

# Ronaldo has a match!



REUTERS, Lima

Anyone who has to fight with Ronaldo for a place in the team needs to do well when he is given a chance.

Brazil striker Adriano took his with both hands by scoring seven goals in six games to finish as top-scorer in the Copa America, which Ronaldo decided to skip.

The 22-year-old was almost too emotional to talk after scoring in the third minute of injury-time as Brazil drew 2-2 with Argentina in Sunday's final before winning 4-2 on penalties -- when Adriano coolly converted his attempt.

"I'm very happy," he said. "I want to thank God, my family and my team mates. It's an inexplicable emotion."

Adriano, raised at Flamengo and now with Inter Milan, was given his first cap by Brazil at the age of 18 in a World Cup qualifier against Colombia in November 2000.

Many were surprised by his selection and it was more than two years before he won another cap in the friendly against Portugal.

Adriano was again called up for the Confederations Cup last year and, although he scored two goals, it was not a happy experience.

Brazil were knocked out in the first round and Adriano was criticised too for his alleged lack of technique.

Strong and powerful with a tremendous left-foot shot, Adriano was then overlooked for the next year as Brazil concentrated on qualifying for the 2006 World Cup.

But for the Copa America, Brazil rested their top players because of the timing of the tournament and he was given another chance.

He responded by scoring a hat-trick against Costa Rica, two more against Mexico and the crucial goals against Uruguay in the semi-final -- when Brazil again won on penalties after a 1-1 draw -- and Argentina.

Ronaldo will be back for the World Cup qualifier against Bolivia in September but he may think twice before choosing which competitions he plays in.

## Uzbeks send Turkmenistan packing

AFP, Chongqing

Uzbekistan wrapped up their Asian Cup first round campaign with a 1-0 victory over Turkmenistan to dump their Central Asian rivals out of the tournament here Monday.

A superbly taken second-half free-kick from talismanic skipper Mirdjalal Kasimov settled the encounter for the Uzbeks, who had already been assured of a place in the quarter-finals after victory in their two previous Group C games.

Kasimov struck in the 58th minute, bending a left-footed shot from 25 yards over the Turkmenistan defensive wall and into the top corner.

It was the second goal of the tournament from a free-kick for Kasimov, known in his home country as the

'David Beckham of Uzbekistan'. Uzbekistan, who had rested seven first-team regulars for the game, now meet Group A runners-up Bahrain in the quarter-finals in Chengdu on Friday.

## Bayern pip MU on penalties

AP, Chicago

Oliver Kahn stopped two of four penalty kicks to give Bayern Munich a 4-2 victory over Manchester United following a scoreless tie in an exhibition game Sunday.

In a match of teams coming off disappointing seasons, Roy Keane was the only player in the opening lineup who had started 35 or more games for Manchester United. Bayern started several of its stars, including Khan, the goalkeeper who is captain of Germany's national team.

After 80 scoreless minutes, fans started booing both teams. The crowd of 58,121 became more vocal after David Bellion sent a bad ball to Manchester newcomer Alan Smith, which ended a two-on-one opportunity.

Chicago-area native Jonathan Spector, who graduated from St. Viator high school only weeks ago, made his debut for Manchester United. The 18-year-old defender played a solid left back and made a great stop on Hasan Salihamidzic in the first half.

Phil Bardsley's 25-yard shot during first-half injury time was the best scoring chance for Manchester. It sailed high.

Piotr Trochowski almost scored for Bayern in the 54th minute, but goalkeeper Roy Carroll made a diving save.

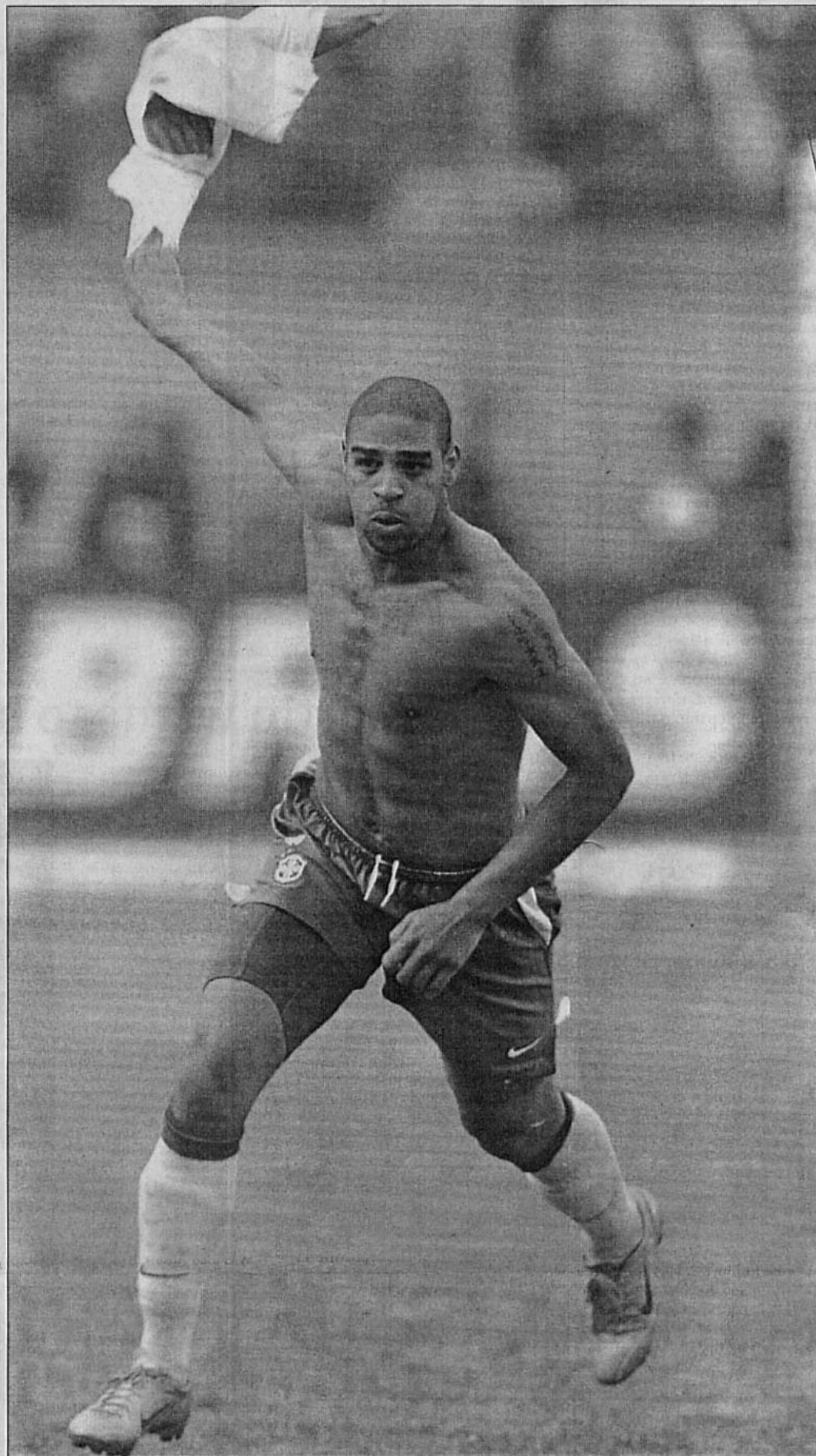


PHOTO: AFP

**WATCH OUT WORLD!** Brazil's star striker Adriano celebrates after scoring the equaliser against Argentina at the Nacional stadium in Lima on July 25.

## No team like Brazil



REUTERS, Lima

There is only one team in the world which can afford the luxury of resting high profile players such as Ronaldo, Ronaldinho, Kaka and Roberto Carlos and still win a major tournament.

Brazil's performance at the Copa America, which they won on Sunday by beating Argentina 4-2 on penalties in the final, was an awesome illustration of their strength-in-depth and has left coach Carlos Alberto Parreira more confident than ever.

Striker Adriano, who was not even in the squad for World Cup qualifiers against Argentina and Chile, finished as the competition's top scorer with seven goals.

Players such as midfielder Renato, striker Luis Fabiano and captain Alex would be guaranteed regulars in almost any other

national team. Yet for Brazil, they are lucky to even make the squad.

"We have shown the magnitude of Brazilian football," Parreira said. "There's no other country which could do this."

"I've no doubt about it." Parreira was initially sceptical about the competition, claiming before arriving in Peru that it was badly timed and had become a problem.

By the end, he was enthusing over the chance it had given to experiment in a competitive environment.

"It's always important in Brazilian football to get results but even if we hadn't got results, it would have been worth it because of the players we've been able to observe," he said.

"The Mexican team, for example, have reached their limit," Parreira said of the team which Brazil beat 4-0 in their quarter-final.

"They brought their full-strength team here and they have six or seven players in their early thirties."

"We have players here who will

still be young enough to play at the 2010 World Cup," he said. "We have opened up new possibilities for Brazilian football in the future."

However, Parreira made it clear that the top players -- known locally as Big Medals (Medalhoes) -- would be back for Brazil's next competitive match, a World Cup qualifier at home to Bolivia in early September.

"We are not duty-bound to keep everyone who's been here in the team," he said. "But a lot of things can happen between now and 2006 and a player who has been here is much closer to a place than somebody who has not."

"These players will all be very useful Brazilian national team, nobody has any doubt about that."

"All these players are regulars in important teams and are internationally recognised. The only thing they hadn't done was play in the Brazilian national team."

"They all made the most of their chance. We have a very good generation and we have a marvellous future ahead of us," he added.

## 'It's pure bad luck'



REUTERS, Lima

Argentina coach Marcelo Bielsa said his side were unlucky to lose after they were beaten on penalties by Brazil in Sunday's Copa America final.

"It's clear that if the aim of today's game is to decide which of the two teams was best, the final position obtained was contradictory to what each of the teams did," Bielsa said in his inimitable style.

"This pre-supposes not taking anything away from the opposition."

Argentina lost 4-2 in the shoot-out after conceding an equaliser with the last kick of the game in a 2-2 draw with arch-rivals Brazil.

Bielsa's team dominated the match but allowed their opponents to equalise with the last kick of the game.

"Some teams turn around the scoreline deservedly and others do it casually. One of these two happened today," Bielsa said.

"What should we have done to not deserve what happened today? When I was talking to the players after the game, we asked ourselves what we should have done and not have done (when it was 2-1)."

"In the end, we convinced ourselves that there was no path to follow which we had failed to follow."

Bielsa brought on defender Facundo Quiroga for striker Carlos Tevez in the 89th minute and gave an even longer-winded explanation when asked if the substitution was responsible for Brazil's equaliser.

"A substitution of this nature is made firstly to take up time and the position of the player who came on is the same as the place where the rebound happened," he said.

"But if I hadn't made the change and they had scored a goal, then it would have been my fault for not making the change."

## Iraq oust Saudi Arabia

AFP, Chengdu

Iraq reached the quarter-finals of the Asian Cup here Monday after knocking out three-time champions and bitter rivals Saudi Arabia with a 2-1 victory.

Saudi Arabia, who had reached the final of every Asian Cup since first entering the competition in 1984, were sent packing from the tournament after second-half goals from Iraq's Nashat Akram and Younis Mahmoud.

Iraq, who beat the odds to qualify for the Asian Cup after seeing football facilities shattered by war in their homeland, finish Group C as runners-up behind Uzbekistan and now face hosts China in Friday's quarter-finals.

Saudi, who took only one point from their first two matches, needed to beat Iraq to have any chance of reaching the last eight but were always struggling to impose themselves against the Iraqis, who are fielding their Olympic squad.

Iraq took the lead on 51 minutes with a well-worked move. Skipper Razzaq Farhan found space on the edge of the area and toe-poked to an unmarked Akram, who drilled an unstoppable shot past Saudi keeper Mansour Al Naje.

But Saudi Arabia got back into the game almost immediately when defender Hamad Al Montashari headed home a 57th-minute equaliser after a flick on by midfielder Ibrahim Sowed.

A frantic finale saw Iraq twice go close to regaining the lead, only to see striker Younis Mahmoud denied by the woodwork after earlier forcing a brilliant reflex save from Al Naje.

Saudi substitute Talal Al Meshal then went close to giving his team the lead but Iraq were not to be denied a famous victory. With Saudi Arabia pressing for a winner, Iraq countered down the left through Qusay Munir.

Qusay's shot was parried by Al Naje only as far as Mahmoud, who drilled the ball home to the delight of 10,000 fans in Chengdu's Longquan Stadium.

## Benfica hold Real

REUTERS, Lisbon

Portugal's Benfica marked the end of their centennial birthday celebrations by drawing 2-2 with Real Madrid in a pre-season friendly on Sunday.

Real coach, Jose Antonio Camacho, who guided Benfica to victory in the Portuguese Cup final last season, fielded a strong side in the opening half, including newly-signed Argentine international defender Walter Samuel.

Benfica, managed by former Italy coach Giovanni Trapattoni, went ahead in the first minute with a goal by Slovenian midfielder Zlatko Zahavic.

Real's Ronaldo equalised in the third minute, tapping in a rebound after the Benfica defence failed to clear a corner by David Beckham. The ball ran on to Zinedine Zidane, whose header was parried by goalkeeper Yannick before Ronaldo scored.

Striker Fernando Morientes, who has returned to Real after a season on loan to AS Monaco, put the Spanish side 2-1 up in the 77th minute after a goalmouth scramble.

However, Brazilian midfielder Geovanni secured the draw for Benfica when he headed home from a corner in injury time.

Although Benfica have won more league titles than any Portuguese club, they are without a championship success since 1994. Last season, they finished runners-up to Champions League winners Porto.

## Overmars gives in to injury



Football

REUTERS, Madrid

Dutch international Marc Overmars announced his retirement from football on Monday, blaming the decision on persistent injury problems.

"My footballing future ends now," the 31-year-old winger told a news conference at Barcelona where he has played since July 2000.

"My knee is causing too many problems and I can't play at the level I would wish."

Overmars became the most expensive Dutch player of all time and the most expensive player in Barcelona history when he signed from Arsenal in July 2000 for a fee of around 36 million euros -- a deal which also included his Arsenal team mate Emmanuel Petit.

Overmars' task was to replace Luis Figo, the Portuguese winger who had been poached by Real Madrid, but he failed to produce the sort of eye-catching attacking form he regularly showed at Arsenal and Barcelona told him at the end of last season that he could leave the club.

Overmars said on Monday he would leave without recompense of the one year remaining on his contract.

Barcelona president Joan

Laporta thanked him for that gesture, saying: "It's an act of sincerity and respect for the club."

"It's a mark of great dignity for him to say he can no longer play at the level Barcelona require and to renounce his contract."

Overmars played for the Netherlands at Euro 2004 in Portugal in June but opted against



MARC OVERMARS

looking for a new club for the forthcoming season, following Barcelona's decision to let him go.

The popular player made his Dutch international debut against Turkey in February 1993 and represented his country 86 times, making him the third highest-capped Dutch player after Frank de Boer (112 caps)

and Edwin van der Sar (89). He scored 17 goals for his country.

He started his career at Go Ahead Eagles before playing for Willem II, Ajax, Arsenal and Barcelona and retires having won the Champions League with Ajax in 1995, three Dutch titles with Ajax, one English title with Arsenal and a string of other honours.

They included a 1998 FA Cup final win with Arsenal in which he scored in a 2-0 victory against Newcastle United as Arsenal completed an English league and cup double.

The arrival of Overmars at Barcelona in 2000 coincided with a lean spell for the club and he could not help the Catalans to a single major title in his four years in Spain.

He scored eight league goals in 31 appearances in a first season that was acceptable rather than spectacular and that proved to be his most successful campaign.

He failed to score in 20 league games the following season, scored six in 26 games in 2002-03 and managed one league goal in 20 games last term.

Overmars becomes the fifth Dutch player to leave Barcelona since the end of last season, following the departures of Patrick Kluivert, Michael Reiziger, Philip Cocu and Edgar Davids.

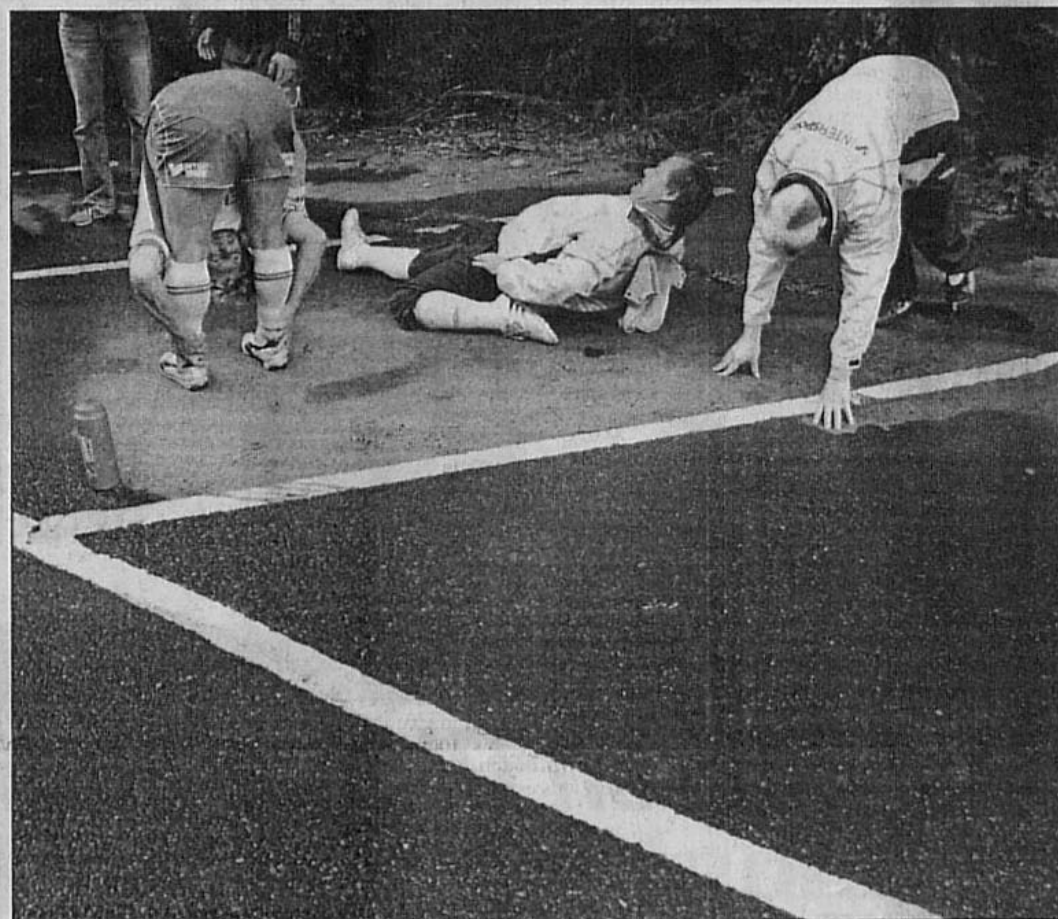


PHOTO: AFP

**STREET LIFE!** Swedish players stretch before the opening match of the Homeless Street Soccer World Cup between Sweden and Germany in Gothenburg on July 25.

## Home in football

AFP, Gothenburg

The second football World Cup for the homeless got under way Sunday in the west Swedish city of Gothenburg with teams from 28 countries competing for the prize.

At the first competition, held in Graz in Austria last year, 14 countries were represented. Countries participating this year include Brazil, Japan, Namibia and the United States. About 300 players are involved, including the homeless, recovering addicts, asylum-seekers and sellers of street newspapers.

"The World Cup should cast light on the problems of the homeless and their misery," organiser Bernhard Wolf of Austria said at the opening ceremony of "The Homeless World Cup", quoted by the Swedish TT news agency.

"It is also pure therapy for those taking part, because football has a

magic effect."

At last year's tournament 141 players were involved, 31 of whom later found their lives transformed, through training courses, treatment for drug or alcohol addiction or the finding of accommodation.

"But the few who play football in this World Cup are just the tip of a huge iceberg," according to Wolf, creator of the tournament and former editor of a street newspaper in Austria.

The tournament is sponsored by sporting goods manufacturers. Matches last 14 minutes, seven minutes each way, and are played on pitches measuring 20 metres (65 feet) by 14 metres (45 metres). Four players including a goalkeeper may be on the pitch for each side at any given moment.

The next tournament is due to take place in New York next year.

## Eriksson acting brave

AFP, London

England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson has brushed aside media calls for him to stand down after the Football Association admitted he had an affair with an FA secretary.

Eriksson's affair led to the 56-year-old Swede splitting with Italian girlfriend Nancy Dell'Olio and led to calls for him to go.

But Eriksson's agent Athole Still said the coach was adamant he wanted to continue.

"He is very committed to the job and is looking very much forward to leading England into the 2006 World Cup qualifying," Still told the Daily Mirror.

"There is absolutely no question of him leaving his job over this."

Eriksson always tries to keep his personal life private and has warned in the past that he would walk out if more revelations were exposed about his tangled love life.

The FA had to do an embarrassing U-turn after initially denying a report last week which alleged an affair between Eriksson and Alam, who is secretary to the organisation's executive director David Davies.

But the FA backtracked on Sunday and admitted not only did Alam have an affair with Eriksson but also with chief executive Mark Palios.

It left several FA councillors questioning why Eriksson allowed the FA to put out a denial statement in the first place.

However, although some FA councillors might be getting restless over Eriksson's love life they are unlikely to take any action with an 8 million pound compensation clause in his contract.

Although some newspapers suggested Middlebrough manager Steve McLaren would be asked to take over England's World Cup campaign if Eriksson was asked to leave.



PHOTO: AFP

**LET IT GO!** Argentina's coach Marcelo Bielsa (R) comforts goalkeeper Roberto Abbondanzieri (C) and Juan Pablo Sorin (L) at the end of the Copa America final against Brazil in Lima on July 25.