A Portuguese shame

AFP, Lisbon

Euro 2004 runners-up Portugal were roasted in the Portuguese press Sunday the morning after they were held to a humiliating 2-2 draw against minnows Liechtenstein in a World Cup qualifier at Vaduz.

Overconfidence was blamed for the humbling of the starstudded side after Portugal had gone into the Group Three match with a perfect six points from two matches

On Saturday they were coasting 2-0 up at half-time thanks to a 23rd minute opener from Pauleta and a 39th minute own goal from Daniel Hasler.

But Liechtenstein, with two defeats from two games and nine goals conceded, refused to buckle and pulled one back three minutes after the interval through Franz Burgmeier with Thomas Beck grabbing the equaliser with 14 minutes to go.

'The joke of Europe," headlined sports daily A Bola.

"Portugal in Vaduz performed one of the worst exhibitions in their history, a loose, amorphous, uninspired, slow display," the paper continued.

"National team humiliated." headlined the top-selling daily tabloid Correio da Manha. "Liechtenstein transforms a 0-2 at half-time to 2-2." The paper said that a draw to

part-timers Liechtenstein, ranked 151st in the FIFA World Ranking: "is one of those films in which reality surpasses fiction." 'The worst performances of

Scolari's Portugal, the friendly matches before Euro 2004, are back. Except this time the joke cost two points," it added. Portugal moved up three

places to eigthh in the most recent FIFA ranking released Wednesday. "Night of humiliation for a

ridiculous team," said sports daily Record, while daily Diario de Noticias's front page screamed "national team disappoints against Liechtenstein".

Portugal, who now have a 4-1-0 record against Liechtenstein, have seven points in Group 3, three points behind group leaders Slovakia. with Liechtenstein second from bottom of the seven-team group with one point.



WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU ARE GOING? Venezuela's Alejandro Cichero (C) pushes a Venezuelan fan wearing Brazil's shirt who burst into the field to touch Brazil superstar Ronaldo (L) during their World Cup 2006 qualifying match in

Venezuela no match

REUTERS, Maracaibo



Kaka and Ronaldo hit two goals apiece as Brazil hammered Venezuela 5-2 on Saturday in a World Cup qualifier twice inter-

rupted by fans going on to the field to hug the visiting players

Adriano added the fifth goal as the world champions stayed top of the 10-nation South American qualifying group at the halfway mark of the competition, with 19 points from nine games.

Venezuela, who grabbed two late consolation strikes through forward Ruberth Moran, have 10

The first supporter came on to the pitch after Ronaldo had scored Brazil's fourth goal in the 51st minute and hugged fullback Roberto Carlos before being pulled away by security men

Shortly after, another fan, wearing a Brazil shirt, went on the field and did the same to Ronaldo.

Although Roberto Carlos laughed off the incident, the Venezuelans could find themselves in serious trouble for the double security lapse

The first half was even in terms of possession but Kaka's two goals made the difference. Ronaldo then scored twice in three minutes after the break to kill off the home team.

"Venezuela don't have the decisiveness we have in attack and that is the difference, that's why we deserve to win," Brazil coach Carlos Alberto Parreira told reporters.

Venezuela, who have lost all 16 meetings with Brazil, had hoped to end their wretched run after enjoying a huge improvement in the last three years under coach Richard

Paez said he was pleased with his team's performance even though they lost

"Brazil were undoubtedly the better team but I liked Venezuela's attitude and I believe we learned a lot." he said.

"For the first time, we saw a Venezuela team that wasn't afraid of Brazil. We didn't defend, we always went for goal which is our philoso-

Brazil almost went ahead inside

a minute when Ze Roberto's shot was cleared off the line by Luis Vera.

Kaka, who was left out of last month's match against Bolivia after he failed to take part in an August friendly in Haiti, played a one-two with Ronaldinho on six minutes, slipped through several defenders and placed his shot in the right corner of the net.

Venezuela then twice tested Dida with long-range shots. The AC Milan goalkeeper parried one dipping effort from Juan Arango before tipping Jose Manuel Rey's swerving free kick over the cross-

The world champions always looked dangerous on the break and went further ahead in the 35th minute when Ronaldo broke clear, rounded goalkeeper Gilberto Angelucci and slipped the ball to Kaka, whose shot was deflected in

Ronaldo turned in Ze Roberto's 49th-minute cross to grab his eighth goal of the qualifiers.

Two minutes later, Ronaldo struck again with the help of an Angelucci blunder. The Real Madrid player burst through the defence and, although his shot was weak, it slid through the goalkeeper's legs.

Ronaldo said he wanted to keep Brazil apart from his club Real Madrid, where he has hit a bad run

"It's good to separate things," said Ronaldo, who is the leading scorer in the South American World Cup qualifying competition with nine "In the national team, I'm doing

well and scoring goals. At Real Madrid, I'm going through a bad Adriano came off the bench in

the 68th minute to replace Ronaldo and netted the fifth with 15 minutes

Venezuela, who had only scored twice in their previous 15 matches against Brazil, doubled their tally when Moran scored from close range in the 80th minute before calmly converting a chance set up by another Arango run in injury time.

In between, Adriano missed a chance for the sixth when he miscued a tap-in on the goalline

Only England impress



England brushed aside feeble Wales 2-0 to take another step closer to the World Cup finals on Saturday but it was a disastrous

day for the continent's other big guns with Italy losing to Slovenia while France, Netherlands and Portugal were all held to embarrassing draws.

Sven-Goran Eriksson's men took the plaudits with an assured performance at Old Trafford where goals from Frank Lampard and skipper David Beckham sent them top of Group Six. "I was very pleased with the

performance," said Eriksson who was rewarded for his bold approach of plaving three strikers in Wavne Rooney, Michael Owen and Jermain Defoe. "Wales defended very well, they

closed all the spaces but we did a good professional job. We played with three strikers, had good balance and could have scored more England, who next face

Azerbaijan in Baku on Wednesday, will be without Beckham who is suspended after being booked for a reckless tackle on Ben Thatcher.

He also ended the day undergoing X-rays on a broken rib which could sideline him from Real Madrid's upcoming fixtures.

Italy's hopes of securing an automatic place at the finals suffered a major setback after they lost 1-0 to Slovenia in Celje with their form as miserable as the driving

Bostjan Cesar's header eight minutes from time gave the home side a dramatic victory and enabled Slovenia to replace Italy at the top Group Five.

Italy's defeat was their first in a World Cup qualifying match since May 1, 1994 when they lost away to Switzerland

Slovenia top the group with seven points from three matches, one ahead of Italy, who had won their first two games against Norway and Moldova

Italy coach Marcello Lippi insisted his team deserved better having dominated possession and enjoyed the greater number of chances

"They scored from the only chance they had in the second-half,"

"You just cannot afford to lose these matches. We didn't deserve it because we played well. Now we must win our next game (against Park and increase the pressure on Belarus on Wednesday).

In Vaduz, meanwhile, Furo 2004 runners-up Portugal suffered a humiliating setback when they were held to a 2-2 draw by the part-timers of Liechtenstein.

The Portuguese led 2-0 up at half-time thanks to a 23rd minute opener from Pauleta and a 39th minute own goal from Daniel Hasler.

But Liechtenstein refused to buckle against their superstar visitors and pulled one back three minutes after the interval through Franz Burgmeier. Thomas Beck then made it 2-2 with 14 minutes left to give the tiny nation their first point in the competition.

The defeat also left Portugal three points behind group leaders Slovakia who beat Latvia 4-1.

In Paris, former world champions France were held to a goalless draw by a spirited Ireland side.

Buoyed by a sea of green, white and orange - over 25,000 Irish supporters had come to watch this first meeting between the two countries in 15 years - Irish hopes were high of a first win in Paris since

A tough physical contest was predicted and that's what the packed Stade de France were served up with the Irish emerging

"We came here to be disciplined and defend when we had to," said Ireland skipper Kenny Cunnin-

"We also took the game to them and we had chances to score. There were openings there and I think we showed a lot of imagination up

Switzerland, who drew 2-2 in Israel, stay top on goal difference

with Ireland in second place. In Skopie, the Netherlands surrendered a one-goal lead to draw 2-2 with Macedonia. Wilfred Bouma gave the Dutch a 43rd minute lead only for Goran Pandey to hit back on the stroke of half-time.

Dirk Kuiit then restored the lead in the 66th minute but Aco Stoikov saved a point for the home side four minutes later.

Spain managed to avoid similar setbacks when two goals in the space of four second half minutes from Alberto Luque and Raul were enough to beat Belgium in Group Seven in Santander.

Belgium finished the match with nine men after Eric Deflandre and Bart Goor were red-carded.

In Glasgow, former Tottenham striker Steffen Iversen scored from the penalty spot to give his side a 1-0 win over Scotland at Hampden

Scots' boss Berti Vogts. "We played so well, we were very unlucky. I am very proud of my team they gave everything," said Vogts

after the Group Five clash. Scotland are now six points behind leaders Slovenia. The Czech Republic, who lost their opening Group One game in

the Netherlands, got their campaign

back on track with a 1-0 win over

Romania in Prague thanks to a 36th minute Jan Koller penalty. Romania had gone into the match with a perfect nine points

from three games. Finland beat Armenia 3-1 in Tampere and went top on goal difference with two goals coming

from Ipswich Town's Shefki Kuqi. In Group Three, Slovakia extended their lead at the top with a 4-1 win over Latvia in Bratislava while Russia stayed in touch thanks to a 4-0 win in Luxembourg where Dmitri Sychev grabbed a hat-trick.

Maier gets the boot

AFP, Frankfurt

German national goalkeeper coach Sepp Maier has been sacked for taking sides in the rivalry between first team goalies Oliver Kahn and Jens Lehmann, the German Football Federation (DFB) announced Sunday.

The decision was taken after the team returned from Saturday's 2-0 friendly win over Iran in Tehran where Arsenal goalkeeper Lehmann had a rare chance to take over from Kahn.

Maier has been in charge of goalkeeper training at the national team since 1988, but had come under fire after bad mouthing

"He (Lehmann) can go hang himself, he'll never be number one," the 60-year-old Maier is reported to have said.

Maier favours Kahn, who like him

is with German giants Bavern

Munich. Germany coach Jurgen Klinsmann, who paid tribute to Lehmann after Saturday's game, is said to favour former German and Marseille goalie Andreas Koepke for

Results from the 2006 World Cur European Zone qualifying competition

Group One At Tampere, Finland Finland 3 (Kuqi 9, 88, Eremenko Jr 28) Armenia 1 (Shahgeldyan 32) At Prague

Czech Republic 1 (Koller 36-pen)

At Skopje Macedonia 2 (Pandey 45, Stoikov 70) Netherlands 2 (Bouma 43, Kuijt 66)

Ukraine 1 (Shevchenko 48) Greece 1

Turkey 4 (Karadeniz 17, Nihat 50, Tekke 90, 90) Kazakhstan 0

At Luxembourg Luxembourg O Russia 4 (Sychev 56, 69, 86, Arshavin 62) At Bratislava

Liechtenstein 2 (Burgmeier 48, Beck 76) Portugal 2 (Pauleta 23, Hasler 39-

Slovakia 4 (Nemeth 47, Reiter 50

Karhan 55, 87) Latvia 1 (Verpakovskis

At Nicosia Cyprus 2 (Konstantinou 14-pen, Okkas 82) Faroe Islands 2 (Jorgensen 21 Jacobsen 43) France O Republic of Ireland O

Group Five At Glasgov Scotland O Norway 1 (Iversen 55-pen) At Minsk Belarus 4 (Omelianchuk 44, Kutuzov 65, Bulyga 76, Romashenko 90)

At Manchester, England England 2 (Lampard 4, Beckham 76) At Baku Azerbaijan O Northern Ireland O

Austria 1 (Schopp 30) Poland 3

Moldova 0

At Vienna

Krzynowek, 79, Frankowski 90) Bosnia O Serbia-Montenegro O

Group Eight At Stockholn Sweden 3 (Ljungberg 26, Larsson 50, Svensson 67) Hungary 0 At Valetta Malta O Iceland O At Zagreb Croatia 2 (Srna 15, 32) Bulgaria 2 (Petrov 78, Berbatov 87)

Liechtenstein on cloud nine

AFP, Paris

It took 21 matches and eight years of trying but little Liechtenstein were basking Sunday in clinching their first ever World Cup point.

with Euro 2004 runners-up Portugal in Vaduz and ended a streak of 20 consecutive defeats in World Cup qualifiers stretching back to their debut in April 1996. A tiny country with just 33,000 inhabitants and squeezed between Switzerland and Austria. Liechtenstein is better known in sport

It came on Saturday in a 2-2 draw

for producing Alpine skiers like Andreas and Hanni Wenzel and Willi Frommelt who were Olympic Games regulars in the 1970s and 1980s. But the nation's footballers have been on a slippery slope of their own and before Saturday's win, achieved from being 2-0 down at half-time, they had lost their two Group Three

openers, 2-1 to Estonia and 7-0 against Slovakia. Their record in European Championship qualifiers is slightly better, however, having played in 1996, 2000 and 2004 and recording one win - 2-1 against Azerbaijan in

October 1998. They can also 'boast' three draws against the Republic of Ireland, Hungary and Macedonia. But the FIFA rankings tell an

embarrassing tale for Portugal. **USA** almost there

AFP, Washington

The United States can make sure of their place in the final round of qualifying for the 2006 World Cup if they beat Panama on Wednesday after defeating El Salvador 2-0 on Saturday.

of CONCACAF Group One with eight points from four matches, three ahead of Jamaica The USA victory in San Salvador came courtesy of goals from Brian McBride, his

26th international goal, and Ed Johnson,

The win kept Bruce Arena's team on top

who scored on his debut. In Panama City, Theodore Whitmore hit a 73rd minute equaliser to give Jamaica a 1-I draw with Panama for whom Roberto Brown had opened the scoring in the 22nd

minute In Group Two, Costa Rica kept their hopes of qualifying for the six-nation final round next year with a 5-0 crushing of previously unbeaten Guatemala in San Jose with former Manchester City striker Paulo Wanchope hitting a hat-trick. Honduras and Canada fought out a 1-1

draw in the day's other match.

Argentina cruise



Argentina scored a crushing victory in one of Saturday's World Cup qualifiers when they beat Uruguay 4-2 in Buenos Aires.

Argentina, playing their first match under new coach Jose Pekerman, raced into a 4-0 lead after 54 minutes with a Luciano Figueroa double and a goal apiece from Luis Gonzalez and Javier Zanetti.

Cristian Rodriguez and Javier Chevanton, from a twice-taken penalty, made the scoreline respectable for Uruguay. In other games, Colombia

wasted a hatful of chances as they were held 1-1 by Paraguay in Barranquilla while Bolivia stayed bottom of the group table despite beating Peru 1-0 in a scrappy match in La Paz. As the South American World

halfway mark, Brazil lead with 19 points from nine games with Argentina one point behind. Both look certain to qualify for Germany They are followed by Paraguay (15), Chile (12), Ecuador, Uruguay, Venezuela (10) and Colombia,

Cup qualifying section reaches the

Chile complete the weekend's program in Quito on Sunday. The top four teams qualify for the finals and the fifth play off against the Oceania region win-

Peru and Bolivia (9). Ecuador and

Pekerman, who took over last month after Marcelo Bielsa unexpectedly ended his six-year reign, admitted to first-night nerves against Uruguay but they were quickly calmed by Gonzalez's sixth-minute opener. Figueroa, standing in for the

ners for another place.

injured Hernan Crespo, and Zanetti finished off incisive moves to make it 3-0 before halftime and then Figueroa latched on to Juan Roman Riquelme's pass for the fourth goal. "I was nervous at the start, it

was a new experience," Pekerman told reporters. "Fortunately, Argentina were

very efficent in the first half. We took our chances and that knocked Uruguay out of their stride." After Gonzalez's early strike, Figueroa gave the hosts a convinc-

underlined Argentina's class on the Zanetti all but wrapped up the

ing lead in the 32nd minute with a

spectacular left-footed effort which

halftime to make it 3-0.

Blond-haired Figueroa, who plays for Cruz Azul in Argentina. grabbed his second goal ten minutes after the restart to more or less guarantee the points for Pekerman's squad, which had been without veteran midfielder

Juan Sebastien Veron on the night. Argentina soon took their foot off the gas and it was shortly afterwards that Uruguay, being urged forward by several thousand visiting fans, managed to pull a goal

However the 63rd minute strike by midfielder Cristian Rodriguez, and the 87th-minute penalty that Javier Chevanton drove past



LUCIANO FIGUEROA

Roberto Abbondanzieri in the Argentine goal proved too little too

Zanetti, the scorer of Argentina's third goal, admitted the team were happy to have given the fans "We're happy because we were

able to show the supporters that

we're capable of great things," said "After we had gone 3-0 up, we were in complete control of the

Argentina will now go into their midweek match away to Chile on a high, although captain Juan Pablo Sorin admits it will be difficult to

replicate Saturday's match. "Everything went perfectly in the first half. We were on another

level," said Sorin. "We had the rest of the game under control, and our pace and rhythm came to the fore at all the

"But you don't get a lot of results like 4-2. In the qualifiers it's not easy and it will be difficult to play

again like we did tonight."

Rueda lamented his team's wastefulness after they had only Freddy Grisales's deflected goal to show for outclassing Paraguay in the

Colombia coach Reinaldo

The visitors, notoriously difficult opponents, hit back with an Aureliano Torres goal in the 78th "Colombia played well but we

vert the chances we created," said Rueda, whose team missed an opportunity to climb to fifth. "We're still in an embarrassing position...and we have to make up

lost ground."

committed one sin, we didn't con-

Joaquin Botero's fifth strike of the qualifiers gave Bolivia three points against Peru in a scrappy, bad-tempered game. The match degenerated in the

84th minute when Bolivia

midfielder Luis Gatty Ribeiro was

sent off for kicking Juan Jayo in the

Standings after Saturday's games in the South American zone qualifier for the 2006 World Cup finals (played, won, drawn, lost, for, against, points):

azil	9	5 5	4	0	19 18	10 9	19 18
gentina	-	-	-			-	
raguay	9	4	3	2	11	9	15
ile	8	3	3	2	9	7	12
uador	8	3	1	4	8	8	10
nezuela)	9	3	1	5	8	1	3
uguay	9	3	1	5	15	23	10
lombia	9	2	3	4	11	11	9
ru	9	2	3	4	10	11	9

(The first four teams will qualify directly for the World Cup finals with the fifth

9 3 0 6 11 19 9

At Quito: Ecuador - Chile Playing October 12 At La Paz: Bolivia - Uruguay

At Asuncion: Paraguay - Peru At San Cristobal: Venezuela - Ecuador

At Santiago: Chile - Argentine At Maceio: Brazil - Colombia