



PARTYING IN PARIS: French fans celebrate after their team beat England 2-1 at City Hall square in Paris.

Hailing Zidane

REUTERS, Paris
 "God Save Zidane," was the main headline in sports daily L'Equipe, celebrating the French captain's two injury time goals in their sensational 2-1 defeat of England at Euro 2004.
 L'Equipe's front page was devoted to a picture of Zinedine Zidane converting the winning penalty in the dying seconds.
 "Incredible," was the only word used by popular newspaper

Le Parisien on its front page with a picture of Zidane taking the free kick that had levelled the score two minutes earlier.
 "Zidane's genius sends France to paradise," was Le Parisien's main headline in their sports section.
 The general mood was triumphant but French media also expressed relief about Sunday's result.
 "The magnificent English supporters were launching into

the clear sky of Lisbon a God Save the Queen full of bliss and pride (...). Les Bleus were worn down, short of ideas and on their last legs," reported L'Equipe soccer correspondent Vincent Duluc.
 "To turn round a game like that, one needs a kind of supernatural event or a truly supernatural player. So, yes, Zidane is pure magic."
 Goalkeeper Fabien Barthez, who denied England captain David Beckham with a second half penalty save, was the other

hero of the game. But on the whole, French media were far from impressed by the titleholders' performance.
 L'Equipe gave striker David Trezeguet a mark of 4.5 out of 10. Striker Thierry Henry got 5.5 and midfielder Robert Pires 6.
 "Les Bleus did not play well," wrote L'Equipe.
 "Zidane and Barthez have worked miracles. Such Bleus will live for ever but miracles will not last for ever, maybe."

PHOTO: AFP

ZZ still top

REUTERS, Lisbon
 To those who thought France could live without Zinedine Zidane, Sunday proved them wrong.
 With the champions just minutes from defeat in their Euro 2004 opener against England, "Zizou" scored twice in injury time to steal a 2-1 victory.
 "Great players prove themselves in great games," said midfielder Patrick Vieira.
 "This was just a fantastic match."
 World Player of the Year three times, Zidane suffered a disappointing 2003/4 season with Real Madrid and seemed to be losing the powers that made him the outstanding performer at the European Championship in 2000.
 A couple of weeks' rest worked wonders. When the team was preparing at the seaside resort of La Grande Motte a fortnight ago Zidane said he felt at the "zenith" of his form.
 "I'm going to be 32 and I feel I can do something great in Portugal," he said.
 On Sunday he did just that. With England leading 1-0

through a Frank Lampard header, Zidane equalised with a 20-metre free kick in the 91st minute and slotted home a penalty with just seconds left on the clock.
 "It is one of the best games I've ever played in," Zidane said.
 "Winning does us a lot of good."
 The two goals saved France from a repeat of their 2002 World Cup nightmare when they lost 1-0 to Senegal in the opening game and, as reigning champions, were knocked out in the first round.
 Zidane, already tired after winning the Champions League with Real, missed the first two matches because of a thigh injury and returned for the third. But it was too late.
 Since he took over from Roger Lemerre in July 2002, coach Jacques Santini has done his best to teach France to play without Zidane.
 The player was absent from the victorious campaign in the Confederations Cup last year and France had to rely on Thierry Henry at his very best to beat 1-0 Cameroon in the final.

Many, including probably Henry himself, were surprised when Zidane was named World Player of the Year in 2003. On Sunday, Henry was anonymous and Zidane was superb.
 However, he will retire one day and the French have to avoid a situation similar to the one when Michel Platini, another number 10, left at the end of the 1980s.
 France failed to qualify for the 1990 and 1994 World Cup finals and were eliminated in the first round of the 1992 European Championship.
 Zidane has not set a date for the end of his career and his contract with Real Madrid has been renewed until 2007.
 If he feels fit enough he could take part in the 2006 world championship in Germany. He will be almost 34 then.
 For the time being, France badly need him.
 "If you tell yourself that a game is over before the final whistle you are certain to lose," said goalkeeper Fabien Barthez.
 "What Zidane did tonight is just typical of him. It's why soccer is such a great sport."



REAL CONSOLATION: England captain David Beckham (R) is consoled by his Real Madrid teammate Zinedine Zidane at the end of their match.

Barthez guessed it right

REUTERS, Lisbon
 France goalkeeper Fabien Barthez contributed hugely to France's dramatic 2-1 victory over England at Euro 2004 on Sunday by saving a David Beckham penalty.
 "You can say that saving a penalty is just luck but luck doesn't come to you like this," Barthez said.
 "You have to stir it up, it is the result of hard work."
 "In a situation like this one the odds are 90 per cent against the goalkeeper but you never know. It's only instinct."
 The flamboyant Barthez, who was sent off for a reckless tackle playing for Olympique Marseille in last month's UEFA Cup final defeat by Valencia, said he had just guessed correctly when faced by his former Manchester United team mate.
 "I dived to the right," he said about his 73rd minute save.
 "I was really focused on what I was doing. It's just great because going 2-0 down, the story would have been over."
 France midfielder Patrick Vieira paid tribute to his goalkeeper.

Tears of anguish

REUTERS, London
 If the photo of an hysterical Romeo Beckham bawling in the arms of his Spice Girl mother didn't quite say it all, the flaming overturned police cars got the point across.
 England fans were not happy.
 At 21 months, toddler Romeo may not quite have understood all the implications of dad David's missed penalty on Sunday night, the turning point in a heartbreaking defeat.
 But the tears of the son of the England captain - captured grimacing on the cover of Monday's Daily Mail wearing a replica of his father's shirt in the stands in Lisbon -- reflected the national mood perfectly.
 In Croydon, south London, 400 fans threw an inconsolable fit of their own, clashing with police who arrested 14.
 About 200 fans rampaged through Birmingham, damaging a bus, and some 70 fans threw bricks and bottles at police in Boston, Lincolnshire, overturning two police cars and setting them on fire.
 At least in Lisbon itself, Portuguese police said the England fans were more or less well behaved. England has been cautioned by soccer's governing body that it will be dropped from the tournament if its visiting fans riot as they did four years ago at the European championship in Belgium and the Netherlands.
 Britain's biggest-selling tabloid, The Sun, used just one word on its front page -- "Gutted" -- with a

picture of the England skipper covering his eyes. The Daily Mirror, with the same shot, ran a banner headline of "Broken Lionhearts".
 Most papers looked for positives, pointing out that -- with Switzerland on Thursday and Croatia next Monday still to play in group games -- England were not out yet.
 The Sun said: "We frightened the life out of the French, and there are two easier games to come. So don't be downhearted. Let the flags flutter just as proudly today."
 The Daily Telegraph's soccer correspondent Henry Winter felt England had been robbed.
 "How cruel, how unfair, how brutal. Just when England thought their gutsy defending and Frank Lampard's fine header had guaranteed a Jour de Gloire, Zinedine Zidane struck two astonishing late goals," he wrote.
 But Matt Dickinson of The Times feared the shock of Zidane's goals, from a free-kick and then a penalty following an error by Steven Gerrard, could have derailed their campaign.
 "So cruel and brutal were the blows inflicted on them by Zinedine Zidane in those amazing last few minutes that...last night's loss could send them into the depths of despair," he wrote.
 Still, not all was sorrow on the island of Britain. North of the border in Scotland, where the national team did not make it to the European tournament, there was some glee.
 "All hail KING ZINEDINE of Scotland!" wrote one Scottish supporter on the England fan's website englandfc.com.



UTTER DISPAIR: A shell-shocked England fan reflects on what went on wrong.

LATEST ODDS
REUTERS, Lisbon
 Latest odds offered by British bookmaker William Hill for Euro 2004:
 5-2 France, 9-2 Italy, 5-1 Spain, 15-2 Netherlands, 9-1 England, 12-1 Portugal, 14-1 Czech Republic, 16-1 Germany, 25-1 Sweden, 28-1 Greece, 33-1 Denmark, 80-1 Bulgaria, Croatia, 125-1 Russia, 200-1 Switzerland and 500-1 Latvia.

PREVIEW CZECH REPUBLIC v LATVIA

No Czech-mates please

REUTERS, Lisbon
 Czech Republic goalkeeper Petr Cech, the 22-year-old who is joining Chelsea after Euro 2004, knows they must avoid complacency against outsiders Latvia in their opening Group D clash in Aveiro on Tuesday.
 Once one of the most consistently skilful nations in European soccer, the Czechs want to make up for their flop in the finals four years ago by emerging successfully from a tough group that also includes Germany and the Netherlands.
 Until they went out at the group stage in Euro 2000, the Czechs had never been lower than third at any of the European Championship finals they had qualified for after being champions in 1976, third in 1960 and 1980 and runners-up in 1996.
 Now, with several of the older generation from the 'team of the 90's' heading for retirement, they hope to realise their great potential with a trophy.
 A flying start against surprise Baltic qualifiers Latvia, in the first official competitive meeting between the two nations, is expected. But Cech, like captain and key forward Pavel Nedved, has warned against taking the Latvians lightly.
 Cech, who has risen up the ranks since playing superbly at the European under-21 finals in Switzerland in 2002, has earned a reputation as a

penalty-saving expert. He hopes he will not have to rely on this specialist ability against Latvia.
 "We've had a good two weeks preparation and are ready to go," he said. "It's vital we get off to a good start, especially with Germany and the Dutch to come."
 Not favourites
 Complacency, a familiar enemy to teams filled with skilful players like the Czechs, has also been identified as a real danger by Nedved. "Just because Latvia are not so famous does not mean we can concentrate any less," he said.
 LIVE ON ESPN AT 9.55 pm
PROBABLE TEAMS
CZECH REPUBLIC (4-4-2): 1-Petr Cech; 6-Marek Jankulovski, 21-Tomas Ujfalusi, 5-Rene Bolf, 2-Zdenek Grygera; 11-Pavel Nedved, 10-Tomas Rosicky, 4-Tomas Galasek, 8-Karel Poborsky, 15-Milan Baros, 9-Jan Koller.
LATVIA (4-2-2-1): 1-Aleksandrs Kolinko; 7-Aleksandrs Isakovs, 2-Igor Stepanovs, 4-Mihails Zeminskis, 6-Olegs Blagonadzins; 8-Imants Bleidelis, 3-Vitalijs Astafevs; 17-Marian Pahars, 10-Andrejs Rubins; 9-Maris Verpakovskis, 11-Andrejs Prohorenkovs.

"We're a good team but certainly not favourites (to win the tournament)," added the European Football of the Year, who has hinted he will retire from internationals after Euro 2004.
 "You only have to look at the result of Portugal against Greece (a 2-1 defeat for the hosts) to realise that there are no bad teams in this tournament. We're pleased to be playing Latvia first but that's no good unless we go and win the game."
 The heat has also been a problem for the Czechs.
 Nedved has complained of dehydration and headaches after training but should be fit to take his place in a wide attacking midfield role in 64-year-old coach Karel Brueckner's flexible 4-4-2 system, revived after his experiment with three at the back failed during their defeat by Japan in a warm-up game.
 He expects defender Marek Jankulovski to recover from a groin strain, while playmaker Tomas Rosicky has shaken off a similar problem. If Jankulovski fails to make it, Zdenek Grygera could switch flanks to accommodate Martin Jiraneck.
 Latvia coach Aleksandrs Starkovs may bring in defensive midfielder Juris Laizans, if he shakes off a slight leg injury, but will rely on Marian Pahars to provide the chances in attack for Maris Verpakovskis.



Czech Golden Ball 2003 winner Pavel Nedved smiles during a training session in Sintra June 11.

KICKIN' AROUND

AFP, Paris
 Not for the first time, Czech Republic striker Jan Koller is both the tallest and the heaviest player at the European championships. At 2.02 metres (6ft 8ins) and 103 kilograms, the 31-year-old Borussia Dortmund man -- who once worked carrying obsolete Czechoslovak coins to be melted down -- is not surprisingly renowned for his headers.
FRENCH CLEAN SHEET ENDS
 France had kept a clean sheet for 1,078 minutes until England's Frank Lampard headed past Fabien Barthez during their Euro 2004 Group B opener on Sunday.
 The goal came in the 38th minute of the match and gave England a 1-0 lead when Lampard latched on to a David Beckham free kick.
GERMANY MUST

GET NASTY
 Former German international midfielder Gunter Netzer says Germany's Euro 2004 side are just too nice.
 "Germany have always had good results when there are a couple of tough guys on the pitch," said Netzer, who was part of the 1974 World Cup-winning team.
 "Too much harmony is dangerous. The German players are nice guys, who don't communicate with each other and don't talk enough." Goalkeeper Oliver Kahn is the exception to the rule, Netzer says, "but he's too far away from the others."
DUTCH MASTER
 Having provoked controversy by choosing Ruud van Nistelrooy as a lone striker for his Euro campaign Netherlands coach Dick Advocaat has reacted by insisting he is the

man who makes the decisions.
 "The coach has the final word sometimes it is right sometimes it is wrong," he said.
 "The media have their own ideas about who should play but I am the coach and I have the final say."
FRENCH PM HAILS ZZ, BARTHEZ
REUTERS, Paris
 Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, who was on the losing side in French politics on Sunday, applauded his country's soccer players after their extraordinary, last-gasp 2-1 win over England at Euro 2004.
 "He paid tribute in particular to the personal exploits of captain Zinedine Zidane and Fabien Barthez, the authors of two decisive feats," Raffarin's office said in a statement.

Little Lahm

REUTERS, Almancil
 Philipp Lahm, who has surprised even himself by winning a spot in Germany's Euro 2004 squad, cannot wait for the tournament to start.
 "Just a few months ago nobody would have expected me to be here and I certainly could not imagine it," the VfB Stuttgart left back said on Sunday.
 "This is a dream."
 The youngest player among Germany's automatic starters at 20 and the shortest member in the team, the pocket-sized defender, who stands just 1.7 metres tall, has won praise from coach Rudi Voeller.
 "He's a great talent," said Voeller.
 "What amazes me the most is that tactically, he's already as smart as an old fox."
 When the season started, Lahm said his only goal was to play for Stuttgart. Not only did he secure a place in the first team but he soon became a German international and has now won six caps after playing in all the team's games this year.
 Felix Magath, who coached Lahm at Stuttgart and has now moved to Bayern Munich, admitted he was impressed by the young player's raw energy.

EU ministers talk soccer

AFP, Luxembourg
 European Union foreign ministers Monday discussed more than just the finer points of the EU's first-ever constitution and pressing questions of international diplomacy.
 France's heart-stopping defeat of England in a Euro 2004 match intruded onto the negotiations after a weekend that without doubt saw more Europeans glued to their TV screens for the football tournament than for EU election results.
 British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw congratulated his French counterpart Michel Barnier after two last-gasp goals by French maestro Zinedine Zidane broke English hearts on Sunday night, aides said.
 The 2-1 result proved food for thought for several ministers contemplating the EU's struggle to agree a historic constitution at a leaders' summit this week.
 Barnier, according to British Europe Minister Denis MacShane, used the outcome to take a lighthearted dig at Britain.
 "That's exactly how the consti-

tutional talks will pan out," MacShane quoted Barnier as telling him.
 "With the way the UK negotiates, nothing will be decided until the very last minute."
 German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer confided to Barnier that he thought the France-England game was a "classic", while Ireland's Brian Cowen said it proved a salutary lesson for the constitutional drive.
 "As England found to their cost last night, you can't take your eye off the ball until the game's in the bag," an Irish diplomat quoted Cowen, who was chairing the Luxembourg talks, as telling his colleagues.
 England's next match is against Switzerland on Thursday evening -- coinciding with the start of the two-day EU summit. Some in the British delegation are already making plans to duck out to watch some of the game.
 But MacShane said that the constitutional negotiations were "one Euro 2004 where everyone has to emerge a winner".