

# Germany hails 'dream start'

AFP, Berlin

"We're going to blow you all away", screamed Bild newspaper on Monday after Germany's 4-0 humiliation of Australia in their first World Cup match in Durban.

"Dream start for Germany," ran the ticker on the N24 rolling news television channel as it showed images of the 35,000 fans draped in the national colours watching the match at the "fan mile" at Berlin's Olympic Stadium.

Former German stars were effusive about the team's performance as the three-time champions outclassed Australia in every department with goals from Lukas Podolski, Miroslav Klose, Thomas Mueller and Brazil-born striker Cacau.

"What we saw today was simply brilliant. That was football of the highest quality. The German team is on top form and right in the tournament now. A perfect start," said former Germany goalkeeper Oliver Kahn on ZDF television.

Shouts of "Deutschland, Deutschland, Deutschland" rang out in the night throughout the football-mad country cities as drivers of cars patriotically flying the national flag honked their horns in approval.

One of Berlin's main shopping streets, the Ku'Damm, was closed off to traffic for two hours after the final whistle after it became clogged up with cars carrying Germans wanting to party.

# Cahill crushed

INTERNET

Australia midfielder Tim Cahill wept profusely late Sunday, after being sent off in his team's World Cup opener against Germany.

"It's probably one of the saddest moments of my footballing career," he told reporters in Durban after the match. "It just shows you how dreams can be made and crushed in the space of hours."

In the 56th minute of the Group D game, Mexican referee Marco Antonio Rodriguez showed Cahill a straight red card. The Aussie was shocked by the decision, because he fell and then crashed onto German midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger in the process.

Schweinsteiger told the referee that Cahill did not deserve to be sent off, but there was no turning back.

"It was not a red card, sorry," the German again told his colleague after the match.

And Cahill could appreciate that despite his sadness.


"To hear Schweinsteiger say that, it's very nice of him," the tearful player said. "But this is the beauty of football: One day you are the hero, the next day you are at the bottom."

Germany were already winning by 2-0 when Cahill left the pitch, but Australia will miss the Everton striker in their next match -- Saturday against Ghana.




TIME TO DELIVER AT THE BIGGEST STAGE: Portugal striker Cristiano Ronaldo executes a spectacular side volley during a training session at Bekker High School in Magaliesburg on Sunday. Ronaldo will be the man to watch when Portugal launch their World Cup campaign against Ivory Coast in Port Elizabeth today.

PHOTO: AFP



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## PREVIEW

# A mouthwatering prospect

AFP, Port Elizabeth

Two of the world's finest footballers were set to grace the World Cup stage here on Tuesday as Portugal open their campaign against top African hopes Ivory Coast.

Cristiano Ronaldo and Didier Drogba will be the inspirations for their sides as they look to sidestep a forecast last 16 clash with European champions and cup joint favourites Spain.

Drogba had initially looked sure to miss the game after breaking his arm in a warm-up against Japan on June 4.

The Chelsea striker underwent surgery and amazingly could still take part - he joined in a training session with his damaged arm in a sling last Friday.

Manager Sven-Goran Eriksson is hopeful his walking wounded warrior will make it.

"He is feeling better and better each day," said the former England and Mexico boss who took over the Elephants after January's Africa Cup of Nations.

The Swede will leave a decision about Drogba's participation until just before kick-off.

Drogba's presence is vital. He was sorely missed when his teammates missed a host of chances in a warm-up against modest Swiss outfit Lausanne last Tuesday.

Ronaldo was refusing to get too excited about testing himself against one of the potential stars of this tournament.

"We know all about Drogba, he's a great player," the Real Madrid 'galactico' said on Sunday.

"But we can't get preoccupied by him. We must concentrate on our team, our tactics and our ambitions. That's the only way to



win."

Simao is hoping Portugal can top the table to avoid Spain, but that is a tall order with five-time champions Brazil, who take on minnows North Korea later Tuesday, lurking.

"It will be difficult if Portugal face Spain in the last 16 because they are the European champions," the 30-year-old said.

"Portugal have some of the best players in Europe with a lot of ambition and it's a very united and strong team."

"It's always important to start the World Cup in the best way with a win. We don't want to face Brazil in the third game need-

ing a win but if we need to win, why not? Because we have beaten them several times before."

Portugal, semi-finalists in 2006, had to survive a nervy play-off with Bosnia Herzegovina to qualify for South Africa, but Ronaldo insisted that their troubles were behind them.

"The most important thing is to get to the second round and if it's as group winners, that would be better," said the 25-year-old.

"If not and we have to play Spain, there will be no need to fear them. Spain are one of the favourites for the World Cup, but we are not scared of anyone. We are going to play to win, or try to win."

Ronaldo, who scored 26 times for his club last season, is confident he will refine his scoring boots for his country after failing to net in qualifying, a 16-month long drought.

Goals, he explained, are like "ketchup - when it comes out (of the bottle) it all comes out at once".

He added: "I am just plugging away as usual. God knows who is working hard and who is deserving. I am perfectly calm."

"I want to turn in a great tournament and, who knows, be the best. I will strive for that. My ambition has always been to be the best."

Portugal are missing Manchester United winger Nani, who suffered a collarbone injury last week ruling him out of the competition.

## THE KNOWLEDGE

This will be the first meeting between the sides.

Portugal have never drawn a group game at the World Cup, winning eight and losing four.

## PREVIEW

# All whites dreaming big

AFP, Rustenburg

New Zealand coach Ricki Herbert is confident that his players will not be struck by first night nerves as they seek to make World Cup history against Slovakia on Tuesday.

The All Whites are appearing in the finals for only the second time and, having lost all

weakest squads in the tournament, New Zealand will have their work cut out containing a talented Slovakia side that is making its first appearance in the finals as an independent nation.

But a surprise friendly win over Serbia in the build-up to the tournament was proof that Herbert's squad can get the

for the second group game against Italy.

In Brown's absence, defender Ivan Vicelich is expected to bolster central midfield and will share responsibility for keeping tabs on Slovakia's captain and playmaker, Marek Hamsik, with fellow veteran Simon Elliott.

Slovakia, who qualified by topping a group that included highly-rated neighbours the Czech Republic and fellow qualifiers Slovenia, go into the match quietly confident of starting their campaign with a win.

As well as Hamsik, the dangermen for Slovakia are striker Stanislav Sestak, who plays in the Bundesliga for VfL Bochum, and Miroslav Stoch, a winger who has just been sold by Chelsea to Turkish giants Fenerbahce after a successful season on loan at Dutch champions FC Twente.



three matches in Spain in 1982, are still looking for a first point on football's biggest stage.

"There are a few nerves, a sense of anticipation," admitted Herbert. "But that is not a bad thing. The players are very focused on what they have to do."

Regarded as one of the

better of more technically gifted opponents.

Herbert's options have been restricted by the loss of bustling midfielder Tim Brown, who will not be risked against the Slovaks as he completes his recovery from shoulder surgery at the end of May but should be available

## THE KNOWLEDGE

New Zealand's only previous World Cup appearance saw them lose all three games in 1982 by at least three goals.

Slovakia are competing in their first-ever World Cup finals tournament.

## LAHM, SCHWEINSTEIGER STAYING PUT

Bastian Schweinsteiger and Philipp Lahm are not for sale, Bayern Munich sports director Christian Nerlinger said in the wake of interest from major clubs in the two.

Premier League champions Chelsea are reportedly pondering a bid for the midfielder Schweinsteiger and the German World Cup captain Lahm has in the past been linked with Spanish champs Barcelona.

But Nerlinger told Monday's edition of Kicker sports magazine that "Lahm and Schweinsteiger are our crown jewels. They are not for sale!"

Schweinsteiger, 25, and Lahm, 26, are under contract in Munich until 2012. They were both impressive in Germany's 4-0 rout of Australia in their World Cup opener on Sunday, which could lead to more interest after the event.

## ZIZOU BLASTS THE FRENCH

French footballing legend Zinedine Zidane has attacked the country's World Cup stars for not playing as a team. He also accused Raymond Domenech of "not being a coach".

"I did not see any team play," said Zidane in an interview with French television channel Canal+ late Sunday about France's opening goalless draw with Uruguay.

"The players should control themselves and leave their egos to one side. There was no team play. They did not play for each other. Always trying to do things on your own is not good," he said.

The 37-year-old who played his last game for the national team in the 2006 World Cup final also criticised coach Domenech, suggesting he was capable of picking the players but not organising them.

Zidane said: "He is not a coach, he just picks the players. He should concern himself with making sure the players work as a team. But ultimately it is the players that have to show what they can do on the pitch."

France play Mexico in Polokwane on Thursday and Zidane added: "Only as a team can we succeed. Each player has to help his team-mate. No player can do everything alone."

## CARRAGHER CALLS FOR CALM

Centre-back Jamie Carragher on Tuesday called on England fans to have faith in manager Fabio Capello after widespread criticism of the Italian in the English media.

Capello was widely blamed for the selections of James Milner, Rob Green

and Ledley King in Saturday's 1-1 draw against the United States in Group C.

But Carragher, who replaced King at half-time, is firmly behind the manager. "Look at his record," Carragher said. "He's Fabio Capello: look at what he's done in his career and what he's done up to now with England."

He dismissed the thought that the pressure would have any effect on the England manager.

"I'm sure Fabio Capello will be fine," he said. "He's been manager of Real Madrid and AC Milan. He's seen it all before."

Having won nine titles in 14 years at club level, Capello dragged England from the gloom that surrounded their failure to qualify for Euro 2008 so they qualified for the World Cup at the top of their group, having scored seven more goals than anybody else in the European section.

## WORLD CUP FEVER HITS VENEZUELA

Even Hugo Chavez has to take a back seat during the World Cup. The Venezuela president put back his daily address to the nation on Sunday so that it did not clash with any matches.

The weekly radio and television programme "Alo presidente" is usually broadcast at 11 am but it was switched to 6 pm to allow the Venezuelan people to watch events in South Africa.

Chavez announced the scheduling change via his social networking account on Twitter. He also congratulated Diego Maradona for Argentina's success against Nigeria saying: "Well done Argentina! It could have been five goals. Congratulations com-

rade Maradona."

## PORTUGAL DENY NANI COVER-UP

Portugal have denied suggestions that there were any secret motives for the country's decision to send injured winger Nani home from the World Cup.

Nani has told reporters, "I'll be fine in a week" and questions have been raised after Nani travelled to South Africa with the injury and even trained with Carlos Queiroz's squad for two days.

Portugal are adamant that concerns over the player's fitness were the only factor in their decision to replace Nani ahead of the tournament.

"There is no attempting to hide anything, there was only the hope that he could have recovered," Portuguese federation vice-president Amandio de Carvalho said.

# Ronaldo hits out at vuvuzelas

AFP, Magaliesburg

Cristiano Ronaldo added his voice Sunday to the complaints about the wall of sound being made by the vuvuzela trumpets at the World Cup, protesting they disturb the players' concentration.

"It is difficult for anyone on the pitch to concentrate," the Portugal star told a press conference.

"A lot of players don't like them, but they are going to have to get used to them."

The metre-long (three feet-long) plastic vuvuzelas have been a hit with fans at the World Cup stadiums in South Africa, but the noise of thousands being blown at once resembles a high-volume swarm of buzzing bees.

"Teams have done nothing but criticise the vuvuzelas, but you have to respect them," Real Madrid midfielder Ronaldo said.

"Hardly anyone likes them, but the people who do like them are those who like to blow the instruments and make a racket."

As well as the vuvuzelas, Ronaldo said he was getting used to the much-criticised World Cup match ball.

"I'm more used to it than I was two weeks ago. I don't think it will be a problem," he said.

"We've trained enough with it to get accustomed to it and I'm sure the dribbles, the shots and the corners with it will all be fine."

# Rosell Barca's new chief

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona's former vice chairman Sandro Rosell was Sunday elected to replace Joan Laporta as the boss of the Spanish champions, the club announced.

Rosell, a former Nike executive who was behind Brazilian Ronaldo's move to Barcelona in 2003, won 61.35 percent of the vote by club members, beating three other candidates to become chairman of the Catalan giants.

Laporta was ineligible to stand for election again after holding the post since 2003.

Rosell, 46, was on the club's board between 2003 and 2005 during Laporta's first term.

He quit as vice chairman in 2005 because he was disillusioned with the way the club was being run, accusing it of lacking "independence, transparency and democracy".

"The problem is Laporta, he has a problem with himself. The project of this group of youths has gotten lost in recent years," he said at the time.

Barcelona's outgoing vice-president Jaume Ferrer was the only one of the four candidates in the race who had the backing of Laporta.