

'DONE WITH MEXICAN FOOD IF WE LOSE'

Former Sweden international Anders 'Taco' Svensson has vowed to give up having Mexican food if Mexico knocked the Swedes out. "I've bunkered up with some Mexican grub, and it's the last time I'll eat it if Mexico knock Sweden out," he said in a video posted on Instagram.



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FIFA WORLD CUP
RUSSIA 2018



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Germany's inspirational midfielder Toni Kroos takes a long and forlorn walk towards the tunnel as South Korea players celebrate their 2-0 victory at the Kazan Arena yesterday, a result which eliminated the defending champions from the first round of the World Cup.

PHOTO: AFP

We deserve to crash out, says Loew

AFP, Kazan Arena

Germany coach Joachim Loew said he felt "huge disappointment" at seeing the holders crash out of the World Cup but said they had fully deserved it after they were sensational beaten 2-0 by South Korea on Wednesday.

The four-time champions needed to beat the unfancied Asians by two clear goals in their final group F match in Kazan to advance to the last 16. But after spurning a series of scoring chances, Germany were stunned in five dramatic stoppage-time minutes as South Korea scored twice to record a historic win over the world's number one-ranked team and leave the Germans rock bottom of the group.

It is the first time Germany have failed to reach the knockout stage of a World Cup since 1938.

"I'm shocked because we didn't manage to beat South Korea and qualify," said Loew, who said he will wait for "a couple of hours" before making any decision on his future. "The disappointment of us being eliminated is just huge," Loew conceded.

"We didn't deserve to win the title again, we didn't deserve to make the last 16. We tried hard to win, but we never earned the chance to take the lead."

Germany are the sixth holders in history to fall at the first hurdle and their demise came four years after defending champions Spain also failed to make it out of the group stage in Brazil.

Loew's side began their campaign with a 1-0 defeat to Mexico before rekindling their bid with a last-gasp 2-1 win over Sweden. The Swedes won the group on Wednesday after beating Mexico 3-0, but the central Americans also went through.

"First we need to congratulate our two opponents who made it out of the group," said Loew. "For us it's a huge disappointment. At our training camp we prepared well and we came here ready to take on the role of defending champions."

"But we didn't play the top-class football we needed to. We created chances but we couldn't relax and score the goals we needed."

"Since 2006 we've been among the last four or in the final. This time we didn't perform to a level sufficient to allow us to do that. We have to admit this is a defeat."

Timo Werner, Marco Reus, Mesut Ozil and second-half substitute Mario Gomez were among the

Germany stars who failed to take goalscoring chances as the South Koreans defended with determination.

After failing to find a way past Korea 'keeper Jo Hyewon in the second half, Germany could only look on in shock as referee Mark Geiger called for the video assistant referee to intervene after the unmarked Kim Younggwon had bundled his shot past Neuer from a corner early in stoppage time.

The goal was awarded because Toni Kroos' touch had played him onside, and minutes later Germany were 2-0 down after Neuer ran up the pitch in a desperate attempt to grab an equaliser.

Loew said he had not yet reflected on the future. "How we go from here is something we have to talk about," he said. "It's too soon but we'll talk about it shortly."

"It's too soon for me to answer, it will take a few hours to see things clearly, the disappointment is very deep in me. We will have to have discussions tomorrow, we'll see how it goes."

JOACHIM LOEW ON WHETHER HE WILL RESIGN

'AUF WIEDERSEHEN!'

AFP, Berlin

From chants of "goodbye" to stunned silence, Germany fans reacted with dismay to their defending champions' humiliating World Cup exit Wednesday after a first-round loss commentators called a "historic disgrace".

"Our World Cup nightmare has come true," screamed the Bild daily.

Even before the final whistle blew in Russia's Kazan Arena, supporters in Berlin had begun leaving the city's so-called fan mile, disappointed by Germany's lacklustre performance against South Korea in a match heavy with missed opportunities.

Those who remained applauded sarcastically when South Korea's Son Heung-min scored a late second goal into an empty net.

Calls of "Raus (Out)" and "Auf Wiedersehen (goodbye)" rang out from the fan zone as the weight of the 2-0 loss sunk in.

"These aren't world champions, they didn't fight at all," fumed 27-year-old Oliver Fischer, wearing a Germany jersey.

"We absolutely deserve to be out. We had no fight, no courage, no ideas!"

Others erupted into tears and buried their heads in their hands as a sense of disbelief spread through the crowd at Germany's largest public viewing area.

"Speechless," read a one-word tweet on the German team's official Twitter account, summing up the national mood.

The defeat was the first time four-time champions Germany have been knocked out of the World Cup group stages since 1938.

The country now joins a small but unlucky club of title defenders who



Some Germany fans could barely watch as the defending champions had their campaign cut short.

PHOTO: AFP

plucky South Korea.

Germany had needed a clear win to move into the last 16, but a series of wasted chances saw the team finish last in Group F.

Chancellor Angela Merkel, speaking at a Berlin event about artificial intelligence, expressed her sadness in a "discussion" with a robot named Sophia, who noted how successful the German team had been in the past.

Merkel responded: "Yes, that's true over a long timeframe. But tonight we're all very sad."

Her spokesman also shared the shock of a nation in a tweet. "Not our World Cup - How sad! There will be other tournaments where we can cheer again," Steffen Seibert wrote.

Former Germany goalkeeper Oliver Kahn, who was a losing World Cup finalist in 2002, said: "The

commentator Bela Rety from public broadcaster ZDF, speculating about the future of head coach Joachim Loew.

Former Germany star Mario Basler slammed the national team's sub-par performance. "If you can't win this game, you don't belong in the final," he tweeted.

Sports website Kicker dubbed the match a "historic debacle" that called for a radical rethink. Continuing with Loew is "hardly imaginable", it wrote.

Despite the heartache, not all Germany fans despaired.

"We were too slow, we deserved to lose," admitted Laura Kabin斯基, who watched the match at Berlin's fan mile. But the 20-year-old student was determined to look on the bright side.

"Let's see if we can do better at the European Championships in two years' time," she smiled.

Germany 'no longer always win'

AFP, London

Gary Lineker had to modify his famous quote about the Germans always winning for a second time after Joachim Loew's holders crashed out of the World Cup on Wednesday.

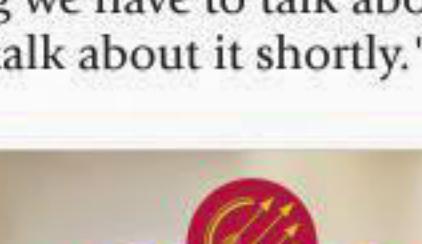
The former England striker once famously said: "Football is a simple game -- 22 men chase a ball for 90 minutes and at the end, the Germans always win."

On Saturday Lineker sent out a revised version following Toni Kroos's dramatic late goal against Sweden, which kept Germany's World Cup hopes alive.

"Football is a simple game, 22 men chase the ball for 82 minutes and the Germans get a player sent off so 21 men chase the ball for 13 minutes and at the end the Germans somehow win."

Lineker was moved to make a second tweak to his saying after South Korea's stunning 2-0 win in Kazan left the four-time world champions humiliated and heading home as Group F's bottom team.

He wrote on Twitter: "Football is a simple game. Twenty-two men chase a ball for 90 minutes and at the end, the Germans no longer always win. Previous version is confined to history."



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