



PHOTO: AFP

German midfielder Michael Ballack walks off the pitch with a cramp in his calf during their quarterfinal against Argentina at Berlin's Olympiastadion on Friday.

Mental strength the key



REUTERS, Berlin

Michael Ballack could hardly walk during extra time against Argentina on Friday but the Germany captain showed unflinching strength of character to haul his team into the World Cup semi-finals.

His reward may very well be the chance to play in a World Cup final, four years after a personal sacrifice in the semi-finals cost him a place in the Germany team that lost to Brazil.

Ballack went down with cramp early in extra time and he needed several minutes of treatment before he could hobble back on. Somehow the 29-year-old

skipper managed to finish the 120 minutes of normal and extra time and he made a crucial defensive header to snuff out Argentina's final attack in the last minute.

Despite his exhaustion, he stepped up to score Germany's second penalty and help the hosts to a 4-2 win in the shootout. He was subsequently named man of the match.

"I got a kick from Juan Roman Riquelme and that was possibly why I got cramp so early," Ballack told reporters. "We'd already used the three substitutes but I wanted to play to the end."

"It was tough but we fought to the end."

It says something that coach Jurgen Klinsmann never considered striking Ballack from the list of penalties, despite his obvious discomfort.

"My only question was whether he would take the penalty with his left or right foot," Klinsmann told reporters.

One more win in the semi-finals would give Ballack a chance to make up for that huge disappointment in 2002.

Then, Ballack found himself suspended for the final because of a tactical foul he was forced to make in the semi-final against South Korea, earning himself a yellow card and a one-match ban.

Ballack had been the inspiration for Germany's unlikely run to the final and without him they ended up beaten 2-0 by Brazil.

"We've got over a huge obstacle now," he said on Friday. "We've beaten one of the favourites and we have great self-confidence. We have a great dream and we want to live it."

Klose-ing in on Klinsmann

AFP, Berlin

Germany striker Miroslav Klose now stands seventh in the all-time World Cup goalscorer list with ten after scoring a vital equaliser that helped the hosts go on to win Friday's quarterfinal with Argentina 4-2 on penalties.

Polish-born forward Klose levelled the score in the 80th minute at 1-1 to take his tournament tally to five -- the same number he scored at the 2002 World Cup.

The 28-year-old Klose moves above Portugal icon Eusebio -- who scored all his nine in the 1966 edition -- and Italy's Paolo Rossi in the all-time list and now stands alongside West Germany's 1954 World Cup hero Helmut Rahn.

Klose's coach Jurgen Klinsmann, a World Cup winner with West Germany in 1990, is his next target with 11, heading into Tuesday's semifinal with Italy.

Brazilian striker Ronaldo leads the World Cup goalscoring charts with 15 having overtaken yet another German Gerd Muller when he scored in the 3-0 victory over Ghana in the second round.

Not so neutral

AFP, Berlin

The German World Cup organisers were left red-faced on Saturday after admitting that the announcer for the Olympic Stadium here had been replaced after encouraging Germany in the quarterfinal.

The German announcer had told the predominantly German crowd in the stadium in Berlin, "Ladies and Gentlemen, our team needs our support" during Germany's 4-2 win over Argentina in a penalty shootout, FIFA spokesman Markus Siegler said.

Stadium announcers at World Cup matches must remain neutral according to FIFA rules.

Siegler said: "We have said he must stop this. This is part and parcel of the principle of fairness and this cannot be accepted."

"The local organising committee has replaced him with immediate effect."

A spokesman for the local organising committee, Gerd Graus, said: "He will no longer have the microphone at the stadium."

"He has been the announcer at the Olympic Stadium for years but he was very excited because it was a very special match."

The World Cup final will take place in the Olympic Stadium on July 9.

Zidane didn't do it

AFP, Berlin

France midfielder Zinedine Zidane has refuted allegations that he kicked a dent in a door at a World Cup stadium in France's draw with South Korea in the first round.

"The French national team would like to clearly state that Zinedine Zidane did not kick in the door in Leipzig and nobody from the French delegation kicked it either," organising committee spokesman Gerd Graus said at a daily media briefing.

"We don't know who it was and we are not going to hire a private detective to find out, but Zinedine Zidane did not do it."

The manager of the Leipzig stadium, Winfried Lonzen, said on June 18 that Zidane, who will retire after the World Cup, had kicked a door to the dressing room in frustration after the Koreans had scored an 81st minute equaliser to secure a 1-1 draw.

Lonzen said the door would be kept as a souvenir that one of the greats of World Cup football had played in Leipzig.

Pekerboys not men enough



AFP, Berlin

Jose Pekerman may have led Argentina to three under-20 world titles, but at senior level it was not to be for Argentina as they slid out of the World Cup on Friday, beaten by Germany on penalties.

Pekerman came here in the expectation his team, nicknamed the "Pekerboys" after the bulk of the senior squad graduated under his protective wing, would grow into their role as world champions in waiting.

Missed penalties from Roberto Ayala and Esteban Cambiasso meant they will have to wait at least another four years.

For all his animated wheedling from the technical area Pekerman was not able to address his pitchside coaching to the man who many Argentine fans will have felt was the one individual who could make the difference after he failed to send on the mercurial Lionel Messi, left on the bench throughout.

And the man in charge reacted afterwards by throwing in the towel, announcing his resignation.

"I am not going to carry on. I can leave with my head held up high. I have always believed in the players and they have not let me down," Pekerman said.

"I am convinced we did all we could -- and nobody is infallible. It is a great shame we could not go all the way. But the players still showed they are Argentina and did the country proud."

"I always believed in this squad -- we had two changes forced on us today and we paid dearly for it," said Pekerman as he was forced to replace goalkeeper Roberto Abbondanzieri through a hip injury with 20 minutes of normal time left, while it was Julio Cruz who appeared when Juan Riquelme appeared to take a knock.

Those misfortunes sealed Messi's fate as the Argentines ran out of substitutes.

Diego Maradona had anointed Messi as his successor since the latter made a starring contribution to a successful Under-20 world cham-

pionship campaign last year.

The spine of the 'albicestele' squad are also 'veterans' of the Pekerman-built teams which landed the 1995, 1997 and 2001 titles in that age group.

But Messi was left kicking his heels as the South Americans failed to build on Ayala's headed opener which Miroslav Klose cancelled out.

but came here on the back of friendly losses to England and Croatia.

He was under huge pressure to deliver as the last senior Argentine triumph came 13 years ago at the Copa America.

Pekerman's run of success in blooded youngsters has been a blessing to an Argentine federation

things which made us stand out but became lost" with the passage of time as Argentina failed to regain the heights of the Maradona era.

But Maradona himself expressed doubts when Pekerman was brought in to replace Marcelo Bielsa two years ago, opining that "he's not yet a coach for adults."

Despite an exhilarating 6-0



PHOTO: AFP

Argentine coach Jose Pekerman shows his helplessness during their quarterfinal against Germany at the Olympiastadion in Berlin on Friday.

Instead, Pekerman tried out Cruz in place of the ineffective Hernan Crespo and then Cambiasso for a subdued Riquelme, whose usual mercury was falling as the clock ticked down towards 90 minutes.

Pekerman started off in October 2004 with a 4-2 win over Uruguay

which bit the bullet in 1994 by responding favourably to the application of a man who suggested how he would overhaul the two-times champions' football at youth levels.

In his envelope accompanying his CV Pekerman urged his country to "regain our identity and technical capabilities, unwrap our talent --

beating of Serbia and Montenegro in the group phase Argentina were unable to hit top gear against a dogged Germany and following the shootout lottery they will now have to start planning for 2010 -- with a more mature Messi this time on the pitch and without Pekerman.

European dream alive



FIFAWORLDCUP.COM, Undated

Germany raised its arms towards the heavens and rejoiced as Argentina stared down at the floor in utter dejection. Friday, 30 June witnessed the polarising effects that victory and defeat can impart in a World Cup quarterfinal.

So, the 2006 edition lost the team that had, arguably, provided the most scintillating football of the 22 days since the first ball rolled in Germany. But the hosts are still alive and kicking.

Facing Germany in the semifinal in Dortmund in three days' time are Italy, who had things mostly their own way in a 3-0 defeat of Ukraine in Friday's other quarterfinal. Only Brazil now stand in the way of an all-European final, the first for 24 years.

A hiatus of 48 hours as Germany 2006 took its first breather after 19 frenetic and mostly fantastic days, was far too long a time to wait for Germany-Argentina, a coming together again of two legendary opponents who had disputed both the 1986 and 1990 Finals.

The vast bowl that is Berlin's Olympiastadion was a magnificent setting for such an occasion. The tension was palpable, the hopes and dreams of both sets of supporters soaring towards the skies as kick-off approached. One felt, however, that a banner proclaiming: GER 50 - ARG 0 Das Wunder '06' (The Miracle of 2006) was perhaps a shade optimistic.

Argentina started well, Juan Riquelme immediately stamping his class on proceedings by drifting into telling areas and proving near-impossible to shake off the ball. Michael Ballack took personal affront at his rival's early dominance and responded positively, with some assured touches serving to encourage Germany.

However, from about the 30-minute mark the South Americans took a firm hold on the play, Javier Mascherano, Maxi Rodriguez and Luis Gonzalez contributing every bit as much to the midfield supremacy as the elusive Riquelme. Up front, Carlos Tevez justified his selection by rampaging his way down the left and in field.

Minutes after half-time, Argentina took the lead when Riquelme's corner found Roberto Ayala rising majestically to head home. The issue looked like falling Argentina's way, but fate was to take a critical hand when goalkeeper

Roberto Abbondanzieri was hurt climbing for a corner, an injury which later forced his withdrawal.

With ten minutes left, the equaliser arrived as Ballack crossed, Tim Borowski nodded on and Miroslav Klose turned in his fifth goal of the tournament. Extra time yielded no further goals and so it went to the dreaded shoot-out. Ayala saw his attempt saved by Jens Lehmann as did Esteban Cambiasso, while Germany successfully converted all of theirs.

"Deutschland, Deutschland" rang out around the stadium. So many happy, smiling faces. But you could cry for Argentina.

There was a touching moment at the end of the match in Berlin when Kahn, the hero of Germany's campaign in Korea/Japan 2002, and the hugged Lehmann, the man who has taken his place. Before the shoot-out, he had also taken time to offer Lehmann some words of encouragement.

Now it is only Italy who stand in the way of a second successive final appearance for the Nationalmannschaft. When the

teams met in Florence in March, Italy won 4-1. Jurgen Klinsmann was written off as a coach and Germany were given no hope in this year's FIFA World Cup. How quickly things change.

An early goal is always desirable in these games, with nerves so capable of playing havoc with your composure. Italy, having just seen a fourth-minute chance missed by Mauro Camoranesi, were thrilled to score two minutes later.

A surging run opened the way for Zambrotta to stride on and beat Oleksandr Shovkovskiy by his left-hand post with a powerful shot.

Shovkovskiy, the hero of Ukraine's Round of 16 shootout-victory over Switzerland was beaten twice more, but the scoreline was perhaps a little harsh on the Eastern European debutants, who enjoyed 59 per cent of the possession during the course of the 90 minutes. They were mounting an unarguable case for an equaliser, coming agonisingly close on three occasions when Italy broke away to score their

second of the evening through Luca Toni's stooping header. The same player then finished off more good work from Zambrotta for the third.

Besides the invention of Francesco Totti and the power play of Zambrotta, Gennaro Gattuso embodied the work ethic and determination so vital to Italy's cause. He suffered pain when he had his arm stamped on in the early stages, but recovered to produce sterling service in the central areas.

And so, a repeat of the 1982 final is upon us. Perhaps more appropriately, the sides last met in a semifinal at Mexico 1970, when Italy ran out 4-3 winners. That game, while providing a feast of football for the neutrals, ended in heartbreak for Germany and one of the stars of their side, Franz Beckenbauer. With Beckenbauer certain to be watching from the stands in Dortmund, he and the rest of the host nation will hope that history does not repeat itself on 4 July.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

38 Prepares Easter
1 Colonial sewer
5 Pompous
8 Grace
12 Terrible
13 Chapeau
14 Abundant
15 Samoan
17 Actress
18 On the
19 Team
21 Diplo-
24 Doctrine
25 Recedes
28 Attention
30 Sapporo
33 Stickum
34 Monty
35 Lepidop-
36 Scull tool
37 Tarzan's

DOWN

1 Philbin
2 Water-
3 Judicious
4 Quick
5 "Eureka!"
6 Give in to
7 Cease
8 Jennifer
9 1987
10 Advan-
11 Approach
12 Sch.
13 Filcher
14 Leeward
15 Islands
16 Feathery
17 accessory
18 One of the
19 Party
20 Cinder-
21 set-
22 ting
23 O'Neill
24 output
25 "A Doll's
26 House"
27 writer
28 Parisian
29 pal
30 Clumps
31 Leave out
32 Send
33 forth
34 Croupier's
35 tool
36 Leno's
37 promi-
38 nence
39 Sugges-
40 tion
41 Hole in
42 one
43 Coop
44 occupant

Solution time: 21 mins.

ATOP WET QUIT
SIRE HOR UNTO
HARDIASE EBIEN
ART EMBOIS
CHINA GLEE
REST SUITCASE
ART STENS RAW
BOOKCASE FILE
RANT VADER
DEMAND ROT
ICON SHOWCASE
BRUT UMP ALUM
SUEZ POE TABS

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CRYPTOQUIP
BY Z ODFRWA YWFVSQZKDR
Z VDKMWP KW GWQWF
MZBF, UWS GWSQP GZQQ
BKZ "PUD-BK OQZA."
Yesterday's Cryptquip: SUPPOSE I POURED A SUGAR SUBSTITUTE ON THE LAWN. WOULD THAT BE "SPLENDA IN THE GRASS"?
Today's Cryptquip Clue: K equals T
The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.



PHOTO: AFP

German policemen arrest an English football supporter in Gelsenkirchen on Friday on the eve of the World Cup quarterfinal between England and Portugal.