

## Ozil's racism claims are 'nonsense': Kroos



Mesut Ozil and Toni Kroos.jpg

AFP | Berlin

Germany midfielder Toni Kroos says Mesut Ozil was 'out of order' to make accusations of racism within the German set up as he retired from international football last month.

"Basically Mesut is a long-serving national team player and deserved a better exit as a footballer," Kroos, 28, told German daily Bild.

"I have played with Mesut for many years and know that he is a nice guy. But the way he retired was out of order."

"The proportion of his statement which was fair and justified was unfortunately overshadowed by a much higher proportion of nonsense."

"I think he himself knows that racism does not exist within the national team and the DFB."

"On the contrary, we are always committed to diversity and integration."

"Mesut was a good example of that, like many of our team mates."

Ozil, 29, created a furore last month when he retired from international football in an explosive three-part statement in which he accused German FA (DFB) president Reinhard Grindel of racism.

"In the eyes of Grindel and his supporters, I am German when we win, but I am an immigrant when we lose," wrote Ozil, sparking a racism storm in Germany and triggering fierce debate about integration.

Ozil fell offside with German fans and was booed during pre-World Cup friendlies after he and fellow midfielder Ilkay Gundogan posed for pictures with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in May, raising questions about the pair's loyalty to Germany.

Only a handful of Germany players have spoken about the saga, which captain Manuel Neuer described as 'stressful' while Thomas Mueller said there is "no question of racism within the team".

Head coach Joachim Loew has yet to comment.

# Real 'must improve in all areas': coach

Bleacherreport | Madrid

Julen Lopetegui stressed Real Madrid "have to improve in all facets" after their first competitive match under his management saw them suffer a 4-2 extra-time defeat to bitter rivals Atletico Madrid in the UEFA Super Cup.

Atleti's Saul Niguez and Koke struck in quick succession in the additional period at Tallinn's A. Le Coq Arena after the game ended 2-2 in normal time.

Real had been 2-1 up, with Karim Benzema cancelling out Diego Costa's first-minute opener and Sergio Ramos then converting a 63rd-minute penalty, before Costa netted his second of the contest to draw things level.

Lopetegui was quoted by AS as saying in his post-match press conference: "We had good game phases but it was not enough."

"We have to congratulate Atletico, I believe that they have won deservedly."

"We are not happy and the negative is that we have conceded four goals and this is not normal. This will have to be improved, without a doubt."

"We have to improve in all facets, we do not like when we make mistakes and we have to improve in everything, not only in individual errors."

"(It is a) feeling of frustration and sadness. But knowing that responsibility forces us to get



Real Madrid conceded four as they lost to rivals Atletico in Tallinn

"We have to improve in all facets, we do not like when we make mistakes and we have to improve in everything, not only in individual errors. (It is a) feeling of frustration and sadness"

JULEN LOPETEGUI

up and try to improve and start the league as we want to start."

Real, having not only seen Lopetegui's predecessor Zinedine Zidane but also club record goalscorer Cristiano Ronaldo depart the club over the summer, begin their 2018-19 La Liga campaign on Sunday when they host Getafe.

While they have won the Champions League in each of the last three years and four of the last five, they have claimed the LaLiga title only once in that time, and finished third last term.

Lopetegui said when asked about Real's hunger having won the Champions League so many times: "We want to focus on the season without thinking about the last years and get the best out of the team."

"We want to get up now and think about the league, which makes us excited. The team has won few LaLigas in recent seasons and we want to start well."

"They are not less hungry for having won the Champions League. They were hungry, eager, excited to win this title."

## Ex-Portugal boss to coach South Korea



Paulo Bento

AFP | Seoul, South Korea

Former Portugal boss Paulo Bento will be unveiled Friday as South Korea's new coach, the Yonhap news agency reported yesterday.

Bento took the Portuguese reins in 2010 after four seasons in charge of Sporting Lisbon and guided the national side to the Euro 2012 semi-finals, but was sacked two years later after an ignominious home defeat to Albania.

He later had stints in charge of Brazil's Cruzeiro and Olympiakos in Greece, and was appointed coach of Chinese Super League club Chongqing Lifan in December last year.

The CSL side sacked him last month after he failed to improve the side's fortunes.

"Bento has been named as the new coach," Yonhap news agency quoted a Korea Foot-

ball Association (KFA) official as saying.

A KFA spokesman declined to comment, saying the new coach will be unveiled on Friday.

Bento -- a tough-tackling defensive midfielder capped 35 times by Portugal -- would replace South Korean Shin Tae-yong, whose contract expired last month.

The contract terms remain unclear but his annual wage is expected to be higher than the 1.5 billion won (\$1.4 million) received by Germany's Uli Stielike, who coached South Korea from 2014-17, Yonhap added.

South Korea -- who reached the World Cup semi-finals in 2002 -- exited Russia 2018 at the group stage after defeats to Sweden and Mexico, despite stunning Germany to eliminate the defending champions.

## Lahm to be figurehead if Germany host Euro 2024

AFP | Berlin



Philipp Lahm

Former World Cup winner Philipp Lahm will be the head of the organising committee if Germany win the bid to host Euro 2024, it was confirmed on Thursday.

Germany and Turkey are the only two candidates bidding to host the European championships in six years time with a decision by European football's governing body UEFA set to be made on September 27.

Lahm, 34, stepped down from international duty after leading Germany to the 2014 World Cup title and retired from all football in May 2017 after winning a joint record eighth Bundesliga title with Bayern Munich.

## Rooney strikes twice as DC down Portland 4-1



Wayne Rooney in action

AFP | Washington

Wayne Rooney scored twice as DC United, fighting for their Major League Soccer playoff lives, beat the Portland Timbers 4-1 on Wednesday.

With MLS still buzzing from the dazzling tackle and pass from Rooney that led to DC's stoppage time game-winner over Orlando on Sunday, the former England and Manchester United star was again the difference maker.

After Portland took the lead on Samuel Armenteros' 35th-minute strike, Rooney scored the equalizer shortly



Rooney's goal scoring capacity was evident during 2009-10 seasons when he scored 34 goals in 44 matches which fetched him "Football Writer 'Player of the Year'"

before halftime, finding open space to receive a through ball from Yamil Asad and firing a left-footed shot past an on-rushing Jeff Attinella.

Jamaican defender Oniel Fisher put DC United ahead 2-1 in the 47th, and two minutes after bouncing a shot off the crossbar Rooney scored again, blasting a free kick past Attinella.

Darren Mattocks came on for Rooney in the 86th minute and rounded out the scoring in stoppage time.

With the win DC jumped from 11th and last to eighth place in the Eastern Conference, pulling within six points of playoff position.