



Germany coach Joachim Loew was bombarded by the press upon Die Mannschaft's arrival to Berlin following their humiliating World Cup exit on Wednesday night. The reigning champions were dumped out following a 2-0 loss to South Korea.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Lacked team spirit, says Matthaeus

REUTERS, Moscow

Defending champions Germany lacked personality and team spirit, contributing to their shock World Cup first-round exit, their former World Cup-winning captain Lothar Matthaeus said on Thursday.

"First we missed the performance, and when you don't have the performance, you cannot expect results," Matthaeus said. "I think everybody made mistakes, from the coach to the players, many players didn't perform (with) good personality, and I think we missed team spirit."

The Germans crashed out of the tournament on Wednesday after suffering a stunning 2-0 defeat by South Korea in their final Group F match, eliminating them in the opening round for the first time in 80 years. They also lost their opening group match 1-0 to Mexico before managing a last-gasp 2-1 win over Sweden.

"Everything that was good four years ago in Brazil was going badly in Russia," Matthaeus said.

"For this, the team is now in the plane on the way to Germany and I think this is exactly the result they have to get after the three performances that they had here during the World Cup."



## Dawn of a new age?

REUTERS, Berlin

Germans started adjusting to a new world on Thursday, brushing off any notion that a shock humiliation in the soccer World Cup, which coincides with a rare moment of political instability, was symptomatic of national decline.

German newspapers fused the fates of German team coach Joachim Loew and Chancellor Angela Merkel who, after 12-and-a-half years looking unassailable, is fighting for her political survival due to a row over migration with her Bavarian allies.

On top of Wednesday's defeat to South Korea which sent them out of the tournament in the opening round for the first time in 80 years, Germans are also agast at turmoil in their proud auto industry over an emissions cheating scandal. That culminated earlier this month in the arrest of Audi boss Rupert Stadler.

Top-selling Bild highlighted the mounting problems last week after an ominous soccer loss to Mexico, with the headline: "The three pillars of Germany are cars, football, stability. Summer of 2018 will be remembered as a summer of shaky pillars."

Despite a media assault on the German team and headlines on Thursday such as "Summer depression" and "Make or break days for Merkel and Loew", Germans on the street took events on the chin.

"I didn't expect it, it was not foreseen at all that they would lose to South Korea. Germany will go on. I am optimistic," said truckdriver Michael Annamann, 44, from



Magdeburg, adding at least there were plenty of jobs.

Girt Kirchner, 51, from Leipzig, said she was confident Germany would "find itself again" and it was important to look ahead confidently. "I hope that [Germans] will reflect on this and become aware that they live an absolute luxury."

Even if fears of a trade war with the US are clouding the outlook for Europe's biggest economy, ordinary Germans are still enjoying a long growth spell and record low unemployment. Economists see little chance of a World Cup hit.

"Unfortunately - or maybe fortunately - we have no experience of such an early exit from the World Cup," said Rolf Buerkl, an expert at the GfK market research group. "But I do not expect a long term impact on consumer confidence," he said. Germans' resilient attitude to some extent reflects the spirit of the players, who picked themselves up and shouldered the blame.

"We are sorry we didn't play like world champions. That is why we are deservingly out ... Defeat belongs to sport, as does recognising when others are better," wrote the team in an apology.

Still, German media could not resist speculating about the decline and fall of Merkel and Loew. Focus online wrote that Loew had much in common with Merkel, who has often had herself photographed with a successful German team, including when they won the World Cup four years ago.

"They've been in office for almost the same length of time, like eating Cordon bleu together. Now the chancellor and trainer are experiencing how fast things can go wrong."

## A sight for sore Argentine eyes



The Argentine contingent will not be enjoying the best of views ahead of their round of 16 clash against France. Every time they look out of the windows at the Ramada Hotel, they will be greeted by Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo and his cheeky wink.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Fans rejoice after German defeat

AFP, Moscow

The internet turned cruel for Germany fans on Thursday as online mockery swept the globe following the defending champions' shock World Cup elimination.

"Don't mention the VAR," was a common refrain, while Brazilian media gleefully took their revenge for Brazil's 7-1 humiliation by Germany at the last World Cup in 2014. "AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA..." read a tweet from Fox Sports Brasil that ran to 272 characters.

"Germany's fastest exit from Russia since 1943," posted one user, while another tweeted a picture of Germany towels reserving all the seats on an empty plane.

Mexico fans were particularly delighted after South Korea's last-gasp win allowed them to qualify for the last 16 behind Group F winners Sweden -- while Germany finished rock bottom.

Aeromexico offered a 20 percent discount on flights to South Korea.

## Hierro gets vote of confidence

REUTERS, Krasnodar

Spain defender Dani Carvajal spoke out on Thursday in favour of his side's interim coach Fernando Hierro's abilities whilst admitting the 2010 world champions have failed to meet expectations at the World Cup so far.

Hierro, a last-minute replacement after Julen Lopetegui was sacked, had his capacity for coaching called into question by former Real Madrid manager Bernd Schuster after the national team scraped their way to the top of Group B with five points.

Their reward for winning the group is a last 16 clash with tournament hosts Russia on Sunday.

"The first problem Spain have is that Hierro is not a coach, he doesn't have the experience for this level, being a player is not the same as being a coach," Schuster told radio station Onda Cero on Wednesday. "He came in very late and it's not his fault but it's very difficult for him to take decisions. The team had been built by another person and he's not making the right changes, he doesn't have a plan, he doesn't know how to react."

Carvajal hit back at Schuster on Thursday, saying: "I think he is more than capable, so I have to disagree with Schuster's words. In the end we are the ones who see him every day and we believe he is qualified to lead the team. He is a great coach and we'll stand by him until death."

Carvajal said no one was been happy with their displays so far but also claimed the overall level of football in the World Cup has not been high.

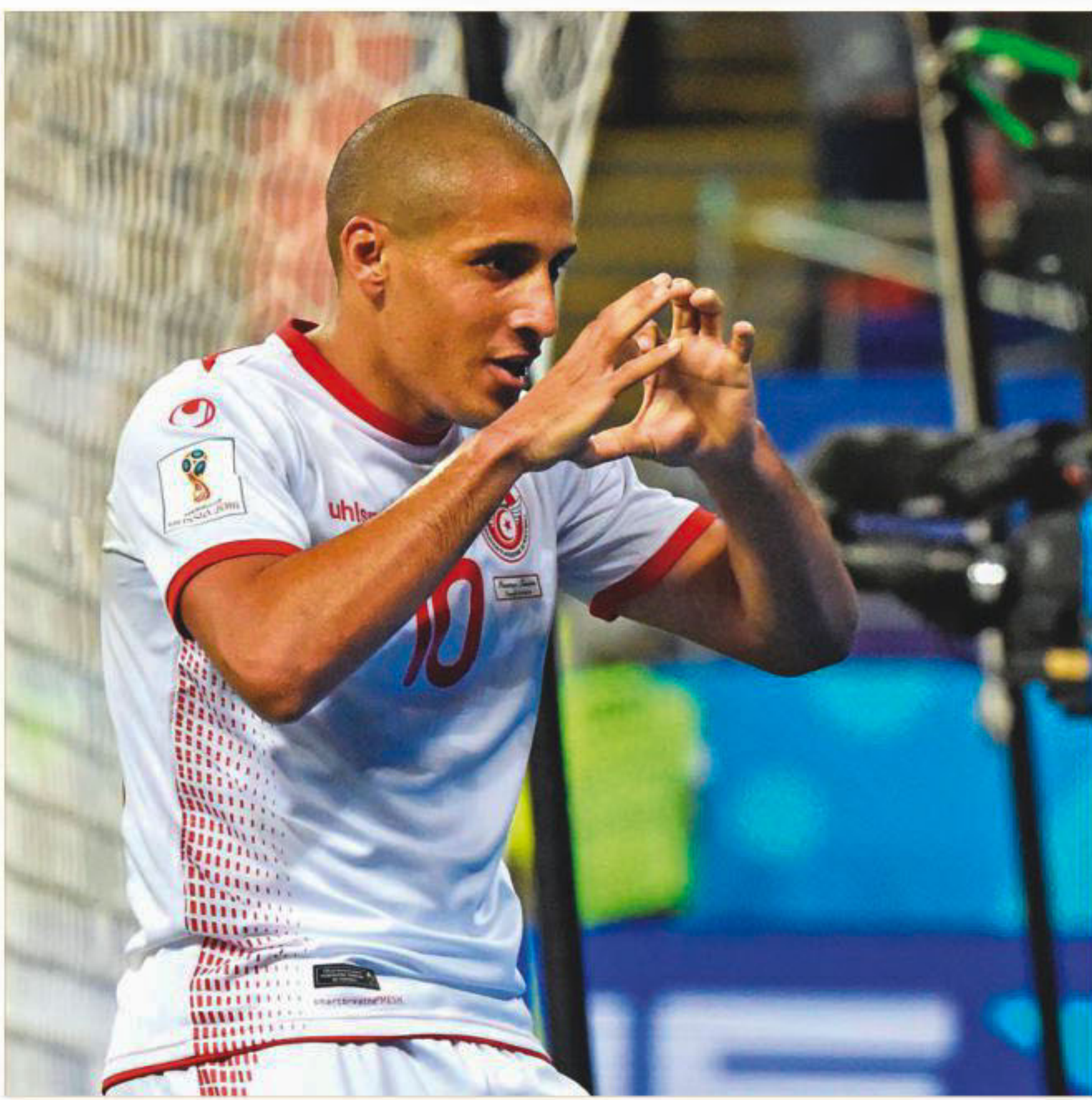
## Kolarov, Matic ponder int'l futures

REUTERS, Moscow

Serbia's captain Aleksandar Kolarov and midfielder Nemanja Matic are considering their international futures after a 2-0 defeat by Brazil eliminated them from the World Cup.


"I will speak with the people from the football federation, whether they see me in the national team," Kolarov, 32, was quoted as saying by Blic newspaper. "If I can't contribute to what the national side needs, I won't be selfish."

"First I need a rest," Matic said. "I'm drained, both emotionally and physically. We'll see." "If I feel I cannot give my maximum, I'll pull out," added Matic, who turns 30 in a month.



Tunisia forward Wahbi Khazri scored the goal that delivered their first win at the 2018 World Cup while also damning Panama to a winless campaign.

PHOTO: REUTERS



The Daily Star

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