

## England's World Cup humbling complete as they draw with Costa Rica

Roy Hodgson's team prepare to fly home from Brazil with their worst goal tally since 1950



Say hello, wave goodbye: England players line-up ahead of their final game at the World Cup Photo: GETTY IMAGES

By Gordon Rayner, Chief Reporter, in Belo Horizonte

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England's World Cup humbling was completed today when the team drew 0-0 with Costa Rica in their last match of their worst ever tournament.

Roy Hodgson's team will fly home from Brazil tonight with a string of unwelcome records to their name: the fewest points at a World Cup, the first time since 1958 they have failed to reach the knockout stage and just two goals scored, their worst goal tally since 1950.

The team will also record their lowest ranking in a World Cup finals. Their previous worst ranking was 13th, at the last World Cup in South Africa.

Despite the woeful results, the Football Association has insisted that Hodgson will keep his job as the England manager.

The match was marred by crowd trouble when a group of England fans began throwing drinks in paper cups towards the pitch 20 minutes from the end of the game.

Stewards quickly reacted by separating the England fans from Brazilians standing next to them, then a group of around 30 military police armed with pump-action shotguns filed into the stand to restore order.

The police stood in a column between the English and Brazilian fans for the rest of the match. It was the first crowd trouble to erupt during England's World Cup campaign.

UK police delegation Silver Commander Chief Superintendent Rachel Barber said: "We are aware of a minor incident involving a group of fans near the segregation line who were reluctant to leave the stadium at the end of the match. The matter was dealt with swiftly by the Brazilian military police and we have not been made aware of any arrests having taken place."

Prince Harry was among the 57,823 at the Estadio Mineirao in Belo Horizonte to see the defeat, having made plans months ago to attend the match, which was expected to be a crucial game on England's path to the last 16.

He sat in a VIP seat between Alexander Ellis, the British Ambassador to Brazil, and Alberto Pinto Coelho, the governor of the state of Minas Gerais. He spent much of the game leaning over to talk to members of the Costa Rican delegation sitting near him.

His brother the Duke of Cambridge, who is President of the FA, did not see a single England game because he had intended to fly to Brazil if the team reached the quarter-finals.

Hodgson played an almost entirely different team from the previous two matches, giving the players who did not feature against Italy or Uruguay a chance to get some World Cup experience.

But the scratch side was unable to break down Costa Rica, whose two wins and a draw mean they finish top of Group D. The Central American side, ranked 18 places below England at the start of the tournament, had been billed as the fall guy of the group, but instead they qualify for the knockout stages as group winners, with Uruguay also going through as runners-up.

England are on their way home together with the four-times World Cup winners Italy, who were beaten 1-0 by Uruguay.

The stadium in Belo Horizonte already held bad memories for England – it was the venue for one of their most notorious World Cup defeats, when they lost 1-0 to a USA team made up of amateur players.

The England team will fly home tonight, arriving in Manchester tomorrow afternoon where northern-based players will disembark before the aircraft flies on to Luton.

\* An England fan had to be taken to hospital after becoming the victim of a hit-and-run road accident in Belo Horizonte hours before the match. Mark Fisher, 25, from Penrith, Cumbria, had to be treated for bruises and a broken tooth after he was hit by a motorcycle which did not stop at the scene of the collision.

Henry Redcliffe, 22, from London, said: "This was the only game we expected anything from. I've given up all hope for England now. The last good game was in 2000 against Germany.

"They've played some good games but they still struggle through them.

"But this World Cup has been fantastic. Rio is amazing, so much fun, it's a great atmosphere, with great people."

Greg Barsmith, 23, also from London, added: "I can't remember the last time we outplayed quality opposition. It's disappointing but expected."

Patrick Huggard, 37, a lawyer from Nottingham who travelled to Brazil from Hong Kong, said: "I'm just disappointed having come all this way to get knocked out after two games.

"The game was alright. But the defence has been weak. Everyone said we played good attacking football against Italy and maybe we were a little bit too open. I think the players were a bit tired as well, compared to the South American players.

"But it's been marvellous – lovely people, great food, and it's been great meeting people from other countries."

One fan in the stadium in Belo Horizonte made their feelings clear by holding up a banner parodying a well-known credit card advertisement saying: "Flights to Rio £1,200, Enjoying the ambiance £2,000, Accommodation £2,000, Arriving after elimination - priceless"

Midfielder Jack Wilshere admitted the players had been "nervous" at the prospect of finishing with no points, and said: "We are just happy we didn't lose all three of our games."

Defender Luke Shaw said: "It would have been a massive downfall to go home with zero points."

Hodgson said: "I thought we were really unlucky not to win this game."

