



OFF HE GOES: Japanese referee Yuichi Nishimura (R) issues the red card to Uruguay midfielder Nicolas Lodeiro (not in picture) as teammate Sebastian Abreu protests during their Group A encounter with France at the Green Point Stadium in Cape Town on Friday.

Media hail Bafana

AFP, Johannesburg

South Africa's newspapers Saturday declared the World Cup opener "Fantastic", revelling in scoring the tournament's first goal and in finishing the first day without major incident.

The Star newspaper ran a half-page photo of rapturous flag-waving fans at Soccer City across its front page, under a headline "Ayoba, Mzansi!" -- meaning roughly "Awesome, South Africa!"

"Respect! That's what we earned yesterday. Defying the prophets of gloom and doom, South Africa pulled off a stunning World Cup opening ceremony, and Bafana Bafana followed that up with a heart-stopping draw against Mexico," the paper's front page read.

"That our footballers came agonisingly close to winning, after being written off as no-hopers by many people just a few months ago, showed that we are not a nation of unrealistic dreamers. We might dream -- but we have the courage, the energy and the commitment to make those dreams come true."

Inside the paper ran a spread of photos of joyous fans under the headline "Fantastic", images seen across South African media.

"Goal!" screamed the Weekend Argus in Cape Town, on a half-page photo of Siphwe Tshabalala rejoicing after scoring the World Cup's first goal.

The Citizen mourned Bafana's near-victory, with a full page photo of a stunned Teko Modise as he narrowly missed a late-minute goal that would have taken the game.

"Oh so close," the headline said. "Bafana almost pull off shock Cup victory."

Few problems were reported on the opening day, although relentless traffic jams snarled Johannesburg's main roads.

A blackout in Soweto -- a stone's throw from the actual game in Soccer City stadium -- meant some fans' televisions went black deep in the first half, the paper said.

PREVIEW

Too much at stake

AFP, Pretoria

The World Cup Group D opener between Serbia and Ghana in Pretoria on Sunday is one that neither side can afford to lose, in a tough pool that also includes Germany and Australia.

While many might believe that the clash at the Loftus Versfeld stadium is crucial in the battle for second place behind the Germans, the group should be far closer than that with even the Aussies capable of shaking things up.

In tight groups any defeat can put a team under pressure and such a reverse in this game could see the losers potentially needing to beat Germany to reach the knock-out stages.

It all suggests a tight and cagey affair for which neither side has had an ideal build-up.

Ghana have lost arguably their best player in Chelsea's Michael Essien, who misses the entire tournament with knee ligament damage, and that blow will certainly hit their hopes.



What's more, their second most high-profile star, Inter Milan midfielder Sulley Muntari, is struggling to be fit for the opener following a thigh injury, although he expects to make it.

Despite the potential threat posed by Australia, Muntari believes that this match is the most important for the team's qualification.

"Germany are the group favourites and so it will doubtless come down to Serbia -- we

don't know quite what to expect against them, but we know they are a good team," he said.

One advantage Ghana have is that they will know more about their opponents than vice versa, thanks to their Serbian coach Milovan Rajevic, who insists that he has no divided loyalties.

"I am 100 percent Ghanaian. I am a professional, my primary target is to win against Serbia and to qualify,"

he said. Meanwhile, Serbia's preparations have been hit by a change of training venue due to a worry about picking up injuries.

They switched from their practice pitch at the AW Muller Stadium in western Johannesburg to the University of Johannesburg's rugby stadium.

"I think they put a surface down a few days ago, so the pitch has not yet laid down nicely," said Lazio defender Aleksandar Kolarov, a reported target for new Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho.

"The surface was a bit unstable, so we were worrying about injuries."

THE KNOWLEDGE

Serbia captain Dejan Stankovic made his international debut for the old Yugoslavia team against South Korea in 1998.

Ghana 'keeper Richard Kingson has won the most international caps (75) for his country.

Fair & Lovely
MAX Impression Moment

PREVIEW

In search of maiden win

AGENCIES

Slovenia coach Matjaz Kek has said tension and anxiety are simmering in the team's camp ahead of their opening Group C match against Algeria in Polokwane on Sunday.

The Slovenians are looking for their first win in their third major tournament, having failed in Euro 2000 and the 2002 World Cup, and Kek conceded his players were nervous in what they see as a vital game.

"Tension and anxiety are creeping in but I think it's a

THE KNOWLEDGE

Rafik Saifi, Antar Yahia and Karim Ziani scored three goals each for Algeria in their World Cup qualifying campaign.

Slovenia qualified after defeating Russia on away goals following a 2-2 aggregate tie.

Algeria's weaknesses, I can say my staff and I have detected them and we are confident that we can chalk up three much needed points.



good sign because it shows the players are operating like a team, unlike in the 2002 tournament when they were at loggerheads with each other," Kek told a news conference after Friday's practice.

"It is imperative to get off to a good start and while it would be unfair to talk about

"Whatever happens in this World Cup I can guarantee that this crop of players will return home as a unit."

Kek promised in the build-up to the tournament his team would take risks to play entertaining football but striker Zlatko Dedic, whose goal in a 1-0 win over Russia sent Slovenia

through to the finals, said the players had other ideas.

"Winning the opening game would open the door to the last 16 and we don't care how we do it, as far as I am concerned we can win all three group matches 1-0 with our goalkeeper Samir Handanovic being the only scorer," he said.

"We are fully focused on the opening match but we are also looking at the big picture in our group because reaching the knockout stage has to be our goal if we beat the Algerians."

Algeria meanwhile have suffered a double injury blow ahead of the match.

Striker Rafik Djebbour was ruled out of the match with a foot injury while captain Anther Yahia suffered an ankle injury and is considered only 50/50 to play in what will be Algeria's first appearance at the finals since 1986.

Djebbour, who will probably be replaced in the starting line-up by Abdelkader Ghezzal, suffered the injury in training on Thursday and aggravated it on Friday, a source inside the Algerian camp told AFP.

Yahia underwent x-rays on Friday after he fell awkwardly going for a header during the training session and he is likely to be replaced by either Abdelkader Laifaoui or Carl Medjani.

Yahia's absence would be a huge blow to the Algerians not only for his leadership but also his goalscoring ability, it was his goal that got Algeria to the finals in their 1-0 play-off victory over six-time African champions Egypt.

SERBIA'S HEALINGAIDE

Serbia have allegedly come up with a novel solution by employing the services of a mysterious and controversial doctor, Marijana Kovacevic, to protect them.

The daily newspaper Vecernje Novosti reported that the players have decided to pay out of their own pockets to engage Kovacevic's alternative healing services, which reportedly include a special gel made from horse placentas and six hour massages, as their Federation was not convinced.

"Our players wanted her as a part of the team, but Serbia's Football federation has rejected the call," the daily quoted a source close to the national squad.

DE ROSSI PICKS UP INJURY

Italy have another key injury concern just three days before their World Cup opener.

Daniele De Rossi sat out a training match against the Gauteng All Stars on Friday with a right calf problem, although the team physician, Enrico Castellacci, said the midfielder has a chance of recuperating in time for the game against Paraguay on Monday.

Another midfielder, Andrea Pirlo, could miss the entire group phase with a left calf injury.

De Rossi and Pirlo were the only members of Italy's team who did not play against Gauteng. Two other midfielders who had minor injuries, Claudio Marchisio and Mauro Camoranesi, both performed without any problems -- Marchisio as a starter and Camoranesi as a second-half substitute.

BOLT GERRARD'S INSPIRATION

"Usain Bolt is an athlete I really look up to," said Gerrard of the world record holder in the 100 metres and 200 metres. "As a sprinter he's the man, isn't he? He's there to be shot at but keeps on winning. It takes some doing to be at the top of your game like he is. He's a winner, an inspiration, a character and someone I love watching."

"I'd heard he was a big football fan and it was really flattering that he wanted my shirt. I'm just disappointed I haven't got his pace. Pity he's a Man United fan, though. I was going to ask him to one of our training sessions when he's in England but I might not bother now!"

WC HEAT ON GOOGLE

Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo is the player Google users are searching for the most as the World Cup gets underway in South Africa.

"In search, the winning player is already clear: Cristiano Ronaldo, the Portuguese team captain and talented forward," the Internet giant said in a blogpost on Friday.

Besides Ronaldo, Google said analysis of search queries found heavy interest from Web surfers in Brazil's Kaka, England's Wayne Rooney, Argentina's Lionel Messi and Wesley Sneijder of the Netherlands.

Google also said there was much more interest online in injured Dutch winger Arjen Robben than there was in Wednesday's elections in the Netherlands.

"In the days leading up to the June 9 elections, between four and five times as many searches were done for Robben than either of the two popular candidates," Google said.

Google said World Cup searches were spiking "although overall World Cup buzz seems to be off to a slower start in 2010 than in the months leading up to the 2006 tournament, based on global trends."

As the tournament kicked off on Friday, the hottest searches on Google in the United States concerned how to watch the opening match between South Africa and Mexico on television or online.

TWITTER'S WC OUTAGE

Twitter, which has suffered a series of outages this week, warned Friday that there could be more problems amid heavy World Cup traffic.

Jean-Paul Cozzatti, a Twitter engineer, said on the Twitter blog that the micro-blogging service's problems this week were due to an internal network being over-capacity.

Cozzatti said Twitter was doubling capacity and rebalancing traffic on the network to redistribute the load.

When Twitter goes down, a picture of a whale -- known as the "fail whale" -- appears on Twitter.com, and Cozzatti said his engineering team was hoping for fewer appearances by the creature.

"You may still see the whale when there are unprecedented spikes in traffic," he said.

"For instance, during the World Cup tournament -- and particularly during big, closely-watched matches (such as tomorrow's match between England and the USA) -- we anticipate a significant surge in activity on Twitter."



DANIELLE DE ROSSI



CRISTIANO RONALDO

JUMBO IPS এর সাথে একটি DAEWOO এসি ফ্রি! ELECTRONICS

১৮ মাসের ওয়ারেন্টি

RAHIMAFROOZ IPS One second please 6KVA

এসি কম্পিউটার ফ্রিজ টিভি লাইট ফ্যান মাইক্রোওভেন ওয়াশিং মেশিন

আর কী চালাবেন? নো প্রবলেম! জাম্বো থাকলে, সব চলবে!

RAHIMAFROOZ IPS One second please