

Big boys' battle

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The two teams were in the same qualifying group, with the Czechs coming out on top thanks to a 1-1 draw in Amsterdam and a 3-1 win in Prague, and they are also in the same qualifying section for the 2006 World Cup.

The Czechs have slight injury worries over defenders Rene Bolf (knee) and Zdenek Grygera, who went to hospital with swollen glands on Thursday, but both are expected to be fit to play.

The hot weather has also taken its toll, with playmaker Pavel Nedved and fellow midfielder Tomas Rosicky suffering from headaches, while Koller needed an intravenous drip after losing five kilos in the win over Latvia.

Dutch midfielder Clarence Seedorf has returned to full training after recovering from an injury and may well go straight back into the side.

Coach Dick Advocaat sprung a surprise by selecting Boudewijn Zenden ahead of youngster Wesley Sneijder in midfield against Germany, and Sneijder should start against the Czechs after impressing as a second-half substitute.

Edgar Davids was also taken off at halftime against the Germans after failing to impose himself but his experience should be vital in trying to curb the rich creative talents of Nedved and Rosicky.



PHOTO: AFP

A LARGE SHADOW! Dutch superstar Ruud van Nistelrooy poses for a photograph after a press conference in Albufeira on June 17.

PROBABLE TEAMS

Netherlands (4-3-2-1): 1-Edwin van der Sar; 18-Johnny Heitinga, 4-Wilfred Bouma, 3-Jaap Stam, 5-Giovanni van Bronckhorst; 14-Wesley Sneijder, 8-Edgar Davids, 6-Philip Cocu; 7-Andy van der Meyde, 11-Rafaël van der Vaart; 10-Ruud van Nistelrooy.

Czech Republic (4-4-1-1): 1-Petr Cech; 2-Zdenek Grygera, 21-Tomas Ujfalusi, 5-Rene Bolf, 6-Marek Jankulovski; 4-Tomas Galasek, 8-Karel Poborsky, 10-Tomas Rosicky, 11-Pavel Nedved (captain); 15-Milan Baros; 9-Jan Koller

Referee: Manuel Enrique Mejuto (Spain)
Linesmen: Oscar David Martinez (Spain), Rafael Guerrero Alonson (Spain)

A sad day

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brain had stopped functioning.

It is believed Bashir while on vacation in Rangamati after the Corporate Cricket League, contracted the malaria.

Coach Jalal Ahmed Chowdhury, who had been working with the young cricketer for the last eight years, broke the news of Bashir's death.

"It was too late when he was rushed to Renal Hospital," said Jalal, who was almost speechless at the death of his beloved player.

In fact some of Bashir's relatives throughout the morning had apparently asked the doctors at the Holy Family to send him elsewhere for better treatment.

Some of Bashir's mates pointed fingers at the coaching staff of the Bangladesh Cricket Board's High Performance Unit for allowing him to train despite having a fever.

"He had been suffering from fever from June 8 and still was allowed to take part in training. Obviously they didn't realise how ill he was," said a distraught friend of Bashir.

In his short career, he appeared in 15 first-class matches and had been a loyal player for Dhanmondi Club in the Dhaka league.

Shantoo's

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practice matches before the tournament starts and I have outlined my plans to the BFF."

The no-nonsense coach also wants a sports medicine specialist to accompany his side.

"A sports medicine specialist is very essential. I have underlined the need in my development proposal which was submitted to the BFF recently."

KICKIN' AROUND



AFP, Lisbon

UEFA's decision to appoint Swedish referee Anders Frisk for the do-or-die Group A clash between hosts Portugal and Spain on Sunday will have raised a few eyebrows in the latter's camp.

Frisk was the subject of massive criticism from the Spanish after their 2002 World Cup second round clash with Ireland after he awarded the Irish two penalties in normal time - the second in the last minute after Fernando Hierro pulled Niall Quinn's shirt.

Ireland equalised at 1-1 from that spot kick but ended up losing ironically on penalties after the match ended at 1-1 after extra-time.

Then Spanish coach Jose Antonio Camacho made no secret of his disdain for the Swede, who is regarded behind Pierluigi Collina

as probably the best referee in the world and was handed the tough Germany v Netherlands clash on Tuesday which passed off without incident.

"We had three or four opportunities and the referee blew for offside. I'm not sure they were offside and I don't think the final penalty (Keane's) was a penalty," the now Real Madrid coach said at the time.

The Spanish side that drew 1-1 with Greece on Wednesday contained eight of the players from that match including Raul and Fernando Morientes though Hierro is now retired from international football.

JUST ONE FOR ROONEY?

England striker Wayne Rooney faces having his second goal against Switzerland chalked off as UEFA said Friday it is mulling over awarding it as an own goal for Swiss keeper Jorg Stiel.

Rooney's close-range header gave England the lead and made him the youngest player ever to



AFP, London

England football fans ejected from Portugal following riots in the southern resort of Albufeira loudly protested their innocence Friday after flying back home.

"I have not been treated fairly. I just want to go home," Paul Donahue from Manchester, north-west England, complained to reporters in the early hours of Friday morning, shortly after arriving at London's Heathrow Airport.

Sporting a black eye and cuts on his arm, the 32-year-old was cleared of criminal wrongdoing by a Portuguese court but banned from the country for five years.

He was among dozens arrested following two nights of clashes between mostly English supporters and riot police in the Algarve, where the majority of English fans are based for the Euro 2004 football tournament.

Eight of the 10 supporters who arrived back at Heathrow were facing another court appearance on Friday.

They were due to appear at a magistrates' court in London later in the day where British authorities would apply for so-called "banning

score in a European Championships but his second effort hit the post and then rebounded off Stiel into the net.

UEFA's technical committee, which includes former Scotland coach Andy Roxburgh and former Liverpool boss Gerard Houllier as well as ex-Switzerland chief Roy Hodgson, were discussing Friday afternoon whether Stiel should be credited with an own goal.

"The technical committee are looking at the criteria of attributing an own goal," said UEFA spokesman Rob Faulkner, who told AFP the committee expected to announce its findings "some time later today."

If Rooney keeps his goal he will remain joint top scorer with Sweden's Henrik Larsson and Frenchman Zinedine Zidane on two goals.

Ironically, Zidane would have had three goals but Croatia defender Igor Tudor deflected in his freekick and was promptly credited with putting through his own net.

Innocent thugs?

orders" to prevent them travelling when future England football matches take place.

Many involved in the violence have already been widely condemned -- as well as named and pictured -- in the British press, but those arriving at Heathrow complained they had been treated unfairly.

John Jackson, a 22-year-old from Newcastle, northeast England, offered to show reporters injury marks on his back.

"It's a disgrace. I was beaten up and spat on by the police," he said, adding that the police were "picking on innocent people".

Nonetheless, British police and politicians have heaped praise on Portuguese authorities for dealing with the trouble and its perpetrators swiftly and decisively.

"These are not football fans that have been arrested, they are just thugs," British sports minister Richard Caborn told BBC radio on Thursday.

One supporter not on the flight was a 47-year-old British fireman jailed for two years by a court in Albufeira on Wednesday after he was found guilty of taking part in a street battle with police.

Gary Mann, a tattooed Birmingham City fan from the south coast town of Faversham, will be deported later to serve the sentence in England.

Pepsi beach v'ball

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Navy clinched the Pepsi Beach Volleyball tournament title in the men's group outplaying Bangladesh Police by 21-18 and 21-17 at the Laboni Point in the resort town of Cox's Bazar.

Usha KC emerged champions in the women's group defeating East End Boys by 21-15, 16-21 and 15-11 at the same venue.

Bangladesh Rifles became third in the men's group beating Bangladesh Biman by 21-16 and 21-13 in the place deciding match.

Executive Director of Transcom Beverage Limited Golam Kuddus Chowdhury distributed prizes among the winners.

ZCU chief steps down

AFP, Harare

Zimbabwe Cricket Union (ZCU) chief executive Vincent Hogg has resigned.

His resignation comes following a bitter row with 15 white players after the sacking of captain Heath Streak.

Hogg has notified ZCU chairman Peter Chingoka and the 12-man board of directors of his decision and will quit his functions on August 6 two days before the scheduled ZCU annual meeting.

"The past few months have been really strenuous for me. I have decided to resign because I was no longer enjoying the work," explained Hogg on Thursday.

Only as a tourist

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island's north and east.

"I already have a foundation of my own helping the needy, but I am also very happy to associate myself with the WFP," Muralitharan said.

Meanwhile, some cricket fans appear to be as concerned about the love life of the world's top test wicket-taker, as they are about his game.

A matchmaking website features a purported profile of the Sri Lankan off-spinner, an ethnic Tamil who is single and has said in the past he has no immediate plans for marriage.

"International Cricketer Muralitharan looking for a life partner," it reads. "Interested?" Then it lists several castes from which he find a suitable partner.

But Muralitharan said he had not taken to cyberspace to seek a bride, and the ad at

www.tamilmatrimony.com must be a joke.

"It's not true," he said. "It must just be people making fun."



AFP, Lisbon

Croatian head coach Otto Baric praised his side's showing in holding European champions France to a 2-2 draw at Euro 2004 on Thursday and said his side would have won had it not been for two refereeing errors.

"I am very satisfied with how we played against one of the strongest teams in Europe," said Baric, who criticised Danish referee Kim Milton Nielsen for missing an apparent handball by French striker David Trezeguet in scoring the final goal.

The draw left France top of Group B, a point clear of England,

Better than Baggio!



AFP, Lisbon

Sven-Goran Eriksson on Friday stoked the flames of Rooneymania by describing his 18-year-old striker as better than Italian legend Roberto Baggio at the same age.

Wayne Rooney has put his senior strike partner Michael Owen in the shade and emerged one of the stars of Euro 2004 by following up a confident display against France with a two-goal haul in the 3-0 win over Switzerland.

The goals made the Everton striker the youngest player ever to score in a European Championship and has ignited a

frenzy of excitement about his potential back in England.

Eriksson claimed the England players were insulated from the feverish reaction, but that did not prevent him from contributing to it by describing the player as the best 18-year-old he had ever worked with.

Given that Eriksson worked with a teenage Baggio at Italian club Fiorentina, that is praise indeed.

"I've had very many young talents in the past - Rui Costa, Roberto Baggio and Paolo Souza," Eriksson said. "But Wayne Rooney is someone special."

Given his performances and potential, the Swede acknowledged that it was inevitable that Rooney would capture the imagination of the public the way he has done.



PHOTO: AFP

HEAD OVER HEELS! English sensation Wayne Rooney cartwheeling after giving his side the lead against Switzerland at Coimbra stadium on June 17.

PREVIEW GERMANY v LATVIA

Destroy 'em



REUTERS, Oporto

Germany coach Rudi Voeller has urged his men to race forward when they face debutants Latvia in their second Euro 2004 Group D match on Saturday.

After holding their own in a 1-1 draw with the Netherlands in their opening game on Tuesday, the three-time world and European champions will want to dictate play against Latvia, who were very competitive in their 2-1 loss to the Czech Republic.

"We will have more possession and we will have to play a more attacking game," said Voeller. "We need to take more initiative and to be more dangerous in front of goal."

To do that, Voeller, who opted for a compact formation with only Kevin Kuranyi up front against the Dutch, will field a second striker at Porto's Bessa stadium, probably Fredi Bobic.

A defensive midfielder, possibly Frank Baumann, will likely lose his place in the lineup.

Latvia are expected to rely on the same game plan they used against

the Czechs, with a well-organised defence as the base on which to launch swift counter-attacks.

Coach Aleksandr Starkovs said his best player, attacking midfielder Marian Pahars, should play a bigger role after being a late substitute against the Czechs due to fitness worries.

The Baltic side came to Portugal with absolutely nothing to lose and realised after their first game that they can give more prestigious opponents a hard time.

"Maybe we can grab a point against Germany or the Netherlands," said goalkeeper Aleksandr Kolinko, who played his part in keeping the Czechs at bay until late in the game.

A convincing performance against the Dutch that suggested Germany, who had a poor run-in to the tournament, may have a serious title chance.

Voeller, however, remained cautious.

"I know everybody back home is satisfied and it's good that people believe we can do well but so far we have not won anything," he said.

Beating Latvia, Voeller warned, would not be a formality.

"They are not here by accident," he said.

How many goals the three big

"I'm not surprised that he's 18 years old and playing football like he's been doing. Of course he must be the man of the day, not only in England but in all of Europe."

Eriksson admitted that the shy teenager was still largely an unknown quantity to him off the pitch, but he has seen enough of his emerging superstar to identify youthful insouciance as the key to his extraordinary effectiveness.

"I wouldn't say that I know him that much because he's not talking that much. But what he said after the Switzerland match was absolutely fantastic," Eriksson said.

"That's him. He's not doing a lot of talking but he has no fear."

"He's not worried if the opposition is France, Croatia or Turkey. It is like he's out on a school pitch saying 'give me the ball, I will enjoy myself.'"

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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			44 Miller
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CRYPTOQUIP

NRW AUZGWNWZ NRBXERN

RW ' J FABZW VUJTK BO

NRW NWFN, V XN RW WOJWJ

XG OUQTQOE QN

Yesterday's Cryptquip: A NONUNION LAUNDRY WORKER WAS HEARD TO SAY, "LET'S IRON WHILE THE STRIKE IS HOT!"

Today's Cryptquip Clue: Z equals R

The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.