



TORN APART: Romania's Ionel Danciulessu is ecstatic after scoring while Germany's Jens Jeremies (L) and goalkeeper Oliver Kahn (C) are speechless in Bucharest on April 28.

## Romanian blitzkrieg

Dutch class too much for Greece

### Football

AP, London

The European Championship is just over six weeks away. It may be coming too soon for Germany and the Czech Republic.

With only defending champion France and England idle, Wednesday's friendlies were the last chance for many Euro 2004 coaches to watch their sides before the official teams are named for the June 12-July 4 championship.

Germany coach Rudi Völler and Karel Bruckner of the Czech Republic didn't like what they saw.

World Cup runner-up Germany was humbled 5-1 by Romania, its worst loss since falling by the same score to England in 2001 in World Cup qualifying.

The Czechs went down 1-0 at home against Japan, their second straight loss after being unbeaten in 20 games.

"There is no excuse at all for this," said German captain and goalkeeper Oliver Kahn, who let in four first-half goals. "We let ourselves be slaughtered. It was humiliating."

"I felt worse after the loss to England, but it still hurts," said Völler, who had several key players out injured. "There is no excuse, although we'll probably never play again with this lineup."

The Japanese were nearly perfect in the first half. The Czechs put them under pressure in the second half, but their organized defense survived.

"It wasn't a good match for us," Czech coach Karel Bruckner said. "We failed to put Japan under enough pressure."

Germany, European champion in 1996 -- and as West Germany in 1972 and 1980 -- was down 4-0 after only 43 minutes with all four going in behind Kahn. Second-half substitute Gabriel Caramarin scored the final Romanian goal and Philipp Lahm scored late for Germany.

Mihai Plesan made it 1-0 in the 21st followed by Razvan Rat (24th) and Ionel Danciulessu (36th and 43rd).

Romania failed to qualify for Euro 2004, but got some pleasure with only its second win over Germany in 12 matches.

Germany, without injured defender Christian Woerner and midfielder Christian Rahn, got more bad news when midfielder Michael Ballack was ruled out just before kickoff with a calf injury. Frank Baumann, Jens Nowotny and reserve goalkeeper Jens Lehmann also missed the match with injuries. Timo Hildebrand played the second half of the game.

Germany's thrashing even without playmaker Ballack left German football legend Franz Beckenbauer incredulous.

"Any one in Europe looking at this result will think it is a printing error," exclaimed the Kaiser.

Captain Oliver Kahn had the misfortune of playing in the last time they lost 5-1, to England in a 2002 World Cup qualifier, and was angry that the scoreline could be repeated.

There was only an abject apology from coach Rudi Völler, who was in the then West Germany team that won the 1990 World Cup and which was managed by Beckenbauer while Vogts was the

assistant coach.

"It reminds me of the England game," admitted Völler. "We made too many amateur mistakes and were punished."

"We can only apologise to everyone for the first half."

At Prague, the highly regarded Czechs failed to beat the Japanese defense despite applying pressure in the final 25 minutes. The Czechs lost to Ireland last month 2-1.

Japan got the winning goal in the 32nd with a swerving shot by Tatsuhiko Kubo that got behind Czech goalkeeper Peter Cech.

Bruckner fielded a lineup that's likely to start at Euro 2004 with Pavel Nedved of Juventus leading at midfield and Liverpool's Milan Baros and Dortmund's Jan Koller up front.

The Czechs are among a pack of contenders expected to challenge defending champion France. Japan was without injured midfielder Hidetoshi Nakata.

European Championship host Portugal, winless in seven straight against Euro 2004 qualifiers, is battling its own problems.

Playing in Coimbra, Portugal, substitute Nuno Gomes headed in an equalizer in the final minute to salvage a 2-2 draw with Sweden.

Kim Kallstrom and Pedro Paula got the first-half goals in a game dominated by the Portuguese. Luis Figo missed a first-half penalty and twice hit the woodwork. An own-goal by Rui Jorge five minutes from the end gave Sweden a brief 2-1 lead.

Greece had its 15-match unbeaten string stopped in a 4-0 loss at the Netherlands. Greece has been able to grind out victories under coach Otto Rehhagel, but the

Dutch were too much with Roy Makaay, Boudewijn Zenden, Johnny Heitinga and Pierre van Hooijdonk scoring in Eindhoven.

Italy and Spain drew 1-1 in Genoa. Fernando Torres gave Spain a lead early in the second half, but Christian Vieri leveled minutes later. Roberto Baggio was feted with a stadium full of banners and cheered at each touch of the ball in his farewell match for the Italian national team Wednesday.

(Baggio moved by farewell)

Italy drew 1-1 in a friendly against Spain, the final game for both clubs before naming their rosters for the upcoming European championships.

Atletico de Madrid's 20-year-old striker Fernando Torres scored his first goal for Spain in the 53rd minute on a perfect set up from fellow second-half substitute Juan Carlos Valeron, and Inter Milan's disgruntled power forward Christian Vieri replied for Italy three minutes later off a cross from Stefano Fiore.

The closest scoring chance for the 37-year-old Baggio came just before halftime, when the legendary striker with the graying ponytail sent a header just wide.

"Tonight's game will be the most beautiful memory of my career," Baggio said. "Over the course of a

### RESULTS AT A GLANCE

AFP, Paris

Results of international friendlies on Wednesday:

Friendlies involving Euro 2004 finalists

At Genoa, Italy

Italy 1 (Vieri 56) Spain 1 (Torres 53)

At Riga

Latvia 0 Iceland 0

At Skopje

Macedonia 0 Croatia 1 (Klasnic 33)

At Eindhoven, Netherlands

Netherlands 4 (Makaay 50, Zenden 58, Heitinga 61, Van Hooijdonk 89) Greece 0

At Geneva

Switzerland 2 (Celestini 66, Hakan Yakin 85) Slovenia 1 (Zahovic 45)

At Oslo

Norway 3 (Andresen 25, Rushfeldt 43, Soli 62,) Russia 2 (Radimov 85, Kirichenko 90)

At Copenhagen

Denmark 1 (Sand 60) Scotland 0

At Bucharest

Romania 5 (Plesan 21, Rat 22, Danciulessu 35, 43, Caramarin 84)

Germany 1 (Lahm 88)

At Sofia

Bulgaria 3 (Berbatov 8, 53-pen, Lazarov 55) Cameroon 0

At Prague

Czech Republic 0 Japan 1 (Kubo 32)

Friendlies not involving Euro 2004 finalists

At Innsbruck

Austria 4 (Kirchler 5, Kiesenbner 9, Haas 85, Kollmann 88) Luxembourg 1 (Huss 63)

At Belfast

Northern Ireland 1 (Quinn 18) Serbia and Montenegro 1 (Paunovic 7)

At Budapest

Hungary 1 (Torghelle 57) Brazil 4 (Kaka 33, Luis Fabiano 36, 45, Ronaldinho 76)

At Stax

Tunisia 1 (Jedidi 56) Mali 0

At Tallinn

Estonia 1 (Varga 80) Albania 1 (Aliaj 51)

At Brussels

Belgium 2 (Sonck 34, Dufre 85) Turkey 3 (Basturk 43, Tolga 69, Gokdeniz 90)

At Zenica

Bosnia 1 (Micimovic 88) Finland 0

At Aix-les-Bains, France

Ivory Coast 4 (Drogba 8, Kolo Toure 32, Kalou 45, Bakari 68) Guinea 2 (Feindouno 12, Oularé 39)

At Clermont-Ferrand, France

China 1 (Xiao Zhan Bo 26) Algeria 0

At Kiev

Ukraine 1 (Venglynski 13) Slovakia 1 (Varga 65)

At Minsk

Belarus 1 (Bliznyuk 75) Lithuania 0

At Tel Aviv

Israel 1 (Kovalenko 32-og) Moldova 1 (Rogatchev 69)

At Yerevan

Armenia 1 (Ara Akopyan 68)

At Almaty

Kazakhstan 2 (Karpovich 57, Lunev 80)

Azerbaijan 3 (Nabiev 31, Guliev 59, Sadygov 85)

At Bydgoszcz, Poland

Poland 0 Republic of Ireland 0

### Ronaldinho is priceless

AFP, Barcelona

Ronaldinho will not be sold for all the money in the world, Barcelona president Joan Laporta said hours after telling Spanish radio it would be difficult to keep hold of him.

Laporta, speaking at the Barcelona ATP tennis tournament, made the comment when asked about a possible bid by Premiership big-spenders Chelsea for 80 to 90 million euros.

He had earlier told Catalunya radio that Ronaldinho would not be easy to keep hold of because so many top big clubs want him but in later comments said: "The answer is always no."

The Brazilian midfielder, who has a buy-out clause of 100 million euros, hit a clever chip to set up Barcelona's winning goal in a 2-1 victory at arch rivals Real Madrid on Sunday to make him an automatic Catalunya hero.

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