

2010... Is the honeymoon over?

 By Nick Said

18 Jun 2010

... and so soon? We're barely *one week* into the month-long tournament and already the cracks are showing... Could this turn into a World Cup to forget?



Is the euphoria of the World Cup beginning to wear-off for South Africans already? Security guard and bus driver strikes, the freezing winter weather that has gripped the country, criticism over the adidas Jabulani ball and the hatred of the vuvuzela by some fans abroad are all casting a growing pall over the tournament.

It has not helped that the football has been less than inspiring with goals at a premium and attacking play giving way to the defensive tactics of coaches who are too scared to lose, rather than go for the win.

That should change as we move into the second and third rounds of the group phase, with wins becoming ever more necessary for those sides that fell short in their opening game.

But the problem is that there are only a handful of sides in the world, even at club level you would say, who play genuinely attacking football from the off.

Even Brazil, who was made so fashionable around the world with their 'Samba Style' of attacking play, have become a bit ... boring. That was displayed against North Korea on Tuesday as they took a defensive approach to a game between the side ranked number one in the world, and the Koreans in 105th place.

Losing that 'entertainment factor'?

Brazilians have been playing this way for some time now under their coach Dunga, who was himself a defensive midfield player. Perhaps it is his German roots that force him to play a structured, disciplined game, rather than allowing his wonderful attacking players to be free spirits on the park.

It was put to me that we were watching the 'death of football' as Brazil laboured to their 2-1 win. I think that is being a bit

dramatic, but we have seen in this World Cup a closing of the gap between so-called smaller footballing nations and the superpowers.

This means teams are more evenly matched, and we will not see the massive one-sided clashes of past tournaments, where goals have rained in from all sides.

It means for the purists the football is more interesting, but for the average fan, it does not have the entertainment factor of old. So perhaps we are, for the first time, seeing a World Cup that has a more level playing field, but not one that will live long in the memory of fans.

ABOUT NICK SAID

Nick Said is the business director of The Content Company, a leading supplier of South African and African football news, features, analysis and statistics to the local and international market. He is a former online business manager for Kick Off magazine, having previously held posts as sports editor for iafrica.com and operations manager for 365 Digital Publishing, where he led the team that produced the award-winning Football365.co.uk website.
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