



TORN APART: Romania's Ionel Danculescu 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 Voeller 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 Voeller, 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.

# Brazil break a jinx

### Football

INTERNET SOURCE, Budapest

World champions Brazil showed their class with a dazzling performance to beat Hungary 4-1 in a highly entertaining international friendly on Wednesday.

First-half goals from Kaka and a Luis Fabiano double wrapped up victory for Brazil by the break with a superb Ronaldinho solo effort rounding off the night at the Ferenc Puskas stadium.

It was the first time the Brazilians had beaten Hungary in an official match in five attempts.

"My team played well, technically the players were brilliant," said Brazil's coach Carlos Alberto Parreira, whose side were held to 0-0 draws in their two previous matches this year.

"We found holes in the Hungarian defence and we scored fine goals. The first half was better. In the second, the pace dropped a bit due to the several substitutions.

"I am very proud now that we have been able to cast aside the fact that we never beat the once so-called Mighty Magyars."

Brazil took the lead in the 33rd minute when Ronaldinho played a one-two with Kaka who blasted home from 10 metres.

The visitors doubled their advantage three minutes later when Ronaldinho's shot was parried by Gabor Babos only for Luis Fabiano to follow up and tap

"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.

Mihaela Plesan made it 1-0 in the 21st followed by Razvan Rat (24th) and Ionel Danculescu (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 Woerns 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 for Kahn.

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

"Anyone 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 Voeller, 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 Voller. "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 Pauleta 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 streak 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 to the Italian national team.

Dimitar Berbatov scored twice and Zdravko Lazarov got the other in Bulgarian's 3-0 win over Cameroon. Cameroon's Lucian Metomo picked up a red card eight minutes into the second half. Berbatov converted a penalty two minutes later, and Lazarov scored two minutes after that.

Norway defeated qualifier Russia 3-2. Norway took a 3-0 lead on goals by Martin Andresen, Sigurd Rushfeldt and Jan Gunnar Soli before Vladislav Radimov and Dmitry Kirichenko made it close.

Croatia won 1-0 at Macedonia on Ivan Klasnic's goal midway through the first half.

Denmark substitute Ebbe Sand scored in the 60th minute to beat Scotland 1-0. It was the Danes' third victory in four tuneup matches for Euro 2004.

Switzerland won at home 2-1 over Slovenia on second-half goals from Fabio Celestini and Hakan Yakin. Zlatko Zahovic scored for the Slovenes.

## 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 (Klasic 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, Danculescu 35, 43, Caramarin 88)  
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, Kiesenebner 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 (Torghele 57) Brazil 4 (Kaka 33, Luis Fabiano 36, 45, Ronaldinho 76)  
At Sfax  
Tunisia 1 (Jedidi 56) Mali 0  
At Tallinn  
Estonia 1 (Varga 80) Albania 1 (Aliaj 51)  
At Brussels  
Belgium 2 (Sonck 34, Dufer 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, Oulare 39)  
At Clermont-Ferrand, France  
China 1 (Xiao Zhan Bo 26) Algeria 0  
At Kiev  
Ukraine 1 (Venglinsky 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)  
Turkmenistan 0  
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 bigspenders 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. x

## Van Nistelrooy for Barca?

SUN, London

Manchester United's board is reluctantly ready to accept an offer of around £28million for the striker.

But, as with Beckham, United are keen to sell him to Barcelona rather than Real Madrid, who they see as major European rivals.

Real have been in touch with the striker's agent Roger Linse throughout the season.

But United are also understood to have had contact with Barcelona about the possibility of letting the Dutchman go to the Nou Camp.

United's efforts to move Becks on to Barca last summer ended in failure as the England captain joined Madrid. Van Nistelrooy has hit a staggering 106 goals in 142 games for United since signing from PSV Eindhoven three years ago for £19m.

He signed a 4½-year deal with United only in January but since then has fallen out with boss Alex Ferguson and a number of teammates.

# Baggio, nothing else mattered

### Football

AP, Genoa

Roberto Baggio was feted with a stadium full of banners in his honor 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

to give me the possibility to score a goal, which unfortunately did not happen," he said.

Fans and media are still hoping Trapattoni changes his mind and decides to include Baggio on his roster for the Euros.

At a news conference Tuesday, with Baggio sitting right next to him,

## A Belgian offer

INTERNET SOURCE

Anderlecht have approached Brescia's veteran striker Roberto Baggio.

The new Belgian champions want Baggio to spearhead their Champions League campaign next season and have offered a 12-month deal worth around £500,000.

Baggio has insisted this will be his last season of competitive football, however he is also fielding offers from Fiorentina and Bologna.



PHOTO: AP

HE'S THAT BIG: Roberto Baggio's fan show a giant jersey of their idol prior to the start the friendly match between Italy and Spain at the Marassi stadium in Genoa on April 28.

professional career there are the goals and the victories, but nothing was as beautiful as the demonstration of affection that these people gave me today.

"I thank Trapattoni for giving me this opportunity," he said.

Italy coach Giovanni Trapattoni called Baggio up as a special "farewell" gesture before the the country's favorite player retires next month at the end of the Italian league season.

He had not played for the national team in five years and fans throughout Italy were anxious to see how he would perform.

Hampered slightly by a right thigh injury suffered in a league match for Brescia on Sunday, he did not look like his normal self.

Still, when Baggio was replaced by Fabrizio Miccoli in the 87th, he was treated to an extended standing ovation.

"I saw him leave the field with tears in his eyes," Trapattoni said. "He loves soccer and he's given soccer a lot."

Baggio said he was not expecting to play so many minutes.

"You can see the coach wanted

Trapattoni left open such a tantalizing possibility.

"The future is in the hands of god," the coach said then. "You never say never in soccer."

After the match, "Trap" reiterated his stance, saying Baggio likely has "no future" on the team, but that he will keep the remote idea in mind.

"Baggio is 70 kilometers from me when he practices, so I know where he is," Trapattoni said of the distance between his home in Milan and Baggio's base in Brescia.

At the match, fans chanted Baggio's name all night and banners dedicated to him filled the stands at soldout Luigi Ferraris stadium.

"The world appreciates you, Europe appreciates you, Italy has never forgotten you. Roby Baggio: welcome back," said one.

"With Baggio on the national team, Europe can be conquered," said another banner, expressing hope that Baggio is selected for the June 12-July 4 tournament in Portugal.

Another lamented Trapattoni's decision to leave Baggio home from the 2002 World Cup, when Italy lost in the second round to co-host

South Korea in overtime. "Thanks for the idea Trap, but we wanted him in Korea," it said.

And: "Maradona + Pele = Baggio"

Baggio said that the fan outpouring -- "the love of the people" -- was the "most beautiful thing" of the evening.

Baggio's last match for Italy was a Euro 2000 qualifier against Belarus on March 31, 1999. Since making his debut in 1989, this was his 56th appearance in all for the "Azzurri." He stands fourth on the team's all-time scoring list with 27 goals.

He has also scored 11 times in Serie A this season, placing him among the league leaders.

Real Madrid star Raul Gonzalez had the first scoring chance of the match, sending in a low, mid-range shot that Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon did well to deflect over the bar in the fourth minute.

Four minutes later, Spain thought it had scored, but a goal by Madrid defender Ivan Helguera was annulled for offside.

Italy took 20 minutes to organize its first attack, with Baggio carrying



PHOTO: AP

the ball upfield, and midfielder Simone Perrotta concluding the action with a shot that was blocked in the area.

In the 28th, Baggio sent a floating pass from the left flank toward the far post that Christian Vieri nearly headed in.

Fernando Morientes, the striker who has led Monaco to the brink of the Champions Cup final, had his shot deflected wide in the 33rd.

Just before halftime, Baggio sent a header off am Andrea Pirlo free kick just wide. Despite the miss, the crowd erupted into a "Ro-berto Baggio" chant, which was revived when the striker left the field three minutes from the end, clapping his hands over his head.

Afterward, Baggio said his mind was made up about retiring at the end of the Serie A season on May 16, adding that he would only play more if he is invited to the Euros.

"Otherwise, thanks anyway and arrivederci," he said.

# Diego up and walking

### Football

AGENCIES, Buenos Aires

Diego Maradona walked around his hospital room Wednesday, and his doctors expect him to spend only a few more days in intensive care for heart and lung treatment.

The 43-year-old soccer great was on his feet for the first time after being hospitalized 11 days ago.

Doctors said he stood up twice and took steps around his room in the Suizo-Argentina clinic, according to a daily update from his medical team. He will remain in intensive care the extra days "only to help speed up his recovery."

He is tolerating a special liquid diet and is breathing unaided after a respirator was removed last weekend.

The improving football legend has also been joking with doctors about bringing him a ball so he can prove he is recovering, local press reports said on Thursday.

Maradona, who has been in intensive care and close to death suffering from heart and lung problems for 12 days, said to medical staff in the Swiss-Argentina Clinic: "Bring me a ball so that I can show them I'm well."

The decision to maintain him in intensive cares appeared to be to

## Bolton want a quick reply

REUTERS, Bolton

Rivaldo has been told to make up his mind over a proposed move to Bolton Wanderers, after manager Sam Allardyce expressed fears his club were being used by Brazil's World Cup winner.

The former AC Milan and Barcelona forward, who is a free agent after leaving Brazil's Cruzeiro in February, has returned home after last week's talks with the premier league club.

Allardyce, who is still waiting for an answer from the 32-year-old, told Thursday's Bolton Evening News: "At this time of year, nobody wants to make a decision, but we will be asking for a decision either way before very long."

"We are wise enough to know what's going on behind the scenes."

"We're probably being used to create interest from elsewhere. You'd be surprised how many other football clubs it kick-starts into action."

"I'm disappointed we haven't got a decision yet," he added. "That tells me there is still hope, but there will have to be a movement from his Brazilian agents soon."

"If there isn't a positive move in a few days, we will have to call time on it."