

world cup 12 – The Playoff for Third & Fourth Places

The Playoff For 3rd & 4th

July 11 2010

Germany 3 - Uruguay 2

With Suarez back from suspension for Uruguay and a German side missing key players Lahm, Podolski and Klose through illness or injury, this began as an even match and ended the same way, right down to the final kick in stoppage time. Germany brought in veteran goalkeeper Hans-Jörg Butt in place of Neuer, perhaps a signal that they expected, and were expected, to win. Ironically, in “the game that no-one wants to play in” commentator Dave Woods observed that fast and open football is often provided. And so it was.

In the opening minutes Uruguay had a free kick close to Germany’s goal and Friedrich’s header hit the Uruguayan bar. The opener wasn’t long in coming. In the nineteenth minute Jansen neatly twisted on the German left and turned the ball inside to Schweinsteiger who blasted from thirty metres. Muslera couldn’t deal with the swerve and spilled for Müller to finish from ten. “Müller has five for the tournament – and perhaps three more World Cups still in him!”, Woods enthused. “Soon afterwards Forlan nearly equalised, heading a loose ball onto the desperately raised foot of Mertesacker. The resulting corner and scramble for possession saw another of those fearful breaks with Germany’s massed ranks diagonally steamrolling Uruguay’s midfield, the South Americans scurrying to get back in time.

The superb equaliser was the result of a similar Uruguayan break of three, with Cavani sliding the ball past Butt after Perez, who had a stellar game, surgically disentangled the ball in midfield from Schweinsteiger’s control. For a few minutes Uruguay played with a dash and daring that suggested they had several more in them. It was fast, attacking play in dense rain until half time, in which the South Americans marginally had the better of it. Suarez will think he should have scored when he put the ball wide in the fortieth; and in the forty-fifth Pereira, with two men inside him ready to shoot, held onto the ball himself. One all at the break.

One of the two or three best goals of the tournament came in the fifty-first minute when Carvalho’s skilful persistence along the Uruguayan right saw him lose his opponent and push the ball inside to Forlan, who executed a first time sideways volley slamming the ball hard into the ground on its way towards the net on the rise. The astonished Butt was beaten by a only metre of space but an ocean of surprise. Total quality from Diego Forlan.

Germany remained a threat, though, with Özil all over midfield play, carving and slicing his way through and directing tasteful long passes to his right and left. In the fifty-sixth, Muslera went for Boateng’s long cross and missed, leaving Jansen free to pop it home off his head. The camera caught the gracious Uruguayan captain Lugano applauding the goal. There followed a period of exhibition football with end to end skills and chances aplenty for both sides.

Lugano was again sporting in congratulating Kiessling when he just failed to reach another superb Boateng cross in the seventy-ninth. But inevitably there was a loose ball waiting to be pounced on and it came in the eighty-second minute for Germany, bobbing

about in the goalmouth with the Uruguayan defence momentarily distracted. Khedira neatly poked it off his head high and wide past the outstretched Muslera. Kiessling should have made it four but shot high above an open goal with ninety seconds to play. Two minutes of stoppage time extended to three when Uruguay had a deserved free kick within striking range and Forlan's outstanding dipping shot, which would have forced extra time, hit the bar with Butt beaten.

A game of thoughtful, busy football from both teams, often thrilling, always exemplary and evenly matched for chances. In the end, Germany took one more of theirs than Uruguay. "Time for a rest, now, after a hard tournament", said Diego Forlan. He goes home as the star of an honourable Uruguayan side, South America's best at the moment. "Watch this German team – we have much more to give", said Bastian Schweinsteiger. We certainly will.

The Final
20.30 hrs

July 11 Netherlands vs Spain
(Aust tv coverage from 03.30 aest July 12, SBS 1)