



YET ANOTHER TUMBLE: French midfielder Zinedine Zidane looks at the ball as he tries to regain balance on the pitch during the game against South Korea at Leipzig Stadium on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

'We will do it for Zidane'



AFP, Leipzig

France's struggling World Cup stars have insisted they still have a chance of reaching the last 16 despite a second successive draw which leaves their hopes in the balance.

The 1-1 stalemate against South Korea has left them anxiously eyeing Switzerland's match with Togo on Monday in a Group G from which all four teams could still progress.

France will almost certainly have to beat Togo by several goals

in their final group match in Cologne on Friday.

They will have to do it without Zinedine Zidane, who will be suspended after picking up his second booking of the tournament against the Koreans.

His teammates said they had the added motivation of ensuring that one of his nation's greatest ever players has a chance of lining up again in his final World Cup.

The inspirational midfielder who led the French to the 1998 triumph on home soil turns 34 on the day of the match.

"I hope we can give him the birthday present of playing in another match," said midfielder Florent Malouda, while veteran defender Lilian Thuram said after the Korea match: "We will do every-

thing possible to make sure that this is not his last game."

Zidane himself was confident he would be pulling on the France shirt again in the second round.

"I don't think this was my last match. I'm looking further ahead," he said after the South Korea stalemate.

Willy Sagnol said many people forget that Zidane was suspended for two matches during France's charge to the title eight years ago.

"There is no real replacement for Zidane, but perhaps we can play differently without him," said the Bayern Munich stalwart.

"When Zidane was suspended after a red card in 1998 the team went a long way without him."

Goalkeeper Fabien Barthez, a key part of the 1998 side, said it was time France proved they had more

determination than four years ago when they crashed out in the first round in South Korea.

"Nothing is said and done yet. We have to show we have guts because we can get out of this situation ourselves."

Thierry Henry -- who scored his country's first World Cup goal in eight years when he found the net on Sunday -- said there was no chance the team would freeze when it mattered most.

"There is no tension and no annoyance among the players. It's up to us now. Providing we beat Togo by at least two clear goals we're safe."

If France fail to win the group, they will have to face the winners of Group H, which includes Spain and Ukraine.

Gray ruled out

REUTERS, undated

Trinidad and Tobago defender Cyd Gray will miss their final World Cup Group B match against Paraguay on Tuesday.

"Cyd will be out for at least a week with a partial torn ligament in his upper leg," team spokesman Shaun Fuentes told Reuters on Saturday.

"He picked it up in the game against England and managed to play until the end. But once he had warmed down, the doctor looked at it and said he needed to rest."

The Caribbean side, playing in their first finals, still have a mathematical chance of progressing to the second round, despite losing 2-0 to England on Thursday.

If Trinidad beat Paraguay and Sweden lose to England, second place will be decided on goal difference between the islanders and the Scandinavians.

England, with a 100 per cent record after two games, have already qualified for the second phase, Paraguay have been eliminated.

Fuentes said Trinidad would return to training on Saturday after being given a day off on Friday to spend with their families.

Paraguay will exit

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"We did our best and I am proud of the players, their performances and the responsibility shown."

He said he had concerns over injured defenders Carlos Bonet and Jorge Nunez but added that he expected Nunez to be fit to play against Trinidad and Tobago in Kaiserslautern on Tuesday.

Asked if Ruiz would be offered a new contract, the president of the Paraguay Football Association Oscar Harrison told reporters, "now is not the time to talk about the future -- we need to reflect before we make any decisions".

Ruiz's current deal ends after the World Cup.

End of line

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made his international debut in March 1993, also believes it is time to give youth a chance.

"It's inevitable to have a generational change in the national team," said Acuna, who currently plays in the Primera Liga with Deportivo La Coruna.

"I sincerely hope that the new generation can surpass the achievements this group has done and that they can take Paraguay all the way to the top."

Recognition near

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World Cup as a player with the then West Germany and Euro '96 with Germany.

"An important thing for me is that I can have a normal life in Los Angeles. That is priceless."

Klinsmann was heavily criticised for his frequent flights to the United States -- sometimes directly after matches -- but found a base in Germany for the World Cup and Germany's two wins out of two have silenced the critics for now.

Superstars cutting it fine



INTERNET, undated

The 2006 FIFA World Cup has burst emphatically into life, with football's finest laying on a sumptuous feast of mazy dribbles, heroic defending, and spectacular goals. But for fans of the beautiful game across the globe, it is not just the technical ability of the world's footballing elite that they have come to admire. In fact, it would not be the FIFA World Cup without odd hair-raising moments.

Following in the footsteps of FIFA World Cup icons of the past, such as former USA defender Alexi Lalas or Colombian midfielder general Carlos Valderrama, the class of 2006 have taken the field sporting a variety of hairstyles. As FIFAworldcup.com found out, the Germany 2006 catwalk has provided us with some real talking points. But for some players, it is simply a case of 'hair today, gone tomorrow'.

It seems that the most common tonsure amongst the top dogs of football is the shaved look. And this is where tournament newcomers Côte d'Ivoire stand out. Take the peroxide blond crop of striker Arouna Kone, the tribal designs belonging to pugnacious midfielder Romaric, or the natty rasta style of Bakary Kone. And the fashion parade does not stop there.

Perhaps they were in a hurry to get to Germany, but it seems that a fair few footballers did not bother their barbers in the run-up to the

tournament. The 'castaway' look has been a common sight during the first week of action.

A classic example is to be seen atop the head of Japan centre-half Yuji Nakazawa, the man who had to answer to the nickname 'Bomberhead' in his early career, thanks to his penchant for eccentricity with his hair. Korea Republic sharpshooter Ahn Jung-Hwan on the other hand, favours a mid-1970s playboy look, his long tresses groomed to perfection.

Before the tournament, Italy playmaker Francesco Totti was to be seen prowling around the training ground beneath a hair-style that can only be described as leonine. But in true Roman fashion, the gallant gladiator was given the thumbs-up to put the beast to the sword in favour of a sharper, neater look.

Regardless of Totti's last-minute climb-down, desert-island chic has certainly made its mark among the Latin American players. Another star who is causing a hairy hullabaloo is Mexico's marauding midfielder Gerardo Torrado. His tangled locks fall squarely into the 'Carlos Valderrama jr' category. All he needs is a little more time with his crimping irons in the morning.

Tournament favourites Argentina are turning into the Samsons of the competition, drawing their strength from their long-haired libertines Hernan Crespo and Juan Sorin. Meanwhile, curly Carles Puyol was so excited to be named in the Spain squad that he clearly forgot to pack that essential item for today's well-groomed defensive hardman, a comb.

As we continue with our play-

ers' pantomime, there are two outstanding candidates for the coveted role of Prince Charming. Any Cinderella would love to be swept off her feet by Czech icon Pavel Nedved, or even Serbia and Montenegro's dashing young wing-back Dusan Basta.

Vintage sights and sounds have also provided some inspiration for our image-conscious competitors. Serbia and Montenegro goal-poacher Mateja Kezman and the Czech Republic's reserve keeper Jaromir Blazek have both gone punk, with their Sex Pistols-style mohicans. Ecuador's midfield prodigy Luis Saritama has looked to the 1980s for his hairstyle, with a mullet typical of cinematic legends Steven Seagal and Chuck Norris. England's Rio Ferdinand, meanwhile, has gone all Studio 54 on us, with his one-man afro-fuelled disco revival.

In the 'dyed-in-the-wool' category, the first nomination goes to Japan's blond bombshell Junichi Inamoto. He is hoping to see off the challenge of his colourful counterparts, Korea Republic's Lee Chun-Soo and Spain's veteran shot-stopper Santiago Canizares. Worthy of mention too is Serbia and Montenegro striker Danijel Ljuboja, who will be hoping that his badger-inspired central stripe can end his team's losing streak.

But among the Afros, the mullets and the badgers, one thing is for sure -- the FIFA World Cup finals are a chance for many players to make their mark on world football's biggest stage. The fact that many choose to do so while committing heinous fashion crimes only adds to the fun.

Tattoos in vogue



AFP, Berlin

FIFA directives to keep their shirt on after scoring might keep many of them under wraps, but the World Cup brings together a swathe of players who don't mind getting the needle -- for the sake of sporting a tattoo.

The be-needled skin of England skipper David Beckham is well documented but he is far from alone among the 735 players taking part at the event.

Drawings, messages of undying love, children's names cover arms, backs, legs and necks, as well as other assorted regions.

Beckham famously has the names of sons Brooklyn, Romeo and Cruz as well as that of his wife, Victoria -- in Hindi -- on his forearm, though some linguistic experts say

it contains inaccuracies.

Under Victoria's name -- "It would look tacky if I had Victoria just in English," Beckham says -- is the Latin phrase At Amem et Foveam, meaning that which I love and adore.

On one arm he also has his England number seven in Roman numerals -- he wore the same number shirt at Manchester United but has worn 23 at Real Madrid -- and a number of other additions including a winged guardian angel across the back of his neck and a Michelangelo angel on his right arm.

"My dad had three tattoos of his own and so the idea has been with me since I was a kid," the player once explained, commissioning specialist Louis Malloy to do each one.

Luis Gonzalez of Argentina comes close to rivaling 'Becks' as he has ten tattoos of his own, including the signature of Diego Maradona and also the name of his wife Pamela in Chinese. Others

include the initials of his family, a rose on his left leg and a depiction of Jesus on his right.

Another Argentine, Fabrizio Colocini, has a tattoo depicting his deceased mother on his chest at heart level.

Spanish defender Sergio Ramos has the names of his parents on his forearm while Spain striker Fernando Torres, in a possible bid to emulate Beckham, has an Indian inscription on one arm.

Italy are also in on the act with "Roman" Francesco Totti having a gladiator tattoo.

Brazil take a religious approach with Adriano opting for a forearm slogan "Jesus lives with me" while Serbian star Mateja Kezman has an image of Christ on his right arm.

And England striker Wayne Rooney has a Celtic cross on his right arm.

On his back the same player has the word "then" as he and a friend had a catchphrase, "okay then."

The friend now sports the "okay."

Metzelder fit for Ecuador

AFP, Berlin

Germany can call upon centre-back Christoph Metzelder for Tuesday's World Cup encounter with Ecuador in Berlin, assistant coach Joachim Low said Sunday.

Borussia Dortmund man Metzelder was forced to pull out of Saturday's training due to a pain in his right knee but the injury is not serious.

"Christoph Metzelder took part in training today (Sunday) and should do again on Monday," Low revealed.

"It is not a serious injury and he is available to play against Ecuador."

The 26-year-old Metzelder is carrying a yellow card and a caution against Ecuador would see him suspended for the last 16 match.

Both Germany and Ecuador have already qualified for the second round and the match will decide who tops Group A.

Ballack won't

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But the midfielder thinks he is experienced enough to deal with the situation.

"There are a few situations where you start to hesitate and to second-guess your moves but I am experienced enough to deal with it."

Centre-back Christoph Metzelder is under the same threat but Ballack said he wanted coach Juergen Klinsmann to pick the same defensive line-up after they played so well in a 1-0 win over Poland in their last game.

"The defenders have found themselves," Ballack said. "You need consistency and stability in defence."

"At the World Cup everyone wants to get forward but we need to be careful, just as we were against Poland."

Birthday wish for McBride



AFP, Hamburg

US forward Brian McBride celebrated his 34th birthday here Monday by starting workouts for what might be his final World Cup match, hoping to delay the farewell beyond Thursday's showdown with Ghana.

The Fulham stalwart took a severe elbow to the face from Italy's Daniele De Rossi in the 28th minute, rising in a bloody mess but staying in the game and helping a nine-man US squad secure a 1-1 draw to keep alive hopes of advancing.

"You get hit and you get back up," McBride said.

"The effort was where it needed to be. All 23 of us believed we could do it. We know we have to work for each other and we did."

A mighty challenge awaits in the first-ever US meeting with Ghana. The Africans beat the Czech Republic 2-0 after the Czechs bounced the US side 3-0 in earlier Group E matches.

The Black Stars would advance by beating the Americans, who must win to have any hope of reaching the round of 16.

No US player has yet found the net at this World Cup, the lone American tally coming on an Italian own-goal. But if anyone can finish the job, McBride is the man.

With 30 goals in 94 caps, McBride ranks second on the all-time US scoring list, fourth shy of matching Eric Wynalda's record.

McBride needs one goal to match Bert Patenaude as the all-time US World Cup scoring leader with four. Patenaude led the Americans to a third-place finish in the inaugural 1930 Cup, scoring three goals against Paraguay.

Scoring against Ghana also would give McBride a goal in three World

Cups. He produced the lone US goal in a winless 1998 campaign and added goals in 2002 triumphs over Mexico and Portugal.

"He's extremely valuable. He brings confidence and experience to our team," US coach Bruce Arena said. "He can score goals or make a bunch of plays in games that only his teammates seem to appreciate."

"He's invaluable to this team on the field and off the field. He's a key figure for us in this World Cup run."

McBride might have been in the best position of any US player to handle the red-card foul to his face, one which opened a gash that

required three stitches to close and for which De Rossi apologized after the match.

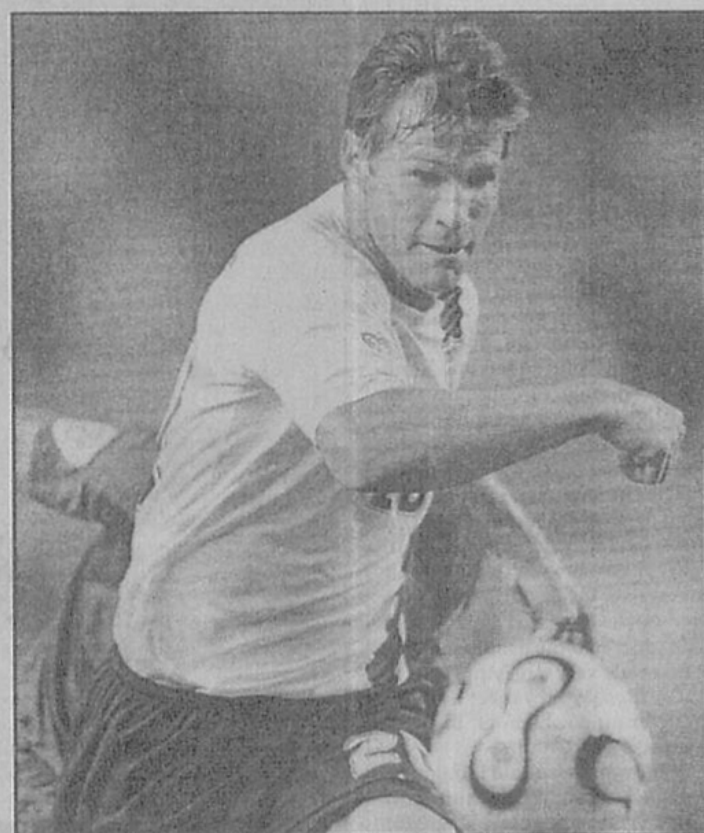
McBride already has seven metal plates in his face after prior collisions.

"I'm fortunate I don't have a lot of feeling in my face. My nerves are all dead from the surgery," McBride said.

Once more without feeling, McBride is ready to throw himself into the fray.

"He's going to stick his head in where some others wouldn't go," said US goalkeeper Kasey Keller.

"Brian had a big effort. I just want him to get a goal."



BRIAN MCBRIDE

Israeli flag waver sparks fury

AFP, Cairo

Ghana defender John Paintsil's waving of an Israeli flag to celebrate his team's World Cup goals drew a barrage of insults and furious reactions in Monday's Egyptian newspapers.

Paintsil, who plays for Israeli club Hapoel Tel Aviv, celebrated the two goals in Ghana's 2-0 win over the Czech Republic by pulling an Israeli flag out of his sock and waving it at the cameras.

"The ignorant and stupid Paintsil, who spent 20 days in Egypt during the last African Nations Cup, plays for Hapoel," sports commentator Alaa Sadek wrote in the daily Al-Akhar, explaining to baffled Egyptian audiences Paintsil's link to Israel.

"Egyptians supported the Ghanaian team all the way until the 82nd minute, and regretted it after the Israeli flag (waving)," screamed a bold red headline in the independent daily Al-Masry al-Yom.

"As soon as the referee blew his whistle to start the match, Egyptians were out enthusiastically, almost hysterically supporting Ghana, until defender John Paintsil took out the Israeli flag," read the paper's front page article.

The live commentator on the Arab satellite channel broadcasting all World Cup matches in the region abruptly cut short his trademark "go o o o o o o o o o o" when Paintsil brought out the flag.

"What are you doing, man?" the bewildered commentator said.

The main question on Egyptian lips after the match was "why?"

Some papers described Paintsil as a "Mossad agent," others said "an Israeli had paid him to do it" but the most elaborate theory was offered by the top-selling state-owned daily Al-Ahram.