

## Brazilian football legend Zagallo dies aged 92



ANTONIO SCORZA/AFP

BBC – Brazilian football legend Mario Zagallo, who won four World Cups as a player and coach, has died aged 92. Zagallo was a winger in the Brazil team who won back-to-back World Cups in 1958 and 1962, starting in both finals. He managed the side widely regarded as the greatest international team of all time, including Pele, Jairzinho and Carlos Alberto, to glory in 1970. Zagallo's final World Cup triumph came as Carlos Alberto Parreira's assistant coach in 1994. He returned as Brazil manager after that tournament and led them to the final in 1998, where they were beaten by hosts France. Zagallo was the first person to win the World Cup as both a player and a manager – a feat that has since been matched by Germany's Franz Beckenbauer and France's Didier Deschamps. "With enormous sadness, we inform you of the death of our eternal four-time world champion Mario Jorge Lobo Zagallo," a statement on his official Insta-

gram account said. "A devoted father, loving grandfather, caring father-in-law, faithful friend, victorious professional and a great human being. Giant idol. A patriot who leaves us a legacy of great achievements." Brazil are the most successful nation in World Cups, with five titles, and Zagallo is one of the most instrumental figures in that history. As a teenager on national service he was one of nearly 200,000 in the Maracana Stadium who saw hosts Brazil stunned by Uruguay in the decisive final match of the 1950 World Cup. Speaking to BBC Sport in 2013, Zagallo said: "That day has never left my mind." The tactically astute Zagallo, nicknamed "The Professor" and "Old Wolf", pulled together a side filled with the attacking talents of Pele, Jairzinho, Gerson, Tostao and Rivellino and made them irresistible. Brazil won all six of their games in the 1970 World Cup and swept to a 4-1 victory over Italy in the final.

## Iran needs to be 'more clinical', Qalenoeei says after Burkina Faso win

### Sports Desk

Iran head coach Amir Qalenoeei warned his men against wasting chances in front of the goal, which could be "dangerous" for the team at the upcoming AFC Asian Cup.

The Iranian was speaking after a 2-1 victory over Burkina Faso on the Kish Island on Friday. Mohamed Konaté gave the African visitors a surprise lead 12 minutes into the game, only to see Porto striker Mahdi Taremi draw Iran level three minutes before the break.

Veteran midfielder Omid Ebrahimi bagged the winner 20 minutes from normal time for the home side, which had all 11 players changed at halftime. This was a final friendly for Iran before leaving for the continent's flagship international event in Qatar.

"It was a good game for us as the opponent played with high intensity and pace. We only had a couple of training sessions before the match and wanted to test our two gameplans, which is why we played with two different lineups. Our goal is to have the players in their best form and harmony for the first game [in the Asian Cup]," said Qalenoeei, whose team is to play Indonesia in a friendly, presumably behind closed doors, before beginning the Asian Cup campaign against Palestine in Group C in Al Rayyan's Education City Stadium next Sunday.

"We did a good job in creating chances today but failed to convert them, which could be dangerous for us in Qatar. We'll have to make sure we'll be more clinical in front of the goal, as there will be few opportunities coming our way in the latter stages of the competition." Meanwhile, the Iranian coach was full of praise for Brentford midfielder Saman Qoddous, who has enjoyed a rebirth in the No. 10 role for the national team since Qalenoeei took over from Portuguese Carlos Queiroz last March. "Saman is a great midfielder



Iran's Mohammad Mohebbi (21) goes up for a header during a victory over Burkina Faso on the Kish Island, Iran, on January 5, 2024. MOHAMMADREZA ALIMADADI/IRNA

with top qualities in our squad and delivered some superb through balls today. I'm sure he would have had more to offer had he been given proper attention in the past. He is the kind of playmaker I've always used in my teams," said the former manager of Sepahan, Esteghlal, and Tractor in the Iranian top flight. Asked about the contribution made by the 36-year-old Ebrahimi – for whom Friday's game was only the second international appearance in more than a year – Qalenoeei said: "I was on the receiving end of a lot of criticism for giving him a call-up but

I choose the players in accordance with my tactical requirements and you could see he put in a great performance and was our matchwinner today." Chasing a first Asian Cup title since last lifting the trophy on home soil in 1976, three-time champion Iran will also face Hong Kong on January 19 before playing the United Arab Emirates in the final round of the group fixtures four days later. The top two of the six groups will be joined by four best third-place teams in the last-16 round, with the final showpiece to be staged at the Lusail Stadium on February 10.

## Nadal's Australian Open return in doubt after injury scare



Spain's Rafael Nadal is in action against Australia's Jordan Thompson during their men's singles match at the Brisbane International in Brisbane, Australia, on January 5, 2024. AFP

AAP – Rafael Nadal's grand slam return at the Australian Open is up in the air following an injury scare to the same hip that required career-saving surgery. The Spanish great's promising Brisbane International comeback was ended in a gruelling three-and-a-half hour quarter-final loss to Australian Jordan Thompson as Nadal was hampered by a leg issue on Friday night. The former world No 1 is hopeful the injury concern amounts to nothing and that he can line up at the Australian Open when it begins on 14 January. But he admitted his fear, given the proximity of the soreness to the hip that was operated on in June. "Yeah, it is a very similar place to what happened last year, but different," Nadal said post-match. "I feel more muscle, last year was tendon. "For sure it's not the same like last year at all because when it happened

last year I felt something drastic immediately. "Today, I didn't feel anything. The only problem is because the place is the same you are a little bit more scared than usual. "I hope it's not important and I hope to have the chance to be practising next week and to play Melbourne. Honestly, I am not 100% sure of anything now." Nadal had three match points in the second set but Thompson benefited from a handful of uncharacteristic errors, and played brilliant tennis of his own, to win 5-7 7-6 (8-6) 6-3 at a raucous Pat Rafter Arena. The 22-time grand slam winner Nadal had impressed in Brisbane while disposing of Dominic Thiem and Jason Kubler to reach the quarter-finals. Nadal made his return to action at the tournament following the injury that forced him off the ATP Tour after an early exit at Melbourne Park last year.

The Spanish star said ideally the latest issue was just fatigue after back-to-back matches, with a tip of the cap to 29-year-old Thompson who is set to return to the world's top 50 thanks to his campaign in Brisbane. "From this perspective you don't know all the information that I have," Nadal said. "The only thing that probably you see is I have been playing very well the last two matches. It's true, I have been playing well. "A lot of things can be happening in a body like my body, after a year without playing tennis. "So hopefully it is just that, just a muscle that is supercharged ... if that's the thing, everything perfect." "That's why ... I have been talking with a lot of precaution. "If things happens, if I have one problem there, one problem to the other part of the body, I need to accept."