



Germany star Bastian Schweinsteiger goes on a victory lap at the end of their Euro 2008 semifinal against Turkey at the St. Jakob-Park Stadium in Basel on Wednesday.

Terim to leave

AFP, Basel

Turkey coach Fatih Terim is set to coach a European club side next season as he revealed after his side had pushed three-time champions Germany to the limit in their Euro 2008 3-2 defeat in the semifinal on Wednesday.

The 54-year-old - whose finest moment as a club coach had come when he took Galatasaray to the 2003 UEFA Cup title - would not reveal which club it would be as he took his country's agonising loss on the chin.

"I have already said that I would not be working in Turkey next season," said Terim, who has also coached Italian giants AC Milan.

"I am someone who keeps his promises. I am probably going to return to a European club. But it is not for me to make the announcement."

"I have to hold talks with the Federation before making it official. I said goodbye to the players and that is all as it is the end of the

tournament," said Terim, saluting his squad for coming so close while recognising that "you can't always have things go your way."

Turkish television reports quoted Federation president Hasan Dogan as saying following the match that they do not want to part ways with Terim, nicknamed "The Emperor" for his leadership skills.

Terim said he was proud of his side's resilience in a performance which showed "they really wanted this win."

"We would have hoped to reach the final, but sometimes you do lose in the final minutes and you have to accept that."

He said his side must now build on their success at Euro 2008 by using their last four appearance here to make the knock-out stages of future World Cups.

Six years ago, Turkey made the last four of the World Cup in Japan and South Korea, before they were beaten by Brazil.

"We must strive to keep

reaching the semifinals, football is important in Turkey," said Terim.

"There were 70 million Turkish hearts beating with the players' out there today and I believe a team like Turkey must keep getting to these tournaments and proving themselves."

"I hope we can build on this success."

"I am proud of my players and I think their desire, tactics and performance means they showed the world what a great team they are."

"I think we are leaving as the most colourful team of the tournament. We were almost there, but that is football."

"It was important to have a team which generates excitement amongst our fans, it was important to be here, it is important to be here as much as possible to get the players a taste for success."

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"Everyone will remember us as the team that played football."

Pundits had given Turkey little chance, but the team surprised all to win their last three games in nail-biting fashion and earn a reputation of comebacks.

In the group matches, they beat Switzerland 2-1 and the Czech Republic 3-2 with last-minute goals and knocked Croatia out at the quarterfinals on penalties after equalising with the last kick of the game in time added on.

Italy sack Donadoni

AFP, Rome

Italy coach Roberto Donadoni has been told he will not have his contract renewed, the Italian Football Federation announced on Thursday.

Donadoni's position had been under threat since the World Cup holders crashed out of Euro 2008 losing to Spain in the quarterfinals.

FIGC president Giancarlo Abete said he and Donadoni had discussed the performance of the Azzurri at the organisation's headquarters in Rome and "examined the activities (of the team) over the past two years and the European Championships," a statement read.

"While confirming to Donadoni the personal high regard in which he holds him and his appreciation for the seriousness of his professional commitment at the head of the national team, president Abete has told the coach about the FIGC's decision to consider that their contractual link has expired at its natural term."

The 44-year-old Donadoni's contract had only been extended before the tournament to run until the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

But his deal included a clause that he had to ensure the Italians at least qualified for the semifinals of Euro 2008.

According to Italian media reports, Donadoni's predecessor, 2006 World Cup winning coach Marcello Lippi, is set to return to the post.

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Storm causes TV blackout

AFP, Vienna

The broadcast transmission of the first Euro 2008 semifinal between Germany and Turkey was cut three times Wednesday evening following a violent storm in Vienna.

The cuts occurred in the second half of the game, which was being played in the Swiss city of Basel, the first one lasting between four and seven minutes, several broadcasters said.

The causes for the cuts, which apparently originated at the International Broadcast Centre in Vienna, were still unknown, a spokesman for the Euro 2008 organising committee, Wolfgang Eichler, told AFP.

"We're carrying out checks," he said.

Two broadcasters -- Swiss television and Qatar-based 24-hour news channel Al Jazeera -- did not suffer any transmission cuts, however.

But fans in most countries around the globe were briefly left without live pictures.

The Euro 2008 organising committee said it was putting the entire second half of the game at broadcasters' disposal for a potential repeat broadcast.

Winds of up to 100 kilometres per hour, strong rain and hail hit the Austrian capital Wednesday evening, prompting the evacuation of the city-centre fan zone and later that of the stadium media centre.

The Euro 2008 broadcast is being produced for the first time by the European football organisation UEFA.

Media hail their heroes

AFP, Ankara

Turkish newspapers heaped praise Thursday on coach Fatih Terim and the national team for their stunning performance in Euro 2008 even though they bowed out of the championship after losing to Germany in a dramatic semifinal.

"Champions of our hearts," read a banner headline in the mass-circulation Sabah over a full-page picture of the team after Wednesday's clash, which Germany won 3-2 with a 90th-minute goal.

"Thank you, boys," said the liberal Radikal, hailing the team's "unforgettable" performance.

All dailies were united in declaring Turkey the better team on the pitch on Wednesday despite the absence of nine men, including key players, from

Terim's squad due to injury and suspension.

"We crushed Germany, but could not defeat them," Sabah said.

"A glorious farewell," added the liberal Milliyet. "We return from Switzerland with heads held high."

The popular Vatan said: "Turkey is proud of you."

Wednesday's match was the first semifinal in a European championship for Turkey, whose best international showing so far is third place in the 2002 World Cup.

Turkey's Euro 2008 performance also brought relief to Terim, who was much criticized for his tactics and choice of players after losing 2-0 to Portugal in the opening match.

An angry Terim lashed out at Turkish press, saying it was up to him and not the media to decide, then led his team to dramatic

last-minute victories in the next three games to make it into the final four.

"Fatih Terim succeeded in getting the team to play to his philosophy," commentator Ridvan Dilmen, a former Turkey international, wrote in Milliyet. "I am not exaggerating when I say this is a revolution in world football."

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German fans celebrate after their national team won their Euro 2008 semifinal against Turkey in Basel on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Loew snubs luck factor

AFP, Tenero

Germany coach Joachim Loew insisted on Thursday his team's experience and the German legacy of producing results when they matter put his side in Sunday's Euro 2008 final - not luck.

"It's not about luck," he insisted.

"What gives Germany the winning edge is the immense experience we have amassed over many decades and many tournaments."

"Over the decades, die Mannschaft has forged a legacy of grinding out results in pressure situations on their way to the finals of major tournaments."

They held their nerve to beat hosts England in the Euro 1996 semifinal in a penalty shoot-out, then a golden goal by current team manager Oliver Bierhoff against the Czech Republic gave them their third European crown.

And at the 2002 World Cup,

Germany squeezed past co-hosts South Korea in the semi-final before losing to Brazil.

But for Loew, the German way is all about hard work and a fierce will to succeed, just don't talk to him about luck.

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But while Loew is looking forward to Sunday's final against either Spain or Russia, he insists he will not be over-awed by the occasion in Vienna.

In his two-year reign, Germany have lost three times - a 1-0 friendly defeat by Denmark in March 2007, a 3-0 defeat by the Czech Republic in qualification last October and the 2-1 stage defeat by Croatia on June 12.

"My record as national team coach is a source of pride and it's great for me to be in the final as head of the German team," said Loew.

"I was involved for the 2005 Confederation's Cup and the 2006 World Cup."

"But I have had other big matches, so I would diminish the importance of this slightly because I have already been through my baptism of fire."

"However, to be in a European final is something special and I am looking forward to it."

Nihat facing surgery

AFP, Madrid

Turkey striker Nihat Kahveci will have surgery on a ruptured tendon in his right thigh, the injury which ruled him out of Wednesday's Euro 2008 semifinal with Germany, his Spanish club Villarreal said.

The forward picked up the injury in Friday's quarterfinal win over Croatia and then left the Turkish camp for Spain.

Beforehand, the 28-year-old had played a pivotal role in getting Turkey to the last four, his two late goals against the Czech Republic earning them a place in the quarterfinals, where they promptly saw off the Croatians on penalties.

Villarreal player Nihat Kahveci was examined Wednesday evening by the club's medical services. Test the player underwent confirmed the rupture of the tendon in his right leg, the club said.

"German-Turkish friendship will be in first place today, regardless of who continues on to the final," Ertugrul Ozkok and Kai Diekemann, wrote. "We want to see Germans and Turks partying together!"

Interior Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble saw the match as a test of the peaceful, but sometimes tense, relations between Germans and Turks living in the country.

"Let not only the best team win on Wednesday but also German-Turkish friendship," he wrote in Berlin tabloid B.Z.

"I am not that interested in football but when Turkey plays it's different," 16-year-old Rabia said in Kreuzberg.

But she added that a German victory was not the end of the world.

"I am German too," she said.

Germany were poor

AFP, Berlin

Well done for winning, but you played poorly, went the message from the German press to the nation's football team Thursday after their 3-2 victory over Turkey in a nail-biting Euro 2008 semifinal.

"Horror movie with a happy end," was how the Berliner Zeitung summed up the thriller of a semifinal that has given Germany a shot at becoming European champions.

The German team's performance in this championship has been hard to understand. The level of their play has been erratic as that of a bunch of pubescent players."

Under the headline "What madness. Our nerves!" the tabloid-style newspaper Bild warned the team that they would have to "improve by at least 200 per cent" when they face either Spain or Russia in the final in Vienna on Sunday.

Der Tagesspiegel agreed that "the level of football we saw was rather poor."

Most newspapers ran front-page photographs of a jubilant Philipp Lahm lifting his shirt after kicking Germany into the final with a 90th-minute goal.

Real have a house ready for C'Ron

AFP, Madrid

Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo, the subject of intense speculation about a move to Real Madrid, has a house ready for him in the Spanish capital, a Spanish sports newspaper said Thursday.

The daily Marca said the Portuguese forward will live in the upmarket district of Morajeda next season, not far from Real's president Ramon Calderon and German coach Bernd Schuster.

Marca and another sports newspaper AS said Ronaldo, who is on holiday in Sardinia with his Spanish fiancee Nereida Gallardo after playing for Portugal in Euro 2008, may return to Manchester next week to inform the club's directors that he intends to move to Real.

Manchester United have repeatedly said the player - whose contract runs until 2012 - is not for sale.

Calderon last week dismissed talk that the Spanish champions would be willing to pay 100 million euros (155 million dollars) for the 23-year-old.