

Germany praises SA for World Cup success

South Africa's soccer organisational skills and the amount of effort it had put into hosting one of the world's best international football competitions had been given the thumbs-up by previous World Cup hosts Germany. This was the message delivered by the German Football Association (GFA) and that country's Ambassador in Pretoria on Tuesday. The German Embassy was hosting its country's football federation and Pretoria Mayor Gwen Ramokgopa. The German football officials are in South Africa for the competition and will watch Germany's clash with Ghana at Soccer City tonight [Wednesday]. Opening the event, German Ambassador Dieter Haller said that from the word go, this year's World Cup had been a success. "Wherever you look you can see the success. On people's faces, on the way tourists are enjoying the competition, in the generosity of South Africans to foreigners and in the passion in the way the games are being played," he said. "This competition is without a doubt a success." Haller said that overall, the biggest winner was South Africa. "This country ... it proved to the world that it and the continent could host an international sporting spectacular like this, the world's biggest sporting event," he said. GFA president Theo Zwanziger said that for him and the organisation, the best day was when Fifa president Sepp Blatter announced that South Africa would host the competition. He said when South Africa lost out to Germany to host the 2006 World Cup and he saw the sad reactions of South African officials, he knew then that the GFA had to do everything in its power to help this country host the next event. "It was our obligation to make sure that South Africa could play host to this competition," he said. "What this country has done in terms of stadium design, the base camps and the other logistical magic that it has woven is magnificent," said Zwanziger. "What makes this event even better are the people of this country who have truly embraced the competition with their joy." Zwanziger said that the way South Africans celebrated the competition and showed their pride and enjoyment with the vuvuzela was incredible. "I love it. Back home supporters whistle, but here it is the vuvuzela and its blasts, which bring not only the country closer together but the world," he said. Asked what the difference had been between Germany and South Africa hosting the competition, Zwanziger said Germany had vast knowledge of hosting such sporting events, especially as soccer was the biggest sport in his country. He said the biggest difference had been logistics and the movement of teams, with South Africa being a vast country compared to Germany. "Obviously this made things a lot easier for us and a lot more complicated for South Africa," he said. Zwanziger said the challenges that faced South Africa and Germany at the time of both countries hosting the competition included infrastructure and the management of international expectations. "In Germany we had the infrastructure and people were confident the games would be a success in our country, but here in South Africa the infrastructure was lacking in part and a lot of work had to be done on people's perception. Fortunately, South Africa overcame both magnificently and has turned this into one of the world's best soccer World Cups," he said.

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Niall Wilkins
First Secretary Political
South African High Commission
Trafalgar Square
London
WC2N 5DP

Tel: 0207 451 7240

Fax: 0207 451 7283