

# Out but not down



AFP, Leipzig

Mexico may have crashed out of the World Cup in the second round, but coach Ricardo Lavolpe took solace from his side's battling performance against Argentina.

The Mexicans, who had won only one match in the group stages - against Iran, were real underdogs going into the second round match here against their Latin American rivals but came close to providing a major upset.

Led superbly by captain Rafael Marquez, the Mexicans took the game to Argentina in a full-blooded, end-to-end affair.

Regulation time ended 1-1, after an early Marquez strike and an unfortunate Jared Borgetti own goal, and it took a wonder goal from Argentine midfielder Maxi Rodriguez eight minutes into extra-time to break the deadlock.

"It was an even game, just as I expected it to be, and it was a magnificent individual goal that decided it," said Lavolpe, himself a member of Argentina's 1978 World Cup-winning squad.

"Having said that, Mexico gave an excellent account of themselves. Once again though, we didn't achieve what we came to do, which was to reach the quarterfinals at least."

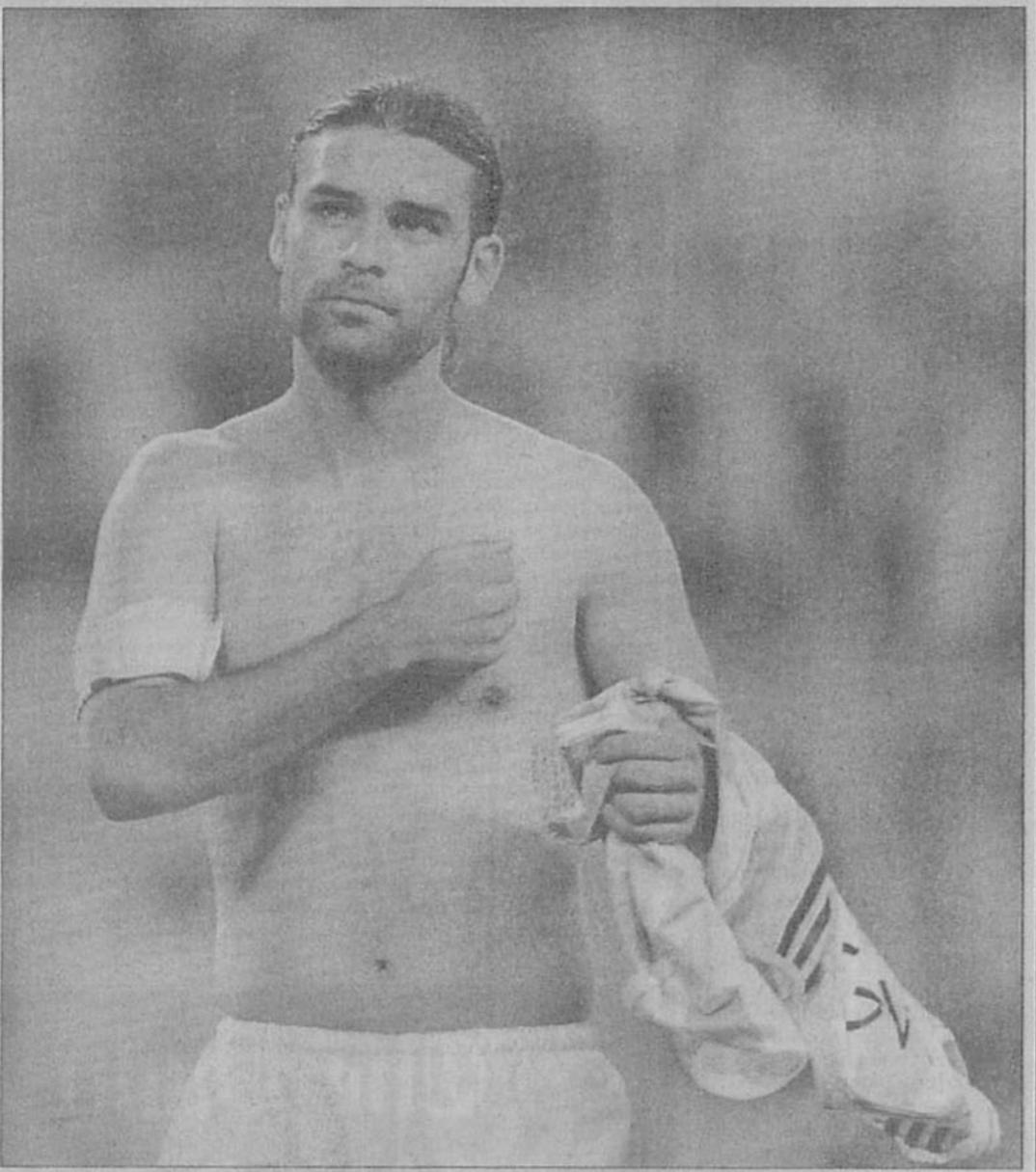
Mexico have twice been quarterfinalists, but on both occasions, in 1970 and 1986, it was on home ground.

They certainly had not shown any form in the group stages, scraping through with the 3-1 win over Iran, an unconvincing 0-0 draw with Angola and a 2-1 loss to group winners Portugal.

"It has to be said that playing Argentina always brings out the best in Mexico," admitted Argentina coach Jose Pekerman.

Mexico captain Marquez, who excelled in marshalling his back-four against the highly-rated Argentina attacking line, acknowledged that there was massive disappointment among his teammates.

"I'm disappointed because we played so well and unsettled Argentina. Even so, we still lost," said the Barcelona defender.



Mexican captain Rafael Marquez looks dejected after elimination from the World Cup following a 2-1 loss to Argentina in the round of 16 at the Leipzig stadium on Saturday.

## Germany now believes

AFP, Munich

German fans were dreaming of reaching the World Cup final on Sunday after their side dismissed Sweden 2-0 on Saturday to set up a quarterfinal match-up against South American giants Argentina.

The hosts had little trouble in getting past Sweden with Lukas Podolski scoring twice in 12 hectic first half minutes, and it could have been more after Sweden had Teddy Lutz sent off after 34 minutes.

The result and manner of the performance has increased optimism further and there is now a real belief that Jurgen Klinsmann's team can go all the way and add to their World Cup crowns of 1954, 1974 and 1990.

"World champion-like," headlined Bild daily, the country's best selling newspaper. "Klins now against Maradona and co. We think you can send them packing."

Argentina's 1986 World Cup hero Diego Maradona is no longer playing but television pictures have showed him enthusiastically celebrating his country's victories.

"Germany are now in the quarters after Klinsmann's most important win. We can now dream of the title," Bild crowed.

"The latest chapter in Germany's summer fairytale is complete," said Die Welt newspaper.

"Klinsmann's team put up a thrilling display to reach the quarterfinals -- Argentina await us in Berlin on Friday."

"We have a lot of respect for Argentina. They have been one of the best teams so far," admitted Klinsmann.

"We often talk about the Jose Pekerman school and Argentina have great individual players."

"We drew twice against them last year and it is about time we took that extra step and beat them," Klinsmann declared.

"I am not content with a quarterfinal spot -- and neither are the players."

"I can honestly not remember the last time a Germany team played like we did in the first 30 minutes. I was just able to relax in the dug-out and watch."

Confidence is certainly growing in the German camp and captain Michael Ballack said the hosts had no fear.

Bayern Munich midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger echoed the sentiments of his skipper.

"We could have won 6-1. We still have a lot more to show," Schweinsteiger crowed. "This was the first step and hopefully there are three more."

## Buenos Aires wild



AFP, Reuters, Buenos Aires

Celebrating Argentines poured into the rain-splashed avenues, screaming, singing, dancing, blowing horns and setting off firecrackers after their team secured a 2-1 World Cup win over Mexico on Saturday.

But things are different this time. Argentines have renewed confidence as their economy surges and to keep the good times rolling, their side won 2-1 in extra time against Mexico on Saturday, moving into the quarterfinals.

"It wasn't easy but we won!" shouted Sergio, who turned out with his wife and three small children after following every minute of the game.

"Brazil, start getting ready -- you are just little babies compared to our



Argentine fans celebrate at Republica Square in Buenos Aires after their defeat of Mexico in the on Saturday.

American outfit Chivas.

Francisco Fonseca, who was a constant thorn in the Argentinians' side but whose final touch just failed him, said that review of Mexico's stuttering World Cup performances was needed.

"We're disappointed because we performed well and still lost," he said.

"I'm really pleased we're changing our mentality although we need

to look at why we keep getting knocked out in the second round in World Cup finals."

Goalkeeper Oswaldo Sanchez was more philosophical.

"The game was always going to be decided by a mistake or a wonder goal and that's what happened," said Sanchez, who got nowhere near Rodriguez' exquisite, looping volley in the eighth minute of extra-time.

## Mexico mourns

REUTERS, Mexico City

Mexicans cried on Saturday after exiting the World Cup with a 2-1 loss to Argentina but took heart from a display that forced one of the tournament favourites to struggle into extra-time.

Mexican police unclipped handguns to control dozens of angry local fans who chased down a car load of Argentines celebrating in a drive around the capital. No shots were fired and the local supporters retreated.

Screams rang out in homes and cantinas across the country with Mexico's every attacking move, but they were silenced by a spectacular extra time goal from Argentina's Maxi Rodriguez and the tears began to flow.

"We did not deserve to lose and we were not the favourites, but we gave Argentina the fright of their lives," said Martina Vega, a 21-year student, rubbing her tear-streaked face painted with the colours of the Mexican flag.

At one cantina in Mexico City dozens of stricken fans wiped blurry eyes, although for others the defeat was relief from the soccer frenzy that has taken over the nation.

"I'm eight months pregnant and this sort of nerves might force me to rush to the hospital so to be honest I'm half glad we are out and I can go home and do breathing exercises," said Maria Martinez, 29, a nurse.

Wild celebrations by whole families crammed into bars in Mexico City erupted after a sixth minute goal by captain Rafael Marquez. Argentina equalised minutes later but Mexican hopes were kept alive by one of the team's best performances in years.

A left foot volleyed goal from Rodriguez hit extra time to break the tie and Mexicans had their heads in their hands, certain their team was on its way home early again.

"We played a good game against a team that everyone thought was going to steamroll over us," said captain Marquez. "But we played even better than them and we did not deserve this. A great goal eliminated us."

Other Mexicans said the country should now concentrate more on electing a new president next week instead of instead of the tournament.

"This soccer tournament has distracted the country from the more important task of choosing between the left, the right and the old Mexico next Sunday," said 66-year-old newspaper seller Marco Riquelme.

"Winning the World Cup is not crucial for the future of the country. Choosing who runs it is," said Riquelme.

Mexico's July 2 election is a very tight race, with leftist Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador slightly ahead of right-wing rival Felipe Calderon in opinion polls.

In third place is Roberto Madrazo, of the Institutional Revolutionary Party, which ran Mexico for 71 years before current President Vicente Fox ousted the party in 2000.

Fox watched the game in his rural ranch and criticised Swiss referee Massimo Busacca for bias but said he was proud of the team. "Mexico dominated all the time, the defeat was circumstantial. Mexico was always ahead and deserved victory."

Calderon, a soccer fan and personal friend of World Cup striker Jose Fonseca, could have received a boost in the election if Mexico had beaten Argentina, especially as Lopez Obrador prefers baseball.

He then persuaded Zidane to sign for Cannes, the team where he would make his professional debut.

"I don't know what has gone wrong," said Van Nistelrooy in the Sun. "I have two years left on my contract and, unless anybody tells

me differently, I will return to Manchester for pre-season training."

Bayern Munich have expressed an interest in signing the Dutch forward.

Lars warms Germans

INTERNET, undated

Stuttgart winger Jesper Gronkjaer has returned to his homeland to join FC Copenhagen.

The Danish club reported on its website that the former Chelsea and Atletico Madrid player had signed a four-year contract. The 28-year-old has earned 60 caps for his country. He has also played for Ajax and Birmingham.

Ruud expects

United return

INTERNET, undated

Ruud van Nistelrooy expects to return to Manchester United for pre-season training after the World Cup despite his end-of-season row with boss Sir Alex Ferguson.

Van Nistelrooy, 29, missed the final game of the season and drove away from Old Trafford ahead of the clash with Charlton; with suggestions he could leave the club in the summer.

However, the Holland striker, who scored for his country against Ivory Coast in Germany, will return to United when they begin preparations to challenge Chelsea for the Barclays Premiership.

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"Germany has a good team, I think they showed that in this game and in the group stage. After a good start they controlled the game well. I think they have a good chance. They have a fair chance to go on in this tournament."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they did, although they changed their game when we were playing with 10 men. The strong side of the team is that Mr Klinsmann and his staff work hard for each other."

"I think we showed after the two goals that we can play at the same level as they