing, expect no controversy when the bald-headed figure of Pierluigi Collina leads out Brazil and Germany for Sunday's final.

Football's world governing body FIFA have turned to their safest pair of hands for their biggest match.

Collina is generally regarded as the world's top referee and once his home nation Italy had been eliminated by South Korea, it became clear he would be handed the whistle for the big night in Yokohama.

Instantly recognisable with his shining head and bulging eyes, the 42-year-old financial consultant has been voted the best referee on the

planet four times and he is the official that everyone wants.

"Players, coaches and the press all respect him," said Brazil coach Luiz Felipe Scolari.

Collina was handed control of two potentially explosive matches in this World Cup already - England's first-phase win over Argentina and Turkey's second-round victory over co-hosts Japan.

He refereed two matches at the 1998 World Cup and took charge of the 1999 European Champions League final between Manchester United and Bayern Munich, when he memorably consoled the weeping German players after they lost to

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Fastest Sukur

INTERNET, Daegu

Hakan Sukur, Turkey's captain and star striker, recorded the fastest goal in World Cup history on Saturday.

According to Britain's Press Association, Hakan Sukur found the net after just 11 seconds had elapsed in the third-place playoff between Turkey and South Korea.

Korean captain Hong Myung Bo inexcusably lost possession on the edge of the area after a challenge by forward Ilhan Mansiz. The ball bounced into the path of Hakan Sukur, who slipped the ball past goalkeeper Lee Woon Jae.

Nicknamed "The Bull of the Bosphorus," Hakan Sukur beat the previous mark held by Vaclav Masek of the former Czechoslovakia. On June 7, 1962 in Chile, Masek netted the opener against Mexico in just 15

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Brazil No 1 again

AFP, Yokohama

France have not only been dethroned as World champions, Brazil will also supplant them atop the FIFA world rankings no matter what happens in Sunday's World Cup final against Germany.

The French have headed the rankings since April 2001 on the back of their triumphs in the 1998 World Cup and in the Euro 2000 in Belgium and the Netherlands.

Brazil had been World No 1 from the rankings' inception in 1994 until the French overtook them.

Coming into these World Cup finals, the South American samba kings had even slipped to second equal alongside Argentina following their struggle to make it out of the South American zone qualifiers.

Germany, who had crashed out of the top 10 for the first time based on their poor form in the qualifiers will move back up among the elite, while Argentina, first round losers here, will regress.

Semifinalists South Korea from Asia and quarter-finalists Senegal from Africa expect big leaps.

The new FIFA rankings will be out on Wednesday and can be consulted on the FIFA website at www.Fifa.com.

WORLD CUP 2002 Clash of the Titans

The statistics

Attack	
88	Shots
36	Shots on target
14	Goals
223	Average goals per match
36	Corners

Fouls	
1	Red cards
117	Yellow cards
119	Fouls committed
15	Fouls against
	Offside

Players	
27.2	Average age
1.84 m	Average height
80.9 kg	Average weight
Matsushita (21 ans)	Youngest
Bierhoff (32 ans)	Oldest
Jankovic (93 kg)	Heaviest
Neuveille (65 kg)	Lightest
Jankovic (1.93 m)	Tallest
Novakovic (1.71 m)	Smallest
11 (of whom 8 in Italy)	Playing abroad

Route to final

Germany - S. Africa 4-0	1st round	Brazil - Turkey 2-1
Germany - Eire 1-1	Germany - Cameroon 2-0	Brazil - China 4-0
Germany - Paraguay 1-0	Germany - Paraguay 1-0	Brazil - Costa Rica 2-0
Germany - United States 1-0	Germany - United States 1-0	Brazil - Belgium 2-0
Germany - S. Korea 1-0	Germany - S. Korea 1-0	Brazil - England 2-1
	Quarter-finals	Brazil - Turkey 1-0
	Semi-finals	

Since 1930

Germany	Brazil
15	World Cup appearances
84	Matches played
59	Wins
176	Goals scored
3	Titles won
	Since 1930
	Matches played
	Wins
	Goals scored
	Titles won

Miroslav Klose

Age: 24
Height: 1.82 m
Weight: 74 kg
Club: FC Koln/Bastonia (Ger)
Caps: 18
Goals: 13

Luiz Nazario de Lima

Age: 35
Height: 1.83 m
Weight: 77 kg
Club: Inter Milan (Ita)
Caps: 53
Goals: 43

WORLD CUP 2002

Miroslav Klose	Luiz Nazario de Lima
Matches: 6	Matches: 14
Minutes played: 488	Minutes played: 459
Goals: 5	Goals: 6
Shots: 7	Shots: 17
Shots on target: 5	Shots on target: 17
Decisive passes: 5	Decisive passes: 0
Fouled against: 13	Fouled against: 12
Yellow card: 0	Yellow card: 0
Red card: 0	Red card: 0



PHOTO: AFP

WINNER TAKES ALL: A combo of photos showing Brazil coach Luiz Felipe Scolari (R) and his German counterpart Rudi Voller overseeing the training of their respective teams at Yokohama yesterday.

Delectably different

AFP, Seoul

Rudi Voller was a celebrated centre forward with 47 international goals to his name. Luiz Felipe Scolari was a burly but basic defender who achieved little as a player.

In many ways, the only thing the coaches of Germany and Brazil have in common is a moustache.

If Voller's side win the World Cup in Yokohama on Sunday, it will be his first title of any kind as a coach to add to his winner's medal from 1990 as a player.

Scolari, nicknamed 'Big Phil', meanwhile has won titles galore at club level as a coach, although he

admits he was a limited player.

"To be honest, I wasn't a good defender," he admitted on Friday.

He led the Al Qadsia club in Kuwait to the Gulf Cup in 1990 and then in 1994 and 1996 he enjoyed success back in Brazil with Gremio, winning the Copa Libertadores and the Recopa, a South American 'supercup'.

With Palmeiras, he won the national cup and the Mercosur Cup in 1998, the Libertadores in 1999 and the Rio-Sao Paulo tournament in 2000.

Early last year he added the Minas state cup with Cruzeiro before taking over from Emerson Leao as

Brazil coach with the team floundering in their early World Cup qualifiers.

Voller only fell into the role of national coach by default.

Christoph Daum was due to take over when he became embroiled in press revelations that he had taken cocaine.

Two years ago, Voller stepped into the breach. "He was the right man at the right time for German football," said his assistant Michael Skibbe.

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TODAY'S MATCH

Final

Brazil vs Germany

Venue: Yokohama

Time: 5:00 pm