



PHOTO: AFP

CONTRASTING RECEPTIONS: A combo of pictures shows (L-R) Brazil captain Cafu being mocked by humorists holding a replica of the World Cup trophy upon his arrival at Sao Paulo while Argentine players wave to fans on their return home on Monday. Both teams exited from the World Cup in the quarterfinals.

'Germany have no chance'

REUTERS, Berlin

Recent history shows Germany have no chance of beating Italy in the semifinals of the World Cup, captain Michael Ballack joked on Monday.

Ballack was part of the Germany team that lost 4-1 against Italy in Florence and lost by the same scoreline in the Champions League with Bayern Munich against AC Milan.

"We lost 4-1 with Germany and 4-1 with Bayern in Milan," Ballack said at a news conference. "Basically, we've got no chance, have we?"

Ballack seemed amazingly relaxed on the eve of the semifinal in Dortmund and his comments raised laughs from the assembled reporters and his coach Juergen Klinsmann.

"Yeah, after those defeats it's a really great feeling to have going into the semifinal," he added.

Speaking more seriously, Ballack said he was fully fit and eager for the match to start.

"I've had time to recharge my batteries," said Ballack, who needed lengthy treatment for muscle cramps during the quarterfinal penalty shootout win over Argentina.

"We beat one of the big teams to reach the semifinals and playing in Dortmund only adds to the faith that we will win."

Germany have never lost an

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Long waiting game

AFP, Berlin

Just as national economies move in cycles so does football -- and the current World Cup downturn is proving a long slog for Argentina, who with their quarterfinal loss to Germany must now be classed among the latter day underachievers.

The 'albiceleste' bagged titles in 1978 and 1986, but since their final appearance in 1990, when they lost to the Germans, they have fallen on hard times.

Argentina have not won anything of note since the 1993 Copa America championship, since when they have toiled for scant reward -- though at under20 level they have scooped four world titles since 1995.

That has not translated into senior success and coach Jose Pekerman, the architect of the first three of those youthful triumphs, has taken responsibility -- perhaps prematurely, as most of the fans still back him -- by resigning.

"We are really a bit down in the mouth. We know we gave all we could and we are very sorry to be going home in such circumstances," said goalkeeper Roberto Abbondanzieri Saturday as the squad prepared to fly home.

Argentina's only consolation is that their English and Spanish counterparts have given them a good run for their money for the underachievers' sobriquet --

England still chasing the lost spirit of 1966, while Spain's sole semi-final showing came 50 years ago.

None of the trio covered themselves with glory this time - the difference for the Argentines being that they were expected to number bright young stars like Lionel Messi and Carlos Tevez among their numbers.

Instead, the sorcerer's apprentices found German's penalty-taking machine too hot to handle.

Pekerman's mea culpa may seem harsh after a penalty shootout against the hosts but his country's barren run of not even making it to the last four has seen the likes of Bulgaria, Croatia, Sweden and South Korea all go that far.

"It is over, the chapter is closed," said Pekerman, who opted to leave out of the squad several experienced campaigners such as Inter Milan's Javier Zanetti, preferring to give the youngsters their head -- though not, strangely, Messi in the Germany tussle.

"I am not going to carry on. I can leave with my head held up high. I have always believed in the players and they have not let me down."

In fact, the much-maligned FIFA team rankings were almost spot on for Argentina, who were ranked ninth in the world ahead of the event -- though they are certainly stronger than Mexico, as they showed in the second round, and the United States, likewise ranked higher.

Pekerman replaced Marcelo

Bielsa two years ago.

Bielsa initially survived the opening phase exit in 2002, Argentina's worst showing since 1962, but then gave way to a man of whom Maradona says: "He's not yet a coach for adults."

If Pekerman throws in the towel and ignores fan pleas to give it another World Cup cycle then he never will be on the global stage.

At least the Peker-boys are now men and the Argentine Federation are hoping to find someone who can make best use of their talents in a country which has floundered since Maradona's day.

England and Spain know the feeling.

In Spain, Luis Aragones is generally recognised as still being the best man for the job despite the exit to France -- Liverpool's Rafa Benitez shows no sign of being ready to drop club football for the international scene, and in the culture of La Liga club tends to count for more than country.

Aragones now says he is ready to stay on after first indicating that his time was up.

England, of course, have made their leap of faith in choosing Steve McClaren to succeed Sven-Goran Eriksson, but, like the Spanish they have found their level as they pick over the wreckage of another failed campaign.

Somewhere between the last 16 and the last eight.

WC BRIEFS

AFP, Berlin

Bild newspaper gave England some charitable advice on how to take spotkicks after Germany's rivals lost, as usual, on penalties.

With Germany having made it four out of four shootout wins against Argentina and England having made it four out of five losses after missing three of four kicks Bild explained patiently: "The ball has to go in the goal."

Only a yellow!

The stadium announcer in Berlin's Olympic Stadium is to be allowed to carry on after World Cup organisers initially said he would be replaced after encouraging Germany in the quarterfinal win over Argentina.

The German announcer had told the predominantly German crowd in the stadium in Berlin, "Ladies and Gentlemen, our team needs our support" during the match.

Stadium announcers at World Cup matches must remain neutral according to FIFA rules.

But after initially facing losing his place the announcer has been told that he may continue.

"We have given him a yellow card and he has got the message," organisers said.

Prodi to inspire Azzurri

Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi intends to cheer on Italy against Germany in their their semifinal on Tuesday.

"I will follow the match between Italy and Germany. It will be a tough

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Coaches need to be lucky

AFP, Berlin

Napoleon said that all he wanted from his generals was that they were lucky -- the four coaches still standing in the World Cup will need that and more.

Two of the quartet -- Luiz Felipe Scolari and Jurgen Klinsmann - may feel they already have had their luck with Portugal and Germany winning their quarterfinals on penalties.

Italy's Marcello Lippi may also count his blessings that someone up there likes him after his Azzurri won their second round match against the Australians with a penalty five minutes into injury-time.

France's Raymond Domenech could also surmise that the blessing for him was the second yellow card of the group stage that ruled out playmaker Zinedine Zidane from the final first round match against Togo.

Having looked jaded and every inch his 34 years, the former Real Madrid star returned for the 3-1 win over Spain reinvigorated and outplayed the superstars of Brazil to a man.

Aside from luck, the four men, with whom the buck ultimately stops with success or failure, also need qualities of their own to inspire

their troops to victory.

All four have very different ways of going about it, owing of course to their contrasting characters.

Scolari is as he is on the sidelines of the pitch -- animated, charismatic and a brilliant mindgames manipulator -- and Brazil may well be rueing the fact one World Cup was enough for him.

"This is a new Portugal team and it's a new spirit. It's a warrior spirit. This is what we were missing in the past," said the 57-year-old of his squad.

Domenech by contrast cuts a different character entirely.

A dormouse to Scolari's bulldog he may be but both his coaching and motivational powers are just what his squad needed after the uninspiring reigns of Roger Lemerre and Jacques Santini.

"I made every tackle, I jumped up and down, I kicked every ball along with the team. I am exhausted but immensely happy," Domenech said after the Brazil match.

Lippi is very much the classy-looking, smooth-talking Italian.

Not for him the pre big match superstitions of predecessor Giovanni Trapattoni of sprinkling holy water on the turf, but that has come as a refreshing change for hardman midfielder Gennaro

Gattuso.

"Nothing against Trapattoni but Lippi has his own way of preparation which has made us a more solid squad."

"Also as a man he is always able to tell us things straight to our faces. I hope that he stays with us as long as possible," said the 28-year-old AC Milan stalwart.

Whether the 58-year-old Champions League winning coach does renew his contract rather than leave and return to his favourite past-time of fishing on his boat remains to be seen.

The same question can be posed about Klinsmann, the 41-year-old US-based former star striker has not yet decided whether he will stay on.

However previous sceptics about the rookie coach's free spiritedness he has brought to the job have been won over after watching a German side playing for the first time in years with enterprise and joy.

"Klinsmann has installed a philosophy in this team and that needs to continue as we owe it to the fans - even if there is the risk it sometimes doesn't work," said German Football Federation president Theo Zwanziger.

"Klinsmann's way is the right one and we want to continue with it."

AAD

Nakata hangs up his boots

AFP, Tokyo

Japanese midfielder Hidetoshi Nakata, one of the most famous Asian players of his generation, has announced his retirement from professional football, his website said on Monday.

"I will never go out onto the pitch again as a professional football player, but I will never give up football," said the 29-year-old Nakata, whose third World Cup ended in a 4-1 defeat to defending champions Brazil.

The two-time Asian Footballer of the Year was seen lying disconsolate on the pitch with a towel over his face after Japan's crashed out of the World Cup despite taking a 1-0 lead early on in their final Group F match.

"I had been determined since half a year ago that I would finish my career after the German World Cup and retire from the football world where I stayed for some 10 years," said Nakata.

"After the match against Brazil on June 22, which was my last game, I felt surely I love football. I was very moved, much more than I had expected.

"Coming into the World Cup, I thought the Japanese team has very good potential. Each player's individual skills are very well and speedy. The only disappointment

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PHOTO: AFP

A file photo taken on June 1 shows Japan star Hidetoshi Nakata wiping sweat during a training session in Bonn before the start of the World Cup. Nakata announced his retirement from professional football on Monday.

'Don't revel in Argentina win'

AFP, Berlin

Germany coach Jurgen Klinsmann believes it is vital that the hosts do not revel in the glory of Friday's sensational World Cup quarterfinal penalty shootout win over Argentina, saying they can only be content when the trophy is in the cabinet.

Germany face Italy in Tuesday's semifinal in Dortmund with the country in a state of euphoria after downing mighty Argentina but Klinsmann warned the job was only half done.

"You can never look back after a successful match but look towards the next big challenge," Klinsmann said in an interview with German sports agency SID.

"We can only be content if we are world champions on Sunday. I will give everything to make that happen.

"There is no time for the word 'content' at the moment. A World Cup like this encourages a permanent hunger from match to match."

Germany appointed 41-year-old Klinsmann as national coach in August 2004 and the 1990 World Cup victor with West Germany immediately said lifting the World Cup was the goal.

The hotel rooms for the Berlin final on July 9 were booked in advance but not everyone was convinced, particularly as Germany had crashed out of Euro 2004 at the first hurdle without winning a single match.

"In the beginning some laughed when we set the World Cup title as our target after we exited the Euro 2004 at the first stage," said Klinsmann, who is bidding to emulate Franz Beckenbauer, who won the World Cup as player and coach.

"But fortunately now there is a different way of thinking which we have achieved through two years of hard work."

With an attacking brand of football Germany have surpassed many people's expectations by reaching the last four and are riding on the crest of the World Cup wave.

Italy are up next and Klinsmann admits his time in Serie A -- the striker played for Inter Milan between 1989 and 1992 -- was a valuable part of his learning curve.

"At the time the switch to Italy was the most important step in my career," he said.

"I learnt a lot. The lifestyle and the mentality is a part of me today."

2006 Round 5 (Bumper), Draw in Dha

(See June 8 issue of the Star Sport for competition information, prizes and rules)

The Daily Star RANGS TOSHIBA World Cup Quiz Round 5 (Bumper) Ends July 09, 2006

Tick () the correct answers

1. Whom did Ronaldo overtake as the leading scorer in the World Cup?	Muller	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pele	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fontaine	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Which player was shown three yellow cards in a World Cup match?	Simunic	<input type="checkbox"/>	Deco	<input type="checkbox"/>	De Rossi	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Who scored the 2000th World Cup goal?	Ze Roberto	<input type="checkbox"/>	Joe Cole	<input type="checkbox"/>	Allback	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Which World Cup champions failed to win it at home?	Italy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Uruguay	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brazil	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Who is this player?	Essien	<input type="checkbox"/>	Drogba	<input type="checkbox"/>	Saha	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name (Mr/Mrs/Ms).....Age.....

Father's nameOccupation

Address

Telephone (if any)SignatureDate

Write with a ballpoint pen in clear BLOCK letters.

Cut along the dotted lines and mail to OR drop in the Quiz Box at The Daily Star

You may send as many entries as you like. Envelopes of entries must be clearly marked "Star World Cup Quiz 5."

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