

Colombia star James Rodriguez exults after scoring the second goal against Paraguay during their Copa America match in Pasadena on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Colombia advance USA hammer Costa Rica

REUTERS, Pasadena



Colombia became the first side to book a spot in the Copa America Centenario quarter-finals on Tuesday after beating Paraguay in Pasadena, while the United States kept their hopes of advancing alive by thrashing Costa Rica 4-0.

Colombia's 2-1 win put them top of Group A on six points, with the United States on three and the other two teams on one point each.

After losing their opener 2-0 to Colombia, the United States were in clinical form against the Costa Ricans in Chicago and scored three times in the first half through Clint Dempsey, Jermaine Jones and Bobby Wood.

Substitute Graham Zusi added a fourth in the 86th minute to cap the win and improve the hosts' goal difference.

"It was important for us to get off to an early start," said Dempsey. "Once the second went in and the third we got into a bit of a rhythm."

Dempsey got the first, his 50th international goal, from the penalty spot after Cristian Gamboa was adjudged to have pushed Wood in the box with six minutes gone.

Dempsey was involved in the Americans' second after 36 minutes when his run at the Costa Rica defence saw the ball fall to Jones, who struck a low shot from the edge of the box past the outstretched hand of goalkeeper Patrick Pemberton.

The third goal came five minutes later

and once again it was Dempsey who set it up. Wood won the ball in midfield and played a one-two with Dempsey before turning to strike home a low drive from 15 yards out.

Costa Rica, who reached the World Cup quarter-finals in 2014, improved in the second half with captain Bryan Ruiz playing a more influential role, but they were ineffective in the last third of the field.

Ruiz hit the post with a header midway through the second half but Costa Rica lost a fourth goal in the dying moments when Zusi stole the ball in midfield and strode forward before slotting the ball home from 15 yards.

In the second Group A game, played at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California, Colombia took a 2-0 lead in the first half but were pushed hard in the second.

Carlos Bacca scored the opener in the 12th minute with a header before James Rodriguez doubled Colombia's lead with a left-foot strike on the half-hour mark.

Paraguay gradually played their way back into the match and hit the woodwork before half-time before forcing David Ospina into a world-class save in the 62nd minute, the Colombia goalkeeper diving full stretch to turn a header around the post.

Paraguay continued to dominate the second half and were rewarded when midfielder Victor Ayala scored with a stunning 30-yard rocket in the 71st minute.

However, they could not force an equaliser and Colombia hung on to take all three points and claim a berth in the next round. Paraguay must now beat the United States on Saturday to have any chance of advancing to the quarters.

EURO 2016 COUNTDOWN

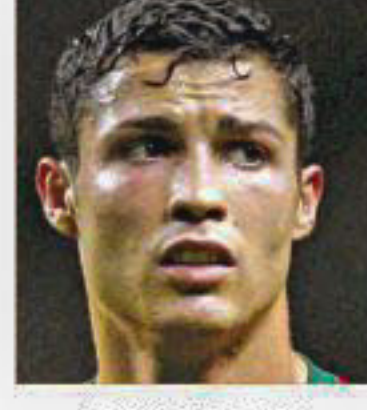
1 DAY TO GO

Stars to watch out for

STAR SPORT DESK

Paul Pogba: France

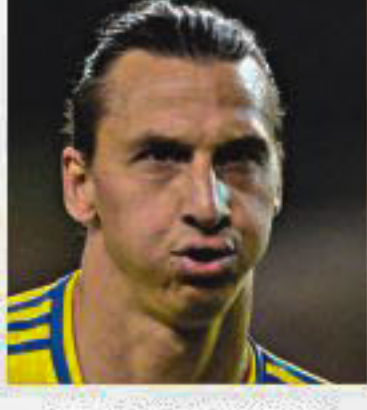
The brunt of hosts France's hopes will be borne by the 23-year-old Paul Pogba. Without key players such as Karim Benzema and Raphael Varane, the French will be hoping that their wonder boy can pull the strings from midfield and feed Antoine Griezman and Anthony Martial with his lovely passes. Pogba also possesses the unique ability to conjure a goal out of thin air, with strikes from his venom-



RONALDO



BALE



IBRAHIMOVIC



BUFFON



MUELLER



INIESTA



POGBA



HAZARD

ous right foot leaving many a net bulging over the past few seasons.

Cristiano Ronaldo: Portugal

Cristiano Ronaldo has never been closer to international glory than he was on this stage. It was in 2004, when a 19-year-old Ronaldo scored two goals as his side made it all the way to the final before being cruelly denied a win. 12 years on, Ronaldo has solidified his status as one of the game's greatest ever players. Coming off another 50-plus goal season, Ronaldo -- this time with the armband and Portugal's dreams

around him -- will be hoping to go one better than in 2004 and clinch his first major international trophy.

Eden Hazard: Belgium

Belgium has been enjoying a golden generation in their country's football, with players breaking out every year. However, the most highly rated -- barring the injured Vincent Kompany -- is none other than the mercurial Eden Hazard. With a host of talent and a wealth of experience around him, Hazard will be hoping to shake off the 'blues' he suffered

knocked out by Spain and although Italy's weakened squad do not have many chances, the presence of Buffon between the sticks means all bets are off.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic: Sweden

Zlatan Ibrahimovic will bid adieu to France at the Euros after a hugely successful spell at Paris Saint Germain as he gears up for perhaps his last major international tournament. Although lacking the pace that he once had, Zlatan has redefined himself as a more imposing figure in

that he can keep his head above water and two Champions League titles also bear witness to his credentials of doing it all on the game's biggest stage.

Thomas Mueller: Germany

Thomas Mueller, the interpreter of space as he once called himself, will definitely be amongst the goals in this tournament. Ending the 2010 World Cup with five goals and following it up with five more in the 2014 edition, he certainly has a knack for finding the back of the net. And with the Germans fresh off a World

Keshi dies

REUTERS, Cape Town

Former Nigeria defender Stephen Keshi, who won the African Nations Cup as both a player and a coach, died of a suspected heart attack on Wednesday, the country's football association has confirmed.

The 54-year-old coached Nigeria to the Nations Cup title in South Africa in 2013, 19 years after lifting the trophy as a player, only the second man after Egypt's Mahmoud El-Gohary to achieve the feat.

Keshi is regarded an iconic figure in a golden generation of Nigerian players, captaining the team at the 1994 World Cup in the USA.

During a 20-year playing career, Keshi had spells in France and Belgium, most notably for Anderlecht, and also in the U.S. during the Sacramento Scorpions' brief existence in the mid-1990s.

He found almost instant success as a coach, leading Togo to surprise qualification for the 2006 World Cup. He also had a two-year stint with Mali.

Ronaldo tops Forbes rich list

AFP, New York

Real Madrid star Cristiano Ronaldo and Barcelona striker Lionel Messi topped the Forbes magazine list of the world's highest-paid athletes on Wednesday in the wake of boxer Floyd Mayweather's retirement and back surgery for golfer Tiger Woods.

The annual list of total revenues for top sports stars had been topped 12 times by Woods and in three of the last four by Mayweather, who retired unbeaten last year.

This year, 31-year-old Portugal forward Ronaldo topped the list at \$88 million (77.2 million euros) with \$56 million in salary and \$32 million more from endorsement deals.

The three-time FIFA player of the year is a marketing juggernaut with a new Nike deal worth \$13 million annually plus endorsement partners such as Tag Heuer and Herbalife plus his own lines of suits, cologne, shirts, shoes, underwear and hotels.

Messi, who sat out Argentina's opening victory at the Copa America Centenario this week, was next at \$81.4 million, with \$28 million of that from sponsorships.

LeBron James was third on the list and tops among Americans with \$77.2 million. He has endorsement deals of \$54 million, including a lifetime pact with Nike that could pay off to the tune of \$1 billion, and \$23.2 million in club salary.

Roger Federer, the Swiss tennis star with a record 17 men's Grand Slam singles titles, was fourth on \$67.8 million. He set the pace in sponsor income at \$60 million.

The top 100 include 65 Americans and athletes from 22 other nations encompassing 10 sports, with the most from baseball at 26.

Bowlers put SA on top

AFP, Providence

South Africa roared back into contention in the tri-nation one-day international series with a 47-run victory over Australia in the third match of the tournament at the Guyana National Stadium on Tuesday.

Defending a modest 189 for nine on another pitch that challenged batsmen, the Proteas bowlers were resisted only by opener Aaron Finch's defiant 72 before he was ninth out as the World Cup holders folded for 142 off 34.2 overs.

By virtue of their margin of victory, South Africa also earned a bonus point and leapt from last to first over Australia, leaving hosts West Indies third.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: 189 for 9 in 50 overs (Amla 35, Behardien 62; Hazlewood 2-20, Maxwell 2-15)

AUSTRALIA: 142 all out in 34.2 overs (Finch 72; Rabada 3-13, Tahir 2-39, Phangiso 2-26)
Result: SA won by 47 runs.



Fans of Muhammad Ali pay their respects as they view a makeshift memorial at the Muhammad Ali Centre in Louisville, Kentucky on Tuesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS