

Prandelli warns Azzurri

AFP, Recife

Italy must step up the pace against Uruguay or face a second consecutive World Cup exit at the group phase, coach Cesare Prandelli warned Friday after his side's shock defeat. Costa Rica's 1-0 win over the Italians left them needing at least a point against Uruguay in their final Group D game to avoid a repeat of their first round exit at the South Africa World Cup in 2010.

Italy started with a solid 2-1 defeat of England, but Prandelli is now worried.

He rejected claims that the heat and humidity in Recife had played a factor in the defeat. "It was no excuse," said the 56-year-old. "We had the wrong approach, our pace was too slow. It wasn't the best approach," added Prandelli. "Costa Rica were well organised, quick and good at winning the ball. After we conceded the goal, we just couldn't get back into it."

Prandelli added: "I'm sure we are going to step up a notch (for Uruguay). We have to, otherwise we are out."

Striker Mario Balotelli missed two first half chances set up by midfielder Andrea Pirlo, who was marked closely throughout as Costa Rica shut out through balls to the forwards.

Klose salvages

FROM PAGE S1

An inspired switch with Klose netting the goal that keeps the Germans in contention to reach the second round for a remarkable 16th consecutive World Cup.

Ghana sit third in the group on one point with United States (three points), playing bottom side Portugal on Sunday.

This was the 800th match in the history of the World Cup and was a fitting tribute to the tournament.

It marked Mertesacker's 100th German cap and also saw the Boateng half-brothers face each other for the second World Cup in a row. Jerome played the first half for Germany while Kevin-Prince played for Ghana.

Eng WC's 'idiots'

AFP, London



England were left looking like smiling idiots just happy to be at the party, Britain's newspapers said Saturday after their humiliating early exit from the World Cup was confirmed.

With England's tournament in Brazil over -- Costa Rica's 1-0 win over Italy on Friday making their survival mathematically impossible after two defeats -- the press began casting about for scapegoats.

Newspapers vented anger at the Football Association, the national governing body, for giving manager Roy Hodgson the green light to carry on in charge -- 35 minutes before England went crashing out of the tournament.

The Daily Mail said it was "bloody insulting" for the FA to declare Hodgson safe in his job so quickly.

Greg Dyke, the erratic FA chairman, decided it should be the very day for him to declare his public support for his manager in what looks like a Sepp Blatter-esque display of disengaged buffoonery.

"He might as well have said: 'Who cares about the fans anyway, I'll just do what I want and sod the lot of you'."

The paper added: "This is as good as it gets. This is what we must expect. This is who we are now. The smiling idiots just happy to be at the party."

The Daily Telegraph said the FA should apologise to England's fans.

"They think it's all over. It is now. How those words haunt England," the broadsheet said.

"The national team's latest failure... demands an apology from the FA, Roy Hodgson and the players."

- More John Major than James Bond -

The Guardian said the "familiar search for scapegoats and answers" was under way as it tried to work out how to apportion blame.

"England's biggest names failed to ignite," it said.

Meanwhile "the Premier League paradox -- its huge success as a global product having squeezed the chances of young English players -- is only getting worse".

The Times said there was a lesson to be learned somewhere in the debacle, and it was hard to argue that English football's structure was better than Costa Rica's.

"Some problems are not solved by money, by state-of-the-art facilities, by flooding the country with coaches," it said.

"Some problems, such as a failure to conserve possession, are more deep-rooted. Until those issues, cultural and knotted, are solved, the country can kiss any hope of success goodbye."

The Independent said the FA was using the only tactic it hadn't tried yet: standing by an England boss.



Ecuador forward Enner Valencia (No. 13 shirt) celebrates his first strike against Honduras in their World Cup Group E match at the Arena da Baixada in Curitiba on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

Shakib unaware of rules!

All-rounder denies scuffling with spectators

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is expected to take a hard line against all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan for breaching ICC's code during the first ODI between Bangladesh and India on June 15.

As per the code Shakib is expected to get a fine ranging between Tk 5,000 to Tk 300,000. However, a BCB source told The Daily Star that it has the scope to impose harsher sanctions, something that the board is reportedly keen on doing.

Shakib left the dressing room during a rain break in the match, which is a breach of the ICC's anti-corruption code. A hearing was held at the BCB's headquarters at Mirpur yesterday where Shakib explained the reason behind his actions.

"An incident took place during the first match and I explained the issue. I left the dressing room and

that is against the rule, but I was not aware of that. So I do have a fault, but let's see what happens," Shakib, an international cricketer for seven years now, told reporters after the hearing.

While Shakib did not clearly state why he had left the dressing room, it is alleged that the player had gone to the VIP box to visit his wife, who was allegedly being harassed by a group of spectators. Shakib reportedly got into a scuffle with a spectator and later filed a case against him. The spectator was arrested on Wednesday and released on bail the following day.

While the left-hander did state that spectators should be more 'conscious' of their activities while in the stadium, he denied getting into a scuffle with anyone that day.

"I can't speak much on this matter because this has now gone to court but yes the audience should be more conscious."

"I was at the stands at that point of

time. There were security people over there and I never raised my hand," said Shakib.

The lawyer of the accused, Advocate Masud Ahmed Talukder, however told The Daily Star that his client was physically attacked by the all-rounder.

Furthermore, Shakib also said that he was seriously pursuing the nari nirjaton (women's oppression) case against the spectator.

"From what I know, when a nari nirjaton case is filed, then the person cannot be bailed out. I don't know how that person got bail. I will go again to file a GD. I am very serious about this issue," said Shakib.

BCB director Jalal Yunus who was present at the hearing said that the board will take a decision in a week's time.

"We will have to discuss the matter with all the members of the board. We also have to take into account the team manager's report before we come to a conclusion," he said.

Valencia double lifts Ecuador

AFP, Curitiba



Ecuador moved into second place in World Cup Group E as two goals from Enner Valencia handed them a 2-1 win over Honduras in Curitiba on Friday.

Honduras had looked on course for their first ever World Cup win when Carlo Costly fired them in front on 31 minutes, but Valencia levelled from close range just three minutes later.

And the Pachuca striker moved alongside Karim Benzema, Robin Van Persie, Thomas Mueller and Arjen Robben as the tournament's joint top scorer on three goals when he headed home the winner from Walter Ayovi's free-kick 25 minutes from time.

"Scoring at a World Cup has been something I have dreamed of since I was a child and thanks to the coaching staff and my teammates that has come true," said Valencia.

"The golden boot is not something I am thinking about. The most important thing is qualifying from the group and if that comes thanks to more goals from me then all the better."

Ecuador now lead Switzerland on goal difference with both sides locked on three points after two games behind group leaders France on six.

However, Honduras can also still qualify despite losing both their games so far should they heavily defeat the Swiss and Ecuador lose to France.

And Honduras boss Luis Suarez insisted they have to believe anything is possible against Switzerland.

"It would be worse if we were eliminated and this game didn't mean anything. This chance still exists and we have to try," he said.

"Now more than ever we have to fight for the country. If a victory means qualification then great, but if it doesn't at least we have given everything until the end."

After a nervy opening from both sides the game began to open up midway through the half and Honduras felt they had a strong penalty appeal waved away by Australian referee Benjamin Williams when Costly went down under pressure from Juan Paredes.

Moments later it was Ecuador who should have taken the lead as Valencia timed his run onto Frickson Erazo's long ball forward perfectly but couldn't find the target when left with just Noel Valladares to beat.

Honduras's first clear chance of the game came just before the half hour mark when Victor Bernardez headed wide when unmarked at the far post.

Four minutes later, though, Costly did net his country's first World Cup goal in five games stretching back to their inaugural appearance at the finals in 1982 as he beat Jorge Guagua to a high ball before slamming home left footed.

The Hondurans' lead was short-lived as within three minutes Juan Paredes' deflected effort fell perfectly for Valencia to bundle home his second goal of the tournament.

HONDURAS 1 (Costly 31)
ECUADOR 2 (Valencia 34, 65)

Muktis take 4th spot

SPORTS REPORTER

Nigerian Nkowcha Kingsley slammed a hattrick to power hosts Muktiyoddha Sangsad to an emphatic 4-1 win over visiting Team BJMC in the Nitol Tata Bangladesh Premier League at the Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni Stadium in Gopalganj yesterday.

Muktiyoddha's ninth win in 20 matches meant the team have again leapfrogged Brothers Union to seize the fourth position with 33 points, 15 points ahead of leaders Sheikh Jamal DC while BJMC, with their 10th defeat, remained in seventh place with 19 points from 20 matches.

Muktiyoddha Sangsad continued to enjoy home advantage following their 3-2 win over Mohammedan in the previous match. The hosts took just 11 minutes to take a lead through Nkowcha Kingsley, who then struck two more goals in the 57th and 87th minutes to complete his second hattrick in the league.

Kingsley's Nigerian partner Sunday Chizoba also struck one goal in the second half to confirm Muktiyoddha's third win of the season in as many matches over Team BJMC, who pulled one goal back through their foreign recruit Ismael Bangoura in the late stages of the game.

Robson puts Eng on top

AFP, Leeds

Australia-born opener Sam Robson scored his maiden Test century before Sri Lanka checked England's progress on the second day of the second Test at Headingley on Saturday.

England were 320 for 6 in reply to Sri Lanka's 257, a lead of 63 runs, at stumps after Robson had made 127 in only his second Test.

But with England on the verge of taking command, Sri Lanka fought back with three wickets late in the day.

And both Matt Prior (three not out) and Chris Jordan (four not out) were dropped before the close.

"It was a special day, I got a bit of a start last night but I just wanted to fight hard this morning and get us into a decent position," 24 year-old Robson told Sky Sports.

Robson's debut, in the drawn first Test of this two-match series at Lord's, his Middlesex home ground, had yielded scores of just one and 19.

England resumed Saturday on 36 without loss after Yorkshire fast bowler Liam Plunkett had taken Test-best figures of five for 64 and Stuart Broad a hattrick on Friday.

Alastair Cook had added just 3 runs to his overnight 14 that left Cook still searching for his first Test century since the last of his England record 25 hundreds at Headingley last year.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SRI LANKA: First innings

257 (Sangakkara 79;

Plunkett 5-64, Broad 3-46)

ENGLAND: First innings

320 for 6 (Robson 127,

Ballance 74, Bell 64;

Mathews 2-29, Eranga 2-63)

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