



German coach Low criticises FIFA and the 2026 World Cup format

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German

Former German coach Joachim Löw has voiced clear criticism of [FIFA's](#) decision to expand the 2026 World Cup to 48 teams, arguing that the new format has diminished the tournament's competitiveness and technical quality.

In an interview with [the German channel RTL](#) as part of the series "World Cup Fever: Monica Lierhaus and the National Team Coaches," Löw—who led Germany to victory in the 2014 World Cup in Brazil—confirmed that he was never in favor of increasing the number of participating teams.

The 66-year-old coach stated that he had always believed the 32-team format was the most suitable for the World Cup, explaining that group stage competition was more intense and exciting when qualification was limited to just two teams per group.

The current edition of the World Cup is being held for the first time with 48 teams across the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Löw considered this an excessive expansion, even while acknowledging the right of smaller teams to dream of participating in the world's biggest event.

The [German coach](#) pointed out that allowing eight teams finishing third in their groups to advance to the knockout stages has reduced the importance of first-round matches, making the group stage less compelling than in previous versions.

He added that the old system forced a genuine struggle within each group to secure the two qualifying spots, whereas the current

version has a wider margin for qualification, which negatively impacts the level of competition and excitement.

Lew believes that maintaining the tournament's technical quality should be a priority for FIFA, emphasizing that he prefers more selective and competitive tournaments rather than increasing the number of participants.

The German coach concluded his remarks by stressing the need to maintain the high standard of the World Cup, suggesting that reducing opportunities for qualification to the knockout stages would enhance the value of the matches and raise the quality of competition in the tournament.

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