

Pele, who earlier during the World Cup finals said that Maradona had only taken the Argentina coaching job because he needed the money, said Maradona's previous troubles - which included treatment for a cocaine addiction - could only have a bad effect on the team. "He (Maradona) is not a good coach, because he had a bizarre lifestyle which cannot go down well with his team," Pele told German magazine 11Freunde.

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**Dunga's hands
are tied**

AP, Port Elizabeth

Brazil coach Dunga may have a hard time selecting his midfield for the quarterfinal against the Netherlands at the World Cup on Friday because of injuries and a suspension.

Kaka and veteran Gilberto Silva are set to start at Nelson Mandela Bay stadium, but a suspension to Ramires and injuries to Elano, Felipe Melo and Julio Baptista leave the coach with few options for the other two midfield positions.

Elano is definitely out because of a bruised bone in his right ankle, while Felipe Melo and Julio Baptista are doubtful to make the starting lineup.

Felipe Melo practised before Brazil headed from Johannesburg to Port Elizabeth on Wednesday, but it wasn't clear whether he would fully recover in time after injuring his left ankle against Portugal in Brazil's final group match. The injury kept him out of Brazil's 3-0 win over Chile in the Round of 16 on Monday.

Julio Baptista replaced the suspended Kaka in midfield against Portugal and injured his left knee in that match. Julio Baptista missed the victory over Chile but also practised Thursday.

Elano is the most serious problem for Brazil, however, and he could even miss the rest of the World Cup because of his injury, according to Brazil doctors. He had been key in the Brazilian midfield and will be the biggest loss for Dunga on Friday.

The Galatasaray player scored in each of Brazil's first two matches before getting injured in a hard tackle against Ivory Coast.

"I wish I could be playing now," Elano said. "I will keep undergoing treatment, and hopefully I will get better to still help the team in this World Cup."

Daniel Alves came in for Elano in the previous two
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WHO'S THE RING-LEADER? Kaka (L) is about to sting Luis Fabiano (C) who is held by Robinho and Julio Baptista during Brazil's training in Johannesburg yesterday, on the eve of their quarterfinal clash with Netherlands. PHOTO: REUTERS

QUARTERFINAL PREVIEW: NETHERLANDS V BRAZIL

Awaiting an explosion

AFP, Port Elizabeth

Brazil, without suspended Ramires and injured Elano, face the Netherlands here on Friday for the fourth time at a World Cup in what promises to be an explosive quarterfinal.

In 1994 Brazil overcame the Dutch 3-2 at the same stage of the competition before going on to win the title. Four years later in France the Oranje lost out again, 4-2 on penalties after drawing their semifinal 1-1.

They first met in 1974, with the European side prevailing 2-0. The Netherlands are in arguably better shape than they have ever been to exact revenge on their arch nemesis at the Nelson Mandela Bay stadium and extend their unbeaten record in South Africa to five games.

Bert van Marwijk's men are seeking to be crowned champions at the ninth attempt, after falling at the final hurdle twice -- in 1974 and 1978.

Van Marwijk, appointed after Euro 2008 when Holland excelled in the 'Group of Death' only to run out of steam against Russia, has claimed his team are the "underdogs".

"Brazil are a very mature and stable team. They convey a positive form of arrogance, that others cannot win. We might be the underdogs against Brazil, for the first time in this World Cup," he said.

Holland's previous international outings have often been marked by discord in the camp, sometimes along racial lines, but one of the hallmarks of the 2010 squad has been its harmony.

That unity was briefly threatened by an outburst from Robin van Persie who when he was taken off during

Monday's last 16 win over Slovakia reportedly said "it is not me that should be substituted but Wesley Sneijder".

Van Persie later denied that he had mentioned Sneijder, but just to be on the safe side van Marwijk held clear the air talks between the pair, with Sneijder later insisting nothing had happened.

Dunga's Brazil meanwhile are aiming to become the first of what could be an all-South American cast list for the semifinals. The Selecao are seemingly coming to the boil at just the right time judged on their 3-0 last 16 rout of Chile, one of the most attractive sides at these finals.

Goals from Juan, Luis Fabiano and Robinho put Brazil into the last eight with a record of three wins and a drab draw with Portugal in Durban.

Brazil suffered a shock quarterfinal defeat to eventual beaten finalists France in Germany in 2006, and are anxious to atone for that reverse as they seek a sixth world crown.

Gilberto Silva said: "I believe we can win [the title]."

Turning to the upcoming test against Holland the former Arsenal midfielder added: "We know that if we give them space it will be very difficult for us and we could have a problem."

Dunga, under enormous pressure to deliver the title, has the utmost respect for Friday's opposition.



QUARTERFINALS

Netherlands v Brazil Time: 8.00pm Port Elizabeth

Uruguay v Ghana Time: 12.30am (Saturday) Johannesburg

TODAY'S MATCHES

TODAY'S POLL

Who will win the Brazil-Netherlands quarterfinal?

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

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WORLD CUP POLL

Do you agree with Cryuff that Brazil is boring?

Yes 58.7%
No 39.1%
Maybe 2.2%

TOTAL VOTES: 86

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NOKIA N900

Spain striker David Villa applauds supporters as he leaves the pitch during their Round of 16 match against Portugal on June 29 at the Green Point stadium in Cape Town. PHOTO: AFP

The Goal Machines and the Magic Weavers

Football is all about goals. And World Cup Football 2010 at South Africa has certainly seen quite a few and some of them were spectacular.

Spanish matador David Villa and Argentine goal maestro Gonzalez Higuain have already scored four goals apiece. Closely following them are Fabiano of Brazil, Gyan of Ghana, Diego Forlan and Luis Suarez of Uruguay. And the German duos of Miroslav Klose and Lukas Podolski have their sights on the Golden Boot too. Don't count out another German prodigy Mueller, who silenced the English fanfare with a delightful double. Of the lot, the individual brilliance of David Villa, Luis Suarez, Assamoah Gyan and Podolski have stood out.

Talking about the one man brilliance factor, the first name has to be a legend in making named Lionel Messi. He has been instrumental in all the Argentine victories. And with Tevez in great form, this is one of most lethal duos of the tournament. Ozeil of Germany has been the find of the tournament and is the livewire of the German attacks. David Villa of Spain has his name in this list as well. The list is complete with Brazilian flairs of Fabiano, who is terrorizing opposition defence along with Robinho, whose darting runs has created havoc.

The next four games will set the tone for the final stages. And it starts with today's encounter of Brazil and Netherlands. One must be brave enough to predict the winner.

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