



sports@thecurrentstar.net

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AKNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOUR: Japan goalkeeper Yoshikatsu Kawaguchi goes full stretch to save a penalty taken by Croatia's Varoš Šrba (not in the picture) during their World Cup Group F clash at Nuremberg's Franken-Stadion yesterday.

SPAIN V TUNISIA

Africans aim to derail juggernaut

AFP, Stuttgart

French-born coach Roger Lemerre has said that Tunisia have both the physical strength and tactical savvy to derail high-flying Spain in their World Cup Group H clash here Monday.

While the Spanish have emerged as major title contenders following their 4-0 defeat of Ukraine, a question mark hangs over Tunisia's second round survival chances after their late salvaging of a 2-2 draw with Saudi Arabia.

It took a late headed equaliser from Bolton defender Rahdi Jaidi to keep Tunisia's campaign alive, and the post-match feeling from the Saudis was they had been robbed of two points.

Despite having to overcome both a psychological and physical handicap, Lemerre feels Tunisia can use a combination of power and style to defeat Luis Aragones' Primera Liga-packed group favour-

ites.

"It will be a battle of two different styles of game," said the Frenchman, who after the ignominy of steering France out of the World Cup first round in 2002 without a win or a goal rekindled his career two years later by leading Tunisia to the African group.

In their bid to defy Spain, salvation might instead come from their saviour against the Saudis. Bolton defender Jaidi said they have learned from their disastrous opening match.

"We all know that we didn't play well, but if we manage to concentrate better against Spain

Lemerre however is hoping to spoil the fiesta.

"Our players are just as good and maybe have the edge (on Spain) when it comes to physical power," Lemerre added.

"Our number one priority is motivation. We have to be prepared to push for this together. The expectations are big, so we need nothing less than 100 percent from everybody."

While Aragones seeks to further reap the rewards of his latest recruit -- a sports psychologist whom he is the first Spain coach to employ -- Tunisia's past and present shows some worrying symptoms.

The Africans haven't won a World Cup game since they beat

Mexico 3-1 on their tournament debut in 1978.

And to complicate matters, top Brazilian-born striker Francileudo dos Santos is still sidelined with a persistent shin injury and only has a 50-50 chance of playing in their final group match, against Uruguay.

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we will play better," he said.

"Maybe we can even cause an upset."

Spain should be brimming with confidence after notching up their 23rd match unbeaten against Ukraine, although the nightmare scenario of yet another exit at the quarter-final stage is omnipresent and Aragones seems to have insisted on his players favouring a step by step approach.

If Spain get past a second round match-up with either France, Switzerland, South Korea or Togo, they could then face Brazil, Croatia, Italy or Ghana in the quarterfinal.

Real Madrid defender Sergio Ramos, whose performances for Spain have managed to keep club mate Michel Salgado on the sidelines, feels it's still too early to be making predictions.

"Spain has always had great teams with quality players, but we haven't had the luck to go with it," he said Saturday.

"We can go a long way in the World Cup, but first we have to have the maximum respect for the other teams in the group."

"We have two tough games coming up. The most important thing is to keep our feet on the ground."

TEAMS

Spain (4-3-3)
1-Alvaro Arbeloa (59-0); 15-Sergio Ramos (12-2), 5-Carles Puyol (48-1), 22-Pablo Ibanez (12-0), 3-Mariano Pernia (21-1); 16-Marcos Senna (4-0), 14-Xabi Alonso (27-1), 8-Xavi (37-1); 11-Luis Garcia (11-3), 9-Fernando Torres (31-11), 21-David Villa (9-4)

Tunisia (4-4-2)
1-Ali Boumnejel (49-0); 6-Hatem Trabelsi (57-0), 15-Radhi Jaidi (90-6), 3-Karim Hagui (27-4), 18-David Jemmali (3-0); 20-Hamed Namouchi (15-1), 12-Joahar Mriani (38-1), 14-Adel Chedli (39-4), 13-Radhi Bouazizi (86-4); 5-Ziad Jaziri (62-14), 9-Yassine Chikhaoui (2-0)

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THIRD EYE

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

When Eddie Johnson of the United States said in the build-up to their match with Italy that it would be a war, he only meant it figuratively. Or so we thought.

There was a far more literal representation of Johnson's comments on the pitch at Kaiserslautern as the Italians stayed true to their word of being ready for the war that the USA would wage.

And as in every other war -- there were casualties.

Passions spilled over at the Fritz Walter Stadion when Italy and the USA squared off against each other in a match, which ultimately ended all square.

But don't let the result dissuade you about the excitement and fervour with which the match was played. There was intense drama all throughout the 90 odd minutes of play and it was ultimately a Uruguayan who stole the limelight via referee Jorge Larrionda.

Larrionda sent off three players in the match, an event that had occurred only thrice before in the history of the tournament.

First to go was the temperamental Romanian Daniele de Rossi as

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LEADING SCORERS

AFP, Berlin

World Cup leading scorers after Sunday's Japan-Croatia match:

2 - Bravo (Mexico), T Cahill (Australia), Crespo (Argentina), Delgado (Ecuador), Klose (Germany), Maxi Rodriguez (Argentina), Rosicky (Czech Republic), C Tenorio (Ecuador), Villa (Spain), Wanchope (Costa Rica)

1 - Ahn Jung-hwan (South Korea), Al Jaber (Saudi Arabia), Al Kahtani (Saudi Arabia), Aloisi (Australia), Cambiasso (Argentina), Cristiano Ronaldo (Portugal), Crouch (England), Deco (Portugal), Dragba (Ivory Coast), Fernando Torres (Spain), Frings (Germany), Gerrard (England), Giardino (Italy), Golmohammadi (Iran), Gyan (Ghana), Iaquinta (Italy), Jaidi (Tunisia), Jaziri (Tunisia), Kaka (Brazil), Kaviedes (Ecuador), Koller (Czech Republic), B Kone (Ivory Coast), Lahm (Germany), Lee Chun-soo (South Korea), Ljungberg (Sweden), Messi (Argentina), Kader (Togo), Muntari (Ghana), Nakamura (Japan), Neuville (Germany), Paulta (Portugal), Pinto (Italy), Robben (Netherlands), Savio (Argentina), Tevez (Argentina), van Nistelrooy (Netherlands), van Persie (Netherlands), Xabi Alonso (Spain), Zincha (Mexico)

FIFA pursues Togo to play

REUTERS, Frankfurt

team did not want to play," a FIFA spokesman said.

The FIFA delegate there told them it would be extremely serious. He told them to be reasonable and they were," the spokesman said, adding the team were now on the road.

No team that has qualified for a World Cup finals has withdrawn from a match in the 76-year history of the event. Any nation doing so face a heavy fine and could be banned from subsequent competitions.

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TODAY'S MATCHES

ALL MATCHES LIVE ON ESPN. ALSO LIVE ON BTW

TEAM	TIME	VENUE
Togo v Switzerland	6:50 pm	Dortmund
Saudi Arabia v Ukraine	9:50 pm	Hamburg
Spain v Tunisia*	12:50 am (Tuesday)	Stuttgart

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FIFA World Cup 2006 Quiz

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19th to 22nd June
Part D

STANDINGS

GROUP H

Team MP W D L GF GA Pts

Spain 1 1 0 0 4 0 3

Saudi Arabia 1 0 1 0 2 2 1

Tunisia 1 0 1 0 2 2 1

Ukraine 1 0 0 1 0 4 0

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