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⇒ **SPAIN DRAW BETTER THAN BRAZIL**

European champion Spain, which has never won the World Cup, should have an easier path to the knockout phase than Brazil, having been drawn against Switzerland, Honduras and Chile and avoiding tougher opponents in the 32-team draw.

Another country happy with the draw should be France who too have avoided the big teams in the draw, instead being placed in an evenly matched group with host South Africa, Mexico and Uruguay.

South Africa will face Mexico in the opening game on June 11th in Johannesburg, where the Final will also take place on July 11th.

Germany, which has won the title three times, faces a tough group against Australia, Serbia and Ghana, but has not lost a World Cup group game since a 2-0 defeat to Denmark in 1986.

Defending champion Italy, chasing its fifth World Cup title, should be confident of reaching the next stage after drawing New Zealand, Paraguay and Slovakia.

The Netherlands, which won all its qualifying games, faces Japan, Cameroon and Denmark. The Dutch have reached the final twice and should prove strong enough to make it through to the second round.

Argentina, which only just made it after winning its final two qualifying games under coach Diego Maradona, must play Nigeria, South Korea and Greece, the Euro 2004 champion.

⇒ **SOCCEROOS vs POMS?**

The lure of a possible second round showdown with England will provide Australia with added motivation to advance past the opening round of next year's World Cup in South Africa.

"It can be a bonus for the players for the last two percent of motivation they can hopefully play England in the next round," Verbeek said.

Australia and England have a long, colourful rivalry in sport. They have played each other in two Rugby World Cup finals and a Cricket World Cup final but have never met at soccer's showpiece tournament.

⇒ **FIFA'S BIG MONEY PRICE HIKE!**

FIFA has announced a 60% hike in prizemoney for next year's World Cup.

Emerging from a historic meeting on Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela and current South African President Jacob Zuma were both jailed during the struggle against apartheid, FIFA's executive committee approved an increase in prize money for the 2010 championship in South Africa from \$261 million to \$420 million.

FIFA secretary general Jerome Valcke



With **LAKIS KONISTIS**

Sports World

announced that the winner would take home \$31 million while each of the 32 teams would receive at least \$9 million if they do not progress from the first round.

⇒ **ARE THEY FOR REAL?**

"We don't want to try to block the bid but we do have concerns that we think are legitimate," the NRL's CEO David Gallop said this week. "I'll be meeting with FFA later this week and hopefully they can shed some light on what has really been proposed. We just can't disappear off the face of the earth. There is one proposal that we play State of Origin over a three-week period. Clearly, that would be very difficult."

Is he for real?

Is Gallop comparing the State-of-Origin to the World Cup?

Surely he does not believe for one moment that these sporting competitions are similar in importance- similar in the significance they bring to our country?

Does he truly believe that the world even knows who or what the NRL or AFL is?

It is truly astonishing to believe that such minor organisations, on a world perspective, would have the audacity, the nerve to even consider attempting to "block" the bid!

We sure how much interest the recent rugby league world cup attracted.

As for an AFL World Cup... do we have one in the first place?

How many countries play AFL at all?

Which makes even the AFL CEO's Andrew Demetriou's extraordinary outburst that an entire AFL season would go down the gurgler totally laughable.

Fellas, whether you like it or not, truth is the World Cup competes with the Olympics as the greatest sporting show on Earth!

Your beloved sports do not rate anywhere near the World Cup.

So what if the World Cup venues became off-limits to these other sports for a period of time- stop your whingeing and granstanding and start looking for alternate venues now.

FFA CEO David Buckley is spot on when he says, "We certainly understand there is a competitive element, but we think the World Cup is bigger than any individual sport".

Australia's bid book for hosting either the 2018 or 2022 World Cup has to be submitted by May. Interestingly, new Premier Kristina Keneally has said that should Australia win a World Cup, Sydney would like to host the final.

⇒ **ERREA HANDS OVER \$1000**

I had the pleasure in being one of the invited guests to the Greek Orthodox Community Home for the Aged in Earlwood last week where Errea's General Manager George Aliferis handed over the \$1,000 winner's cheque to Mr. Kiki Efthimiou on behalf of George Stavroulakis who won this year's "O Kosmos Errea tipping Competition".

What a magnificent job Mr. Efthimiou has done! Doesn't matter Kiki that you may not be considered worthy enough for LIFE MEMBERSHIP by some organisations...

Kiki, what you have achieved for the Greek Community Home for the aged speaks volumes about the man you truly are- A man of substance! And that, nobody can ever take away from you.

The only downside to the visit at the "Greek Community Home" was that George Stavroulakis never got to show me that special room with a view to the river that he has been talking about- maybe next time.

⇒ **AFC DRAW 2010**

The 2010 AFC Asian Champions League draw was held today in Kuala Lumpur and revealed the pathway of Adelaide United and Melbourne Victory who represent the Hyundai A-League in the competition in 2010.

Adelaide United have been drawn with Pohang Steelers of Korea Republic, reigning AFC champions, and also face Republic of China side Shandong Luneng and the eventual champions of the Japan Cup.

Melbourne Victory return to the tournament in 2010 to face Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma of Korea Republic, Beijing Guoan, where Newcastle Jets striker Joel Griffiths has recently returned from a successful loan stint, and Japan side Kawasaki Frontale.

The top two teams, following the completion of the six rounds of group games, will progress to the Round of 16, a one-off elimination match before the finals commence. The final two places in the draw, including one in Adelaide's Group H, will be decided in East and West Play-off matches between Al Karamah (Syria) v Al Wahda (United Arab Emirates), Churchill Brothers (Indonesia - Bye to the West final) and Armed Forces (Singapore) v Sriwijaya (Indonesia), Da Nang (Vietnam) v Muangthong (Thailand).

The remaining five teams will be relegated to the AFC Cup.

| West | East |
|---|--|
| <p>Group A Al Ahli (Saudi Arabia) Al Gharafa (Qatar) Al Jazira (United Arab Emirates) Esteghlal (Iran)</p> <p>Group B Zobahan (Iran) Al Ittihad (Saudi Arabia) Bunyodkor (Uzbekistan) Play-off Winner (West)</p> <p>Group C Al Ain (United Arab Emirates) Sepahan (Iran) Al Shabab (Saudi Arabia) Pakhtakor (Uzbekistan)</p> <p>Group D Al Sadd (Qatar) Al Ahli (United Arab Emirates) Mes (Iran) Al Hilal (Saudi Arabia)</p> | <p>Group E Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma (Korea Republic) Melbourne Victory (Australia) Beijing Guoan (China PR) Kawasaki Frontale (Japan)</p> <p>Group F Kashima Antlers (Japan) Jeonbuk Motors (Korea Republic) Persipura Jayapura (Indonesia) Changchun Yatai (China PR)</p> <p>Group G Henan Jianye (China PR) Gamba Osaka (Japan) Suwon Bluewings (Korea Republic) Play-off East winners</p> <p>Group H Adelaide United (Australia) Shandong Luneng (China PR) Cup winners (Japan) Pohang Steelers (Korea Republic)</p> |

⇒ **Play-off draw**

West

SF1 - Al Karamah (Syria) v Al Wahda (United Arab Emirates)
SF2 - Churchill Brothers (Indonesia) bye into play-off final
Final - Winner (Al Karamah v Al Wahda) v Churchill Brothers
West winner goes to ACL. The two losers go to AFC Cup.

East

SF1 - Armed Forces (Singapore) v Sriwijaya (Indonesia)
SF2 - Da Nang (Vietnam) v Muangthong (Thailand)
Final - Winner SF1 v Winner SF2
East winner goes to ACL. The three losers go to AFC Cup.