

# Glorious Greek odyssey



AFP, Lisbon

Arms pumping, Greek coach Otto Rehhagel raced onto the pitch after Sunday's against the odds Euro 2004 triumph over hosts Portugal at the speed which would have done justice to a man less than half his 65 years.

Then the man known as 'Rehhakles', Greek for Hercules, stopped to embrace skipper Theodoros Zagorakis in the pair's hour of glory as the latter chose the biggest night of his life to equal Efstratios Apostolakis' Greek record of 95 international caps.

Rehhagel, a larger than life figure who attracts respect and controversy in equal measure, then leapt onto the winner's podium to jump up and down with unfettered glee after pulling off the biggest shock in the entire history of the European game.

Not since Uruguay shocked mighty Brazil in the 1950 World Cup final in the Maracana had there been anything to run this result close.

And in an instant, three Bundesliga titles and a Cup Winners Cup - the latter in the same Stadium of Light - achieved with Werder Bremen and Kaiserslautern paled into insignificance.

Coach and team then disappeared in a welter of blue and white tinsel as fireworks prepared on the stadium

roof lit up the sultry Lisbon sky. Rehhagel said it was an historic moment in the sport and not just because he had become the first coach not of the same nationality as the winning team to win the championship.

"This is a fantastic day for Greek football and for European football," said the 65-year-old.

"Today we played to our strengths and the Greek team has written football history here.

"There will be unimaginable scenes in Athens when we fly back on Monday," added Rehhagel, who has a habit of going into the changing room and singing German songs to his squad.

And Rehhagel said it was especially sweet to lift the European trophy in the rebuilt stadium where he had led Werder Bremen to victory over Monaco in the European Cup Winners' Cup in 1992.

"It is sensational to return here and do this here."

Rehhagel said it would be hard to come back down to earth given their likely reception back in Greece.

"We'll be treated like gods now.

"Greeks like to exaggerate joy and sadness, but they will calm down eventually but we certainly won't mind if people show up at the airport to wait for us.

"It's amazing how football can unite people in Greece, something which politics is unable to do."

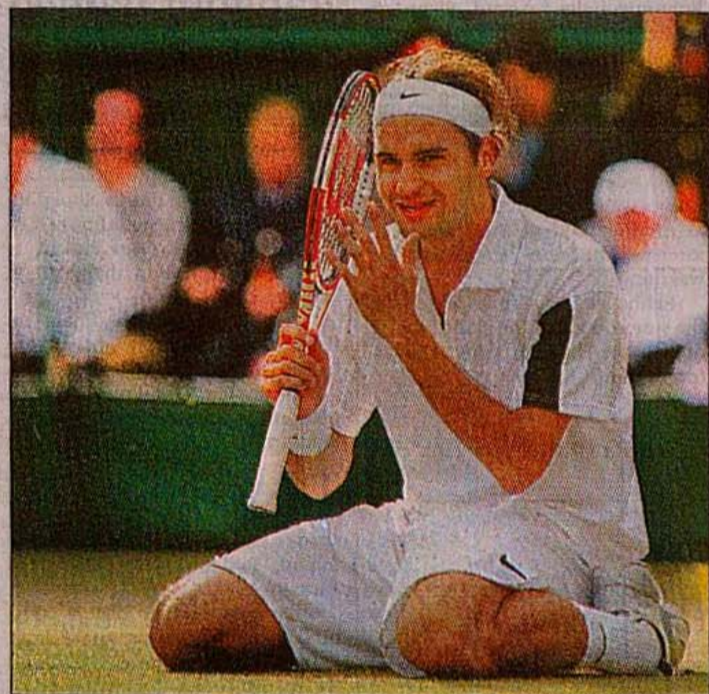
After insinuations that German referee Markus Merk would be



OTTO-GEAR AT FULL THROTTLE: (L) Greece's miracle-making coach Otto Rehhagel (C) has suddenly rediscovered the spring of a 15-year old in his steps as he sprints towards his players past distraught Portuguese booters with fist pumping the air after the final whistle. (R) The Greek legends parade with the trophy.



PHOTOS: AFP



THANK GOD, I COULD DO IT: Swiss Roger Federer is ecstatic after defending his Wimbledon title on July 4.

## Federer humbled by achievement

WIMBLEDON

REUTERS/AFP, London

The front page headlines spread out before him, a broad, white smile crept across Roger Federer's face.

"I'm so proud... so proud I could handle everything, handle all the pressure," he mused, almost to himself, as he leafed through the morning's newspapers.

"The sense of satisfaction is unbelievable. The worst thing would have been to lose early at Wimbledon, but to defend it... well, it is just amazing.

"It was all so new to me, I had never done this before, come to a grand slam as the champion."

There is little doubt it is a feeling

Federer will experience many more times in a career which could not be built on more solid foundations. The Swiss heir to Pete Sampras' king of Grand Slams crown, Federer has now won three Slams from three finals.

On Sunday he spoiled Andy Roddick's Fourth of July celebrations to win his second straight Wimbledon title. Sandwiched between them is an Australian Open crown won in February.

Not one to dwell on the past, the 22-year-old leant back in his chair in the Wimbledon garden he has called home for the last fortnight and was already plotting the defence of that title Down Under.

"It will be much easier going to Australia as champion now," he said.

"Now that I have done it at

## Tigers go into action today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will play their first practice match in Sri Lanka today against a combined eleven at Police Park ground in Colombo.

The Tigers left Dhaka on June 30, two weeks ahead of the Asia Cup kicks off for preparation, but the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) was still uncertain about the opponents in the three practice matches.

Board officials were not available for comment as most of them were still in London attending ICC meetings.

When contacted, chief selector Faruque Ahmed said that he was yet to talk to the team since its departure.

"It is always good to play warm-up matches before a tournament and I can assure you that Bangladesh will face competitive sides. Last year when I visited Sri Lanka as manager of the Under-23 team, I saw a lot of good cricketers in the

## 'Hey Europe, we belong!'



AFP, Athens

Greeks hope their national team's stunning conquest of the European football championship has quashed doubts abroad about the country's ability to stage the Athens Olympics next month.

"I think it's a very good response to all the press articles in recent months about Greece not being able to stage the Olympics, Greek opposition leader and former Foreign Minister George Papandreou said after Greece's 1-0 victory over Portugal in Sunday's final.

"There was a prejudiced effort to put us into stereotypes... we showed that Greece has changed. It's a different country."

Greeks' pride was hurt by a string of recent articles in the world's press

criticising construction delays and security lags in the preparations for the August 13-29 Olympics.

"It's the best passport to the Olympics," Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis said about the team's success.

Chief Olympics organiser Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki danced to the same tune. "Greece is smashing the views of those who said that it can't make it... Little Greece can succeed in the Olympics," she told the Flash radio station after the Greek side qualified for the final.

The Greek press hailed the fact that the Greeks' success was due to a set of qualities not usually associated with the country: coolness, clear-headedness, hard work and tight organisation -- imbued by the team's German coach Otto Rehhagel.

"Greeks can enjoy the fact that they can look other Europeans eye to eye, without an inferiority complex," 44-year-old accountant Nikos

Kavaliareas told AFP. Greeks were particularly satisfied to hear Australian Prime Minister John Howard, whose country's press was the most vocal in its criticism, to hail the Greeks' success as a "harbinger of a fantastic Olympic Games" in Athens.

And enthusiasm runs sky-high. "2004 will be the year of Greece," an Athens taxi-driver told AFP. "We were third in the Eurovision song contest, now we win the football championship, and you better wait to see what we'll achieve at the Olympics," he said.

The press urged all Greeks to prepare a heroes' welcome at Athens airport later in the day.

The official reception ceremony was scheduled for 1730 GMT at the impressive, white-marble Panathinaikon stadium in Athens where the first modern Olympics took place in 1896.

The flags of Greece and Athens

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## Did U Know?

This was the first time at a European Championship or World Cup finals that the teams who played the opening match met again in the final.



## TALK TURKEY



Carlos Queiroz (Former Real Madrid coach)

"I am not surprised by Beckham's comments as he has always had excuses. When he failed in Korea, and when he failed in Portugal, he always has an excuse."

## Low key Copa from tomorrow

AFP, Lima

World champions Brazil have all but admitted they will only go through the motions in the Copa America which kicks off here on Tuesday.

"The Copa America is simply a fixture in the calendar. If Brazil wins or loses the Copa America, what will that change?" said Brazil coach Carlos Alberto Parreira.

Brazil are without Ronaldo, Ronaldinho, Cafu, Dida, Roberto Carlos and Kaka for the bi-annual South American championships which break into the region's World Cup qualifying competition.

However, Parreira did admit the tournament would enable him to run the rule over some younger players and give others a chance to win their way back into the squad.

Manchester United's Kleberson is the only member of the 2002 World Cup-winning team to make the trip to Peru, while Arsenal's Edu will be trying to establish himself as a first-choice player.

"It will be a good testing ground for the future," said Parreira. Brazil have been drawn in Group C with Chile, Costa Rica and Paraguay.

Paraguay's formidable defence of Paulo Da Silva, Denis Caniza, Carlos Gamarra and Julio Caesar Caceres should prove the biggest test for Brazil.

Argentina, missing Chelsea's Hernan Crespo, Inter Milan's Juan Sebastian Veron, Real Madrid's Walter Samuel and Valencia's Pablo Aimar, are in Group B with Uruguay,

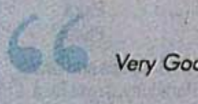
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