



WHAT TO WATCH
BTV, MAASRANGA & GTV
FIFA World Cup
Opening Ceremony
Live from 12:00am (Friday)
Brazil v Croatia
Live from 2:00am (Friday)

STAR SPORTS2
England v Sri Lanka
First Test, Day 1
Live from 4:00pm



Blame it on goalies

AFP, Paris

Eccentric Colombian Rene Higuita, French philosopher Albert Camus and the recently canonised Pope John Paul II all shared one mutual feeling on the sporting field, the dread associated with being a goalkeeper and making a crucial mistake.

Rarely acknowledged by way of individual awards but who can dramatically change the course of a game single-handedly, goalkeepers are an instrumental part of any successful World Cup finals campaign.

Higuita unlike Camus and Pope John Paul II experienced a World Cup finals as Camus never played after representing his university in Algeria and Karol Wojtyla as John Paul was then found a higher calling after playing in that position for his school.

The tournament provides an unrivalled platform for keepers to enhance their reputation but, conversely, the fear of committing a costly blunder is heightened on the global stage given the high stakes.

Portrayed as the team's outcast given the long periods of games spent in isolation, prone to criticism and are seen as easy scapegoats.

A teammate's misplaced pass or miscued shot can often pass without consequence but the keeper is acutely aware that one simple error could prove fatal, undoing all the good work that precedes it.

Germany's Oliver Kahn excelled during the 2002 tournament, becoming the only goalkeeper to date to claim the Golden Ball as the tournament's most outstanding player, but the lasting image from the final was that of Kahn slumped against the goalpost after full-time, ruing an error that handed Brazil the opening goal in a 2-0 victory.

Fortunately for Kahn he was afforded a hero's reception upon returning home but the same could not be said for former Brazil custodian Moacir Barbosa, whose error in the 1950 final against Uruguay was the catalyst to what became known as the darkest day in Brazilian football history.

Barbosa was widely regarded as one of the leading goalkeepers of his generation as Brazil hosted the 1950 event but with the hosts needing just a draw to claim the title and the scores locked 1-1 at the Maracana, also the venue for this summer's showpiece, the ill-fated custodian allowed Alcides Ghiggia's strike to sneak in at his near post.

Brazil were stunned and Barbosa, a black man in what was still a racially-divided country, was cast as a pariah and vilified by his contemporaries for costing his nation the World Cup.

He was seemingly never properly forgiven as just prior to his death in 2000, Barbosa, then 79, famously said: "Under Brazilian law the maximum sentence is 30 years. But my imprisonment has been for 50 years."

Barbosa's case is by far the most extreme but by no means the most grievous gaffe committed by a World Cup keeper.

Higuita, one of the original sweeper keepers and unafraid to dribble the ball out from the back, was left red-faced in the last 16 of the 1990 World Cup when he was dispossessed outside his area by Cameroon striker Roger Milla, who steered the ball into an unguarded net to help the Africans into the quarter-finals.



England goalkeeper Joe Hart hones his skills at a training session in Rio de Janeiro yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

BD A go down 2-0

SPORTS REPORTER

The West Indies High Performance Centre took an unassailable 2-0 lead against Bangladesh A with a three-wicket win in the second game of the three-match one-day series at Barbados yesterday. Andre Russel was the player of the match yet again as he took a career-best 6 for 28 to lead the hosts home.

Russell, who had blasted a century in the first 50-over game, won his second successive Man-of-the-Match award yesterday with his six-wicket haul. He removed the Bangladesh A openers Imrul Kayes and Soumya Sarkar by the 10th over, and later got the scalps of Sabbir Rahman and the lower order to bowl out the visitors for just 179 in 46.5 overs. Marshall Ayub and captain Naem Islam scored 45 each.

During their chase, despite a good start the home side lost their way in the middle as they slipped from 53 for one to 59 for four in the 13th over. They were further reduced to 103 for seven by the 22nd over with the visitors sniffing a sneaky victory. However, the hosts fought back courtesy of a 77-run partnership between Ashley Nurse and Chadwick Walton to win the game.

Robiul Islam took three wickets while Forhad Reza and Muktar Ali took two scalps each.

SCORES IN BRIEF
BANGLADESH A: 179 all out in 46.5 overs (Marshall 45, Naem 45; Russel 6-28)
WEST INDIES HPC: 180 for 7 (Walton 45, Nurse 40; Robiul 3-59)

Bangladeshi football app

SPORTS DESK

Plaantik, the biggest football community in Bangladesh, signed an agreement with Magnito Digital to start a new era in Bangladesh's football industry by launching the Plaantik App, developed by Magnito Digital, which will be Bangladesh's first ever mobile application that is fully dedicated to football, tailored for the Bangladeshi fans.

Desperate to

FROM PAGE S1
"At this moment, everyone is calm," said the striker. "When we go to Sao Paulo and the game approaches, there will be excitement, anxiety. But the opening of the World Cup in our country will be different to others."

And squad member Bernard said it was crucial to start the tournament with a win as Brazil chase their first World Cup tournament win on home soil.

"There are no easy games and the game against Serbia was very complicated," said the winger. "They are quite a well-balanced side. I think the game against Croatia will be similar. It's important to be focused on the opening game, we need to start off with three points."

Sneijder set for 100th cap

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Wesley Sneijder turned 30 Monday and will earn his 100th cap when the Netherlands face champions Spain in their World Cup opener, but there may not be too many Brazilians joining in the celebrations.

Sneijder is probably the best-known Dutch player in Brazil having scored both goals as his country knocked out the five-time champions in the quarter-finals in South Africa in 2010.

"The people recognise me but I don't get the impression that there's any animosity, quite the contrary," said Sneijder.

The veteran attacking midfielder, who now plays his club football for Galatasaray after successful spells with Ajax, Real Madrid and Inter Milan, even received applause from onlookers as the squad took a stroll

along Rio's famed Ipanema beach.

"Come and look, it's that little one," shouted fans to passers-by in reference to the combative star who stands at a modest 1.70m (5ft 7in).

"There was no security but these people only had good intentions," said Sneijder saying it was "typical of the World Cup".

The player is looking ahead to his third World Cup despite a rollercoaster club season in Turkey which at one stage looked as if it could cost him his place in the Dutch squad.

A late burst of form, however, as well as injuries to Rafael van der Vaart and Kevin Strootman, opened the way for Brazil.

"I was a little asleep at the start of the season but I worked hard and now I have been rewarded," said Sneijder, who has nevertheless lost the national captaincy to

Manchester United striker Robin van Persie.

"That hurt me, but it's like that. Even if I am not the captain, I am still one of the leaders of the team."

Spain beat the Netherlands in the 2010 final in Johannesburg, but Sneijder does not believe that Saturday's group game in Salvador will necessarily be a repeat.

"We are perhaps no longer a team at the top. But never mind, we are still capable of beating Spain. We just have to play as a unit."

There has been criticism of coach Louis van Gaal's decision to line up with five defenders, but Sneijder said he supports the decisions of the new Manchester United boss.

"It doesn't matter if this tactic is not an attacking tactic for the Dutch team. What counts is results and with this new strategy we will not be worried by anybody," said Sneijder.

"What makes me equally optimistic is the atmosphere in the squad. It's excellent, better than it was two years ago at Euro 2012. I will do all I can to make sure it stays like this because I know from personal experience that it is an important factor in having a successful tournament."

Sneijder, who was dropped by Van Gaal last year, has taken up kick-boxing to boost his fitness for the Dutch campaign and also as a way of extending his career.

"A few years back, I always considered players in their thirties to be old. Now it's my turn, but I have no desire to retire straight-away."

He is also keen to take revenge on Spain.

"It's like a scar that hasn't yet

Tickets still available

AP, Sao Paulo

Tickets remain available for more than 15 World Cup matches just a day before the tournament opener, including some involving Germany, Italy and France.

FIFA said it already sold more than 2.9 million tickets, but some were still on sale Wednesday.

There were plenty of tickets for matches between less prominent nations, including Bosnia-Iran and Greece-Ivory Coast, but it was also still possible to attend games with some of the more traditional teams. Fans could still get tickets on FIFA's website for matches such as Germany-Ghana, Switzerland-France and Italy-Uruguay.

Only tickets for the highest-priced categories remained available for the better matches.

FIFA said a total of about 3.1 million tickets will be sold for the first World Cup in Brazil since 1950.

Thursday's opener between Brazil and Croatia at the troubled Itaquerao stadium in Sao Paulo sold out fast. Of the 61,600 tickets available, only about 25,600 were sold to the general public. Nearly 10,000 additional tickets went to fans through promotional activities, but sponsors and local organizers got most of them.

Tickets for the July 13 final at the Maracana Stadium also were hard to get. A crowd of nearly 80,000 is expected at the decisive match.

The game with the most tickets available by Wednesday morning was Bosnia-Iran in the northeastern city of Salvador on June 25, followed by Greece-Ivory Coast a day earlier in nearby Fortaleza. The Nigeria-Bosnia game on June 21 in the western city of Cuiaba also remained available.

Other matches with tickets on sale included Honduras-Switzerland in the jungle city of Manaus on June 24, Russia-South Korea in Cuiaba on Tuesday, and Uruguay-Costa Rica in Fortaleza on Saturday.

Tickets would remain on sale until the day of the matches.

FIFA said it received an "unprecedented number" of nearly 11 million ticket requests for the tournament in Brazil. It sold a total of about 2.2 million tickets directly via FIFA.com to the general public, and the rest went mostly to hospitality programs. About 60 percent of the tickets went to Brazilians, and Americans were the second-biggest buyers with almost 197,000.

FIFA said last week that nearly 1,400 people were told to change their tickets because they were handed out before work in some of the stadiums was completed. It said seating configurations changed after technical teams established exactly where the media tribunes and broadcast equipment had to be placed in each of the 12 venues.

Pirlo to end after Brazil

AFP, Brazil

Italy's Andrea Pirlo confirmed Wednesday he will end his international career after the World Cup.

Pirlo helped steer Italy to the World Cup title in 2006 but has come to Brazil as part of a squad looking to erase the memory of a first-round exit from South Africa in 2010.

While announcing he had also extended his current deal with Serie A champions Juventus by two years, the 35-year-old said it was time to wind down his international career.

"I think I will stop after the World Cup," Pirlo told reporters on Wednesday, three days before Italy's opening Group D game against England in the Amazonian city of Manaus.

"I'm not getting any younger and you have to allow younger players to come through. It would be useless to keep on going."

Kiwis in command

AFP, Kingston



Experienced seamer Tim Southee and debutant off-spinner Mark Craig shared the bowling honours as New Zealand dismissed the West Indies for 262 to take a potentially match-winning 246-run first innings lead late on the third day of the first Test at Sabina Park in Jamaica on Tuesday.

By the close, the Black Caps had extended that advantage to 260 in reaching 14 for two in their second innings.

Opener Peter Fulton and first innings centurion Kane Williamson fell cheaply but the tourists go into the fourth day still very much in command.

On a dry, wearing pitch that is expected to deteriorate further over the remaining two scheduled days of the match, the tourists are already in an excellent position to take the lead in the three-match series with what would be only their second Test match win in the Caribbean.

Southee's miserly accuracy (4 for 19 off 16.2 overs) and Craig's persistence (4 for 91 off 24 overs) were the highlights of a determined New Zealand effort in the field with the only

substantial resistance coming from the home side's two most experienced players.

Not for the first time, Shivnarine Chanderpaul was left unbeaten in getting to the top score of 84, although most of the attention was focused earlier in the day on local hero Chris Gayle who, in his 100th Test, threatened something special before becoming Southee's first wicket for 64 just after lunch.

It was no more than the persevering bowler deserved following a probing but wicketless morning spell, and after removing the dangerous left-hander to a catch at the wicket, he disposed of Marlon Samuels two balls later via the LBW route.

Having identified him as the man to provide the breakthrough, skipper Brendon McCullum turned to Southee again to end a 72-run sixth-wicket stand between Chanderpaul and West Indies captain Denesh Ramdin on the stroke of tea before he polished off the innings with his second delivery with the second new ball.

Yet it was spin that proved most effective for New Zealand in the morning with Craig and leggie Ish Sodhi combining for three wickets in

the space of 11 deliveries that transformed the West Indies innings from the comfort of 60 without loss to the considerable unease of 61 for three.

Kieran Powell, on 28, fell palpably LBW to Craig. New batsman Kirk Edwards stabbed indecisively at a delivery from the newcomer two deliveries later and Ross Taylor dived low to his right to take the catch at slip.

Bad turned to worse for the West Indies in the next over when Darren Bravo, who has struggled for runs since leaving the tour of New Zealand last November for personal reasons, chipped a catch back to Sodhi. Like Edwards, he also failed to score.

Craig added the scalps of tailenders Kemar Roach and Sulieman Benn later in the day but the resistance engineered by Chanderpaul necessitated the second new ball and Southee, who duly obliged.

SCORES IN BRIEF
NEW ZEALAND: First innings 508 for 7 declared.
WEST INDIES: First innings 262 all out (Gayle 64, Powell 28, Chanderpaul 84 not out, Ramdin 39; Southee 4-19, Craig 4-91)
NEW ZEALAND: Second innings 14 for 2.



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