

'Underdog tag to help Argentina'

AFP, Beto Horizonte

Argentina striker Sergio Aguero believes his side will relish the tag of underdogs when they face Germany in the World Cup final in Rio de Janeiro on Sunday.

The two sides' contrasting routes to the final has made Joachim Loew's men heavy favourites to win the World Cup for a fourth time as they smashed hosts Brazil 7-1 in their semifinal, whilst Argentina only squeezed past the Netherlands on a penalty shootout after a 0-0 draw.

"Germany were always the favourites, along with Brazil, to win the World Cup," the Manchester City man said on Thursday.

"They continue to be so now. We need to play our own game and it suits us that all the pressure is on them."

Argentina's road back to the final for the first time in 24 years has unexpectedly come on the back of a solid defensive record as their fearsome attack, including four-time World Player of the Year Lionel Messi, has failed to hit top form.

And Aguero is aware they may have to withstand plenty of pressure from the Germans once more at the Maracana.

"We are in the final and we have to play it and win it in whatever way possible."

"We want to have control of the ball, but we know that Germany is a great team that know each other off by heart having played together for many years."

"It is clear that Argentina always go out to win, but sometimes during the game you have to be cautious. We are all aware of what the objective is and we will leave everything on the field to achieve it."

And former Liverpool player Maxi Rodriguez insisted Argentina were capable of beating anyone on their day.

"Germany is a very strong, aggressive opponent, but if we are at our best we can beat anyone."

"What I am interested in is leaving as a champion. It is the dream all Argentines have."

Aguero made his return to action for the final 40 minutes against the Dutch after missing the last 16 and quarterfinal victories over Switzerland and Belgium respectively due to injury.

The 26-year-old struggled to get into the game, though, and admits it is difficult to recover full fitness in the middle of such an intense tournament.

"When you come back from an injury, it is always in the back of your mind whether it will return," added Aguero.

"I had to train and try to be as good as I could be. When you miss three games, especially in a World Cup, you realise what you are missing."

Argentina are hopeful of recovering another key player from injury in time for the final as Angel di Maria returned to light training on Thursday.

The Real Madrid midfielder missed the semifinal due to a thigh injury.

"Di Maria trained at between 60 and 80 percent on the pitch," said Argentina team spokesman Andres Ventura.

"His progress is obvious. He will be observed over the next few days to see if he will be fit."



Argentina's Sergio Aguero is happy with the underdogs tag going into the FIFA World Cup final against Germany at Rio de Janeiro's Maracana Stadium on Sunday.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

মানসম্মত বাংলাদেশী পণ্যের ব্যবহার
শিল্প বিকাশে সহায়ক

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Secret plan to stop Messi

AFP, Beto Horizonte

Germany have a secret plan to shut Argentina superstar Lionel Messi out of Sunday's World Cup final at Rio de Janeiro's iconic Maracana Stadium.

Assistant coach Hansi Flick said Thursday there is a "special plan" to cope with the four-time Ballon d'Or winner but refused to give details.

Messi had a relatively quiet match against the Netherlands as Wednesday's semifinal was settled by penalties.

The 27-year-old was often

greeted by two Oranje shirts in Sao Paulo and the Germans are also getting organised.

"We saw how the Dutch managed to keep Messi out, but we too have a special plan for him – although I won't give that away," said Flick.

"We're looking forward to meeting a compact, organised team and in Messi, they have one the standing players of the tournament."

"We know plenty about Argentina, Germany has to accept the role of favourites, but the final will write its own script."

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Defender Benedikt Hoewedes said the Germany defence will pay Messi the same close attention Cristiano Ronaldo received in the 0-0 rout of Portugal in the group stages.

"Messi is one of the best players in the world, but just as I said before the Portugal game when we faced Ronaldo, we have to defend as a team," said the left-back.

"We have to stifle his opportunities to score goal and create dangerous situations."

This is the sixth time Germany will meet Argentina at the World Cup and the second time in the final.

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On their most recent meeting, Messi scored two years ago when Argentina enjoyed a 3-1 win over ten-man Germany in a Frankfurt friendly.

The Germans won the most recent World Cup meetings, they played a Diego Maradona-coached Argentina 4-0 in Cape Town at South Africa 2010 after a quarterfinal penalty shoot-out win in Berlin four years earlier.

Germany lost the Mexico 1986 final 3-2 to Argentina, then took revenge four years later by winning the Italia 1990 final 1-0 when Argentina finished with nine men in Rome.

Argentina legend Maradona played in both matches, but Germany's veteran striker Miroslav Klose said neither match has any relevance now.

"You can't really make comparisons, Maradona was one player, but Messi is just as fantastic and they are absolutely on par," said Klose.

"We have to come up with a few surprises of our own and I am just looking forward to an exciting game, which will be marked by tactics and a bit of trickery."

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