

# Real in the end

## Football

AFP, Tokyo

Star-studded Real Madrid shrugged off a slow start in their first match on tour in Japan here Thursday as they stormed back from an early goal down to beat local club JEF United Ichihara 1-3.

"It was a typical pre-season match," said Jose Antonio Camacho, head coach of the Spanish giants.

"We couldn't control the game in the first 10 minutes. But we played better after we modified the (players') positioning and much better in the second half."

"It is what we are going to work on during these pre-season matches," Camacho said.

The local J-League side surprised 51,840 spectators as Brazilian striker Marquinhos netted on a free kick to give Ichihara a 1-0 lead in the sixth minute.

But the expensively assembled Spanish team soon started to control the ball, connecting accurate and quick passes to move their opponents around and get them tired.

It allowed Guti, Raul and Santiago Solari to score after some pin-point passing in the 23rd, 36th minutes and in injury time.

"It was a game to see if we can do what we planned before the match and we did it pretty well and won. We tried to keep the ball as long as possible and it resulted in three goals," said Guti.

Man-of-the-match Raul said: "It was a good game as our second game of the season. Hopefully, we can play like this in our next match too."

France's World Cup captain Zinedine Zidane and Brazilian striker Ronaldo did not play due to left foot problems, but Camacho



Real Madrid captain Raul celebrates a goal during a friendly match against Japan's JEF United Ichihara in Tokyo yesterday. Real Madrid won the match 3-1.

said they were both rested on caution.

"Their injuries are not serious at all. I just thought it would be better for them not to play today, because if they had played, it would have made them more tired. Besides, we have one more game," said Camacho.

Meanwhile, Ichihara's Croat coach Ivica Osim admitted the

difference between one of the top teams of the world and his own.

"Real is a very big team. Whatever I say about them, it does not explain the exact level of their team. They play ideal football. They are really fantastic," said Osim.

Real will take on another J-League team Tokyo Verdy on Sunday during their one-week visit here.

## Iraq still weeps



AFP, Beijing

Iraq's war-weary footballers were struggling to keep their minds on Friday's Asian Cup quarter-final with China after the latest explosion of bloodshed in their shattered homeland.

More than 120 people were killed and dozens injured on Wednesday in a series of attacks across Iraq, one of the worst days of violence since the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime last year.

News of the escalating death toll left Iraq's players in shock at their team hotel Thursday, anxiously worrying about family and loved ones thousands of miles away from the Chinese capital.

"This morning at breakfast all the players were speaking about the news after watching television. They were

very shocked," said Iraq coach Adnan Hamid.

"All the players worry about their families because of the situation in Iraq. It's not a good security situation. At any moment maybe something could happen -- the bombing, the terror, the American army."

Hamid, who replaced coach Bernd Stange on the eve of the Asian Cup after the German resigned citing deteriorating security conditions in Iraq, said his team were determined to try and bring some cheer to their compatriots.

"The players want to do something for our country at this time," said Hamid. "Iraqis love football. When the national team play all the people watch television and are happy when we win."

"It's very important for us and the players to make our people happy, to try and forget some of their problems," said Hamid, who said his team's 2-1 victory over Saudi Arabia on Monday had been rapturously received back home.

"People were very happy, shooting into the air and everything," he said.

They even had to share a training pitch with grazing sheep after Baghdad's only proper football stadium was used by the US military to park tanks and armoured vehicles.

"You know the situation in Iraq -- you know what war means for any country," Hamid said. "We had many problems to prepare the team for the Asian Cup. We don't have a good field, we don't have a stadium."

The fact that Iraq's qualifying games all took place in neighbouring Jordan, also meant that the team had to take a gruelling 10-hour coach

journey through lawless bandit country when travelling to their matches.

Since overcoming the various hurdles to qualify for China and Athens, Iraq -- who are fielding their Under-23 side in both sports events -- have gone from strength to strength.

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