PHOTO: AFP

Uruguay star striker Diego Forlan celebrates after scoring against Germany during their World Cup third place play-off at Nelson Mandela Bay stadium in Port Elizabeth on Saturday.

Forlan masters Jabulani

SYED SHAFQUAT HUQ

The greatest football tournament on earth comes to an end on July 11, 2010. Full of controversies, this Fifa World Cup in South Africa was full of entertainment with things happening on and off the pitch; from Shakira's 'Waka Waka' to K'Naan's 'Wavin Flag', from Kaka's red card to Suarez's handball.

But one attraction that stood out more than anything else was the 'ball'. Better known as the 'Jabulani', this latest toy by Adidas remained a point of controversy all throughout the World Cup. Although some critics averted the blame from the Jabulani to the altitude of South Africa, the majority criticised the ball endlessly. It did not dip like the usual balls do; it would fly away at the slightest pressure.

Potential shots by players like Lampard, Torres and the like, would orbit aimlessly in the air, disappointing the players and fans alike. However, some players showed true finesse in controlling the Jabulani.

Stars like Messi, Villa, Iniesta and the like exercised outstanding control over the ball. But one golden haired individual, who was far from the limelight before the start of the tournament, caught the attention of all with his control over the troublesome Jabulani.

As the World Cup comes to an end Uruguay took on Germany for the third place play-off. It was Germany's second time in a row fighting for third place. The game was a very exciting one with a lot of action and goals. The Germans won in the end, though it was not them who shone brightly.

It was a man with golden hair, with a very athletic body capable of doing extraordinary things with the ball.

It was the free-kick he took in the 93rd minute that stole the essence of the match as the ball hit the bar, had the ball gone in it would have been a completely different story altogether.

The bar might have denied him the goal but nothing could deny the fact that Diego Forlan stood up at every opportunity he got for his team. It can be said that Forlan was the heart of Uruguay in this World Cup; it was for his exquisite goals that Uruguay hurdled to the semifinals after 40 long years.

He is without doubt the powerhouse of this Uruguayan side. Before the World Cup Forlan shone bright as ever for his team as Atletico Madrid went on to win the Europa League.

Although he lacks the huge fan following of superstars like Ronaldo or Messi, the 31-year old striker was phenomenal in this World Cup, as he finished with five goals and almost bagged a sixth. So many controversies circled around the Jabulani throughout the World Cup, but Forlan had no qualms over the ball, rather he took the challenge of taming the Jabulani, which was evident in every touch he made.

All the five goals that he scored had different characteristics. His first goal came against South Africa, a beautifully struck shot from outside the penalty area, which dipped perfectly at the right moment and went into the net. Forlan's second came in the same match with a perfectly slotted penalty kick. Forlan's resilience was starting to show as the World Cup drew to the round of sixteen. The golden haired man still had a lot left to give as he hit three more outstanding goals. One in the quarterfinal against Ghana with a perfect free-kick which dipped and swerved past the Ghana keeper.

Forlan, a natural right footer, blasted past the Dutch keeper a shot with his left foot in the semifinal. Forlan yet again proved that he could be as deadly with both feet. To his frustration, Forlan could not pull Uruguay through to the final but his style, play, runs and astonishing goals kept the fans on their toes to come out and experience the third place play-off.

This third place match almost gave Forlan the perfect World Cup finish, where he scored his fifth goal with an exquisite volley. The moment that stole the quintessence of the whole match came when Forlan hit the German bar with his trademark freekick.

That ended Diego Forlan's run for this World Cup, but carved his name in the heart of all football fans throughout the world. As the master of Jabulani tames its pet, Forlan has shown the world that he is a force to be reckoned with.

German élan rewarded with medal

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

They call it the 'little final.'

It is the game no-one wants to play, which ironically means that it is the game that is usually the most entertaining. Statistics say that on average, the third-place game produces, four goals a game. Yesterday it produced five as Germany and Uruguay served up an absolute thriller as a prelude to the biggest show on earth.

The Germans won in an error-ridden but frankly brilliant game that oscillated between one side and another until Sami Khedira's looping header settled issues in the 83rd minute. Even then, Uruguay captain Diego Forlan nearly took the game into extra-time when his superb 93rd minute free-kick thundered off the bar with Hans-Jorg Butt beaten.

It would have been sweet justice for the underrated Forlan, whose inspirational performances have seen Uruguay scale the heights after a near 40-year absence. Forlan can perhaps lay claim to the Golden Ball as he has time and again bailed out the Uruguayans in this tournament and has been the backbone behind their strong showing.

As has Bastian Schweinsteiger. The Germany winger converted to central midfielder had a mixed game, but still proved the heartbeat of the side. Although it was his error that gave away the equaliser to Uruguay, it was also his shot that paved the way for young Thomas Mueller to give the Germans the lead.

And on the topic of Mueller, the Bayern Munich tyro is almost set to win the award for the best young player of the World Cup. His intelligence and fearlessness make him a sparkling player to watch and with five goals and three assists he has been directly involved in more goals than any other player in this World Cup.

The game itself was packed with entertainment as both sides looked to take the game to the opponents. Luis Suarez, roundly booed whenever he touched the ball, Forlan and Edinson Cavani formed a formidable strike-force and they constantly troubled the German backline missing captain Lahm.

But Germany were not to be outdone with Khedira, Mueller and Mesut Oezil in particular forming threatening combinations backed up by Schweinsteiger. Sadly, it was Cacau upfront trying to score, rather than Miroslav Klose. The Bayern Munich striker was aiming to unseat Ronaldo as the greatest scorer in World Cup history but a bad case of the flu put paid to his hopes.

In the end, it might be divine justice as Ronaldo is a player of a much higher calibre, than the humble Klose, although a return of fourteen goals from three World Cup's is as good as it gets. Fittingly, he remains tied with Gerd Mueller.

In the end, Germany's triumph will mean that the young team will go home with a medal for their exploits. The Germans have wowed with their superb football throughout the tournament, and their young team with an average age below 25 have a bright future ahead. Euro 2012 and the World Cup in Brazil beckons.

Sonali Bank thump Azad

SPORTS REPORTER

Sonali Bank registered a 5-1 win over Azad Sporting Club in the Green Delta Insurance Premier Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The bankers led the first half 2-0 after a brace from Shahjad Nasir, who struck in the ninth and 24th minutes.

After resumption, Rana Jubair, Sultan Ashraf and Moniruzzaman netted one goal each to confirm their sixth victory in nine matches.

Salam Sadik scored the consolation goal for Azad.

WORLD CUP POLL

Who will win the World Cup?

Spain 72.4%

Netherlands 27.6%

TOTAL VOTES: 76

TODAY'S POLL

How good was the World Cup for you?

Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast vote

Follow The Daily Star Sport on twitter
www.twitter.com/dssport

What to WATCH

STAR Cricket & SuperSport6

England v Bangladesh
Third ODI
Live from 3:45pm

Mannschaft to be honoured

AFP, *Erasmia*

Both coach Joachim Loew and his squad are to receive Germany's top honours after winning 'the hearts and minds' of fans by finishing third at the World Cup, it was revealed on Sunday.

Newly-elected German president Christian Wulff visited the team, just before they left their World Cup base to fly home on Sunday night after they beat Uruguay 3-2 in Saturday's third place play-off, to announce the news.

Loew is to receive Germany's Federal Cross of Merit, while the team will receive the Silver Bay Laurel Leaf, Germany's top sporting award, in recognition of their roles as ambassadors by scoring 16 goals at the World Cup.

"This team is Germany's best ambassador on the world stage," said 51-year-old Wulff, who succeeded Horst Koehler, who resigned on May 31 after he appeared to suggest German troops abroad were defending Berlin's economic interests.

"The team has deserved this distinction, they have won the hearts and minds of people not just in Germany, but across the world.

"The Cross of Merit for Joachim Loew is in recognition of his work as a coach, we all know how important he has been.

"The whole of Germany has been grateful for what he has done."

With the coach out of contract now Germany's World Cup is over, Theo Zwanziger, the president of the German Football Federation (DFB) says he wants to talk with Loew back in Frankfurt about his future.

"I think we will sit down and put our heads together, I have always said I want to keep working with Loew," said Zwanziger.

"I think it is right and fair that we need to take time to digest the World Cup."

Loew has refused to hint whether he will lead Germany into their Euro 2012 qualifying campaign, to be held in Poland and the Ukraine, with the first qualifier taking place against Belgium in Brussels on September 3.

"I have really put the issue on the back burner, I wanted zero distraction and that was the agreement I had with Dr Zwanziger," said the 50-year-old, who stepped up to the top post after being Jurgen Klinsmann's assistant at the 2006 finals and then guided them to the Euro 2008 final where they lost 1-0 to Spain.

"I just need a few more days to get sorted out, I need a few days rest and a chance to think about my situation. Do I have the same level of energy and power to drive this team forward?

"It is up in the air, I haven't really thought about it, I have pushed all thoughts about it aside.

"There will be talks in Frankfurt and we will keep an open mind."

Despite losing captain Michael Ballack with an ankle injury before the tournament started, Loew's young side has played arguably some of the best football of the World Cup.

Germany hammered England 4-1 in the round of 16 and proved it was no fluke by beating Argentina 4-0 in the quarter-final before losing 1-0 to Spain in the semi-final.

Attacking midfielders Mesut Ozil and Thomas Mueller, who scored five goals, have earned reputations as dangerous attackers, while captain Philipp Lahm and his deputy Bastian Schweinsteiger have shown maturity to lead the team.

"I am delighted we have taken a big step forward, we have shown we can dominate some big nations, we have played some great attack-minded football which keeps our opponents under pressure," said Loew.

"Even the match against Spain could have gone either way, Toni Kroos had a chance to score and we could be preparing for the final, the way the team has played is exemplary. We have reached as high as we possibly could.

"We can all be justifiably proud of all the players, we were up against the odds, we had players dropping out with injuries.

"We dealt with the problems, the team trained and worked incredibly hard.

"There were no divas -- we were a compact and solid unit."

Two lead in nat'l chess

SPORTS REPORTER

FIDE Masters Abu Sufian Shakil and Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar shared the lead in the Mercantile Bank 36th National Chess Champion-ship at the end of the ninth round at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room yesterday.

Both Shakil and Sagar have 7.5 points each from nine matches.

Shakil got walkover against Mahtabuddin Ahmed Robin while Sagar lost to FM Mohammad Javed.

GM Reefat Bin Sattar was in the second position with seven points after losing to FM Mehdi Hasan Parag in his ninth round board.

In other matches, FM Aminul Islam beat Golam Mostafa Bhuiyan, Deberaj Chatterjee drew with FM Syed Mahfuzur Emon, Sharif Hossain defeated Mizanur Rahman, Abdullah Al Saif got walkover against Arman Monir.

Germany look to young guns

AFP, *Erasmia*

Midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger said on Sunday Germany's rising stars have the potential to become future World Cup winners after finishing third at the World Cup finals.

"We have come even closer to the top five teams in the world, there is a bit of a tear in my eye thinking of the semifinal we lost, but there is a smile in the other one as we showed both heart and courage against Uruguay," said Schweinsteiger, who is just 25 but one of the veterans with 81 caps.

"If we keep improving like this, sooner or later the trophy will be ours."

Germany beat Uruguay 3-2 in Port Elizabeth on Saturday to win the third place play-off after losing 1-0 to Spain in last Wednesday's semi-final.

The side were due to fly back to Germany on Sunday night at the same time the final takes place in Johannesburg between Spain and the Netherlands, but captain Philipp Lahm says more is to come from this side.

"We have a very good chance in the coming years to play at the top. We are still nowhere near the end of our development," said 26-year-old Lahm.

"We must continue to work hard. But we have a lot of quality and must be optimistic looking ahead."

This Germany squad was the second-youngest side to compete at a World Cup finals with an average age of just under 25.

"We have nothing to worry about," said forward Lukas Podolski, who like Lahm and Schweinsteiger was a member of the team that also finished third in the 2006 finals in Germany.

"We have a young group and will compete again for the title," added the 25-year-old.

Ten players of the 23-man World Cup squad in South Africa are under 25, while Bayern Munich's Thomas Mueller, who has scored five goals here, is the red-hot favourite to win the best young player award.

"This team is the future, it is viable that it will only reach its zenith in a few years," predicted Joachim Loew, who has yet to decide whether he will stay on as head coach.

"The culture of our game is doing well," added the 50-year-old.

Loew pleads for time

AFP, *Port Elizabeth*

Germany coach Joachim Loew insisted on Saturday that there have been no talks over a new contract which would keep him at the helm of the team he led to third place at the World Cup.

"There have been no negotiations for the moment. I need calm and time to go over things that have happened in my head," said Loew, after Germany defeated Uruguay 3-2 in the third-place play-off.

"I want to have two or three days to get an idea of what can happen and I want to talk to may team manager, Oliver Bierhoff."

CROSSWORD *By Eugene Sheffer*

ACROSS

1 Accordion feature
6 Remark to the audience
11 Baltimore flier
12 Change the title
14 Flag
15 Way
16 Early bird?
17 Steve Carell role
19 Boss (Abbr.)
20 Tallow source
22 Personal pronoun ...
23 ... and its possessive form
24 Bizarre
26 Malign
28 Pismire
30 Curry or Rice
31 Fame
35 Stares stupidly
39 Million (Pref.)
40 Court
42 1492 vessel
43 Undivided
44 Chaplain
46 Pen point
47 "Full House" family name
49 Worker on Steinbeck's "Row"?
51 Transfused
52 Colored ring
53 Scuba gear
54 Passels

DOWN

1 Czechs' capital
2 Hang around
3 Quite some time
4 Hearty brews
5 Contract clauses
6 Neighboring passengers may fight over it
7 Membership
8 Hostel
9 Rockette, e.g.
10 Eastern bigwigs
11 Unpleasingly plump
13 Irregular
18 "Eureka!"
21 Pageant winner's adornment
23 Macho type
25 Conclusion
27 Babe, for one
29 In the direction of
31 Hit, old-style
32 Rent payer
33 To-do list
34 Chic, to Austin Powers
36 Sift
37 Prepares to propose
38 Native Israeli
41 Killer whales
44 Cheat at hide-and-seek
45 Count counterpart
48 Sister
50 Society-page word

Solution time: 27 mins.

T	U	N	E	R		L	A	W		T	A	W
A	R	E	T	E		A	C	H		E	R	A
P	I	T	A	S		P	H	O	E	N	I	X
		F	L	I	M	S	Y		P	O	S	E
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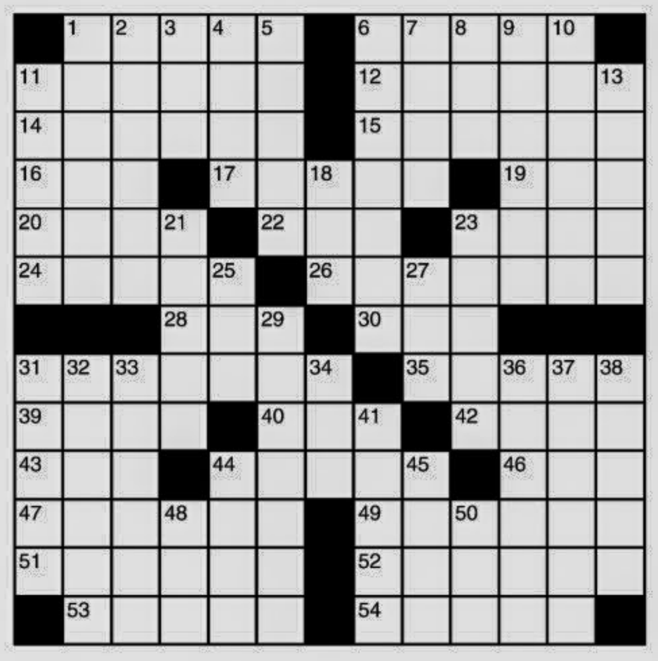

CRYPTOQUIP

JYDIZCY IZNTRM BRVVYLZN KC QRAARHKVL NTIN QYAARH BYMU DARCYAU, K NTKVF TY'C JYKVL FZMN-NIKAYW.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SINCE THE WRY COMEDIAN WAS FORMERLY A MARATHONER, HE TENDED TO USE A LOT OF RUNNING GAGS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals S