

# World champs being exploited?

Football

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Brazilians have vented their anger over what they interpreted as an attempt by politicians to use the country's World Cup victory for their own ends.

Commentators lashed out at Brazil's Football Confederation (CBF) after Wednesday's shock 1-0 defeat at home to Paraguay in their first match since beating Germany 2-0 in the World Cup final, saying it had turned the team into a political football.

The Paraguay match was played in Fortaleza, political stronghold of Ciro Gomes who is an opposition candidate for Brazil's presidential election in October.

Several newspapers carried front-page photographs of Gomes with the players in the dressing room before the game.

A picture on the front of the Rio de Janeiro daily O Globo carried the headline: "Paraguay spoil Ciro's party".

After the match, Brazil coach Luiz Felipe Scolari, who was in charge for the last time, said he and his players were acting under orders when they posed for the photographs with Gomes.

"You, as employees yourselves, should be aware that I am an employee of the CBF and if the boss gives me an order, I have to obey it," he told reporters.

"But I have also participated in other political acts in Brasilia, Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre," he added, referring to post-World Cup celebrations all of which were attended by politicians.

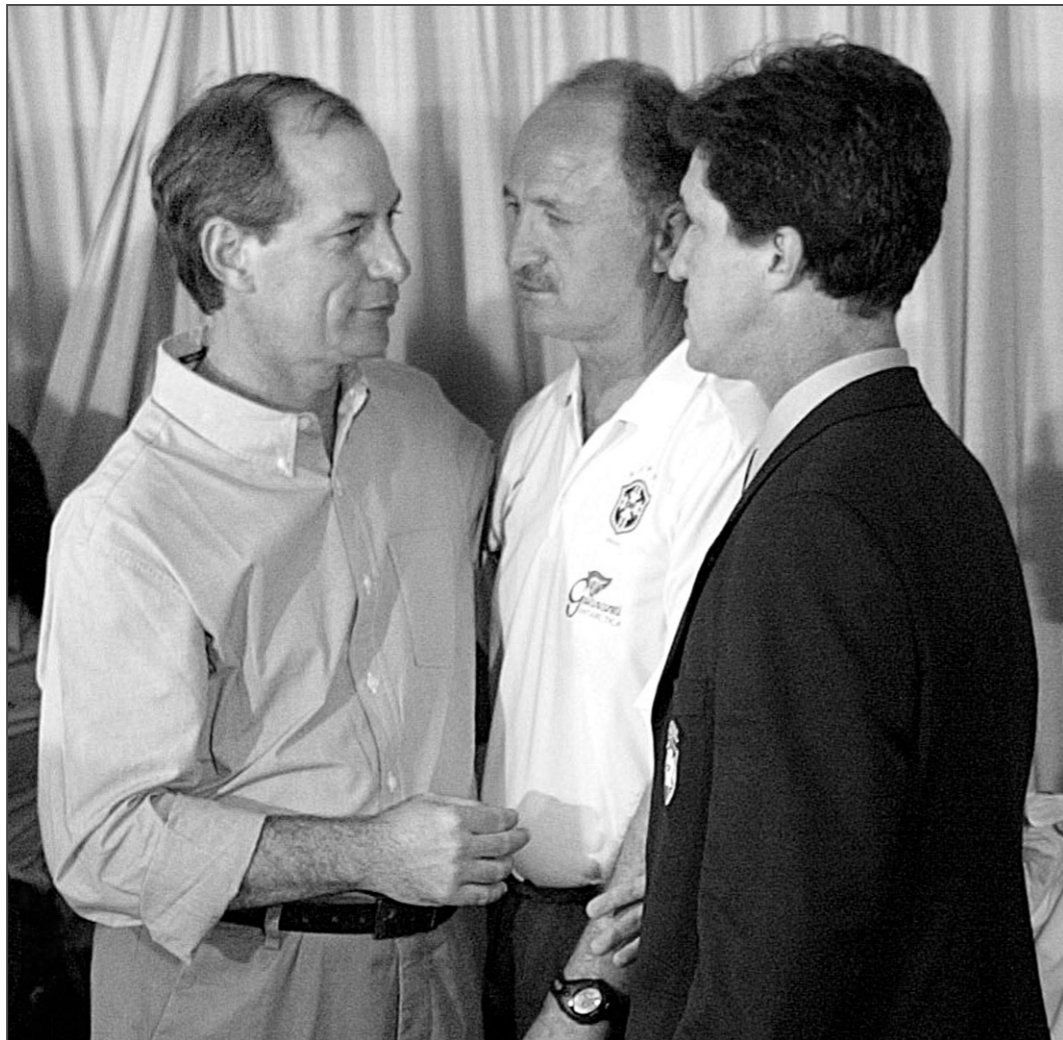
"We don't choose who is going to visit us. The players took part because they are part of a group which was visited," he said.

But commentators were not impressed.

"The team which won the fifth world title is no longer unbeaten," wrote Juca Kfour, a columnist in the sports daily Lance. "The CBF has an amazing capacity to kill a dream, to turn a great achievement into something banal."

The same newspaper carried an editorial entitled: "Sad and indecent political exploitation".

"What should have been a cele-



Ciro Gomes (L), a candidate for the Progressive Socialist Party (PPS) in the Brazilian presidential election welcoming Brazil coach Luis Felipe Scolari (C) and an assistant, Weber Magalhaes at Fortaleza on August 21.

bration was a disgrace for everyone who loves the national team and the sport," it said.

"The use of the Brazil team by (CBF president) Mr Ricardo Teixeira to attend to his political interests was another sad demonstration of the CBF president's lack of stature."

O Globo said in a headline: "Celebration organised by CBF directors for Ciro ends in defeat for the five-times champions."

An editorial compared the event to 1970 when Brazil won the World Cup for the third time and the then military government also jumped on the bandwagon.

"From the times of general-

president Garrastazu Medici... it has been proved that football and politics don't mix," it said.

"Not even the third world title saved the military regime from eventually becoming caught up in an economic crisis. The supporters are not naive."

Brazil fielded the same players who took part in June's World Cup in South Korea and Japan, even though many, including striker Ronaldo, were clearly out of shape and not ready for a full international.

Captain Cafu contributed to the festive atmosphere by lifting the World Cup before the game but once play began it was clear Brazil

had made no effort to prepare seriously, even though it was classed as a full international.

Teixeira is at loggerheads with the government of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso after two Congressional commissions of inquiry were set up to investigate alleged mismanagement and corruption in the sport.

One of the inquiries, in its final report, accused Teixeira of a "negligent administration", of living in luxury at the CBF's expense and of leading the confederation down the path to financial ruin.

# FA to show respect to Holly, Jessica

AFP, London

The English Football Association (FA) said Thursday there will be a minute's silence before all of this weekend's fixtures as a mark of respect to murdered schoolgirls Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman.

British police confirmed Wednesday that two bodies found in a forest were those of the two 10-year-olds who went missing 13 days earlier wearing matching red Manchester United jerseys with David Beckham's number seven on the back.

In a statement on the FA's website, director of marketing and communications Paul Barber said: "The whole nation has been shocked and saddened by the deaths of Holly and Jessica."

"The girls' love of football is well known and everyone connected to the game is keen to pay their respects to Holly and Jessica and offer their condolences to the girls' families and friends at this very sad time."

Cambridgeshire police detective Chief Inspector Andy Hebb added: "We are extremely grateful to the football authorities and football community for the sympathy and support which they are showing to the two families."

"The strength of feeling throughout the country has been a great source of strength to Holly and Jessica's parents at this extremely difficult time."

The girls' remains were found Saturday on a forest track not far from their hometown of Soham near Cambridge, southern England.

Ian Huntley, a high school caretaker charged with their murder, is being held at a high-security psychiatric hospital. His girlfriend, teaching assistant Maxine Carr, has been remanded in custody for lying to police.

# Eriksson to set rookies free

AFP, London

England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson said on Thursday he was ready to throw some of the country's brightest young stars into international action when his side take on Portugal in a friendly next month.

Preparations are starting for the Euro 2004 qualifying campaign's double-header against Slovakia and Macedonia in October and Eriksson is planning to freshen up the squad.

"We will have some new faces coming in," said the Swede as he looked ahead to the match with Portugal, the first national team has played since the World Cup.

"It will not be a big revolution though because the squad that we had in Japan will continue to be our base and a lot of them are still very young. But, yes, we will probably see some new faces."

The Portugal game is being held on September 7 at Villa Park in Birmingham - the scene of the Swedish coach's debut 3-0 victory against Spain.

Eriksson is confident that the team can improve on their performances at the World Cup during the summer and he has high hopes for Euro 2004.

"It is a young team and it will certainly get better," he told the Football Association's website, www.thefa.com.

"We must qualify for the European Championships and that's not going to be easy but, if we can go to the tournament with players who are fit and fresh, then I think we have a very big chance."

# Santini's simple formula

AFP, Paris

The only way France can put their humbling experience at this year's World Cup behind them is by getting results on the pitch, new French coach Jacques Santini declared here on Thursday.

The former Lyon boss was speaking the day after his first game in charge of the 1998 World Cup winners - a hard-fought 1-1 draw away to Tunisia.

Reflecting on the modest start to his international career Santini told AFP: "Time doesn't heal everything. Only your performances and their collective results will draw a line under the World Cup."

Santini believes the next three weeks before France's first Euro 2004 qualifier against Cyprus will be crucial.

"The players themselves told me there was a huge gap in their fitness levels. They found it hard to carry through their efforts. When players aren't at their top level in terms of fitness then they play with caution."

Christophe Dugary, who called time on his international career after France's World Cup flop, said his former teammates were still recovering from their disaster in Asia when they failed to score a single goal despite boasting the top scorers in the Italian, English and French leagues in their lineup.

"The match in Tunisia was difficult and the French team are still convalescing a bit. Now it's up to the manager to take stock and make alterations," the Bordeaux player said.

# Most hated man in Milan

Football

REUTERS, Milan

They idolised him and they supported him in his toughest moments but now Inter Milan fans feel betrayed by Ronaldo.

The Brazilian World Cup winner is hoping that his Italian club can agree on a deal to sell him to Spanish side Real Madrid although the two clubs remain locked in talks for the moment.

Should no deal emerge, the twice World Player of the Year could find himself in the tricky position of having to return on Saturday to train with the club he has spurned after three injury-plagued years.

But, for Inter fans, Ronaldo is already history.

The stalls dotted around Milan's San Siro stadium, selling cheap copies of Inter merchandise, have made a good living out of unofficial Ronaldo products in the five years since he joined the club from Barcelona.

But before Thursday's friendly match with AS Roma it was hard to find any sign of Ronaldo among the piles of shirts, flags and scarves.

"No one wants to buy anything to do with Ronaldo," said one stall holder. "It is finished with him here."

Ronaldo was not present at Thursday's game as he is still in Brazil where he played for his country in game in their 1-0 loss at home in a friendly with Paraguay.

Inside the ground which once echoed to an emotional cry of "Never Give Up" after Ronaldo's most serious knee injury two seasons ago, there was a raucous chorus of "Ronaldo Bastardo" from

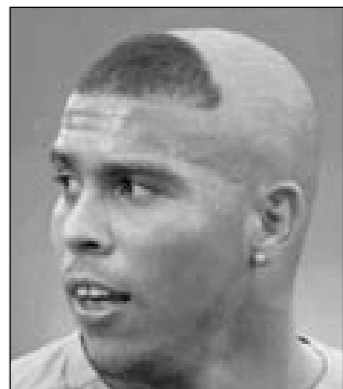
the Inter ultras.

An internet poll of 4,000 fans -- carried out by the daily Gazzetta dello Sport -- found 70 percent of Inter supporters believe it is now right to sell the Brazilian.

That is hardly surprising.

After three seasons in which the Brazilian spent most of his time receiving medical treatment while picking up his reported 4.5 million-euro salary, Ronaldo finally looked back to his best for Brazil during the World Cup earlier this year.

He finished top scorer with eight



RONALDO

goals -- two of them coming in the 2-0 final win over Germany.

Following the bitter disappointment of missing out on the Italian title on the final day of last season, Inter fans were confident that, with Ronaldo finally at full force, they would have a real chance of claiming their first title since 1989.

"Ungrateful" read one banner at Milan's Malpensa airport when Ronaldo returned for pre-season training with Inter earlier this month, and it is a feeling that is widespread amongst the supporters.

It is hard to imagine how Ronaldo would manage to regain the confidence of Inter fans should he be left with no alternative but to return to the Italian club.

The players diplomatically say they are ready to welcome 25-year-old back into the fold but coach Hector Cuper has been notably silent on the issue.

It is Ronaldo's strained relationship with Argentine Cuper that many believe lies behind the Brazilian's attempt to quit Inter.

Cuper made it clear from the start of his reign at Inter last season that Ronaldo would be treated ordinarily as one of the squad and would play only when fully fit.

Yet, on each occasion when the Brazilian was close to a comeback, he put pressure on Cuper by making declarations that he was ready to play from the start.

Cuper was also reported to be angered by Ronaldo's late return from a spell recuperating in Brazil last season, after the coach had spent days insisting the player return to Italy on time.

According to Italian media, the breaking point came during Inter's disastrous defeat to Lazio on the last day of the season when, with the title slipping out of their hands, Cuper substituted the Brazilian.

Inter president Massimo Moratti had ensured Ronaldo always felt like a superstar at the club but Cuper's more down-to-earth and egalitarian approach does not appear to have been appreciated by the Brazilian.

The chants in praise of the coach at the stadium on Thursday may have been another way of insulting Ronaldo but they also show that the fans know in whose hands the club's future now lies.

# Hasselbaink's Barca dream

REUTERS, Barcelona

Chelsea's striker Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink said that he would jump at the chance of joining Barcelona, amidst reports that the Dutch international is being targeted by the Catalan club.

"I would love to come - it is the chance of a lifetime," Hasselbaink was quoted as saying by Barcelona-based sports daily Mundo Deportivo.

"At the moment there are only rumours, but I feel honoured that a club like Barcelona are showing an interest in me. If the signing does come off I can provide plenty of goals, goals, hard work and motivation."

The 30-year-old Dutchman, who moved to Chelsea for a then British record equaling fee of dollars 22 million from Atletico Madrid in June 2000, would team up with international striker partner Patrick Kluyvert and former national team coach Louis van Gaal if the move did materialise.

Van Gaal has admitted that Barcelona are interested in acquiring an additional striker, but stressed that a new signing was not vital.

"We do need a centre-forward, but if we don't end up signing one it will be no problem," he told reporters on Thursday.

"Everything depends on the market," he said. "If a player is good value for money we could go for it."

Spanish international strikers Albert Luque and Diego Tristan have also been linked with a possible move to the Catalan club in recent weeks.

# Trezeguet may lose half a year

AFP, Rome

Juventus forward David Trezeguet could be sidelined for five months due to complications with a right knee injury, according to local media reports.

Trezeguet, who was the top scorer in Serie A won by Juventus last year, was injured on July 31 during a friendly tournament which included teams from AC Milan and Inter Milan.

The 25-year-old France international has consulted two foreign specialists in a bid to get fit.

Turku-based (Finland) professor Sakari Owaro, who put former French international Didier Deschamps under the knife, is reported to have said Trezeguet needs an operation that would keep him out for five months.

On hearing the news Trezeguet consulted another specialist, who said he could avoid the operation but would have to have treatment for two months.

# Premiership preview Spotlight on young Magpies

Football

AFP, London

Fit-again Gary Speed believes Newcastle's youngsters are playing so well that he is by no means assured of a place in the first team for Saturday's Premiership clash at Manchester City.

The 32-year-old Welsh international has recovered from an ankle injury but faces a battle to win back his place after Bobby Robson's men, including four players of 21 or younger, thumped West Ham 4-0 on Monday night.

In Speed's diary notes at www.icons.com, the former Leeds player said:

"I'll definitely be fit for Saturday but after our fantastic performance against West Ham I'll be lucky to get in the squad!"

"We've got a very young side but the kids certainly did us proud on Monday night."

"There are some fantastic talents here and as it's been proved many times now that you can win trophies with kids."

Speed singled out Congolese striker Lomana Tresor Lua Lua who celebrated his two goals against the Hammers with his trademark somersault.

"Lomana is doing really great," he said.

"When he first came to the club he was a bit raw and he had a lot to learn."

"But he's come on leaps and bounds and he's now scoring goals. He's got all the talent there to be a top player and he's got a pretty special goal celebration too."

Speed was also impressed with Newcastle's two 19-year-old midfielders Hugo Viana and Jermaine Jenas.

"Hugo got stuck in on Monday and the fans took an instant liking to him," he said.

"He's still playing a bit out of position but he certainly had a good start for us."

**FIXTURES (1400GMT unless stated)**  
Saturday: Birmingham v Blackburn, Bolton v Charlton, Liverpool v Southampton, Manchester City v Newcastle, Middlesbrough v Fulham, Sunderland v Everton, Tottenham v Aston Villa, West Brom v Leeds (1630GMT), West Ham v Arsenal

"Then there's Jermaine Jenas. JJ's only 19 but he played really well and he certainly looks one for the future."

Speed admitted he has started to feel old playing alongside so many youngsters but believes he still has a lot to offer the team.

"With all these kids about there's only me and Alan Shearer who are getting on a bit," he said.

"To be fair we're only 32 and that's hardly geriatric. We're both still young but we just happen to be the oldest players in the squad."

"Although having said that, you can't help but notice the age gap sometimes in the dressing room."

"But when it comes to football, despite being in my thirties, I'm as fit as I've ever been and now my injury worries are over."

Arsenal, who were outstanding in their 2-0 win over Premiership newcomers Birmingham on Sunday, face a tough test at London rivals West Ham who despite being thrashed earlier in the week are very strong at home.

The Hammers only lost three league matches at Upton Park last season and along with Liverpool had the best home defensive record in the top flight.

One player who won't be playing this weekend is Dutch international Giovanni van Bronckhorst, but the injury-plagued Arsenal midfielder is close to making a comeback.

The former Rangers player damaged cruciate ligaments in his knee last year but has resumed training after a length lay-off and is eager to return to first team action.

"Watching the lads' performance against Birmingham has made me more determined than ever to get back to full fitness," he said.

"I'm working really hard to achieve that, and at the moment I'm training at about 80 per cent of my full ability, which is where I'd hope to be in my recovery at this stage."

"Most of the time I don't feel the knee at all, but occasionally I just cross that line of what I can do, and you feel it a bit. I'm really happy with the way it's going."

fame and wealth bring responsibility. "I take into account your good character and references that have been heard."

Terry refused to comment as he posed for photographers outside court.

His solicitor, Steven Barker, said: "Anyone who saw him give evidence in that witness box will have no doubt of the enormous stress and strain he has been under for the last eight months because of some monstrous allegations that he took a bottle to a bouncer."

"He is extremely relieved and pleased at this verdict, his words were that justice has been done."

"He wants to thank his legal team, Chelsea Football Club and last but not least his family and friends."

"He has been under enormous strain, that is clearly visible on this young man's face."

"Now he wants to get on with what I believe is a glorious career in the game."

# Terry cleared

Football

AFP, London

Chelsea and England under-21 defender John Terry was cleared Thursday of glassing a doorman in the face following a fracas at a west London nightclub in January.

Terry was cleared on charges of wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm, unlawful wounding, possessing a bottle as an offensive weapon and affray.

Chelsea teammate Jody Morris was also cleared of affray at Middlesex Guildhall Crown Court, west London.

Wimbledon defender Des Byrne was found guilty by a majority verdict of 10-2 of possessing a bottle as an offensive weapon but was cleared of affray.

Byrne was fined 2,000 pounds (3,000 dollars) and faces 45 days in prison if he defaults on the fine. He was ordered to pay costs of 1,000



JOHN TERRY