

# Ronaldinho on the treble

Football

AFP, Rio De Janeiro

He may be a blast from the past as far as the World Cup is concerned, but Ronaldinho is bagging most of the limelight in Rio, even as the city prepares to host Saturday's draw for the 2014 tournament.

With Brazil themselves already qualified for the 2014 World Cup as hosts, fans are not too fazed about the draw, knowing that in any case the South American countries will all face each other as always.

Instead, they were still gorging themselves on Wednesday's thrilling league encounter between 2002 world champion Ronaldinho's Flamengo and Santos, the club of young starlet Neymar.

Inspired by a hat-trick from the 31-year-old Ronaldinho, Flamengo recovered from three goals down to win a breath-taking contest 5-4 leaving Neymar on the losing side despite a brace of his own.

The match was still the talk of Brazilian fans Friday with 'R10' - Ronaldinho - the subject of countless newspaper headlines and television debates.

His goal for 4-4 was a daisy cutting freekick under a jumping wall of defenders - a repeat of a trick he pulled off starring at his peak for Barcelona against Werder Bremen in the 2006 Champions League.

"This Ronaldinho is an ace," papers agreed as they eulogised the veteran, twice a world footballer of the year.

He signed for Flamengo after a three-year spell with AC Milan earlier this year with an eye-popping salary of 700,000 dollars a month.

"Little by little I am showing my importance to Flamengo. Today we are top of the table with just one loss all season," said the forward as he looked back on his hat-trick at the Vila Belmiro de Santos stadium.

"Magic, pure magic," enthused daily O Globo, which published a lengthy analysis of the "electrifying spectacle" which brought much of the country to a virtual standstill as millions of fans watched spellbound.

Columnist Renato Mauricio Prado said it was wonderful to be able to watch a match "which became a true time tunnel. In 90 minutes you could see the Neymar we have all been waiting for and also the Ronaldinho who was justifiably twice voted world player of the year."

# Exit Bradley, enter Klinsmann

Football

AFP, Chicago

Former German international Jurgen Klinsmann was named on Friday as coach of the United States national team, replacing the sacked Bob Bradley with qualification for the 2014 World Cup his prime mission.

"I am proud and honoured to be named the head coach of the US Men's National Football Team," Klinsmann, who turns 47 on Saturday, told US Soccer.

"I would like to thank the US Soccer Federation for the opportunity, and I'm excited about the challenge ahead.

"I am looking forward to bringing the team together for our upcoming match against Mexico (on August 10 in Philadelphia) and starting on the road towards qualifying for the 2014 World Cup."

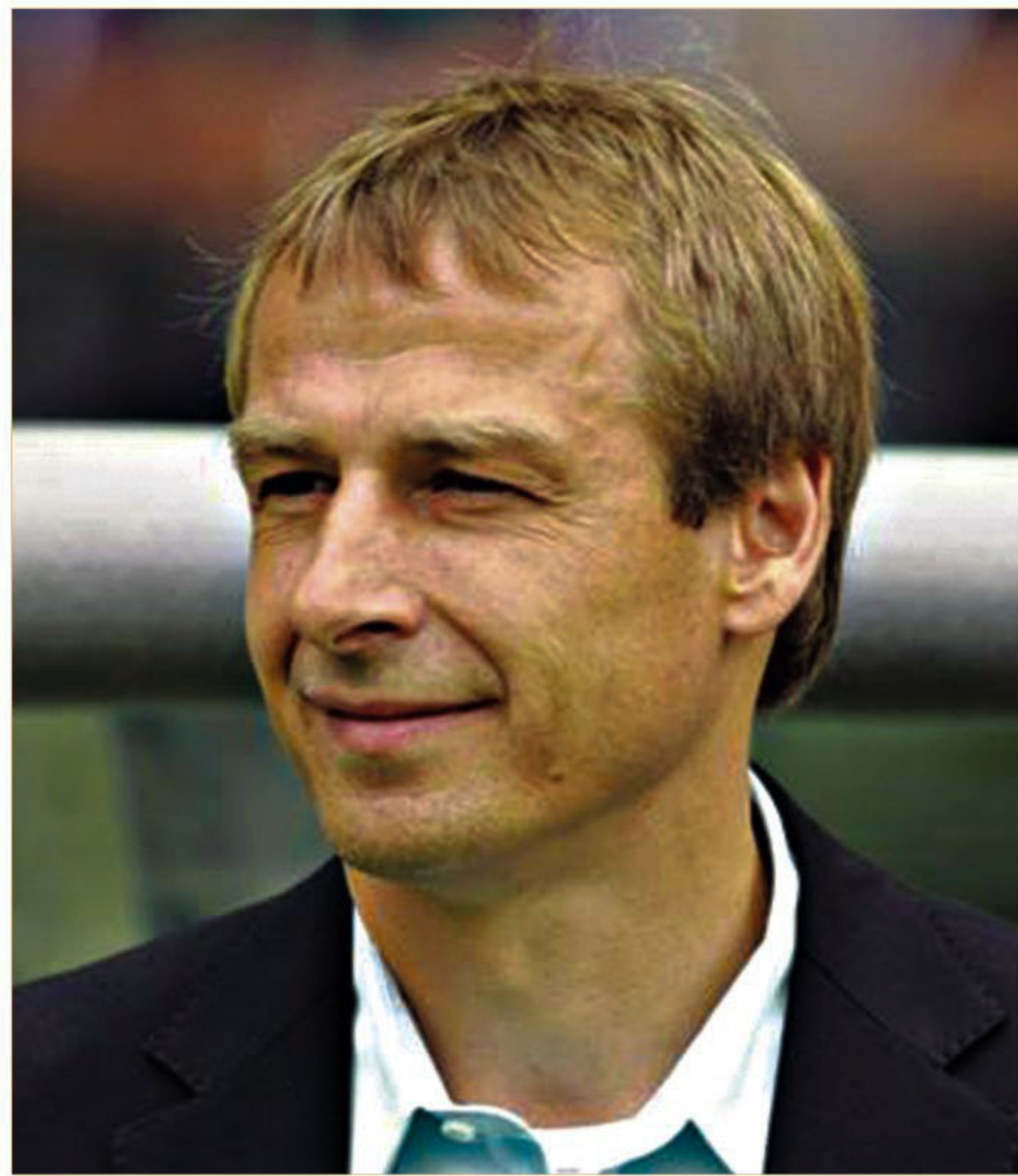
US Soccer president Sunil Gulati expressed his delight at the appointment, saying: "We are excited to have Jurgen as the head coach of our men's national team.

"He is a highly accomplished player and coach with the experience and knowledge to advance the program. Jurgen has had success in many different areas of the game and we look forward to the leadership he will provide on and off the field."

As a player, Klinsmann won the 1990 World Cup and 1996 European Championship, and was also a prolific goalscorer at club level for Stuttgarter Kickers, VfB Stuttgart, Inter Milan, Monaco, Tottenham Hotspur, Bayern Munich, and Sampdoria.

He already has experience of coaching at international level, having led his native Germany to third place at the 2006 World Cup on home soil.

However, he was sacked from his last coaching position at Bayern Munich five games before the end of the 2008/09 season, and has not worked in a dugout since, choosing instead to devote time to his role as a



partner with a sports marketing consultancy. Klinsmann is very familiar with the US, though, having moved to California with his American wife after retiring from playing in 1998.

He was linked with the US coaching job after Bruce Arena was fired in 2006, only for US Soccer to opt for Bradley instead, and was also reportedly close to taking charge at the

LA Galaxy in 2007 before the MLS club appointed Ruud Gullit.

Klinsmann will be formally unveiled at a press conference in New York on Monday, and will be charged with the task of leading the USA to a seventh consecutive World Cup final.

Former US team members who now serve as TV commentators weighed in as well, with

Alexi Lalas saying Klinsmann's hiring will be "a source of motivation and maybe a kick in the pants" for US players while Eric Wynalda said that "if you're going to make the move, he's the perfect choice."

After taking on Mexico, the team will also have friendly matches against Costa Rica and Belgium to look forward to before the 2014 qualifying campaign begins.

Bradley was sacked when US Soccer decided it was "time for us to make a change following the 4-2 defeat to Mexico in the Gold Cup final.

Meanwhile, current Germany coach Joachim Loew, who served as Klinsmann's assistant during the former's spell in charge of the national team, said he was delighted by the news.

"I am very happy for Jurgen and to see he has found himself a new challenge. I wish him the best of luck. Knowing Jurgen as I do I am sure he will take up the cudgels with gusto and really get things moving," said Loew, who learned of the decision by telephone.

German Football Federation (DFB) president Theo Zwanziger added in a statement: "I can only congratulate the Americans on their choice."

Klinsmann becomes the first non-American to coach the US squad since Bora Milutinovic was dropped in 1995 and replaced by Steve Sampson, who felt Bradley could have reversed American fortunes given more time.

"I'm disappointed at the loss of Bob because I felt the national team was in transition and he needed more time to complete the job," Sampson said, though he allowed that Klinsmann was a solid choice for his knowledge of US methods.

"I believe he understands the American system as well as anybody, having observed youth development and the professional game in the United States," Sampson said.

"Certainly there isn't any player that can say 'Jurgen hasn't done it,'" Sampson said. "That's the overriding advantage Jurgen has."

## Pele the face of 2014 WC

AP, Rio De Janeiro

For Brazil, there was really no other choice as honorary ambassador for the 2014 World Cup than Pele, the country's greatest ever player.

A day before Saturday's qualifying draw, the government introduced Pele in the role.

"We want to learn from a man who has been through 12 World Cups," Brazilian Sports Minister Orlando Silva said. "Pele represents how the world sees Brazil. We want him to be the face of the World Cup."

Silva said Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff picked Pele to represent the country because of his dedication to promoting Brazil and its football across the world.

"I've been representing Brazil since I was 17 years old in the 1958 World Cup in Sweden," Pele said. "I'm proud to have received this invitation and I'm honoured to have the obligation to laud Brazil's name."

## Cesc to miss Emirates Cup

Football

AFP, London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has revealed Cesc Fabregas will miss this weekend's Emirates Cup because he has been "unsettled" by continued speculation about a potential move to Barcelona.

Fabregas has been keen to join Barca for over a year but the European champions have so far failed to meet Arsenal's £40 million (\$65.8 million) valuation of the Spanish midfielder.

It is thought Arsenal rejected Barca's latest offer of around £30 million earlier in the off-season and there has been no progress in talks between the clubs.

Wenger wants to keep his captain but he admits the saga has taken a toll on Fabregas, who has not featured in any of Arsenal's pre-season games as he makes a slow comeback from a recurring hamstring injury.

Speaking at Friday's press conference ahead of the Emirates Cup -- a friendly tournament featuring Arsenal, Boca Juniors, Paris St Germain and the New York Red Bulls -- Wenger said: "He is coming back from an injury and is not settled with us. You know all the

speculation which is around his position that has to be sorted out soon."

Wenger is growing increasingly concerned that Fabregas is unable to focus on his life at Arsenal while the lure of a return home to Barcelona, where he started his career, remains tantalisingly within reach.

The French coach is well aware of Fabregas's feelings after several meetings with the Spaniard but, although he understands the player's dilemma, he wants the situation resolved soon so the Gunners can focus on preparing for the new season.

"There is only one deadline, it is on August 31. The other deadline is for us to get everybody focused, the players who are really committed to the club, my energy and my focus goes on them," Wenger said.

"That is what I focus on, I cannot help the other situation, because it does not only depend on me, it depends on the players and on the other clubs.

"I'm just worried that the player has to be completely focused and committed to our club.

"At the moment he's coming back from an injury and we have to sort out that situation.

"He is the captain of our club and we

have to make sure he is really focused on being with us."

Asked whether it would be better to simply allow Fabregas to leave, Wenger said: "Frankly I don't know. I don't master completely the situation - it depends on Cesc.

"I think he's in a moment when he thinks about it and it is a big concern.

"I always say he is torn between two loves - the club where he has been educated as a very young boy and the club where he has been educated from 16 onwards and he has been given a chance. I personally can understand it."

Fabregas won't be pleased to hear Wenger reaffirm his belief that Barcelona must meet Arsenal's asking price before a deal can be done.

"It would mean that anybody who just wants to leave we will have to let him go, and for any price," Wenger said.

"It has to be as well that the three parties agrees and that everybody is happy at the end.

"If there is only two who are happy and one is very unhappy it doesn't work".

Wenger is also hopeful France midfielder Samir Nasri will sign a new deal despite Manchester City's attempts to sign him for £25 million.

## Chelsea accept apology

Football

AFP, Hongkong

Chelsea have accepted an apology from the Football Association of Malaysia over anti-Semitic abuse that targeted Israeli midfielder Yossi Benayoun during a pre-season match.

The London club had lodged an official complaint after Benayoun was barracked during a game in Kuala Lumpur on July 21, the first leg of Chelsea's Asian tour.

Chelsea initially played down the incident but went ahead with its complaint after reviewing the game. The club, which has since played games in Bangkok and Hong Kong without incident, said it is now happy to move on.

"We appreciate the prompt attention the Malaysian FA has given our complaint," it said in a statement.

"Chelsea Football Club is committed to eradicating all discriminatory behaviour from the game, and urges the MFA to take appropriate steps to stamp out this type of behaviour in future.

"The club and Yossi accept the apology, and the matter is now closed."

The Malaysian FA on Friday released a qualified apology to Chelsea and the player for conduct it said came from a small disruptive section of fans.

"The FA of Malaysia would like to strongly register that we do not condone any form of racism in football," it said.

The midfielder was booed and jeered whenever he touched the ball in during the 1-0 win against a Malaysia XI in the capital.

## Mourinho ban reduced

AFP, Nyon

UEFA have reduced a ban imposed on Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho for comments made about referees in last season's Champions League following an appeal hearing on Friday.

The Portuguese was initially handed a ban of four matches, plus one suspended for three years, as well as a fine of 50,000 euros (\$72,000) when he was sent from the bench during Real's 2-0 defeat to Barcelona in the Champions League semifinal first-leg on April 27.

UEFA also punished him for an "inappropriate statement" in his post-match press conference.

However, after a six-hour hearing at UEFA headquarters, the fine remains in place, but the suspension has been reduced to three matches, plus two suspended.



Barcelona striker David Villa dribbles the ball during a training session at the RFK Stadium in Washington DC on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Gerrard out till September

Football

AFP, London

Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard will be out of action until September after going into hospital on Saturday for treatment on an infection related to his groin injury.

Gerrard is expected to spend several days in hospital while he is given antibiotics to cure the infection before returning to the club's Melwood training ground to continue his rehabilitation.

The England midfielder hasn't played for Kenny Dalglish's side since March when he had surgery in a bid to cure a recurring groin problem.

Gerrard has missed all of Liverpool's pre-season programme, with the infection further slowing an already difficult recovery after the operation.

The 30-year-old will now be ruled out of Liverpool's opening three Premier League fixtures against Sunderland, Arsenal and Bolton.

"Steven Gerrard today began a course of antibiotic treatment for an infection related to an ongoing groin problem," a statement on Liverpool's website read.

"He is expected to remain in hospital for several days while the precautionary procedure is completed.

"The player will then return to Melwood to continue his rehabilitation programme and is expected to be available for selection in September."

Gerrard's spell on the sidelines will also preclude him from featuring in England's friendly against Holland on August 10.

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#### STAR Cricket

England v India  
Second Test, Day 3  
Live from 4:00pm

#### STAR Sports

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Hungarian Grand Prix

#### DAY'S EVENT



Bangladesh v Zimbabwe XI  
3-Day Warm-up Match, Day 2