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WORLD CUP SPECIAL

A Diego declaration

South America will never be a greater soccer power than Europe, Diego Maradona said on Saturday after the region's five teams all qualified for the second round. But South America, level with Europe at 9-9 in world titles, can continue to provide great players to clubs around the world, he told a news conference. "We'll never be more of a power than Europe," the former Argentina captain said. "The best prize South America has is to know that we give all the clubs in the world great players."

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DHAKA SUNDAY JUNE 27, 2010, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net



PHOTO: AFP

Ghana striker Asamoah Gyan pumps his fist at the end of their World Cup Round of 16 match against USA at the Royal Bafokeng stadium in Rustenburg yesterday. Gyan struck in the third minute of extra time to secure the Black Stars' place in the quarterfinals.

Ghana send USA packing

AFP, Rustenburg

Ghana's Asamoah Gyan scored three minutes into extra time to send Africa's last World Cup contender into the quarterfinals with a 2-1 victory over the United States on Saturday.

The Black Stars booked a last-eight meeting with Uruguay on Friday at Johannesburg's Soccer City stadium.

The South Americans had secured their progress with a 2-1 victory over South Korea earlier on Saturday.

Ghana become only the third African team to reach a World Cup quarterfinal, matching the achievements of Cameroon in 1990 and Senegal in 2002.

"I am the happiest man in the world," said Gyan.

"In 2006 we made the second round, now we have gone a step further. We have made Ghana proud and the whole of Africa proud."

The Black Stars, who also defeated the Americans to eliminate them from the 2006 tournament at the group phase, are the last of six African teams that began the first World Cup on African soil.

Kevin-Prince Boateng gave the Africans the lead in the fifth minute but the Americans, who fought back to draw after falling behind against England on the same pitch two weeks ago, equalised in the 62nd minute via a Landon Donovan penalty.

Former US President Bill Clinton and British rock legend Mick Jagger watched as

four-time African champion Ghana denied an attacking US side the decisive goal late in normal time, setting the stage for two 15-minute extra-time periods.

The wait for the game's pivotal moment lasted only three minutes.

Ghana's Andre Ayew launched a high, bouncing pass upfield to Gyan, who tried to keep control as he was

bumped into by US captain Carlos Bocanegra -- Gyan's friend and teammate with French club Rennes.

Gyan came away with the ball and met it on the bounce two strides later to blast a left-footed shot over US goalkeeper Tim Howard for his third goal of the tournament, taking him to a share of the lead in the goal-scoring chart.

SCORE BOARD

USA 1 - 2 GHANA
DONOVAN 62 (PEN) BOATENG 5
GYAN 93

USA (4-4-2): Tim Howard, Steve Cherundolo, Jay Meredit, Carlos Bocanegra, Jonathan Bornstein, Landon Donovan, Ricardo Clark (Maurice Edu 31), Michael Bradley, Clint Dempsey, Jozy Altidore (Herculez Gomez 91), Robert Findley (Benny Feilhaber 46)

Ghana (4-1-3-1): Richard Kingson, John Paintsil, John Mensah, Jonathan Mensah, Hans Sarpei (Lee Addy 73), Anthony Annan, Samuel Inkoom (Sulley Muntari 113), Kwadwo Asamoah, Kevin-Prince Boateng (Stephen Appiah 78), Andre Ayew, Asamoah Gyan

Venue: Royal Bafokeng Stadium, Rustenburg

ROUND OF 16

Germany v England Time: 8.00pm Bloemfontein
Argentina v Mexico Time: 12.30am (Monday) Johannesburg

TODAY'S MATCHES

Fair & Lovely MAX Fairness for MAX Impression
MAX Skin Lightening
MAX Spot Reduction
MAX Sun Protection

KEY STATS

USA	Ghana
Shots (on target)	
21(6)	16(6)
Corners	
5	4
Possession	
49%	51%
Yellow Cards	
0	0

TODAY'S POLL

Will the England-Germany match go to penalties?

Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast your vote

WORLD CUP POLL

Will Messi score against Mexico?

Yes 61.4%
No 38.6%

TOTAL VOTES: 104

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South Korea striker Park Chu-Young (L) and Uruguay defender Diego Lugano fight for possession during their Round of 16 match in Port Elizabeth yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Night of the Titans

The streets of Buenos Aires will be aloud for the Argentine. The Mexican waves will continue all the way from Mexico City to South Africa. The Bundesliga spirit will echo from Berlin. And the Barmy Army will make its presence felt at Mangaung / Bloemfontein.

The Germans will have Klose come back after a freak red card and unite the firepower with Podolski. But the key player for the Germans to create the scoring is definitely Mesut Ozil. Joachim Low, the German coach has underlined his importance, "Ozil is a gift for German football." On the other hand, one of the highest paid managers in the World Cup 2010, Fabio Capello and team England will look to draw inspiration from their last match win against Slovenia. If Rooney doesn't score for England now, he will be yet another wasted talent for English football, who couldn't make it in national colors.

While at Johannesburg, the abundance of football talent that Argentina holds will be on test against the ever spirited Mexicans. The same battle took place in the last World Cup, where Argentina prevailed with a fantastic goal from Maxi Rodriguez. But this time at least in paper, the margin should be bigger for the men in blue and white. Will Maradona find coaching glory, or will Messi bamboozle the Mexicans? Time will say.

But of course the "hilarious" referee decisions might change the course of game in seconds.

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