

What to Watch

DAY'S EVENT

Maasranga TV & STAR Cricket

ICC Champions Trophy First Semifinal

England v South Africa

Live from 3:30pm

Maasranga TV & STAR Sports

FIFA Confederations Cup

Brazil v Mexico

Live from 1:00am (Thursday)

Italy v Japan

Live from 4:00am (Thursday)

Super Cup

Venue: PARIS

Time: 6:00pm

Time: 8:00pm

Sk Jamal v Team BJMC

Iranian players embark on a victory lap after their 1-0 win against South Korea at Ulsan yesterday. The victory won Iran a place in the next summer's World Cup in Brazil.

PHOTO: AFP

Win or bye for Blue Samurai



Italy midfield maestro Andrea Pirlo (C) shows a T-shirt as he celebrates a century of appearances for the Azzurri during a training session at the Joao Havelange Stadium in Rio de Janeiro on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

AFP, Recife

The task facing both Asian champions Japan and three-time world champions Italy is clear cut in Recife at the Confederations Cup. An Italian win, on the heels of Sunday's success over Olympic champions Mexico should propel the Azzurri into the semi-finals, while also ending the Blue Samurai's interest in this summer's event. The pressure is off Japan to a large extent in that, aside from World Cup and Confederations hosts Brazil they are the only side competing here who have already booked their tickets for next summer's jamboree. In going down 3-0 to the Brazilians in the opening match, Alberto Zaccheroni's Japanese showed the effects of a long, yet successful, qualifying World Cup campaign - they only arrived 72 hours after seeing off Iraq in the Gulf.

They also showed - AS Zaccheroni tacitly admitted - that they are at this stage a work in progress with 12 months to plan next year's assault. "What we must not do is repeat the mistakes of the Brazil game," said midfielder Yasuhiro Endo. "But don't judge us on that game." Defender Yuto Nagatomo, who plays for Serie A side Inter Milan, said he and his teammates would have to get to grips with Mario Balotelli, who proved a handful for Mexico and who scored the winner in that game to see the Italians join Brazil on three points. And Nagatomo said slyly that he figures there is one way to do so - nuzzle the temperamental striker.

Balotelli is already carrying a needless booking into the match having taken off his shirt after his goal Sunday. And Nagatomo says that "while he is very quick and physical we must mark him tightly and above all get under his skin. He is always in the thick of things but he has a short fuse. It will be a mental battle for him." Japan earlier arrived in Recife from Brasilia and had no injuries to report. Keisuke Honda got over a hip problem that saw him miss a Saturday training session and skipper Makoto Hasebe shook off a sore ankle.

Italy enjoyed a beach volleyball session earlier after their win over Mexico although Balotelli, criticised by coach Cesare Prandelli for his booking, did not show. Defender Giorgio Chiellini and midfielder Riccardo Montolivo were both buoyed by the win over the Mexicans, who had widely been seen as key rivals for second spot in Group A. "We tried a few things and were very solid and it was a good performance against Mexico," said Montolivo, while Chiellini added that "we have to build on what we did against the Mexicans and another win now will set us up for the semi-finals."

Iran win Battle Ulsan

Book WC berth with S Korea and Australia

REUTERS, Ulsan



Iran produced a resolute defensive display to snatch a 1-0 away win over South Korea on Tuesday and qualify for the World Cup finals in Brazil, a few hours after Australia beat Iraq by the same margin to become the second country to book their tickets to Brazil in front of 80,000 rain-soaked but euphoric fans at Sydney's Olympic Stadium.

And despite the defeat at Ulsan, the Koreans also qualified for the finals after they edged Uzbekistan - 5-1 winners over Qatar - for the runners-up spot on goal difference.

Substitute striker Josh Kennedy headed the ball home seven minutes from time to give the Socceroos the win they needed to secure second place in Asian qualifying Group B behind Japan. The Australians, frustrated for much of the evening, will now make their third successive trip to soccer's showpiece tournament and a fourth in total after 1974, 2006 and 2010.

Forward Reza Ghoochannejhad was Iran's hero, latching on to an error by defender Kim Young-gwon to score the

winner in the 60th minute with the visitors' only real chance in a one-sided match in Ulsan.

Iran coach Carlos Queiroz punched the air in delight at the final whistle after their third qualifying win in June sealed a fourth finals appearance.

The under-pressure Portuguese had traded verbal volleys before Tuesday's Group A clash with Korean counterpart Choi Kang-Hee, who had vowed to beat Iran and force them to watch the World Cup on television after being "badly treated" in the reverse fixture in Tehran last year.

But the Korean coach Chio, who had wanted his Portuguese counterpart to 'watch the World Cup from home', almost had to eat his own words following spectacular late rally by Uzbekistan in Tashkent. Uzbeks could have finished ahead of Korea had they scored one more goal. They will have to rely on the playoff route to make it to Brazil.

Meanwhile, after the the win at Sydney, 64-year-old German coach Holger Osieck made it clear at the post-match news conference that he wanted to enjoy the qualification and not go into an analysis of the game.

He did, however, find time to fire a salvo at the many who have ques-

tioned his decisions over the past three years.

"When you have 10 people, you have 10 different opinions, when you have 100 people, you have 100 opinions," he told reporters.

"Why should I care? I know what I'm doing, I'm close to the players, I know the situation.

"Sometimes a player you consider a starter, I don't see as a starter. Because of the situation in his club, because he's carrying an injury, whatever...

"But I can assure you, I'm pretty much on top of it although some people may not be of the same opinion."

Osieck was brought in after Australia bowed out at the group stage of the 2010 World Cup finals to oversee the transition from an ageing golden generation to a younger group.

The presence in Tuesday's line-up of players such as captain Lucas Neill, Tim Cahill and goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer indicate that he has been only partially successful.

With seven minutes to go before fulltime on Tuesday, the match was locked at 0-0 and it looked like the direct path to Brazil would be blocked, at least until Oman met Jordan in the early hours of Wednesday morning, local time.



PHOTO: AFP

Brazil defender Marcelo tries to back-flip a ball during a training session at President Vargas Stadium in Fortaleza on Monday.

AFP, Fortaleza



Brazil left-back Marcelo says his side will not be seeking revenge when they renew acquaintance with Mexico in their second game of the Confederations Cup in Fortaleza on Wednesday.

The last encounter between teams representing the two countries saw Mexico shock the five-time world champions with a 2-1 victory in the final of the men's football competition at the London Olympics last year. It was a crushing defeat for Brazil, who have never claimed Olympic gold, but Marcelo said those involved had quickly put it behind them.

"The Mexico defeat didn't stick in

my throat. I don't see this match as a chance for revenge," said the Real Madrid defender, who was one of three permitted players aged over 23 in Brazil's Olympic squad.

"Of course, I remember it. It was a very sad day for the players and the whole of Brazil. It's difficult to say why we weren't able to pierce their defence.

"We know that Mexico have great players, but we're Brazil and we have some, too. We can think that the match will be difficult, but they have to think that as well."

Brazil enjoyed an ideal start to the Confederations Cup on Saturday, with a stunning goal from poster boy Neymar setting them on the way to a breezy 3-0 win over Group A rivals Japan in the national capital Brasilia.

Brazil will secure a place in the

semi-finals if they overcome Mexico at Estadio Castelao, but Marcelo was bewildered by reporters' questions about the possibility of a final showdown with world champions Spain.

"You talk about Spain as if they were already waiting for us in the final, but we've barely started the competition," he said.

"If we have to play them in the final, very good, it'll be a great match. But we still have to play Mexico and Italy.

"Any adversary could then fall into our path - even Tahiti. It's not up to us to pick our opponents."

As well as the Olympic final victory, Mexico prevailed 2-0 when the sides last met in a friendly in Texas last year, and Brazil coach Luiz Felipe Scolari has also warned his players not to take them lightly.



PHOTO: AFP

A student holds aloft a sign saying "Don't shoot, listen!!!" during a protest in Brasilia.

UP IN ARMS

AFP, Rio de Janeiro



Youths clashed with police in central Rio Monday as more than 200,000 people rallied in major Brazilian cities to protest the billions of dollars spent on the Confederations Cup and higher public transport costs.

The nationwide demonstrations, the biggest in 20 years, were relatively peaceful.

They tapped widespread resentment over the huge costs of hosting the Confederations and next year's World Cup while this emerging country is hobbled by deep social inequality between rich poor and a creaking infrastructure.

In Rio, a host city for the Confederations Cup, police said around 100,000 marched, notably down the central Rio Branco avenue.

In Brasilia, more than 200 youths briefly occupied the roof of the National Congress.

Later, an estimated 5,000 youths formed a human chain around the Congress building.

In Sao Paulo, the country's economic capital and most populous city, an estimated 65,000 staged a generally peaceful march, with no repetition of the violence that marred similar protests last week.

"I am here to show that Brazil is not just about football and partying. We have other concerns, like the lack of investments in things that really matter, like health and education," said Daiana Venancio, a 24-year-old lawyer marching in Rio.

Earlier, Sports Minister Aldo Rebelo warned that that authorities would not allow the protests to disrupt international football tournaments Brazil has pledged to host -- the Confederations Cup and next year's World Cup.

"The government assumed the responsibility and the honor to stage these two international events and will do so, ensuring the security and integrity of the fans and tourists," Rebelo said.



NIGERIA VS TAHITI

Echiejile 5, 80, Oduamadi 10, 26, 76, Jonathan Tehau 68 (OG)



Jonathan Tehau 54

Nigeria swamp Tahiti

AFP, Belo Horizonte



Nnamdi Oduamadi claimed a hat-trick as Nigeria shook off the jet lag to thrash minnows Tahiti 6-1 in their opening Confederations Cup game in Belo Horizonte on Monday.

The African champions only arrived in Brazil 36 hours before the game after a row over bonus payments, but they could even afford some wasteful finishing as they leapfrogged world champions Spain to the top of Group B.

It was a predictably chastening experience for Tahiti, ranked 138th in the world, but they were nonetheless able to celebrate when Jonathan Tehau headed in their first ever goal at a high-profile international event.

Tehau's goal, early in the second half, trimmed Nigeria's lead to 3-1 after a deflected Uwa Echiejile shot and a pair of goals from Oduamadi had put Nigeria in command.

However, the south Pacific islanders' hopes of a famous comeback were dashed as Tehau put through his own goal before Oduamadi and Echiejile added further goals to give Stephen Keshi's men a spring in their step ahead of Thursday's crucial showdown with Uruguay.

There were only 20,187 people in attendance at the newly renovated Estadio Mineirao but they were vocal in their support of Tahiti, who were granted a standing ovation at the end of the game.

"I'm very proud of the team, who fought to the end," Marama Vahirua, Tahiti's only professional player, told Brazilian television.

"We came here with the goal of winning the hearts of the fans. The Brazilian public has adopted us and it makes us very happy."

Pep's Deutsch test on Monday

AFP, Berlin



Pep Guardiola will give his first press conference as Bayern Munich coach next Monday with the ex-Barcelona boss having been declared the right man to lead the Champions League winners' new generation by the coach he replaces.

Guardiola's first appointment after a year's break with his family in New York, where, according to his brother, he has been learning German diligently.

Bayern have stressed Monday's opening press conference at Munich's Allianz Arena will be in German with Guardiola set to show off his hard-earned language skills from the start.

"Pep's done it like he always does things, obsessively. Four hours, every day, like a madman," his brother Pere Guardiola told magazine Spiegel, revealing how a German tutor was at the Spaniard's side on a recent trip to Europe.