

# Why are European soccer bosses crying wolf over 2010?

 By [Dr Nikolaus Eberl](#)

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[When news leaked](#) that Uli Hoeness, the all-mighty president of Germany's powerhouse FC Bayern Munich, recently launched an all-out attack on South Africa's ability to host the 2010 FIFA World Cup at a town hall meeting in Munich, soccer analysts started questioning his motives, as well as the timing of his remarks.

## “Never been a friend of Africa”

[Said Hoeness](#): ““I was never a friend of a World Cup in South Africa and Africa as long as the security issue is not 100 per cent solved. Mr Blatter had to have his way, I always considered it wrong... I am convinced that deep down Mr Blatter has realized that giving the World Cup to South Africa was one of the biggest mistakes he ever made... I will definitely not travel to South Africa.”

Hoeness' choice of words is telling: “never a friend of Africa”, “always considered it wrong”, “Blatter had to have his way”. As one analyst put it, “Freud would have had a field day with Uli” - even more so, since the Bayern Boss conveniently forgot that there is no such thing as guaranteed 100% event security - if only he had looked up the history of sporting events in the ‘Old World’ over the past 38 years:

- **1972 Olympic Games:** Hoeness' home town, Munich, became witness to the worst-ever case study of event security gone wrong, when a team of Palestine terrorists forced their way into the Israeli compound and ended up killing nine athletes. [Says Michael Hershman](#), a senior security advisor who has been involved in five Olympics: "Over the years Munich has served as a model of what not to do in every conceivable way."
- **1996 Olympics:** A pipe bomb killed two people and injured 111 more in the [Centennial Olympic Park bombing](#) during the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta.
- **1998 FIFA World Cup:** In one of the worst incidents of hooliganism, French policeman Daniel Nivel was fatally injured by a group of German hooligans which tried to force its way into the stadium.
- **2006 FIFA World Cup:** Following the defeat of their team by the hosts Germany, hundreds of Polish hooligans went on the rampage in the host city of Dortmund and it took a massive police contingent to prevent further escalations.

And, most recently, [Germany itself has been rocked](#) by a string of violent public crimes. First, a 17-year old student killed 15 of his co-learners in the town of Winnenden; then another learner in Ludwigshafen went on the rampage at his school, killing his teacher for receiving poor marks; and now a pensioner shot three estate agents dead over a property deal that

had gone sour.

## Where does the Afrophobia come from?

Hoeness echoed remarks made earlier this month by German Football League (DFL) president Reinhard Rauball, who had raised security concerns following the attack on the Togo team. Said Rauball: "We must think about how we get a grip on security issues. We can't simply say that South Africa is something else than Angola."

Clearly, the fact that Cabinda is almost four hours flight away from Johannesburg, and that the political situation in Angola holds no relevance whatsoever to South Africa's, has not registered with Rauball - unless he is part of the Plan B Committee and harbours hopes that sabotaging 2010 will torpedo any efforts by African candidates to host future international sporting events.

## Belligerent branding

Donald Trump, the foremost proponent of brand leadership, [once said](#): "If you don't manage your brand, somebody else will do that for you. And that somebody will most likely be... your competitor."

By now, it has become clear that South Africa's competitors have engaged in brand-jacking the 2010 FIFA World Cup and applying one of the most lethal forms of competitive branding: once reserved for states at war with each other, the practice of belligerent branding is aimed at sowing doubt and fostering fear in the mind of the consumer.

Unfortunately, this is exactly what Hoeness' words of mass instruction appear to have achieved. [A survey conducted](#) by Germany's biggest daily, *Bild*, revealed that out of 67 600 respondents, 84% consented with Hoeness' statement and declared that they will not travel to South Africa.

## Blatter on the counter-attack

Blatter has made it clear that he believes Europe to be part of "the Old World" of prejudice, as concerns over security become ever more apparent in the media. "Every year 11 million tourists go to South Africa and nobody says they should not go there," [he said](#). "It's a kind of anti-Africa prejudice. I think there is still in the so-called Old World a feeling that 'why the hell should Africa organise a World Cup'."

Blatter also maintained that Europe is responsible for taking the best players out of the continent and blamed a lack of respect. "Colonialists over the past 100 years have gone to Africa and taken out all the best things - and now they are taking all the best footballers. There's no respect," he added.

## Unprecedented move by German ambassador

Blatter's rebuttal was joined by none other than the German ambassador to South Africa. In a move rarely seen before in the history of international football, Germany's chief diplomat in Southern Africa, Dieter Haller, dropped the otherwise iron-clad diplomatic etiquette and lobbed a verbal volley at the Bayern boss, denouncing the "unresponsible and irrational utterings of Herr Hoeness" and decrying the damage these remarks have wrecked on Germany's image across the African continent.

[Said Haller](#): "Uli Hoeness' statement in no way reflects the opinion of German authorities... such unfounded and irresponsible statements tarnish Germany's excellent reputation in South Africa and undermine the manifold efforts of the German Government".

## Answering the 2010 ambush critics

Maybe the best way to answer the 2010 Ambush Cartel is to follow the Chinese example: when Beijing was host to the 2008

Olympic Games, belligerent branding reached fever pitch proportions just before the opening ceremony. Unperturbed by its international armchair critics, Beijing delivered a truly spectacular event and - according to public relations expert Al Ries, got its monies' worth for the US\$40 billion invested in hosting the Olympic showpiece.

Said [Scott Russel](#), sports commentator at the Canadian broadcaster CBC Sports, "Beyond its great stadiums, the host city became a special window on the world that led to an awakening for so many of us. The Chinese capital astounded, amazed and far exceeded the preconceived expectations of those who arrived burdened with cynicism and doubt."

[Concluded Russel](#), "It is a strange feeling to be at home and to somehow acknowledge pangs of longing for a place that one just left. To feel homesick for a once forbidding and mysterious land, which lies halfway around the world... Finally, it is essential to pay homage to the hosts in the People's Republic of China and most of all to the residents of the Olympic city of Beijing. They made us feel warm, safe and above all, welcome."

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## ABOUT DR NIKOLAUS EBERL

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