

Just in case



AFP, Beijing

Authorities are taking no chance that the grudge Asian Cup final between China and Japan will turn nasty, drafting in more than 1,000 extra police to keep order.

Altogether some 6,000 police and security personnel will be in place for the match Saturday at Beijing's Workers' Stadium as concern grew that Chinese animosity over Japanese war-time atrocities could spill over.

Rowdy Chinese fans have heckled Japan throughout the tournament, booing their players and national anthem, even rushing Japan's team bus in Chongqing.

Japanese fans have had to be escorted out of the stadium by riot police.

"On any given China game there will be altogether 5,000 police and security people," said a senior tournament security official who did not want to be named.

"For the Japan game we are putting on an extra 1,000 to protect the Japanese

fans, so altogether there will be around 6,000 on duty."

Some officials have estimated 2,000 Japanese fans will watch the game at the 65,000 capacity stadium although others say the figure is likely to be far higher.

Asian Football Confederation general secretary Peter Velappan said he was confident the security would be sufficient and the game would pass off without incident.

"I'm not really worried about the final. It should be a special occasion for everyone," he told AFP.

"After Chongqing the leaders here took a very serious view. They assured us of the maximum security and I am sure they will keep their promises."

But with the game being shown to some 500 million viewers around the world, a record audience, Velappan admitted that if the booing started again, it could prove a blow to the image of Asian football.

"I am very concerned about the booing, that it will give the wrong image," he said.

"This should be the opportunity to show the world that China is a friendly country, friendly to its neighbours.

"China has lifted the bar of the Asian Cup to a very high level. It has been a great thing for China."

Senior politicians from both China and Japan have urged fans to behave.



PHOTO: AFP

IN THE THICK OF THINGS: Japan's coach Zico joins the players in training during a practice session in Beijing on August 5.

Haan impressed



AFP, Beijing

China coach Arie Haan, who will lead the side into Saturday's Asian Cup final against Japan, said the high level of play seen at the tournament showed that Asian football was quickly improving.

"The level of Asian football is relatively high...., I think the level of Asian football is moving forward," the Dutch coach told journalists.

"To tell you the truth before I came to Asia, I didn't think Asian football was so good, but this Asia football cup has let me see the whole of Asian football."

Haan, at the helm of the Chinese team for two years, has been tasked to win the Asian Cup and qualify for 2006 World Cup 2006 in Germany.

If successful, China will have won the Asian Cup for the first time, and made the World Cup for only the second.

"Up until now the Asian Cup

matches have been very exciting," Haan told Titan Sports.

"Just like (the Iran) match, I think the level of the match between us and Iran was very high, the match was exciting and the pace of the game very fast. You could say it had the elements of a high level match."

Haan, who played in two World Cup finals and won the European Cup three times with Ajax in the 1970s, has been impressed at how his side has adopted his "total football" philosophy made famous by legendary Dutch star Johann Cruyff.

"I have been very surprised with some of the players' performances at this Asian Cup. High is not the word to describe the play, it has been very, very high," he said.

Saturday's grudge match with Japan could seal China's place among the Asian football elite beside the defending champions and other traditional powers like South Korea, Saudi Arabia and Iran.

"The Japanese team is a leading team in Asian football, but we can beat them," Haan said.

"This will be a very wonderful thing. But you saw how difficult it was for us to beat Iran (in the semi-final)."

Behave please!



AFP, Beijing

China's foreign ministry and its football association Thursday told fans to behave at the Asian Cup final while criticising the Japanese media for inflaming animosity.

"We are very happy to see that the Chinese team and Japanese team both made it to the final with outstanding performances," said foreign ministry spokesman Kong Quan.

"We hope the Chinese and Japanese football fans will enjoy a wonderful match ... with good behaviour."

While Japan has been loudly heckled and jeered by Chinese fans throughout the tournament, prompting the Asian Football Confederation to seek assurances about security, Kong denied there were any problems.

"According to the information received, the four matches that the Japanese team played so far were well-ordered and had a warm atmosphere," he was quoted as saying by Xinhua news agency.

"It is known to all that extreme behaviour of a few football fans are

frequently witnessed at key international football matches. We don't agree with those behaviours." And he said it was "regrettable that some Japanese media focused too much and played up on those behaviours and even connected them with politics."

"We believe that improving China-Japan communication including sports exchanges will help promote understanding and friendship between the two peoples," he said.

China Football Association spokesman Dong Hua urged the players and fans to respect each other.

"We ask our players three things -- they must respect the referee, respect their opponent and respect the crowd," he told AFP.

"As far as the players are concerned this is all about football. This is the Asian Cup and this is the final.

"The players are not thinking about these things (politics and Japan's war-time atrocities).

The two teams take the field at the Workers' Stadium in Beijing on Saturday.

Many Chinese people believe Japan has never fully faced up to its wartime past and its brutal occupation of China before and during World War II.



PHOTO: AFP

GOT TO MAKE A DECISION SOON! Real Madrid superstar Zinedine Zidane holds his head after a practice session at the sports city in Las Rozas, near Madrid on August 4.

Zidane takes time

Football

AFP, Madrid

Zinedine Zidane said he needs time to reflect on his international future after meeting new France coach Raymond Domenech here on Wednesday.

Domenech told the inspirational playmaker and France captain that he wanted him to become "the relay for the young generation" but if Jacques Santini's successor was hoping for a quick response he left the lunch appointment disappointed.

Zidane reported: "I'm going to take a week or two before announcing what my future with the French team will

be."

The Real Madrid ace said he felt obliged to tell Domenech his decision by September 4 - the date of France's first 2006 World Cup qualifier against Israel in Paris.

In calling on Zidane to assume the role of marshalling the young troops Domenech insisted he did not want "to put Zidane under any pressure, leaving him to make his own decision".

He said he had found Zidane "ready to listen".

The discussions with the midfielder followed those held Tuesday between Domenech and France veteran defender Bixente Lizarazu.

Zidane meanwhile said he had felt obliged to meet the new France coach.

"Whatever the outcome I had to meet Raymond Domenech," he told his website.

"It's the least I could do. I was waiting to speak to him, to explain my reasons and everything I was thinking, all that I had to say.

"He outlined to me his ideas. Now we'll talk over all that again soon."

Whatever his decision Zidane is unlikely to figure in Domenech's plans for the friendly against Bosnia on August 12, saying he did not think he'd be in the line-up.

Fellow influential French players Marcel Desailly and Lilian Thuram have both recently announced their retirement from international football.

Larsson double for Barca

AFP, Tokyo

Spanish football powerhouse Barcelona whipped former J-League champions Jubilo Iwata 3-0 in Shizuoka, central Japan, on Wednesday to wind up their two-game pre-season series.

The writing was on the wall for the J-League side early on when Brazilian striker Ronaldinho's shot hit the bar as early as the third minute.

And it was Ronaldinho who, in the 29th minute, dribbled past Toshihiro Hattori, Hideto Suzuki and Takahiro Yamanishi to set up Swedish forward Henrik Larsson for the opener.

Larsson bagged his second in the 36th minute when he jumped for a header at a corner delivered by Dutch defender Giovanni van Bronckhorst.

In the second period, Itawa started brightly when their Brazilian striker Gral made a diving header from a Hiroshi Nanami cross in the 48th minute, but the effort went wide.

Barcelona managed to add to their tally before the end with Ronaldinho once more producing a skillful pass to Luis Garcia, who scored with a shot in the 63rd minute.

Barcelona ended their tour of Japan without conceding a goal, following their 5-0 thrashing of Kashima Antlers on Sunday.

In Tokyo, forward Miguel Angel Angulo netted in injury time to give a second-string Valencia a 1-0 win over Kashima Antlers, also finishing a two-game series following a humiliating 5-2 loss to Alvilex Niigata on Sunday.

Football

AP, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil won't hold its punches in a soccer friendly with Haiti this month -- even if it means disobeying a presidential request.

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva reportedly asked the defending World Cup champions not to run up the score in the game Aug. 18 in Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital.

"Lula asked us not to win by too much to avoid spoiling the party," Ricardo Teixeira, president of the



PHOTO: AFP

Barcelona striker Henrik Larsson tries to power through two Jubilo Iwata defenders during their friendly at Shizuoka stadium in Fukuroi city, central on August 4.

No samba mercy

Football

Brazilian Soccer Confederation, said in an interview with the O Estado de S. Paulo newspaper Wednesday.

But the team showed no intention of taking it easy on Haiti in a warmup for the 2006 World Cup qualifiers that resume next month.

Brazil's coach Carlos Alberto Parreira on Tuesday summoned 18 players of his "A" team, including World Cup stars Ronaldo, Ronaldinho, Cafu and Roberto Carlos.

Fully eight players were on the team that won a record fifth World Cup title in 2002. Five others starred on the Brazilian squad that won the Copa America last month.

The friendly is billed as "the game of

peace" in violence-torn Haiti. Fans will be invited to swap guns for tickets, part of a campaign to disarm warring factions.

Soccer is a key to Brazil's peace-keeping drive. In May, Brazilian troops arrived in Haiti as part of a United Nations peacekeeping mission and handed out soccer balls to children.

"Our army, our armed forces, will be the 18 players," the Soccer Confederation's Teixeira said. "We are absolutely sure we'll have no security problems. It will be a beautiful party in Haiti."

President Silva is expected to attend, Brazil's official news agency said. Haitians indicated they expect

Another pillar falls

Football

AFP, Paris

French defender Bixente Lizarazu on Thursday announced his retirement from international football after a glittering career that saw him pick up winners medals at the 1998 World Cup and Euro 2000.

The 34-year-old from the Basque region joins fellow defenders Marcel Desailly and Lilian Thuram in retiring from the French national team in the wake of their disastrous Euro 2004 campaign.

"I share with Lilian the idea that we must give our places to other players for 2006 (World Cup). It's now up to them to take their responsibilities," said Lizarazu, who will play for Marseille this season.

"You must have time and a lot of matches to reach the highest level and they will need this to reach maturity in

THE DRAW



AFP, Paris

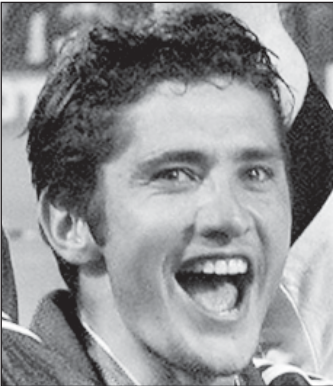
Revised UEFA Champions League 3rd qualifying round draw after Wednesday's second qualifying round results:

GrazAK (AUT) v Liverpool (ENG)  
Juventus (ITA) v Djurgardens (SWE)  
Ferencváros (HUN) v Sparta Prague (CZE)  
Rosenborg (NOR) v Maccabi Haifa (ISR)  
Bayer Leverkusen (GER) v Banik Ostrava (CZE)  
Red Star Belgrade (SEM) v PSV Eindhoven (NED)  
Dinamo Bucharest (ROM) v Manchester United (ENG)  
FC Basel (SWI) v Inter Milan (ITA)  
Benfica (POR) v Anderlecht (BEL)  
Deportivo La Coruna (SPA) v Shelbourne (IRL)  
PAOK Salonika (GRE) v Maccabi Tel-Aviv (ISR)  
Gorica (SLO) v Monaco (FRA)  
Wisla Krakow (POL) v Real Madrid (SPA)  
**First leg:** 10/11 August 2004  
**Second leg:** 24/25 August 2004

two years time," he told L'Equipe sports daily.

The 1998 World Cup and Euro 2000 winner made his French debut in 1992 and went on to win 97 caps, scoring two goals.

Prior to joining Marseille this month



BIXENTE LIZARAZU

Ligue 1 preview

Lyon's four in a row mission

Football

AFP, Paris

Three-time champions Lyon set out in search of a place in the select club of French teams who have won the league title four consecutive times on Friday.

Marseille and Saint Etienne are the only sides to have achieved the feat with UEFA Cup finalists Marseille set to be one of Lyon's biggest rivals during the 2004-2005 campaign.

The champions launch their title defence at Nice in the only match scheduled for Friday.

Whether coach Paul Le Guen's team can maintain the momentum remains to be seen with financial difficulties forcing them to part with key players like Vikash Dhorasoo, Peguy Luyindula, Eric Carriere and Edmilson.

But Le Guen has managed to hang on to playmaker Juninho and striker Giovane Elber, and despite the exodus goalkeeper Gregory Coupet is confident for the new season after their recent 'Trophée des Champions' success over French Cup winners Paris Saint Germain.

"There will always be the same team spirit," said Coupet.

"It's a challenge to try and win this first match of the season. If not to take at least a point. But the PSG match has given us confidence."

Marseille, who will not be competing in Europe this season, can concentrate all their efforts on winning their first title since their four-in-row effort between 1988 and 1992.

Boosted by 37.5 million euros from the transfer of Didier Drogba to Chelsea, Marseille treated themselves to a host of internationals including Frederic Dehu, Bixente Lizarazu, Benoit Pedretti, Bruno Cheyrou, Luyindula and the Brazilian Eduardo Costa.

Coach Jose Anigo wants to get down to business straight away and benefit from the fact that they will host three games on front of their merciless fans at the Velodrome stadium in August starting with Bordeaux on Saturday.

New boy Luyindula is predicting great things for his new team.

"I think that Marseille's team will be better than that of Lyon this new season," said Luyindula.

"Lyon might have qualified for the Champions League but the biggest difficulty is yet to come for them."

League runners-up PSG have only one aim - to do better than last season - and kick off their campaign at Brittany side Rennes on Saturday.

The departures of Frederic Dehu, Gabriel Heinze and Juan Palo Sorin were offbalanced by the arrival of Sylvain Armand, Mario Yepes and Jean-Hugues Ateba with midfielder Jerome Rothen tipped to be the star at

Juve want Mutu

Football

AFP, Rome

Juventus have offered English Premiership club Chelsea 12 million euros (14.5 million dollars) for Romanian striker Adrian Mutu, according to Thursday's Gazzetta dello Sport.

The newspaper reported that Mutu, a 24 million euro (29 million dollar) signing from Juve's Serie A rivals Parma last year, is keen on a return to Italy after failing to settle in London.

The Gazzetta claim that

on a two-year deal he played with German giants Bayern Munich for seven years, winning four Bundesliga titles.

He previously played in Spain with Athletic Bilbao and French side Bordeaux.

"Over the past seven years at Bayern, I have given 100 percent of my energy to the French team and my club. Now I need more time for my personal life and my son.

"I feel relieved with this announcement. I've been thinking it over for a long time," he said. "These decisions are not taken easily."

The French Football Federation issued a statement on behalf of Raymond Domenech in which it said the new coach "totally respects this choice, as he had done with Lilian Thuram."

Domenech had held talks with Lizarazu on Tuesday in a bid to put off his retirement.

Parc des Princes this season, along with Portuguese international striker Pauleta, looking for a confidence-booster after his European championship disappointment.

"The club's ambitions are big this year and I'll be right in there," warned Yepes. "We're getting better and better on the pitch and we're heading in the right direction."

Unlike Marseille both PSG and Monaco will have to juggle their European campaigns with a heavy calendar at home.

Champions League finalists Monaco have seen the departure of Ludovic Giuly, Jerome Rothen, Dado Prso and Fernando Morientes, with coach Didier Deschamps threatening to quit unless new faces were brought in.

The club acquired a new president in wealthy businessman Michel Pastor, and Deschamps stayed put.

The result has been the arrival of strikers Ernesto Javier Chevanton and Mohamed Kallon, along with young Brazilian defender Maicon, fresh from Brazil's Copa America victory.

Deschamps is also on the look out for inspiration up front, with Manchester City striker Nicolas Anelka reportedly being lined up as a transfer target if they fail to sign Barcelona star Javier Saviola.

The Principality side will face their first challenge at promoted Saint Etienne, who are targeting a return to the glory days of the 1960s and 1970s with their last of ten titles back in 1981.

Travelling to Lille are Guy Roux's Auxerre, the 1996 champions, who are out to rebuild after the departure of a generation of gifted players including Jean-Alain Boumsong, Philippe Mexes, Olivier Kapo and Djibril Cisse.

Lens, who have also been recruiting new blood, are also in the running for a place at the top of the table, playing their first match against Toulouse who narrowly missed the drop last season.

Along with newcomers Caen and Istres, Saint Etienne, the holders of the most titles in French league history, will need to get off to a strong start to secure their place in the first division.

Meanwhile nervous coaches will now have to resort to chewing gum on the line as of Friday after the French Professional Football League (LFP) banned smoking on the bench in line with European Football Union (UEFA) regulations.

FIXTURES

**Friday:** Nice v Lyon (18H45 GMT)  
**Saturday (18H00 unless stated):** Saint Etienne v Monaco (15H15), Bastia v Strasbourg, Caen v Istres, Lille v Auxerre, Marseille v Bordeaux, Metz v Nantes, Rennes v Paris SG, Sochaux v Ajaccio, Toulouse v Lens