

# 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 tipped.

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



PHOTO: AFP

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 pre-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.

## Strikers in charge of Germany

AFP, Berlin

Former striker Oliver Bierhoff was appointed deputy to new Germany coach Jurgen Klinsmann on Thursday.

It means Germany will go into the 2006 World Cup led by two former strikers with no coaching experience.

But German federation president Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder said the priority was to get an experienced coach on board after Holger Osieck, deputy to Franz Beckenbauer in the 1990 World Cup, turned the job down.

Klinsmann, 40 on Friday, replaces Rudi Voller who resigned after Germany's Euro 2004 disaster. He has been involved in sports marketing in the US since he ended his playing career in 1998.

He has a training licence but no coaching experience.

Bierhoff, 36, scored 37 goals in his 70 internationals, including the golden goal winner against the Czech Republic in the Euro 96 final.

Klinsmann won 108 caps for Germany, scoring 47 goals, and played in the 1990, 1994 and 1998 World Cups.

He was Germany's third choice after Otto Rehhagel, the German who guided Greece to a shock victory in Euro 2004, and former Bayern Munich coach Ottmar Hitzfeld turned down offers.

## Barca lose to Korean club!

AFP, Suwon

Result of a football friendly match played here Thursday between Barcelona FC of Spain and Suwon Samsung of South Korea.

Barcelona 0 Suwon Samsung 1 (Urumsore Zoran 78)

# 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 Hamd.

"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."

Iraq reached the Asian Cup and next month's Olympics after seeing sports facilities across the country devastated and being forced to play all their qualifying matches away from home.

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," Hamd 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.

Hamd, 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 Hamd. "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 Hamd, 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.

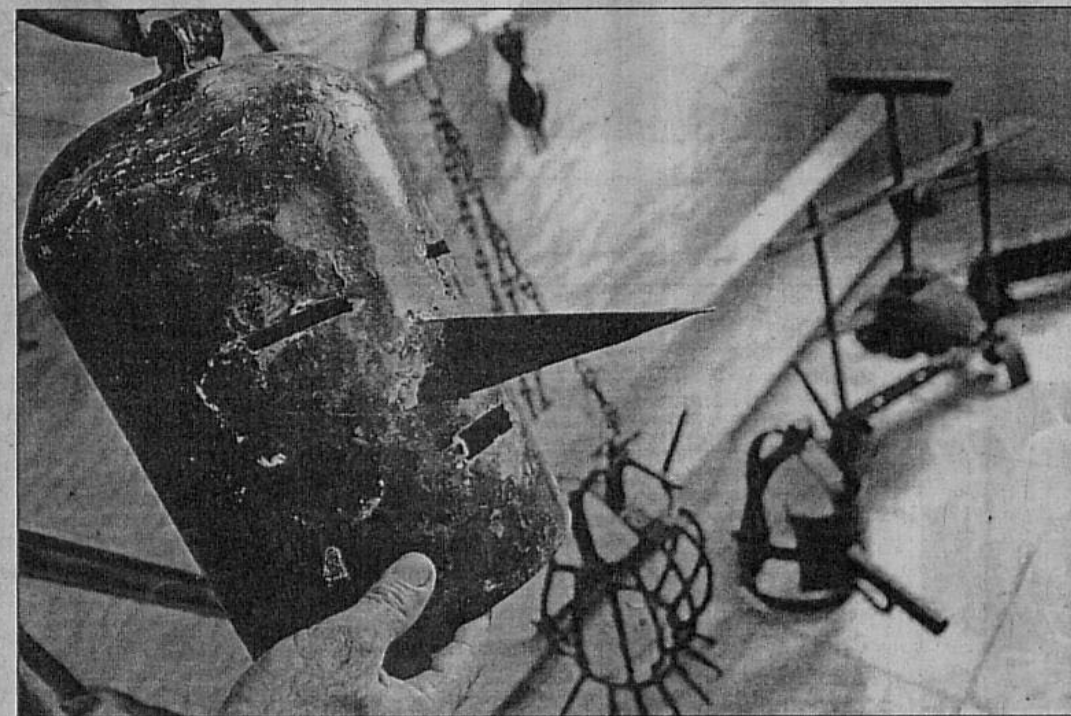


PHOTO: AFP

SCENES FROM THE MEDIEVAL AGE: An Iraqi Olympic Committee official shows a torture mask at al-Shaab Stadium in Baghdad on July 28. The device was reportedly used by Saddam Hussein's eldest son, Uday, president of the Iraqi Olympic Committee during his father's regime, to punish athletes, especially football players, whose performance failed to meet his expectations.

# Iran united



AFP, Chongqing

The extraordinary on-field bust-ups which threatened to wreck Iran's Asian Cup campaign have galvanised the squad as it bids for an unprecedented fourth title, their coach said.

Branko Ivankovic praised his team, decimated by suspensions after their incendiary 2-2 draw with Oman, after booking a place in the last eight thanks to a goalless encounter with Japan.

Iran's tournament had looked in

tatters after the Oman match when they were lucky to escape with a draw and had three players banned for stamping or fighting.

"We resolved the problem among ourselves," Ivankovic said. "We took over the problems and worked them out. Everything that was said out on the pitch went through internally."

"We had some problems before the match so I appreciate that our players played so well. I'm happy that we could play the match so well against Japan."

Ivankovic promised there would be no repeat of incidents such as the slap-fight which earned defenders Rahman Rezaei and Ali Badavi a two-match ban or the vicious stamp which saw Mohammed Nosrati barred for four games.

"Iranian players are famous for their enthusiasm and play emotionally," he said.

"The result of the incident in the last match is that it's finished. It seems it won't happen again."

Ivankovic, who led Iran to the gold medal in the 2002 Asian Games, said confidence was growing among the team which will take on South Korea in the quarter-finals on Saturday.

"We have to build up the spirit among the team. Team spirit is the most important part of a national team especially when players are coming from different parts of the country," he said.

"Building up spirit in a team is a very difficult job but our players are tough and can do anything."

## Camara in for loan record

REUTERS, London

Wolverhampton Wanderers striker Henri Camara is poised to complete a British record loan move to Scottish champions Celtic, according to the player's agent.

"Wolves have negotiated a British record loan fee with Celtic which means they have got their money back, plus 300,000 pounds (\$546,600)," Camara's agent Willie McKay told British newspapers on Thursday.

Camara, 27, joined Wolves, who were relegated from the English premier league at the end of last season, from French club Sedan for 1.5 million pounds in August 2003.

McKay said: "They (Wolves) still have the option of selling Henri in a year's time. Henri needs to play at the highest level to keep his place in the Senegal team."

## Dauids is Inter's

AFP, Milan

Inter Milan's midfield was one of the best in last season's Champion's League, newly recruited Dutch international Edgar Davids claimed at his unveiling.

Inter's midfield already includes Argentine international Juan Sebastian Veron, who left English club Chelsea, and Serbo-Montenegrin, Dejan Stankovic, who comes from Lazio.

"I really think that it's one of the best in the Calcio (Italian national league) and the Champions League," said Davids, referring to the midfield combination.

The 31-year-old tough-tackling midfielder, who left Juventus, has signed a three-year contract, reportedly worth 3.5 million euros a season. He has previously played for Ajax, AC Milan and Barcelona.

# Ronaldo plans to marry?

## Football

REUTERS, Sao Paulo

Those playboy binges and extra pounds of weight might be about to end for Real Madrid's Brazilian star Ronaldo.

The striker has asked his girlfriend, model and MTV presenter Daniella Cicarelli to marry him after dating for just a month and a half, according to Brazilian media reports.

Ronaldo proposed during a vacation in Greece and they will get married in Paris in a few months time, O Estado de S. Paulo newspaper and Contigo magazine said.

"I don't confirm and don't deny," Rodrigo Paiva, his friend

and press agent, told Reuters. "But there is a possibility that they will get married, of course. They are



DANIELLA CICARELLI

together and very happy".

"When he sets the wedding, the day, the hour and the place, then I'll be able to confirm," Paiva added.

Ronaldo was married to Brazilian soccer player Milene Domingues for four years. They have a 3-year-old son, Ronald, and split up in November.

Ronaldo is known to enjoy the nightlife in Madrid and has been criticized for putting on weight. Cicarelli, a Brazilian triathlon athlete and marathon runner, has forced him to go on a diet and to jog daily, the reports said.

The relationship came as a relief to Brazil's soccer trainer Carlos Alberto Parreira. Veja magazine quoted him as saying "the national teams is thankful to her" for bringing Ronaldo back to a healthy life.

# Van Basten the boss

## Football

REUTERS, Amsterdam

Marco van Basten has agreed to become the new Netherlands coach, the Dutch football association (KNVB) announced on Thursday.

The 39-year-old former international striker will replace Dick Advocaat, who resigned days after the Netherlands lost 2-1 in the Euro 2004 semi-final to hosts Portugal.

The KNVB said on Thursday they had finalised a deal with Van Basten and his assistant John van 't Schip and the pair would be presented officially at a news conference on Monday.

The statement included no details of the contract but media reports suggest Van Basten would be given a four-year contract.

After Advocaat's resignation KNVB director Henk Kessler approached Johan Cruyff for advice and the Dutch soccer great recommended he recruit Van Basten and Van 't Schip.

Cruyff, who has never been in charge of the Dutch national side, has promised his support to the new

coach in a backroom role.

Two more former Ajax and Dutch internationals, Rob Witschge and Stanley Menzo, have been approached to complete the technical staff.

If they accept the offer, the new Dutch coaching team will be made up



MARCO VAN BASTEN

entirely of players who won the 1987 European Cup Winners Cup in an Ajax side coached by Cruyff.

It will be Van Basten's first head

coaching role since persistent injury put an end to his playing career in 1995.

After seven years out of football, he joined the technical staff at Ajax in 2002, assisting Van 't Schip in coaching the reserve team.

Van 't Schip, also a former Dutch international, had one year as a head coach with Twente Enschede in 2002 before resigning to return to Ajax.

Van Basten, who also played club football for AC Milan, was a member of the Dutch team that won the 1988 European Championship, scoring with a memorable volley in the final against the Soviet Union.

He will be the second Dutch national coach from that team after Frank Rijkaard, who was in charge of the squad between 1998 and 2000.

The most feared goalscorer of his generation, Van Basten was named European player of the year three times (1988, 1989 and 1992) and FIFA world player of the year in 1992.

Van 't Schip played for Ajax, Italian club Genoa and the national side as a winger.

# Hosts have all the worries



REUTERS, Beijing

Hosts China will be under enormous pressure to beat Iraq when they meet in the Asian Cup quarter-finals, Iraqi coach Adnan Hamd said on Thursday.

Iraq have already defied the odds to reach the last eight, knocking out bitter rivals Saudi Arabia along the way and Hamd warned that his team could pull off another surprise in Beijing on Friday.

"For us there is no pressure," he said. "Sometimes the support of the home fans can give you more pressure. China are under more pressure

than Iraq."

Uzbekistan, meanwhile, have completed a remarkable turnaround after a miserable Asian Cup campaign four years ago and on current form will be favourites to beat Bahrain in Friday's other quarter-final in Chengdu.

War-weary Iraq produced a minor miracle just to reach the Asian Cup, forced to practise on a bumpy pitch alongside grazing sheep in Baghdad and play their qualifying games in neutral Jordan due to security fears.

Hamd insisted, however, that the escalating violence at home would give his players added incentive against China after finishing second behind Group C winners Uzbekistan.

"You know the situation now in Iraq," he said. "The players want to do something for our country in this

difficult moment for the people in Iraq."

In addition to the pressure of delivering a first Asian Cup title, China coach Arie Haan has a mounting injury list to worry about, with captain Li Weifeng and playmaker Shao Jiayi both nursing sore knees.

The Dutchman is also without first-choice strikers Hao Haidong and Li Yi, who have ankle injuries.

Group A winners China will be firm favourites in front of 65,000 in Beijing but Haan insisted they would take nothing for granted.

"Iraq are a very strong, a complete team with a lot of quality," he said. They are also a team which has nothing to lose and maybe that makes them a little bit dangerous."

Uzbekistan were easily the worst team in Lebanon in 2000, the former Soviet republic losing 8-1 to eventual champions Japan and 5-0 to

runners-up Saudi Arabia.

However, they should have too much firepower for Group A runners-up Bahrain.

Led by inspirational captain Mirdjalat Kasimov, Uzbekistan won all of their Group C matches 1-0 and were the only team with a 100 per cent record in the first round.

Kasimov, known in his country as the "David Beckham of Uzbekistan" because of his dead-ball prowess, has provided the spark for his side, scoring with two exquisite free kicks.

The 33-year-old insisted there was more to come from Uzbekistan, who have become adept at grinding out results.

"We have developed a certain stability and have done very well to defend narrow leads," he said. "If we win the next game 1-0 too, it still counts and there is nothing wrong with it."

# Zidane prepared to wait

## Football

AFP, Tokyo

French captain Zinedine Zidane was tightlipped about his future with the national side, but paid tribute to Lilian Thuram after the defender brought his own international career to an end.

"I don't want to announce my decision right now. But I will need to talk about it soon", Zidane told AFP in Tokyo Wednesday.

Zidane is expected to meet with the newly-appointed France coach Raymond Domenech next Monday in Madrid, according to the French sports daily L'Equipe.

He paid tribute to Thuram, who announced his international retirement this week at the age of 32.

"I just want to congratulate him for all that he's done for France, 103 caps in the French national team. It was a great pleasure to play with him," said Zidane.

Thuram, who won the World Cup in 1998 and the European Championship in 2000, said he first wanted to retire after France's disastrous World Cup in 2002 when they became the first defending champions to fail to score a goal.

The Guadeloupe-born player scored only two goals in his international career but they could not have been more important - both came against Croatia in the 1998 World Cup semi-finals.

Zidane is in Tokyo with his Spanish star-studded powerhouse Real Madrid for a Japanese tour including two exhibition games with J-League sides JEF United Ichihara Thursday and Tokyo Verdy Sunday.

Real Madrid also did a pre-season tour of Asia last year and some critics said this money-earning business caused them to

finish fourth in the Spanish league.

But Zidane denied it, saying: "It's our fault that we couldn't win the Spanish league. It's not because we came to Japan. There's no excuse."

Real's one-week trip is expected to earn them 14 million euros (16.8 million dollars).

Zidane was also delighted with the news that Real Madrid could land Arsenal and French interna-

tional midfielder Patrick Vieira.

"I will welcome it if Patrick comes to Real. He's a good player, so it's good for us. But I don't want to talk about it because nothing is done yet," stressed Zidane.

Zidane will be available for Thursday's game, while Brazilian World Cup winning striker Ronaldo will be out due to a knee injury.

## Something is bugging Kahn

REUTERS, Berlin

Germany and Bayern Munich goalkeeper Oliver Kahn suggested on Wednesday that he might leave the country to protect his private life.

"I have a contract until 2006 which I would like to fulfil but certain circumstances occur again and again and we have reached a solution (with Bayern)," Kahn told reporters at the team's training camp in Bonn.

Neither Kahn nor Bayern officials would elaborate on what that solution was but the 35-year-old spoke after a report by Wednesday's Sport Bild weekly saying the club had agreed to release him for a move abroad.

Kahn has made headlines in the German popular press since admitting last year to having an affair with a barmaid while his wife was pregnant.

The Bayern player said he was planning legal action after forged photographs of his private life were published by a German newspaper earlier this month. The newspaper has since printed an apology.

"There are things that have nothing to do with my job as a Bayern Munich goalkeeper which have become unbearable," he said on Wednesday.

# Portillo going to Fiorentina

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid are sending striker Javier Portillo out on loan to Fiorentina in Italy for the coming season.

Portillo, 22, broke a stack of Real Madrid's goalscoring records at junior level. He made a big impact in his breakthrough season in 2002-03 but found last term much tougher, with just one goal coming in 393 minutes of league action.

The return of Fernando Morientes from a loan spell with Monaco left him as fourth choice striker, with Raul and Ronaldo also ahead of him. The club have opted to let him go, at least temporarily.

"This will give me the opportunity to gain the experience that will enable me to come back next year at Real Madrid," Portillo told the Spanish club's website.

## VAN BASTEN FACTS

AFP, Amsterdam

Factfile on new Holland coach Marco van Basten:

**Date of birth:** 31 October 1964  
**Place of birth:** Utrecht  
**Position:** Striker  
**Clubs:** Ajax Amsterdam (1981-87), AC Milan (1987-94)  
**International record:** 58 caps, 24 goals

**Honours**  
European Championship 1988  
European Cup 1989, 1990 (Milan)  
European Cup Winners' Cup 1987 (Ajax)  
Dutch league 1982, 1983, 1985  
Italian league 1988, 1992, 1993, 1994  
Dutch Cup 1983, 1986, 1987  
European Player of the Year 1988, 1989, 1992  
FIFA World Player 1992

**Coaching experience**  
Assistant coach of Ajax youth team from 2001  
Dutch federation coaching certificate in 2000

# Beattie brings MU down

AFP, Philadelphia

Celtic's first win was Manchester United's first loss on American soil as Craig Beattie's goal in the 71st minute gave the Scots-side a 2-1 decision over the Red Devils.

Scheduled to play a four-high four matches, Celtic was playing for the third time in five days during the Champions World tour.

It lost to Chelsea, 4-2, in Saturday's tour opener in Seattle and to Liverpool, 5-1, on Monday in East Hartford, Connecticut.

But facing the tour headliners in front of 55,421, Celtic played their most spirited match and dealt the first setback to Man U, which battled Bayern Munich to a boring 0-0 draw Sunday in Chicago.

Beattie scored his fourth goal in three games when he latched on to a fine flank ball from Chris Sutton, blew past Roy Keane and nutmegged a helpless Tim Howard in goal.

"It was a tough game, obviously," Beattie said. "We played them last year and they have gotten better, so it was good to get the win."

Missing some seven first-team players for a variety of reasons, Manchester United was forced once more to field a second-string squad.

Manchester United's next match is Saturday against AC Milan, while Celtic face AS Roma the same