

# French return to disgrace

AFP, Paris

France's shamed World Cup squad faced the wrath of President Nicolas Sarkozy, the press and a furious public on Wednesday after a disastrous exit from the tournament in South Africa.

The players were due to fly back to a humiliated country that has largely written them off as spoiled millionaires led by an incompetent coach and unworthy of the blue jersey worn by the 1998 world champions.

France is so angry that Sarkozy, who had been hoping a good showing from the team might cheer a country facing difficult economic times, has called a meeting of government ministers to discuss the defeat.

"Those responsible for this disaster must accept the consequences, first the players, then the team management and after them the football federation," sports minister Roselyne Bachelot said on Europe 1 radio.

He also attacked the outgoing team captain Patrice Evra, for his part in a players' strike on Sunday, when the team refused to train in protest at the sacking of striker Nicolas Anelka.

Several newspapers noted that France had only qualified for the finals in the first place by

"cheating" Ireland of its place when striker Thierry Henry handled the ball before their winning goal in a qualifying match.

"France is not ready to forgive," declared the popular Le Parisien, while the influential sports daily l'Equipe demanded that the government step in to reform the French Football Federation, which it said is run by "clowns".

Henry is flying back to France separately from the rest of his teammates and will meet Sarkozy on Thursday, having requested a private audience. The rest of the squad were to fly back late in the night and arrive early Thursday.

Meanwhile, the airwaves were filling with outraged commentators and call-in listeners, criticising everything from the team's lack of patriotism -- many failed to sing the national anthem -- to the players' level of education.

Few of the players have responded to the criticism, but midfielder Florent Malouda -- the sole Frenchman to have found the back of the net -- denied that the team was made up of "hooligans".

"Me, I'll stay on. We have a responsibility to rebuild what we have destroyed," he told Le Parisien, promising that the players would work better with Domenech's replacement, Laurent Blanc.

# Paraguay bank on striking trio

## PREVIEW

REUTERS, Johannesburg

Paraguay will look to a trio of sharpshooters to see them into the World Cup second round while New Zealand, surprise contenders for a place in the last 16, are hoping luck favours them at last.

The South Americans seemed the better team for much of their opening 1-1 draw with world champions Italy and easily beat Slovakia 2-0 to top Group F ahead of Thursday's match.

New Zealand, one of the lowest ranked sides in South Africa at 78th in the world and with no big name players, have confounded the pundits by holding Slovakia for their first ever World Cup point and then Italy by the same 1-1 scoreline.

As underdogs, the affable All Whites are fast becoming a favourite for neutrals across the world and should garner most cheers at Polokwane's Peter Mokaba Stadium.

But a win, or even another draw, may be a bridge too far. Paraguay are expected to push for goals through Roque Santa Cruz, Nelson Valdez and Lucas Barrios -- a striking trio that overpowered Slovakia.

**THE KNOWLEDGE**  
Mark Paston was New Zealand's second choice goalkeeper until he saved a crucial penalty in their WC qualifying play-off against Bahrain in 2009.

Paraguay, who have four points ahead of Italy and New Zealand on two, need only draw to guarantee their progress but will be wary of the Kiwis' height and prowess at set pieces.

Paraguay's Argentine coach Gerardo Martino could slot the fit-again Santa Cruz in behind Barrios and Valdez -- a potent attack that would test a New Zealand back four that will again be led by the inspirational Ryan Nelsen.

The All Whites captain marshalled his troops admirably during an onslaught by Italy on Sunday, when goalkeeper Mark Paston and the wondrous saw off 23 shots, seven on target.

In contrast, New Zealand managed just one shot on target -- Shane Smeltz's seventh minute goal -- and not one corner.

New Zealand, who will be unchanged, need a win to guarantee qualification but if Italy and Slovakia produce a stalemate the All Whites could go through with a higher scoring draw.

What they lack in experience and skill, the Kiwis make up for with spirit and self belief and, having already exceeded expectations, all the pressure will be on Paraguay.



**BATTLE MODE:** Denmark players do a bit of shadow-boxing ahead of a training session at Loerie Park in Knysna on Monday. The Danes need nothing less than a win today against Japan for a second round qualification.

PHOTO: AFP

# Denmark need a dynamite

## PREVIEW

REUTERS, Rustenburg

Denmark coach Morten Olsen is hoping for some traditional 'Danish dynamite' from his team's attack in Thursday's decisive Group E clash with Japan.

Olsen, who captained Denmark when they made their impressive 'dynamic' debut at the World Cup finals in 1986, acknowledged Japan are well-organised and difficult opponents but said his side will treat the game as if it was a final.

"It is a decisive game, hopefully the first final for us," said the 60-year-old. "We know what we have to do -- that is the name of the game. We just have to be confident."

After one win and one defeat each in their opening games, both nations are level on three points. For Japan, a draw would take them through to the second round for the second time, but for Denmark it would signal elimination.

Netherlands have already secured their qualification for the last 16 by beating the Danes 2-0 and Japan 1-0, while Cameroon are already out after losing twice.

Olsen said he had respect

for Japan's resilience and spirit, developed under coach Takeshi Okada, who is in charge at a World Cup for the second time after leading them in France in 1998, and expected a tight contest.

"They have a good group of players who are fighting for their country. They are proud to play for Japan," he said. "They have a good coach who has a good knowledge of

football. It won't be easy, but we have to break them down."

Denmark will hope to improve on their patchy form and perform with greater purpose and concentration than they did against Cameroon last Saturday when goals by striker Nicklas Bendtner and winger Dennis Rommedahl gave them victory.

They had to come from

behind after Samuel Eto'o capitalised on a Christian Poulsen mistake to fire Cameroon in front.

Poulsen, whose tackling and energy are so important in the Danish midfield, said: "Cameroon were really good, they had a lot of strong players, but they were not well organised. The Japanese are disciplined. It is going to be a very different kind of game -- less open, more tactical."

Okada, who targeted a semifinal place before the tournament began, warned his players to prepare for the "match of their lives" at the Royal Bafokeng Stadium.

He added that Bendtner, back from injury, was the chief threat and they would have to "cut off the supply for him".

That may mean leaving Japan's outstanding creative player Shunsuke Nakamura out again as he did in the 1-0 defeat by the Dutch in Durban when Yoshito Okubo was preferred.

**STANDINGS**

Teams	P	W	L	D	GF	GA	Pts
Netherlands	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
Japan	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Denmark	2	1	0	1	2	3	3
Cameroon	2	0	0	2	1	3	0



**THE KNOWLEDGE**  
Japan has one of the highest sponsorship incomes for a national squad, amounting to over 16.5 million pounds last year.

# Everybody hates Raymond

AFP, Bloemfontein

Raymond Domenech said he felt a "genuine sense of sadness" as his colourful, controversial reign as France coach came to a bitter end with defeat at the hands of South Africa on Tuesday.

The 58-year-old said despite the rancour in the camp over the past week he had greeted his players at the end of the match, whom he praised for their efforts in their final Group A match.

It was "important to show them that I understand that they also had been through difficult times and they have given their best" in the match, said Domenech, who took France to the final in 2006.

"I think we need to be dignified both in victory and defeat," Domenech said, adding it was too early to make judgements about the French campaign which yielded just one draw and a single goal.

Domenech refused to be drawn on why he had not accepted the traditional shake of the hand from South Africa coach Carlos Alberto Parreira.

"I have no intention of replying to this question," he said, when asked to explain his refusal.

Parreira, who won the World Cup with his native Brazil in 1994, tried to explain the snub.

# Dutch not complacent

## PREVIEW

REUTERS, Cape Town

Already-qualified Netherlands will be at full strength against out-of-contention Cameroon in their final Group E match on Thursday in a bid to avoid a hat-trick of early knockout exits after fielding weakened teams.

In the 2006 World Cup and at Euro 2008 the Dutch qualified after their first two group games. Both times then-coach Marco van Basten rested big names for

the final match and in both tournaments they were beaten in the first knockout round.

This time, on six points after wins over Denmark and Japan, there is still top place to play for as a defeat by Cameroon coupled with a healthy win for either of the other sides who meet in Rustenburg could relegate them to second place.

Coach Bert van Marwijk is not taking any chances. "I don't plan to make many changes," he told reporters, saying he wanted to maintain the team's rhythm.

Robben has been on the

sidelines so far as he recovers from his latest injury, this time a hamstring problem, but he has hardly been missed as the Dutch started strongly against Denmark and looked even more clinical against Japan.

Cameroon have nothing to play for but pride after defeats by Japan and Denmark meant they had got through to the knockout stage only once -- in 1990 when they lost to England in the quarterfinals -- in six appearances at the World Cup.

Coach Paul Le Guen, widely criticised even by some of his own players, for controversial selections against Japan, brought back the likes of Alexandre Song, Geremi and Achille Emana.

Those players should keep their places although there may be other changes. Rigobert Song, Aurelien Chedjou and keeper Carlos Kameni could come in while defender Gaetan Bong, striker Eric Choupo-Moting and midfielder Joel Matip are also in contention.

**THE KNOWLEDGE**  
Mark Van Bommel is married to Andra, the daughter of Dutch coach Bert van Marwijk.  
  
Benoit Assou-Ekotto hoped to play for France but eventually debuted for Cameroon in 2009.



## JABULANI MAN

An Australian man is being paid thousands of dollars to watch the World Cup inside a giant football equipped with a well-stocked fridge, a games console and a bunk bed.

Adam Santarossa, 23, says his friends are jealous after he was selected by Adidas to spend the month-long tournament watching football, tweeting and writing blogs inside the six-metre (yard) diameter Jabulani ball.

"Other people have work commitments and family commitments. My only problem is getting my blog done on time," he told AFP. "It's an easy life I'm living. I'm sure people will be quite jealous."

Santarossa has a cleaner, free laundry, a PlayStation 3 and a laptop, and will get 3,000 dollars (2,600 US) for his trouble, along with the contents of the ball and three bags full of sports gear.

He is allowed to have friends round to the ball, on Melbourne's docks, for Australia's games and even had a visit from a minor celebrity, singer Dannii Minogue's partner Kris Smith.

"I had a bit of trouble at the start -- it's a bit difficult having people peer in through the windows 24-seven," he said.

"But it's a pretty easy life. I'm going to be seeing if they can extend my lease."

## RONALDO SEES THE FUNNY SIDE

Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo was happy to see the funny side of the strike that ended his international goal-scoring drought.

The Real Madrid star, who became the world's most expensive player when he switched from Manchester United to the Spanish capital, had not scored a competitive goal for his country since Euro 2008.

However, Monday's astonishing 7-0 demolition of Korea DPR put the 25-year-old firmly back on the score sheet -- albeit in unconventional style.

"I smiled when I scored because it was a funny goal, the way it hit me on the neck," Ronaldo declared, after the ball bounced luckily off the back of his neck before he regained control and fired home.

"I knew the goal would come eventually. It's normal (to have these spells), I didn't feel under pressure about it."

Ronaldo also played a large part in the remainder of Portugal's seven goal haul and was voted the man of the match, although he was modest enough to pass on the accolade.

## VILLA DODGES FIFAACTION

Spain striker David Villa has escaped punishment for striking Honduras

defender Emilio Izaguirre on Monday night.

The new Barcelona recruit scored twice in the match to secure a 2-0 victory for the European champions but was captured on camera hitting out at Izaguirre as the pair waited for a set-piece to be taken late in the first half.

Japanese referee Yuichi Nishimura took no action at the time and a spokesman for FIFA said yesterday: "The disciplinary committee of FIFA have examined the situation and have found no grounds to open a case against David Villa."

That leaves the star striker free to play in his team's vital third Group H match against Chile.

## FRENCH SHAKE ROCKS PARREIRA

South African coach Carlos Alberto Parreira remains confused by Raymond Domenech's refusal to shake his hand.

The snub came after the host nation piled on more agony for Les Bleus with a 2-1 win in the last Group A clash on Tuesday.

Domenech refused to shake Parreira's hand after the match, despite the South Africa coach standing right in front of him and demanding why.

Domenech refused to answer that question, though, leaving the Brazilian born Parreira a little baffled.

"I was very polite at the end of the game," declared Parreira. "But he claimed I had offended him. I cannot for the life of me understand why."

"One of his assistants said I had commented on Thierry Henry's handball and that France should not be in the finals."

"But I do not recall making these

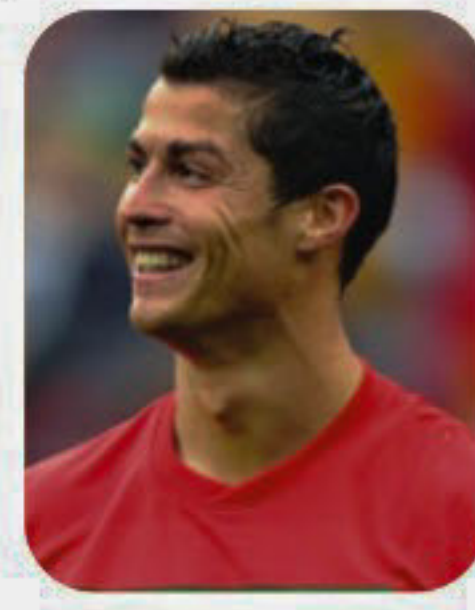
## LION BURGER STIRS IRE

Offering up lion burgers as a tribute to the World Cup in South Africa is getting a Phoenix valley restaurant into controversy.

The Il Vinaio restaurant in downtown Mesa has received a bomb threat and around 250 e-mails from animal rights activists after it announced it would offer lion as a special to honour the soccer tournament.

"We thought that since the World Cup was in Africa...that the lion burger might be interesting for some of our more adventurous customers," owner Cameron Selogie told Reuters.

The restaurant is offering the lion burgers at 21 dollars, served with spicy homemade chips and roast corn on the cob.



RONALDO



PARREIRA

