

FIFA doesn't mind



AFP, Paris

Football's world governing body FIFA on Monday said they are "not shocked" by the Brazil delegation's outpouring of religious fervour after they beat Germany 2-0 in the World Cup final in Yokohama.

Brazil's post-match celebrations on the pitch on Sunday, witnessed by billions worldwide, showed the entire Brazilian delegation on their knees saying a collective prayer of thanks before hoisting the World Cup trophy.

Some of the players, including self-styled Christian soldier Edmilson, were even shown wearing t-shirts professing their love for Jesus.

In another touching moment, two-time champion Cafu was thrust onto a pillar to raise the World Cup while his teammates scribbled a religious message on the front of his top.

FIFA, who said that political gesturing is a no-go area, admitted that demonstrating one's love for a higher entity, whether Christian or

Muslim, is not new in football. "The attitude of the Brazilian players after the final didn't shock us. As long as there are no negative reactions or violent demonstrations everyone is free to do what they want," a FIFA spokesman said Monday.

FIFA even said it was understandable that the team offered their thanks to God given the fact they had just ended "50-60 days of extreme pressure linked to the competition".

"We try and preach tolerance and respect for each other," added FIFA.

"In 1989, during the under-20 world championships, the Saudi Arabia team had asked to be given 45 minutes to pray before coming to the press conference, and we fully agreed."

During the World indoor championships, in Guatemala, FIFA had also allowed Muslim players to respect the holy month of Ramadan during the competition after a doctor confirmed there appeared no danger in the players not eating between dawn and dusk.

"It's an individual decision," said FIFA who nevertheless added: "It is out of the question for us to accommodate some players or teams if it's to the detriment of the majority



IT CAME FROM UP ABOVE: Superstar Ronaldo holding hands with his Brazil teammates to thank the Lord after the World Cup final in Yokohama on June 30.

Tribute from Inter



INTERNET, Bormio

During an interview given from Inter Milan's summer training base in Bormio, Hector Cuper underlined the qualities of Brazilian World Cup hero Ronaldo, who is back to his best.

Cuper said, "I don't know if the credit is also mine, in the sense that I waited for him and didn't make him hurry his recovery, but the credit is principally Ronaldo's. He's had the right patience and he has returned to greatness."

"It was a great joy to see Ronaldo score two goals that put him on the top of the world," remarked Inter's Argentine coach. "He has deserved this title game after game, constantly improving his performance."

Inter's Sierra Leon international Mohamed Kallon also wished to pay his compliments to the newly-crowned world champion.

Kallon remarked, "Ronaldo played superbly throughout the World Cup. Already during the last month of the championship [Serie A] he had done great things and I'm sure that when he returns to play with us he will carry us all to the final victory."

Inter trainer Alfano spent some words on Ronaldo: "I'm very happy for Ronaldo. He has proved to be a great player and also a great man, who managed to recover from a very serious injury and return the champion he once was. I want to underline the fact that together with the player's determination, this has been possible thanks to the great work done by the medical staff."

Argentinian Javier Zanetti phoned Bormio to give his regards to the team which is training there. The Inter captain also phoned Ronaldo, Inter vice-captain, to congratulate him for the victory: "He has been extraordinary throughout the whole tournament. I can't wait to start a great season at Inter with him."

Inter and Uruguayan international midfielder Alvaro Recoba commented on Korea/Japan 2002 and was full of praise for Ronaldo.

Recoba said, "Naturally, I can't be happy for Brazil's World Cup victory because in footballing terms it's a rival country, but I'm very happy for my friend Ronie. It was his World Cup and he deserves it for all the sacrifices made in the last two years. "At the beginning of the tournament, no-one would have bet

on Ronaldo being the protagonist of the event, but he proved the forecasts wrong. I'm happy for him.

"Vieri, Ronaldo, myself and all my nerazzurri team-mates that played at the World Cup in Japan and South Korea represented Inter well."

Inter president Massimo Moratti watched the World Cup final from his house in the Tuscan resort of Forte dei Marmi.

"We rejoiced and cheered for the whole match," said Moratti. "All the family, all together. It's an enormous happiness. We are enthusiastic. I was convinced that it would be his (Ronaldo's) final. He's one of the greatest players of all time. We spoke on the telephone yesterday and I understood that he was in top form, calm and serene. He joked on the phone. I told him that he would triumph. Ronaldo has had the success he deserves."

Moratti also commented on Ronaldo's new look. "We joked about his new hairstyle. He said to me, 'President, since I cut my hair in this way, everyone has been talking more about my new hairstyle and a lot less about my past injuries.'"

He said, "Ronaldo's full recovery is an enormous success, not only from the sporting point of view, but also and above all from the human one."

Moratti continued, "I would like to deny all the annoying rumours about possible disagreements between Ronaldo and the club. I have an excellent relationship with the player, a relationship based on great affection and extraordinary mutual understanding."

The Italian sports press also joined the Ronaldo bandwagon. The three leading sports dailies rated the superstar out of 10 points in match against Germany for the World Cup final.

La Gazzetta dello Sport: (8 out of 10) "The most extraordinary fact is that he the Inter player is not in tip top physical shape. Just imagine if he was well."

Il Corriere dello Sport: (10 out of 10) "Two goals which gives Brazil the World Cup title since 8 years ago, won against Italy in USA. He is the real protagonist!"

Tuttosport: (10 out of 10) "The greatest, not only for his two goals in the final, 8 goals in this tournament and 12 scored in two World Cups (reaching Pelé as best Brazilian scorer.) Also for what he as gone through in the last couple of years, returning back as the Fenomeno he once was."

Hiddink honoured



AFP, Seoul

Hundreds of thousands of people lined the streets of Seoul on Tuesday to pay tribute to Guus Hiddink and the South Korean football team as the Dutch coach confirmed that he would return to Europe.

Hiddink sat at the front of the parade in an open top car waving a South Korean flag and with a Red Devils supporters scarf tied around his arm as adoring fans, including tens of thousands of teenaged girls, screamed and waved.

The team - including top stars Ahn Jung-Hwan and captain Hong Myung-Bo - were relegated to a bus following the limousine as crowds along the route chanted "Hiddink, Hiddink, Hiddink."

in the World Cup, the Dutchman told reporters that he was in talks for a return to his former club PSV Eindhoven.

"Nothing has been decided yet. The main negotiations are with Eindhoven which asked about my intentions before the World Cup."

"Several clubs are interested and I am going to the Netherlands next week," he said. British news reports have also linked Hiddink to the vacancy at English Premiership side Leeds United.

"The next challenge for me will be with a European club where I can work every day but I would like to maintain relations with South Korea. I would like to continue working for the development of Korean football."

The national squad will be reorganised for the Olympics in 2004 and the next World Cup in 2006 and Hiddink said he would like to be a technical advisor with the national team or younger players, or help

God loves Brazil!



AFP, Rio de Janeiro

From Pele's wife to Brazil's World Cup stars, the secret to success has been revealed - divine intervention.

Brazil's fifth World Cup triumph in Yokohama on Sunday after their 2-0 final win over Germany was followed by the whole Brazilian delegation saying a collective prayer on the pitch before going on to hoist the trophy.

Amid the joyous scenes several

of Brazil's players took off their tops to reveal t-shirts with over and colourful tributes to Christ and Jesus.

In another touching moment, two-time champion Cafu was thrust onto a pillar to raise the World Cup while his team-mates scribbled a religious message on the front of his top.

However it was reported here Monday that Brazil's players are just a few of the country's sports figures who are part of an ever-growing Evangelical movement which can boast Assiria Nascimento, the wife of Brazil legend Pele, as one of the stars of popular Gospel music.

The "Assembly of God" Church

can boast 4.5 million followers while the "Universal Church of the Kingdom of God" has two million followers - just two of the movements who are gaining ground on the traditional Catholic Church.

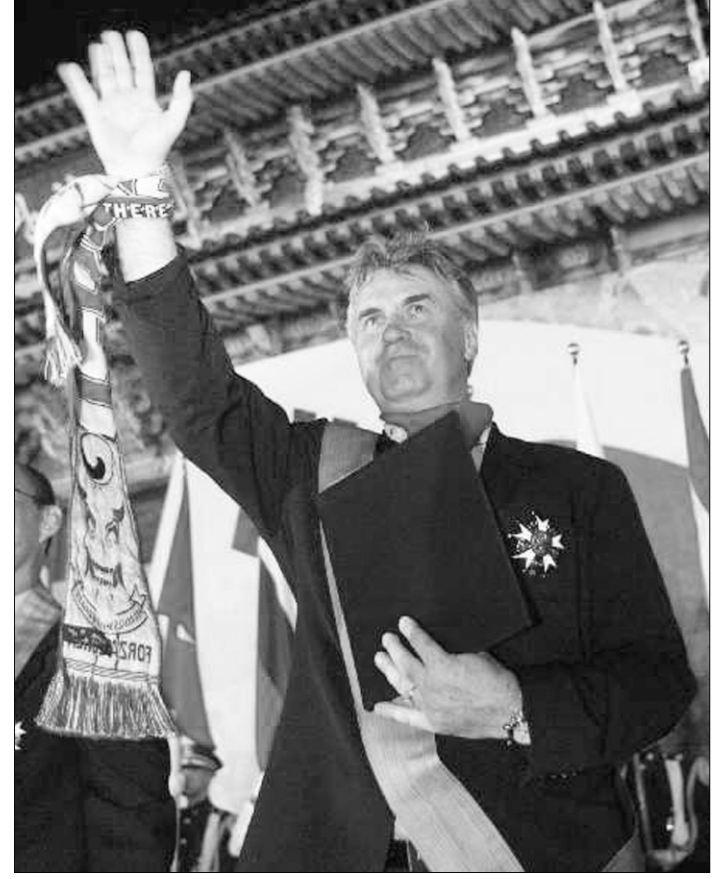
Although it is hard to say how many of Brazil's World Cup team are members, according to weekly "Veja" the "Association of the Athletes of Christ" - founded by ex-racing car driver Alex Dias Ribeiro - now has 10,000 followers, including half of the Sao Caetano top flight football team.

"The climate in the world of sport has become less hostile since the creation of the Association of the Athletes of Christ," affirmed Ribiero.

Former Brazil coach Carlos Alberto Parreira confirmed: "Generally the players (who are members) have a much healthier way of behaving and a more positive attitude than the others," he said in *Veja*.

Evangelists, whose yearly income of 200 million dollars comes mainly from the sale of music and books, also attract people from a wide social spectrum, which has led many politicians to court their attention near to election time.

Gospel music is a big hit in Brazil, with five new CDs on average hitting the shelves every month.



HONORARY CITIZEN NO. 1: Guus Hiddink waves after being awarded an Order of Sport Merit medal and honorary citizenship during a festival to celebrate the achievements of the South Korean team in the World Cup at Seoul yesterday.

The team have become national heroes and Hiddink the most popular foreigner in South Korea's history after the Red Devils became the first Asian team to reach the World Cup semi-finals.

Korean Football Association (KFA) president Chung Mong-Joon, the country's main World Cup organiser, put flowers around Hiddink's neck as the parade stopped at City Hall plaza.

Coffetti poured out of the windows of Seoul skyscrapers as the motorcade moved to the Gyeongbok palace where President Kim Dae-Jung was to make Hiddink the country's first honorary citizen.

But despite the stunning success

develop the Korean league. "I am discussing with the Korean Football Association how to maintain relations. The period I had with the Korean squad was very precious for me."

"I don't want to work in an office, I want to work every day on the pitch. That is the way a European club is my next target."

Hiddink contract ran out after South Korea lost in the third place play off to Turkey last Saturday.

The KFA is now resigned to losing the coach who earned a bonus of more than one million dollars and was offered a substantial new contract, football officials said.

Camacho quits

AFP, Madrid

Spain coach Jose Antonio Camacho has resigned, the president of the country's football federation Angel Maria Villar said during a press conference on Tuesday.

"Life is made up of many stages and in my case I think that one of those has come to an end," he told reporters.

The contract of former Real Madrid player Camacho, who had been at the helm of the Spanish national team for nearly four years, had been due to run till after the 2004 European Championship finals in Portugal.

Linke calls it a day

AFP, Munich

Germany defender Thomas Linke is retiring from international football, the Bayern Munich player said on German television.

The 33-year-old Linke earned his 41st cap during his country's 2-0 defeat against Brazil in the World Cup final in Yokohama, Japan on Sunday.

"My son is eight months old. I think he needs a little bit of time with me now," said Linke, who scored a goal in Germany's first match of the South Korea/Japan finals in the 8-0 win over Saudi Arabia.



THOMAS LINKE

Undisputed rulers



AFP, Sao Paulo

"The World Is Ours" exulted the Brazilian press Monday echoing the samba celebration that rocked this country after top scorer Ronaldo shot two goals to beat Germany 2-0 in the World Cup final.

"Only Brazil has Five" cheered the daily O Globo, which like many newspapers here printed out special editions to laud their team's victory in Yokohama, Japan on Sunday, making Brazil the only country to have won the cup five times.

"The World Is Ours!" the daily proclaimed, starring pictures of team captain Cafu holding the winning trophy high in the air and of Ronaldo's winning goal kick.

Giant photographs of the triumphant players took over the front pages and sports sections all the dailies, with the 25-year-old Ronaldo elevated to the status of national hero after years of damaging knee injuries.

Ronaldo's eight goals in seven matches saw him take his World Cup tally to 12, equalling that of legendary Brazilian player Pele. It also consigned to history the disaster of 1998, when he suffered a seizure before the final but played anyway as Brazil suffered a traumatic loss.

All that was forgotten in the glory of the moment.

"Ronaldo gave us the Cup" applauded the Estado de Sao Paulo, plastered with triumphant photographs of critical moments of the game and its players.

Not to be outdone, the Jornal do Brasil effused in its Internet publications that "the world was at Brazil's feet", adding in its print edition that Sunday had been "the day people had most been waiting for this century".

"The world is green and yellow" rejoiced the online sports daily Lance, in which sports analyst Juka Kfouri raved that Brazil won its fifth World Cup because "the Brazilian soccer player is unbeatable."

Although the German team tried hard, he continued, the Brazilian team proved to be "too much talent for them. Now it's time to win for a sixth time on their home turf."

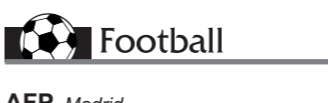
Germany is to host the World Cup in 2006.

Meanwhile, the streets in Brazil were eerily quiet Monday as celebrants slept off their night-long samba party.



their team home Tuesday. CAN'T STOP! Brazil's new sensation Ronaldinho Gauchao (R) leads irrepressible teammate Roque Junior and journalists in a samba sing-along during their flight home from Japan on July 1.

Tax slapped on Rivaldo



AFP, Madrid

The Spanish tax authorities have handed Brazilian World Cup winner Rivaldo a 1.8-million-million euro (1.77-million-dollar) bill for image rights, revealed Spanish newspaper El Pais on Tuesday.

The Barcelona midfielder, under investigation since the start of 2001, has been told to handover

the hefty sum of money he earned between 1997 and 1999 from Barcelona and Catalan TV.

According to El Pais a law was passed in 1997 which states: "A player can deduct a maximum of 15 per cent of his total image rights, the rest is considered like a salary."

Rivaldo, who jetted back to Brazil with the rest of his victorious countrymen on Tuesday, is disputing the tax bill and now has two weeks to present his case to the authorities.

Intermission!



REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Millions of Brazilians struggled into work with hoarse voices and puffy eyes after celebrating Brazil's fifth World Cup soccer title with yelling, singing and beer drinking.

Many admitted they did not do much work as they gathered around televisions to watch endless replays of the two winning goals against Germany. And, although the victory drums stopped, scores of people in Brazil's main cities were looking forward to more celebrations.

"Today I'm trying to figure out where the team will be tomorrow so I can go and cheer them," said Andre, a computer engineer in Rio de Janeiro who did not want to give his last name because he's skipping work on Tuesday.

"We'll have more great fun," he said.

The team's plane coming from Japan, freshly painted with a fifth star marking its fifth World Cup win, will land in the capital, Brasilia, where President Fernando Henrique Cardoso and the players' families will greet the national heroes.

They will later travel to Rio -- the second biggest city in Latin America's largest country of 170 million -- and then to the megapolis of Sao Paulo, where many of the players' clubs are located.

In all three cities, the players will take long rides atop red fire engines, a traditional treat for soccer champions. Popular singers have lined up to

perform for them. In Brasilia, federal agencies will not open on Tuesday, which means that most people living in the capital will be free to come and cheer the national team. A total of 4,500 police officers will be on duty during the parade.

In Rio, which on Sunday had an impromptu carnival in yellow and green -- the predominant colors of the Brazilian flag -- some companies will only have skeleton crews working.

Despite the jubilation, the financial markets were already shifting their focus on another important event -- the October presidential election. Rather than being buoyed by soccer success, Brazil's real currency slumped to new all-time lows on fears of a leftist victory and debt servicing problems.

Newspapers on Monday sang the praises of the team and striker Ronaldo -- who made both of Sunday's goals.

"Ronaldo makes the world capitulate to five-star football," said Rio's tabloid Extra. Journal dos Sports called Ronaldo "The God of the fifth title."

Sunday's victory yell of "Five-time champions!" could still be heard anywhere from offices and factories to sea ports and farms, as much as the affected voices permitted.

Office clerks could be seen wearing distinctive yellow jerseys underneath or even instead of formal shirts. The hottest commodity in the market was a team shirt with the fifth star embroidered among the four stars Brazil already has.

"We are still living the World Cup emotions -- the players haven't even come back," said Edson Tenorio, 27, a street vendor in Sao Paulo.

Death and arrests



AFP, Hamburg

One person died and some 900 people were briefly detained in incidents across Germany after the national football team lost the World Cup final, police said on Monday.

A 39-year-old man who had been drinking alcohol drowned when he tried to swim across the Neckar river

in the southern city of Mannheim after watching his team lose 2-0 to Brazil, police said.

Several people were hurt in the north in Hamburg when part of a crowd of more 100,000 fans gathered to watch the match began throwing rocks and bottles at police.

While police insisted that the World Cup final generally passed off peacefully, they said a mixture of disappointment and alcohol had led to some violence.

Seven people were injured and 12 arrested Sunday when violence broke out in a crowd watching the

final on a giant screen in the eastern city of Leipzig.

The incidents occurred after police tried to break up a dispute in a restaurant near where the match was being screened.

Some of the 2,000-strong crowd joined the scuffles and two officers were hurt by a barrage of bottles and stones.

Cars and shop windows also became targets, and police said damage would run into tens of thousands of euros.

World Cup suicide!



AFP, Bangkok

A 41-year-old Hong Kong businessman found dead here Tuesday is believed to have been driven to suicide by huge gambling debts he incurred during this year's World Cup, Thai police said Tuesday.

Chu Chi Wap Nelson, the manager of a garment exporting company, was found dead in the bathtub at his office premises in central Bangkok by his Thai wife and the office cleaner, police said.

The cleaner had found a suicide letter in his office and alerted his wife, they said.

Nelson appeared to have used masking tape to seal the bathroom, and burned charcoal which released poisonous fumes that suffocated him, they added.

"The victim's background showed he was a football gambler, and he had incurred large debts from this year's World Cup tournament," Metropolitan Police Major General Theerasak Nguanbanjong told reporters.

"His wife said that he was worried about his debt, which ran into millions of baht," Major Issara Na Phattalung from Makasan police station told AFP.