



THE
Mighty
DELTA
World Cup Edition

THE GRAPHIC
BOMB

P

"YOU'VE WON IT ONCE. NOW YOU'LL HAVE TO
GO OUT THERE AND WIN IT AGAIN."

WELCOME

Arsene Wenger may be drumming up support for a biennial event, but the anticipation created by having to kick your feet for the average lifespan of a Mongolian gerbil (fact!) for a World Cup to come around brings its own unique joy.

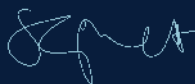
Panini stickers have been collected, swapped and stuck in this vintage's flimsy album (creased up and wonky in some cases goddamnit) and we are now all aware that the oft-repeated Sergino Dest, Craig Goodwin and Chul Hong will grace the largest sporting event on earth this winter.

It's hugely exciting, as World Cups should be. But as much as we want to immerse ourselves purely in the football, it is impossible to ignore the elephant in the room: the host nation's appalling human rights record.

Amnesty International estimate that over 1.7 million migrants from Bangladesh, India and Nepal have built the stadiums and infrastructure for the tournament, and there is plenty of evidence that many workers have been exploited, some enslaved. Hundreds are believed to have died on the job.

Given the World Cup's enormous potential for uniting people and doing good, it is a shabby state of affairs and hugely worrying that wealth and politics lay at the heart of the decision to award Qatar the jewel in football's crown. A World Cup is not a right to be acquired and Hummel, who have "toned down" Denmark's kits for the tournament, should be praised for taking a stand.

If the dream of standing over a free-kick in the last minute of a World Cup final is to endure, and the legacy left by the likes of Charlton, Pele, Cruyff, Maradona and R9 is to be honoured, then football's heart has to be in the right place.



Stephen Gillett | Editor-in-Chief

Editor in chief
(captain)



Design and Illustration
(retired from Internationals)

WGRAPHIC
THE BOMB

2022 FIFA WORLD CUP

GROUP A



GROUP B



GROUP C



GROUP D



GROUP E



GROUP F



GROUP G



GROUP H



QATAR

With @ArabNewsSport



GROUP A



SQUAD

Best WC finish
N/A

Felix Sanchez

	M
Yousef Hassan	GK
Meshaal Barsham	GK
Saad Al-Sheeb	GK
Musab Khoder	DF
Salem Al Hajri	DF
Pedro R6-R6	DF
Abdelkarim Hassan	DF
Boualem Khoukhi	DF
Ismail Mohamad	DF
Bassam Hisham	DF
Homam Ahmed	DF
Tarek Salman	MF
Karim Boudiaf	MF
Naif Al-Hadhami	MF
Abdulaziz Hatem	MF
Jassem Gaber	MF
Ali Asad	MF
Mohammed Waad	MF
Mostafa Meshaal	MF
Assim Madibo	MF
Hassan Al Haydos	FW
Mohamed Muntari	FW
Akram Afif	FW
Almoez Ali	FW
Khalid Muneer	FW
Ahmed Alaeldin	FW

Qatar have played in a variety of tournaments and competitions across the world over the last couple of years and have surpassed expectations in some of them (including winning the 2019 AFC Asian Cup by defeating Japan in the final).

However, they have endured a very difficult 2022 and look set to head into their first-ever World Cup as one of the weakest, if not the weakest, representatives in the 32-team tournament.

Star Player

The host nation's main man is their skipper: Hassan Al-Haydos, who has earned an impressive 169 caps for his country and led them to victory at the 2019 Asian Cup in the United Arab Emirates – Qatar's first-ever major international trophy.

The forward also captained his country to a bronze

medal finish at the 2021 FIFA Arab Cup in Qatar last winter.

Al-Haydos has been a one-club man for Qatar's dominant Al-Sadd since making his debut in 2007. Just a year later he earned his first cap for the Maroon and has since gone on to score 36 goals for his country.

Wild Card

Manager Felix Sanchez has spent the last couple of years cultivating a club-like atmosphere in terms of his consistency of selection in the national squad. However, there is one name that stands out as a potential surprise package at the tournament.

Midfielder Khalid Muneer played lower-league football in Spain before a 2018 move to Al-Wakrah in Qatar. He only has a handful of caps for his country, although his first

came back in 2016, but he has since broken back into the first-team set-up.

Opinion

About 18 months ago, it seemed like Qatar might surprise quite a few people - but times have changed.

Results have fallen off a cliff this year and the team has begun to look like one of the worst in the competition. Presently, only Saudi Arabia (51) and Ghana (61) rank lower than Qatar (50) in the FIFA rankings.

Recent friendly victories against depleted Guatemala, Honduras and Panama sides should not disguise their poor year, which has seen them win just two of 11 matches within 90 minutes.

All the signs point to a group stage exit despite home advantage.

FIXTURES

20:00 VS

25:00 VS

29:00 VS

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS

Playmaker
say...
Group stage

Bet365
say...
250/1

STAR PLAYER
AL-HAYDOS

169

Hassan Al-Haydos is the most capped player from the Asian confederation at this World Cup with 169 caps for Qatar.

WILD CARD
MUNEER



ECUADOR

With @FCPlantain



GROUP A



SQUAD

Best WC finish
Round of 16, 2006

Gustavo Alfaro	M
Moises Ramirez	GK
Alexander Dominguez	GK
Hernan Galindez	GK
Piero Hincapie	DF
Robert Arboleda	DF
Pervis Estupiñan	DF
Angelo Preciado	DF
Jackson Porozo	DF
Xavier Arreaga	DF
Diego Palacios	DF
Felix Torres	DF
William Pacho	DF
Carlos Gruezo	MF
Jose Cifuentes	MF
Jhegson Mendez	MF
Moises Caicedo	MF
Jeremy Sarmiento	MF
Alan Franco	MF
Angel Mena	MF
Ayrton Preciado	MF
Gonzalo Plata	MF
Romario Ibarra	MF
Djorkaeff Reasco	FW
Enner Valencia	FW
Kevin Rodriguez	FW
Michael Estrada	FW

Gustavo Alfaro's verbose discourse might have awakened the curiosity of Ecuador fans, but it has been his ability to transform a hapless ageing squad into one of the most impressive young teams on the continent that has captured their attention.

Now every single Ecuadorian supporter is hoping that this new and vibrant chapter ends with Alfaro's charges delivering the best World Cup performance in the nation's history.

Star Player

Brighton's Moisés Caicedo will be the one to watch. He's a box-to-box midfielder with the anticipation, strength, and positioning of a classic number 6 allied to the passing and progressive running of a number 8. He has been the cornerstone of Alfaro's rebuild.

Caicedo's meteoric rise from winning the U20 Libertadores with Independiente del Valle to becoming one of the most exciting midfielders in the Premier League has happened in the blink of an eye for most observers, but 'Moi' is playing as if he has been preparing for this his whole life.

The World Cup will be the biggest challenge of his career and yet another chance for the young midfielder to impress.

Wild Card

Signed by Bayer Leverkusen at 19 years of age, Piero Hincapie was one to watch for the future. After impressing during the 2021 Copa América, Hincapie has now made the centre-back position his own.

With 21 caps to his name already, the youngster will

look to lead from the back and showcase his classy and strong defending on the biggest stage of all. If he manages to string solid performances together, La Tri may be able to extend their stay in Qatar.

Opinion

On November 20, all eyes will be on this extremely young group of players as they play in the opening World Cup fixture against hosts Qatar. It is a must-win match for Ecuador and a win would boost morale and open up a pathway to the last 16. A loss, meanwhile, would more than likely eliminate them from contention.

The team has the quality and personality to qualify for the knockout stages – it will be interesting to see if they have the maturity and temperament to deliver with the world watching.

FIXTURES

20⁰⁰ VS

25⁰⁰ VS

29⁰⁰ VS

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker say...
Group stage



Bet365 say...
200/1

STAR PLAYER
CAICEDO

Ecuador are expected to be the only team at the tournament without an outfield player selected from their domestic league.

WILD CARD
HINCAPIE

SENEGAL

With @playmaker_EN



GROUP A



SQUAD

Best WC finish
Quarter final, 2002

Aliou Cissé	M
Seny Dieng	GK
Édouard Mendy	GK
Alfred Gomis	GK
Pape Abou Cissé	DF
Youssef Sabaly	DF
Kalidou Koulibaly	DF
Abdou Diallo	DF
Fodé Ballo-Touré	DF
Formose Mendy	DF
Ismail Jakobs	DF
Gana Gueye	MF
Mamadou Loum	MF
Moustapha Name	MF
Pape Sarr	MF
Gueye Gueye	MF
Ilimane Ndiaye	MF
Cheikhou Kouyaté	MF
Pathé Ciss	MF
Nampalys Mendy	MF
Boulaye Dia	FW
Bamba Dieng	FW
Nicolas Jackson	FW
Krépin Diatta	FW
Famara Diédhiou	FW
Ismaila Sarr	FW
Sadio Mané	FW

As African champions, Senegal head into the 2022 World Cup being tipped by many as a side that could go very deep in the tournament.

However, in what has been a memorable and historic year for the Senegalese, they have been rocked by the news that key man Sadio Mane is a doubt for the tournament.

The former Liverpool forward picked up an injury during Bayern Munich's 6-1 hammering of Werder Bremen just a week and a half before Senegal's opening match against the Netherlands.

Can coach Aliou Cisse and his team recover from such a hammer blow?

Star Player

With Mane's fitness in doubt, Senegal will be reliant on another vertebra in the impressive spine of their team.

Kalidou Koulibaly's Chelsea career has started slowly, but the captain of the 2022 Africa Cup of Nations winners still has a pedigree that ranks him as one of the best defenders in the tournament.

The former Napoli man has 64 caps for his country and has been pivotal in their return to prominence on the African continent. Alongside Edouard Mendy, he provides a key foundation for the Lions of Teranga.

Wild Card

Despite Mane's potential absence, Senegal have a plethora of other attacking options - one of whom could be set to burst onto the global scene.

Born in Dakar, 21-year-old Nicolas Jackson is an exciting forward who made his debut for Villarreal this season and has already notched a few goals in La Liga.

Jackson made the Senegal squad in September but has yet to debut for his country - quick, direct and excellent at attacking space, he is a potential surprise package.

Opinion

Sadio Mane's injury might become tedious to discuss when it comes to Senegal, but it is a major blow for one of this year's potential dark horses.

However, as a team, Senegal are as resolute and defensively astute as any side in the competition - as was evidenced in their AFCON triumph at the start of the year.

The Lions of Teranga will rightly be confident of reaching the last 16 where they could meet England.

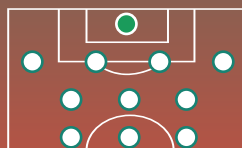
FIXTURES

21st vs

25th vs

29th vs

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker
say...
Last 16



Bet365
say...
80/1



STAR PLAYER
KOULIBALY



No African team has got further than Senegal at a World Cup (QF in 2002), when they reached the final of AFCON earlier that year.



WILD CARD
JACKSON



NETHERLANDS

With [@EredivisieMike](#)



Best WC finish
Runners-up 1974,
1978, 2010

SQUAD

Louis van Gaal	M
Justin Bijlow	GK
Remko Pasveer	GK
Andries Noppert	GK
Tyrell Malacia	DF
Matthijs de Ligt	DF
Jeremie Frimpong	DF
Denzel Dumfries	DF
Nathan Aké	DF
Daley Blind	DF
Stefan de Vrij	DF
Virgil van Dijk	DF
Jurrien Timber	DF
Marten de Roon	MF
Frenkie de Jong	MF
Teun Koopmeiners	MF
Davy Klaassen	MF
Xavi Simons	MF
Kenneth Taylor	MF
Steven Bergwijn	FW
Noa Lang	FW
Wout Weghorst	FW
Vincent Janssen	FW
Steven Berghuis	FW
Cody Gakpo	FW
Memphis Depay	FW
Luuk de Jong	FW

Louis van Gaal's Oranje are viewed by many as potential 'dark horses' for the 2022 World Cup with the Netherlands having been in excellent form since their early elimination at Euro 2020.

With Virgil van Dijk finally set to play at his first-ever international tournament and van Gaal enjoying a final hurrah in his third term, before departing after Qatar, the timing looks good for the Dutch.

Star Player

Louis van Gaal and the Netherlands will be grateful to have their captain, Virgil van Dijk, fit and ready for the tournament.

The Liverpool centre-back has not been at his absolute best so far this season with his club side struggling defensively. But a winning goal and a clean sheet in the crucial UEFA

Nations League tie against Belgium in September shows that his form with the national side remains good.

The 31-year-old is an essential part of this Netherlands side and, at his imperious peak, there is no better defender in world football.

Wild Card

The standout name to keep an eye on could well be PSV Eindhoven's Xavi Simons.

On loan at the club from PSG, Simons has been outstanding in both the Eredivisie and the Europa League so far this season for Ruud van Nistelrooy's Boeren.

Capable of playing anywhere across the front end of the pitch, the 19-year-old has an almost indescribable spark to his

play, alongside a keen eye for a goal and an assist.

Opinion

Going into the World Cup, the Netherlands are unbeaten in 15 games, finishing top of their Nations League group. Louis van Gaal – in his third spell as Netherlands manager – has transformed the culture and fortunes of the team.

Supporters are placing a lot of faith in van Gaal to bring joy after the disappointment of Euro 2020, when they were knocked out by the Czech Republic, and their failure to even reach Euro 2016 and the 2018 World Cup.

As always with the Netherlands, the talent is there but that doesn't necessarily equate to success.

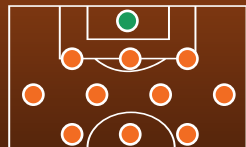
FIXTURES

21st VS

25th VS

29th VS

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker
say...
Quarters



Bet365
say...
12/1



ENGLAND

With [@playmaker_EN](#)

Despite reaching the 2018 FIFA World Cup semi-finals, placing third in the inaugural UEFA Nations League and then finishing runners-up at Euro 2020, England head into the 2022 FIFA World Cup with relatively low expectations.

The Three Lions, under the management of Gareth Southgate, will be among the pre-tournament favourites but they have had a very difficult 2022 with some poor performances and results in the Nations League against Germany, Hungary and their Euro 2020 nemesis, Italy.

Star Player

We were boring and predictable for our Euro guide - and we're at it again: England's key player is Harry Kane.

The Three Lions are heavily reliant on Tottenham's talisman with nobody else, with the possible exception of Raheem Sterling, proving themselves to be

a consistent goal threat at international level.

Kane, England's captain for four and a half years now, has notched 51 goals in just 75 caps for his country, including six in the last FIFA World Cup in Russia, where he became the second Englishman to win the Golden Boot award.

Wild Card

Gareth Southgate is a steady and safety-first manager but he has been inclined to pick younger players throughout his tenure.

England's 'wild card' is unlikely to be an uncapped, uncut gem but maybe someone who has yet to establish himself as an out and out starter.

Arsenal's Bukayo Saka is having an excellent club season and was trusted in key matches at Euro 2020 by Southgate. Still only 21, Saka could take up one of the two spots

behind Harry Kane in what is likely to be a 3-4-2-1 formation. Given his good form, outstanding ability and solid temperament, Saka could provide some much-needed spark for the Three Lions.

Opinion

England should head into the tournament in a better frame of mind, both within the squad and among their supporters, than they do.

They have been one of the more consistent national teams in the last half-a-decade or so with a star-studded squad stacked with talent.

However, they have a tendency to drift into an overly conservative style of play that curbs their attacking instincts. On current evidence at least, any team on a par with England, let alone better than them, will probably send the Barmy Army packing in the knockout stages.



GROUP B



Best WC finish
Winners 1966

SQUAD

Gareth Southgate

Jordan Pickford	GK
Nick Pope	GK
Aaron Ramsdale	GK
Conor Coady	DF
Luke Shaw	DF
Eric Dier	DF
John Stones	DF
Harry Maguire	DF
Ben White	DF
Kyle Walker	DF
Kieran Trippier	DF
Alexander-Arnold	DF
James Maddison	MF
Kalvin Phillips	MF
Mason Mount	MF
Jude Bellingham	MF
Conor Gallagher	MF
Declan Rice	MF
Jordan Henderson	MF
Marcus Rashford	FW
Raheem Sterling	FW
Jack Grealish	FW
Callum Wilson	FW
Phil Foden	FW
Harry Kane	FW
Bukayo Saka	FW

M

FIXTURES

21/11 VS

25/11 VS

29/11 VS

FORMATION



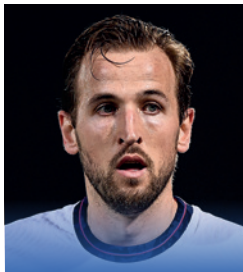
PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker
say...
Quarters



Bet365
say...
8/1



STAR PLAYER
KANE



Harry Kane (51) needs three goals to overtake Wayne Rooney (53) as England's all-time record goal scorer.



WILD CARD
SAKA



USA

With [@anthony_jack_k](#) and [@USMNTTAKES](#)



GROUP B



SQUAD

Best WC finish
Third place 1930

Gregg Berhalter

Matt Turner	GK
Sean Johnson	GK
Ethan Horvath	GK
Aaron Long	DF
Carter-Vickers	DF
Sergio Dest	DF
DeAndre Yedlin	DF
Joe Scally	DF
Antonee Robinson	DF
Tim Ream	DF
Shaq Moore	DF
Walker Zimmerman	DF
Yunus Musah	MF
Tyler Adams	MF
Weston McKennie	MF
Luca de la Torre	MF
Giovanni Reyna	MF
Jesús Ferreira	MF
Brenden Aaronson	MF
Cristian Roldán	MF
Kellyn Acosta	MF
Haji Wright	FW
Timothy Weah	FW
Josh Sargent	FW
Jordan Morris	FW
Christian Pulisic	FW

The United States are back in the World Cup after shockingly missing out on the last one in 2018.

They return to the world stage with fresh young faces. In fact, this team will be the youngest in the entire tournament, which obviously has both positives and negatives.

People remember the Americans as a tough, pragmatic and physical side that will outwork opponents to grind out results. But Gregg Berhalter's team is determined to change the way the world views them.

Star Player

The days of Landon Donovan and Clint Dempsey are long gone and the US have a new Captain America: Christian Pulisic.

This will come as no surprise to anyone, as Pulisic has been viewed as the catalyst to take this team to new heights since his debut as a 17-year-old.

He won't be coming into the World Cup in his best form though, as he is still struggling to nail down a starting spot at Chelsea where he is often played out of position at wing-back.

However, he does seem a different player when wearing a US kit and he carried his team with vital goals against Mexico and Panama during the qualifiers. It will be exciting to see what he can do at his first World Cup.

Wild Card

Pulisic may be Captain America, but most US fans actually see Giovanni Reyna as the player with the highest potential in the current squad.

The son of former US national team captain Claudio Reyna and the US women's national team midfielder Danielle Egan, 'Gio' hails from a family of football royalty.

Reyna followed in Pulisic's footsteps, leaving the US as a teenager to join the Dortmund academy and debut for them at just 17.

Despite constant injury issues, the versatile winger has appeared 89 times for Der BVB, recording 11 goals and 14 assists.

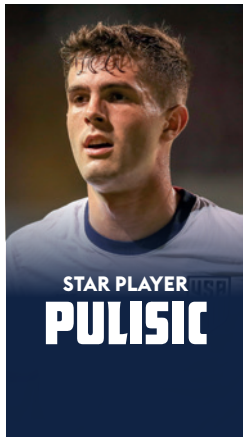
Still only 19-years-old, he is on the right path to become the first truly world class American footballer.

Opinion

The expectation for this US team is to get out of the group, but it will be tough going.

Anything beyond the last 16 will be viewed as a bonus: anything short of that will be seen as a huge failure.

The squad looks pretty good on paper, but doubts swirl regarding whether Berhalter is the right man to get the best out of it.



STAR PLAYER
PULISIC

76.6%

Gregg Berhalter has the best win rate of any USMNT manager in history: 76.6%.



WILD CARD
REYNA

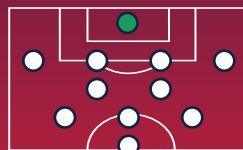
FIXTURES

21/11 VS

25/11 VS

29/11 VS

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS

Playmaker say...
Group stage

Bet365 say...
150/1



IRAN

With  @GolBezan



Perhaps no team participating in Qatar has faced more off-field turmoil than Iran ahead of the World Cup.

A last minute coaching change saw Carlos Queiroz return to the helm following the controversial election of a new federation president in the summer. The veteran Portuguese, who managed Iran between 2011-2019, replaced Dragan Skocic whose reign ended after a disastrous June camp.

Of greater note are the weeks of intense protests in Iran following the killing of Masha Amini at the hands of "morality police" which have caused many to question the team's participation in Qatar.

Star Player

It's easy to forget that just a few years ago Mehdi Taremi was still playing in the Qatari Pro League.

After making the jump to Europe in 2019, his progression has

been nothing short of spectacular.

Following a highly productive first season for Rio Ave, he earned a move to Portuguese giants Porto where he has gone on to score 62 goals and provide 35 assists across 115 matches.

An intelligent link man who can pull something outrageous out of the hat.

Wild Card

Iran's biggest surprise package will likely come in the form of Dinamo Zagreb right back Sadegh Mohammari.

Despite recently turning 26, he has only just won starting spots for both club and country. Blessed with impressive recovery speed and natural close control, Mohammari's solid performances in the Champions League against the likes of AC Milan and Chelsea have elevated his stock tremendously.

Fans will be hoping he can reproduce such form against Christian Pulisic and Raheem Sterling in November.

Opinion

Considering Iran managed to earn four points in a group containing Spain, Morocco, and Portugal in 2018, expectations are high this time around.

With a strong core of players, headlined by Taremi and Bayer Leverkusen's Sardar Azmoun, the team has matchwinners in its ranks, a luxury they had to do without in Russia.

Queiroz has instilled a regimented structure out of possession and Iran will rely on quick transitions through Brentford's Saman Ghoddos and Feyenoord's Alireza Jahanbakhsh to supply his star men up top.

A last 16 berth is certainly possible, but by no means guaranteed.

GROUP B



SQUAD

Best WC finish
Group stage

Carlos Queiroz	M
Hossein Hosseini	GK
Amir Abedzadeh	GK
Alireza Beiranvand	GK
Payam Niazmand	GK
Eza Pouraliganji	DF
Sadegh Moharrami	DF
Shojae Khalilzadeh	DF
Majid Hosseini	DF
Roozbeh Cheshmi	DF
Ramin Rezaeian	DF
Milad Mohammadi	DF
Abolfazl Jalali	DF
Ehsan Hajsafi	DF
Hossein Kanaani	DF
Ahmad Nourollahi	MF
Saman Ghoddos	MF
Ali Gholizadeh	MF
Ali Karimi	MF
Saeid Ezatolahi	MF
Sardar Azmoun	FW
Mehdi Torabi	FW
Alireza Jahanbakhsh	FW
Karim Ansarifard	FW
Mehdi Taremi	FW
Vahid Amiri	FW

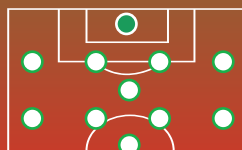
FIXTURES

21/11 VS 

25/11 VS 

29/11 VS 

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker
say...
Last 16



Bet365
say...
500/1



STAR PLAYER
TAREMI



Iran have scored just nine goals in 15 FIFA World Cup matches.



WILD CARD
MOHARRAMI



WALES

With [@playmaker_EN](#)



SQUAD

Best WC finish
Quarter-finals 1958

Rob Page	M
Wayne Hennessey	GK
Adam Davies	GK
Danny Ward	GK
Ethan Ampadu	DF
Tom Lockyer	DF
Ben Davies	DF
Chris Gunter	DF
Connor Roberts	DF
Chris Mepham	DF
Neco Williams	DF
Joe Rodon	DF
Ben Cabango	DF
Matt Smith	MF
Jonny Williams	MF
Joe Morrell	MF
Aaron Ramsey	MF
Dylan Levitt	MF
Rubin Colwill	MF
Joe Allen	MF
Harry Wilson	FW
Daniel James	FW
Kieffer Moore	FW
Gareth Bale	FW
Sorba Thomas	FW
Brennan Johnson	FW
Mark Harris	FW

Under former Port Vale and Northampton Town boss Rob Page, Wales are heading into their first World Cup since 1958, when they reached the quarter-finals in Sweden, and just their second ever global tournament.

The Dragons have stirred in the last decade or so, qualifying for Euro 2016 and reaching the semi-finals of that tournament before getting to the knockout stages of Euro 2020.

Star Player

This one goes without saying really but Wales' Star Player for the tournament is indeed Gareth Bale.

Their captain has been instrumental in their rise in recent years and, after a comfortable few months playing intermittently for

Los Angeles FC, he heads into the tournament with a nice balance between being tested and rested.

Wales' all-time top-scorer and captain has won 108 caps for his country and is expected to call time on his career at the end of the tournament in Qatar, at the age of just 33.

Wild Card

Wales have a lot more young, attacking options than they did in their Euro 2016 vintage, but none of them leap off the page as wild cards, as their potential and quality is quite well known.

One player that could go under the radar is Cardiff City's Mark Harris. Harris broke into The Bluebirds' first-team in 2020 and has been a key player

throughout the 2022/23 campaign. He has five caps for his country and could prove to be an important and versatile attacking option for the Dragons.

Opinion

Wales find themselves in a really intriguing qualification battle, as Group B is the only group in the entire tournament where all four teams are ranked inside the world's top 20, according to FIFA.

Given that, all four teams naturally harbour a belief that they will advance to the knockout stages.

Although it is more than possible for the Welsh, advancing any further than the last 16 seems very unlikely.

FIXTURES

21st VS

25th VS

29th VS

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS

Playmaker say...
Group stage

Bet365 say...
200/1



STAR PLAYER
BALE



Wales' 64-year absence from the FIFA World Cup is the longest-ever gap between qualifications.



WILD CARD
HARRIS

ARGENTINA

With Osman Gani [@ARG_soccernews](#)



GROUP C



SQUAD

Best WC finish
Winners 1978, 1986

Lionel Scaloni

Emiliano Martínez	M GK
Franco Armani	GK
Gerónimo Rulli	GK
Marcos Acuña	DF
Gonzalo Montiel	DF
Nahuel Molina	DF
Germán Pezzella	DF
Nicolás Tagliafico	DF
Juan Foyth	DF
Nicolás Otamendi	DF
Cristián Romero	DF
Lisandro Martínez	DF
Rodrigo de Paul	MF
Exequiel Palacios	MF
Leandro Paredes	MF
Alexis Mac Allister	MF
Guido Rodríguez	MF
Enzo Fernández	MF
Julián Álvarez	FW
Nicolás González	FW
Papu Gómez	FW
Paulo Dybala	FW
Lionel Messi	FW
Lautaro Martínez	FW
Joaquín Correa	FW
Ángel Di María	FW

Superlatives are flying around regarding this current Argentina side. Record books have been re-written and curses dispelled; new stars are rising and one supernova still burns bright.

The big question: will the Albiceleste's current 35-game unbeaten streak be the launchpad to World Cup glory...or will they crash and burn in Qatar?

Two games shy of Italy's longest-ever unbeaten run in international football, Lionel Scaloni's Argentina must harness their momentum if they are to reclaim the trophy they last lifted with the help of a certain Diego Maradona back in 1986.

Star Player

Wherever you stand on the Lionel Messi v CR7 debate, Argentina's number 10 is undeniably an all-time great. The 35-year old genius has literally won every team trophy and individual accolade going during his career...except the World Cup.

Although he hasn't flopped as such, Messi has yet to dominate a World Cup in the manner of a Maradona, although he nearly won the competition in 2014 when Argentina lost I-O to Germany in the final.

Images of a dejected Messi collecting the tournament's Golden Ball afterwards are part of World Cup folklore... is it destiny that he will scoop the ultimate prize in the twilight of his career?

Wild Card

Julian Alvarez is the Argentine young gun who could blaze a trail in Qatar.

Likely to feature only as an impact sub initially, the forward is a fine prospect who made his mark in Argentina with River Plate prior to his move to Man City.

With explosive acceleration, a keen eye for goal and unique game intelligence, it is a matter of time before Alvarez emerges from Messi and Haaland's respective shadows for club and country.

Opinion

Whenever Argentina play at a World Cup, the goal is to win it - and that is the objective in Qatar.

Copa America champions in 2021 and winners over Italy in June's 'Finalissima', Argentina are in a groove.

They play in a 4-4-2, but often shift to 4-3-3, with Lionel Messi and Lautaro Martinez the chief goal threats, although Angel Di Maria and Papu Gomez chip in.

Argentina are incredibly solid. Emi Martinez has emerged as a reliable keeper, Cristian Romero has forged a formidable defensive partnership with Nicolas Otamendi and the midfield trio of Lo Celso - Paredes - De Paul has been amazing.

Past Argentina sides have been star-studded, but dysfunctional. However, the 'Class of 2022' complement one another and they are a strong contender at this World Cup.

FIXTURES

22/11 VS

26/11 VS

30/11 VS

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker
say...
Winners



Bet365
say...
11/2



35

Argentina are on a 35-game unbeaten streak, the longest active run of any national team and only two games shy of the world record set by Italy in 2021.



SAUDI ARABIA

With [@ArabNewsSport](#)



GROUP C



SQUAD

Best WC finish
Round of 16, 1994

Hervé Renard

Moha Al Owais	M
Mohammed Al-Yami	GK
Nawaf Al-Aqidi	GK
Yasser Al-Shahrani	DF
Abdullelah Al-Amri	DF
Abdullah Madu	DF
Hassan Al-Tambakti	DF
Moha Al Burayk	DF
Ali Al Bulayhi	DF
Saud AbdulhaMF	DF
Sultan Al-Ghanam	DF
Mohamed Kanno	MF
Salem Al Dawsari	MF
Abdullelah Al-Malki	MF
Nasser Al-Dawsari	MF
Firas Al-Buraikan	MF
Abdullah Otayf	MF
Hattan Babhr	MF
Salman Al Faraj	MF
Ali Al-Hassan	MF
Riyadh Sharahili	MF
Sami Al-Najei	MF
Saleh Al Shehri	FW
Haitham Asiri	FW
Abdulrahman Al-Oboud	FW
Fahad Al-Muwallad	FW

Widely regarded as the strongest of the quartet of Arab nations (+ Qatar, Morocco and Algeria), Saudi Arabia are an evolving force under the steady hand of French coach Herve Renard.

Defensively solid and with some outstanding technical operators in their ranks, the Saudi's Achilles heel may be a lack of firepower - the Green Falcons unable to breach the defences of teams such as Honduras, Ecuador, USA and Venezuela in their pre-tournament preparations.

That said, Renard has kept his World Cup cards close to his chest in recent fixtures to deprive Group C opponents of intelligence on the Saudi Arabian players, tactics and formations.

Star Player

The Green Falcons' key man is undoubtedly their captain Salman Al Faraj - who sets the standard for his team-mates for both club and country.

The elegant midfielder has known little but success

at club level with Al-Hilal, although such joy has been harder to come by in the green jersey of his national team.

Now 33, the cultured left-footer has long been a mainstay in the Green Falcons line-up and he notched a penalty in the Saudi's 2-1 win over Egypt at the last World Cup in Russia.

Wild Card

Having handed the youngster his first senior cap at the tender age of 19, head coach Renard has complete faith in up-and-coming forward Firas Al-Buraikan.

Al-Buraikan's stats speak for themselves at club level where he has scored 15 goals and supplied five assists for Al-Fateh over the past two seasons in the Saudi Premier League.

While some may consider the 22-year-old too young to lead the Green Falcons' attack, he already has 20 international caps under his belt and he has seized his opportunities with both hands. Notably three of

his four goals for Saudi Arabia have proved to be match-winners.

Opinion

Saudi Arabia carry the hopes of the Arab nations in the World Cup, when it comes to pedigree and experience. However, although they do not concede many goals, KSA have difficulty scoring them.

Facing an Argentina side raring to go from the off, followed by a difficult Poland team provides a serious impediment to them progressing.

This leaves the last game - arguably the most manageable - against Mexico who themselves have maverick tendencies. Expect a winner-takes-all atmosphere and a game full of goals and intrigue in that one.

Saudi hearts may say qualify, but a group stage exit looks the most likely outcome, which will be tough to take after the Green Falcons' lengthy World Cup preparations.

FIXTURES

22/11 VS

26/11 VS

30/11 VS

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker
say...
Group stage



Bet365
say...
750/1

STAR PLAYER
AL FARAJ

Saudi Arabia have won exactly 50% of their games under Herve Renard, losing just six of 34 games under the Frenchman.

WILD CARD
AL-BURAIKAN



MEXICO

With  @LigaMXreddit



Best WC finish
Quarter-finals
1970, 1986

SQUAD

Gerardo Martino	M
Rodolfo Cota	GK
Guillermo Ochoa	GK
Alfredo Talavera	GK
Gerardo Arteaga	DF
Johan Vásquez	DF
Jorge Sánchez	DF
Héctor Moreno	DF
César Montes	DF
Néstor Araujo	DF
Jesus Gallardo	DF
Kevin Álvarez	DF
Luis Chávez	MF
Carlos Rodríguez	MF
Érick Gutiérrez	MF
Luis Romo	MF
Orbellín Pineda	MF
Edson Álvarez	MF
Andrés Guardado	MF
Uriel Antuna	MF
Héctor Herrera	MF
Roberto Alvarado	MF
Alexis Vega	FW
Henry Martín	FW
Hirving Lozano	FW
Raúl Jiménez	FW
Rogelio Funes Mori	FW

Remarkably, Mexico have exited every World Cup since 1986 at the last sixteen stage - but many 'El Tri' fans doubt they will get that far in Qatar.

Recruited back in 2019 to end this 'fourth game' curse, coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino enjoyed a promising start at the helm, winning the Gold Cup that year, but qualification for this World Cup was something of an ordeal.

Around 40,000 Mexicans will still descend on Doha, but confidence in their team is taco thin.

Star Player

An integral part of the Napoli side that currently sits top of Serie A, Hirving Lozano's status ratchets up a notch when he's with El Tri, for whom he has scored 16 goals in 59 games.

A winger cum false 9, 'Chucky' as he is known

by his team-mates, is a handful: fast, tricky and with an explosive shot. The most expensive Mexican footballer of all time at €38million, Lozano is good IV and a big threat on the counter.

Martino's side are stuttering in attack and need Chucky to strike fear into their opposition in Qatar.

Wild Card

Liverpool are reportedly monitoring 21-year-old Chivas forward Alexis Vega who will be looking to use the World Cup as a springboard to a big move to Europe next year.

With four goals in 21 appearances, Vega is fast becoming a key part of Mexico's frontline and his ability to play through the middle or off the flank gives them some interesting options.

Injuries to Sevilla's Jesus Corona and Wolves striker

Raul Jimenez will increase Mexico's reliance on Vega; now is his time to show those outside Mexico what he's made of.

Opinion


Martino has referred to himself as "Public Enemy Number One" back in Mexico, and the disconnect between the coach and the fans is a major issue.

On paper, El Tri are set up to play attractive and exciting football. If they start well and finally bare their teeth in front of goal then the tide could quickly turn.

Injuries mean opportunities, goal droughts have to break and waves of Mexican fans will flood into Qatar to support their team.

Ranked 13th in the world, it would be foolish to completely write off Mexico's chances of making their usual last sixteen slot.

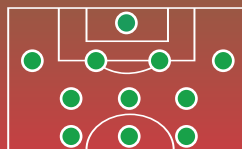
FIXTURES

22nd vs 

26th vs 

30th vs 

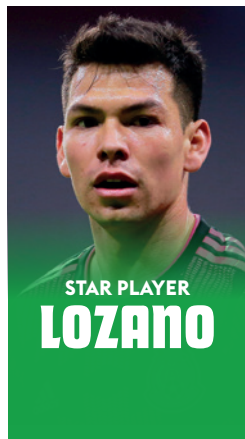
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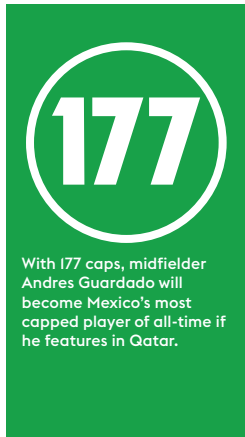
PREDICTION/ODDS

 **Playmaker**
say...
Group stage

 **Bet365**
say...
80/1

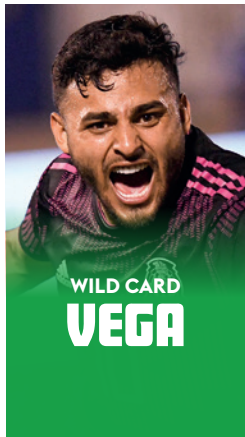


STAR PLAYER
LOZANO



177

With 177 caps, midfielder Andres Guardado will become Mexico's most capped player of all-time if he features in Qatar.



WILD CARD
VEGA

POLAND

With @Ryan_Hubbard



GROUP C



Best WC finish
Third place
1974, 1982

SQUAD

Czesław Michniewicz	M
Lukasz Skorupski	GK
Wojciech Szczesny	GK
Bart Dragowski	GK
Matty Cash	DF
Bartosz Bereszynski	DF
Robert Gumny	DF
Jan Bednarek	DF
Artur Jedrzejczyk	DF
Jakub Kiwior	DF
Mateusz Wieteska	DF
Kamil Glik	DF
Sebastian Szymanski	MF
Nicola Zalewski	MF
Damian Zurkowski	MF
Szymon Zurkowski	MF
Piotr Zielinski	MF
Grzegorz Krychowiak	MF
Krystian Bielik	MF
Robert Lewandowski	FW
Michal Skoras	FW
Krzysztof Piatek	FW
Arkadiusz Milik	FW
Jakub Kaminski	FW
Kamil Grosicki	FW
Przemyslaw Frankowski	FW
Karol Swiderski	FW

It is hard to find a Poland team that was as highly rated as the current crop. Even back in 1974 and 1982, when the Biało-Only twice finished third at the World Cup, pre-tournament expectations were tempered.

Czesław Michniewicz's problem, though, is that recent form has been stuttering. Qualification for the tournament - in only his first week in the job - was followed by a 6-1 defeat to Belgium: the Poles' heaviest defeat in more than a decade. So it might be worth tempering those expectations again.

Star Player

Believe it or not, Poland's tournament won't hinge entirely on whether Robert Lewandowski turns up. He has very rarely taken the plaudits at major tournaments; and unable to carry the entire hopes of the nation on his shoulders, he'll need those behind him to pull their weight.

But if his compatriots provide service and space, the Barcelona hitman will flourish. The summer transfer to Catalonia is paying dividends, with 18 goals and four assists in his first 19 games for the club. Whether he can translate his Blaugrana form to the international stage will decide whether Poland head to the knock-out rounds or back to Warsaw.

Wild Card

Though he only debuted in June, defender Kiwior has quickly become one of the first names on Michniewicz's team sheet. The 22-year-old has impressed in his four national team outings - often garnering better reviews than his more experienced defensive partners.

On the left of a back three, 'Kuba' shows a composed tenacity and maturity befitting of a player many years his senior. At six feet two inches, he is a threat in the air; but is also extremely adept with the ball at his

feet. If no club has snapped him up pre-tournament, they'll have to pay a premium to do so after.

Opinion

Poland's third 'golden generation' is a team titled as such without the success to back it up; and with some of their biggest names inching closer to retirement, 2022 is likely their last chance to achieve it.

Ultimately, the opening match against Mexico will be their bellwether: they need to win it to stand any chance of progressing from the group. Only twice before have the Poles won their opener at a major tournament - in 1974 and 2016 - and in both they progressed deep into the competition.

If the likes of Piotr Zielinski, Arek Milik and Sebastian Szymanski hit form, they should have enough to do so again; however, the second round is likely their limit.

FIXTURES

22⁰⁰ VS

26⁰⁰ VS

30⁰⁰ VS

FORMATION




PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker
say...
Last 16



Bet365
say...
150/1



STAR PLAYER
LEWANDOWSKI



With 13 goals in 14 games, Robert Lewandowski averages a goal every 82 minutes for Barcelona in La Liga this season.



WILD CARD
KIWIOR



DENMARK

With  @TokeTheilade



Denmark enter the World Cup as one of the outsiders - but with high hopes. After reaching the semi-finals at the Euros last year, the expectations for Danish dynamite are higher than ever and with good reason.

Kasper Hjulmand has a strong squad at his disposal and, as proved after Christian Eriksen's collapse at the Euros, there is a special bond between the players and fans that could help the Danes surpass their limitations.

Star Player

Although the collective is often emphasised when discussing the Danish team, it is impossible to overlook the importance of Christian Eriksen.

Still only 30 years old, the Manchester United midfielder has been part of the set-up since 2010, and he seems to get better and better.

With excellent technique, brilliant vision and

intelligence, Eriksen is the heartbeat and cornerstone of the Danish team and, as its central playmaker, everything goes through him.

A classic number 10, Eriksen is the Danes' chief set-piece taker and in addition to his creative qualities, his 39 goals for the national team illustrate that he carries a serious goal threat himself.

Wild Card

Young winger Andreas Skov Olsen has been excellent since joining Club Brugge in January last year. A former Danish Superliga topscorer at just 19 with Nordsjaelland, he has finally recaptured the form that made him one of Europe's most exciting young players a few years ago.

Still just 22, Olsen finished as Denmark's joint top scorer in qualification with five goals. Technically gifted and with a natural instinct for goals, he could move on to a bigger destination very soon.

Opinion

Hopes for this Danish team are high...maybe too high!

After their fairytale story at the Euros, they can't go under the radar again and the pressure to perform is much bigger than last year.

One additional concern is that many of Denmark's key players are struggling for form.

Schmeichel, Maehle and Delaney are all bench players at club level, and so are offensive aces such as Damsgaard and Dolberg.

The Danish continue to struggle to find a reliable striker, and they are dependent on midfielders and defenders contributing with goals - Skov Olsen and Maehle finished as joint top scorers in qualification.

Combine all of the factors above and Denmark may struggle to meet expectations; an exit in the round of 16 the most likely result.

SQUAD

Best WC finish
Quarter-finals 1998

Kasper Hjulmand	M
Kasper Schmeichel	GK
Oliver Christensen	GK
Frederik Ronnow	GK
Stryger Larsen	DF
Joakim Maehle	DF
Joachim Andersen	DF
Daniel Wass	DF
Victor Nelsson	DF
Robert Skov	DF
Rasmus Kristensen	DF
Andreas Christensen	DF
Alexander Bah	DF
Simon Kjaer	DF
Mathias Jensen	MF
Thomas Delaney	MF
Christian Eriksen	MF
Pierre Højbjerg	MF
Christian Norgaard	MF
Jonas Wind	FW
Kasper Dolberg	FW
Mikkel Damsgaard	FW
Andreas Cornelius	FW
Skov Olsen	FW
Yussuf Poulsen	FW
Jesper Lindstrom	FW
Martin Braithwaite	FW

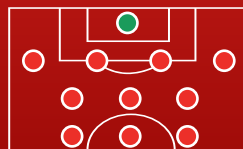
FIXTURES

22nd vs 

26th vs 

30th vs 

FORMATION



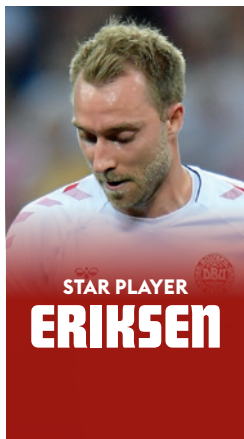
PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker
say...
Last 16



Bet365
say...
28/1



FRANCE

With  [playmaker_EN](#)

Crowned world champions in Moscow back in June 2018 after a 4-2 win over Croatia, France arrive in Qatar with hopes of becoming the first side to win back-to-back World Cups since Brazil in 1962.

With power, pace and quality dripping throughout their squad and a forward line featuring Karem Benzema and Kylian Mbappe, Les Bleus have every chance.

However, Didier Deschamps' side flirted with Nations League relegation recently and their first order of business will be to fend off the curse that has seen four of the last five holders (Germany, Spain, Italy and France themselves) sent packing in the group stages.

Star Player

Only a rare talent can take top billing away from 2022 Ballon D'Or winner Benzema, but Kylian Mbappe most certainly is.

Since breaking on to the scene as a mercurial teenager at Monaco, Mbappe has been the heir apparent to Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo as the 'Best Player in the World' - and the stage is set for the PSG star to usurp their throne in Qatar.

Blessed with the kind of pace that gives defenders nightmares, Mbappe is currently top of the goal charts in Ligue 1 and the Champions League, and he could tear the tournament to pieces if he hits top gear.

Wild Card

The enigmatic, but injured, Paul Pogba would have been a perfect fit for this category, but his absence could prove a blessing in disguise for France.

With N'Golo Kane also missing the World Cup through injury, the time seems ripe for Real Madrid star Eduardo Camavinga to establish himself as France's midfield lynchpin.

An outstanding athlete with impeccable technique, the 20-year-old is an absolute thoroughbred - the question is whether he can graduate from bit part to mainstay in Qatar.

Opinion

They may have a squad to die for, but France enter the tournament in bad form and with many convinced that manager Deschamps is unable to extract the best from his uber-talented roster.

As underlined by their Euro 2020 last 16 defeat to Switzerland on penalties, France appear to have a soft underbelly, which can be exposed when push comes to shove and there is plenty of room for improvement from a side who were recently outclassed twice in the Nations League by Group D opponents Denmark.

That said, it's always better to peak during the tournament rather than before it, and if Mbappe and Benzema click up front: watch out!




Best WC finish
Champions
1998, 2018

SQUAD

Didier Deschamps

Steve Mandanda	GK
Alphonse Aréola	GK
Hugo Lloris	GK
Jules Koundé	DF
Raphaél Varane	DF
Dayot Upamecano	DF
Theo Hernández	DF
Lucas Hernández	DF
Benjamin Pavard	DF
Axel Disasi	DF
William Saliba	DF
Ibrahima Konaté	DF
Aurélien Tchouaméni	MF
Mattéo Guendouzi	MF
Youssef Fofana	MF
Jordan Veretout	MF
Adrien Rabiot	MF
Eduardo Camavinga	MF
Christopher Nkunku	FW
Kylian Mbappé	FW
Ousmane Dembélé	FW
Kingsley Coman	FW
Karim Benzema	FW
Antoine Griezmann	FW
Olivier Giroud	FW
Marcus Thuram	FW

FIXTURES

22/11 vs 

26/11 vs 

30/11 vs 

FORMATION



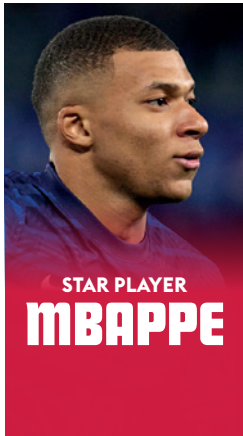
PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker
say...
Final



Bet365
say...
6/1



STAR PLAYER
MBAPPE



A survey of the fastest players across Europe's 'Top 5' leagues in 2022 ranked Kylian Mbappe sixth, with a top speed of 36.08 km/h.



WILD CARD
CAMAVINGA

AUSTRALIA

With Ipswich Town defender  @CamBurgess95



GROUP D



SQUAD

Best WC finish
Round of 16 2006

Graham Arnold	M
Andrew Redmayne	GK
Mathew Ryan	GK
Danny Vuković	GK
Nathaniel Atkinson	DF
Bailey Wright	DF
Thomas Deng	DF
Joel King	DF
Harry Souttar	DF
Milos Degenek	DF
Fran Karacic	DF
Kye Rowles	DF
Aziz Behich	DF
Awer Mabil	MF
Cameron Devlin	MF
Riley McGree	MF
Jackson Irvine	MF
Ajdin Hrustic	MF
Aaron Mooy	MF
Kenau Baccus	MF
Mitchell Duke	FW
Mathew Leckie	FW
Jamie MacLaren	FW
Garang Kuol	FW
Jason Cummings	FW
Martin Boyle	FW
Craig Goodwin	FW

After qualifying for their fifth consecutive World Cup, the wind was slightly taken out of Australian sails when they were drawn in a group almost identical to their 2018 World Cup group - familiar foes France and Denmark joined by Tunisia, rather than Peru, this winter in Qatar.

At Russia 2018, the Boys From Down Under exited at the group stages with a solitary point to their name, and they will have their work cut out if they are to turn history on its head.

They lack household names, but boss Graham Arnold will hope that a blend of youth and experience will help his charges stay competitive.

Star Player

Former Brighton goalkeeper Mat Ryan could be vital to how the Socceroos go in this tournament. Now at FC Copenhagen, Ryan is likely to be a key player - and a strong keeper on form

could breed confidence and be the difference maker for Australia.

Playing against current world champions France in their opening fixture, Ryan will need to be on his game and if he is, the Socceroos could spring a surprise.

Wild Card

This has to be 18-year-old Garang Kuol, who continues to make waves for Central Coast Mariners in the A-League after signing for Newcastle United - his transfer to the Magpies due to go through in January after the World Cup.

Kuol stole the show playing against Barcelona for the A-League All Star team - a fearless display against top class players suggesting his temperament is made for the big stage.

A 'bolter' whose emergence has coincided perfectly with this World Cup, Kuol is a game-changing talent who

could prove a bright spark for the Socceroos.

Opinion

Australia have been drawn in a very tough group, but the way their fixtures have fallen gives them a chance of qualifying for the knockout rounds.

Facing France first will suit the Aussies as they can give it a good go against one of the tournament favourites and hopefully catch them cold.

Their second game is a must win against Tunisia for Arnold's men to have a chance of qualifying for the next round. Depending on results, that could set up a deciding final game against Denmark.

Reaching the last 16 is a tall order - but it's definitely do-able!

FIXTURES

22/11 VS 

26/11 VS 

30/11 VS 

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker say...
Group stage



Bet365 say...
350/1



STAR PLAYER
RYAN



Tim Cahill remains Australia's all-time record goal scorer with 50 goals for The Socceroos.



WILD CARD
KUOL



TUNISIA

With  @TunisieFoot

The fantastically named 'Eagles of Carthage' had one of the easier flight paths to Qatar, as Jalel Kadri's side topped a group that consisted of Equatorial Guinea, Zambia and Mauritania before beating Mali 1-0 on aggregate in their World Cup play-off.

They have valuable experience in their ranks, with a host of players who helped Tunisia finish third in England's World Cup group in 2018, as well as some new blood looking to make an impact. The North Africans have never made the last 16 in six World Cup appearances, though, and history has a habit of repeating itself!

Star Player

Sidelined by a knee injury on the eve of the last World Cup, captain Youssef Msakni will be eager to make his mark in Qatar. With 87 caps, he is an experienced operator capable of influencing games at this level.

Accused by some of sacrificing his football ambitions for the sake of a

fat pay packet, Msakni may be a talent on the wane - but he will certainly feel at home during the tournament given that he plays his club football for Qatari side Al-Arabi.

The versatile attacker showed glimpses of his ability as Tunisia reached the last eight of the Africa Cup of Nations in January, and he has a reputation as a man for the big occasion.

Wild Card

Man Utd midfielder Hannibal Mejbri came to the attention of most English football fans last season when he made a brief cameo kicking Liverpool players around Anfield at the end of a demoralising 4-0 defeat for the Red Devils.

Occasionally over-zealous, but brimming with energy and personality, Mejbri is currently impressing on loan in the Championship with Birmingham and his defensive tenacity and technical ability mark him out as a burgeoning talent.

The 19-year-old already has nearly 20 caps and he will hope to impress those back

at Old Trafford by making an impact in Qatar.

Opinion

Drawn against France and Denmark, two of the 'Top 10' ranked sides in the world, Tunisia are clear underdogs in Group D along with Australia.

A 5-1 defeat to Brazil in a recent friendly showed that Tunisia will struggle to contain top class opposition and it will be interesting to see if manager Kadri favours a more attacking 4-3-3 or a safety-first 4-4-2.

The likes of 24-year-old Lorient defender Montassar Taibi, FC Koln midfielder Ellyes Skhiri and Ferencvaros' Aissi Laidouni will be key men and if Tunisia can play to their, primarily defensive, strengths they could spring an upset.

Getting points on the board against Denmark and Australia will be crucial ahead of Tunisia's final group game against France, who they have traditionally performed well against.



SQUAD

Best WC finish
Group stage

Jalel Kadri	M
Aymen Balbouli	GK
Aymen Dahmen	GK
Bechir Ben Said	GK
Mouez Hassen	DF
Bilel Ifa	DF
Montassar Talbi	DF
Yassine Meriah	DF
Dylan Bronn	DF
Ali Maâloul	DF
Mohamed Drager	DF
Ali Abdi	DF
Nader Ghandri	MF
Hannibal Mejbri	MF
Ferjani Sassi	MF
Aïssa Laidouni	MF
Mohamed Romdhane	MF
Ellyes Skhiri	MF
Ghaylen Chaaleli	MF
Wajdi Kechrida	MF
Naim Sliti	MF
Anis Slimane	MF
Youssef Msakni	FW
Issam Jebali	FW
Wahbi Khazri	FW
Taha Khenissi	FW
Seifeddine Jaziri	FW

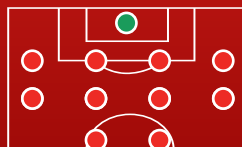
FIXTURES

22nd vs 

26th vs 

30th vs 

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS


Playmaker
say...
Group stage

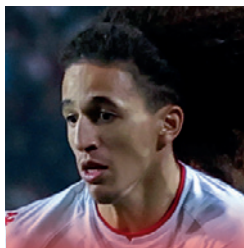

Bet365
say...
500/1



STAR PLAYER
MSAKNI



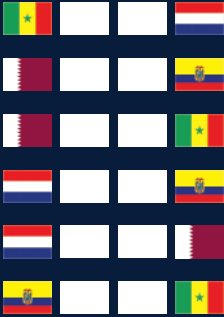
Hannibal Mejbri is the only Tunisian player ever to represent Manchester United. He has made three senior appearances for the Red Devils.



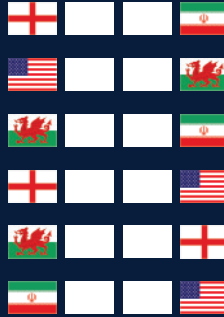
WILD CARD
MEJBRI

GROUP GAMES

GROUP A



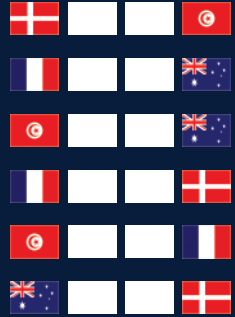
GROUP B



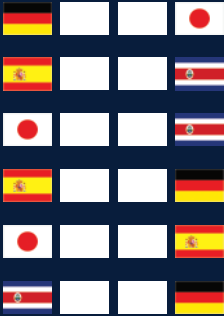
GROUP C



GROUP D



GROUP E



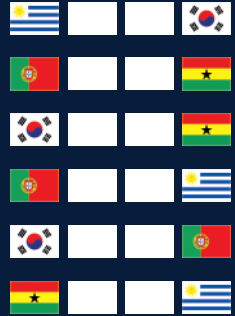
GROUP F



GROUP G



GROUP H



ROUND OF 16

WINNER A

RUNNER UP B

WINNER B

RUNNER UP A

WINNER C

RUNNER UP D

WINNER D

RUNNER UP C

WINNER E

RUNNER UP F

RUNNER UP F

RUNNER UP E

WINNER G

RUNNER UP H

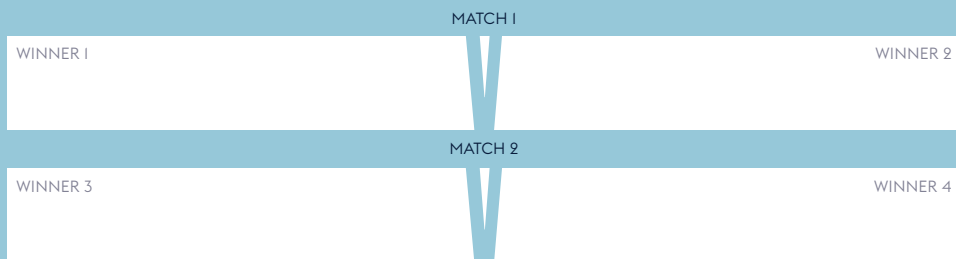
WINNER H

RUNNER UP G

QUARTER FINALS

























SEMI FINALS



THE FINAL



THE CHAMPIONS

1930:		1970:	 3	2002:	 5
1934:		1974:	 (WEST) 2	2006:	 4
1938:	 2	1978:		2010:	
1950:	 2	1982:	 3	2014:	 4
1954:	 (WEST)	1986:	 2	2018:	 2
1958:		1990:	 (WEST) 3	2022:	 ?
1962:	 2	1994:	 4		
1966:		1998:			

SPAIN

With [@pabloegea](#) from [@marca](#)



GROUP E



Best WC finish
Champions 2010

SQUAD

Luis Enrique	M
Robert Sánchez	GK
David Raya	GK
Unai Simón	GK
Dani Carvajal	DF
Aymeric Laporte	DF
Eric García	DF
César Azpilicueta	DF
Hugo Guillamón	DF
José Gayà	DF
Jordi Alba	DF
Pau Torres	DF
Rodrí Hernández	MF
Pablo Gavi	MF
Koke	MF
Pedri González	MF
Dani Olmo	MF
Carlos Soler	MF
Marcos Llorente	MF
Sergio Busquets	MF
Marco Asensio	FW
Ansu Fati	FW
Yérémy Pino	FW
Álvaro Morata	FW
Nico Williams	FW
Ferrán Torres	FW
Pablo Sarabia	FW

Spain no longer carry the same kind of fear factor that they have done previously over the past decade. Perhaps that's down to a lack of firepower, but La Roja are still a strong tactical unit with undoubtedly one of the best midfields in the tournament.

Under Luis Enrique, Spain reached the semi-finals of the Euros and the final of the Nations League, perhaps they can go one better this year?

Star Player

Pedri will spend his last days as a teenager at the World Cup, with the Barcelona player turning 20 midway through the group stage. Of course, on the pitch his age has never been an issue. The midfielder's superb passing and creativity will

see him as the man to unlock even the meanest defences.

Pedri was named the best young player at Euro 2022 and made the Team of the Tournament. It wouldn't be surprising if he replicated that feat in Qatar – especially considering he has been great again for Barcelona so far this season and will surely continue that form into the World Cup as well.

Wild Card

Unsurprisingly, Pablo Sarabia hasn't been getting as much game time as he or Luis Enrique would like at Paris Saint-Germain so far this season. Last year the attacker was prolific on loan at Sporting, having his best campaign since his breakthrough season at Sevilla. While for the national team, Sarabia has

scored five and assisted once in his last 10 games for Spain.

Although the 30-year is almost like a forgotten man at his club, his quality still remains. A definite wild card.

Opinion

Spain aren't the out-and-out favourites anymore but they're still one of the strongest teams in the tournament. The group stage won't be easy, but La Roja should progress to the latter stages.

Luis Enrique is arguably the best manager at the World Cup and he has some outstanding players and a lot of squad depth at his disposal. Getting to at least the semi-finals this year will be expected, even if the competition is fierce.

FIXTURES

23⁰⁰ VS

27⁰⁰ VS

1⁰⁰/12 VS

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker
say...
Last 16



Bet365
say...
17/2



STAR PLAYER
PEDRI



Pedri recorded 31 key passes at Euro 2020 - a dozen more than any other player.



WILD CARD
SARABIA



COSTA RICA

With  @crcfutbol

Costa Rica ended World Cup qualifying in near-perfect form, winning seven of their last eight matches. There is a sense of optimism around the team and a strong belief in Luis Fernando Suarez's ability to secure results.

Sharing a group with Japan, Germany, and Spain has drawn comparisons back to 2014 – when Costa Rica topped a group that included Italy, Uruguay, and England. A few names from 2014 will still be there, with Suarez opting for a mix of the old guard like Bryan Ruiz combined with more exciting youngsters like Brandon Aguilera.

Star Player

Keylor Navas does not have marketable value for Europe's biggest clubs, but he is still the most irreplaceable player for Costa Rica. According to the stats, in 14 World Cup qualifiers, Costa Rica's opponents were expected to score 12 goals based on shots on target, but they only netted six.



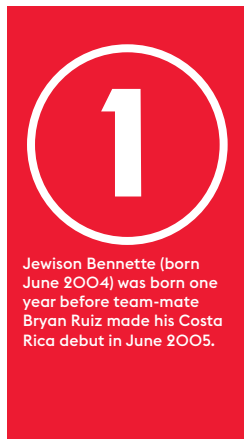
STAR PLAYER
NAVAS

For as much credit as Costa Rica's defence gets for a stingy goals-against-average, it was Navas' heroics that allowed them to reach an intercontinental play-off with New Zealand. Matched against the attacking might of Spain, Germany, and Japan, Navas will undoubtedly be called upon again.

Wild Card

Jewison Bennette announced himself on the global stage in Costa Rica's 1-0 victory over New Zealand. He showed every bit of the pace and composure synonymous with his game, assisting Joel Campbell for the matchwinner.

Despite not carrying many international caps, he qualified for an English work permit and joined Sunderland in the summer transfer window. At only 18, he has made several appearances in the Championship – including scoring the equaliser against Watford in just his second appearance for the Mackems.



Jewison Bennette (born June 2004) was born one year before team-mate Bryan Ruiz made his Costa Rica debut in June 2005.

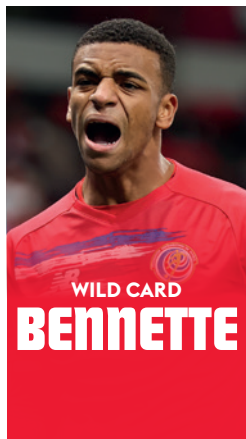
Opinion

Comparisons to 2014 are inevitable. Unfortunately, the results will probably not follow in 2022.

The other 31 nations at the World Cup are constructing the most competitive squads possible and the same cannot be said for Costa Rica.

Luis Fernando Suarez's player selection is limited to domestic players and players abroad who featured in World Cup qualifying. More deserving names will not be present in Qatar. Given his persistence to leave out his best options in multiple positions (Manfred Ugalde, Cristian Gamboa, Randall Leal etc.) the brutal reality for Costa Rica in Group E is that there is small room for optimism.

Defensive structure based on an impenetrable low-block, sprinkled with a bit of Navas magic, is the only recipe for success in Qatar.



WILD CARD
BENNETTE

GROUP E



SQUAD

Best WC finish
Quarter-finals 2014

Luis Fernando Suárez	M
Estebán Alvarado	gk
Patrick Sequeira	GK
Keylor Navas	GK
Keysher Fuller	DF
Francisco Calvo	DF
Kendall Waston	DF
Douglas López	DF
Ronald Matarrita	DF
Bryan Oviedo	DF
Juan Pablo Vargas	DF
Carlos Martínez	DF
Oscar Duarte	DF
Yeltsin Tejeda	MF
Celso Borges	MF
Gerson Torres	MF
Álvaro Zamora	MF
Youstin Salas	MF
Roan Wilson	MF
Johan Venegas	MF
Brandon Aguilera	MF
Jewison Bennette	MF
Daniel Chacón	MF
Anthony Hernández	FW
Anthony Contreras	FW
Joel Campbell	FW
Bryan Ruiz	FW

FIXTURES

23⁰⁰ VS 

27⁰⁰ VS 

1⁰⁰/₁₂ VS 

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS


Playmaker
say...
Group stage


Bet365
say...
750/1



GERMANY

With  @BVBbuzz



GROUP E



Best WC finish
Champions 1954,
1974, 1990, 2014

SQUAD

Hansi Flick

Kevin Trapp	M GK
Marc ter Stegen	GK
Manuel Neuer	GK
Lukas Klostermann	DF
Thilo Kehrer	DF
Christian Gunter	DF
Matthias Ginter	DF
Armel Kotchap	DF
Nico Schlotterbeck	DF
Antonio Rudiger	DF
David Raum	DF
Niklas Sule	DF
Ilkay Gundogan	MF
Jamal Musiala	MF
Jonas Hofmann	MF
Joshua Kimmich	MF
Marlo Götzke	MF
Leon Goretzka	MF
Julian Brandt	MF
Kai Havertz	FW
Karim Adeyemi	FW
Youssef Moukoko	FW
Leroy Sané	FW
Serge Gnabry	FW
Niclas Fullkrug	FW
Thomas Müller	FW

Germany are coming off a rather underwhelming Nations League campaign and will feel disappointed not to have made the play-offs. But Hansi Flick is regarded very highly having led the team to a stunning unbeaten run previously.

Die Mannschaft is a team with a great mix of youth and experience at the moment. And while they have underperformed in recent tournaments, including a disastrous Euro 2020, they have recovered well and there is plenty to be excited about going into the World Cup.

Star Player

There are a number of quality players in the squad, but no one is more important to the team than Joshua Kimmich. The Bayern Munich star is a Swiss Army knife of a player and can make an impact regardless of what role he is playing. Still only 27, Kimmich has enjoyed glittering success with Bayern and now he will be determined to play a

leading role in Germany's World Cup bid.

Not only does Kimmich have a great passing range, but he is also capable of carrying the ball forward under pressure, breaking the lines with his passes, and also halting opposition attacks. He is one of the shrewdest players in the squad, and will no doubt be the first name on the team sheet.

Wild Card

Jamal Musiala is set for a massive World Cup. The Bayern Munich attacking midfielder has been in incredible form in the Bundesliga this season and could announce himself on the world stage in a Thomas Müller-esque manner.

Musiala has 11 goals and eight assists to his name in 20 appearances this season, and he will have a crucial role to play in the absence of Timo Werner. The 19-year-old can play through the middle or out wide, and his movement in tight spaces makes life

difficult for opposition defences. Musiala no doubt has a very bright future and this could be the next big step in his development.

Opinion

Germany aren't one of the top favourites to win the World Cup, but there is real optimism that they can make a deep run in the tournament. In order to do that, they must progress from a difficult group.

Not having Werner available is a big blow and it will be interesting to see if Flick decides to replace him with a natural centre-forward or goes with a false nine. For a successful World Cup, Germany will depend on the Bayern quartet of Kimmich, Müller, Musiala, and Leroy Sané to find a way past opposition defences even without potentially having a quality striker in the box.

Germany will need their inconsistent defence and world-class midfield to step up if they want to have a successful tournament.

FIXTURES

23/11 VS 

27/11 VS 

1/12 VS 

FORMATION



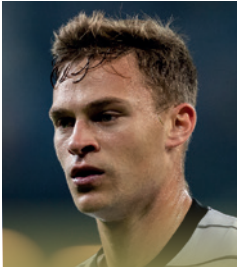
PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker
say...
Quarters




Bet365
say...
10/1



STAR PLAYER
KIMMICH



Jamal Musiala has scored 20 league goals for Bayern as a teenager – a record held with club legend Uli Hoernes.



WILD CARD
MUSIALA



JAPAN

With  @jleagueregista



GROUP E



Best WC finish
Round of 16 2002,
2010, 2018

SQUAD

Hajime Moriyasu	M
Eiji Kawashima	GK
Shuichi Gonda	GK
Daniel SchMFt	GK
Takehiro Tomiyasu	DF
Shogo Taniguchi	DF
Yuto Nagatomo	DF
Miki Yamane	DF
Maya Yoshida	DF
Hiroki Sakai	DF
Hiroki Ito	DF
Ko Itakura	DF
Junya Ito	MF
Ritsu Doan	MF
Wataru Endo	MF
Hidemasa Morita	MF
Ao Tanaka	MF
Daichi Kamada	MF
Takefusa Kubo	MF
Takumi Minamoto	MF
Kaoru Mitoma	MF
Gaku Shibasaki	MF
Yuki Soma	MF
Takuma Asano	FW
Daizen Maeda	FW
Ayase Ueda	FW

Japan have become a regular fixture at the World Cup since their first appearance in 1998 and have always got the ability to cause an upset. However, being in a tough group will make it some achievement for Hajime Moriyasu's team to make it into the knock-out stage.

Surprisingly, the manager has plenty of doubters with his set style of play that leaves the likes of Celtic's Kyogo Furuhashi out in the cold. When it comes to tournament football though, there's something to be said about having a proven system.

Star Player

Kaoru Mitoma is making his name in England after a solid season in Belgium last year. The Brighton & Hove Albion winger will be a key part of Japan's attacking output and his kind of creativity and

unpredictability could be a game changer.

As well as impressing in the Premier League already, the 25-year-old has proven his worth for the national team too. In eight games for the Samurai Blue in 2022, Mitoma scored five times. Japan aren't blessed with strikers so that kind of firepower will be essential for progression.

Wild Card

Wataru Endo and Hidemasa Morita are likely to be the two in a 4-2-3-1 system for Japan but fans will be hoping to see a glimpse of Ao Tanaka in that role as well – whether as a six or an eight.

The 24-year-old is currently playing his trade in the 2. Bundesliga for Fortuna Dusseldorf but his all-round game is likely to move to a bigger league sooner rather

than later. A good World Cup will help.

Opinion

It's a time of transition for Japan. On average, quality-wise, this is the best national team the country has ever brought to a WC even if there are no major names like Keisuke Honda and Shinji Kagawa. Tomiyasu, Mitoma, and Kamada are all potential stars in the making, but no one has worldwide recognition yet.

Moriyasu's methods have underlined this development, playing a wait-and-see brand of football, very different from the tradition Japan established in the last decade.

Japan have a chance, but overcoming Germany and Spain will be a massive task. The opening match will be the key one.

FIXTURES

23⁰⁰ VS 

27⁰⁰ VS 

1⁰⁰/12 VS 

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS



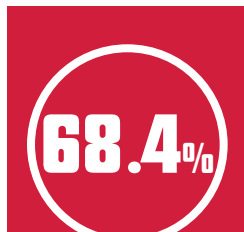
Playmaker
say...
Group stage



Bet365
say...
250/1



STAR PLAYER
MITOMA



Hajime Moriyasu has a winning rate of 68.42% as Japan manager; no one has a better record for the Samurai Blue.



WILD CARD
TANAKA



BELGIUM

With  @BelgianPodcast



The Belgian Red Devils are currently regarded as one of the strongest sides in international football despite failing to secure a major trophy with what many consider to be an extremely talented squad.

There is a general feeling that the so-called 'Golden Generation' may have missed their best opportunity for glory and Qatar is unquestionably the last opportunity. However, the future looks very bright with some serious talent waiting in the wings...

Star Player

Romelu Lukaku is indispensable to this side in many respects, offering a lethal combination of pace, power and finishing when fully fit. His overall international stats speak for themselves: Lukaku has scored 68 goals in 103 appearances for Belgium.

The striker has proven his ability to deliver at the highest level with the player now back at Inter, where he has netted 66 goals in 100 games.

Lukaku must remain fully fit and sharp for the Red Devils to make serious progress - he has the ability to be one of the stars of the tournament.

Wild Card

19-year-old Anderlecht centre back Zeno Debast has recently made the jump to the Red Devils having featured in two Nations League fixtures already this season.

Roberto Martinez has been hugely impressed by the rapid progress of Les Mauves' defensive prodigy. The teenager has become a mainstay of the current Anderlecht side and could well secure himself a place in the team at this World Cup.

Opinion

Historically, the Red Devils have done better at major tournaments when little is expected of them, and there is a feeling that the moment has passed for this generation.

There remain major concerns about whether the ageing defence is good enough and it remains the side's weak link despite its offensive output. Fans have worried for some time that the backline has not been reinvigorated with emerging talent. The team also finds itself on the difficult side of the draw, which means they will have to do it the hard way.

It is essential for Belgium's fortunes that world-class players such as Thibaut Courtois, Kevin De Bruyne, Eden Hazard, and Lukaku all remain fully fit. The minimum expectation is to qualify from the group.

GROUP F



SQUAD

Best WC finish
Third place 2018

Roberto Martínez	M
Simon Mignolet	GK
Thibaut Courtois	GK
Koen Casteels	GK
Zeno Debast	DF
Jan Vertonghen	DF
Thomas Meunier	DF
Toby Alderweireld	DF
Wout Faes	DF
Timothy Castagne	DF
Arthur Theate	DF
Leander Dendoncker	MF
Kevin De Bruyne	MF
Yannick Carrasco	MF
Amadou Onana	MF
Hans Vanaken	MF
Axel Witsel	MF
Youri Tielemans	MF
Dries Mertens	FW
De Ketelaere	FW
Romelu Lukaku	FW
Michy Batshuayi	FW
Jérémy Doku	FW
Lois Openda	FW
Leandro Trossard	FW
Eden Hazard	FW
Thorgan Hazard	FW

FIXTURES

23⁰⁰ VS 

27⁰⁰ VS 

1¹² VS 

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS

 **Playmaker say...**
Semi-final

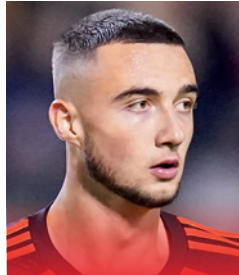
 **Bet365 say...**
16/1



STAR PLAYER
LUKAKU



Eight of the top ten all-time appearance makers for Belgium are still currently active for the Red Devils.



WILD CARD
DEBAST



CANADA

With @ENBSports



GROUP F



SQUAD

Best WC finish
Group stage

John Herdman	M
Dayne St. Clair	GK
James Pantemis	GK
Milan Borjan	GK
Derek Cornelius	DF
Sam Adegugbe	DF
Alistair Johnston	DF
Steven Vitória	DF
Kamal Miller	DF
Joel Waterman	DF
Richie Laryea	DF
Alphonso Davies	DF
Ismaël Koné	MF
Stephen Eustaquio	MF
Samuel Piette	MF
Jonathan Osorio	MF
Liam Fraser	MF
Mark-Anthony Kaye	MF
Atiba Hutchinson	MF
David Wotherspoon	MF
Iké Ugbo	FW
Jonathan David	FW
Tajon Buchanan	FW
Liam Millar	FW
Cyle Larin	FW
Junior Hoilett	FW
Lucas Cavallini	FW

Englishman John Herdman oversaw Canada qualifying with surprising ease for the 2022 World Cup after dominating the CONCACAF qualifying groups – including iconic victories over the United States and Mexico.

The former Women's team coach took over the Men's team in 2018, bringing in an aggressive style of play and overseeing the emergence of young talent that has seen the Canucks reach new heights ahead of being one of the host countries for the 2026 tournament.

Star Players

Canada would not be at this World Cup if it was not for the rapid development of both Bayern's Alphonso Davies and Lille's Jonathan David. Both players' families emigrated to Canada before their potential was discovered at age 12. They then both went through an academy system to become the stars they are today.

Great Canadian athletes aren't a new thing, but they're usually found in ice hockey, basketball, or baseball. So, having football stars is a fresh experience for Canadian fans and there is a lot of hope that both players can have an impact in Qatar and raise the profile of football across the country.

Wild Card

There are a lot of players unknown to world football playing for Canada in this World Cup, although many are looking to use the tournament as a stepping stone to follow Davies and David to a big European club.

The newest wonderkid getting a lot of attention is 20-year-old Ismaël Kone. Kone was playing local amateur youth soccer in Quebec three years ago before CF Montreal snapped him up. European clubs have already looked at buying the athletic box-

to-box midfielder and with a high-profile World Cup, a potential transfer fee could rise above \$20 million.

Opinion

Herdman chooses to play a high-pressing system with a lot of athletic players who can run at a high pace for the full 90 minutes. That energy coupled with the individual ability of the team's key players will make Canada a difficult team to face.

Where they have shown weaknesses is in more of the basic fundamentals of the game, which could lead to goals being leaked through losing aerial duels, giving away fouls or poor decision-making.

For these reasons, Canada are likely to fall short of the knockout stages, but will continue to be an exciting story leading up to 2026.

FIXTURES

23⁰⁰ VS

27⁰⁰ VS

1/12 VS

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker
say...
Group stage



Bet365
say...
200/1



STAR PLAYERS
DAVIES & DAVID



John Herdman is the first manager to lead both a men's and women's national team to the World Cup.



WILD CARD
KONÉ



MOROCCO

With  @MVN_EN



SQUAD

Best WC finish
Round of 16 1986

Walid Regragui	M
Munir Mohamedi	GK
Ahmed Tagnaouti	GK
Yassine Bono	GK
Achraf Hakimi	DF
Achraf Dari	DF
Noussair Mazraoui	DF
Jawad El Yamiq	DF
Badr Benoun	DF
Nayef Aguerd	DF
Yahia Attiyat Allah	DF
Hakim Ziyech	MF
Selim Amallah	MF
Azzedine Ounahi	MF
Yahya Jabrane	MF
Sofiane Boufal	MF
Bilal El Khannouss	MF
Ilias Chair	MF
Abdelhamid Sabiri	MF
Sofyan Amrabat	MF
Romain Saïss	MF
Amine Harit	MF
Abderazzak Hamdallah	FW
Walid Cheddida	FW
Abde Ezzalzouli	FW
Youssef En-Nesyri	FW
Zakaria Aboukhlal	FW

Walid Regragui only took over as the coach of Morocco in August of this year, but the former Atlas Lions international will be looking to lead his team to the round of 16 for the first time since 1986.

With star power from the likes of Achraf Hakimi and the returning Hakim Ziyech coupled with a signature high-pressure style of play, there is room for cautious optimism among Moroccan fans.

Star Player

Now 29, Ziyech returned to the national team this year after being exiled under the previous manager, Wahid Halilhodžić. Ziyech could have been the missing piece in Morocco's AFCON 2021 campaign and it's clear he can make a difference to the team. The winger possesses the

technical skill as well as experience having already featured at the 2018 World Cup.

Ziyech's lack of playing time at Chelsea is worrying for both the player and his manager, but an impressive tournament would be highly beneficial for Ziyech who is his country's joint 6th top scorer of all time.

Wild Card

Achraf Hakimi is no stranger to the football world. The wing-back is one of the best in his position in recent years, having won trophies at every club he has played for.

Despite his tender years, Hakimi has already played 53 international games: scoring eight goals and providing seven assists. With his speed, drive, and

excellent free-kicks he will be a key part of Morocco's World Cup.

Opinion

Moroccans always have faith in their national team, but The Atlas Lions may well be a surprise package at the World Cup with a former international as head coach.

Success will depend a lot on key players like Ziyech, Hakimi, Mazraoui, Abde Ez and Saïss, and they will need to excel at both ends of the pitch. Coach Walid Regragui has a clear philosophy and cares about team chemistry - it now remains to be seen if he has hit upon a winning formula.

Much will depend on the first group match against Croatia. If Morocco manage to win that, they will be in a strong position.

FIXTURES

23⁰⁰ VS 

27⁰⁰ VS 

1¹² VS 

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS



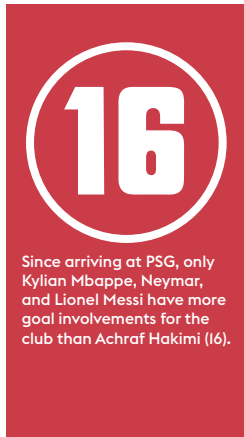
Playmaker
say...
Group stage



Bet365
say...
200/1



STAR PLAYER
ZIYECH



Since arriving at PSG, only Kylian Mbappe, Neymar, and Lionel Messi have more goal involvements for the club than Achraf Hakimi (16).



WILD CARD
HAKIMI

CROATIA

With @CroatiaFooty

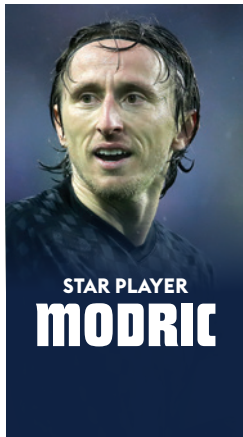
After a very successful Nations League campaign that saw them qualify for the final four, most Croatian fans are united behind coach Zlatko Dalic and his team.

The 2018 World Cup runners-up will be looking for another strong showing in Qatar. Their recent Nations League success included a win over France, which provided some small measure of revenge for their 4-2 defeat in Moscow four years ago.

Replicating their glorious run in Russia will be very difficult, but that will be the aim for a team that is technically and tactically savvy.

Star Player

It's impossible not to pick Luka Modric as the Star Player, even at the age of 37, he's still vital for both Real Madrid and his country. Remarkably, Modric is still playing at the same level he did in 2018



STAR PLAYER
MODRIC

when he won almost every prize imaginable.

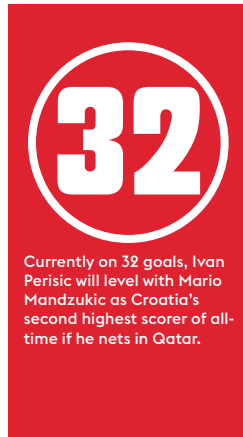
In 2022, the midfielder has provided goals and assists for Real and Croatia. It's a year that has seen him win the Champions League and guide his country to an excellent Nations League campaign.

Modric is expected to deliver once again in what is likely to be his last World Cup appearance - although it's hard to see him slowing down any time soon!

Wild Card

Despite being just 20-years-old, Josko Gvardiol has become vital for both Croatia and RB Leipzig and he is already a world-class centre-back.

The ball-playing defender was a stand-out performer in Croatia's games against Denmark and Austria this year, with his assured calmness on the ball and ability to time his tackles.



Currently on 32 goals, Ivan Perisic will level with Mario Mandzukic as Croatia's second highest scorer of all-time if he nets in Qatar.

Meanwhile, for his club, Gvardiol scored in Leipzig's 3-2 Champions League victory over Real Madrid to send his stock soaring.

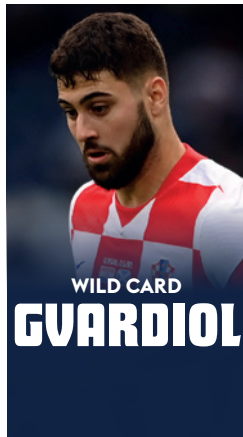
Opinion

Croatia fans maybe haven't been on this kind of a high ever - despite a last 16 exit to Spain at Euro 2020.

The spirit of 2018 is still alive and big things are expected back in Croatia this World Cup.

Zlatko Dalic looks to have the players to fit his system and it appears as if the Croats will battle it out with Belgium for top spot in the group.

A lack of injury problems going into the tournament is a huge bonus though they will need their midfield trio of Modric, Brozovic, and Kovacic to maintain form and fitness if they are to reach the latter stages.



WILD CARD
GVARDIOL

GROUP F



SQUAD

Best WC finish
Runners-up 2018

Zlatko Dalić	M
Dominik Livakovic	GK
Ivica Ivusic	GK
Ivo Grbic	GK
Josip Sutalo	DF
Josko Gvardiol	DF
Borna Sosa	DF
Josip Juranovic	DF
Domagoj Vida	DF
Josip Stanisic	DF
Dejan Lovren	DF
Borna Barisic	DF
Martin Erlic	DF
Nikola Vlasic	MF
Ivan Perisic	MF
Mario Pasalic	MF
Luka Sucic	MF
Mateo Kovacic	MF
Kristijan Jakic	MF
Marcelo Brozovic	MF
Luka Modric	MF
Lovro Majer	MF
Bruno Petkovic	FW
Mislav Orsic	FW
Ante Budimir	FW
Andrej Kramaric	FW
Marko Livaja	FW

FIXTURES

23⁰⁰ VS

27⁰⁰ VS

1/12 VS

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker
say...
Last 16



Bet365
say...
50/1



BRAZIL

With Eduardo Massa [@ogolcombr](#)

A star-studded Selecao claimed World Cup glory in South Korea 20 years ago to reinforce Brazil's status as the best footballing country on the planet.

Although the crop of 2022 don't have players of the same ilk and wow factor as Ronaldo, Rivaldo or Ronaldinho, they do arrive in Qatar in great form and with a fantastic team ethic instilled by coach Tite.

This unity, a winning blend of youth and experience, and arguably the two trickiest customers in world football, mean Brazil are - as ever - one of the favourites!

Star Player

Serially controversial, Neymar divides opinions like no other player on the planet. Whatever your take on his lifestyle, haircuts, regular strops and tiresome theatrics, what is impossible to deny is his outrageous natural talent.

For a player who too often appears to lack focus, this

World Cup looks to have provided it - the gifted playmaker arriving in Qatar as the most productive player in Ligue 1 this season.

Despite the nagging sense that he has underachieved, the 30-year-old PSG star has won the lot at club level - and his dedication to arrive at the tournament in the best possible form suggests he is gunning for the ultimate prize. Beware World, Ney is coming for you!

Wild Card

A vital player for European champions Real Madrid, Vinicius Junior is yet to establish himself to the same extent at international level despite plenty of opportunity.

Tite has placed plenty of trust in Brazil's 'NextGen' of Vini', his Real team-mate Rodrigo, Antony and Martinelli - but none of them are certain starters.

A return of one goal in 16 internationals underlines that Vinicius Jr has yet to find his feet for Brazil

and, with Neymar often deployed in similar areas of the pitch, the 22-year-old is often sacrificed against stronger opposition.

That such an exceptional talent can be benched shows both the depth of this Brazil squad, and Tite's tactical flexibility.


Opinion

Tradition, talent, youth, experience, tactical nous and a manager who knows what he is doing...Brazil have all the ingredients to win in Qatar.

After a tremendous qualifying stage, Brazil have only tasted defeat three times between Russia 2018 and now - and two of those losses were against Messi's Argentina, another valid contender.

In terms of individual quality, only maybe France have more 'resources', but even Les Bleus lack the stability that Brazil currently have.


Brazil have not arrived at a World Cup in such fine fettle since... 2002.



STAR PLAYER
NEYMAR



Neymar has scored 75 goals in 121 matches for Brazil - he needs three goals to overtake Pele (77 goals) as his country's all-time record scorer.



WILD CARD
VINICIUS JR

GROUP G



Best WC finish
Champions 1958, 1962, 1970, 1994, 2002

SQUAD

Tite

Alisson Becker
Weverton
Ederson Moraes
Danilo
Thiago Silva
Marquinhos
Alex Sandro
Dani Alves
Éder Militão
Alex Telles
Bremer
Casemiro
Lucas Paquetá
Fred
Fabinho
Bruno Guimarães
Éverton Ribeiro
Richarlison
Neymar
Raphinha
Antony
Gabriel Jesus
Vinicius Júnior
Rodrigo
Gabriel Martinelli
Pedro

M

GK
GK
GK
DF
DF
DF
DF
DF
DF
DF
DF
MF
MF
MF
MF
FW
FW
FW
FW
FW
FW
FW

FIXTURES

24th vs

28th vs

2nd vs

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS

Playmaker say...
Semi-final

Bet365 say...
4/1



SERBIA

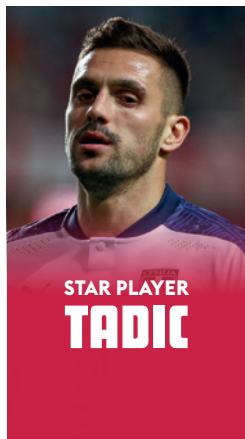
With  @SerbianFooty

Serbia will have a spring in their step after topping their qualifying group without suffering a single defeat. An achievement that was followed by promotion to Division A in the Nations League.

Manager Dragan Stojkovic was appointed in 2021 and he has been a breath of fresh air for Serbia. His style of play suits the players at his disposal and the results are there for all to see. 20 games, 13 wins, a ticket to Qatar, and Nations League promotion. You can't do much better than that...

Star Player

Despite the two tanks up front, Aleksandar Mitrovic and Dusan Vlahovic, Dusan Tadic is the true heart of this team. His experience (90 caps and counting) and creative quality make the 33-year-old almost irreplaceable.



STAR PLAYER
TADIC

The Ajax man has already provided nine assists and three goals for his club so far this season – although his goalscoring record hasn't hit the heights of previous years just yet. If Serbia want to progress in the tournament much will depend on the midfielder.

Wild Card

He's probably the biggest name in the squad, especially after his £67m transfer to Juventus back in January of this year, but it's easy to forget that Dusan Vlahovic is still just 22-years-old.

This tournament is his first real opportunity to showcase his talent on the international stage and there's no better place than a World Cup to announce yourself to the globe.

Vlahovic has made a promising start to life in



Aleksandar Mitrovic is the most prolific goal scorer across England's top four tiers in 2022 with 30 goals (followed by Harry Kane on 25).



GROUP G



Best WC finish
Fourth place
1930, 1962

SQUAD

Dragan Stojković	M
Marko Dmitrovic	GK
Vanja Milinkovic-Savic	GK
Marko Ilic	GK
Stefan Mitrovic	DF
Strahinja Pavlovic	DF
Milos Veljkovic	DF
Filip Mladenovic	DF
Aleksa Terzic	DF
Srdan Babic	DF
Nikola Milenkovic	DF
Matija Nastasic	DF
Dusan Tadic	MF
Filip Kostic	MF
Nemanja Maksimovic	MF
Nemanja Radonjic	MF
Filip Duricic	MF
Sasa Lukic	MF
Andrija Zivkovic	MF
Darko Lazovic	MF
Sergej Milinkovic-Savic	MF
Nemandja Gudelj	MF
Marko Grujic	MF
Uros Racic	MF
Aleksandar Mitrovic	FW
Luka Jovic	FW
Dusan Vlahovic	FW

Turin and will want to live up to his billing as one of the best strikers in Europe right now.

Opinion

Serbia have experience, a balanced squad, and a manager who seems to be getting his message across.

Another factor that bodes well for the Serbians is that the backbone of their squad is entering its prime – making this a unique opportunity for a very talented generation.

Since the breakup of Yugoslavia, Serbia have been to two World Cups (2010 and 2018) without progressing past the group stage.

Making the knockout stages would therefore be a big achievement - and the Serbs have all the tools to pull it off.

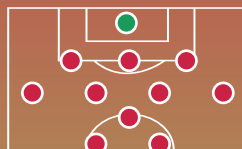
FIXTURES

24th vs 

28th vs 

2nd/12 vs 

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker
say...
Quarters



Bet365
say...
80/1



WILD CARD
VLAHOVIC





SWITZERLAND

With [@Bolzpazz](#)



Switzerland qualified as group winners for their fifth straight World Cup – ahead of European Champions Italy.

Following the Swiss' historic quarter-final appearance at Euro 2020, Murat Yakin took over the manager position from Vladimir Petkovic and he has quickly won over the fans.

His side is tactically clever, confident, hard to break down and versatile going forward. The Swiss are on a roll and will be eyeing up another appearance in the last eight of a major tournament.

Star Player

Switzerland skipper Granit Xhaka has already earned 106 caps for his nation and the Arsenal midfielder arrives in Qatar in arguably the best form of his life.

While his Premier League career has seen many ups

and downs, his status as a key player for Switzerland has never been in doubt. Xhaka possesses fantastic passing ability and vision and his thunderous left foot is always a threat from long range.

Swiss players of Xhaka's calibre don't come around too often and if the Nati want to impress on the global stage this winter, he will need to step up.

Wild Card

There are a couple of promising young Swiss players on the rise, but Noah Okafor is the pick of the bunch.

The RB Salzburg attacker burst onto the international stage with a number of great performances in the Champions League and he has quickly established himself as an integral part of Yakin's front three.

Explosive, fearless and deadly in the box, the

22-year-old will be Switzerland's most exciting young prospect in Qatar. Keep an eye on him!

Opinion

Switzerland have qualified for major tournaments with astonishing regularity and also possess a remarkable habit of negotiating the group stages.

This continuity and occasional big results against the top nations have earned the Nati a place among Europe's elite.

Setting such standards has fuelled expectations and Swiss fans will view a group stage exit as a failure.

Reaching the round of 16 will be their goal – but it won't be easy: Brazil, Serbia and Cameroon are strong opponents and will put Switzerland to the test.

Best WC finish
Quarter-finals 1934,
1938, 1954

SQUAD

Murat Yakin	M
Philipp Kohn	GK
Gregor Kobel	GK
Jonas Omlin	GK
Yann Sommer	GK
Manuel Akanji	DF
Ricardo Rodríguez	DF
Eray Comert	DF
Fabian Schar	DF
Nico Elvedi	DF
Silvan Widmer	DF
Remo Freuler	MF
Granit Xhaka	MF
Edi Fernandes	MF
Djibril Sow	MF
Michel Aebischer	MF
Rubén Aegvas	MF
Fabian Frei	MF
Fabian Rieder	MF
Denis Zakaria	MF
Ardon Jashari	MF
Xherdan Shaqiri	FW
Breel Embolo	FW
Noah Okafor	FW
Renato Steffen	FW
Christian Fasnacht	FW
Haris Seferovic	FW

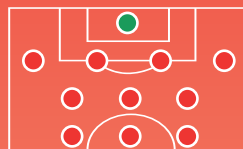
FIXTURES

24th vs

28th vs

2nd/12 vs

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS

Playmaker
say...
Group stage

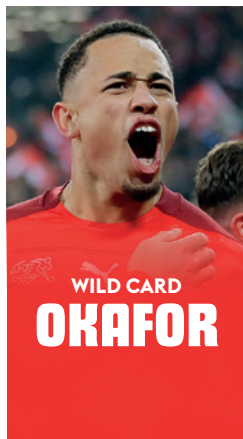
Bet365
say...
100/1



STAR PLAYER
XHAKA



Since he joined Arsenal in 2016/17, Granit Xhaka has been the most booked player in the Premier League with 54 yellow cards.



WILD CARD
OKAFOR

CAMEROON



With [@AllezLesLions](#)

Following a new path since legendary striker Samuel Eto'o's appointment as the director of Cameroon's Football Federation (FECAFOOT), the Indomitable Lions enter their eighth World Cup with high hopes.

However, defeats in friendlies against Uzbekistan and South Korea in the build-up to the tournament have piled pressure on their new manager Rigobert Song, who helped them navigate their World Cup play-off with Algeria in February.

The former Liverpool defender has inherited a squad with plenty of Champions League and Europa League experience under its belt - but can he harness it in what looks a very difficult group?

Star Player

Currently on fire at Bayern Munich, Jean-Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting took centre stage in qualification by scoring Cameroon's decisive goal in their qualification win over Algeria.

After playing second fiddle to Robert Lewandowski in each of his previous two seasons in Munich, Choupo-Moting has exploded into life since the Polish striker departed for Barcelona last summer.

In 16 games across all competitions this season, the 22-year-old striker has scored 11 goals and supplied three assists for Bayern and The Indomitable Lions will hope he can transfer his red hot club form onto the international stage.

Yes, he really did play for Stoke!

Wild Card

A last minute switch of allegiance, from France to Cameroon, has propelled 23-year-old Brentford winger Mbeumo to the cusp of his World Cup debut.

The powerful left-footer played full games in the aforementioned friendly defeats to Uzbekistan and South Korea in September and, although the results were underwhelming, Mbeumo gives the Indomitable Lions added depth in attack.

With 15 goal involvements for the Bees over the past two seasons, Mbeumo has shown he can trouble the best Premier League defences and he could offer Cameroon a different type of threat off the right flank in Qatar.

Opinion

History suggests qualification from Group E will prove beyond Cameroon - who have lost their last seven games in World Cup competition dating back to 2002.

Perhaps best known for their riotous journey to the quarter-finals of Italia '90, Cameroon will need to find a spark from somewhere if they are to emulate that memorable journey in Qatar.

Veteran forward and captain Vincent Aboubakar will have to channel his inner Roger Milla if The Indomitable Lions are to roar this winter - and Napoli's Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa will also need to step up to the plate.



SQUAD

Best WC finish
Quarter-finals 1990

Rigobert Song

Devis Epassy	M
André Onana	GK
Simon Ngapandouetnbu	GK
Christopher Woolh	DF
Collins Fai	DF
Nicolas N'Koulou	DF
Nouhou Tolo	DF
Olivier Mbaizo	DF
Jean Castelletto	DF
Enzo Ebosse	DF
Jerome Mbekeli	MF
Georges N'Koudou	MF
Olivier Ntcham	MF
Pierre Kundé	MF
Martin Hongla	MF
Zambo Anguissa	MF
Samuel Oum Gouet	MF
Gael Ondoua	MF
Christian Bassogog	FW
Jean-Pierre Nsamé	FW
Vincent Aboubakar	FW
Choupo-Moting	FW
Moumi Ngamaleu	FW
Souaibou Marou	FW
Bryan Mbeumo	FW
Karl Toko-Ekambi	FW

FIXTURES

24¹¹ VS

28¹¹ VS

2¹² VS

FORMATION



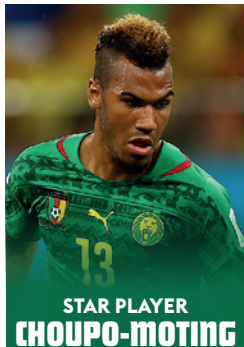
PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker
say...
Group stage



Bet365
say...
250/1



PORTUGAL

With Luis Rocha Rodrigues  @zerozeropt

Portugal arrive in Qatar suffering something of an existential crisis.

Blessed with what is widely regarded as the most talented generation in their history, Portuguese fans and media outlets are united in the belief that manager Fernando Santos has little clue how to maximise the array of individual talent at his disposal.

The 2016 European champions are also grappling with the unfathomable Ronaldo Paradox which states that: 'the glory and success enjoyed by a worldbeater will be directly proportional to all future agonising regarding whether he is past it or not'.

Star Player

He might not be in his best form, and perhaps Portugal play better without him - but Cristiano Ronaldo remains the main man for the Selecao.

As Manchester United have discovered since CR7 signed up for a second stint at Old Trafford, teams lose dynamism and intensity when he is on

the pitch - the trade off being that they gain one of the best goalscorers to have ever lived!

A lot will depend on Ronaldo's condition and focus when he arrives in Qatar. This almost certainly represents his last tilt at winning the World Cup and it is inconceivable that he won't give it his best shot. Playing at five Euros and now five World Cups is a Herculean achievement!

Wild Card

Europe has sat up and taken note of Porto keeper Diogo Costa's penalty heroics this season (he has already saved three, a record in a single Champions League edition), but there is far more to his game.

Portugal may be famed for producing elite outfield talent, but Costa has everything a top modern goalkeeper needs: fantastic presence, distribution and shot-stopping allied to a rock solid temperament.

Costa has gone a little under the radar playing outside of Europe's 'Top 5' leagues, but

he is on track to establish himself as one of the best keepers in the world - a strong World Cup showing will quicken that process.

Opinion

Portugal memorably finished third in their group before winning Euro 2016, and the 'Quinas' have a habit of coming unstuck against inferior opposition - so Group H is not without its challenges.

With such a strong squad and only a few injuries, Portugal should comfortably reach the knockout stages - but how they fare when they get there is anyone's guess!

With Diogo Jota sidelined, Fernando Santos may have to dismantle his favoured midfield diamond and abandon a 4-4-2 in favour of a 4-3-3. Either way, he will face a raft of tough selection issues and headaches, such as how to coax the best out of Bernardo Silva and Bruno Fernandes.

If Portugal click, it could be 'What a tournament!'. If they don't, it'll be a tale of What Ifs...



SQUAD

Best WC finish
Third place 1966

Fernando Santos

Rui Patrício	M
Diogo Costa	GK
José Sá	GK
Raphaël Guerreiro	DF
Pepe	DF
Nuno Mendes	DF
Diogo Dalot	DF
António Silva	DF
João Cancelo	DF
Rúben Dias	DF
Matheus Nunes	MF
Daniilo Pereira	MF
Bernardo Silva	MF
William Carvalho	MF
Bruno Fernandes	MF
Vitinha	MF
Rúben Neves	MF
Otávio	MF
João Mário	MF
João Palhinha	MF
Rafael Leão	FW
Gonçalo Ramos	FW
Ricardo Horta	FW
Cristiano Ronaldo	FW
João Félix	FW
André Silva	FW

FIXTURES

24/11 VS 

28/11 VS 

2/12 VS 

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker
say...
Last 16



Bet365
say...
14/1



GHANA

With  @Ghanasoccernet

Missing from the action in 2018, Ghana had to fight tooth and nail to reach this year's World Cup.

In the qualifying group stage, the Black Stars sealed their play-off place in their last game after they beat South Africa to go level on points. The only way to separate the two teams was on goals scored – and Ghana had more. They then drew O-O at home to Nigeria in the first leg of their World Cup play-off before an epic I-I draw away booked the African side's ticket to the big event.

The less said about Ghana's performance at this year's AFCON, the better - suffice to say Otto Addo's men will hope to show their true potential to the world in Qatar.

Star Player

Thomas Partey is enjoying a tremendous start to the season for Arsenal and he

will hope to bring his good form to Qatar.

The Gunners midfielder is a strong physical presence and also boasts a pass completion percentage of 88% in the Premier League this season. Having one of the most in-form midfielders in Europe in their ranks is a huge plus for Ghana.

To underline his importance to the team, it was Partey's crucial goal against Nigeria in the World Cup play-offs that secured the Black Stars' place in the tournament.

Wild Card

22-year-old Mohammed Kudus has been a welcome surprise in European football this season with 10 goals in 21 games for Ajax, and he will certainly be on every elite club's radar after his recent performances in the Champions League.

His tactical versatility vouches for his football intelligence, as he's able

to play on both wings and as an attacking midfielder. Ajax primarily use him as a false No. 9 and he's been banging them in for fun. Group H, beware!

Opinion

On paper, Ghana are one of the weaker teams in the group, but the Black Stars could be dark horses in the tournament.

Being the underdog will take some pressure off, and head coach Otto Addo has had a positive impact since his appointment in the wake of a disappointing AFCON.

Addo and his players have something of a free hit, as qualification itself was a success, so they could prove dangerous opposition.

GROUP H



SQUAD

Best WC finish
Quarter-finals 2010


Otto Addo

Lawrence Ati-Zigi
Abdul Nurudeen
Ibrahim Danlad
Alexander Djiku
Denis Odoi
Baba Rahman
Mohammed Salisu
Joseph Aidoo
Tariq Lamptey
Alidu Seidu
Gideon Mensah
Daniel Amartey
Thomas Partey
Salis Samed
Kamal Sulemana
Fatawu Issahaku
Elisha Owusu
Mohammed Kudus
Osman Bukari
Kamal Sowah
Inaki Williams
Daniel-Kofi Kyereh
André Ayew
Jordan Ayew
Daniel Afriyie
Antoine Semenyo

M

GK
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FW

FIXTURES

24th vs 

28th vs 

2nd/12 vs 

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker
say...
Group stage



Bet365
say...
250/1



STAR PLAYER
PARTEY



No player has scored more Eredivisie goals from inside the six yard box this season than Mohammed Kudus (4).



WILD CARD
KUDUS

URUGUAY

With [@UruguayanHeroes](#)



GROUP H



Best WC finish
Champions
1930, 1950

SQUAD

Diego Alonso	M
Sebastián Sosa	GK
Sergio Rochet	GK
Fernando Muslera	GK
Mathías Olivera	DF
Guillermo Varela	DF
Martín Cáceres	DF
José Luis Rodríguez	DF
Matías Viña	DF
Diego Godín	DF
José Giménez	DF
Sebastián Coates	DF
Ronald Araújo	DF
Manuel Ugarte	MF
Matías Vecino	MF
Facundo Pellistri	MF
De Arrascaeta	MF
Nicolas de la Cruz	MF
Lucas Torreira	MF
Rodrigo Bentancur	MF
Fede Valverde	MF
Luis Suárez	FW
Edinson Cavani	FW
Maxi Gómez	FW
Darwin Núñez	FW
Agustín Torres	FW
Facundo Canobbio	FW

A year into the Diego Alonso era, and things are looking bright for Uruguay.

Since Alonso took over the reins from Óscar Tabárez, the 47-year-old manager has led La Celeste to the World Cup, winning seven of his first nine games in charge.

Alonso has made Uruguay more solid at the back, and more forceful in attack. This is a team that is capable of taking the initiative, but with the smarts to adopt a more pragmatic style when necessary.

Star Player

Currently flying past La Liga defences, it's hard to look past Real Madrid's magnificent Federico Valverde.

The 24-year-old midfielder has become the footballing leader of this new-look Uruguay side. In previous World Cups Luis Suarez and Edinson Cavani grabbed much of the attention, but even though the hitmen born

in Salto are expected to play a big part in Qatar, Valverde is currently the best Uruguayan footballer around.

This will be Valverde's first World Cup, as he was deemed surplus to requirements in 2018. Now he arrives with a nation draping their hopes around his shoulders.

Wild Card

Fresh from winning the Copa Libertadores with Flamengo, Giorgian de Arrascaeta arrives at the World Cup with a taste for trophies.

He's won twelve to be precise since joining 'Fla' in 2019, and is widely regarded as one of the best players in South American football. The creative attacking midfielder has silky feet, can spot a pass and execute in the blink of an eye, and on top of that he's not one to shy away from defensive dirty work.

Opinion

Uruguay fly to Qatar with the belief that they can go all the way.

Such an attitude is engrained in the country's footballing culture dating back to its glory days between 1920-1950.

It's not a belief solely grounded in the past, however, as Uruguay have a well-balanced squad with quality and depth. Their World Cup group, although challenging, is certainly negotiable.

The aim will be to top the group, as second place would likely mean a round of 16 confrontation with Brazil.

If Uruguay do get out of the group, each game will be judged as a final. And it is in these exact circumstances (high pressure, backs against the wall) that La Celeste usually thrive.

FIXTURES

24th vs

28th vs

2nd/12 vs

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker
say...
Last 16



Bet365
say...
50/1



STAR PLAYER
VALVERDE



Federico Valverde has scored more league goals from outside the box (4) than any player across Uefa's 'Top 5' leagues this season.



WILD CARD
DE ARRASCAETA



SOUTH KOREA

With [@taegeuktavern](#)



KOREA

SQUAD

Best WC finish
Fourth place 2002

Paulo Bento

Kim Seung-gyu
Jo Hyeon-woo
Song Bum-keun
Kim Min-jae
Kim Jin-su
Kim Moon-hwan
Hong Chul
Yoon Jong-gyu
Kwon Kyung-won
Kim Young-gwon
Cho Yu-min
Kim Tae-hwan
Lee Jae-sung
Hwang In-beom
Jung Woo-yong
Lee Kang-in
Son Joon-ho
Paik Seung-ho
Kwon Chang-hoon
Hwang Hee-chan
Jeong Woo-yeong
Cho Gue-sung
Na Sang-ho
Song Min-kyu
Hwang Ui-joo
Son Heung-min

M
GK
GK
GK
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FW

While the memories of an unforgettable 4th-placed finish at the 2002 World Cup are still fresh in a lot of people's minds, South Korea's recent form suggests a repeat performance is a long shot.

Yes, this is probably the most offensively talented group Korea have ever brought to a World Cup, but they are shaky at the back and arguably over-reliant on the talents of centre-back Kim Min-jae.

Will the Taegeuk Warriors be able to reconcile these opposing forces and impress in Qatar? It will certainly be entertaining to see them try and their Portuguese manager Paulo Bento has been working towards that goal for the past four years.

Star Player

The automatic response here would normally be Tottenham striker Son Heung-min, but he is doubtful with a fractured eye socket and will struggle for match fitness despite making South Korea's squad.

Another player who is absolutely key, however, is Napoli centre-back and rising star Kim Min-jae who has adapted seamlessly to life in Serie A after a summer move from Fenerbahce.

With Korea liable to concede the lion's share of possession to their opponents, Min-jae's class and composure will be essential if Bento's side are to remain solid and competitive.

Wild Card

Olympiacos midfielder Hwang In-beom is an important player for Korea given his ability to knit defence with attack.

A member of South Korea's gold medal winning U23 squad at the 2018 Asian Games, Hwang combines offensive instincts with an ability to win and protect possession.

The 26-year-old has previously stated his compatriots' last 16 win over Italy in the 2002 World Cup inspired him to

become a footballer and he's now got a chance to emulate his heroes.

Opinion

Back in South Korea, fans of the national team are confident yet realistic about their chances in Qatar.

The potential loss of talismanic striker Son would be a cruel blow, but Korea have a collective strength that will go some way to absorbing it if he misses out.

A last 16 spot isn't beyond the Taegeuk Warriors, but they will likely need to play near their best and have some luck along the way if they are to make the knockout stages.

It's worth noting that South Korea have risen from 57th to 27th in the world rankings under Bento, so clear progress has been made. Just how much remains to be seen.

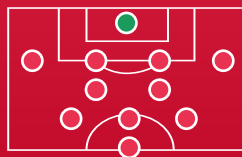
FIXTURES

24th vs

28th vs

2nd vs

FORMATION



PREDICTION/ODDS



Playmaker
say...
Group stage



Bet365
say...
250/1



STAR PLAYER

MIN-JAE



After 23 goals for Spurs, Son Heung-min made history last season as the first Asian player to win the Premier League Golden Boot (which he shared with Liverpool's Mo Salah).



WILD CARD

IN-BEOM

Your favourite World Cup kit designs on one print



Get your World Cup Print in A3 or A4 at www.etsy.com/uk/shop/TheGraphicBomb

Also available...



Italia
90



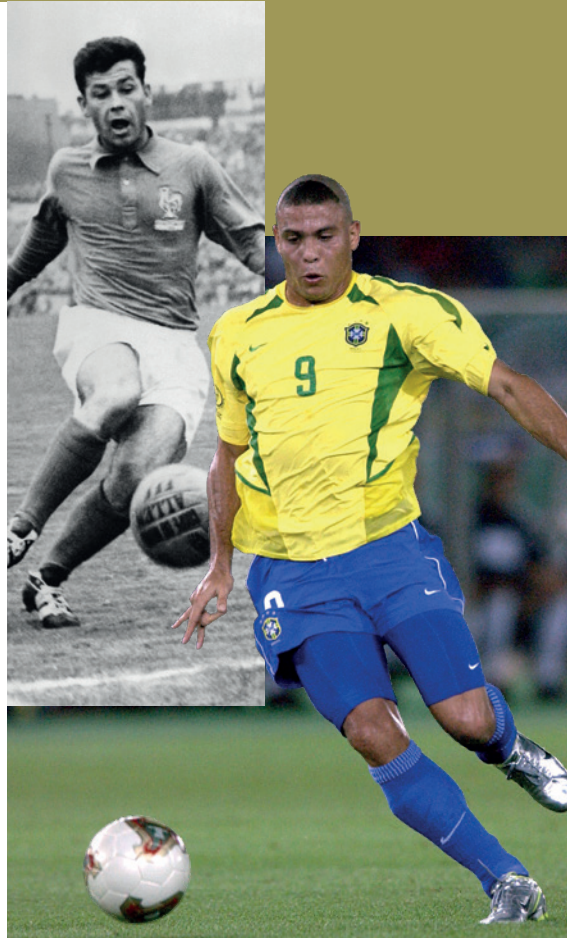
Euro
96



France
98

THE GOLDEN BOOT

- 1930:** Guillermo Stabile (Argentina) – 8
- 1934:** Oldrich Nejedly (Czechoslovakia) – 5
- 1938:** Leonidas (Brazil) – 7
- 1950:** Ademir (Brazil) – 8
- 1954:** Sandor Kocsis (Hungary) – 11
- 1958:** Just Fontaine (France) – 13
- 1962:** Florian Albert (Hungary), Valentin Ivanov (Soviet Union), Drazan Jerkovic (Yugoslavia), Leonel Sanchez (Chile), Vava & Garrincha (Brazil) – 4
- 1966:** Eusebio (Portugal) – 9
- 1970:** Gerd Muller (West Germany) – 10
- 1974:** Grzegorz Lato (Poland) – 7



- 1978:** Mario Kempes (Argentina) – 6
- 1982:** Paolo Rossi (Italy) – 6
- 1986:** Gary Lineker (England) – 6
- 1990:** Salvatore Schillaci (Italy) – 6
- 1994:** Oleg Salenko (Russia), Hristo Stoichkov (Bulgaria) – 6
- 1998:** Davor Suker (Croatia) – 6
- 2002:** Ronaldo (Brazil) – 8
- 2006:** Miroslav Klose (Germany) – 5
- 2010:** Thomas Muller (Germany) – 5
- 2014:** James Rodriguez (Colombia) – 6
- 2018:** Harry Kane (England) – 6

THE DIRECTORY

Although every team needs a Deschamps in its engine room, you'll never lift a World Cup without genuine inspiration. Without the genius of a Maradona, the audacity of a Ronaldinho, the balance of a Zidane or the sixth sense of an Iniesta. Shorn of those rare gifts, football is a great game but not a beautiful one.

A World Cup is therefore the perfect time to celebrate such artistry and, with our eighth Delta in the onion bag, we would like to say a heartfelt thank you to the design team at the Graphic Bomb. Darren and John, we may be called Playmaker, but we fully recognise that we are the water carriers in this relationship! Thanks for your continued support and hard work, in addition to your inspirational talent.

Lastly, a huge thank you to everyone else who generously gave their time and energy to help bring this guide to life. Please give the following a follow...

Think the backslapping is all over? It is now!

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