



MOMENT OF THEIR LIVES: Brazilians at Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana beach go wild after watching Ronaldo's second goal on a giant screen yesterday.

Penta perfect

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil broke into wild samba celebrations Sunday as the national side's 2-0 World Cup final win over Germany triggered an explosion of national joy.

Car horns blared in cities across the country, fireworks crackled across the sky and millions of Brazilians waving the national colours streamed into the streets to pay homage to the team that collected the "penta" -- a fifth World Cup title unequalled by any other country.

Four years after the country went into mourning following the traumatic 1998 World Cup final defeat to France, Brazilians reclaimed their pride as the cradle of Pele's "beautiful game."

For a while Latin America's biggest country can forget the struggle through hard times and a bleak economic future.

Both goals by Ronaldo, now elevated to near sainthood here, sparked seismic eruptions of joy in Rio where samba bands struck up the dance music to launch a massive street party.

The tension generated by a scoreless first half only increased the release of bottled up emotion when the final whistle blew. Fans hugged one another and smiled through their tears.

Brazilians woke early for the morning kick off in Yokohama, Japan, and most opted to watch the

game with their families at home but supporters packed the bars and restaurants of Rio and watched in their thousands the giant screens erected in several areas of the city.

The dance frenzy gripped Copacabana beach, where fans roared the team on to victory as they watched a big screen erected by the ocean.

Draped in the yellow, blue and green of the national side, and others in little more than patriotic face paint, fans laughed, sang and jiggled to the samba beat, chanting "Brazil, five-times champion."

In the working class northern district of Tijuca, the elite Salgueiro samba school went into overdrive and set the tone for a wild day and night of victory celebrations.

In Sao Paulo, 18 million people in the world's second largest city and Brazil's industrial heartland, were transfixed by the return of the good old days of Brazilian soccer supremacy.

"National prestige has been restored," Carlos Alberto Parreira, former national coach who handed Brazil the 1994 World Cup, told the Folha de Sao Paulo newspaper.

The Avenida Paulista, Sao Paulo's financial district, was buried under a sea of flags and banners in yellow and green, as roaring fans drowned out the pulse of the samba drums.

"This was the most heart-

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PHOTO: AFP

BOUM BOUM! Pop star Anastasia sings the World Cup song 'Boum' before the start of the final at Yokohama yesterday.

Content Germans

AFP, Berlin

A collective groan in Berlin accompanied the whistle that ended Germany's World Cup final hopes against Brazil on Sunday but emotions were dominated by general satisfaction that the team had come so far.

In front of the big-screen set up in Potsdamer Platz, a rallying point for more than 125,000 supporters since the tournament started, some 2,500 fans carrying German flags or clad in the red, gold and black colours forced security to close the gates hours before the start of the match.

Despite losing 2-0, fans were happy that "die Mannschaft", two months ago dubbed a team of idiots, had even made it to Yokohama for an attempt at a fourth World Cup

title.

Dominik, 21, had made the trip to Berlin from Hanover especially for the match. "It's not important. Vice-champion of the world is already extraordinary for Germany. No one would have believed that."

Some of the crowd had arrived outside at around 5:00 am, three hours before the venue opened and eight hours before kick-off.

Everyone save by Oliver Kahn was greeted with "Oli, Oli" while every image of the German coach was welcomed with "One Rudi Voller, there's only one Rudi Voller," to the tune of Guantanamera.

But those cheers turned to whistles and boos when Ronaldo scored in the 67th minute after Kahn failed to hold a solid drive from Rivaldo.

Only stunned silence marked Ronaldo's second 12 minutes later.

"Germany is the world champion as far as we're concerned," said teenagers Nick and Benjamin on their way out well before the final whistle. But the pair said Kahn had not played well and that Germany would have won had it not been for Ronaldo.

Others simply ignored the score and seemed ready to party anyway.

"They deserved to be champions of the world," said a red-caped Gagbne. "They had the best chances during the match."

Seventeen-year-old Katrin seemed barely interested in the score, having spent most of the 90 minutes admiring Miroslav Klose, SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

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Scolari said bye already?

REUTERS, Yokohama

Brazil coach Luiz Felipe Scolari will resign after Sunday's World Cup final against Germany, according to a Brazilian newspaper.

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Twin Rs!

AFP, Sao Paulo

Two new-born twins in northern Brazil have been christened Ronaldo and Rivaldo on the eve of the country's World Cup final clash with Germany, it was revealed on Saturday.

The boys, named after Brazil's two star performers and Golden Boot hopefuls in this year's finals, were born in a maternity hospital in the northern town of Recife, a report in Jornal do Brasil reported.

Seconds after their birth they were draped in the traditional green and yellow colours of Brazil and were joined in the same hospital by a baby girl who had confidently been named 'Victory.'

Voeller going nowhere

INTERNET, Yokohama

Rudi Voeller has rubbished rumours he is set to resign as Germany manager after his side's 2-0 defeat to Brazil in the World Cup final.

Media speculation predicted that Voeller may step down after the final but he insisted that he was keen to take the team to the European Championships in Portugal in 2004.

"I like my job. I do not know who started rumours that I would resign after the World Cup. We will try to build up a reasonable team for the Euros in 2004," he said.

Belgium fairest

AFP/REUTERS, Yokohama

Belgium has won the award for the World Cup's fairest team, FIFA announced on Sunday.

Belgium were beaten by Brazil in the second round of the tournament

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Cafu wants more

INTERNET, Yokohama

Brazil right back Cafu has insisted that he does not intend to quit the national side after the World Cup final against Germany, according to the squad for Germany 2006.

"I am only 32 and I think I will still have the strength to play until the next World Cup," he said.

"I was misunderstood," he added. "There is no chance of leaving the national squad at this time."

Cafu stated earlier this week that Sunday's final against Germany would represent the pinnacle of his career and that he felt blessed at being given the chance to become the only player to play in three World Cup finals.

"This record is a great honour for

me," the Roma star said. "But I don't have any plans to quit the national squad or my club level. When I do stop," he added, "I'll stay in Europe."

"I am concerned about the social situation in Brazil and I would never play for a Brazilian club again. If I leave Roma, I would go to another city in Europe."

Before then, Cafu intends to make up for the disappointment of losing to France in the 1998 final by beating Germany on Sunday.

"We need to crown the work we have done by winning the title, but even if we lose, we will have done brilliantly at the World Cup," he said.

"There is no way to compare this match with the one we lost to France, but we learned then that in

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Kahn unrivalled yet

AFP, Yokohama

It took the genius of Ronaldo to unlock the German goal but Oliver Kahn remains firmly established as the best keeper in the world despite watching his side crash 2-0 to Brazil in Sunday's World Cup final.

Two second-half strikes from the Brazilian proved too much for the German. Kahn failed to hold a hard, low strike from Rivaldo in the 67th minute and before he could recover the greasy ball, Ronaldo had struck.

Twelve minutes later Ronaldo, from the edge of the area, drove home a shot off the post that Kahn simply could not get to.

But if it had not been for a series of superb saves from Kahn, Germany could have gone down by four

or five instead of two.

In a flurry of first-half injury-time action the 33-year-old twice denied Ronaldo what seemed certain goals.

In the dying seconds Ronaldo collected a fiercely driven Roberto Carlos drive, spun and fired a left yard shot from 12 yards.

Kahn somehow managed to spread himself and Ronaldo could only look on in disbelief as the ball cannoned off Kahn's knee.

Earlier the Bayern Munich keeper had deprived Ronaldo when he got down to a shot from the Brazilian striker from only five yards. Diving to his left, he stopped the shot with his left hand and then

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THERE'S ALWAYS 2006! A German player contemplates what went wrong after the final against Brazil at Yokohama yesterday.



PHOTO: AFP

FRIENDSHIP CAN WAIT: Brazil defender Lucio (R) trying to get the better of Germany's Oliver Neuville at Yokohama yesterday. The two are club mates at Bayer Leverkusen.