

## Editor's Note

Most team sports now have youth world championships of some sort, but none has the prestige of soccer's World Youth Championship.

The United States has participated in seven Under-20 World Cups but never has qualified three times in a row.

Senior Editor Scott French examines the challenges facing Coach Wolfgang Suhrholz's team, which goes for three in a row (see Pages 10-11).

It's loaded with recognizable names but faces a potentially difficult trip to Port of Spain, Trinidad, for qualifying March 14-18.

*Paul*

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## OLYMPIASTADION

### Munich stadium is passed by

By soccer standards, the Olympiastadion is a modern stadium. Munich's Olympic Stadium is less than 30 years.

It has hosted the 1974 World Cup final and 1988 European Championship final but is already a relic.

The proud Olympic Stadium, where Franz Beckenbauer captained West Germany to the 1974 World Cup title, will almost certainly play no part when the unified country hosts the 2006 World Cup.

A plan to modernize the stadium, built for the 1972 Olympics, was unexpectedly withdrawn last September.

The announcement was a major blow to Beckenbauer, now the president of the 2006 World Cup organizing committee.

The only option for Munich to take part in the 2006 World Cup is to build a new stadium on a different location.

Bayern Munich and 1860 Munich, the clubs that currently use the Olympic Stadium, have agreed to share the costs, estimated at \$163 million, for a 66,000-seat facility.

"We are currently looking for a place to build a new stadium," said Beckenbauer, who also is president of Bayern. "And I'm confident we will be successful."

After years of discussion, Bayern Munich and 1860 Munich had agreed with Munich



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# Upfront

authorities in October 1999 on a plan to transform the Olympic Stadium into a soccer-only stadium at an estimated \$186 million.

Not everybody liked the project, which included ripping out the stands and installing a canopy that was to conceal the stadium's distinctive, spider web-like tensioned roof.

Indeed, the stadium was included on a list of sites under threat of destruction published by the Paris-based International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), alongside Mayan pyramids in Guatemala and frescoes in Pompeii.

The stadium's lovers breathed a sigh of relief when the project to alter the masterpiece was abandoned, but Beckenbauer reminded everybody how serious the situation was.

"If a solution regarding a stadium in Munich is not found quickly," he threatened, "then Berlin will stage not only the final but the opening game as well."

The new Munich stadium should be completed before 2005, leaving nothing but memories of the Olympic Stadium.

It was the site of the 1974 World Cup final, where Beckenbauer and his West German teammates rallied to beat a brilliant Dutch squad featuring Johan Cruyff.

The Olympic Stadium hosted the final of the 1988 European Championship, which the Dutch won, and three European Cup finals.

While the Olympic Stadium is known around the world as the home of Bayern Munich, the largest soccer crowd in its history was for a Bavarian derby involving 1860 Munich.

The No. 1 team in Munich before Beckenbauer's arrival at Bayern, 1860 Munich drew an estimated

90,000 fans who packed the running track surrounding the field for a match against Bavarian rival Augsburg in 1973.

## INDOMITABLE LIONS

### Akono's perfect record is not enough

How tough are Cameroonian fans?

The Indomitable Lions, reigning African and Olympic champions, have not lost a match or conceded a goal since Coach Jean-Paul Akono took charge in October, but fans are calling for his head.

Akono had to be escorted out of the Ahmadou Ahidjo Stadium in Yaounde by paramilitary gendarmes after the Indomitable Lions scraped to a 1-0 win over Zambia in a 2002 World Cup qualifier.

Never mind that the win was the Lions' fourth win in four qualifiers — no other team in Africa can match their record — and they're all but assured of returning to the finals for a fourth straight time.

The official daily *Cameroon Tribune* expressed alarm at the team's performance.

The media warned that the Lions were not just a soccer team, but "a rallying symbol" for the country.

Some fans shouted for the recall of Pierre Lechantre, the Frenchman who led Cameroon to the African Nations Cup title in February 2000 but was moved upstairs after Akono led the Lions to Olympic gold in Sydney.

Yaounde is one of the most intimidating places in the world to play.

It proved more disquieting for the Lions than visiting Zambia.

Cameroon looked sluggish and

**The export trade continues: Ronaldinho (left) and Athirson are two of the latest Brazilian stars to be sold to European clubs.**

PAULO WHITAKER/REUTERS



**Franz Beckenbauer's dream of bringing the World Cup back to Munich's Olympic Stadium, where he led West Germany past the Netherlands in 1974, has been shattered.**

POPPER/OTO

uncoordinated, and Zambia, which has never played in the World Cup, came close to equalizing on several occasions.

The final whistle was greeted with a sigh of relief by the 80,000 spectators.

The players acknowledged they played poorly.

"Even if we created chances," said goalscorer Patrick Mboma, "we didn't play well. The crowd was naturally disappointed."

Akono is one of only a handful of Cameroonians to have held the national team position.

It's a notoriously difficult job. Interference by the Cameroonian sports ministry and soccer federation in team selection has been common:

Fans attribute the Lions' success more to the talent of the players than the coaching.

There were few tears shed for Lechantre when Akono replaced him last fall.

There will be few cheers if the Frenchman returns.

## **BRAZIL EXPORTS**

### **The flood continues**

What's Brazil most famous export? Coffee? Cocoa? The samba?

According to a survey by the Brazilian sports daily *Lance*, Brazil is world leader in the

export of soccer players.

In 2000, 701 players moved abroad, the majority of them to European clubs.

Sao Paulo led all Brazilian clubs with 14 players transferred for fees of \$33 million.

Neighbor Palmeiras was second with 10 players sold.

Of the 413 players who moved to Europe, almost half (190) ended up in Portugal. A common language is one reason for the flood of Brazilians into Portugal. Another explanation: Brazilians can easily obtain Portuguese passports necessary to move to other European Union countries and avoid "foreigner" restrictions.

Asia ranked second with 123 Brazilian imports, followed by South America (88) and CONCACAF(61).

Japan is a favorite stop for Brazilians. Of the 41 who arrived in 2000, most are players of moderate ability.

If the first two months of 2001 are any indication, the Brazilian export business is still flourishing.

Already during the winter *mercato*s, there have been several big-name Brazilians to arrive in Europe: Lucio (Bayer Leverkusen), Adhemar (VfB Stuttgart), Edu (Arsenal), Fabio Aurelio (Valencia), Athirson (Juventus) and Edmundo (on loan to Napoli).

Ronaldinho, the top young Brazilian player, heads to Paris St. Germain next summer.