

# Ronaldo has a match!



REUTERS, Lima

Anyone who has to fight with Ronaldo for 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 50th 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 Chongqing 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.

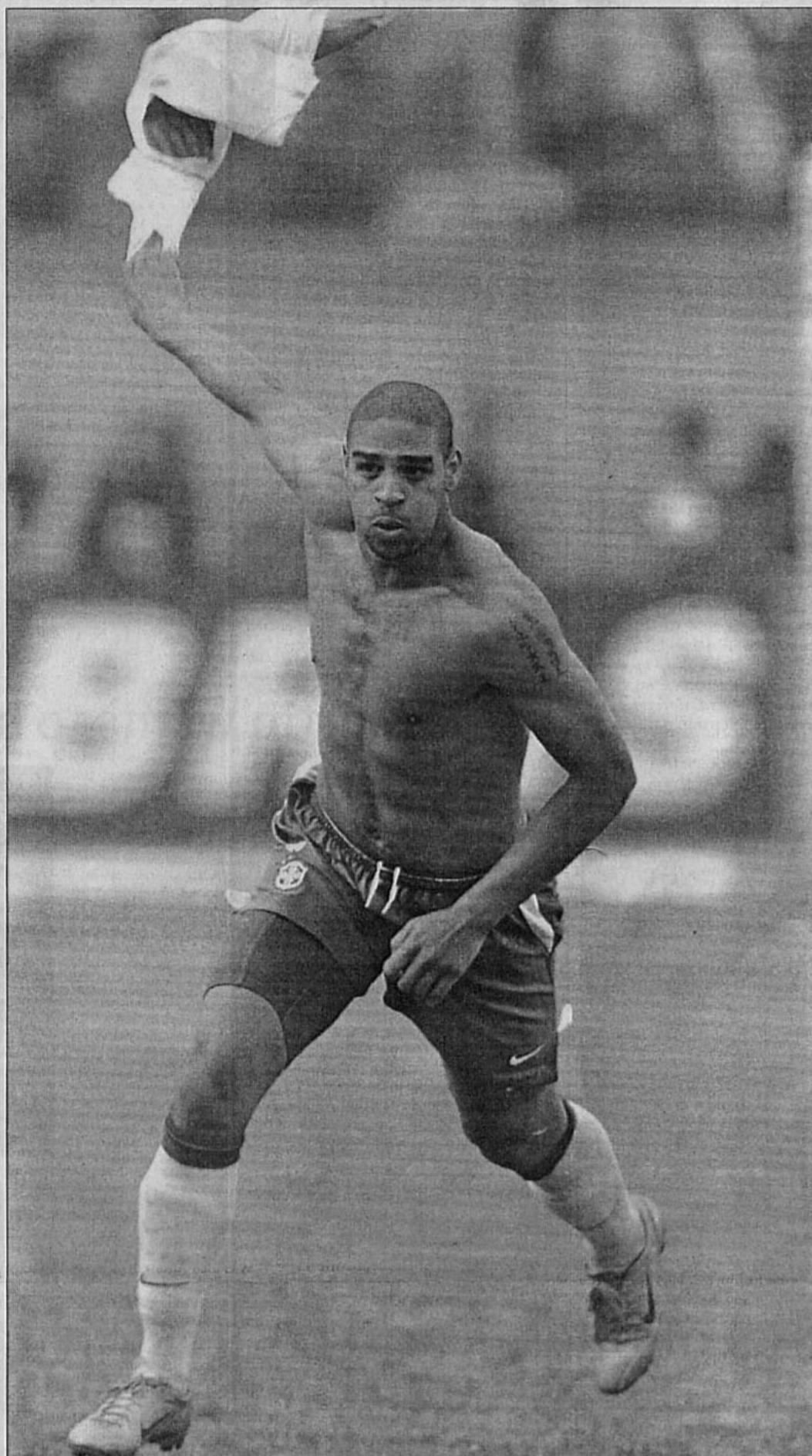
In a matchup of teams coming off disappointing seasons, Roy Keane was the only player in the opening lineup who had started 35 or more games for Manchester United. Bayern started several of its stars, including Khan, the goalkeeper who is captain of Germany's national team.

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.



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

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 it Peru that it was badly timed and had become 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.

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

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

"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 (Medalhões) -- 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.

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## '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

"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," 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 Quirós 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 Razzak 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 Zahovic.

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 Giovanni 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.

"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.

"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.

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"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.