

Who'll you put your money on?

JUST because Ireland can't win the World Cup this time around doesn't mean you get to sit there sulking.

Why, you could be a winner. The Echo has tracked down the best value to be had at this year's tournament.

While we do recommend you put real money on these prices, we cannot, unfortunately, accept any responsibility for your inevitable losses.

Looking at the outright betting, it is difficult to look past Brazil and their array of top-class attacking stars. Difficult, but not impossible. They have reached the last three finals and are always the best prepared international team, but maybe this year they will slip up in the knockout stages.

Best bet looks like 1-2 on the winner coming from Europe with Powers. This is basically just backing against Brazil and Argentina.

Zambrotta and Nesta appear to be in trouble, so this may be bad news for the Italian defence. But considering Italy's recent failures in big tournaments have all come down to indecisive attacking, perhaps this could turn out to be a good thing. The Azzurri are best-priced at 10-1 with Boyles.

Decent each-way value, if you are expecting a shock like at Euro 2004, would seem to be with Mexico (50-1), Poland (100-1) and Switzerland (125-1). The latter two can expect huge support in their neighbouring country.

A big price of 66-1 for a final pairing of perennial under-achievers Italy and Spain can

be had at Corals.

Group D contains Angola, while Group D has Togo. Expect these two to leak a lot of goals and both groups are 11-2 with Powers to contain the most scores in the tournament. Toss a coin.

And so to England.

While Sweden are 2-1 to win this group, better value can be had in picking England to be second with Hills at 3-1.

Their departure is something we expect to come in the second round. This is 11-4 generally, while one stage further in the quarters is 7-2.

But, considering it doesn't matter what stage they go out at for this bet, and because they concede few goals, England look great value with internet bookmakers Betdirect to concede the least goals at 10-1.

David Beckham has managed to keep his temper in check since moving to Madrid, however you wonder if the going gets tough if he will lose the rag. He is 12-1 with Powers to be the first England player sent off, while another player who sometimes loses the run of himself when his team come under pressure, is Steven Gerrard. He is 18-1. Yet England have a relatively good behaviour record internationally and 5-6 for them to receive no red cards is a good bet with Hills.

Ruud van Nistelrooy would like nothing better than to be Manchester United's top scorer at the tournament and he looks a generous 4-6 with Powers.

We'll keep you up-to-date with value prices over the coming weeks.

For two billion, the world stops

WHO can resist the pageantry and tension of the World Cup?

The apolitical display of national characteristics, the revelation of human flaws and the unexpected greatness that lights up the tournament?

Who remains unaffected by the tantalising re-run drama four years on about our nearest neighbour's best player's metatarsal? Who has not thought about which side they would tuck away a penalty in a shootout?

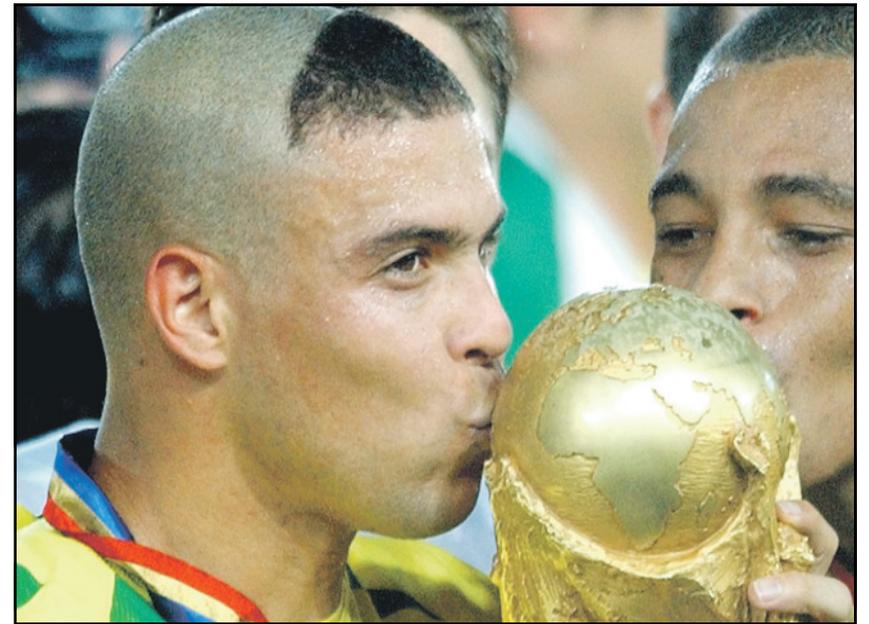
Well, apparently there are around four billion of us who are unconcerned with any and all of the above. Fair enough. But if you are one of the remaining two billion (of whom possibly 1.8 billion are beer-drinking males), then the next month has been a long time coming.

Football is a religion for many of us. Some are practising fans, others are passive. Some can trap a ball and dribble, others prefer to shout from the sidelines. Some of us will make the pilgrimage to the centre of Europe; others will plant their backsides on the couch.

Those lucky enough to be going have been promised by FIFA's public face of the tournament (and Germany's greatest player of all time) Franz Beckenbauer that it will be a fiesta of football.

"We've sold 95 per cent of tickets for stadia that average 60,000 seats," said Beckenbauer. "If we had capacities of 200,000 we would not have been able to satisfy ticket demand."

To someone who applied online several times for tickets for the tournament this was bad news, however, as someone who spent three hours trying to cut through Japanese bureaucracy to get his hands on a ticket to the Mexico-Croatia game four years ago, and arrived at the stadium to find it less than half-full, it



Will Brazil's Ronaldo get this hands on the trophy in Germany?

By ROBERT O'SHEA

can only be good news.

The majority of us though, will be staying at home.

Brian Kerr answered economists' prayers by failing to guide our Emerald Isle to the finals, thereby doubling the efficiency of the Irish workforce this June. But, even though we are not there, it will still be intensely entertaining. Remember France '98?

Will Toni, Riquelme, Messi, Zidane and Figo flop? Will Gerrard, Ronaldinho, Torres and Nedved soar? Over the next month we will find out.

Will you follow Poland because of their numbers now among us? Or Ivory Coast, so you won't have to buy a new

flag? Or Italy because you backed them the last four times and you sure as hell are going to back them this time because if you don't they'll bloody win it?

In the *Evening Echo*, we will try to bring you some of the most interesting stories we can dig up during this time.

We'll bring you information about the countries involved (see below). We hope to get reports from our correspondents inside Germany and around the world.

And we will find out what the participating countries' fans in Cork are making of their team's hopes as the tournament progresses. We'll hunt down the best quotes every day and set some incredibly difficult brainteasers — if you get five correct answers you can feel smug.

What else can we add but — enjoy!

The Evening Echo: Eager to bring you essential facts about the competing countries

GERMANY

1. BMW drivers have more sex than owners of any other car and are much more active than even Porsche drivers. The German magazine, *Men's Car*, found in a survey of 2,253 motorists aged 20 to 50 published in its inaugural May issue, that male BMW drivers say they have sex on average 2.2 times each week while Porsche drivers have sex 1.4 times per week. However, Audi drivers claim an average of 7.63. Vorsprung durch Technik.

2. Germans have to pay 7% of their income tax to churches, but still spend more money on their cars. See fact one for reasons.

3. The average German consumes 225 eggs every year to keep the strength up of the average BMW driver no doubt.

4. When the files of the former East German secret service, the Stasi, were opened up, they were found to contain, among other things, cotton wool swabs of dissidents' body odour, kept in bottles for use by sniffer dogs. Maybe it's the eggs that are to blame.

5. An estimated 40,000 prostitutes from Eastern Europe are expected to join the 400,000 women already working in brothels, hotels and homes and on street corners. It's the eggs, I'm telling ya.



Eggs: Driving BMW owners wild with desire.

COSTA RICA

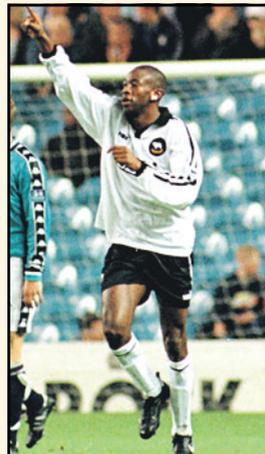
1. THE currency is the Colón. Which gives a new meaning to the words 'crap money'

2. Costa Rican saxophonist Geovanny Escalante of famed local band Marfil, holds the world record for holding a single note. In 1998, the then 24-year-old held a steady 'A' for 90 minutes and 45 seconds, almost twice as long as the previous record by US saxophonist Kenny G. A better record would be to hold Kenny G for 90 minutes, preferably around the neck.

3. Costa Rica was the first country in the world to constitutionally abolish its army. Question is, who would invade it anyway?

4. One third of the entire country is a National Park, which is nice.

5. The world record for fly-fishing, and catching a Blue Marlin was set by Playa Carrillo in 1991. The Blue Marlin weighed over 203 pounds. Makes you wonder how big was the bait?



Wanchope: No worries about conscription.

POLAND

1. In Warsaw baby boys are dressed in pink and baby girls in blue. In other parts of Poland the situation is similar to here: girls are given pink outfits and boys get blue ones.

2. Poland has a town with one of the coolest place names in the world: Zimna Wódka translated as Cold Vodka, which must surely be a happening spot for this World Cup.

3. The first public library in the world was opened in Warsaw in 1747. Probably not as exciting a spot as Zimna Wódka

4. Poland's Stella Walsh (Stanisława Walasiewicz) — won the women's 100-metre race at the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles, becoming the first woman to break the 12-second barrier. When she was killed in 1980 as an innocent victim in a robbery attempt, an autopsy declared her to be a male — Yuck

5. The Bledowska Desert in Poland is the only true desert in Europe. Located midway between Krakow and Czestochowa. it consists of 20 sq. miles of shifting sands and oasis-like vegetation. Vodka, vodka vodka...



Is it a girl or is it a boy? Maybe we'll never know.

ECUADOR

1. Cotopaxi in the Andes is the highest active volcano in world.

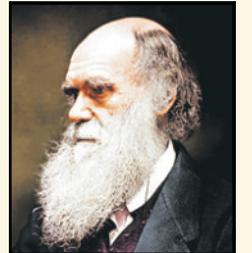
2. Ecuador and Peru share a long border made up largely of jungle and high mountains. As is the case with many such borders around the world, disputes arise and conflict breaks out. In this century, these Latin American neighbours have fought three times, (1941, 1981 and 1995), over the area known as the Cordillera del Condor region. After much bloodshed and much negotiating, these Andean nations signed a peace accord on October 26, 1998. However, they are still technically at war.

3. The Galapagos Islands, made famous by Charles Darwin, lie 600 miles off the coast of Ecuador. Animals include Marine iguanas, giant tortoises, sea lions, boobies, pelicans and penguins. Lets hope their are no boobies on the Ecuador team.

4. Ecuador is the world's largest exporter of fruit. Bananas make up the majority of exports, most of which go to the USA

5. The US dollar was made the official legal tender of Ecuador after the economy collapsed in the early 90s. Banana Republic anyone?

Compiled by John Roycroft



Darwin: Only the fittest players will last 90 minutes.