

Germany destroy Brazil's final dreams with seven-goal battering

Daniel Taylor at Estádio Mineirão

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It was the night Germany removed the crown from football royalty. They did so with their own version of the beautiful game and, by the time they had finished, Brazil had suffered an ignominy that was so extreme and implausible it felt as though a black marker pen had been taken to the pages of their football history.

No team in that famous shirt has ever suffered in the way Luiz Felipe Scolari's did during a brutal first half in which Germany scored five times in 19 minutes and played as though their opponents might as well have been invited from the beach. Brazil had not lost a competitive match at home since 1975 but they were not just removed from their own World Cup. They were embarrassed in a way that will make them look back on this tournament and want to shelter their eyes. It was football's equivalent of chewing on broken glass and they should probably just be grateful Germany did not make it even more harrowing after Andre Schürrle had added another two goals in the second half.

This was not a team losing. It was a dream dying. There was anger, resentment and something approaching a full-on mutiny when Scolari and his players lingered too long on the pitch at the end. Yet there was also an appreciation of what they were seeing. Schürrle's second goal prompted a standing ovation. Soon afterwards Brazil's fans could be heard shouting "olé" to every German touch.

Until this stage Brazil's matches had been a celebration of colour and noise. Yet now there was the eerie sound of silence and other noises, too. At times it was something approaching fear, a strange gargled sound that could be heard every time Germany elegantly broke forward, threatening more humiliation. The sight of Brazil, with all their rich football history, being dismantled this way was actually shocking. What cannot happen, however, is for the story to be all about Brazil's deficiencies when Germany have just put on one of the all-time performances. It was a masterclass. No other word does it justice and all that is left for Joachim Löw now is to hope his team have not peaked too early. If they illuminate the final in this way, they will surely have too much expertise for Argentina or Holland.

For Brazil the inquest will be torturous. It was always going to end in tears of some sort but nobody could have imagined the television cameras would already be zooming in on the first sobs midway through the first half. That was at 3-0 and, five minutes later the

score had risen to five. If it had continued at that rate for the rest of the match, Brazil would have sieved 15. And there were times in that first half, crazy as it sounds, when it did seem as though Germany were genuinely in the mood for double figures.

In the process Miroslav Klose scored his 16th World Cup goal, removing Ronaldo from the record books and earning himself a standing ovation when he was substituted later in the match. Thomas Müller oozed confidence, scoring his fifth goal of the tournament and playing with the nonchalant brilliance that made it seem as though all this was perfectly normal. Mesut Özil did not score but he did enough, all the same, to turn the volume down on some of his critics. More than anyone, there was Tony Kroos - left foot, right foot - showing why Real Madrid want to take him from Bayern Munich. Kroos, with two goals of his own, was the outstanding performer, though Sami Khedira was not far behind.

And Brazil? After all the pining *in absentia* for Neymar, the brandishing of his No10 jersey during the national anthems and the “Força Neymar” baseball caps, maybe they should have given more credence to the fact that Thiago Silva was also missing, without even a fraction of the hysteria. The night was a personal ordeal for Dante, Silva’s replacement, while David Luiz had suddenly reverted to being a player who will always give his opponents a chance.

Brazil’s defending could be neatly encapsulated in that moment, after 11 minutes, when Kroos sent over a corner from the right. Seven players in yellow and blue had joined Júlio César inside the six-yard area. But not one had bothered picking up Müller and by the time Luiz realised there was a man spare it was too late. Müller’s volley punished Brazil for some of the worst marking imaginable and what followed was a full-on disintegration.

Germany sensed their opponents were vulnerable and were absolutely merciless. Kroos’s beautifully weighted through-ball, then Müller’s lay-off, set up Klose to beat César at the second attempt for 2-0. In the next attack Philipp Lahm crossed from the right and Müller mis-kicked his attempt at goal. The ball arrived on Kroos’s left boot and it was a cannonball of a shot for the third goal. Brazil were in disarray and the fourth was even worse from their point of view. Fernandinho lost the ball to Kroos, who broke through the centre, exchanged passes with Khedira and then slotted his shot past a hopelessly exposed goalkeeper.

By the time Khedira made it five, aided and abetted by Özil, after carving another route straight through the centre of Brazil’s defence, it was tempting to wonder whether it was ever going to stop. “It was like we blanked out,” Scolari said afterwards, reflecting on a “catastrophe” and “the worst moment of my life”.

Brazil were booed off at half-time and the anger manifested itself later in the scapegoating of Fred, their non-scoring goalscorer. Schürrle stroked in Lahm’s centre for the sixth goal and then whacked in a shot off the underside of the crossbar. Oscar’s stoppage-time goal could never be described as a consolation. Brazil had been outclassed in every department.

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