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LOVREN'S 29TH BIRTHDAY BASH

Defender Dejan Lovren joined his Croatia teammates to celebrate his 29th birthday and was presented with a cake on Thursday. The Liverpool centre-back showed he has put his past troubles at international level firmly behind him as he prepared for quarterfinal against hosts Russia.



আসল চিনিগুঁড়ার স্বাদ ও সুগন্ধ পেতে
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FIFA RUSSIA



URUGUAY 0 : 2 FRANCE

France defender Raphael Varane scored a sensational header to open the scoring in their quarterfinal clash against Uruguay at the Nizhny Novgorod Stadium yesterday. Les Bleus went on to win the match 2-0.

PHOTO: REUTERS

World of Endless Dreams...

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'It was pure joy'

AGENCIES, Nizhny Novgorod

It was the defining image of France's sorry World Cup quarterfinal defeat against Germany in 2014.

A young Raphael Varane being held off and pushed along effortlessly by defender Mats Hummels as the German headed home the only goal of the match. If ever the "men against boys" sporting cliché was appropriate, this appeared to be it and Varane, only 21 at the time, was quickly in the firing line.

He was roundly blamed for France's limp exit and a question mark placed against him which, in reality, has existed since that day almost exactly four years ago.

But any fear that history would repeat itself was banished towards the end of a nervy first half against Uruguay on Friday when Varane jumped ahead of Cristhian Stuani to glance home Antoine Griezmann's free kick.

The tension was released and not only in the Nizhny Novgorod Stadium. As Varane raced away to celebrate, his catharsis was complete. "It was joy, pure joy. It was beauti-

ful," said a jubilant Varane afterwards. "I told Antoine to put the ball there before the free-kick and he did it perfectly."

Despite the fact that since 2014, Varane has been an integral part of a Real Madrid side which has won three Champions League titles, it felt

like he had to make a statement at the World Cup.

He had faced some criticism back home after Argentina's third goal, a header, in France's thrilling last-16 win last week. But that was all forgotten in the 40th minute as Varane scored just his third goal in France's colours. "I am very happy for Varane," said French Didier Deschamps. "He has gained four years of experience, in fact

they all have more maturity. I told him that at the end of the match."

And as if thinking directly of events in Brazil four years ago, Deschamps added: "It is often in tough situations that you learn the most."

Deschamps added that he was relieved to come the match without losing any of his players to an unnecessary suspension before saying that his team had even more room to improve.

"I told all the players if we qualify and they get yellow cards... not even for fouls but because of their gestures, because of their attitude, because of certain words that were said, that's completely unnecessary."

"You can talk to the referee but you can't be provocative and you can't fall for the provocation of your rivals. I definitely didn't want him to get another booking."

"I had six players on a booking, and now I have everybody available for the next match, and that is great."

"We have margin for improvement," he added. "But youth is not only a weak point. You saw that in the second half. There were certain sparks that we managed to control."

France were better, admits Tabarez

REUTERS, Nizhny Novgorod

Uruguay coach Oscar Tabarez said that France were worthy winners of yesterday's World Cup quarterfinal but that his small country had once again shown why it deserves its place alongside the best nations in global soccer.

In charge of Uruguay for the last three World Cups, Tabarez has taken his teams beyond the group stage each time - to the semifinal in 2010, the last 16 in 2014, and the quarters in Russia.

They were comfortably beaten 2-0, however, at the Nizhny Novgorod Stadium by a smooth-looking French team.

"We couldn't control their strengths," Tabarez said, looking sad but calm after his players left the field in tears to an ovation from their travelling fans.

"Today we played against opponents who were better and stronger than us. We have to admit it and congratulate them."

The Europeans won with a Raphael Varane header in the first half and a fumble by goalkeeper Fernando Muslera in the second that let an Antoine Griezmann shot in.

"I told all my players after the match that they can be very proud, they can keep their heads high," said Tabarez. "I'm not going to tell you what I said with my goalkeeper. He has been very important for us. I am not going to wash my hands putting any responsibility on the players."

"Today our dream comes to an end ... (but) I think the world has seen what we achieved, what we want to do, and what sort of country we are. We are a small country you know. It is harder for us than for France or Germany or England."

"Of course when you lose you feel it, for a country like Uruguay, with our history. Of course it's painful, but let's not be too dramatic. We dream on. Things never end. A World Cup is played every four years."



Uruguay's Edinson Cavani, who was on the bench due to injury, consoled Luis Suarez after the defeat.

PHOTO: REUTERS



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TODAY'S MATCHES

SWEDEN
+ V +

ENGLAND
Time: 8.00pm

RUSSIA
+ V +

CROATIA
Time: 12.00am (Sunday)
ALL TIMES BST



চাইলেই বলতে পারতাম...
গার্ডেন ফ্রেশ খেয়ে খেলা দেখলে

আপনার প্রিয় দলই জিতবে বিশ্বকাপ!
অথবা প্রিয় খেলোয়াড়ই করবে গোল!

এগুলো কিছুই বলছি না
শুধু বলছি

GARDEN FRESH
আপনেই ভালো!

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