

Profligate Brazil held

Coutinho's superb goal was cancelled out by Switzerland's Zuber

AFP | Rostov-on-Don, Russia

Brazil's bid for a sixth World Cup got off to a slow start as Switzerland withstood an early onslaught to snatch a 1-1 draw in Rostov-on-Don yesterday.

Brazil's tag as pre-tournament favourites looked justified in a dominant first-half capped by Philippe Coutinho's wonder strike to open the scoring.

However, Brazil paid for their failure to kill the game off when Steven Zuber powered home an equaliser from Xherdan Shaqiri's corner five minutes after the break. The pressure will now be on Brazil to kickstart their campaign when they face Costa Rica on Friday.

Coutinho had been handed a central role behind Neymar, on his first competitive game for four months, Gabriel Jesus and Willian in a line-up filled with attacking intent from coach Tite.

The five-time world champions went about their task of erasing the memories of a 7-1 thrashing by Germany on home soil four years ago purposefully early on.

Paulinho passed up a glorious chance when his scuffed effort from close range was turned behind by Yann Sommer.

It seemed a matter of time before Brazil's pressure paid dividends and the opener arrived in stunning style on 20 minutes.



Switzerland's midfielder Blerim Dzemaili (L) and Brazil's forward Philippe Coutinho compete for the ball

Barcelona's record signing picked up a loose ball on the edge of the area and in trademark fashion bent the ball crashing in off Sommer's far post. Neymar looked bright despite his lack of match practice as he teased the Swiss defence provoking yellow cards for Stephan Lichtsteiner, Fabian Schar and Valon Behrami.

However, Brazil failed to build on their lead as Thiago Silva and

Jesus headed off target from dangerous corners and were made to pay early in the second-half.

Switzerland had offered barely any attacking threat before leveling when Zuber took advantage of a gaping hole in the heart of the Brazilian defence to head home Shaqiri's corner.

Forced back onto the front foot, Brazil turned to Neymar for a moment of inspiration but he could

only blast into side-netting before Coutinho sliced wide with a much simpler opportunity than the one from which he opened the scoring.

Brazil were unhappy that Zuber wasn't penalised for a slight push on Miranda for the equaliser and felt hard done by again when Jesus tumbled under a challenge from Manuel Akanji inside the area with Mexican referee Cesar Ramos unmoved.



Vladimir Petkovic's men focused on Neymar - who was fouled 10 times across 96 minutes

Tite's men ended as they had begun with a series of chances for a late winner as Neymar and Roberto Firmino headed straight at Sommer before Miranda dragged a shot inches wide.

And deep into stoppage time Schar's outstretched leg turned a goalbound effort from Silva wide as Swiss held out for a vital point.

Swiss give Neymar rough treatment

Goal |

The name on everybody's lips heading into Brazil's World Cup opener against Switzerland on Sunday was an unsurprising one: Neymar.

The Paris Saint-Germain star was a doubt for the tournament in Russia not too long ago after fracturing his metatarsal in the Ligue 1 encounter with Marseille back in February and only recently returned to full training.

Neymar's injury problems did not stop him from scoring both in his return to action against Croatia as well as against Austria, but Brazil boss Tite admitted during his pre-match news conference that the 26-year-



Brazil's forward Neymar reacts after being tackled by Switzerland's midfielder Valon Behrami

old was not in peak condition yet.

"Neymar is not 100 per cent," he stated at the Rostov Arena.

"But he is very privileged physically, his sprinting capacity and his speed is really impressive, he hasn't lost that. He's not 100 per

cent yet, but he's good enough to play very well."

Both parts of Tite's message had clearly registered with the Swiss as they did everything within their power to keep the PSG man quiet.

Valon Behrami needed a mere four minutes for his first foul on Neymar, only to repeat the trick 10 minutes later, much to the annoyance of the Brazil No.10.

Referee Cesar Ramos took action at the half-hour mark when Stephan Lichtsteiner brought down Neymar on the edge of the box, but Switzerland continued to bully the former Barcelona man at every opportunity, with Fabian Schar and Behrami both going into the match official's book too.

factbox

- Brazil failed to win their opening match at the World Cup for the first time since 1978, when they drew 1-1 with Sweden; they had won nine in a row between 1982 and 2014.
- Switzerland have lost only one of their last 23 matches (W16 D6), a 2-0 defeat to Portugal in October 2017.
- Brazil have failed to win any of their last three World Cup matches (D1 L2), their worst winless run since June 1978, when they went four games without a win.
- Switzerland haven't lost their opening World Cup match in any of their last five tournaments (W2 D3).
- Five of Philippe Coutinho's 11 goals for Brazil has been from outside the box.
- Brazil have conceded 10 goals from the last 13 shots on target they have faced at the World Cup.

Today's match



FIFA WORLD CUP
RUSSIA 2018

Group F
Sweden vs South Korea
(3:00 PM)

Group G
Belgium vs Panama
(6:00 PM)

Tunisia vs England
(9:00 PM)



Fans turned out in good numbers to cheer for their teams in the FIFA World Cup match at Adhari Park. There is prediction contest during every match to win gifts including 25 BD Adhari Park rides vouchers

BRAZIL 1 1 SWITZERLAND

Philippe Coutinho (20')

Steven Zuber (50')



Possession

54% 46%

20	Shots	6
4	On target	2
12	Fouls	19

Group E

Team	MP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts
1 Serbia	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	3
2 Brazil	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
3 Switzerland	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
4 Costa Rica	1	0	0	1	0	1	-1	0