

## 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 find 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

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.

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.

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.

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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

for the second group game against Italy.

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

### 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.

### ZIDOU 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".

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