



Brazil forward Neymar (L) scores the second goal against Ecuador during their Copa America encounter at the Mario Kempes Stadium on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

## New role for Vieira

AFP, Manchester

France World Cup-winner Patrick Vieira has retired as a player to take up a new role of football development executive at current club Manchester City, the English Premier League side said Thursday.

Born in Senegal the 35-year-old midfielder won three Premier League titles with Arsenal and four FA Cups before adding another FA Cup with City as the club ended their 35-year wait for silverware by beating Stoke in last season's final.

He also won 107 caps for France and was a member of their 1998 World Cup winning side.

"This role is a fantastic new challenge for me and I am very grateful to Manchester City for offering me this opportunity," Vieira, who also won the European Championship with France in 2000, said in a City statement.

"I have a lot to learn about the non-playing areas of the business but there are many very experienced people here for me to learn from and I am confident that I can make a significant contribution to the club's ongoing success."

According to City, Vieira's new post will entail "a wide ranging role, helping to deliver the club's social responsibility programme, both in the UK and abroad, as well as working closely with City's commercial partners".

The statement added Vieira would also take an "active role in the development of youngsters at the Platt Lane complex, providing mentoring support as part of the Academy's Multiskills Programme, which seeks to provide a well-rounded lifestyle education for the club's junior players".

# Brazil get their Venezuela gatecrash party act together

AFP, Buenos Aires



After two cagey rounds of games at the Copa America, save for Argentina's swatting of Costa Rica, the championship burst into life Wednesday as Brazil hit four goals against Ecuador to reach the quarter-finals.

While the samba stars were finally getting their act together with a 4-2 win thanks to doubles from Neymar and Pato their Group B rivals Venezuela, not to be outdone, served up even more of a thriller in sharing six goals with Paraguay.

In the shakeout of those two results reigning champions Brazil won the group by the scruff of their necks, by a goal difference of plus two to plus one for the Venezuelans, who came back from two goals down against the Paraguayans to score twice in stoppage time and preserve their unbeaten record.

The Brazilians, who were in ominous attacking mode from the start, will now Sunday face the Paraguayans, who go through as one of the two best third-placed finishers.

"That was the game we wanted to play. We wanted to win and to take top spot," said Pato.

"When we lose we all lose and when we win we all win together. The whole team played really well - it's a great result," said the AC Milan striker.

Ecuador's Felipe Caicedo, who grabbed

both his side's goals, said he and his teammates were downcast after giving it their best shot - but coming rock bottom of the group with a solitary point.

"We're a bit sad - we gave it all we had. It hurts. We wanted to make history but we hope the experience will stand us in good stead for the World Cup qualifiers," said Caicedo.

Coach Mano Menezes brought back Robinho for an attacking line-up having dropped the AC Milan man for the draw with Paraguay and he responded with a hard-running showing while Ganso and Andre Santos also starred at the hub of the side as the 'jogo bonito' returned to the Brazilian game.

Robino had an effort chalked off for off-side late on but by then it was academic.

Pato's opening header on 28 minutes set the tone - although Caicedo levelled seven minutes before the interval with a low shot which embarrassed Julio Cesar in the Brazilian goal.

Santos starlet Neymar smacked the favourites back in front four minutes after combat resumed and although Caicedo promptly responded with another low effort the Brazilians then raced through the gears against rivals who had little more to give.

On the hour Neymar shot, keeper Marcelo Elizaga emulated Cesar in making a fumble of his own and Pato bundled in before Maicon hared down the right and Neymar clipped in from four yards out with 18 minutes remaining.

AFP, Buenos Aires



After two games at the 43rd Copa America left hosts Argentina, holders Brazil and 14-times winners Uruguay winless it seemed the old order of South American football could be facing a challenge to its long supremacy.

But try as they might to shake the tree, their rivals have not managed to dislodge them and the trio now have time to regroup having finally made it, albeit belatedly, into the quarterfinals.

Joining them, however, are five teams who are out to prove that the tournament is not a closed shop when it comes to lifting the trophy.

Neutrals will be delighted one of the five is Venezuela, reaching this stage for the first time on foreign soil after holding Brazil and coming back from 3-1 down to hold Paraguay.

Brazil now take on the Paraguayans - who came within a minute of beating them in the group.

While the Venezuelans revel in their role of gatecrashers, the auriverde, the albiceleste and the charruas - the only sides on the continent to have tasted World Cup glory - will now seek to show the old guard still rule.

Yet positive performances by the likes of Chile, Venezuela's next opponents, suggest the heavyweights can take nothing for granted.

One of the Big Three will definitely not be in the semi-final draw as the

Argentinians face the Uruguayans on Saturday at Santa Fe.

With Lionel Messi starting to fire on all cylinders the hosts should advance.

But Uruguay in the past have been a thorn in the flesh of their illustrious neighbours.

Although Argentina have won the tournament on six of the eight occasions they have hosted it and match the 14 titles of their rivals from across the River Plate, the two times they messed up saw the Uruguayans benefit.

### DRAW

#### Saturday

At Cordoba (1700 GMT)

Colombia v Peru

At Santa Fe (2215 GMT)

Argentina v Uruguay

#### Sunday

At La Plata (1900 GMT)

Brazil v Paraguay

At San Juan (2215 GMT)

The first was in the inaugural tournament of 1916, while the latest slip-up came in 1987.

In those early days, Brazil were leeches keen on continental superiority - the auriverde preferred to earn World Cup kudos.

But recently, amid Argentina's ongoing trophy drought, the Brazilians have decided that rubbing in superiority on both levels is a cosy feeling.

While the samba stars have won four of the past five editions - Colom-

bia, through to a meeting with Peru, bagged a title in 2001 to break the sequence - the Argentinians and Uruguayans have slid out of the limelight.

That 1987 surprise was Uruguay's last win to date while Argentinians need no reminding that since they triumphed in 1993 the senior side has won nothing at all.

Uruguay coach Oscar Tabarez, a former handler of Argentinian side Boca Juniors, says he is looking forward to Saturday's encounter.

"It will be do or die and now the tournament is really beginning in earnest," noted 'El Maestro'.

Counterpart Carlos Batista meanwhile has slammed the door shut on the debate as to whether his side can or should try to play like Barcelona, telling ESPN: "I don't have to copy Barcelona; nor do I have to ask (Barca coach Pep) Guardiola for advice."

The difference against Costa Rica was that Messi, 53 goals for Barca last season, excelled as provider, only underlining his versatility.

The duel will take place at the Santa Fe stadium nicknamed the elephants' graveyard, scene of numerous domestic shocks.

While Chile and Uruguay appear the biggest threats to have a tilt at the title, the big guns, early travails behind them, are now loaded.

As Brazil striker Pato warned after his side dispatched Ecuador, when the going gets tough, the top teams get going.

"This is where the Copa starts," said the Milan sharpshooter.

## USA confident

Football

AFP, Moenchengladbach

Striker Abby Wambach has said her USA team are prepared to go the distance to beat Japan in Sunday's final of the women's World Cup as the Americans bid to win their third title.

The last time the USA lifted the World Cup was in 1999, but under coach Pia Sundhage they beat Brazil 5-3 in a dramatic quarterfinal penalty shoot-out and then saw off France with an impressive 3-1 victory in Wednesday's semi-final.

Japan booked their berth in the Frankfurt final by dominating Sweden to seal a 3-1 win in their semi-final also on Wednesday.

Having scored a dramatic goal in the 122nd minute against Brazil to take last Sunday's quarterfinal to penalties, Wambach insists the US can see off Japan with sheer will-power.

"We will approach the game like the last two," said Wambach, who scored her side's second goal against the French.

"Doesn't matter if it's about 90 minutes, 120 minutes or 122 minutes and it doesn't matter who we are playing against."

"A whole nation is behind us and cheering for us. We set the standards for other nations, who try and match us, and therefore invest more in women's football."

While women's football is more popular than the men's game in the United States, Japan come into Sunday's final having also caught their country's imagination.

Women's football fever has gripped Japan, diverting fans from summer staples sumo and baseball, after their side -- nicknamed after the Nadeshiko flower -- have proved giant-killers with victory over hosts Germany and now Sweden.



USA striker Abby Wambach (2nd from L) heads in the second goal against France during their World Cup semifinal in Moenchengladbach on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Boateng joins Bayern

AFP, Berlin

Germany defender Jerome Boateng will leave Manchester City to sign a four-year deal worth 13.5 million euros with German league giants Bayern Munich, reported SID, an AFP subsidiary, on Thursday.

The 22-year-old is currently training in Los Angeles with the City squad and is expected to arrive in Munich in the next few days for the medical.

Boateng's arrival will be Bayern's fifth summer signing along with Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer, Brazil defender Rafinha, striker Nils Petersen and Japan's rising star Takashi Usami.

Having won the last of his 13 caps in the friendly draw with Italy in February, Boateng's arrival would help solve Bayern's defensive problems last season which saw them finish the 2010/11 campaign without any silverware.

### SPORTS POLL

#### WEEKLY QUESTION

Which Copa America team has impressed you the most?

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