

Les Bleus fans brave shock and horror

AGENCIES, Paris



It was an impressive display of bravery and unity - football fans streaming out of the Stade de France singing the French national anthem, each of them aware of the horror and chaos unfolding in their city.

Football fans belted out a hearty and loud rendition of La Marseillaise as they walked calmly out of the stadium which had just minutes ago been rocked by a series of deadly explosions outside its grounds.

However, it started as a celebration of football, a glamour friendly between France and world champions Germany with France winning 2-0 in front of 80,000 fans at Paris's showpiece venue on Friday.

Then they heard the explosions.

"I thought it was just a firework, then my friends told me what was going on in Paris," said a French fan in his 20s as the grim reality of Friday's deadly attacks suddenly hit home.

When three loud explosions were heard from outside the stadium during the first half, football soon drifted from the minds of the spectators when it eventually emerged that three people had died near the arena in the north of the city.

It emerged that one of the explosions was

near to a McDonald's restaurant on the fringes of the stadium.

A police source later said that one of the blasts was caused by a suicide bomber on the Rue Jules Rimet.

French president Francois Hollande, who was in attendance at the game, was hurried from the stadium amid the early reports of shootings in central Paris and of the developing hostage crisis in the Bataclan theatre.

"The game's going on and it's awful -- I'll be honest, I'm very spooked," said an AFP journalist as the match progressed.

At first, very few, if any, of the crowd appeared to be aware of the significance of what was happening despite the appearance of helicopters low in the sky overhead during the second half and the audible sound of sirens from outside.

The crowd still loudly celebrated goals by Olivier Giroud and substitute Andre-Pierre Gignac late in either half of the match that gave France the win.

However, with tight security building up around the stadium, there was evident confusion after the final whistle.

With exit points being restricted, large numbers of fans poured onto the pitch.

There was no visible sense of panic, but it was after 11:30pm local time (2230 GMT) before the pitch was emptied.



Spectators gather on the pitch of the Stade de France Stadium at the end of the friendly match between France and Germany in Paris on Friday after a series of gun attacks occurred across the city as well as explosions outside the stadium.

PHOTO: AFP

Russia pays the price

Provisionally banned by IAAF

AFP, Paris



Athletics giant Russia was provisionally suspended from track and field on Friday over accusations of "state-sponsored" doping as the IAAF scrambled to salvage the sport's credibility just nine months out from the Rio Olympics.

"Today we have been dealing with the failure of ARAF (All-Russia Athletic Federation) and made the decision to provisionally suspend them, the toughest sanction we can apply at this time," IAAF president Sebastian Coe said.

"But we discussed and agreed that the whole system has failed the athletes, not just in Russia, but around the world.

"This has been a shameful wake-up call and we are clear that cheating at any level will not be tolerated."

Russian Mikhail Butov, an IAAF council member and ARAF secretary general, presented his country's position before 24 of the 27-strong IAAF Council chaired by Coe.

But the council returned a vote of 22 for and 1 against, the simple majority confirming a suspension for Russia, who were accused of widespread doping by an independent commission set up by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) in a report which has shaken track and field, one of the Olympic Games' flagship sports.

In that report, commission head Dick Pound, a former president of WADA, called for Russia to be suspended for 2016 "so that they can take the remedial work in time to make sure that Russian athletes can compete under a new framework".

The IAAF took his words to heart, saying the consequences of the provisional suspension were that "athletes and athlete support personnel from Russia may not compete in international competitions including World Athletic Series competitions and the Olympic Games".

It also means Russia "will not be entitled to host the 2016 World Race Walking Cup (Cheboksary) and 2016 World Junior Championships (Kazan)".

The IAAF added: "To regain membership to the IAAF the new federation would have to fulfil a list of criteria.

"An inspection team led by Independent Chair Rune Andersen, an independent international anti-doping expert (Norwegian) and three members of the IAAF Council who will be appointed in the next few days."

The 335-page WADA report blasted Russian officials for blackmailing athletes to cover up positive tests as well as destroying test samples.

West Ham officials in Sylhet

SPORTS REPORTER

West Ham Utd Foundation chairman Joseph Liyons and its ambassador Zakir Khan, also the head of public affairs of Canary Wharf, met footballers of the Canary Wharf Academy in Sylhet yesterday. Liyons and Zakir would be spending today and tomorrow meeting with football organisers and coaches of Sylhet. The two officials arrived from London earlier in the day and were received by the academy's co-ordinator Fazlur Rahman Babul.

DC GOLD CUP

Tangail Youth Club in final

SPORTS REPORTER

Tangail Youth Club reached the final of the Tangail DC Gold Cup beating BKSP 1-0 in the first semifinal at the local stadium yesterday.

Dilon scored the decisive goal for the winning side in the 60th minute from the spot.

BJMC will play against Agrani Bank at 2:30pm today at the same venue.

Lima denies Argentina

AFP, Buenos Aires



Ten-man Brazil came from behind to snatch a 1-1 draw against arch-rivals Argentina on Friday in a tense World Cup qualifying battle between the two South American superpowers.

A second half strike from Santos player Lucas Lima salvaged a vital point for Brazil after Argentina had taken the lead midway through the half thanks to an Ezequiel Lavezzi strike.

Lavezzi's Paris Saint-Germain teammate David Luiz was sent off for a second yellow card in the dying minutes but Brazil hung on for the draw.

The result leaves Argentina winless after three games of South America's marathon qualifying campaign, with only two points from a possible nine.

Friday's match at the Monumental Stadium in Buenos Aires had been delayed by 24 hours after a deluge made the pitch unplayable on Thursday.

Argentina, missing a glut of injured stars including Lionel Messi and Sergio Aguero, started the stronger against a Brazil side who welcomed back suspended striker Neymar.

Neymar however was largely anonymous for long periods as Argentina got on top early on and opened up Brazil with ease on several occasions.

The only surprise was that it took Argentina more than half an hour to get on the scoresheet. The goal came after superb interplay between Argentina's powerful

attacking front three.

Angel Di Maria darted inside on a jinking run near halfway before releasing Gonzalo Higuain down the right flank.

The Napoli striker looked up and picked out Lavezzi with a superb low cross for the France-based star to ram past Alisson Becker for 1-0 on 34 minutes.

It was no less than Argentina's bold attacking approach deserved.

Argentina might have taken an early lead after only two minutes, when Facundo Roncaglia drew a save from Allison from a wide angle with looping shot.

Moments later Di Maria embarrassed Luiz down the right flank, turning the midfielder inside out before firing in a low cross which

flew across the face of goal. Brazil escaped however, with no Argentinian attacker on hand to meet Di Maria's centre.

Luiz might have levelled for Brazil shortly before half-time but could only head over the bar from close range after Willian's freekick from the right.

Argentina started the second half in the same vein, with Ever Banega only being denied a goal from a tight angle when his fierce low shot struck the foot of the post in the 46th minute.

But it was Brazil who struck next, getting on level terms through a cleverly worked goal on 58 minutes.

Dani Alves curled a sublime cross to the far post with the outside of right boot to pick out Douglas Costa, who headed firmly against the bar before Lima smashed in the rebound on the volley.

PARIS TERROR ATTACK Germans spent night in stadium

AFP, Berlin



Germany's football team spent the night at the Stade de France in north Paris after a friendly match against France rather than take the risk of driving through the French capital to their hotel following the attacks that left more than 120 people dead.

"The players were very worried, the information was not very clear and we didn't want to take any risk on the road, so we decided not to drive through Paris (which was) not 100 percent secured and so we stayed in the dressing room," said Germany manager Oliver Bierhoff.

The attacks at several locations in Paris had erupted in the middle of Germany's away match against France at the Stade de France, with three loud explosions heard from outside the stadium in the first half.

It later emerged that one of the explosions was near to a McDonald's restaurant on the fringes of the restaurant, caused by a suicide bomber.

Bierhoff said the team had only learnt of the attacks when they were back in the dressing room, with players receiving text messages from worried family and friends.

Nevertheless, Bierhoff said the players "behaved like real professionals".

"We are of course happy that we have landed safely, but our thoughts are with the relatives and the victims," said Bierhoff, speaking after the team landed in Frankfurt early Saturday.

"The team is very affected, and therefore we decided to give them a day off today, for them to go home... and be with their loved ones," he said.

Asked if the team would be ready to play their next fixture against the Dutch on Tuesday, Bierhoff said: "The game stands but we will of course discuss it internally."

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