

Mi Amore

PREMIUM DAIRY ICE CREAM

Cesar's unwanted record

The Netherlands' opening goal against Brazil on Saturday was the 16th conceded by Julio Cesar in World Cup matches, handing him the unwanted record of conceding the most goals at the finals for the five-time champions. Julio Cesar was beaten from the penalty spot in the third minute and let in a second 14 minutes later in the third-place playoff match. It was his 12th World Cup game over two tournaments in 2010 and 2014. The previous record-holder was Taffarel, who conceded 15 goals in 18 games across three World Cups.

--REUTERS

PRALINE & CREAM

TASTE OF TOGETHERNESS
MI AMORE

Star

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2014

FIFA WORLD CUP

SPORT

ROLL OF HONOUR

Year	Champions	Runners-up
1930	Uruguay	Argentina
1934	Italy	Czechoslovakia
1938	Italy	Hungary
1950	Uruguay	Brazil
1954	West Germany	Hungary
1958	Brazil	Sweden
1962	Brazil	Czechoslovakia
1966	England	West Germany
1970	Brazil	Italy
1974	West Germany	Netherlands
1978	Argentina	Netherlands
1982	Italy	West Germany
1986	Argentina	West Germany
1990	West Germany	Argentina
1994	Brazil	Italy
1998	France	Brazil
2002	Brazil	Germany
2006	Italy	France
2010	Spain	Netherlands
2014	Germany	Argentina

Mario Goetze is the youngest member of a golden generation of German footballers. The Bayern Munich forward came off the bench to score the most important goal of his life in the World Cup final against Argentina in Rio de Janeiro yesterday. His 113th minute strike presented united Germany their first and overall fourth World Cup title.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Photo of the Day

Paint Your Imagination

BERGER
Trusted Worldwide

After the cheers and the tears . . .

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

The question is pretty straight. What do we live for, or live with, now that the football World Cup has drawn to an end? In a country where pain outweighs pleasure and bad politics casts long shadows over the passions that drive the heart, it was FIFA World Cup 2014 that kept our emotions in cheerful balance over the past one month.

It was the human spirit, made manifest through the games throughout the month, that came alive once more. A whole world converged in Brazil to inform us -- despite the protests on the streets of Brasilia, despite the flyover collapse in Belo Horizonte -- that humanity was in the games, that mankind in essence was a tale which transcended boundaries. It was thus that we felt the pain that Neymar, his vertebra fractured, felt. It was thus that we, packaged in emotions as we are, saw the various participating yet losing teams drop out of the games, one after the other.

The field, as always, belonged to the victor, until the victor became the vanquished at the hands of a new victor. There were Cameroon, there were Nigeria, there were France, there were all the others which went down a path known to all of us, even those for whom sports have always been difficult mathematics.

All across the city, this city and across this country, we placed bets over the eventual outcome of the World Cup. When some functionaries of the state tried to intimidate us, in the name of misplaced patriotism, into lowering the flags of the sporting nations we in beautiful fanaticism had hung on our rooftops, we glowered, until the nation's prime minister came down on our side. The flags, Argentine and Brazilian by and large, fluttered all over the place. In relatively fewer numbers came the French and Spanish flags. A brave colleague decided to go unconventional. He hung a huge German flag behind him. His beaming smile once the Germans had

stormed into the final vindicated his choice.

It was a season of human speed, sheer energy and unflinching endurance. It was a time when the predictable did not happen, when teams that should have hung on slipped into early departure for home. People talked about Messi and Neymar. Not many were willing to remember Mueller and Robben, until they began to shine. The foregone conclusion -- in cafes and offices, in the shops and newspaper cubicles -- was that a grand battle between the Argentines and the Brazilians was ahead. Arguments as to which team was better, which players held the key to victory raged in good cheer. World Cup 2014 became, in essence, a local affair, for every global game turns beautifully into a local celebration. Every player sprinting across our television screens, perspiring and yet with that fury in the limbs and fire in the eyes, was someone we knew. Every player became our neighbourhood football hero.

And yet there was something that we did not

know would come to pass. When the Germans thrashed the Brazilians 7-1, a terrified silence came over the world. Every German player, or so it seemed, was scoring a goal. The speed and tactical planning the Germans brought into play took you back to the alacrity with which German tanks seized France and Belgium and Austria in the 1940s. In the German onslaught on the Brazilians, flashes of Rommel's Africa campaign were seen. Brazil lay battered and bruised. Millions of hearts cracked around us. All Brazilians wept. Our tears joined theirs.

Of the four nations making it to the semifinals, we happened to remember with a start, three were led by powerful women. Argentina's Cristina Kirchner, Germany's Angela Merkel and Brazil's Dilma Rousseff, all had their children playing for them. In the Netherlands, until recently, there was Queen Beatrix. There is beautiful coincidence.

Last night, it was Merkel and Kirchner who met, vicariously, in the final at the Maracana. Millions

of Argentine fans prayed hard, prayed as they had never prayed before, for Messi and his teammates. There were others who predicted a German blitzkrieg, who believed Argentina would go down bravely fighting the German war machine.

Well, the results are in. The laughter has been heard. The tears have flowed.

All the players have gone home, some to celebrate in abandon, some others to nurse unanticipated wounds. The flags, though, keep fluttering on our streets. The stadiums are empty, echoing only with the cheers that sounded in our homes and in our streets till last night. Or years and years ago, through the aesthetics that was made of football by Pele, by Platini, by Beckenbauer and Maradona.

The festivities are over. Must we really go back to the banal, to the unreal world we inhabit, imagining it to be our real universe? We slouch back home. Already, intimations of 2018 are in the air. The trumpets will sound again.

start something new

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