



Four-star Brazil

AFP, Goiania



World Cup hosts Brazil strolled to a 4-0 win over Panama in their penultimate warm-up on Tuesday, goals from Neymar, Daniel Alves, Hulk and Willian securing the stroll.

Brazil barely had to break out of third gear in seeing off limited opponents as Neymar, with his 31st international goal, set the ball rolling, rifling in a free-kick for the opener on the half-hour.

Alves drove in the second five minutes before the interval and a cheeky Neymar backheel was enough to pave the way for Hulk to slot in the third early in the second period before Willian put the icing on the cake 17 minutes from time.

With only Friday's friendly against Serbia to come before the Seleccion meet Croatia in their World Cup opener on June 12 in Sao Paulo, 2002 title-winning coach Luiz Felipe Scolari seized the chance to use several second string players.

He replaced Barcelona's Alves with veteran Maicon at the break and sent Henrique on for David Luiz midway through the

second period of the game in the provincial city of Goiania.

Maxwell came on for Champions League winner Marcelo at the break, with Hernanes replacing Ramires also at half-time for the run-out against a side ranked 35 in the world but who have never reached the World Cup finals.

Willian came on for fellow Chelsea colleague Oscar on 63 minutes and Jo replaced Fred on the hour while Scolari left Paulinho, Fernandinho and skipper Thiago Silva back at squad headquarters outside Rio as they recover from knocks.

Tejada picked up a yellow card for the visitors with a foul on Neymar and Brazil's star man swiped his freekick high into the net to delight a 30,000 crowd.

Alves then smacked home the second with a low effort to all but break the visitors' sagging resistance and allow Scolari the luxury of some major pack shuffling.

Neymar was not interested in allowing anyone game time at his expense, however, and it was his superbly weighted backheel which allowed Hulk to slot in a cool third with the outside of his boot.



Brazil star Neymar (R) scores the opening goal from a freekick during their international friendly against Panama at the Serra Dourada Stadium on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

England players losing 2kg a session

GUARDIAN.CO.UK



England's players have been losing up to 2kg in bodyweight in every warm-weather training session as they attempt to acclimatise for their potentially draining collision with Italy in the humidity of Manaus in 10 days' time.

Roy Hodgson has had his squad working in three layers of clothing for some drills since the party first convened on the Algarve a fortnight ago to prepare them for the conditions in Amazonia and the players are also undertaking "brutal" exercise bike drills in heat chambers." At St George's Park last week we were doing double sessions," said the goalkeeper, Ben Foster. "It's kind of like pre-season and then, at night, we were doing bike sessions in heat chambers to get ready. Basically, you're in a sauna on a bike. We've been doing half-hour sessions in there and it's brutal, really hard work. No one's grumbled or moaned about it. We've just got on with it. When we were in Portugal we wore under-armour, t-shirts, zip

up tops and a wet top over that. So it's a lot of layers. When it was 22 degrees, the lads were losing two kilos in sweat in every training session: it's all about trying to replicate the heat and humidity out there." So we'd be weighed before and after training, so you'd know how much fluid you've got to replace.

England's players will experience severe humidity in Miami when they take on Ecuador on Wednesday afternoon. The game kicks off at 3pm and the temperature at the Sun Life stadium is forecast to be 28C, with 62% humidity. Manaus on Tuesday was 30C, with 72% humidity, though those figures are expected to be lower at kick-off time against Italy.

The team's first training session on Monday had been wrecked by heavy thunderstorms, on the first day of the local hurricane season, though the rain stayed away while they prepared at the home of the Miami Dolphins.

The FA have sold their allocated 2,500 tickets for the game against the Azzurri in Manaus, with all having gone to England Fans members. The support will be bolstered in the stadium by others who have gained entry from FIFA general sale, though the Italians have sold only 200 tickets for the game and sent back the rest of their allocation.

Ribery in race against time

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Franck Ribery's participation at the World Cup is still under threat, despite the Bayern Munich winger being named in France's final 23-man squad.

Ribery missed France's warm-up matches against Norway and Paraguay last week with a back injury and has not played since coming on as a substitute in the German cup final victory over Borussia Dortmund on 17 May. The 31-year-old has been receiving treatment for the long-standing injury this week having only started 18 Bundesliga matches last season.

Ribery is expected to be given time to prove his fitness, although coach Didier Deschamps would like him to feature in Sunday's meeting with Jamaica before France depart for Brazil.

WORLD CUP STATS

REUTERS

Following are selected statistics and facts from some of the 32 team squads named for the World Cup in Brazil, which begins on June 12.

- Argentina has the oldest average age of 28.4 years, while Ghana has the youngest at 24.9.
- Uruguay, Ivory Coast, Bosnia and Ghana have the most foreign based players with 22, while Fabio Capello's Russia side have the least with zero.
- Almost 15 per cent of the 736 players selected ply their trade in the English Premier League.
- First-time participants Bosnia have the most experienced squad with an average of 60 caps per player, while Algeria, with 15.1, has the squad with the fewest international appearances.
- The youngest player selected for the World Cup is Cameroon forward Fabrice Olinga, who turned 18 on May 12.
- Colombia have the two oldest players - reserve goalkeeper Faryd Mondragon, who will turn 43 during the group phase of the tournament and made his international debut in 1993, and defender Mario Yepes, who is 38 and also made his debut in the last millennium.
- Germany's Miroslav Klose is one goal short of Brazil striker Ronaldo's all-time World Cup scoring record of 15.
- Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon joins Mexico's Antonio Carbajal and German Lothar Matthaus in being selected for five World Cups, although he did not make an appearance at the 1998 tournament.
- England's Fraser Forster is the tallest player, with the Celtic stopper standing at 6 foot 7 inches, or 2.01m.

Biological passport for all

AFP, Lausanne



FIFA is on an ambitious mission to make sure that for the first time every player who takes part in the World Cup has a drug test and carries a 'biological passport'.

Football's governing body wants to impose the passport -- already used in cycling and athletics -- that will follow a player throughout his career, giving details of blood and urine tests.

Since March, a team of FIFA doctors and nurses have been carrying out random blood and urine tests at inter-

national and team training camps.

Lionel Messi's Argentina and France were visited last week at their camps to prepare for the tournament, according to media reports.

Brazilian star Neymar, Italian captain Gianluigi Buffon and Spain's Andres Iniesta were among those who gave samples at last year's Confederations Cup.

Chelsea, Barcelona, Santos and Monterrey stars were tested during international club competitions over the past 18 months.

Players can expect a tap on the shoulder right from the first matches of the World Cup which starts June 12.

"We can test anybody, anytime, anywhere, any amount of times,"

said Jiri Dvorak, FIFA's chief medical officer in a recent interview.

So far nothing alarming has turned up, according to Dvorak. "The hematological parameters are normal," he said.

FIFA is building up a biological passport on all players.

It has taken at least two test samples from most players while some have given up to four.

So far teams have made the doping investigators welcome. "They understand what we are doing and they consider that kind of examination as part of their professional life," said Dvorak.

The FIFA tests look for discrepancies in haemoglobins and red cells

that could indicate EPO doping or other banned efforts to boost endurance. These kinds of tests are already used in cycling and athletics.

Football's governing body also checks hormone levels and for anabolic steroids in the urine.

The drug testing logistics in Brazil face difficulties, Dvorak acknowledged.

There is no international standard laboratory in Brazil. The World Anti-Doping Agency withdrew its accreditation for the only facility in Rio de Janeiro last year.

FIFA will be sending its samples to a laboratory in Lausanne, Switzerland, which will add \$250,000 (180,000 euros) to the doping clampdown costs.

Beware of FIFA: Brazil President

AFP, Brasilia

Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff has defended her government's preparations to host the World Cup, the target of criticism over chronic delays and soaring costs.

As Brazil rushes to finish stadiums and deal with a wave of protests ahead of the June 12 kick-off, Rousseff partly blamed FIFA for the spiralling World Cup bill but said the money spent would leave a positive legacy.

She said FIFA had assured Brazil that host stadiums would be built with private money.

But the government eventually realized private-sector investment would not even cover "half a stadium," and provided most of the financing itself, Rousseff told journalists at a dinner Tuesday at the presidential residence in Brasilia.

She said she would advise future host countries to "be very careful about the 'responsibility matrix'" they sign with FIFA.

Belgium replace Casteels

REUTERS, Brussels

Belgium have replaced their third-choice World Cup goalkeeper after a scan revealed their initial pick had not sufficiently recovered from breaking his shin in April.

Koen Casteels of German side Hoffenheim had been selected in the 23-strong party to go to Brazil, but his place will instead go to Sammy Bossut, who plays for Belgian side Zulte Waregem.

Bossut can consider himself lucky because he owes his selection not only to Casteels' injury but also to the broken arm suffered by Anderlecht's Silvio Proto, who had previously been called up as cover for Casteels.

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