

Namibia Today Sport

Fifa cracks down after beer stunt

By David Bond

What is the story that has most upset Fifa at this World Cup so far? Is it the lack of goals or the thousands of empty seats at games that were supposed to be sell-outs? What about the stewards' strike that has forced police to take over the running of nearly half the stadiums or the transport gridlock which has blighted some of the early matches?

None of the above actually. Instead, the lawyers are in lather over 36 blonde girls dressed in orange mini-dresses who, according to Fifa, broke strict ambush-marketing rules at the game between the Netherlands and Denmark at Soccer City on Monday.

The lawyers claim the girls were part of a co-ordinated operation by beer brand Bavaria - and two Dutch women, Mirte Nieuwpoort and Barbara Castelein, appeared in court on Wednesday on charges of breaking South Africa's merchandising laws. Apparently, they were arrested in their underwear.

Fifa has taken a dim view of the incident and claims that, even though the logo on the dresses was not picked up by television cameras,



Fifa is not happy with the ambush-marketing stunt. Over 36 blonde girls dressed in orange mini-dresses who, according to Fifa, broke strict ambush-marketing rules at the game between the Netherlands and Denmark at Soccer City on Monday. All of the mini-skirted ladies were ejected from the venue and two were arrested on charges of organising "unlawful commercial activities". Meanwhile, a spokesman for the tournament's governing body Fifa said it was looking into "all available legal remedies" against the brewery.

which, unsurprisingly, spend much of the match focused on them anyway, they were advertising a company which is not one of the official partners of football's

world governing body or this World Cup.

Fifa claims the girls were looking "to secure themselves a slice of the [World Cup] rewards illic-

itly without offering any financial support in return".

A number of companies have paid a lot of money - \$1.2bn to be precise - to be associated with this

World Cup. The contribution of companies like Visa, Coca-Cola and McDonalds has helped Fifa raise record revenues from South Africa 2010.

Fifa fiercely guards its marketing rights on behalf of such companies. While many may feel such an approach is justified to protect their brand, the issue has been a controversial one in South Africa in the run-up to this tournament, with Fifa facing accusations of being overly aggressive in protecting its rights.

But, like it or not, it is now a fact of life in the increasingly commercialised world of sport. And if England wants to host the 2018 World Cup then it, too, will have to ensure Fifa's partners are similarly protected.

In 2006, two years after winning the race to stage this World Cup, South Africa passed a new law - the Merchandise Marks Act - designed to safeguard Fifa's intellectual property rights and prevent the sort of ambush marketing Fifa says Bavaria attempted.

Britain already has such laws, introduced following London's successful bid to stage the 2012 Olympics. But, with an even more highly developed commercial market in the United Kingdom, Fifa will want even firmer assurances that its ability to make money will not be hindered in any way if the 2018 World Cup is awarded to England in December.

Nigeria sunk by Greece comeback

Greece came from behind to defeat Nigeria in a pulsating match that kept alive their hopes of qualifying from Group B.

It was the first victory for Greece at a World Cup and came after a contest that was completely transformed by the dismissal of Nigeria's Sani Kaita after 33 minutes.

Nigeria, who like Greece had lost their opening match in South Africa, had taken an early lead after Kalu Uche's free-kick from a wide area eluded everybody.

And the Super Eagles had a firm grip on the game until Oche foolishly kicked out at Vasileios Torosidis after both players had briefly tangled as they tried to win the ball.

Greece coach Otto Rehhagel, who presided over his team's stunning victory at Euro 2004, quickly grasped the opportunity by adopting a more attacking formation and was rewarded with a crucial victory.

A deflected strike from Dimitrios Salpingidis drew his side level before Torosidis struck the winner after the break to severely dent Nigeria's hopes of progressing be-

yond the group stage.

The Super Eagles, who are managed by Swede Lars Lagerback, are pointless and play South Korea, who defeated Greece, in their final match.

Greece, who now have three points, take on an Argentina side that are on the brink of qualifying after winning their first two matches.

Rehhagel's team lined up with three central defenders, two full-backs and two deep sitting midfielders - and until the dismissal of Kaita after 34 minutes it seemed that their only attacking ploy was to try to win a set-piece in a dangerous area.

Skipper Georgios Karagounis delivered cross after cross after free-kick into the Nigeria area, with recalled defender Sotirios Kyrgiakos a frequent target.

It was stale, unimaginative and one-dimensional, while Nigeria

showed glimpses of precise attacking play and deservedly took the lead.

Greece keeper Alexander Tzorvas clearly thought the unmarked Peter Odemwingie would make contact with Uche's cross but the Lokomotiv Moscow striker missed the ball, which continued on its trajectory before nestling in the far corner of the net.

There was little sign of a Greece comeback until the dismissal of Kaita, who appeared to be in tears as he made his way off the pitch.

Within minutes Rehhagel had replaced the defensive Sokratis Papastathopoulos with Celtic forward Georgios Samaras.

Greece were instantly transformed - and soon cut open a stunned Nigeria defence, with a deft lay-off from Konstantinos Katsouranis playing Salpingidis

through only for Vincent Enyeama to block the striker's shot.

Lukman Haruna cleared an effort from Samaras off the line but, on the stroke of half-time, Greece scored their first ever goal at a World Cup through Salpingidis's deflected strike.

Lagerback tried to bolster his side by replacing Odemwingie with Chinedu Ogbuke Obasi at the start of the second half and playing two banks of four, with Yakubu as the lone striker.

But Greece continued to threaten, with an unmarked Karagounis wastefully heading

wide and Kyrgiakos forcing a save from Enyeama. Greece really should have scored through Theofanis Gekas after an awful header from Joseph Yobo gifted him a gilt-edged opening - but his shot was saved and Nigeria broke with devastating effect.

Ogbuke Obasi slipped the ball to Yakubu, who drew a brilliant one-handed save from Tzorvas. The rebound fell to Ogbuke Obasi, who contrived to miss a sensational opportunity to restore his team's lead.

It was a pulsating passage of play that was greatly appreciated

by a far-from-full Free State Stadium - but it was hardly a fair reflection of how the match had developed.

Greece were in the ascendancy and although Enyeama palmed clear a header from Torosidis he was partially at fault for Greece's winner.

The keeper could not hold a low strike from Alexandros Tziolis, with Torosidis pouncing on the rebound to spark huge scenes of jubilation.

Enyeama made two decent saves in the remainder of the game, denying Karagounis and Tziolis, but Greece held on to end a sequence of four successive defeats at the World Cup.

Diego Maradona announced he has an "easy job" coaching Argentina after watching his side beat South Korea 4-1 to close in on a place in the last 16.

Gonzalo Higuain scored a hat-trick to add to Park Chu-Young's own goal as Argentina took control of Group B.

"I feel good vibrations now we have almost qualified for the last 16 - the way we played was tremendous," he said. "It gives me peace of mind.

"When you have amazing players like I have, then my job is an easy one."

Argentina sparkled in attack, with Lionel Messi, Angel di Maria, and Higuain all excelling. Higuain became the tournament's top scorer as he netted the first World Cup hat-trick since Pauleta's for Portugal in 2002.

"I'm very happy to score the goals, but we have to think of the team as a whole," said the striker, who scored 27 goals for Real Madrid last season.

Maradona celebrated the victory, which followed a 1-0 win over Nigeria in their opener, by hugging and kissing his players, but he insisted afterwards: "I still prefer women.

"I am dating Veronica, who is blonde and 31 years old. But I like to acknowledge and congratulate my players when they play as well as they did today. That was a pleasing result and display. It was a job well done."

The only black mark for Argentina came when Martin Demichelis was caught in possession, allowing Lee Chung-Yong to pull one back just before half-time.

But Maradona could afford to be philosophical after his side's strong second-half performance. "Everyone makes mistakes. At the end of the day it did not cost us anything and it is forgotten," he said.

"It emboldened the team because in the second half they came out with a strong attitude - they did it for a team-mate who had made a mistake.

"South Korea were never capable of controlling us. Of course, they scored but they were never able to dominate any part of the match.

"This shows what we have been training for was right. We have discussed certain elements before and they were able to produce that on the pitch. Everything went well."

Maradona wrapped up his post-match press conference by saying he made peace with Uefa president Michel Platini.

Maradona criticised the former French star, along with Brazil legend Pele, following the reports had attacked his managerial style, but the Argentine coach showed a letter sent to him by Platini clarifying that he had not made such comments.

Maradona added: "I want to say sorry to Platini - but not to Pele."

Maradona reveling in 'easy' job



Diego Maradona announced he has an "easy job" coaching Argentina after watching his side beat South Korea 4-1 to close in on a place in the last 16.