



Germany players celebrate their Confederations Cup final victory on the podium as Argentina legend Diego Maradona (C) congratulates German coach Joachim Loew standing next to Brazil legend Ronaldo at the Saint Petersburg Stadium on Sunday.

Loew hails rising stars

AFP, Saint Petersburg



Joachim Loew has hailed Germany's next generation of stars after beating Chile 1-0 in Sunday's Confederations Cup final -- but says the challenge is to defend the World Cup next year.

Lars Stindl's simple tap-in was enough to seal Germany's victory in Sunday's final in St Petersburg as the youthful world champions lifted the Confed Cup for the first time.

Germany's head coach cut a soggy figure at the post-match press conference when his players stormed the stage and showered him in beer.

"I am immensely proud of this team, we have only been together for three-and-a-half weeks," said Loew in a beer-soaked shirt.

"You could feel something was happening in training, we came together and it's a really deserved win."

Loew took a gamble by leaving first-choice stars like Thomas Mueller, Jerome Boateng, Toni Kroos and Mesut Ozil at home and bringing inexperienced youngsters to Russia.

Germany's captain Julian Draxler was voted the Confed Cup's player of the tournament and striker Timo Werner finished as the top scorer in Russia with three goals and two assists.

German football has a bright future after their Under-21 team were crowned European champions on Friday in Poland.

However, head coach Loew says the hard work for his rising stars is just beginning as they bid to earn a place in die Mannschaft's squad for next year's World Cup.

Only three of the Confed Cup winning team -- Jonas Hector, Joshua Kimmich and Julian Draxler -- are first-choice starters.

"Despite our success here and with the juniors in Poland, we'll still have to reconfirm our victories next year (at the World Cup), but the job starts now, the work is just beginning," said Loew.

"The young ones are only just coming up, this is the first tournament for many of these players."

"They have done well, but staying at the top is another matter and we will have to work hard to defend our title next year."

"The team had to fight back, the Chileans are very robust and things were heating up in the second half, we were fighting for every metre to defend our lead."

"It was a magic match for our young players, they haven't had much experience, but they showed their single-minded determination, which was quite impressive."

Chile were lucky not to have defender Gonzalo Jara sent off for elbowing Werner in the face during the second half, but despite a review by the video assistant referee (VAR), Jara was only booked.

"I didn't see it from where I was standing, but the VAR was consulted and I saw the reply," said Loew.

"It could have been worthy of a red card and I think if a referee sees something like that, he could and should have dismissed him."

Germany's class shines through

ATIQUA ANAM from St Petersburg



Former England forward Gary Lineker once ruefully retorted that 'football is a simple game, 22 men chase a ball around for 90 minutes and in the end, the Germans win.'

Sunday's final of the FIFA Confederations Cup was perhaps another reminder of this oft-quoted remark.

Germany, despite being the world champions, were not quite the hot favourites going into this tournament, thanks to their decision to send a very young and rather inexperienced side to Russia. Chile, on the other hand, came here as two-time defending South American champions, and after

their win over favourites Portugal in the semifinals, were probably the more fancied side in the final.

But then again Germany are not four-time world champions for nothing. They can be clinical and ruthless, especially when the opponents are feeling the nerves associated with facing Germany at the final of a global event.

Joachim Loew's young brigade were not clinical; they were far from their marauding best but were good enough for a side that seemed to have been struck by stage fright. A dreadful error from Marcelo Diaz was all that was needed for Lars Tindl to score the decisive goal early in the match.

Chile had their chances too, especially in the latter stages of the game, but they had

probably left their shooting boots back at the hotel.

In fact it was way too error-prone a game for a match of this stature, which left the 57,000-plus people at the Saint Petersburg Stadium rather disappointed. One obvious reason for the disappointment was most of them were rooting for the South Americans and were quite disapproving of the Germans.

They hardly held back in showing their disapproval of the German players, the referee, and last but not least, the controversial former sports minister of Russia, Vital Mutko, during the award ceremony. But apart from that it seems that the people enjoyed the past two weeks of football festivity and are well prepared to host the next

big thing -- the FIFA World Cup in 2018.

Some credit must go to Mutko in this regard as it was during his tenure as sports minister that Russia won the bid to host the World Cup and thereby were default hosts of the Confederations Cup. Now the deputy prime Minister of the country, Mutko was responsible for having got things and people in place.

There was a lot of skepticism regarding Russia's ability to successfully organise a global football event and keep its growing hooliganism in check. There were even questions raised regarding the voting process in which Russia won the hosting rights. But now with the Confederations Cup completed pretty neatly, a lot of the skepticism will probably go away.

AUSTRALIA PAY DISPUTE FICA backs ACA's cause

PTI, Mumbai



The Federation of International Cricketers Associations (FICA) has extended its support to the Australian Cricketers Association (ACA) and its members in their pay dispute with Cricket Australia.

"FICA is concerned with CA's desire to end the percentage revenue sharing model that has so successfully underpinned the partnership between the players and administrators in Australia for twenty years," FICA said in a media statement.

"The model has not only been hugely successful for Australian cricket but has been a model of best practice adopted by associations in cricket and other sports, worldwide," the statement said.

According to FICA, 230 professional cricketers, whom it represents, have been rendered unemployed following the ending of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the players and CA and the failure of the latter to negotiate a new agreement with the ACA based on the same partnership principles of the previous MOU.

"FICA is also seriously concerned with CA's approach to its dealings with the ACA throughout this ongoing process. FICA commends the ACA and the Australian players for their unity and resolve and for their consistent attempts to negotiate with CA in a professional and transparent manner, including their willingness to use independent mediation to reach a resolution," the statement said.

The cricketers' federation said CA has given indications that it may attempt to restrict now un-contracted players from competing in other cricket events by refusing to grant them a No Objection Certificate (NOC) or threatening them with future playing bans and has opposed it.

"FICA reiterates its strong opposition to any artificial restrictions that unfairly attempt to prevent players from earning a living and that have not been agreed with players or their representatives. FICA believes that such restrictions would be open to legal challenge in most jurisdictions as a restraint of trade," the statement added.

Former South Africa skipper and FICA Independent Board Member Graeme Smith said, "I was part of a revenue share partnership model for many years as a player and this was a critical factor in fostering the relationship between Board and players. In the current cricket environment where players have other options I don't understand why a board would want to change a partnership that has proved to be successful."

Faf to miss first Test

AFP, London

South Africa captain Faf du Plessis is to miss the first Test with England which gets underway on Thursday due to family reasons, Cricket South Africa announced on their website on Monday.

The 32-year-old batsman -- who became only the fourth South African to score a century on his Test debut in 2012 -- returned home for the birth of his first child last week, but will be unable to return in time for the opening match of the four-Test series.

SL to stop elephant menace

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka is to deploy game wardens to stop wild elephants straying onto the pitch when the country hosts Zimbabwe for a series of one-day internationals at the Hambantota Stadium.

Experts will be on hand for all three ODI games at the 35,000-capacity stadium, which is next to an elephant sanctuary.

The stadium was built in 2009 under former president Mahinda Rajapakse, who was from Hambantota, but has hosted only a handful of matches because of its remote location and high maintenance costs.

"There had been a few instances when elephants broke through the fence and invaded the pitch at night," said a wildlife official.

We knew we could beat India: Holder

PTI, North Sound



West Indies captain Jason Holder was pleased as punch after a hard-earned 11-run win over India in the fourth ODI on Sunday.

"Extremely pleased with the guys. It took a big effort."

"Credit must go to all the bowlers. I thought the fielding was very supportive. We knew we could beat India. Just needed some application. Throughout the series we have spoken about taking new-ball wickets," said Holder.

Holder was adjudged player-of-the match for a five-wicket haul that dispatched India's lower-middle order in quick time, but the skipper said that the key to troubling India is to get the top-three quickly.

"India's top order has been doing well. It's all about getting Shikhar Dhawan, Ajinkya Rahane, Virat as soon as possible. I want to make a special mention of Kesrick Williams -- showed a lot of maturity in his second game, showed a lot of heart as well."

Holder however agreed that

batting is an area of concern.

"Batting is an area of concern. We were thinking 250 was the par score on this ground. I always believe in myself. I thought I was doing fairly well in the series so far. Only criticism was at the back end. Roddy Estwick told me not to try too many things and just stick to my plans, and that's what I did."

India captain Virat Kohli blamed his batsmen's shot selection during their shock loss.

"Our shot selection wasn't up to the mark. We lost crucial wickets at crucial stages. You have got to keep up the momentum through the game. Credit to the West Indies bowlers."

They created those dot balls that induced those mistakes. It felt a bit two-paced. Apart from that I don't think there was anything else in the pitch," Kohli said after the match.

He however praised his bowlers for restricting West Indies to 189.

"We bowled really well to restrict them to 189. The bowlers were on the mark, and the fielders as well. With the bat we faltered and that can happen in this game. We just have to



West Indies skipper Jason Holder celebrates after dismissing his Indian counterpart Virat Kohli during the fourth ODI in Antigua on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

put this behind us and come back fresh for the next game," said Kohli.

SCORES IN BRIEF

WEST INDIES: 189 for 9 in 50 overs (Lewis 35, K Hope 35, S Hope 25, Chase 24, Mohammed 20; Yadav 3-

36, Pandya 3-40, Yadav 2-31)

INDIA: 178 all out in 49.4 overs (Rahane 60, Dhoni 54, Pandya 20; Joseph 2-46, Holder 5-27)

Result: West Indies won by 11 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Jason Holder.

Dhoni slowest since 2001

AGENCIES, North Sound

In his prime, former India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni was known to be one of the best finishers in the business when it came to chasing down targets. But on Sunday, that ability seemed to be on the wane in the home stretch of his international career.

Chasing a target of 190, India started off poorly with Shikhar Dhawan (5) and Virat Kohli (3) failing to fire, but all seemed good till Dhoni decided to score a 114-ball 54 to completely catch his teammates off-guard. Dhoni is known to take some time to get going these days. But to fail to hit the fifth gear even after playing 100 deliveries in an ODI was something that few would have expected from the expert pacer of innings.

