

LUIZ FELIPE SCOLARI

Scolari in charge for Paraguay game

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Luiz Felipe Scolari, whose future as coach is in doubt, will lead Brazil when they meet Paraguay in a friendly on August 21 in their first game since the 2-0 World Cup final win over Germany last month.

Scolari, whose agreement with the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) officially ended at the conclusion of the World Cup, would still be in charge against Paraguay, the CBF has said.

The man known as Big Phil, who in only 13 months led Brazil out of the doldrums to World Cup glory, has not yet decided whether he will stay in the job and is due to meet CBF president Ricardo Teixeira next week to discuss his future.

But the CBF said in a statement on its website that Scolari would take charge against Paraguay and that he would have a full-strength squad to choose from.

"Coach Luiz Felipe Scolari will have at his disposal all the players who took part in the World Cup," said the CBF. "The coaching staff of the Brazil team will be the same. The Paraguay team will bring their main players."

The statement said that the match would be played in the North-Eastern city of Fortaleza.

Senegal had originally been put forward as Brazil's opponents for the match.

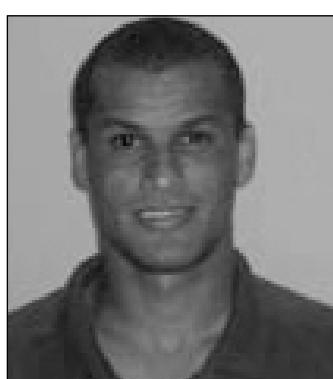
Rivaldo plans Barca farewell

REUTERS, Madrid

Brazilian World Cup winner Rivaldo will delay his arrival at new club AC Milan to stop over in Barcelona.

Rivaldo, who announced the change of plans on his website, said he would now join up with his new team mates in Madrid on Saturday.

AC Milan are playing in a four-team tournament along with Real Madrid, Liverpool and Bayern Munich over the weekend and Rivaldo will be present for his new



RIVALDO

team's first game against Bayern on Saturday, although he is not expecting to play.

"In the end I won't be going to Milan on Thursday," said Rivaldo, who signed for AC Milan this week after being released from Barcelona with a year still to run on his contract.

"Before that I want to bid farewell to the Milan party and after that I'll be available for my medical and official presentation, on Monday or Tuesday."

England start with Portugal

REUTERS, London

England will warm up for their Euro 2004 qualifying campaign with a friendly international against the tournament hosts Portugal.

The match at Villa Park on September 7 will be England's first game since losing 2-1 to Brazil in the World Cup quarter-finals in Japan.

Portugal, who surprisingly failed to qualify from the group stage of the World Cup, will be England's only opponents before Sven Goran Eriksson's side play their first two European Championship qualifiers against Slovakia and Macedonia on October.

Villa Park, home of English premier league side Aston Villa, has already proved lucky for Eriksson as it was the venue for his first game in charge when England beat Spain 3-0 in February last year.

The spokesman added that

Best doing well

Football

REUTERS, London

George Best was showing encouraging signs of recovery after his liver transplant but would remain in intensive care for the rest of Wednesday, his doctors said.

The 56-year-old former Manchester United and Northern Ireland footballer underwent a 10-hour operation on Tuesday at the Cromwell Hospital in west London.

"George Best's condition has improved steadily overnight and he is in a very satisfactory state at present," a hospital spokesman said.

"Mr Best is comfortable and recognises family and staff and will remain in the intensive care ward for the rest of the day."

The spokesman added that

What's eating Brazil?

Football

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

acceleration he possessed before two knee operations.

He then claimed that Ronaldo, whose comeback from injury was the highlight of the tournament, was a "spoilt player".

The Phenomenon, as Ronaldo is nicknamed in Brazil, hit back, claiming that he was "200 percent fit." In a statement on his website, he thanked Scolari for showing faith at a time when many had doubted him but added: "One of the most important things about winning is knowing how to act afterwards."

The two acted quickly to patch up any possible row -- Ronaldo has removed the comment from his site -- and most commentators interpreted Scolari's "spoilt" comment as an unfortunate choice of words rather than a deliberate insult.

"He was probably right on both counts but he didn't need to say

training ground clash with team mate Rodrigo Fabri. "It's a tense atmosphere," he admitted. "My contract is due to finish soon and I'm trying my best not to think about it."

Other players have been more fortunate.

Luizao, reserve to Ronaldo at the World Cup, has joined Germany's Hertha Berlin from Gremio, reserve fullback Belletti has moved to Spain's Villareal from Sao Paulo and midfielder Gilberto Silva has left Atletico Mineiro for English champions Arsenal.

Luizao spoke of his relief in leaving behind the chaos of Brazilian football, where an increasing number of players have gone to court in an attempt to receive wages and other earnings they say that clubs have failed to pay them.

Brazilian soccer, which last year was the subject of two

"

Ronaldo

Anderson Polga

Kleberson

either," said Jucá Kfouri, columnist in the sports daily Lance.

Unfortunately for Big Phil, he had already stirred up public opinion with an astonishing attack on Pele.

During a skiing holiday in the Chilean Andes, Scolari claimed that "Pele knows nothing about football" and added: "If you want to win a title, you have to listen to what Pele says and then do the opposite."

At least his services remain in demand.

He is expected to be given the chance to stay on as Brazil coach next week although both Chile and Mexico have been discussing the possibility of hiring him.

The same cannot be said for some of his team, however.

Midfielder Kleberson, outstanding in the final, and central defender Anderson Polga are still with their Brazilian clubs after the expected flurry of offers from Europe failed to materialise.

Kleberson's club Atletico Paranaense admit they want to offload him but their asking price of dollars 20 million appears too high.

If Polga cannot find takers, he may also have to accept a wage cut to stay at his financially-troubled club Gremio.

His frustration boiled over this week when he was involved in a

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