

GROUP D
By Camille Powell

FIRST-ROUND SCHEDULE
All times Eastern

SUNDAY

Mexico vs. Iran, Noon (ABC) in Nuremberg
Angola vs. Portugal, 3 p.m. (ESPN2) in Cologne ★

FRIDAY, JUNE 16

Mexico vs. Angola, 3 p.m. (ESPN) in Hanover

SATURDAY, JUNE 17

Portugal vs. Iran, 9 a.m. (ESPN2) in Frankfurt

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 21

Portugal vs. Mexico, 10 a.m. (ESPN) in Gelsenkirchen ★
Iran vs. Angola, 10 a.m. (ESPN2) in Leipzig

★ KEY MATCHES

TEAMS AT-A-GLANCE



ANGOLA
Coach:

Luis Oliveira Goncalves.

Appearance:

First.

How Qualified:

Won Africa's Group 4.



IRAN

Coach: Branko Ivankovic.

Appearance:

Third.

How Qualified:

Finished second in Asia's Group B.



MEXICO

Coach: Ricardo LaVolpe.

Appearance:

13th.

How Qualified:

Finished second in CONCACAF.



PORTUGAL

Coach: Luiz Felipe Scolari.

Appearance:

Fourth.

How Qualified:

Won Europe's Group 3.

STAR PLAYER » CRISTIANO RONALDO | F | PORTUGAL

Hail to the Chief: Ronaldo Sets the Tone

Portugal's top attacker — full name: Cristiano Ronaldo dos Santos Aveiro — was not named after Ronaldo, though he is occasionally compared to the Brazilian superstar. The young Portuguese forward actually was named for Ronald Reagan, who was the U.S. president when Cristiano Ronaldo was born in February 1985.

He has been a star in Portugal since he was a child, and he made his debut with Sporting Lisbon at age 16. He joined Manchester United in the summer of 2003, shortly after David Beckham left for Real Madrid, and even was assigned Beckham's No. 7. The winger is known for his flashy dribbling skills (he is especially fond of the step-over).

Cristiano Ronaldo was one of the young stars of Euro 2004; in Portugal's 2-1 semifinal win over the Netherlands, he headed in the first goal and set up the second with a short corner kick. He scored seven goals in Portugal's 12 qualifiers and is the youthful complement to 33-year-old Pauleta, Portugal's all-time leading scorer.

"Cristiano has everything needed to be one of the stars of the World Cup," Coach Luiz Felipe Scolari said. "He's got so much quality about him, a good turn of pace and a decent shot among other things. If all goes well, he'll probably be one of the big names of the tournament."

GROUP D Note For Novices

F Jared Borgetti of Bolton Wanderers is the first Mexican player to play in the English Premier League. He had seven goals in England after scoring 14 for Mexico in qualifying. Mexico scored 67 goals in qualifying, the most of any country.



Cristiano Ronaldo of Portugal was named for Ronald Reagan.

BY SHAUN BOTTERILL — GETTY IMAGES



ANGOLA OUTLOOK

The Black Impalas are an unknown quantity in their first World Cup: They won their qualifying group ahead of heavily favored Nigeria, yet played poorly and failed to advance out of the group stage of the African Nations Cup. Forward Fabrice "Akwa" Maieco, who scored the game-winner against Nigeria as well as the goal that put Angola into the finals, once played for Benfica, but has been without a team since his contract with a Qatari club was terminated earlier this year.

» **Best-Case Scenario:** Earns at least one point against former colonial occupier Portugal on Sunday and finishes third in the group.

» **Worst-Case Scenario:** Three losses.

IRAN OUTLOOK

This is widely considered to be Iran's most talented team, due in part to a quartet of German-based players: MF Ali Karimi (Bayern Munich), a dazzling dribbler who was the 2004 Asian player of the year; F Vahid Hashemian (Hanover 96); MF Mehdi Mahdavia (Hamburg SV); and MF Ferydoon Zandi (Kaiserslautern). Captain Ali Daei, who has scored more than 100 international goals, also spent time in the Bundesliga, with Bayern Munich and Hertha Berlin.

» **Best-Case Scenario:** Earning points against Mexico and Portugal and making the round of 16 for the first time.

» **Worst-Case Scenario:** Facing Angola in the group finale with nothing on the line.

MEXICO OUTLOOK

El Tri should have little problem escaping the first round, and their performance in last year's Confederations Cup in Germany (1-0 win over Brazil, shootout loss to Argentina in the semifinals) could foreshadow a strong showing in the knockout stages. Defense is a strength, with GK

Oswaldo Sanchez (third World Cup, but first as the starter) and combative D Rafael Marquez (Barcelona). The talented but unpredictable Cuauhtemoc Blanco was left at home, but 32-year-old F Jared Borgetti, who has played sparingly for Bolton, is back.

» **Best-Case Scenario:** Win the group and advance to the quarterfinals for the first time on foreign soil.

» **Worst-Case Scenario:** Struggling with Iran and breaking string of three straight second-round appearances.



PORTUGAL OUTLOOK

Portugal was one of the biggest disappointments in 2002, an overhyped team that failed to advance out of the first round. But this squad breezed through qualification, outscoring opponents by a 35-5 margin, after finishing as the Euro 2004 runner-up. Coach Luiz Felipe Scolari — last seen raising the 2002 Cup with Brazil — is in charge of harnessing Portugal's deep talent. MFs Luis Figo, who briefly retired from international soccer, and Deco are among the world's best, and Fs Cristiano Ronaldo and Pauleta are explosive.

» **Best-Case Scenario:** Making the semifinals for the first time since 1966.

» **Worst-Case Scenario:** Finishing second in the group and facing Argentina in the round of 16.