

England striker Wayne Rooney heads the list of unattractive players on dating website BeautifulPeople.com. Rooney has the company of England teammate John Terry in the top 10 ugliest, but it's the Algerian team that comes out as collectively the least attractive on the planet, according to the poll. Most beautiful, according to online voters subscribing to the site, are Italy's Fabio Cannavaro, Fernando Torres and David Villa of Spain, US mainstay Landon Donovan and France's Thierry Henry.



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A first for Europe

INTERNET

The Dutch semifinal victory over Uruguay on Tuesday assures Europe of a first World Cup title at a tournament played outside its territory.

So far no team from the continent has achieved the feat outside Europe, but the jinx will end on Sunday when the Dutch face either Germany or Spain in the 2010 final.

The South Africa World Cup is the ninth of 19 overall held outside Europe.

Brazil won four editions, 1962 in Chile, 1970 in Mexico, 1994 in the United States and 2002 in Japan/South Korea. Argentina and Uruguay share two titles each: Uruguay 1930 at home and 1950 in Brazil, Argentina 1978 at home and 1986 in Mexico.

Meanwhile, Brazil's 1958 title in Sweden is the only one won by a non-European team in Europe.

The other nine events on the Old Continent were all won by European teams.

Italy's four titles came 1934 at home, 1938 in France, 1982 in Spain and 2006 in Germany. West Germany got its treble 1954 in Switzerland, 1974 at home and 1990 in Italy. England and France won their respective home edition in 1966 and 1998, respectively. Sunday's final is the eighth overall between European teams.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Netherlands' Wesley Sneijder hugs his partner as they walk into the Sandton Hilton hotel in Johannesburg yesterday. World Cup finalists Netherlands have found a new home at the Sunnyside Park Hotel in Johannesburg. The Dutch only had reservations at Sandton Hilton until July 5 because they probably did not expect to make it to the last week of the tournament.

Dutch want the Germans

INTERNET

It seems like everybody wants a World Cup revenge on Germany.

First, Argentina were looking for victory in the South Africa quarterfinal to redress the balance for a defeat at the hands of the Europeans at the same stage in Germany 2006.

They failed spectacularly, losing 4-0 to the youthful side.

Now the Netherlands - 3-2 winners against Uruguay in Tuesday's Cape Town semifinal - want vengeance for 36-year-old upset.

West Germany defeated the Dutch 2-1 in the 1974 World Cup final, and defender Joris Mathijsen believes the players would enjoy the opportunity for some payback. Assuming, of course, that Germany overcome Spain in Wednesday's semifinal.

"I am hoping we will play Germany," Mathijsen said after the game.

"If it is Spain that is fine too, but most players are hoping it will be Germany. Then we can finally take revenge for 1974," he said.

Coach Bert van Marwijk remembers that game well and, like most football pundits, believe that the Johann Cruyff-inspired side should have triumphed.

"We should have won that match, we played wonderfully well," he said.

But the Netherlands should be careful

about wishing for a final against Germany given the occasional defensive frailty they displayed against the South Americans.

Admittedly, they were missing defensive midfielder Nigel de Jong and right-back Gregory van der Wiel through suspension. But the Uruguayans still managed to score twice without showing a great deal of attacking enterprise.

Germany have put eight goals past England and Argentina, proof that they can slice through defences at speed. They would be unforgiving of any lapses in concentration by the Dutch.

Goalkeeper Maarten Stekelenburg is also a source of concern for the Dutch.

In Cape Town he should have done better with Diego Forlan's long-distance shot for Uruguay's first goal and later admitted his positioning was poor.

But the Dutch can compensate for errors at the back with potent goal threats in the shape of Wesley Sneijder and Arjen Robben - both on target against Uruguay.

Sneijder, a European Champions League winner this season with Inter Milan, is joint World Cup top-scorer with Spain's David Villa on five goals, albeit two of them coming from lucky deflections.

Against Uruguay he was again voted man of the match - hardly a surprise since it was his fourth in six games.

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Ballack quiet on captain debate

INTERNET

Michael Ballack will not be drawn into a row on the future Germany captain after Philipp Lahm challenged him for the job beyond the World Cup.

"I don't want to comment on the issue," Ballack told Wednesday's edition of Luxembourg paper l'essentiel.

Ballack, 33, is undergoing further rehabilitation on his ankle injury in Luxembourg after ending a visit of the German World Cup team in South Africa.

The 98-times capped Ballack is the German captain but has been sidelined because of the injury. The Bayern Munich right-back took over the captaincy for the tournament in South Africa and said in several newspaper interviews this week that he would not like to give up the role.

The statements, which coincided with Ballack's unexpected departure from the team on Monday, sparked a debate on whether Ballack should be captain again, and whether he should return to the team at all.

Germany have played outstanding football without Ballack, including a stunning 4-0 victory over Argentina and a 4-1 drubbing of England at the World Cup. Former Germany captain Lothar Matthaus is among those who has suggested Ballack should retire from the national team.

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No news on trophy presenter

INTERNET

Tournament organizers have still not decided who will present the trophy to the winners of the World Cup final on Sunday in Soccer City.

National icon Nelson Mandela would be the obvious choice for the local organizing committee (LOC) but the frail 91-year-old's attendance remains uncertain.

"He has an open invitation. The Mandela family will make a decision on the day of the final," LOC spokesman Jermaine Craig said Wednesday in Johannesburg.

Mandela had been expected to attend part of the

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WORLD CUP POLL

Do you think Paul the Octopus will be right again?

Yes 50%
No 34%
Don't care 16%

TOTAL VOTES: 32

TODAY'S POLL

Do you think South American teams are on the decline?

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Uruguay striker Edinson Cavani (R) shoots ahead of Netherlands midfielder Mark van Bommel during their World Cup semifinal at the Green Point stadium in Cape Town on Tuesday.
PHOTO: AFP

10 Interesting Statistics for World Cup 2010

- 420 Million: The total prize money in US dollars available during the World Cup tournament.
- \$10 Million: The number of man hours it took to construct Soccer City stadium, the centerpiece of the 2010 World Cup in Johannesburg
- 42,000: The capacity of the Royal Bafokeng Stadium in Rustenburg, the smallest of the 10 World Cup stadiums
- 41,000: The number of police officers who will be deployed specifically for the World Cup
- 204: The number of teams who attempted to qualify for one of the 31 places available for the final stages. 32 teams will take part in the finals in South Africa, the host nation having qualified automatically
- \$2.85 Billion: The amount that the World Cup is expected to generate for the South African economy
- 330,000: Number of visitors expected to travel to South Africa to attend the World Cup
- 18: The number of World Cups that have taken place before South Africa 2010
- 14: The number of votes that South Africa secured to win the right to host the 2010 tournament
- 11: Perhaps the most significant figure of them all. The tournament runs from June 11 to July 11. The official match ball is the 11th to be made for a World Cup tournament by Adidas and features 11 colors, one for each player in a team. And there are also 11 official languages of South Africa.

Source: Internet

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