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Loew to carry on

AFP, Berlin

Germany coach Joachim Loew said on Wednesday that he never considered leaving his post after winning the World Cup title and insisted he would see out his contract which runs until Euro 2016.

"I didn't think of stopping for one second," said Loew, 54, in an interview published on the German Football Federation (DFB) website.

Loew took over as German head coach in 2006 after two years as assistant and extended his contract until 2016 before the World Cup in Brazil.

"I didn't extend my contract with the DFB until 2016 to prematurely break it," said Loew, who had refused to answer questions about his future after guiding his side to a 1-0 defeat of Argentina in this month's World Cup final.

"I simply kept to what we had agreed before the World Cup that we were going to calmly sit down and analyse the tournament as we have done after every tournament," he explained.

"I can't imagine anything more beautiful than to continue working with this team, to lead them to the European championship in France, to continue to develop the group and each of the players," he said.

"I'm as motivated as the first day. We celebrated a huge success in Brazil, but there are other objectives that we want to achieve. The 2014 World Cup was a summit but it wasn't a conclusion."



PHOTO: AFP

After a forgettable season, Manchester United will look to their new coach Louis van Gaal (C) for a turnaround in the English Premier League this year. The Red Devils finished a distant seventh last season which also meant that they failed to qualify for this year's Champions League.

MU ready to break transfer records

AFP, London



Manchester United are prepared to break transfer records in order to give new manager Louis van Gaal the players he wants, according to executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward.

The English giants have already spent over £50 million (\$85 million, 63 million euros) on England left-back Luke Shaw and Spanish midfielder Ander Herrera, and Woodward says that they are ready to spend even more.

Some of United's European rivals

have spent big recently. Real Madrid on Tuesday signed James Rodriguez from Monaco for a fee of around £63 million (\$107.4m), while Barcelona paid Liverpool around £75 million (\$127.8m) for Luis Suarez.

Asked if United were able to pay a similar amount for a player, Woodward said: "It is in our capabilities. The club are not afraid of doing that -- spending significant amounts of money in the transfer market."

United are rebuilding under Van Gaal after a dismal 2013-14 season and Woodward says that in the context, the club will have no qualms about sanctioning big-money signings.

"Whether it's a record or not doesn't really resonate with us," he added, in comments reported by the British media on Wednesday.

"What resonates is a top, top elite player that the manager wants that is going to be a star for Manchester United. We are in a very strong financial position. We can make big signings."

"I get pointed in the direction of a target that the manager wants and there is an assessment of what that might cost and I'll negotiate hard to do the best I can on the trade."

United have been linked with a host of players in recent weeks, including Germany centre-back

Mats Hummels, Belgium defender Thomas Vermaelen, and the Dutch trio of Daley Blind, Stefan de Vrij and Kevin Strootman.

"You gain credibility through experience and through time," said the former investment banker.

"You can't expect credibility from day one and I wouldn't ask that of the fans. You keep learning on the job and I'll continue to learn for a long period of time."

"I don't mind reading (criticism), because it's extremely important for me to listen to the fans. Criticism can change into positive comments over a period of time."

Don't copy German style, warns Pep

AFP, Washington

Bayern Munich coach Pep Guardiola warned Tuesday that those seeing Germany as a model for success after their World Cup triumph need greater dedication and patience with their own philosophies.

Speaking ahead of the reigning Bundesliga champions' upcoming US tour, the 43-year-old Spaniard said teams who try to reboot their football program after World Cup failures risk falling further behind.

"Any system is good. Any system is wrong," Guardiola said in a conference call.

"I'm not convinced because England is out and Italy is out their system is bad or because Germany won that the philosophy is right."

"Every federation has to believe in what they have and make the best facilities and (opportunities) for the players to develop their talents."

While World Cup results every four years weigh heavily upon football squads worldwide, Guardiola says one bad game can doom your dreams in any event, noting how his ideas were copied during a successful run at Barcelona before his Bayern move.

"All the people went and copied that. It's a big mistake," he said. "You copy that and because of that one day you won. But one day you are going to lose."

"Be patient with the coach and be patient with the players and you are going to be good."

Guardiola cited his homeland Spain's early exit after winning the title in 2010 and the decision not to toss out the entire coaching staff and philosophy.

"Spain lost and they will keep going with the same coach and same style of play. And maybe they will go back," he said. "It's a matter of believing in what you do."

For now, Guardiola believes his squad will have tough matches against Mexican club Chivas on July 31 in suburban New York and the Major League Soccer All-Stars at Portland, Oregon, on August 6 in warm-up matches for the upcoming Bundesliga campaign.

In addition to fitness issues, several Bayern players had key roles in Germany's run to the World Cup title.

"We want to make a good game and win but we are not in the best moment," Guardiola said. "Nine of the most important players on the team they are still on holidays. I know in this moment (opponents) are fitter than us."

"We're going to play in the best way possible, the way we believe. Forget about the results and what's going on with the score. We play our best for the people who come to see us and make the best game possible."



PHOTO: AFP

Colombian striker James Rodriguez is the most talked-about signing for Real Madrid this season. Here the young forward is seen controlling a ball during his presentation at the Santiago Bernabeu on Tuesday.

Barca rope in Mathieu

AFP, Barcelona

Spanish giants Barcelona said Wednesday they have bought 30-year-old French defender Jeremy Mathieu from Valencia for EUR20 million (\$27 million).

Barcelona have been seeking to bolster their defence since Carlos Puyol ended his career.

Though he is not an established French international, Mathieu is recognised as a powerful operator at left back and in central defence. Barcelona called him a "physically imposing defender".

The Catalan club had made several offers to Valencia for Mathieu who last week issued a public letter calling on the side to negotiate his release.

"I have a chance to play for the world's biggest club and that's all I want right now," he said.

Barcelona said in a statement it had reached agreement on a transfer and Mathieu would sign a four season contract.

"The cost of the transfer is EUR20 million and the buyout clause will be

EUR50 million," it said.

Real unveil Rodriguez

AFP, Madrid

Colombia's World Cup revelation James Rodriguez was unveiled as Real Madrid's latest headline signing in front of tens of thousands of fans at the Santiago Bernabeu on Tuesday.

Rodriguez, the top scorer at the World Cup in Brazil, has moved to the European champions from Monaco on a six-season contract.

Spanish media said Real paid about EUR80 million (\$108m) for the 23-year-old playmaker, which if correct would make him the fifth most expensive player in history after Gareth Bale, Cristiano Ronaldo, Neymar and Luis Suarez.

"It's a lot of pressure to be here but I'm ready to take it on," said Colombia's poster boy, looking relaxed and smiling and sporting Real's number 10 shirt - last worn by Mesut Ozil.

"My goal here is to always win, I don't like losing," he added.

"I'm thrilled to be here, it's a dream come true, I hope to give a lot of pleasure," he told a huge crowd estimated at about 40,000, including a significant number of Colombians.

"I think Colombia will now be a fan of this great club," he added.

Neither club confirmed the size of the transfer, but Monaco described it as "one of the biggest transfers in football history".

Spanish sports daily Marca, which has close ties with Real Madrid's board, said Real will pay EUR75 million straight away and up to five million more in add ons.

Monaco paid EUR45 million (\$60m) when he signed from FC Porto of Portugal.

Monaco said in a statement that it had not wanted to sell Rodriguez but that it was "proud to have carried out one of the biggest transfers in football history".

Messi to play in Rome charity match

GOAL.COM

A host of footballing icons from across the world, including Lionel Messi, Zinedine Zidane, Samuel Eto'o, Andrea Pirlo and Javier Zanetti, will take part in the 2014 Match for Peace on September 1.

The event, the brainchild of Pope Francis, is intended to support some of the poorest sectors of modern society across Europe, South America and the rest of the globe.

Proceeds from the match will be donated to the 'Un'Alternativa di Vita' (A Life Alternative) project - a beneficiary of Scholas Occurrentes and Fondazione P.U.P.I. Onlus - which aims to support the education of impoverished youngsters in Buenos Aires.

The match itself - which will also feature Roberto Baggio, Gianluigi Buffon and Yuto Nagatomo -- will be held at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome on September 1.

Copenhagen game shifted to Kiev

AFP, Kiev

FC Dnipro announced on Wednesday the first leg of their Champions League qualifier against FC Copenhagen will be played in Kiev due to the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Dnipro had been due to host the Danish club on July 30, but European football governing body UEFA ruled that match cannot take place at the Dnipro-Arena because of security concerns.

"The match between Dnipro and Copenhagen will be played at the Olympic Stadium in Kiev in July 30 at 1900," Dnipro announced via Twitter.

"The cost of the transfer is EUR20 million and the buyout clause will be

EUR50 million," it said.

MH17 victims to be paid tribute

AFP, Glasgow

The 2014 Commonwealth Games opening ceremony in Glasgow on Wednesday will include a tribute to victims of the Malaysia Airlines MH17 flight disaster, organisers said.

Prince Imran from Malaysia, president of the Commonwealth Games Federation, said all the victims, many of whom were from Malaysia and other Commonwealth countries, would be recognised.

The flight from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, with 298 people on board -- mostly Dutch nationals -- came down in rebel-held eastern Ukraine on

Thursday.

Western governments say the evidence points to it having been shot down with a missile by pro-Russian separatists.

It comes after Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 disappeared in March, with 239 people on board.

"I am from Malaysia and it's another sad occasion for our country, and for the airline," Imran told a news briefing in Glasgow.

"It's a terrible thing to have two tragedies within months of each other. As I understand it, there will be some recognition."

David Grevenberg, chief executive of Glasgow 2014, added: "We will be paying tribute."

Details, in keeping with the rest of the ceremony, are being kept under wraps.

The Games will officially be opened by Queen Elizabeth II during the ceremony at the Celtic Park stadium, which will be watched by an estimated television audience of one billion viewers.

Most of the non-Dutch victims were from Commonwealth countries.

Of the 298 people on board, 43 were travelling on Malaysian passports, 27 on Australian, 10 British and one each from Canada and New Zealand. There was also a South African dual national on the flight.

Kuala Lumpur hosted the 1998 Commonwealth Games.

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