

PREVIEW: SOUTH AMERICA History not with Brazil

AFP, Montevideo

Brazil, yet to win a competitive fixture in Uruguay, travel to Montevideo on Wednesday for a World Cup qualifier against a team which has indelibly marked them.

Brazil's World Cup defeat in 1950 in their own Maracana stadium to champions Uruguay was one of the lowest events in their football history.

Parreira stands by the 'phenomenon'

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil coach Carlos Alberto Parreira reiterated his backing for Ronaldo on Monday and said he had not considered dropping the out-of-form striker.

"Other teams don't have anyone like Ronaldo and are green with envy of Brazil," Parreira told Brazilian media in Montevideo where the world champions face Uruguay in Wednesday's World Cup qualifier.

losing three times -- in 1916, 1932 and 1976.

Tabletoppers Argentina, who beat Bolivia 2-1 in La Paz at the weekend with many reserve players, are set to host Colombia with a much stronger side.

Coach Jose Pekerman knows a victory over Colombia would make even more likely their qualification from one of the four automatic berths for the 2006 finals in Germany.

Colombia, on the other hand, who drew 0-0 with Venezuela at the weekend, lie seventh and have their work cut out to even make a play-off which awaits the fifth-placed side.

Pekerman will have virtually picked his side though a torn muscle in Juan Pablo Sorin's groin has left Diego Placente on standby.

Javier Saviola and Hernan Crespo are expected to be the strike duo with Robert Abbondanzieri in goal behind the same defence which won the Olympic games gold medal last year.

Abbondanzieri looks set to be the only player that also featured against Bolivia.



SORRY, CAN'T JOIN YOU. WE ARE TAKING A DIP OVER THERE! Brazilian superstar Ronaldinho jokes with some guests at the pool of Brazil's team hotel in Montevideo on March 28.

Woolmer sees bright future

AFP, Bangalore

Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer said on Tuesday his team's comprehensive win in the third and final Test against India will propel the side to new heights.

"This fantastic win will lift the team like nothing else can," Woolmer told AFP a day after Pakistan defeated India by 168 runs just before close on the fifth and final day on Monday to level the three-match series 1-1.

"I am convinced the team will come of age on this tour. Bangalore has provided the spark and we must cash in on it," the 56-year-old Englishman said.

Pakistan, who set India a challenging 383-run target, dismissed the hosts for 214 in their second innings to avenge their 195-run loss in the second Test at Kolkata.

The opening Test at Mohali ended in a draw, denying India a home series win against Pakistan for the fourth time since 1979.

"We played some serious cricket. We saved the first Test through hard work and could have won at Kolkata had we not lost our way on the third day," said Woolmer, referring to his side's inability to take a first innings lead at the Eden Gardens.

Woolmer, a former coach of South Africa, replaced former Pakistan great Javed Miandad as coach in June last year, two months after home defeats against India.

"This was our eighth Test since I took over and for the first time we played to our true potential," said Woolmer, under whom Pakistan had lost five of the previous seven Tests.

"We were giving up from winning situations. That happened in Melbourne, Perth and also in Kolkata. I am happy it did not happen here and we outclassed India."

"Beating a potentially world number two team like India is a great achievement and everyone contributed -- from number one to eleven."

Woolmer, who was criticised for his innovative coaching that did not bear results, praised skipper Inzamamul Haq for his outstanding batting and leadership.

Ferozeshah Kotla to become virtual fort



AFP, New Delhi

Police in New Delhi plan to turn a cricket stadium into a fortress before Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf arrives to watch a match between India and Pakistan, officials said on Tuesday.

Some 5,000 policemen and security personnel will guard the Ferozeshah Kotla Stadium on April 17 when the arch-rivals play the last of their six one-dayers scheduled to be watched by Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Police would also install electronic devices to jam radio signals which can remotely detonate explosives, the Times of India newspaper reported Tuesday, quoting unnamed officials.

Security sources, however, have expressed concern about the condition of the stadium which for the past two years has been undergoing a total overhaul and is still incomplete with upper spectator tiers still under construction.

Wayaskarani waltz

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with a 150-ball 95 with 12 boundaries.

Shuvo also shone with the ball as he picked up four wickets for 65 with his left-arm spin.

SYLHET - DHAKA Himel's 116 and Alok Kapali half century took Sylhet to 269 for six at stumps after they had started on overnight 55-2.

Left-hander Himel, the league's leading scorer, played 336 balls and hit seven fours. He shared 152 with his Parvez Ahmed (35 off 144 balls) for the third wicket. Kapali, trying hard to impress the national selectors, made his second fifty in the competition (54 off 85 balls that had six boundaries).

BARISAL - KHULNA Barisal threw a challenge to Habibur Bashar's Khulna after overnight batsmen Proshenjit and Nadif showed the way having resumed on 220 for six. Proshenjit scored a 221-ball 93 while Nadif contributed 90 (235 deliveries).

Number eight batsman Ali Arman then further frustrated Khulna with an invaluable 76 runs (144 balls).

Left-arm spinner Abdur Rzzak Raj was the most successful bowler for Khulna with four for

and plug every gap in the stadium but we can muster the manpower to manually control security matters," said the official from a federal security agency.

Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit began keeping a close eye on round-the-clock preparations at the stadium after Islamabad earlier this month confirmed Musharraf's decision to visit India to watch one of the matches.

"I am satisfied with the fact that things are going as per schedule," Dikshit told journalists during an inspection of the ground, located next to a Muslim-majority walled section of the Indian capital.

"Hosting an India-Pakistan match is a matter of great pride and honour for Delhi," she said, adding the 50,000-capacity stadium, which can seat around 30,000 spectators, will be ready for the match.

The Pakistani president visited India in 2001 for a summit with then prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee but it collapsed in the Taj Mahal town of Agra due to differences over Kashmir, which is divided between the two nuclear-armed rivals but claimed in full.

SLC sinks into deep trouble

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka's cricket administration crisis has escalated with suspended cricket officials challenging the sports minister's authority to launch a government takeover on grounds of financial mismanagement.

Suspended board president Thianga Sumathipala ordered the closure of the organisation's Colombo headquarters on Monday morning and sent all employees home as he started a legal tussle with Sports Minister Jeevan Kumara-tunga.

Chief Executive Duleep Mendis was instructed to stop all correspondence on behalf of Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) and extra security guards have been employed to prevent any of the government's six-man interim committee from entering the premises.

IUB in semis

SPORTS REPORTER

Independent University of Bangladesh (IUB) became the first team to reach the semifinals of the AIUB fourth inter-private university cricket tournament when they ousted Manarat University by seven wickets yesterday.

In the first quarterfinal at the BKSP ground, IUB reached 119-3 after dismissing their opponents for 118 in 39.4 overs.

McGrath opts

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but to keep his hopes alive of doing it in that match he would have had to drop a lofted catch from Daniel Vettori.

With 498 dismissals in the bag and two New Zealand wickets remaining, McGrath was fielding at deep mid-off when Vettori skied a ball from Shane Warne.

As McGrath waited for the lofted ball to come down, he knew to hold on to it would mean the end of his 500 dream -- at least for the time being.

"I actually gave myself about 40 per cent chance of catching it. I wasn't too safe under it but it stuck."

McGrath, whose wife Jane flew over from Australia on Monday night to be present for the potential milestone, then bowled Paul Wiseman to end the New Zealand innings and claim his 499th Test scalp.

He has already named England opener Andrew Strauss as his Ashes series target, but said there was no preference for number 500 as long as it happened quickly.

"Hopefully one of my openers, and in the first over would be even better. We'll have to wait and see. I haven't really targeted anyone yet but it will be out of two blokes."

Mourinho saw nothing!

REUTERS, Tel Aviv

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho said on Monday he did not personally witness his Barcelona counterpart Frank Rijkaard enter the referee's dressing room during a Champions League match at the Nou Camp.

European governing body UEFA has charged the Premier League leaders with bringing the game into disrepute after Mourinho accused Rijkaard of speaking to referee Anders Frisk at halftime in the first leg of the first knockout round tie on February 23.

UEFA specifically cited Mourinho, his assistant Steve Clarke and security man Les Miles. Chelsea, who were leading 1-0 at halftime, lost the first leg 2-1 after striker Didier Drogba was sent off.

"I just informed what people from my staff told me. I saw nothing, I wasn't involved," Mourinho told Israel's Channel 5.

"I am always the first man to leave the pitch at halftime and some assistants told me what happened."

"I have to believe in the people who work with me because the day I don't believe, I don't trust the people who work with me. I go home, or I send them home."

Mourinho earlier told a presentation to Israeli and Palestinian coaches: "I am the manager and I have people who assist me."

If something happens in the football stadium and I don't see and if some of my people arrive and tell me 'I saw this, this happened,' and then the other one comes and says, 'I saw the same' I say it's true, because I cannot work without loyalty, I have to believe my people."

Sweden Frisk has subsequently retired from refereeing after saying he received death threats from Chelsea fans following the first leg.

Chelsea advanced to the quarter-finals after winning the second leg 4-2 at Stamford Bridge on March 8.

Pakistan pair move up

BBC ONLINE, undated

Pakistan batsmen Inzamamul Haq and Younis Khan have broken into the top 10 of the Test rankings after starting in Pakistan's win over India in Bangalore.

Captain Inzamam is eighth after hitting 184, while Younis soared 17 places to ninth after a marathon innings of 267.

Rahul Dravid has been replaced at the top by South Africa's Jacques Kallis after two low scores, while Australia's Glenn McGrath is still the top bowler.

India missed a chance to go third in the team rankings after failing to win.

Table with 2 columns: Teams, Rank. Australia 132, England 110, India 107, Sri Lanka 103, Pakistan 102, South Africa 99, New Zealand 93, West Indies 73, Zimbabwe 41, Bangladesh 6.

Table with 2 columns: Batsmen, Score. Jacques Kallis 886, Rahul Dravid 872, Ricky Ponting 863, Virender Sehwag 848, Brian Lara 842, Damien Martyn 836, Adam Gilchrist 819, Inzamamul Haq 794, Younis Khan 757, Andrew Strauss 751.

Table with 2 columns: Bowlers, Wickets. Glenn McGrath 897, Muttiah Muralitharan 851, Shaun Pollock 837, Shoaib Akhtar 786, Shane Warne 771, Anil Kumble 766, Makhaya Ntini 765, Jason Gillespie 739, Steve Harmison 717, Danish Kaneria 715.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues: 1. Love concern (Lat.), 2. Orbiter until 2001, 3. Undivided, 4. Cavorted, 5. Boxer, 6. Max, 7. Town, 8. Cater to the masses, 9. Stead, 10. Exam format, 11. Burning heap, 13. Neckwear, 19. Do as you're told, 20. Greek X, 21. Aerobic maneuver, 22. Arm bone, 23. See 29, 25. Debater's answer, 26. Novice, 27. Denomination, 29. Tarzan's wife, 31. Stoops to Conquer!, 33. Dairy case item, 34. Special vocabularies, 36. Marries, 37. Smile broadly, 38. Bruin's sch., 39. 'Phoeyoi!', 40. Recog-nize, 43. Gorilla, 44. Flamenco cheer, 45. On pension (Abbr.), 46. Something (Suff.).

PREVIEW: EUROPE Greece, France look lost

AP, London

Nine months after winning the European championship, the Greeks are in jeopardy of failing to qualify for the World Cup.

And they're not the only ones. Portugal, France and Spain also are in danger of missing next year's tournament in Germany.

World Cup qualifying in Europe has hit the halfway point, with 21 games scheduled for Wednesday in the continent's eight groups.

The Greeks, who play Albania in Athens, won 3-1 in Georgia on Saturday but remain haunted in Group 2 by a 2-1 loss at Albania in September.

Greece trails group leader Ukraine by three points. Ukraine is home against Denmark, which is five behind. Ukraine will be without star striker Andriy Shevchenko, who has a broken cheekbone.

"With Shevchenko, it's one team, and it's quite another one without him," Ukraine coach Oleh Blokhin said.

Portugal, the Euro 2004 runner-up, faces a key game at Slovakia. Both have 13 points atop Group 3. Portugal is coming off a 4-1 exhibition win Saturday over Canada. Slovakia defeated Estonia 2-1.

Under European qualifying rules, the eight group winners advance automatically to Germany. The top two second-place teams also advance,

and the other six second-place teams face playoffs. Host Germany qualifies automatically.

Wednesday's games mark the seventh of 13 playing dates. The next rounds are June 4 and 8. Qualifying ends Oct. 12, with playoffs set for November.

France is Europe's "Big Zero" entering its game in Israel. The 1998 World Cup champions tied visiting Switzerland 0-0 Saturday for their third scoreless home tie against their three main Group 4 rivals -- Ireland, Israel and Switzerland.

"We are consistent. All we need to do now is score goals," coach Raymond Domenech said. The team has scored just six goals in eight games since Domenech took over in July.

France, Ireland and Israel have nine points, with Switzerland just three behind. France still has to play at Ireland and at Switzerland in the second half of the qualifying campaign.

Spain, one of Europe's consistent underachievers, could have trouble again at Belgrade against Serbia-Montenegro in Group 7. Serbia leads with 10 points, with Spain and Lithuania two behind.

Spain defeated China 3-0 in an exhibition Saturday. Coach Luis Aragonés is under pressure to bench star striker Raul Gonzalez, who missed the China game with an injury.

"It's clear that Serbia is a great team, but I think if we set a faster pace, we can win," midfielder Luis Garcia said.

PREVIEW: ASIA

Japan, Korea need points

REUTERS, Tokyo

Japan and South Korea will be anxious to take maximum points at home on Wednesday following painful World Cup qualifying defeats in the Persian Gulf.

Japan's 2-1 defeat in Iran on Friday left them in disarray and increased the pressure on their Brazilian coach Zico ahead of Bahrain's visit to Suitama.

Iran and Bahrain have four points from two matches in the final round of Asian 2006 World Cup qualifiers with Japan third in Group B on three points.

Meanwhile, 2002 World Cup semi-finalists South Korea lacked cohesion and provided no serious threat in a 2-0 defeat away against Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia went top of Group A on four points with South Korea and Kuwait a point behind.

With their proud record of having played in the last five World Cup tournaments at stake there will be intense pressure on South Korea to beat Uzbekistan in Seoul on Wednesday.

Japan face the more difficult task against a Bahrain team still buzzing after their hard-fought 2-1 victory over North Korea in Pyongyang.

The Japanese beat Bahrain 4-3 in the semi-finals of last year's Asian Cup but they need a resounding victory this time to restore harmony to a side frustrated over Zico's tactics.

Several players were unhappy with Zico's decision to tinker with his formation to accommodate playmaker Hidetoshi Nakata, who had not played for Japan in a year due to injury problems.

"I'm looking at playing three defenders" said Zico, whose tactics

have come under mounting attack since Japan's fortuitous 2-1 home win over North Korea in last month's Group B opener.

"But if you could win games through your system alone then you wouldn't need a coach."

South Korea coach Jo Bonfrere also came under fire after his side's capitulation against the Saudis and the Dutchman has demanded a huge improvement from his players.

Victory could send South Korea back to the top of Group A with Saudi Arabia playing away to Kuwait for a west Asian clash where scoring opportunities could be at a premium.

Meanwhile, Iran will be favourites to extend their lead in Group B when they face North Korea away after Bahrain's victory erased much of the fear factor of visiting Pyongyang.

Ponting prompts

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When Fleming was caught and bowled by Gillespie it ended a miserable series for the New Zealand captain where he scored a total of 104 runs at 17.33.

BRIEF SCORES NEW ZEALAND: First innings 292 (H Marshall 76, Fleming 65; McGrath 3-49, Warne 3-63); AUSTRALIA: First innings 383 (Ponting 105, Gilchrist 60; Franklin 6-119)

NEW ZEALAND: Second innings 254 (Astle 70, Vettori 65, Vincent 40; McGrath 4-40, Warne 4-78)

AUSTRALIA: Second innings 166-1 (Ponting 86 not out, Langer 59 not out) Result: Australia won by nine wickets and clinch series 2-0.

Man-of-the-match: Ricky Ponting. Man-of-the-series: Adam Gilchrist.

INDEPENDENCE DAY EVENTS

SPORTS REPORTER

Blue Berry crossed a major hurdle in the group phase of the Independence Day Hockey Tournament when they edged Bangladesh Army 1-0 at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

After a goalless first half, Mazharul Islam Moksed broke the deadlock 11 minutes from time to give Blue Berry full points.

In the day's other match, Barnak Samaj came from a goal down to beat Bangladesh Police 3-1.

Swapan put Police ahead after 23 minutes but second half goals from Rajan, Rubel and Sohel sealed the victory for Barnak.

BASKETBALL Bangladesh Army registered a hard-fought 85-75 win against Josephites in Group B in the Independence Day Basketball Tournament at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.

Raja shot highest 29 points and Yasir 21 for Josephites while Altaf caged 20 points for the winners, who took a slim four-point lead (41-37) at the break.

In Group A, Dhumketu comfortably beat BKSP 77-48 after leading 31-23 at half-time.

Munna contributed 21 points for the winners and Masoom 16 for the vanquished.

Talk Turkey logo with a turkey illustration.

STANCHART CRICKET Kalindi School set new mark

SPORTS REPORTER

Pargaon Kalindi High set a record highest team total when they amassed 416-9 in the stipulated 50 overs on way to a massive 341-run win over Mastermind in the Standard Chartered Young Tigers National School Cricket Championship yesterday.

Rana smashed 104 and Imran 92 at the Residential Model School ground as the Kalindi boys raced past the 400-run mark for the first time at any level of local cricket in a limited-overs match.

In reply, Mastermind were skittled out for 75 with Ali Hossain bagging five wickets for just seven runs.

In the day's other matches, Haider Ali cracked 104 as Rashid Adarsah (376) thrashed Bangladesh International School (53) by 323 runs, BKSP (86-1) outplayed Tejkunipara High (85) by nine wickets, Loreeto (167-1) beat Maple Leaf International (164) by the same margin, National Bank Public (175-3) beat BM Abdur Rouf Rifles (174) by seven wickets, Shaheed Ramizuddin (160) defeated Natun Paltan Line (150) by ten runs, Manarat International (202-9) snatched a one-wicket victory against Adhunik Vidyalaya (201-9) and Blue Bird (201-9) registered an identical win over Scholastica (199).

Partex Squash from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Partex Open Squash tournament will begin today at the Gulshan squash court.

More than 100 competitors from British Club, Dhaka Club, Gulshan Club, Chittagong Club, Dhaka University Club, Cadet College Club, Dhaka Army Club and Bogra Army Club will take part in six divisions.

The final will be held on April 9.

Selectors

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and Nazmul Hossain," said chief selector Faruque Ahmed.

"After talking to Dav (Whatmore) over telephone, we finalised the preliminary squad," he said.

Whatmore, who attended the wedding of Sri Lankan off-spinner Muttiah Muralithan, is expected to return to Dhaka on April 3, a day before the camp starts.

Faruque also informed a 16-member final squad would be revealed on April 20.



Sourav Ganguly

(India cricket captain)

"I am not worried about the captaincy. It's for the selectors to decide because I have captained India in 40-odd Tests and have nothing to prove to anyone."