

FUSSBALL



German forward Miroslav Klose leaves a press conference in the ICC Centre in Berlin on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Key to Klose success



INTERNET, undated

One of the many innovations introduced by Juergen Klinsmann since becoming manager of Germany is the concept of homework. Players who have not done any since their school days are given tasks to perform after hours, a way of extending the level of concentration to which Klinsmann is so dedicated. In his house in Bremen Miroslav Klose's homework involves trying to turn the light switches off by kicking a ball at them. "I've broken one vase and a picture," he said.

It could be worse, because the detail in Klose's assignment is that he has to use his left foot. Four years ago in South Korea he leapt on to the international stage with five headers as Germany reached the World Cup final. This time around Klose has nabbed four and is the competition's leading scorer. One of those against Costa Rica was with his left. All the work is paying off and he is impressing some important people, with Arsenal reported to be interested in the Werder Bremen man. They will not be the last.

Germany will need to produce

a complete performance if today's problematic quarter-final against Argentina is to be won. Ninety minutes of effort can be guaranteed, with Klose remarking on his readiness to defend from the front for his team. If Juan Román Riquelme drops deep to collect the ball it is just as likely that Klose or Lukas Podolski will be challenging as often as the central midfielders Torsten Frings or Michael Ballack.

Ballack said yesterday that Germany would "not stoop so low" as to man-mark Riquelme and the German emphasis is on themselves. "Argentina are the yardstick for this tournament," Klose said, "and we know we'll have to pressurise them for 90 minutes, but they are unfortunate to be meeting Germany."

It was not as cocky as it sounds, but there is no sense of inferiority emanating from the hosts. Considering where they were in the run-up to the tournament, Germany are arguably the most inspired side at the World Cup. Klinsmann's homework has had the desired effect. One of his core values is to ensure that a player leaves the squad a better footballer than when he joined up. There is general anxiety in Germany that Argentina's attacking options are simply too great to be halted but Klinsmann has used the past six weeks to try to weld Klose and Podolski into an

equally daunting partnership.

Klinsmann has wanted to recreate the "blind understanding" that he enjoyed at international level with Rudi Völler. The rookie coach has spoken of the young Podolski "commuting between two different football worlds" with Cologne and the national team, and to avoid loading too much on to the 21-year-old the manager has leant on Klose more. Klose has not let him down.

"After his great World Cup four years ago, Miroslav struggled," Klinsmann said. "He had a lot of injuries and moved to Werder Bremen, which was difficult at first. He's built himself up again and has reached his peak. He's a complete player and I told him many times over the last two years that this is his stage and he has to grab it. He's at the right age, like Ballack and [Bernd] Schneider, and has to seize his moment. He is doing that now just as I thought he would."

Klose's goals make the ultimate difference but it is his sleek movement that catches the eye. The spin against Ecuador caught Ballack's attention and in a split second Klose was in between two defenders and around the goalkeeper. Against Sweden it was his ability to drift that created the space for both of Podolski's goals.

Klose has mentioned his admiration for Hernán Crespo and Ruud van Nistelrooy this week but

when he was younger it was Raúl to whom he looked. Klose is not in that bracket -- yet -- but he has travelled so far, so quickly, that further development cannot be dismissed. His first real season at Kaiserslautern was 2000-01; shortly before that he was an apprentice carpenter.

The mere fact that Klose is being linked with clubs such as Arsenal is recognition of that progress. Prior to the opening game against Costa Rica, which fell on Klose's 28th birthday, he talked about his improvement as an all-round footballer. He seems to enjoy the fact that he has not scored a header for three years for Germany. "It's maybe because of the way we play to feet at Werder Bremen," Klose said. "My game is definitely better. There's more to come, I know that, but I'm ready." He described himself as "low-key but very ambitious".

"He has matured as a footballer and as a human being," said goalkeeper-turned-mentor Oliver Kahn. "He was a revelation in 2002 but was very sensitive. He still is but he's been shaped by the success he's had. He's convinced by his abilities but success will not spoil that man." Germany would happily put that to the test today.

Ronaldo's goal takes life in Ghana

AFP, Lome

A Ghanaian fan died suddenly as his country conceded their first goal against Brazil in Tuesday's World Cup second round clash.

Richard Amenawu, 25, fainted and collapsed as Real Madrid's Ronaldo scored the first in champions Brazil's 3-0 victory over the last remaining African side in the tournament.

The young man was watching the match on a screen installed in the train station at Takoradi.

He was taken to hospital in the centre of town but could not be revived.

All for the hotel room!

REUTERS, Berlin

Germany wanted to beat Argentina and stay in the World Cup because the players had become attached to their five-star hotel and did not want to leave it, goalkeeper Jens Lehmann joked on Thursday.

Lehmann said the pampering they are getting at the exclusive hotel built in an luxurious 95-year-old villa in Berlin's poshest quarter was a small but important motivating factor.

"It's just a great hotel," Lehmann told a news conference before Friday's quarterfinal match less than five km (three miles) from Olympiastadion, a smile flashing across his face.

"Even if we have a free day to go where-ever we want, a majority of us, or many of us anyhow, feel so comfortable at the hotel that we decide to stay there. It's just fantastic."

"It's another reason we have to make it to the final so we can stay in there," said Lehmann, 36.

The Schlosshotel in Grunewald, used by Hollywood stars during the Berlin Film Festival, is one of the most expensive in Germany with suites costing up to 3,000 euros per night.

Germans fear us, says Pirlo

INTERNET, undated

Italian midfielder Andrea Pirlo has explained why some sections of the German media have criticised the Azzurri. "They fear us," he noted.

Despite reaching the quarterfinals of the World Cup, Marcello Lippi's boys have come in for some criticism for their style of play.

Yet Pirlo feels that the condemnation thrown towards the Azzurri is as a result of the March friendly when Italy thumped the hosts 4-1.

"The Germans criticise and attack us because they fear of meeting us in the semifinal of the competition," said the former Brescia sensation.

"They have fear inside of them given that they still remember what we did to them in the Florence game."

Italy and Germany could meet in the last four should they get past Ukraine and Argentina respectively.

Poland coach Janas resigns

REUTERS, Warsaw

Polish coach Pawel Janas has resigned rather than wait for an official decision on his future in two weeks, senior football association (PZPN) official and member of parliament Ryszard Czarnecki said on Thursday.

"I spoke to Janas yesterday. The decision has been taken. He will not be the coach any more," Czarnecki, head of the association's international division told public television.

PZPN chief Michal Listkiewicz maintained that Janas's future remained open until a meeting of senior officials on July 14. But he added he had been talking to a number of candidates for the job.

"We have held talks with several people, but it is all still a possible scenario -- if Pawel Janas ceases to be trainer. A decision will be made on July 14," he told news channel TVN 24.

Media and fans have been calling for Janas's head since the Poles' World Cup hopes were scuppered by first-round defeats by Germany and Ecuador before a consolation victory over Costa Rica.

Listkiewicz has defended Janas's record over his three years in charge but sources inside the association say the coach must go to stave off pressure from the conservative government for a wider cleartout.

Ministers have demanded wide-ranging reforms from PZPN and "swift changes" in the national team set-up after a second disappointing first-round exit in four years.

The Poles play the first games in a European Championship qualifying group including Belgium, Serbia and Portugal at the beginning of September.

Low on goals, high on drama



AP, Berlin

Even with scoring down, there's been no shortage of drama at the World Cup.

That was the view of FIFA's top technical analysts Thursday.

With eight games remaining, this World Cup has produced 132 goals in 56 matches, an average of 2.36 a game. Of the 17 previous tournaments, only Italy 1990 averaged fewer goals per game at 2.21. Overall, the tournament average is 2.93.

Sophisticated defences, good coaching and the heat of the German summer have all played their part in the tournament to date. Not to mention the rash of fouls and record number of yellow and red cards.

"The game is not as open as it was. But I don't necessarily think that it makes it any less dramatic," said Andy Roxburgh, UEFA technical director and a member of FIFA's technical and development committee. "You can get a game that's won 5-0 and it's a terrible game because one team wins easily and the other's hopeless..."

"What you really want to have is a drama in the match. And if we get a drama, like we've had in some of the games here, if you watch Mexico-Argentina as an example, it's a fantastic example of football played at the highest level. ... We saw everything in the game. That's also football. It's not just about the goals count. The goals count can be an indicator, but it's not just about that. You can have a wonderfully exciting match that ends up as it did with Argentina-Mexico, 2-1 into extra time."

Some of the drama has come from the flurry of yellow and red cards.

Roxburgh and Holger Osieck, head of FIFA's technical department, did not address refereeing or cheating by players in the form of diving. But Roxburgh rejected a suggestion that FIFA's clampdown at the tournament had unsettled players.

"I think if you tell people in advance what to expect, you've got a better chance of getting it," he said. "And FIFA were quite clear at the beginning about the things that they were going to emphasize in the World Cup. So nobody was in any kind of doubt about the way this World Cup was going to be approached."

The technical committee saved special praise for Argentina's goal

against Serbia and Montenegro, with Esteban Cambiasso capping an attack that covered some 25 passes and lasted a minute.

The FIFA committee also noted: -- Scoring first is crucial. Only eight matches have seen the team that didn't score first recover to win. -- The power of the set piece, which has accounted for some 20 goals already. -- Teams are using fast breaks to penetrate defenses playing deeper, especially on the counter-attack. The committee counted almost 20 defense-splitting balls to date. -- Young stars. The committee pointed to Argentina's Lionel Messi, Spain's Cesc Fabregas, Switzerland's Philippe Senderos, England's Wayne Rooney and Germany's Lukas Podolski. -- Coaching savvy. Examples included Australian coach Guus Hiddink getting goals from substitutes Tim Cahill and John Aloisi in a 3-1 comeback win over Japan; Trinidad and Tobago's Lee Beenhacker putting on an extra striker despite going a man down in the 0-0 tie with Sweden; and Italy's Marcello Lippi bringing in Francesco Totti against Australia, adding to the lineup someone with the composure to convert a last-second penalty kick for a 1-0 win.

Henry a Brazil fan!



REUTERS, Frankfurt

France striker Thierry Henry is a self-confessed fan of Brazilian football.

"You just have to look at those five stars on their shirt to understand that football is part of their identity," Henry told reporters on Thursday, two days before France play Brazil in a World Cup quarterfinal on Saturday in Frankfurt.

"They love the game so much. They just have to race that ball forward, that's the way they always have been and always will be."

Passion for the game, Henry said, was what made five-times

champions Brazil such a fantastic team.

"In Brazil they're born with a ball," he said. "On the beach, on the street, at school, everywhere you look, they're playing football."

"When I was a kid, I used to ask my mum if I could go out and play and she often said I couldn't. In Brazil, the kids are out there playing from eight in the morning until six at night."

Henry also pointed out at Brazil's in-depth strength.

"When you see that a player like (Olympique Lyon midfielder) Juninho, who is so dominant in the French league, is not even in their starting lineup, that says it all," he said.

The Arsenal striker, a real enthusiast for the game, could go on for ever on France's epic quarterfinal win over Brazil in the 1986 finals. He was only eight then but remembers every minute

of it.

"I remember that Brazil team were superb," he said. "They dominated that match but, as a French fan, you didn't want to admit that."

France won that match in Guadalajara on penalties after a 1-1 draw.

Henry was a France player when the two sides met again in the final, which he had to follow from the bench.

Asked whether it was a dream to face Brazil again, Henry said: "Not for us, no. It's a dream for the fans but for us it's a game we have to play."

"We have a lot of respect for Brazil and they have a lot of respect for us but we have to win that match."



THIERRY HENRY

WC gaff takes toll on Poll

AFP, London

English referee Graham Poll revealed on Thursday that he has retired from officiating at international tournaments.

Poll was sent home early from the World Cup after he showed Croatia's Josip Simunic three yellow cards before finally sending him off during a 2-2 Group F draw with Australia.

Poll no longer wants to be considered to take charge of matches at major competitions and told Sky Sports News: "It's time for another English referee to have a go."

The Tring-based official accepted full responsibility for his mistake and said: "Basically, inexcusably, I made an error in law."

"There can be no dispute. It wasn't caused by a FIFA directive, it wasn't caused by me being asked to referee differently to in the Premier League."

"The others in my team were absolutely clear, however. The laws in the game are very specific. A referee takes responsibility for actions on the field of play."

"I was referee that evening, it was my error and the buck stops with me."

He denied there can be any outside influence on his decision and added: "It's not carrying the can, it's being honest. I've had a week to reflect. I've had the first two nights completely sleepless, it's been something that has hurt me deeply."

"It's about being open and saying to people I got it wrong, I'm sorry and it's time to move on."

Poll, who had been a mooted candidate for refereeing the final after 26 unblemished years as the man in the middle, claimed that FIFA and other referees had been supportive of him following his blunder, with FIFA president Sepp Blatter personally asking him to reconsider.

Poll added he will return to English Premiership refereeing next season.

Kaiser wants UEFA job



REUTERS, Berlin

Franz Beckenbauer said on Thursday he would be interested in running for the job of UEFA president, but ruled out a bid to become president of FIFA in the foreseeable future.

Beckenbauer, 60, who is the only man to win the World Cup as captain (1974) and then coach (1990), and is currently the president of the German organising committee for these finals, said he would be interested in standing for the UEFA presidency if Lennart Johansson, 76, was to

retire.

Beckenbauer was responding to comments made by current FIFA president Sepp Blatter in the German media on Thursday in which the Swiss was quoted as saying that Beckenbauer did not want to be FIFA president, nor could he be because of his other commitments.

Beckenbauer replied: "He's right. And I don't speak six or seven languages fluently like Mr. Blatter either which you need to be the president of FIFA."

"But it would be different with UEFA. In Europe everyone speaks English and my English could be better but it is good enough."

"Lennart Johansson said he will make a decision over the next few months about his future and

let's wait and see until he does make that decision. I would be interested if Lennart Johansson was to stand down."

Beckenbauer, who is not an elected member of any FIFA body, has long been regarded as a candidate for high office in both UEFA and FIFA.

If he did stand for election as UEFA president, he would have to run against his old playing adversary Michel Platini of France, a member of both the FIFA and UEFA executive committees.

Platini has already declared his intention to stand for the UEFA presidency when the reign of Johansson, which began in 1990, eventually ends.

WC boost for German economy



REUTERS, Berlin

Whether selling them beer or World Cup souvenirs, German businesses have been working overtime to ensure soccer fans get what they want during the tournament, and the economy seems to like it.

Industry groups say they are on track to meet their sales goals for the month-long tournament and German economic indicators already seem to be reflecting the buoyant mood.

"Everything to do with soccer is selling like hot cakes at the moment. People are buying everything from hats to condoms with World Cup

labels on them," said Rolf Pangels, managing director of Germany's BAG retailers' association.

"Statistically speaking, three fan articles have been sold per capita of Germany's 82 million population," he added.

Pangels said the hope was that spending on niche sectors would spread to other areas of the economy as the tournament headed into its final week with fewer matches played.

"We hope people will use the time off in between games now to spend more money on other things," he said.

Until now, many fans have probably been too busy drinking to shop. Beer maker Radeberger said earlier this week it had resorted to 24-hour bottle filling to keep up with demand.

"What we're hearing from the breweries is really, really good," said

Birte Kleppien, a spokeswoman for the German beer brewers' association. "It seems to be really massive."

She said the group hoped the World Cup could help spur a rise in German beer sales -- currently worth around 8.4 billion euros annually -- for the first time in several years.

BAG's Pangels said the near constant sunshine since the tournament began had been an important factor in boosting sales of outdoor clothing and goods -- but had probably hit demand for televisions.

"People are fighting to get outside, have fun and watch games on a big screen with others -- not sit at home," he said.

All to grab for Ukrainians



AFP, Berlin

Win or lose against Italy in the quarterfinals Ukraine's stars are set to profit handsomely from the tournament, with major clubs hovering over them and waiting to pounce.

Striker Andriy Shevchenko had already wrapped up his move from AC Milan to Chelsea before the competition for a reported 42 million euros (55 million dollars) but Manchester United are running the rule over Spartak Moscow's Maksim Kalinichenko, according to German newspaper Bild.

"Kalinichenko reminds me of David Beckham," Bild quoted an Old Trafford insider as saying.

The daily added that the Russians would likely do business at 11 million euros for the 27-year-old wing wizard -- but United are set to face competition from Valencia, according to Bild.

Shakhtar Donetsk midfielder linchpin Anatoliy Tymoshchuk has admirers in the English Premiership, with Arsenal and Newcastle leading the chase.

Skakhtar are in no hurry to offload their prized asset, having already turned down an AC Milan offer of nine

million euros two years ago.

And although striker Andrei Voronin, currently with Germany's Bayer Leverkusen, is out of the rest of the tournament with a thigh injury, his role in rescuing Ukraine after their opening thrashing by Spain has attracted Italy's Udinese, his agent says.

Striker Artem Milevsky, just 21 and at national coach Oleg Blokhin's former club Dynamo Kiev, is under the microscope at former European champions Porto.

The club have in the past regularly looked east for talent, particularly to Russia for stars such as Dmitri Alenichev and Sergei Ovchinnikov, but also to Bulgaria, for former stars such as Emil Kostadinov.

Portuguese media say that Porto would pay eight million euros for Milevsky, who starred in Ukraine's run to the Euro 2006 Under-21 championships final.

Spanish top flight outfit Getafe, coached by former Germany and Real Madrid and Barcelona star Bernd Schuster, are meanwhile said to be mulling a five million euro swoop for fringe player Oleksiy Byelik, a striker with Shakhtar Donetsk.

Arsenal cleared over Beveren probe

AFP, Zurich

Arsenal were cleared of any breach of club ownership rules on Thursday after FIFA said it was satisfied with the Football Association (FA) probe into the team's relationship with Belgian side Beveren.

"FIFA confirmed today that there is no evidence or indication of any infringement of the relevant regulations," world football's governing body said in a statement.

The FA said last week that its investigation had not found any signs that Arsenal had breached any rules in their dealings with Beveren and passed its evidence on to FIFA.

"In view of these findings, FIFA does not see any reason for further investigation or for any additional measures to be taken in this connection," FIFA said Thursday.

BBC television had reported on June 1 that Arsenal had covertly handed over one million pounds (1.8 million dollars) to fund a 2001 takeover of the Belgian club by a consortium called Goal, prompting the investigations.