



**GLUM GERMANS EVERYWHERE:** Germany midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger (L), with the jersey of Spain's Andrés Iniesta, consoles captain Philipp Lahm at the Moses Mabida stadium in Durban as two Berlin residents (R) look on after their semifinal defeat on Wednesday.

PHOTOS: AFP/REUTERS



# Loew hails La Roja *End of a dream*

AFP, Durban

Germany coach Joachim Loew hailed Spain as masters of the football universe and expressed confidence that they would beat the Netherlands in Sunday's World Cup final.

Despite his frustration at his side's failure to reproduce the kind of form with which they swept past England and Argentina in earlier rounds, Loew paid a gracious tribute to the quality of Spain's passing game and accepted they had deserved their 1-0 semifinal victory on Wednesday.

"Of course we are disap-

pointed, as you inevitably are when you lose a semifinal," said Loew.

"But we have to congratulate the Spanish team. They played very well and over the last two or three years they have been the most skilled team of all.

"They showed that tonight with the way they circulated the ball very quickly and we were not able to reproduce the kind of play we did in previous matches.

"I think we were a little inhibited. But it was very difficult. When we won the ball we were losing it very quickly and it was if we were

not 100 per cent confident. "But that is what it is like playing against Spain. Every team playing them has to work incredibly hard."

Asked if Spain deserved to be regarded as the world's best, the German coach replied: "Yes, I agree. They won the European Championship (in 2008) in a very convincing way. They have won all their important games for the last two or three years and they are a pretty much unchanged group of players.

"It is as if they are playing on auto-pilot now and I'm fairly confident they are going to go on and win

the title.

"When they want to be they can be very dominant and hard to control. They are just a wonderful team. They are masters of the game and you can see it in every pass.

"We have only been playing together in this team for six or seven weeks. Spain has done it for two or three years."

Despite accepting his squad had come up short, Loew, who would not be drawn on whether he will continue in his current role after the tournament, believes the future of the national squad looks bright.

"The players are devastated but I would still like to congratulate them on the way they played throughout the tournament.

"I looked into their faces and, yes, there was disappointment there. It did not work out against Spain but they deserve a huge compliment because they played a fantastic tournament.

"We have to try and wake them up tomorrow because we still have another match -- the third place play-off against Uruguay -- to play."

## THE GUARDIAN

German newspapers have lamented the country's 1-0 World Cup semifinal defeat by Spain and wondered what happened to the scintillating performances that had dispatched England and Argentina with such counterattacking flourish.

There was a mixture of admiration for Spain's dominance of Wednesday's match in Durban but also a sense of bewilderment about what suddenly went so wrong for a side that scored four in the second round and again in the quarterfinal.

"Aus der Traum" (The Dream is Over), Bild splashed in giant letters on its front page. "Caramba, were Spain good! They deserved to win. But we're proud of our lads."

In its match analysis, the paper said: "We lacked courage and cleverness. We didn't see any of the 'made-in-Germany' football that had so enthralled the world in the previous matches. Too much respect for the big names? Or were our heroes crippled by the high expectations?"

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung also put it succinctly in its page one banner headline: "Spain too strong, Germany now aims for third place."

The paper's columnist Michael Horeni wrote: "Spain were too strong an opponent to allow Germany, in their 12th semifinal appearance, to advance to a World Cup final for an eighth time."

"In the duel, Germany were quickly put on the defensive and never able to unleash their refreshing style of attacking football that worked so well against

England and Argentina. The Spanish original was simply better than the young challengers."

Der Tagesspiegel in Berlin, like many newspapers, splashed pictures of German fans weeping after the match. More than 350,000 supporters had watched the game on giant screens in central Berlin with another 50,000 at Munich's Olympic Stadium.

"First high hopes, then huge disappointment," was Der Tagesspiegel's line. "Germans were in a state of shock when Spain scored. You could see the horror etched in the faces of the hundreds of thousands of fans watching at the fan mile."

Some in Germany wanted to blame Paul, the "oracle octopus" who had correctly picked the winners of their first five World Cup matches. Paul shocked the country on Tuesday by picking Spain. Some Germans now want to see Paul publicly barbecued.

A record TV audience of 31.1m (83% of the market share) watched in Germany, topping the previous record of 29.6m for the 2006 semifinal. Another 12m watched at public viewing venues around the federal republic.

Die Welt wrote: "This young team played their way into our hearts with elegance rather than drive. The multicultural team changed Germany. We used to be a land of complainers and pessimists. We're a different country now."

Guenter Netzer, the celebrated former West Germany midfielder, now an analyst for ARD television, said Germany had played poorly. The normally prickly pundit had been astonished by their perfor-

mances in the last two matches and almost sounded resigned to their fate.

"It's impossible to keep getting better all the time," Netzer said. "After England and Argentina it would have been just too incredible if there had been a further improvement against Spain. It would have been eerie."

## No decision on Loew future

AFP, Johannesburg

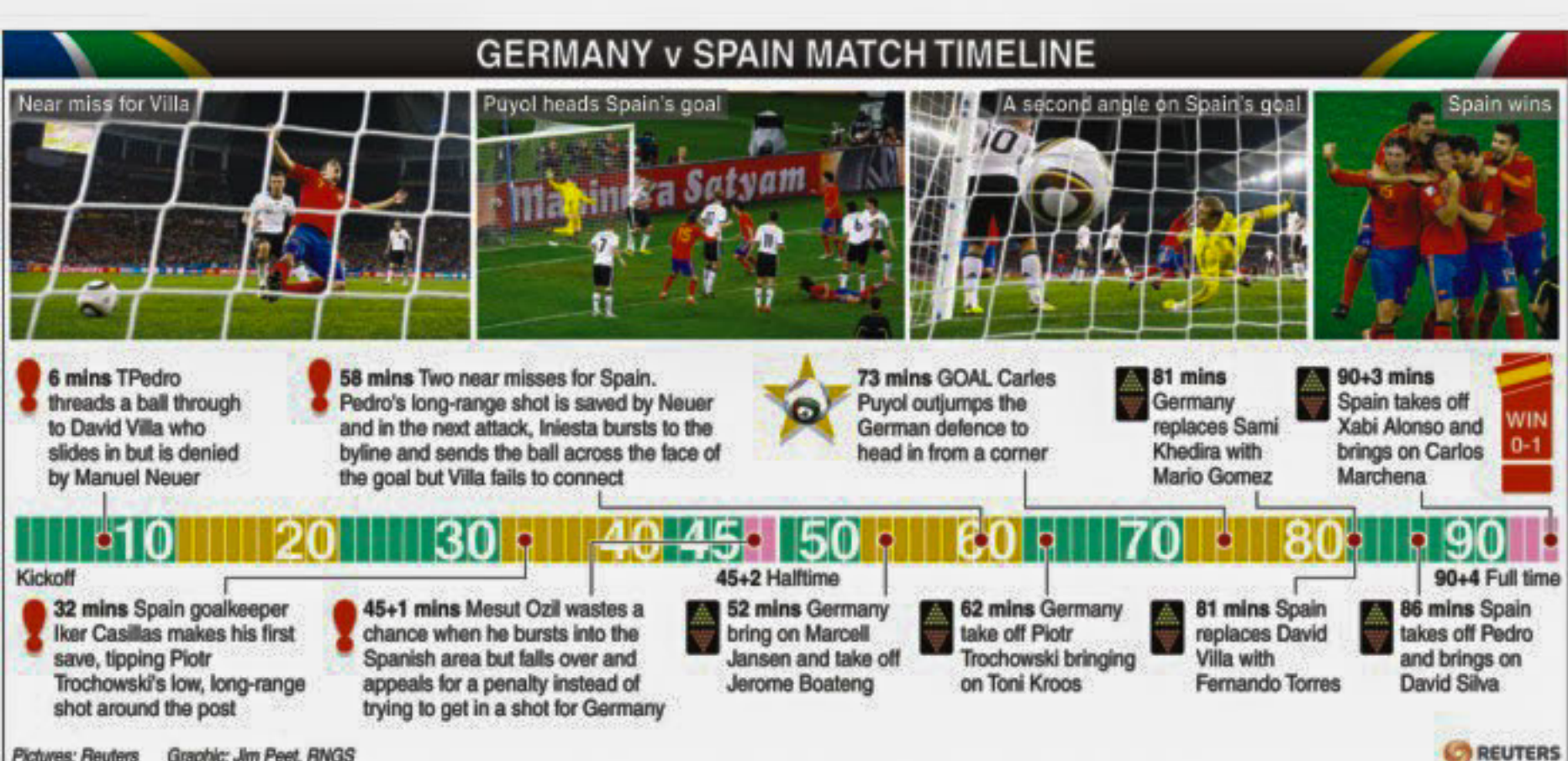
In the wake of his side's World Cup semifinal defeat to Spain, Germany coach Joachim Loew remains tight-lipped on his future plans despite now being out of contract.

"Any talk about the position will only be spoken about after the World Cup," said Loew after his side lost 1-0 in Durban on Wednesday thanks to a 74th-minute goal by Carles Puyol.

"This team will get stronger over the next two years, irrespective of which coach is in charge."

Despite losing several key players before coming to South Africa, Loew's young side has impressed with fast-flowing, attack-minded football and now face Uruguay in Saturday's third-place play-off in Port Elizabeth.

Loew must now decide -- if he has not already -- whether he wants to lead Germany into Euro 2012, to be held in Poland and the Ukraine, with the first qualifier against Belgium in Brussels on September 3.



## Meeting 'motherland'

INTERNET

Sunday will be a very special day for Rafael van der Vaart.

He will be sitting on the Netherlands' substitutes bench during the World Cup final against Spain, waiting for his chance to get onto the Johannesburg pitch and help the Dutch to make it "third time lucky."

The Netherlands lost the 1974 and 1978 finals, against hosts West Germany and Argentina, but are hopeful that they can finally pick up the world crown on Sunday, at the third time of asking.

The two sides have never met at a big event but there is even more to it for van der Vaart. He would be playing, for the first as well, against the country of his mother, and the country where he plays his club football.

On Wednesday - the day after the Dutch beat Uruguay 3-2 in the semis and just before Spain took on Germany - he said that "I hope that we face Spain in the final. Part of my family comes from Spain, and I play for Real Madrid."

Van de Vaart, 27, was a starter in the Netherlands' three Group E matches in South Africa and he helped to secure three wins with his midfield elegance and vision.

From the round of 16 onwards, however, he has been on the subs' bench, because of the return to fitness of winger Arjen Robben.

"It is not easy being on the bench," he said after the shock 2-1 quarterfinal defeat of Brazil.

"It is a bit frustrating to be sat there whilst the game goes on. I just try to be patient and wait for my change to go onto the field and help the team."

Van der Vaart said earlier this year that "a part of me is Spanish, and I am very proud of that. But my first country is the Netherlands, and I am always proud to be called up to play for them."

In the 1950s and 1960s almost one million Spaniards went north in search of work to Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

The offspring of these Spanish immigrants have had an important role in French football - the names of Michel Hidalgo, Manuel Amoros and Luis Fernandez spring to mind - and belatedly in Germany, with the emergence of Mario Gomez.

However, not until van der Vaart had there been much of a Spanish impact on Dutch football.

His mother hails from the small town of Chiclana de la Frontera in the southern Spanish province of Cadiz. She left Spain for the Netherlands with her family at an early age, though they frequently returned to Cadiz.

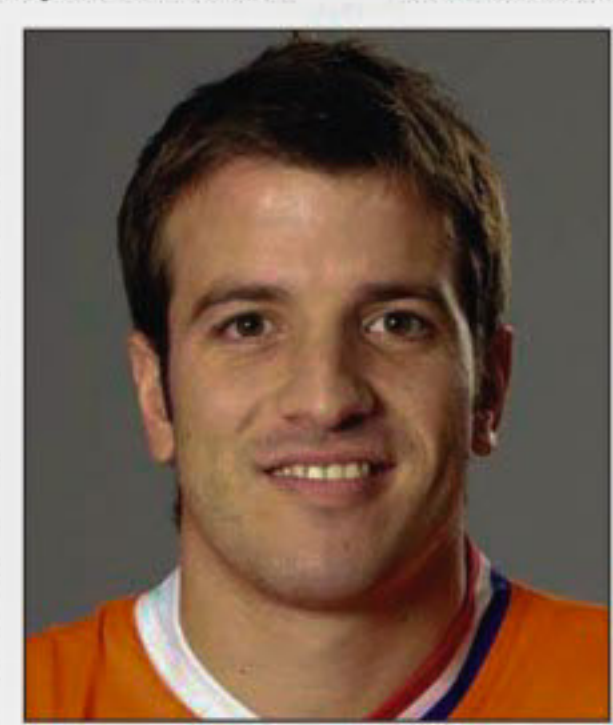
She married a Dutchman but insisted on her son having a Spanish Christian name, Rafael. The youngster grew up speaking both Dutch and Spanish at home.

He learnt his elegant trade at famous Ajax academy and made his debut for the Amsterdam club aged just 17.

Several Spanish clubs were interested in him in 2005 but Ajax preferred to sell him to Bundesliga side SV Hamburg. His dream of playing in Spain finally came true in 2008 when Real Madrid came in for him.

Van der Vaart has spent more time on the Real's sub bench than on the playing field but has nonetheless become a popular figure at the Estadio Bernabeu, with his left-foot elegance and powerful shots.

However, he will lose some of this popularity in Madrid if he helps the Dutch to beat Spain on Sunday.



RAFAEL VAN DER VAART

## BOOEKEARLY

Booking early has its advantages, but booking too early can backfire. This would have happened to football fans who took advantage of a special offer by a German travel agent just one hour before Germany's semifinal against Spain on Wednesday. "Book now, fly Saturday, watch the final Germany vs Holland at Soccer City on Sunday," read the offer. The chance to see "the match of year" for a total of 5,450 euros (6,860 dollars) including flights and hotel was worthless three hours later. Germany lost the game.

## MOOD MUSIC

Spanish defender Sergio Ramos is also the team disc jockey. He puts the players in the right frame of mind by playing loud flamenco music in the team bus and the dressing room before games. Ramos hails from Seville, one of the homes of flamenco music. His favourites are traditionalists like guitar player Paco de Lucia and singer Camaron de la Isla. But Ramos and the team also like the group Ketama, which has a style somewhere between flamenco and pop salsa.

## MARRIAGE OFFER

Nelson Mandela's ex-wife Winnie was so taken with Ghana midfielder Kevin Prince Boateng that she offered him one of her grand-daughters as a potential bride, a Ghana newspaper reported. The Daily Guide said Winnie Mandela took the footballer aside during a reception for the Black Stars at her house in Soweto and told him her "pretty grand-daughter" had taken a fancy to him. Winnie even offered to pay for the wedding ceremony, the report said. It was not clear if she knew Boateng is already married.

## TASTY MORSEL

Spain's football association has had to order fresh supplies of dry, cured ham known as "jamon serrano". The culinary symbol of Spain has proven so popular with players and officials that stocks ran out ahead of Wednesday's World Cup semifinal against Germany. Team bosses ordered several whole pieces of ham to be flown out to the team's headquarters in Potchefstroom.

## DON'T TELL THE POPE

German-born Pope Benedict XVI did not discover his country has been knocked out of the World Cup until Thursday morning, the Ansa news agency

reported.

The 83-year-old pontiff adhered to his daily routine of going early to bed after reading, studying and praying when he arrived at his private summer residence at Castel Gandolfo, to the south-east of the capital.

Wednesday's semifinal, which saw Germany lose 1-0 to Spain in Durban, finished too late in the evening (20:20GMT; 22:20 local time) for the Pope to be disturbed, said his personal secretary Georg Gaenswein.

"He will certainly be happy for Spain, a nation with deep Catholic roots, as he would have been for Germany, his country of origin."

## WILL HE, WON'T HE?

Nelson Mandela's family will decide nearer the time whether the ailing former South Africa president is well enough to make an appearance at Sunday's World Cup final.

Information Communications Manager at the Nelson Mandela Foundation, Sello Hatang, said: "We reiterate that Mr. Mandela and his family will make the decision about whether he attends or not on the day."

Mandela had been due to attend the opening ceremony, but cancelled as the evening before his 13-year-old great-granddaughter died in a car crash.

Local Organising Committee spokesman Jermaine Craig said an open invitation had been sent to the Mandelas, adding: "I can confirm that current president Jacob Zuma will attend Sunday's occasion."

## DOMESTIC ABUSE ON RISE

Fears that the World Cup would be accompanied by a surge in domestic violence appear to have been realised, with one police force recording the greatest number of incidents since 1 January on the day England were knocked out of the tournament.

On 27 June, when England were defeated 4-1 by Germany, Greater Manchester police logged 353 incidents of domestic violence.

A spokesman for the force said the figure was the second highest recorded so far this year and 15.7% higher than the same day last year.

Police forces had been asked to highlight the issue after research conducted during the last World Cup showed that domestic violence increased by almost a third during the tournament.



KP BOATENG



MANDELA