



Hosts howling

AFP, Berlin

Germany on Wednesday wept bitter tears over the 0-2 loss to Italy but took heart in the host nation's surprisingly long run.

"It's a pity. It was a great game," said Chancellor Angela Merkel, who sat next to Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi in the Dortmund stands Tuesday night as Germany's dreams came to a screeching halt at the semifinal match.

"Unfortunately it wasn't quite enough. But this team can still accomplish a lot."

The top-selling Bild newspaper also tried for a glass-half-full view with the banner headline "We are crying with you! You are still heroes" around a giant photo of Klinsmann's head in hands.

President Horst Koehler told the newspaper that Germans must try to sustain the newfound patriotism they discovered during the tournament, when for the first time since the war waving German flags and singing the national anthem were accepted as natural gestures of healthy national pride.

"We are on the right track toward standing up for ourselves and taking pride in what we have achieved since 1945," he said.

"The Germans identify with this country and its national colours. I think that is terrific."

He added that the country could still seek strength in the unexpected winning streak that took Germany to

the semifinals.

"We can achieve a lot if we have the courage to dare to do something new," he said. "We should remember that after the World Cup."

The country has been swept by football fever since the championship started in Munich June 9, carrying along even admitted "soccer-Scrooges" such as Merkel.

Some 30 million people watched the match in Germany, ZDF public television said, with a market share of 84 percent. During extra time, even more tuned in with the share of the television audience topping 89 percent.

ZDF media research chief Susanne Kayser said that the viewers were split evenly down gender lines, as was the case for all the matches featuring the German national side.

Italy destroyed Klinsmann's hopes of emulating the West Germany team of 1974; the last time the country hosted the World Cup.

That team reached and then won the final in Munich 2-1 against the Netherlands.

Berlin's daily Tagesspiegel noted that Tuesday's loss was especially bitter because Italy scored its two goals in the last two minutes of extra time, prolonging the hope for the German side until the very end.

"Italian heat, boundless drama and stunned Germans," the paper wrote above a photo of a shocked German girl draped in the German flag with its colours painted on her

cheeks and red, black and gold bows in her blonde hair.

"After the final whistle the Italians were the only ones cheering."

The Berliner Morgenpost said that Germans should not succumb to sour grapes after their thrilling run.

"Germany are not in the World Cup final -- you can be sad about that for a while but nothing more than that," it wrote.

"These football players did not just cruise past strong nations such as Brazil, Argentina and Holland. Above all, their performance was fun to watch and the people in this country were changed at least for three and a half weeks -- they were happier, more relaxed and more self-confident."

"People abroad were stunned by the Germans, who turned a perfectly organized tournament into a gigantic celebration. We are the world champions in partying. This World Cup month has done us good."

Bitterly disappointed German supporters were left to reflect on what might have been.

A crowd of up to 200,000 fans crowded into Dortmund to watch the semifinal in the city's Westfalenstadion, but their hopes crushed.

"It is a terrible disappointment, especially to lose like that, in the very last minutes," said Dirk, 37, from Dusseldorf, who had man

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IT WAS THAT BAD: A combo picture shows (L-R) a German supporter crying after the second Italian goal while German coach Juergen Klinsmann consoles young midfielder David Odonkor at the end of the semifinal against Italy at Dortmund's Westfalenstadion on Tuesday.

'Germany can be proud'

Waiting for Klinsmann

AFP, Dortmund

Germany manager Juergen Klinsmann admitted Tuesday's 2-0 World Cup semifinal loss to Italy was a bitter pill that would take some time to swallow, but lavished praise on his team saying they had done him and the host nation proud.

Germany fell victim to two extra-time goals from Fabio Grosso and Alessandro Del Piero to end their dreams of reaching Sunday's final in Berlin and Klinsmann admitted the nature of the loss made it difficult to digest.

"Everyone is distraught. The players and I all had a big dream and a goal to reach the final in Berlin. That dream did not come true," Klinsmann lamented.

"I think it will take some time to digest this defeat."

"It hurts that this fatal blow late in the match and it takes time to stomach that."

Despite being down about the loss, Klinsmann said Germany could be proud of their performances at the finals and said the future was rosy with so many young players coming through.

"After the match I told the players in the dressing room that they have a lot to be proud of," said the 1990 World Cup winner with West Germany.

"Our objective was to make it to the final but we narrowly missed it. However the team can still be proud of their achievements."

"This is a very young team and they showed amazing spirit and character. They made the whole

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AFP, Berlin

German football fans, down in the dumps after their country's World Cup semifinal loss to Italy, were Wednesday waiting with bated breath to see if the man who has transformed the team's previously stolid mentality would stay at the helm.

Juergen Klinsmann, World Cup winner as a player in 1990, fell short in his aim of emulating Franz Beckenbauer, who lifted the trophy both as player and coach with 'Die Mannschaft' -- and his future is now in doubt as he and his family live in California.

"He needs time to discuss matters with his family. I know how important that is to him. I hope he come out with a positive decision," said outgoing German Football Federation (DFB) chairman Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder.

"He has brought the team the benefits of his positive aura and optimism," said Mayer-Vorfelder,

who insisted that "I hope he can carry on transmitting that to the team."

Klinsmann, 41, was a controversial choice of coach when he took over from former teammate Rudi Voller two years ago after a disastrous Euro 2004 showing, which followed a surprise run to the 2002 World Cup final.

The former Stuttgart, Inter Milan, Tottenham and Bayern Munich striker had no previous coaching experience, but his adoption of American nutritional and psychological training methods has won widespread approval in a conservative country generally slow to adopt new trends.

With Mayer-Vorfelder about to give way to Theo Zwanziger at the DFB, Klinsmann is torn between underpinning what he has achieved so far with a young side which backs him to the hilt and spending more time in the United States, his domestic base, with his American wife.

Moreover, media reports on Tuesday said the United States were in talks with Klinsmann to lead them to the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, with the US Federation allegedly ready to dangle a multimillion deal before him as current incumbent Bruce Arena returns to club management.

Asked about contract talks with Klinsmann, Mayer-Vorfelder said the DFB would thrash out the details in committee with his current deal expiring this month.

Earlier, Klinsmann himself said: "My contract situation is irrelevant. I need time to talk with my family about it."

Beckenbauer insisted Tuesday that "it would be a shame if he heads back to California -- he has a young team which backs him. Klinsmann must continue," a sentiment backed by skipper Michael Ballack.

"I really hope Klinsmann will continue. He left a big influence on

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Ballack salutes Italy

INTERNET, undated

Germany captain Michael Ballack admitted that Italy deserved to win the dramatic World Cup semifinal between the two sides on Tuesday night.

A marvellous match was deadlocked at 0-0 after 90 minutes and extra-time also looked unlikely to separate the two sides after the Azzurri struck the woodwork twice.

But then in the last two minutes Italy made the breakthrough, with a 119th-minute strike from Fabio Grosso and an Alessandro Del Piero chip in the 120th.

The defeat was especially hard on Ballack, who had missed the 2002 final against Brazil because of suspension.

"It just is not meant to be for me," said the midfielder who has just joined Chelsea from Bayern Munich.

"It is very bitter for us to get eliminated like this, one minute from time. It is bitter but not undeserved."

"We started out rather slowly but did a much better job in the second half."

"The game was well-balanced. The Italians had the better chances in extra-time as they hit woodwork twice. But we also had some good opportunities afterwards, with the header (from Lukas Podolski)."



Argentine legend Diego Maradona gets ready to commentate on the first semifinal of the World Cup between Germany and Italy at Dortmund's Westfalenstadion on Tuesday.

WC BRIEFS

AFP, Berlin

German President Horst Kohler says he is pleased that Germans have been able to follow his example at the World Cup when it comes to flying the flag.

"I think it's great that I am no longer the only one going around with a flag on his car," Kohler said, noting thousands of compatriots have adopted a trend previously reserved for presidential limousines.

Platini, ZZ...Ribery?

A group of six firefighters in the French port of Boulogne-sur-mer have composed a song in honour of local hero and France star Franck Ribery.

The "Fra-Gueules" (literally French mouths) celebrate the man who "came from nothing to become everything" -- although Portugal and Italy must be overcome before he can call himself a world champion.

"Ti Franck" is being held up as the new Michel Platini, perhaps even the new Zinedine Zidane.

His firefighter fans will not be able to chant his name during the semifinal against the Portuguese as some will be on duty.

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2006 Round 5 (Bumper), Draw in Dha
 (See June 8 issue of the Star Sport for competition information, prizes and rules)

The Daily Star RANGS TOSHIBA World Cup Quiz Round 5 (Bumper) Ends July 09, 2006

Tick () the correct answers

1. Whom did Ronaldo overtake as the leading scorer in the World Cup?	Muller <input type="checkbox"/>	Pele <input type="checkbox"/>	Fontaine <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Which player was shown three yellow cards in a World Cup match?	Simunic <input type="checkbox"/>	Deco <input type="checkbox"/>	De Rossi <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Who scored the 2000th World Cup goal?	Ze Roberto <input type="checkbox"/>	Joe Cole <input type="checkbox"/>	Allback <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Which World Cup champions failed to win it at home?	Italy <input type="checkbox"/>	Uruguay <input type="checkbox"/>	Brazil <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Who is this player?	Essien <input type="checkbox"/>	Drogba <input type="checkbox"/>	Saha <input type="checkbox"/>

Name (Mr/Mrs/Ms).....Age.....
 Father's name.....Occupation.....
 Address.....
 Telephone (if any).....Signature.....Date.....

Write with a ballpoint pen in clear BLOCK letters.
 Cut along the dotted lines and mail to OR drop in the Quiz Box at The Daily Star
 You may send as many entries as you like. Envelopes of entries must be clearly marked "Star World Cup Quiz 5."

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