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PHOTO: AFP  
FANS AS IMPORTANT: Superstar Rivaldo signs an autograph while talking on his cell-phone at New Tokyo International Airport in Narita yesterday.

## Relief in Brazilliance

AFP, Paris

Newspapers around the world on Monday praised Brazil's 2-0 World Cup final victory over Germany and honoured the role of Ronaldo whose injuries and 1998 World Cup disaster were consigned to memory.

The record fifth title for Brazil, known as the exponents of the beautiful game, was heralded as Brazil re-established their position at the top of world football.

The British press praised Brazil's achievement with headlines such as "Brazil go Nuts" in the Daily Express, "Braziliant" in the Daily Mirror while the Sun used "Cupacabana" for what they described as victory for the beautiful game over the relentless machine.

The main emphasis however was on the redemption of Brazil's star Ronaldo whose injury nightmare and World Cup disaster of four years ago were relegated to mere footnotes after he reached the peak of his potential.

The injury-plagued two-time world footballer of the year scored in the 67th and 79th minutes to steer Brazil to victory, sparking wild celebrations at the Yokohama International Stadium in an entertaining finale.

Ronaldo had only returned to international duty in March after a series of devastating injuries that had threatened to end his career at the age of just

In 1998 he had suffered a mysterious seizure just hours before the

World Cup final against France, yet controversially played anyway as Brazil plunged to a devastating 3-0 defeat.

Ronaldo's eight goals in seven matches was the highest individual haul at the finals for 28 years. His total of 12 World Cup final goals also took him level with legendary three-time World Cup winner Pele.

A couple of British papers also honed in on Ronaldo's comment that victory was "better than sex".

Not one for revenge this time, the most widely read daily in Germany Bild dedicated its page three to the wave of Samba dancing that invaded the streets of Berlin after Sunday's match.

"The God of Football must be Brazilian," said Bild, which only had some simple advice for Ronaldo: "Change hairdresser," referring to his shaven head except for a half moon of hair on the area of his fringe.

Headlines of influential French sports daily l'Equipe read: "Brazil into Eternity" and "The World is Theirs," in what was described as the unfolding of the destiny of a legendary football country.

The press in football-mad Thailand went all-out in its coverage of the World Cup, dominating the Thai and English-language headlines for the past month.

Thai Rath newspaper, Thailand's largest, said: "Perfect Brazil take fifth title."

The papers embraced the duel



PHOTO: INTERNET  
THE FINAL TOUCHES: Leopoldo Rios, a sculptor, gives the finishing touches on his sand sculptures of the Brazil squad and World Cup at Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro yesterday.

## Perfect No. 10

INTERNET, Yokohama

Rivaldo insists he will be remembered along with Pele and Zico as one of the great players to wear Brazil's famous No.10 shirt.

The striker, who went into the World Cup amid doubts about his fitness and criticism over his form, was in defiant mood after his team's 2-0 triumph over Germany.

He declared: "I played 14 games in the No.10 shirt, a shirt that lots of the great players have worn. In the future lots of people will remember Rivaldo."

"I'm a champion. I've made my contribution to the Brazilian team. I'm very happy and I hope the Brazilian people are also content."

"It means a lot to me because I'm 30 and I believe it's the last World Cup I'm going to play."

"I've played in two World Cups even though a lot of people doubted me."

Rivaldo's international career stretches back to a friendly against

Mexico in 1993.

Yet because of his ungainly style and unassuming manner of the pitch he has often been the brunt of criticism.

The attacks reached a peak in the past two years, when he was booed by the crowd during a Brazil match in Sao Paulo and he threatened to pack in his international career.

At one stage, he was even accused of lacking dedication to Brazil's cause.

Rivaldo insisted: "I have never bottled out playing football."

"I've always played the same way. I had a good World Cup in 1998 but unfortunately I didn't win the title."

"We played with love for our shirt and now we have again won this important title."

"Brazil needed this World Cup. We know the difficulties the country is facing and we know that we are giving a lot of happiness to the people, simple people."

"We had a lot of difficulties in the

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## Back on proven stage

REUTERS, Yokohama

The beautiful game will return to more familiar grounds for the next World Cup in Germany in four years' time, with fewer hurdles to clear but greater worries that ugly scenes might stain the show.

After visiting Asia and being staged in two countries for the first time without any major problem, the festival goes back to Europe, where the game was invented and the violence related to it remains a major issue.

"The security situation here (in South Korea and Japan) is somewhat special in that the hooligan problem is practically non-existent," German Interior Minister Otto Schily said of the peaceful finals that ended with Brazil beating Germany on Sunday.

"Even the usually pretty robust English supporters have been infected with the general friendliness," added Schily, who knows such a scenario is unlikely in 2006,

with not only England but also Germany and several of its neighbours having to deal with potential troublemakers.

The German organisers will benefit from the experience of Euro 2000, when the situation was kept under control through co-operation between the respective authorities, but the atmosphere there was always tense.

Franz Beckenbauer, who was instrumental in bringing the event to Germany and now chairs its organising committee, said South Korea and Japan could not be surpassed in terms of hospitality.

"It is impossible to outdo the cordial friendliness of the people," he said. "You can't import that."

The 2002 finals also set infrastructure standards that will be hard to beat with stunning high-tech arenas, spotless pitches and impeccable media facilities.

Dealing with those aspects, as

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## Party land

REUTERS, Porto Seguro

A sea of yellow and green washed over Brazil on Sunday as the country took to the streets -- dancing, singing, shouting and drinking -- after winning an unprecedented fifth World Cup soccer title.

Cars draped in the colours of South American country's flag filled Sao Paulo with the blare of their horns and dancing broke out in the streets of Rio de Janeiro to the shouts of "Penta Campeao," -- Portuguese for "five-time champion."

In Porto Seguro, the birthplace of Brazil where the Portuguese landed in 1500, thousands converged on the palm-lined streets under the blazing sun in a party that resembled the pre-Lenten Carnival celebrations.

"You've got to have a little beer to commemorate," said Maria Barbosa Andrade, 74, who celebrated World Cup wins in 1958, 1962, 1970 and 1994.

"Am I happy? I'm exploding with happiness," said Wilson Gomes as he bounced through the beach city to Afro-Brazilian rhythms. "There will be a party that will blow Porto Seguro apart."

For many Brazilians, the country's 2-0 win over Germany helped wipe away Brazil's 3-0 loss to the French at the last World Cup four years ago, a nightmarish defeat which triggered a fit of self doubt over their long-time dominance in the sport.

Indeed, after a string of embarrassing defeats against second-tier

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## TVangle

SHAYAN KHAN

Every World Cup belongs to someone. Pele owned it in 1970. Beckenbauer in 1974, if only by virtue of getting his hands on the cup instead of Cruyff. Maradona's hold on the 1986 version was unquestionable. 2002 has been without a shadow of a doubt Ronaldo's. His talent has never been questioned. But during his month long stay in Japan, he has shown the world he also has the heart of a true champion. With another match-winning performance in the final, he has finally well and truly established a right he always seemed destined to achieve before injuries blighted his career. It's the right to be called one of the very best footballers of all time, alongside the likes of Pele, Maradona, Cruyff, Beckenbauer, Di

Stefano. And remember, the man is still only 26.

Ronaldo will be the first to admit he could not have done it without Luiz Felipe Scolari. He never doubted the Phenom. And he has been the greatest beneficiary. The football Brazil played in this World Cup under Scolari was right up there with the great Brazilian teams of the past. The 1994 team, despite winning the World Cup, never won the hearts of the Brazilian public. Somehow, you feel it will be very different for this team. They always struck the right balance between professionalism and entertainment, exuberance and caution, style and efficiency. Scolari relied on the raw talent of the Brazilians, and backed himself to instil the right amount of control. And he did. One more goal, Maradona, Cruyff, Beckenbauer, Di

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PHOTO: AFP  
THIRD PLACE AS GOOD AS FIRST: Turkey star Hasan Sas (C) waves a national flag on board a double-decker at Ataturk Airport in Istanbul on June 30.

## A champ-like homecoming

AFP, Istanbul

Tens of thousands of grateful fans feted Turkey Cup third Turkey on their triumphant arrival back home here on Sunday.

Umit Davala and his teammates touched down in a specially chartered Turkish Airlines flight which had been accompanied as a mark of honour by F-16 planes the minute it entered Turkish airspace.

"An F-16 welcome," was the headline in popular national daily Hurrriyet on Monday forced the world to commit the name of the Turk to memory."

The Turkish Treasury said in a statement on Monday it was printing "third in the world" commemorative coins which will be put on sale after a ceremony later in the day.

"We watched with pride and joined in heartfelt celebration of the team's third place in the World Cup competition," armed forces Chief of General Staff General Huseyin Kivrikoglu said in a weekend statement.

Istanbul's Ataturk airport was transformed into a sea of people in red and white -- many waving flags

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## Same old Diego

REUTERS, Tokyo

Diego Maradona has dismissed Brazil as a "mediocre" team who were lucky to win the World Cup.

Maradona, who won the World Cup with Argentina in Mexico in 1986 and was a runner-up in Italy four years later, also criticised the quality of the football during an upset-filled tournament in South Korea and Japan.

"The final summed up the level of the tournament. It was a poor match. Brazil are just a collection of individuals. They don't play as a team," the 41-year-old told a news conference on Monday.

"Brazil were playing one of the worst Germany teams I have seen in my life. They were lucky that they had a striker (Ronaldo) who hit top form at the right time."

Maradona, who arrived in Japan on Friday after initially being refused entry into the country because of his history of substance abuse, insisted nevertheless that Ronaldo should not win the coveted "Golden Ball" award.

Ronaldo erased the nightmare of the 1998 World Cup final by scoring both goals against Germany in Sunday's 2-0 win to take his tally in the finals to eight.

Maradona, though, said: "It would be lie to say he has been the best player in the tournament. He missed two easy chances in the final

that showed his knees are still not right."

"A Ronaldo with good knees has so many more options. You could give it to him for his passion and heart but I think Rivaldo or Roberto Carlos deserve it more."

Maradona, who is undergoing drug rehabilitation treatment in Havana, blamed FIFA for putting upsets-filled tournament ahead of the World Cup.

"How can you expect the players to always be at 100 per cent when they don't get time to rest between competitions? Look at (Zinedine) Zidane. There was so much pressure on him to deliver but he was physically and mentally exhausted," said Maradona.

"The players were at saturation point after a long season and then they come to the World Cup. There is too much expected of them. No wonder you get all these injuries. FIFA should do more to protect the players."

But if Maradona, who will forever be remembered by England fans for his "hand of God" goal in the Mexico World Cup, felt sympathy for Zidane, he did not for David Beckham.

"Fame is gauged on what you do on the pitch at the World Cup. People talk about 'Beckham-mania' but I don't see David Beckham with the World Cup trophy," he shrugged.

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PHOTO: AFP  
'SEE, MY HEAD STILL WORKS!' The legendary Diego Maradona controls the ball on his head during a media conference at Tokyo yesterday.

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