

《巴西世界杯教给我们的十件事》

As the World Cup final line-up is confirmed with Germany once again facing Argentina on the ultimate stage and after five weeks of breathtaking action, Sportsmail's ROB DRAPER looks back over what we have seen at Brazil 2014.

1) Brazil have long since ceased to be the custodians of the beautiful game

We didn't need the humiliation of the semi final to demonstrate that, though that result will forever be cited as the point at which Brazil lost its moral authority. The sterility of the opening games and the quarter-final against Colombia, when they set out to kick a team off the pitch, did as much damage. The last Brazil team that dazzled was in 2002, with Rivaldo, Ronaldo and Ronaldinho. Ironically it too was managed by Luiz Felipe Scolari. But, given a poorer generation of players, his cynicism simply looked brutish. Jogo Bonito has become an awful cliché which only has credibility in the minds of Nike executives who seemed to think that slick marketing and multi-million pound deals are all you need to sustain the 'brand.'

2) International football remains the peak of the game

This is sacrilege to the Premier League but the fact that it only assumes its supremacy every two years doesn't make it any less true. Note: it is not that the football is better than club football; it clearly isn't. But witness the receptions Colombia, Algeria and Costa Rica have received. Consider the fact that if Argentina win the World Cup, it will surpass anything Leo Messi has done for Barcelona. Only national teams have the power to evoke that kind of universal response from people. Clubs should not feel threatened by that. They're the lifeblood of the game once the carnival crowds depart. But the ultimate power and the glory still rests with those who achieve great things for their country.

3) Passion alone does not win you football matches

The debate between the supremacy of passion or cerebral tactics as a means to win football matches will rumble on. Essentially whichever side you're on is a projection of your personality. Without passion, you don't get Luis Suarez's performance against England. Without tactical know-how, you don't get Costa Rica's march through the tournament or Holland coming within a couple of penalty kicks to the final. There is a balance to be struck and most obviously Brazil got it painfully wrong when they opted to embrace the fervour of a nation and ended up overdosing on emotion, consumed by the Neymar frenzy. Passion overload brings witless football and Brazil's performance was a useful reminder.

4) Attacking football is here to stay

So Argentina and Holland did their best to buck the trend in last night's semi-final. But the move towards positive football, initiated by Barcelona and Borussia Dortmund in Europe, has been given added impetus here by the most exciting South American teams in Chile and Colombia. Counter attack can still work - Carlo Ancelotti delivered a masterclass against Bayern Munich in the Champions League semi-final - but we live in an era where an awful lot of coaches choose to seize the initiative. And that just wasn't the case ten years ago.

5) England players are still over-rated

England may not be quite as bad as their results here suggest. But even in this period of self-flagellation about how awful English football is, as a nation we still default into assuming that players that have done well for big clubs in the Premier League will be up to World Cup standard. One former leading European coach noted of the England team here: 'When it comes down to it, the first touch of most of their players is still short of the other top teams.' That, and a lack of tactical nous and intelligence, ultimately holds back English players and until they are bothered enough about it to think about how they might improve, not much will change.

6) FIFA is finished

We didn't really need the World Cup to tell us that. But the convergence of publicity at the FIFA Congress last month simply confirmed that it represents a broken model of governance. It looks like a 20th century institution still expecting that family patronage and old-school rules will get them by. The winds of change will blow away FIFA's current corporate structure. Either it will fall to Sepp Blatter to introduce a whirlwind of reforms - stranger things have happened - after his inevitable re-election next year (which in itself demonstrates how rotten the organisation is); or sponsors will eventually unseat the tired old man of FIFA under pressure from US lawmakers.

7) Brazil shouldn't have hosted the World Cup

Oh, it's been fun, the best tournament in memory, largely because of the hospitality of the people, volunteers and staff and the rich football tradition here. In some ways you want Brazil to host every World Cup. It's just you wouldn't want the Brazilian government and the organising committee to be left in charge. The disparity between poverty on the streets and the billions lavished on stadia, such as the Brasilia National Stadium - currently under an audit committee investigation for suspicious over-pricing issues - and the Amazon Arena in Manaus, which have been built with state subsidies and which now serve no useful purpose is plain wrong. No country without a joined-up plan as to what the World Cup will do for its people should be permitted to host it. Still, Russia and Qatar up next, so don't hold your breath.

8) Louis van Gaal is a little bit crazy

OK, so Ron Vlaar up for the first penalty is a risk too far. But otherwise the new Manchester United manager had a good tournament. It's not just the Tim Krul substitution for the penalties against Costa Rica, which was a little shallow in all honesty. It's the switching to a back three just before the tournament when many consider the tactic outmoded and Johan Cruyff was telling all and sundry he was a dinosaur; and switching to a back four when it was all going wrong against Australia; and using 3-4-3 against Costa Rica. There are several ways to win a football match. Van Gaal seems determined to use all of them and, if he can, all in one match.

9) The world is still a big place

Technology and globalisation make it seem small as we're all better informed, Champions League football means there are less surprises than ever. It's easy to think we know it all not just in England but in Europe. But some of the most interesting tacticians out here were Jorge Luis Pinto, Costa Rica's Colombian coach, Jose Perkeman, Colombia's Argentinian coach and Jorge Sampaoli, Chile's Argentina coach. Even within Europe, there are players outside the Champions League. There is a world outside of the Premier League and the Champions

