

What German econo

It looks like some tough measures are

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At first glance, finances and football may not have much in common. But in recent months, drawing parallels between Germany's quest to revive its economy and its national team's mission to win the World Cup has become increasingly popular in the media. *Warten auf ein Wunder*, meaning "waiting for a miracle" is the phrase commonly used to describe either pursuit.

But Germans' scepticism about the prospects of success for both endeavours and their anxious hope that things will take a turn for the better are not the only similarities between the country's economy and athletics. Historically, German economics and German football seem to have followed a similar path.

After the Second World War, the *Wunder von Bern* (miracle of Bern), when West Germany beat Hungary 3-2 and won its first World Cup in football, was a big step towards restoring the country's wounded national pride. "We are someone again," was a sentence echoed throughout the country that expressed people's pride and joy at their success in a friendly competition with other nations, after years of isolation.

During the same time, West Germany also achieved the *Wirtschaftswunder*, or economic miracle. Financial assistance of \$1.4 billion from the Marshall Plan and its citizens' hard work turned the country from a scene of destruction into a prosperous nation. By the end of the decade, West Germany had become the world's second-strongest economy.

For the next few decades, both the economy and football did well. In 1990, things were still fine. Germany won the football World Cup and unemployment, one of the country's biggest headaches today, was at less than 2.5 million.

But then the troubles started. While the German national team was still ranked number two in the world by FIFA in 1998, unemployment had already escalated to 4.28 million. By 2005, the national team had crashed to number 17 in the world ranking and German unemployment had climbed to 5 million.



Illustration by NIÑO JOSE HEREDIA/Gulf News

Things didn't look pretty and both football and the economy were in serious need of resuscitation. Enter Angela Merkel on the political stage and Juergen Klinsmann in the sports arena.

Although Merkel's party barely scraped to victory in last September's elections, Germany's first woman chancellor quickly gained ground.

Getting back in the 'first three'

She has declared her mission: to put Germany back among the "first three" of Europe's top nations within 10 years. In order to get there, she would have to modernise the country's education system and cut unemployment to 3 million, among other measures.

The Grand Coalition has approved a 25 billion euro spending programme for 2006 to boost the economy. But next year, the government plans to cut subsidi-

