

Heroes' welcome for Germany

AFP, Frankfurt

Germany's World Cup football team arrived in Frankfurt on Monday a day after failing to capture soccer's most coveted prize in the final in Japan.

The team touched down at around 4:45 pm (1445 GMT) in a Lufthansa jumbo, from where the squad was to be taken into the city under police escort.

At least 10,000 fans were waiting to give the side a heroes' welcome despite losing 2-0 to Brazil in the final.

Thousands of German football fans had already gathered in Frankfurt to pay tribute to their football team, a side that surprised everyone by even making it to the final in Japan.

Police said some 10,000 people had begun crowding into the centre of Germany's financial capital where a bus carrying coach Rudi Voller and his side was later expected to travel under police escort.

Around 100 police officers have been mobilised to ensure security after "die Mannschaft" arrives at Frankfurt.



PHOTO: AFP

NO HARD FEELINGS! Germans in their thousands assemble at the Romerberg Square in Frankfurt yesterday. Germany, who finished runners-up in the World Cup on Sunday, team members were accorded a reception at the City Hall (in the background).

Party land

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teams in the pre-Cup qualifiers, Brazilians were sceptical they could become five-time champs.

"It was spectacular. ... Brazil's heart beats stronger," said Cicero Batista, a street cleaner in Sao Paulo who, like millions of Brazilians as striker Ronaldo scored the two goals. Batista watched the game at a corner bakery over coffee and bread.

But beer quickly substituted for the normal breakfast fare on Sao Paulo's main strip, Avenida Paulista, where Brazilians of all income and ethnic groups congregated for the day-long festivities.

For many Brazilians, the win was also sweet relief from a financial crisis that has gripped the country the past month, pushing its currency, the real, to record lows against the U.S. dollar and unnerving investors ahead of October's presidential election race.

President Fernando Henrique Cardoso congratulated players and coach Luiz Felipe Scolari, known as "Big Phil."

"You prove that with talent, ability and team spirit our soccer continues to be the best in the world," he said in a statement.

Brazil, home of soccer legends like Pele and Garrincha, has excelled in the sport since teenager Charles Miller brought a soccer ball back from his studies in Britain a century ago.

Together with the Portuguese language and the Catholic religion, soccer has helped bind together the melting pot of 170 million Europeans, blacks, native Indians, Asians and Arabs living in a nation larger than the continental United States.

Native Pataxo Indians, swapping red tribal paint for the green and yellow of the Brazilian flag, gathered in the Coroa Vermelha reserve where they had performed a ritual Saturday to ask their god for a World Cup victory.

"We are descendants of the Indians, of the first Brazilians who were found here. Our country has fought and now we won," said Capim Bara, one of the Pataxo tribesman, wearing his feather headdress atop a bandanna emblazoned with the Brazilian flag.

Brazilians speculated that Cardoso would decree a public holiday on Monday, but even without an official day off, revellers might not be too productive.

"I don't think we'll be going to work tomorrow after so much partying," said Claudi Mary Sampaio, 27, on the streets of Porto Seguro.

Same old Diego

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"Beckham scored a penalty (to defeat Argentina 1-0) that shouldn't have been a penalty but England still went out in the quarterfinals. That's no reason to go out and buy a Beckham shirt."

The former Argentina World Cup winning captain also said there is no love lost between him and Pele.

He was typically forthright when asked about his relationship with Pele, whom he edged out to win a recent FIFA poll to select a World Cup dream team.

"Pele is a great politician. Some people say he has had a part in keeping me out of the FIFA family," said Maradona. "He can do that if he wants. He cares about me as much as I don't care about him."

The controversial player, who is currently undergoing drug rehabilitation in Cuba, added: "I am sorry that Pele only came second in the FIFA poll to decide the best player. But what the people decide about me I cannot give to him."

Maradona received over 111,000 votes, almost 4,000 more than Pele in an internet poll conducted by FIFA last month. More than 1.5 million fans worldwide voted, according to the official FIFA website.

Maradona, the architect of Argentina's World Cup triumph in 1986, also criticised FIFA president Sepp Blatter for giving him the cold shoulder despite his status as one of the greatest players ever.

"If I am part of the FIFA family, then why was I only invited to come here at the end of the World Cup?" he asked. "I have ideas about improving the game which I would share with Blatter and (Michel) Platini but FIFA don't want to listen."

"It was a stupid reason for not letting me come here. I didn't kill anyone. I didn't do anything bad to anybody, just to Maradona," he said.

Maradona said his long-voiced concerns over refereeing standards had also fallen on deaf ears at FIFA.

"I have talked about the need for better referees for a long time. Now suddenly Italy and Spain have a problem with the refereeing, so they start to listen to Maradona," he said. Italy and Spain both complained bitterly to FIFA for decisions they claimed resulted in their exit from the World Cup, both at the hands of co-hosts South Korea, who went on to reach the semi-finals.

But Maradona, who happily

accepted the referee's verdict when he scored his famous "Hand of God" goal against England in the 1986 World Cup, had no sympathy for either team.

"The referee should make no difference when a great team like Spain or Italy are involved. They should have scored the goals when it mattered to avoid any confusion," he said.

TV angle

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and Brazil would have tied the all time record for most goals in a single edition of the World Cup. At the other end of the pitch, their defence just got better and better as the tournament progressed, conceding just a single goal in the knockout phase. Emerson was supposed to provide the calming presence in midfield Brazil missed since the retirement of Dunga, and his absence was supposed to be a killer blow to their chances. But Kleber and Gilberto Silva both showed they are good enough in their own right, covering every blade of grass on the pitch. Kleber in particular was absolutely magnificent in the final, and no less important than Ronaldo. Germany will be disappointed. Michael Ballack and Oliver Kahn in particular. Kahn was again magnificent, until that blunder that led to Ronaldo's first goal. Rivaldo's shot may have been spilled by many goalkeepers, but Kahn sets himself

REUTERS RATINGS

REUTERS, Yokohama

Reuters reporters at the World Cup voted for the following bests and worsts of the World Cup finals:

- Best team:** Brazil
- Best player:** Ronaldo (Brazil)
- Best coach:** Guus Hiddink (South Korea)
- Best goalkeeper:** Oliver Kahn (Germany)
- Best defender:** Rio Ferdinand (England)
- Best midfielder:** Ronaldinho (Brazil)
- Best forward:** Ronaldo (Brazil)
- Best goal:** Park Ji-sung (South Korea) v Portugal
- Best fans:** South Korea
- Best match:** Senegal v Uruguay 3-3
- Biggest upset:** France 0 Senegal 1
- Luckiest team:** Germany
- Unluckiest team:** Spain
- Worst losers:** Italy
- Worst foul:** Joao Pinto (Portugal) on Park Ji-sung (South Korea)
- Worst refereeing decision:** Gamal Ghandour (Egypt) for disallowing Spain's Fernando Morientes a goal in extra time v South Korea.
- Worst haircut:** Umit Davala (Turkey).

A champ-like

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and banners, one had on it "Welcome home to the heroes", another "You are the best in the world".

The homecoming was shown live on national television and radio.

The team made their way in an open top bus to the city centre holly pursued by hundreds of cars with klaxons blowing to celebrate their side's heroic and historic exploit in Asia.

Traffic came to a standstill in many sections of the city.

The 25 kilometre route from the airport to Taksim square was lined by thousands of supporters, come to pay homage to the side in scenes reminiscent of the night Galatasaray brought the UEFA Cup back in 2000.

TERRIFIC TEN

AFP, Yokohama

They were the stars that lit up the World Cup - ten of the best:

- RONALDO (Brazil)**
The Brazilian striker was the player of the tournament. Top scorer with eight goals, he scored both goals in the final and found the net in six out of seven games. His comeback from four injury-ravaged years brought universal acclaim and at 25 he could still be around for the 2006 finals in Germany. But will his operation-scarred knees hold out that long?
-- What he said: "Even in my wildest dreams I had never imagined that something like this could happen."
- RONALDINHO (Brazil)**
The revelation of the tournament. At 22, the little midfielder came of age at these finals and his stunning goal and assist in the 2-1 quarter-final win over England will live long in the memory. Missed the semi-final through suspension, but was back at his probing best in the final. Could be a force in international football for years to come, and the European big clubs are lining up to sign him from Paris St Germain.
-- What he said: "Now for another two World Cups."
- OLIVER KAHN (Germany)**
His costly mistake allowing Brazil's opening goal in the final only served to underline the immensity of his overall performance. His saves almost single-handedly dragged an efficient but limited German side into the final. Voted goalkeeper of the finals, he is also now the undisputed best stopper in the world, but at 33 he has probably played in his last World Cup finals.
-- What he said: "It's normal to make a mistake - but it's ten times worse when it comes in the final. Nothing can console me about that - but life goes on."
- MICHAEL BALLACK (Germany)**
His absence in the final through suspension, left Germany with few attacking options. He took command of a German midfield bereft of its star players due to injuries and stamped his authority on the side. He was also a potent threat in front of goal scoring the winners against the United States in the

quarterfinals against South Korea in the semi-finals. Rudi Voller can build the side around him for Euro 2004 in Portugal.

-- What he said after the semi-final red card: "My first thoughts are bitterness and personally, I think that this is a very stupid situation because my dream was to play in the final, but now it will not be."

HASAN SAS (Turkey)
He emerged as the driving force behind Turkey's unexpected drive to the semi-finals combining ultra-fast breaks from midfield with incisive finishing. With one-time leading light Hakan Sukur out of sorts, he was the man the Turks looked to break down opposition defences as their own rearguard looked solid and reliable. Will be the mainstay of Turkey's Euro 2004 challenge starting with the qualifiers against England.
-- What he said: "We have got a young team and we have shown that Turkey deserves to be playing at the highest level. Our opponents will fear us from now on."

AHN JUNG-HWAN (South Korea)
He epitomised the Korean storm that blew away Portugal, Italy and Spain before crashing into the German defensive wall in the semi-finals. His golden goal against Italy will remain one of the abiding memories of the finals and his club Perugia's outrageous outburst against him for defeating Italy made headlines around the world. He finally proved he can perform on the world stage, but is unlikely to have inspirational coach Guus Hiddink directing him in the future.
-- What he said: "I will find a better league and a better club."

FERNANDO HIERRO (Spain)
Spain's captain and all-time top-scorer bowed out of international football with a series of commanding displays that foundered against South Korea in a controversial quarterfinal. Never left his country down through 13 years of duty winning 89 caps. He will concentrate on playing for European champions Real Madrid and Spain will have a massive hole to fill at the heart of their defence.
-- He said: "I will leave the scene a happy man. I've given my all for the colours of my country, and each

selection has been an honour. It's nothing to do with my age, I just feel it's time to move on."

EL-HADJI DJOUF (Senegal)
Djouf arrived at the World Cup with a reputation for trouble-making and left as one of the top four strikers of the entire tournament. His selection in the All-Star Team was a deserved reward for the peroxide blond 21-year-old, who led Senegal on a brilliant run to the quarter-finals on their World Cup debut, leaving France and Sweden in their wake.
Djouf did not actually score himself but his electric pace and pinpoint passing set up goals for teammates - and earned him a big-money move to English giants Liverpool that is set to be completed this week. His time on the world stage will surely come again.
-- What he said after the golden goal defeat to Turkey: "It's tough, it's tough, it's tough."

CLAUDIO REYNA (United States)
Sunderland midfielder Reyna proved a star in the World Cup on and off the field. On it, he drove his side demoralisingly against Germany in a quarter-final the Americans could have won as he sprayed passes around the field. Off the field, he impressed reporters with his linguistic capabilities, giving interviews in English, Spanish and German.
Reyna, 28, was one of his side's top performers as they made the last eight.
-- What he said, after Korea beat Portugal: "We owe them a big thank you - we're just happy to be through."

RIO FERDINAND (England)
Rio Ferdinand came of age in England's defence alongside Sol Campbell and he vowed to get over the pain of a quarter-final exit to Brazil by winning a major international title in the next four years.
Pele rated him highly enough to put the defender in his own all-stars team.
-- What he said: "We will definitely be in a final in the next four years - whether it's the European Championships in Portugal in two years or the World Cup in Germany."

Back on proven stage

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well as transport, accommodation and communication, will be somewhat easier in one single country and the Germans' proverbial efficiency suggests everything will work smoothly.

The World Cup was hosted in West Germany once before, in 1974, but Beckenbauer stresses that the next one is a totally new adventure following German unification in 1990.

Of the 12 host cities, only Leipzig is located in what was once communist East Germany, not including the particular situation of Berlin.

The once divided capital city, whose Olympic stadium is having a major facelift, will stage the final while Munich will get the opening match in a brand new arena yet to be built and will also host the main media centre.

The sensitive issues of ticketing and pricing policy still have to be addressed with also a question mark on the broadcasting after the financial collapse of local media giant KirchMedia.

Organising committee vice-president Fedor Radmann promised an affordable ticket category will be offered, while Schilly said he hoped all the matches would be shown on free-to-air television. Predicting what the game will

look like in four years' time is tricky but it is already clear that Germany, who staged a remarkable comeback to reach the final in Asia before losing 2-0 to Brazil, will have recaptured their status as automatic favourites.

With no such thing as a rainy season in Europe, there will be a longer break between the end of continental domestic league action and the start of the World Cup, which means the top players should be slightly fresher.

But the crowded schedule, which was named as one of the reasons for the early exit of several traditional European heavies, will continue to take its toll unless drastic action can be taken.

For Germany coach Rudi Voeller, the upsets that made the 2002 World Cup such a crazy tournament are here to stay.

"The times when teams like Germany could lose only to eight to 10 teams in the world are gone," he said.

"Teams from Asia and Africa have caught up the European sides and the United States have done that too."

"There are no longer any small teams and that's not just at this particular World Cup. It will stay that way."

QUOTABLE QUOTES

AFP, Yokohama

What they said at the 2002 World Cup finals:

- "It's a fantastic feeling to be a Brazilian tonight. I worked for two and a half years to be here."
- Ronaldo whose two goals ended German hopes and gave Brazil a fifth world title.
- "Even in my wildest dreams I had never imagined that something like this could happen."
- Ronaldo again, after banishing the memories of the 1998 World Cup final defeat to France.
- "It's really frustrating when you make your one mistake of the whole tournament and you get punished like that."
- German goalkeeper Oliver Kahn after spilling Rivaldo's shot for Ronaldo to score.
- "There's no doubt that Brazil are worthy world champions."
- Germany coach Rudi Voller.
- "As the game went on, we saw their great individual talent, they are so strong in one-on-one situations and in quick passing and that began to give us more and more problems."
- Voller bows to Brazilian brilliance.
- "This is probably the sweetest moment of my whole career."
- England midfielder David Beckham lays a few ghosts to rest with his penalty winner against Argentina.
- "You have to tell it like it is... we failed to get to grips with this World Cup."
- France coach Roger Lemerre after the World Cup holders' first-round exit.
- "What happened here was robbery."
- Spanish player Ivan Helguera says bad refereeing handed South Korea quarter-final victory over Spain.
- "Man, if we reach the semis I'll play naked."
- US defender Tony Saneh makes a bold promise but he was spared after the Americans lost 1-

0 to Germany in the quarterfinal.

"I've always said, and I repeat it, that I'd coach my country's team without being paid a single real."

- Diego Maradona offering to come to the aid of Argentina after their first-round exit.

"We should have done better with 11 men against 10. We did not use the ball very much."

- Eriksson says England should have played better against Brazil.

"Joao Pinto punched me in the stomach, on the left side just under the ribs."

- Argentine referee Angel Sanchez accuses the Portuguese star of attacking him after being shown the red card in the 1-0 defeat by South Korea.

"When those come off then you go from being a buffoon to one of the world's great strategists."

- Relieved Irish coach Mick McCarthy on his late triple substitution which led to the equaliser against Germany.

"I hope the result in this World Cup shows Japanese football to the world."

- Japan coach Philippe Troussier saying goodbye after four years of transforming the co-hosts' footballing fortunes.

"I think now Korea have nothing to lose. They have gone beyond the expectations of everyone."

- South Korea coach Guus Hiddink says the pressure is off ahead of the semi-final to Germany which ended in defeat.

"I take my hat off to him. He had to make the foul for tactical reasons."

- Rudi Voller applauds Michael Ballack for his 'professional foul' against South Korea which led to his suspension from the final.

"Ahn will never play for Perugia again. What did you expect me to do? That I would keep a player who ruined Italian football."

- Enraged Perugia President Luciano Guacci after South Korean striker Ahn Jung-Hwan beats Italy with a golden goal.

Perfect No. 10

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qualifiers - but we played with love and dedication we won."

Rivaldo was left out of the team altogether after the 1996 Olympics when he was blamed for a shock semi-final defeat against Nigeria.

He was brought back for France 98 and had a good tournament. But like the rest of the team he was ostracised for the 3-0 defeat by France in the final.

He was joint top-scorer as Brazil won the Copa America the following year, yet was again under fire as they struggled in the qualifiers for the 2002 World Cup despite scoring eight goals in 18 games.

He was surrounded by more doubts after missing the end of the Spanish season at Barcelona with a knee injury.

Rivaldo said: "I've played in two World Cups and reached the final in both. I've lost one and won one."

"I think all the players deserve to be congratulated and I deserve to be congratulated because I always had confidence in myself."

"I was certain I would recover and play the World Cup and play the seven games. I've played in all seven games and I'm a World Cup winner."

Rivaldo dedicated his title to his late father.

He said: "I'm sure wherever he is, my father is very happy and proud of his son."

"People who criticised this team will now have to stay quiet for a long time."

"There is no motive to criticise this team because we made history, we played seven games and won seven games."

Brazil's coach Luiz Scolari said he was on a high after his side's world-beating triumph, but admitted it was tough going at times.

After leading his country to a fifth world title he said: "I feel pleasure and joy that the people of Brazil are feeling now."

"The joy is knowing we did our job but it was full of very hard work."

"Yet now Brazil is back as world champions and that is not something we can forget."

"The secret was the unity of the boys, they all concentrated on one main objective."

"We were feeling the positive energy of the support of the Brazilian people."

The Brazilians became the first team since their 1970 side to win all their matches in a World Cup finals.

Scolari added: "It's marvellous how I feel, simply marvellous."

"I want to thank the people of Brazil and say the people should keep in mind those images, these boys and bringing the cup back home."

"This is the way through love, through compassion through respect we can bring Brazil forward as a nation."

"It is natural that being second in Brazil is being last."

"That's what I tried to pass on to the players. They had to be consistent, play well have fun and win."

Scolari also stood up for his often criticised defence and complimented their ability after they kept a clean sheet.

He declared: "We have the best defence in the world because we have the best technical skills."

Germany coach Rudi Voller called Brazil a "wonderful team and worthy champions."

He said: "We are pleased with what we achieved."

"We had Brazil in our grip for the first 30 minutes but as the game wore on we saw more of Brazil showing their individual class - they are so strong in one-on-one situations."

"We started the second half well, too, but we didn't manage to get that decisive first goal."

"As the game went on, our players got more and more tired because of the Brazilians' skills."

"You have to say Brazil are a wonderful team, they deserve to be world champions and not just because of how they played in the final."

"It's nothing to be ashamed of to lose to Brazil."

"The problem we had was that Brazil have four players of real quality. With a dribble or a one-two they could do something special and cause trouble to any defence in the world."

Relief in Brazilliance

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between superstar Ronaldo and the German keeper Oliver Kahn, with Thai Rath running a large photo with the caption: Ronaldo 2, Kahn 0. Other newspapers followed suit.

The Nation newspaper's banner headline was "Samba Sunday."

"Samba, the world's soccer emperor, wins 2-0 over beer, take fifth title," screamed Matchon newspaper, using its standard nicknames for the countries.

Three Philippine newspapers gave front page treatment to Brazil's record fifth World Cup victory -- rare for a country that hardly paid attention to Korea-Japan 2002 and whose most popular sports are basketball and cock-fighting.

Brazil's triumph dominated virtually every Australian newspaper, with some featuring full front page colour pictures of the player some called the Brazilian wonderboy, Ronaldo.

Sydney's Daily Telegraph devoted its entire front page and a double centre-page spread to the striker.

In a commentary which echoed the views of many fans in a country that normally prefers three other football codes -- Aussie Rules, Rugby League and Rugby Union --

The Australian newspaper said Australians must learn from South Korea to secure a spot at the 2006 World Cup finals.

Co-hosts South Korea, who organised this four-yearly soccer jamboree with Japan, reached the semi-finals in the best performance

ever by an Asian team since the tournament's conception in 1930.

Monda's newspapers in South Africa had headlines like "Ole Brazil", "Brazilian!" and "We lived a dream says Ronaldo."

"Brazil leaves no doubt as to who reigns as kings of soccer," said The Star, with Business Day sport's leading on "Brazil -- the best the world has seen."

The Straits Times in Singapore described Sunday's final in Yokohama as "the perfect winning team, the perfect goal scorer, the perfect ending" in what was the first World Cup finals to be held in Asia.

Devoting almost half the front page and four inside pages to the final and an analysis of the past four weeks, the newspaper said the World Cup had been "a grand success from its giant-killing beginning to its fine finale" and lauding Ronaldo as soccer's "new king."

"To beat the German 'keeper twice on a night when he was at his unreachable best was, indeed the perfect ending for Asia's showpiece, one which was persistently unpredictable except for the end."

"The best team had to win the title, or what was probably the most enthralling World Cup in history would have been a meaningless exercise."

In India, where the World Cup has been avidly followed despite there being no soccer tradition to front pages of all major newspapers.

Headlines ranged from "Cup does a Samba" to "Ronaldo can,

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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