

Seleção stunned, seventh heaven for Germany

Brasilien - Holland 1 - 7

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Germany have advanced to the FIFA World Cup™ Final with a sensational 7-1 drubbing of Brazil at the Estadio Mineirao in Belo Horizonte. The brilliance of Joachim Low's side was matched only by the ineptitude of the hosts, who suffered their heaviest-ever defeat and became the first team to concede seven in a knockout match at the world finals.

Most of the pre-match coverage had focused on the impact of Neymar's absence but, once the game got underway, it was clear that Thiago Silva - Brazil's captain and defensive rock - was the man they would miss most. Without him, A Seleção's defending was shambolic, with Germany seemingly able to slice their way through at will.

The tone was set by the opening goal after just 11 minutes, when Thomas Muller was allowed to steal in completely unmarked to casually volley home from Toni Kroos's outswinging corner. But there was no lesson learned. The hosts' defence continued to afford Germany's forwards the freedom of the penalty area, and it was no surprise when they were ruthlessly punished again 12 minutes later.

Salt was rubbed in Brazilian wounds by the identity of the goalscorer, with Miroslav Klose not only doubling the Germans' lead, but taking his World Cup tally to 16 to surpass Seleção legend Ronaldo as the tournament's record scorer. Again, the marking was non-existent, with the Lazio striker allowed two shots from close range, the first of which was blocked by Julio Cesar, with the second slotted routinely inside the right-hand post.

It was the spark for an incredible six-minute period, during which the Brazilian net bulged four times. Next up, with the pick of Germany's goals, was Kroos, who crashed in a first-time left-foot shot from the edge of the area after Muller had mis-kicked from Philipp Lahm's low cross. The Bayern Munich midfielder was impressive throughout and, a minute later, he made it 3-0 with another goal that owed much to Brazil's hesitant defending.

The guilty man on this occasion was Fernandinho, who allowed himself to be robbed by Kroos midway inside his own half and could only watch as the Germany No18 exchanged passes with Sami Khedira before passing into the net with Julio Cesar stranded. Even at this early stage, it was clear that the game was over as a contest, but though the Mineirao crowd was stunned, there was much, much worse to follow.

Germany's fifth goal was a near carbon copy of their fourth, though with Khedira the finisher rather than the supplier, side-footing home confidently from Mesut Ozil's pass. Brazil had not conceded five goals in a World Cup match since 1938, and while they won on that occasion - beating Poland 6-5 - there was never any chance of a comeback here.

Indeed, it took until the second half for Scolari's side to provide any kind of response, and even then they found Manuel Neuer in imposing form. The Germany keeper has been one of the players of the tournament and he again shone, first in blocking Oscar's outside-of-the-foot shot and then in pulling off a fantastic double save from substitute Paulinho when a goal seemed certain.

As it was, when the net next bulged, it was a German replacement who was celebrating. Again, the ease with which the Europeans scored was staggering, with Lahm given time and space to pick out Andre Schurrle for the most straightforward of close-range finishes. And Germany weren't finished yet, with Schurrle again finding acres of space to control and volley left-footed off the underside of the bar, completing the hosts' suffering. Oscar did score a fine last-minute goal, evading Jerome Boateng before shooting high beyond Neuer, but to describe it as a consolation would be stretching the truth.

It was merely the final act of a match that will be forever remembered by all who witnessed it, and which leaves Brazil to wallow in misery and Germany to plan a Maracana meeting with Argentina or the Netherlands.