

MEXICO V ANGOLA

Quick qualification
the goal

AFP, Hanover

Mexico will hope to seal their place in the World Cup knock-out phase with victory over Angola on Friday.

FIFA's fourth-ranked team are in the box seat in Group D after subduing Iran 3-1, placing them above Euro 2004 finalists Portugal.

But they may have their work cut out against the Black Antelopes, who won plaudits for a battling 1-0 defeat to Portugal on their World Cup debut.

"The game was more competitive than expected," commented Portugal coach Luis Felipe Scolari.

"At one stage they were better than us in midfield but if you look at the best goal chances they were all ours."

Mexico will be without Bolton striker Jared Borgetti, who limped off in the second half against Iran and may not reappear in the group stage.

But they are not without attacking options, a point rammed home by Omar Bravo's match-winning double and Brazilian-born Zinha's scintillating second-half cameo, in which he set up one goal and scored another.

They will also take heart from the tactical wiles of coach Ricardo Lavolpe, whose double-substitution at half-time turned

the game against Iran.

Lavolpe is expected to deploy Bravo in a two-man strike partnership with Argentinian-born Guillermo Franco.

Angola's very appearance at the World Cup is a near-miracle for a country which only recently emerged from three decades of civil war.

But Angola showed their World Cup credentials with a spirited display which largely frustrated their former colonial masters.

"My players played with pride but we are a humble team," said

coach Luis Oliveira Gonçalves.

"Our aim is to complicate the life of the major footballing powers here."

The performance also went down well at home, with Angola's sole newspaper hailing the team's "fighting spirit".

"A great show," said the the Journal de Angola, adding that Portugal would "never forget this night of fear."

The Black Antelopes will again rely on two players without clubs -- captain and top striker Akwa, and goalkeeper Joao Ricardo -- as they vie to overcome massive odds to reach the last 16.

Akwa is reportedly calling for a more adventurous approach against Mexico with two strikers instead of his solo role against Portugal.

Rated a 500-1 shot for World Cup, and ranked more than 50 places below Mexico, they will take heart from Iran's first half when attacking endeavour knocked the South Americans off their stride.

"I recognise the Mexicans are strong but we'll be trying to counter-balance a tough adversary," Gonçalves said.

He may also hope for a cigarette ban on the chain-smoking Lavolpe, who incurred FIFA's wrath for lighting up during the Iran game.

TEAMS

Mexico (5-3-2)

1-Oswaldo Sanchez (71-0); 16-Mario Mendez (33-0); 4-Rafael Marquez (66-7); 5-Ricardo Osorio (36-1); 3-Carlos Salcido (33-2); 14-Gonzalo Pineda (30-1); 23-Luis Perez (53-8); 7-Antonio Naelson "Zinha" (33-5); 8-Pavel Pardo (126-5); 10-Guillermo Franco (8-2); 19-Omar Bravo (34-9)

Angola (4-5-1)

1-Joao Ricardo (25-0); 20-Loco (10-0); 3-Jamba (34-0); 5-Kali (20-0); 21-Delgado (16-0); 17-Ze Kalanga (22-4); 8-Andre Macanga (32-0); 7-Figueiredo (21-2); 11-Mateus (3-2); 14-Mendonça (33-0); 10-Akwa (76-35)



PHOTO: AFP

GET SET GO: Angolan players sprint with the ball during a training session at the Celle stadium on Tuesday ahead of their match against Mexico in Hanover on Friday.

Striking
concerns for
Mexico

INTERNET, undated

Mexico go into tomorrow's game against Angola without 38 goal all-time record scorer and Bolton Wanderers striker Jared Borgetti who picked up a torn thigh muscle in the 3-1 victory against Iran.

The injury is certain to keep Borgetti out of the remaining group stage matches and could even keep him out of the knockout stages, should Mexico qualify as expected.

Coach Ricardo La Volpe does have other strike options available and is likely to partner two-goal hero Omar Bravo with Guillermo Franco, although he could also recall out of favour forward Francisco Fonseca with whom he is alleged to have had a recent bust up over lack of playing opportunities.

Skipper captain Rafael Marquez is philosophical about the situation and told reporters: "Jared is a loss to any team but we have plenty of faith in our other strikers; we scored three against Iran and Jared didn't score any of them, that's a signal of what the others are capable of."

Angola turn to
psychologist

REUTERS, Bielefeld

Away from the traditional pre-match preparations, Angola are using a psychologist ahead of Friday's World Cup Group D game with Mexico.

Boosted after conceding only one goal against much-fancied Portugal on Sunday, the Africans hope the teachings of Laurindo Vieira, who lectures at Luanda's prestigious Catholic University, will give them the mental strength to beat Mexico.

"This afternoon they will have another lecture from a psychologist who will talk to them about confidence and improving their mental strength," spokesman Arlindo Macedo told Reuters.

Vieira was brought in after Angola's poor performance in the African Nations Cup in January, which also cast doubt on the position of coach Luis Oliveira Gonçalves.

Instead of dismissing Gonçalves, the technical team decided to strengthen the coaching staff, with Gonçalves asking for a psychologist and statistician.

The psychologist talks to them about brains and nerves and what-not and he tries to make them more confident in themselves and in the team," Macedo said.

"I'm not really sure what they do in these lectures but the players come out laughing about who is using the right side of their brain and who is not."

Whether the psychologist has any effect against Mexico remains to be seen but Gonçalves is not only relying on mind games.

"The squad have been watching videos of Mexico's matches," he said. "They've seen a few games already

An Angolan success story

AP, Hanover

Joao Silva's entrepreneurial mind went into overdrive when he heard Angola had qualified for the World Cup.

It's already paying off.

The Luanda native came to Germany ahead of the world's biggest soccer tournament and set up a slice of home for the African team's fans, a restaurant called Buffet Angolano.

"German food isn't a big reference like French, Italian or Portuguese food," said Silva, sitting back at the restaurant on the outskirts of Hanover.

"So I thought it would be a good idea to set up a restaurant where the Angolans accompanying the team as well as the Angolan Diaspora here could eat food from home during the World Cup," he headed.

And his \$31.50 buffet is proving to be a hit with the Africans, serving funge, a type of porridge made of corn or manioc flour and kizaka, a finely chopped meal made from the leaf of the manioc tree.

"The restaurant is a little piece of Angola right here for people to meet, eat, hear music from home,"

the 43-year-old Silva said. "There are about 7,000 Angolans in Germany at the moment and every day around 600 people come here. If we become too popular, it could start getting complicated."

The operation started with 11,000 pounds of food flown in from Angola, along with 23 people to work in the restaurant. Silva has since hired another nine people, including five local Germans.

"Every day we use between 200-300 kilos (440-660 pounds) of food. But Angolans eat a lot, we're hungry people," Silva joked.

The restaurant has become so popular that it is open until 4 a.m. every day, and has become the place to be among Angolans in Germany for the World Cup.

"The nights here are mad. There are models, musicians, music, lots of dancing and rhythms. It's always full here," said Angolan music promoter Riquinho, who had come for a bite to eat after a big night out.

"It's great fun."

Even some local residents are coming to discover this corner of Angola on their doorstep.

"Germans say they like the atmosphere. They say Angolans always find an excuse for a party," Silva said. "They don't eat as much as Angolans. Some of them like our food but we also put on a barbecue with big German sausages which they like."

By 3:30 p.m., the canteen-style self-service restaurant is a hive of activity with a long line of people waiting to fill their plates with Angolan food.

"I heard about this place yesterday and caught a taxi here today to try it out," said Elias Miguel, who came from Angola to see the Black Antelopes play at the World Cup. "I was missing home, that's why I came. In the hotel, it's chips and meat all the time. I'll definitely be back."

Camia Gonçalves, who was enjoying a plate of Angolan fare, agreed.

"I've been really missing

Angolan food. We have different food habits so adapting is a bit difficult," she said.

Silva has succeeded in recreating an Angolan atmosphere in his 400-seat establishment, with the Portuguese language and loud banter between tables the norm while music blares both inside and in the outdoor area.

"We want this to be a convivial, happy place," Silva said. "We want people to have somewhere to come to each day."

Silva is planning to keep the restaurant going even if the Black Antelopes are knocked out of the first round of the tournament.

Angola lost to Portugal 1-0 in its opening match Sunday, and still has games against Mexico and Iran to come.

"We believe Angola will go onto the second round," Silva said. "I hope they do. But even if they don't, I'm sure there will be enough business for us to stay open until the end of the World Cup."

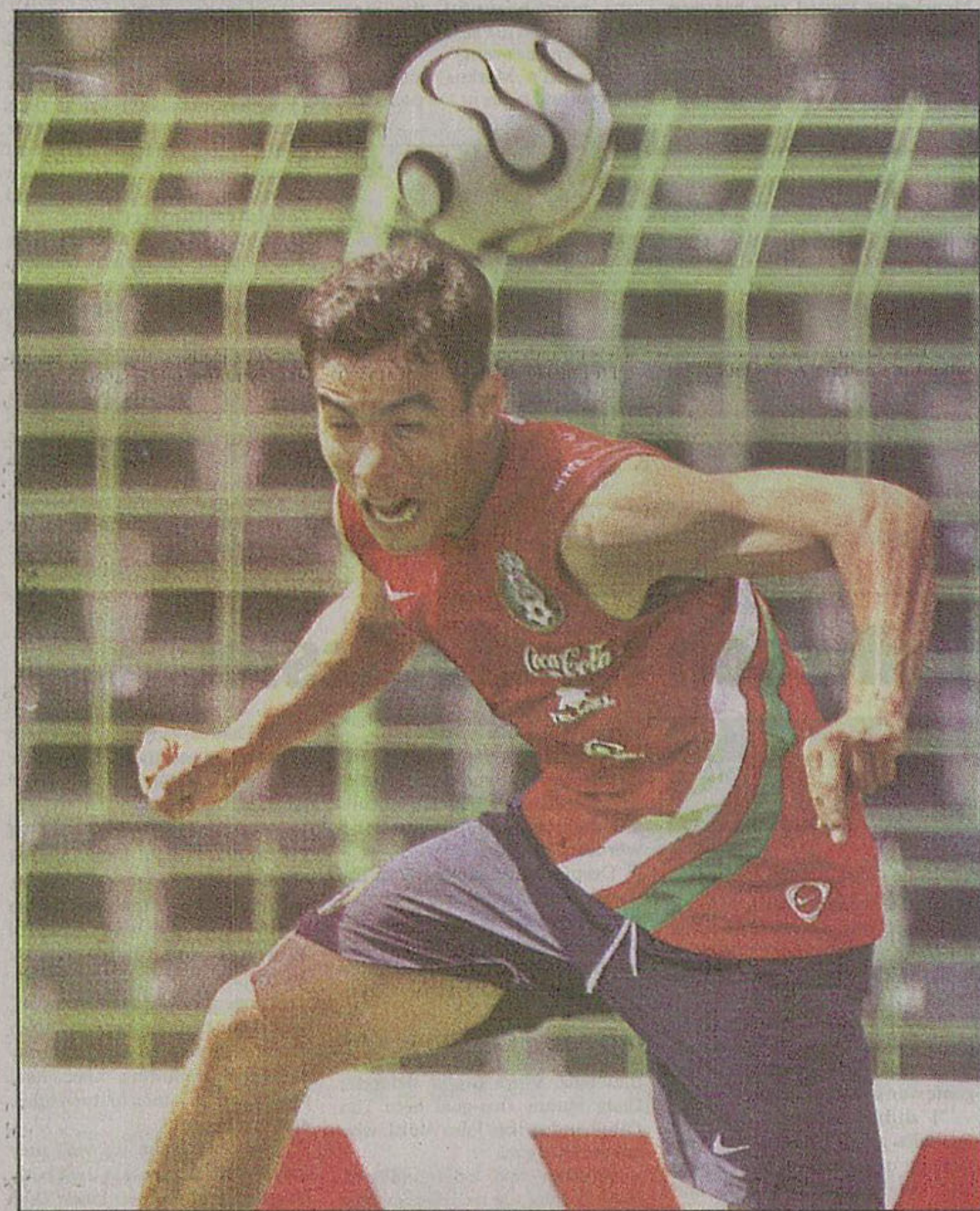


PHOTO: AFP

EYING ANOTHER BRACE: Mexican forward Omar Bravo, who scored twice in a 3-1 win against Iran in their opening World Cup match on Sunday, heads the ball during the team's training session in Goettingen on Wednesday.

Fonseca to the fore

AP, Goettingen

Two weeks ago, Francisco Fonseca's gripes about a lack of playing time made him the target of Mexican coach Ricardo Lavolpe's wrath.

Now, with Jared Borgetti out -- possibly for the rest of the first round -- with a muscle tear in his left thigh, the forward known as "Kikin" could find himself in the starting lineup for Mexico's next World Cup game.

Borgetti, Mexico's leading career scorer with 38 international goals, was injured while chasing down a loose ball early in the second half of El Tri's Cup opener, a 3-1 victory over Iran on Sunday.

An MRI exam on Tuesday revealed the tear, which is expected to keep the 33-year-old Bolton striker out up to 10 days.

Sticking to what he told reporters last week, though, Fonseca insisted that he will be happy with whatever role Lavolpe gives him against Angola on Friday in Hanover.

"That decision is made by Ricardo, but I'm ready," Fonseca said through a translator after the

team's training session on Wednesday. "I'm ready for whatever he decides -- five minutes, 10 minutes or on the bench."

Lavolpe has not let his team scrimmage in front of reporters since Borgetti was hurt. But if the coach decides to go with a three-forward lineup against Angola, as he did in the first half against Iran, Kikin could be seeing a lot of time as the third forward with Omar Bravo and Guillermo Franco.

"Borgetti is our forward with the most goals. We lose him, we lose a lot of potential," defender Gonzalo Pineda said. "But Kikin, Franco, Bravo -- those are great players who are waiting for an opportunity, and they can do it very well."

In a newspaper interview late last month, just before the team arrived in Germany, Lavolpe sharply criticized Fonseca -- who had complained that he wasn't being used enough in pre-World Cup exhibitions.

Lavolpe said Fonseca, who plays for Cruz Azul in the Mexican league, was "saying stupid things." The coach also noted that while Fonseca was playing for Pumas, that Mexican club brought in two

other forwards -- implying the team didn't feel Fonseca was good enough.

But on Sunday, when Borgetti went down in the 52nd minute against Iran, Lavolpe bypassed Jesus Arellano and chose Fonseca to replace him.

Mexico scored twice in the final 20 minutes, and Kikin assisted on the clinching goal by Antonio Naelson, the Brazilian-born midfielder better known as Zinha.

"Ricardo decides, I'm telling you," Fonseca said with a smile on Wednesday. "But I'm happy with my World Cup debut, and I'm happy my team won. It was just coincidence that I was on the field for those two goals."

Borgetti could also miss Mexico's final Group D game against Portugal on June 21. If Mexico advances to the second round, as it is favored to do, its next game would be on June 24 or 25, likely against Argentina or the Netherlands.

"Right now, it's no longer hard for him to walk," Dr. Jose Luis Serrano, the team physician, said of Borgetti. "But we're still going slowly."

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