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SPORT



FIFA WORLD CUP  
Qatar 2022

1 day to go





Focus

# From relegation to table topper: Ramsdale relishes ‘pinch yourself moment’

‘I’M HERE NOW BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN ANYTHING. I HAVE TO GET MY HEAD DOWN TO TRY AND GET INTO THE TEAM’

By **Sahan Bidappa**  
Doha

Still only 24, Aaron Ramsdale has seen it all. The goalkeeper suffered back-to-back relegations from the Premier League with Bournemouth and Sheffield United, but a switch to Arsenal in 2021 has turned things around for him.

Ramsdale has gone on to become first-choice goalkeeper for Arsenal, with the Gunners enjoying a five-point advantage at the top in the English first division this season.

His seven clean sheets – on level with England teammate Nick Pope for Newcastle – have also helped Arsenal concede just 11 goals in 14 matches, propelling Ramsdale into starting XI contention when England open their World Cup campaign against Iran on Monday at the Khalifa International Stadium.

Three years ago though, a World Cup appearance looked like a long distant dream with Sheffield sending him on loan to AFC Wimbledon. Before that he had a short spell with Chesterfield in 2018 when the club were relegated from the fourth tier as Ramsdale watched England make it to their first World Cup semi-final since 1990 at a bar in Spain.

“There are times when it is a pinch yourself moment,” he said at the Al Wakrah Sports Complex yesterday, perhaps still reminiscing the difficult moments he has had in his short career.

“I speak to my parents or my wife and I’m in a really good place, especially after the first few years of my career learning my trade in difficult



situations. It is really enjoyable at the moment and that hard work - you reap your rewards. I’m here now but that does not mean anything. I have to get my head down to try and get into the team,” he added.

Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford has been Gareth Southgate’s No 1 choice for the last two years and is still the favourite to start against Iran on Monday, but Ramsdale knows he is not far off from taking that spot. “Fair. I see as it is,” he said, when asked

about competition for places among the England goalkeepers.

“Jordan (Pickford) has done extremely well for England and he is in fine form for Everton. And so is Popey (Nick Pope) with Newcastle. I’m not the only one racking up the clean sheets. We have a great bond between the goalkeepers and Martyn Margetson (goalkeeping coach) looks after us really well. You need three goalkeepers to train properly to get the No 1 to his best. We are all training as a No. 1 and it will be difficult for the other two to flip the switch. But it is something me, Popey and to a lesser extent Jordan have done before. So whoever gets that first game will have our full support. But you never know with tournament football. You always have to be ready to be called upon,” he noted.

Ramsdale was part of England squad at the delayed Euro 2020 last year, where they lost to Italy in the final on penalties, although he did not play a single minute at the tournament. He has only made three appearances for Three Lions, making his debut in the 10-0 win over San Marino in November. He has since made two appearances in the UEFA Nations League, playing in the goalless draw with Italy in June before conceding four to Hungary three days later.

Ramsdale’s family – especially his father – have had a huge imprint in his development with the goalkeeper joking that his dad “might have a heart attack” if he starts for the Three Lions at the World Cup.

“There were definitely a few tears shed from him,” said Ramsdale, when asked how his dad reacted to his World Cup call-up. “If I actually make it on the pitch he might not return home.

He might have a heart-attack! It’s special for my family and especially my parents who have driven me up and down the country and around the world. He won’t have any nails left,” he chuckled.

England – who also face USA and Wales in Group B – go into the World Cup under the radar with Brazil and Argentina being labelled as favourites.

Southgate’s men have quality all over the pitch but their recent performances have been underwhelming as they are going into the football’s grandest stage having not won any of their past six games and were relegated to the Nations League second tier for the first time following defeat by Italy in September.

Ramsdale said England’s poor recent results have not damaged their confidence. “No, confidence has not been affected. If anything, it’s given us extra motivation. We have added motivation to turn our form around and put those results behind us. We’re going into this full of confidence knowing how good we are,” he said.

England’s Aaron Ramsdale (also left) during a press conference at the Al Wakrah Sports Complex yesterday. (Reuters)



Spotlight

## Qatar opt for closed door training ahead of historic debut

By **Sahan Bidappa**  
Doha

With the spotlight firmly on them ahead of tomorrow’s World Cup opener against Ecuador, it wasn’t a surprise Qatar chose to have a closed door training session yesterday.

A wise move, considering players and coach Felix Sanchez are bracing up for the biggest moment of their lives at the grandest stage of all.

One would think the mood in the Qatar camp would be filled with anxiety, but the pictures released by Qatar Football Association on social media painted a different picture – that of exuberance.

The players seemed to be in high spirits at training as they enjoyed practising with each other, which bodes well ahead of their historic World Cup debut. If anything, Qatar would need to play as a team as they seek avoid the fate of South Africa, who remain the only host country in 2010 to be eliminated in the group stage.

Experienced midfielder Ismaeel Mohamed said the team is focused and ready to give his 100 percent.

“We have been preparing over the years. The last few months we had very



Qatar players during a training session at the Aspire Academy yesterday.

good preparation for the World Cup. Every member of the team is focused and ready to give his 100 percent. We want to win against Ecuador to make history,” the 32-year-old said.

The Qatar squad arrived back home only on Monday after a month-long training camp in Spain. The Asian Champions have notched five successive wins – albeit against lowly-ranked



teams Albania, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama in Marbella.

“These victories before the World Cup are important. They were good sides and importantly these last few games helped us to prepare for Ecuador better,” said Ismaeel, who plays for Al Duhail in the Qatar Stars League. “We will take one match at a time. The team will play every match to win so we can

march into the knockout stage. We are well prepared and I think we have the ability to reach Round of 16.”

Ismaeel called on the fans to get behind the team. “Our fans are like a key player of the team. They helped us claim third position in the FIFA Arab Cup and we will wait for them in our matches. Their support will be the key to us,” he said.

**Italian Orsato to referee Qatar 2022 opener**



Italy’s Daniele Orsato has been selected as the referee for the opening match of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 between Qatar and Ecuador at the Al Bayt Stadium tomorrow.

At 46 years of age, he is one of Europe’s most experienced referees, having been officiating the game since 2010. He was a video assistant referee at the 2018 edition of the FIFA World Cup.

“The feeling cannot be described in words. It’s like a dream come true, playing the first-ever World Cup to be held in the Middle East and the Arab world. I am looking forward to playing my part in getting desired results,” the midfielder added.

Qatar will play their second match against Senegal on November 25 at Al Thumama Stadium and will return to Al Bayt Stadium to face the Netherlands in their last group match four days later.





Focu\_\_\_\_\_s

# ‘Football has power to create a better world’



www.fifa.com  
Doha

“Football is about moments of shared enjoyment, of joy, and of great emotion. It's the only sport that can bring together so many people.”

We are living in uncertain times filled with conflicts and global crises. The world is divided. The FIFA World Cup, through the power of football will bring people together to cross borders, unite and celebrate together.

Football Unites the World will be a global movement to inspire, unite and develop through football.

FIFA Legends have shared their stories of how football united their respective countries during uncertain times. With the much-anticipated kick-off to Qatar

2022 just around the corner, we took a trip down memory lane with France's **Blaise Matuidi**.

Relatively few footballers throughout history have had the privilege of appearing at a FIFA World Cup. It goes without saying that those who have competed at two tournaments are even rarer, and if one of those adventures happened to include a victory in the Final, it would put them in a very elite club indeed.

Matuidi., who was a key component in the France teams that lost in the quarter-finals of Brazil 2014 and lifted the trophy at Russia 2018, is a member of that club, although sometimes he has to pinch himself to verify it really happened.

“I had dreamed of things like that, but I had never dared to think that those dreams might come true one day,” said the combative midfielder. “It was

amazing to share such an incredible experience with my family, friends and team-mates. It was just pure joy for the entire tournament.”

The Frenchman's love affair with the World Cup had begun two decades earlier.

In 1998, Les Bleus, featuring stars such as Zinedine Zidane, Didier Deschamps and Lilian Thuram, made quite an impression on an 11-year-old Matuidi, as they lifted the trophy on home soil.

“That's my first World Cup memory,” he said.

“I was young, and I would dream about that France team – that was an incredible generation.

“I lived in a council estate in Paris. We were surrounded by large blocks of flats, and each time there was a goal, we would all go out onto our balconies.

We'd get out pots and pans and bang on them; it would echo round the whole neighbourhood. We were united, the neighbourhood was united, and France was united – all by the same passion, football.”

Matuidi's life, in which he went from enthusiastic fan to World Cup winner, may have undergone great transformation in 20 years, but the impact that the tournament has on people around the world has certainly not changed.

“During the 2018 World Cup, my team-mates and I were also able to see the spirit of togetherness that was taking hold back home after each game,” he said. “Match after match, we could feel it growing. It was magical.”

He concluded: “Football has the power to create a better world in the way that it brings towns, regions and countries together. It can even unite the entire world!”

Spotligh\_\_\_\_t

# Lewandowski not sure if Qatar World Cup will be his last

‘I REALISE THAT I WILL STILL BE ABLE TO PLAY IN FOUR YEARS’ TIME’

Reuters  
Doha

Poland talisman Robert Lewandowski said he is preparing for the upcoming World Cup in Qatar as if it could be his last, but the 34-year-old added that he would still be physically fit to play at the next edition in 2026.

Poland's record goal scorer Lewandowski has been in terrific form for his La Liga club Barcelona this season, having scored 18 times in 19 games across all competitions.

Poland are in Group C at the World Cup and begin their campaign against Mexico on Tuesday. They also face Argentina and Saudi Arabia.

“Is this my last World Cup? I don't know,” Lewandowski told reporters in Doha yesterday.

“I'm preparing as if it could be my last World Cup, but I'm not saying yes, I'm not saying no. I realise that I will still be able to play in four years' time.”

Lewandowski said that opponents are likely to focus on marking him in attack during games - a move which Poland will try to take advantage of.

“I believe the other players will take advantage of the fact that sometimes I can go down the side taking two players and the space will free up elsewhere,” he explained.

Asked about playing in the high temperatures in Qatar, Lewandowski said: “I've been to Doha many times before, I knew what to expect. It's easier and more pleasant for me when I came here.

“In Sochi (at the 2018 World Cup) it was different, strange, not really comfortable. I don't feel that here.”

Poland, who Lewandowski said are not favourites in their group, won 1-0 against Chile in Warsaw in a warm-up friendly on Wednesday before making the trip to Doha. Head coach Czeslaw Michniewicz opted to leave out some of his key players including goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny,



Poland's Robert Lewandowski during a team training session at Al Kharaityat Stadium in Umm Salal yesterday. (Reuters)

playmaker Piotr Zielinski and Lewandowski for that game.

“Those who played in the match against Chile will be considered for Mexico,” Michniewicz said.

“The decision will be made on Tuesday, but that doesn't mean that if someone played 90 minutes against Chile they won't play against Mexico.”

Meanwhile Lewandowski said yesterday that Poland's World Cup squad had been left in shock earlier this week after the missile strike in his homeland that left two people dead. A missile hit the Polish

village of Przewodow near the Ukrainian border on Tuesday, killing two people.

Lewandowski and his teammates were in Warsaw at the time of the attack preparing for a friendly the next day against Chile ahead of the Qatar extravaganza.

“It was not an easy moment, everyone was waiting for explanations, for some information,” said the Barcelona forward, speaking from Poland's training base in Doha. “Unfortunately it hit people who died. This is definitely a very difficult situation.”

Poland expect goal-machine Lewand-

owski, who has scored 76 goals in 134 matches for the national team, to be a marked man in Doha but the striker says this could work to the team's advantage.

“I'm ready for opponents to be more focused on me. In the game defenders will stick to me,” said Lewandowski.

“Other players will use the fact that I go to the side and take two players with me. There will be more free space for them to enter.” He added: “This might also be our strength, to be able to use those free areas on the pitch created by opponents being too focused on me.”

## SPAIN REPLACE INJURED GAYA WITH BARCA'S BALDE FOR WORLD CUP

**Doha:** Spain dropped injured left-back Jose Gaya from their World Cup squad yesterday, with teenager Alejandro Balde replacing him. The Valencia defender sprained his ankle in training on Wednesday and coach Luis Enrique had said he would make a decision on the situation on Friday, after the team arrived in Doha.

“The full-back leaves Qatar with the love, respect and recognition of his team-mates and the RFEF (Spanish FA),” said the RFEF in a statement.

“The RFEF's message for Gaya is filled with affection, he had won his place in the Spain squad at the World Cup after four years playing for the national team at the top level.”

Gaya, 27, has enjoyed a strong start to the season with Valencia and was set to play at his first World Cup.

Nineteen-year-old Barcelona full-back Balde has burst into the limelight this season at Camp Nou with impressive performances on both the left and the right of defence.

Spain beat Jordan 3-1 in a friendly on Thursday with Aymeric Laporte starting at left-back, while Barcelona defender Jordi Alba, expected to be first choice during the tournament, featured as a substitute.

La Roja open their campaign against Costa Rica on November 23, before facing Germany and Japan.

Commen\_\_\_\_t

# Son ‘will play in Korea’s Cup opener’

AFP  
Doha

**S**on Heung-min will defy a nasty facial injury to play in South Korea's opening match at the World Cup, a former international team-mate said yesterday.

South Korea's talisman and captain had surgery after suffering a fracture around his left eye while playing for Tottenham in the Champions League earlier this month.

The 30-year-old forward trained yesterday in a black face mask.

Son was seen readjusting the mask several times as he went through drills with the rest of the South Korea squad in Qatar.

South Korea play their opening match against Uruguay on November 24.

Former captain Koo Ja-cheol said: “Everybody knows about him, he always plays with passion, he's really a passionate guy, he never wants to stop.

“He joined (also) yesterday with the team training session, of course without heading, so I think he will push himself - as far as I know him - so I expect he will start.

“When someone has an injury like Sonny right now, even one of the biggest players can be scared,



but it cannot stop him, as I know him.”

Midfielder Koo, who captained his country at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, added: “Of course with a mask it's uncomfortable to play, it will not be 100 percent the same for him, but we need him to score for us to win.”

Koo, 33, who is in Qatar for South Korean television, said: “He always says to people that it's an honour to play for the country.”

“He will make something special for Korea.”

South Korea's other opponents in Group H are Portugal and Ghana.

Bottomlin\_\_\_\_\_e

# Belgium beaten in final World Cup warm-up

Reuters  
Kuwait City

**B**elgium were beaten 2-1 by Egypt in a friendly international yesterday in a sobering defeat that belied their status as one of the fancied teams for the World Cup in Qatar.

An error by Kevin De Bruyne and an inspired pass from Mohamed Salah ensured goals for Egypt, who narrowly missed out on World Cup qualification in March, as they posted victory in a

stop-start affair in Kuwait City yesterday.

Mostafa Mohamed scored in the 33rd minute with a rasping short ball after De Bruyne had lost possession just outside his own penalty area to give Egypt a halftime lead.

This was doubled straight from the second half kick-off as Salah's clever pass caught out Belgium's static defence and Mahmoud Trezeguet finished off with his left foot on the counter-attack.

Lois Openda pulled back a goal with 14 minutes to play, set up by Yannick

Carrasco, who then almost had an equaliser four minutes later.

But Egypt held out for the win with Salah close to getting a goal of his own right at the end.

Belgium, who are second in the FIFA rankings and were semi-finalists at the last World Cup, made several switches but showed little rhythm and cohesion with captain Eden Hazard looking out of sorts.

They were able to get in some game minutes for veteran defender Jan Vertonghen, who had been an injury concern over recent weeks.

He came on for the final 20 minutes of the match.

Yesterday's match marked the end of pre-World Cup warm-ups ahead of tournament start set to take place tomorrow. Belgium meet Canada in their first Group F game on Wednesday.

Belgium's midfielder Yannick Carrasco (left) and Egypt's forward Mohamed Salah vie for the ball during the friendly match at Jaber Al Ahmud Stadium in Kuwait City yesterday. (AFP)









# THE SUPER EIGHT

## Al Bayt Stadium

**Capacity: 60,000**  
**Location:** Al Khor City, 35km north of Doha

Al Bayt Stadium's role as host for the FIFA World Cup 2022 opening match was assured from its first design sketch. Qatar turned to the rich fabric of its culture to welcome the world - inviting guests to enjoy the traditional comfort custom has demanded in this region for centuries. Inspired by the bayt al shar of Qatar's nomadic people, the stadium's magnificent tent structure envelops an ultra-modern football stadium. Traditionally, the tents are identified by black and white stripes. This is reflected on the arena's distinctive exterior, as are the vibrant sadu patterns that greet fans once inside. Sustainability was paramount in Al Bayt Stadium's development and the upper tier was designed to be removed after the tournament - allowing the recommissioning of seats. Environmental practices extend to the surrounding city of Al Khor where the numerous parks, lakes and protected green-belt land stretch out from the stadium to the sea - ensuring a lasting legacy from the world's most welcoming stadium.

**Metro**  
Lusail QNB Metro Station (Red line) is closest to Al Bayt Stadium.

Tournament-time operating hours:  
• Saturday to Thursday: 6 AM - 3 AM  
• Friday: 9 AM - 3 AM

A shuttle bus service (Service Number S950) will run to/ from Lusail QNB Metro Station (Red line). Allow a minimum of 25 minutes for the bus journey. From the drop-off area, it is a minimum of a 15-minute walk to the stadium. The bus service starts 4 hours before kick-off and ends 1.5 hours after the final whistle. Expect busy metro carriages before and after matches.

**Departure Bus Hub**  
Souq Waqif - North  
FIFA Fan Festival™  
West Bay  
Barwa Barahat Al Janoub

**Service No.**  
S951  
S952  
S953  
S954  
S955

**Min. Journey Time**  
65 minutes  
60 minutes  
55 minutes  
45 minutes  
65 minutes

**MATCHES**  
Nov. 20: Qatar v Ecuador (7pm)  
Nov. 23: Morocco v Croatia (1pm)  
Nov. 25: England v United States (10pm)  
Nov. 27: Spain v Germany (10pm)  
Nov. 29: Netherlands v Qatar (6pm)  
Dec. 1: Costa Rica v Germany (10pm)  
Dec. 4: Last-16 game (10 pm)  
Dec. 10: Quarter-final (10 pm)  
Dec. 14: Second semi-final (10 pm)

## Lusail Stadium

**Capacity: 80,000**  
**Location:** Lusail City, 20km north of central Doha

Lusail Stadium will host the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Final - an event that will secure its place in football and architectural history. Immense yet exquisite, the scale and splendour of this arena are a wonder, built to lie in harmony with its surroundings. The design reflects the hand-crafted bowls found all across the Arab and Islamic world during the rise of civilisation, while interplays of light mirror the fanar lanterns of the region. With the passing of time, the golden exterior will fade replicating aged metal handicrafts to create a venue alive with cultural character. On December 18 2022, 80,000 fans will come together here for the World Cup Final. Afterwards, and in keeping with Qatar's dedication to sustainable development, Lusail Stadium will be transformed into a community space of schools, shops, cafes, sporting facilities and health clinics.

**Metro**  
Lusail QNB Metro Station (Red line) is a minimum of a 20-minute walk from the stadium.

Tournament-time operating hours:  
• Saturday to Thursday: 6 AM - 3 AM  
• Friday: 9 AM - 3 AM

**Car Parking**  
Residents and locals are encouraged to drive to the stadiums. Parking space is located close to the stadium. Car parks open 4 hours before kick-off and close 1.5 hours after the final whistle. Accessible parking options will be available. Please arrive early, because car parks will fill up fast.

**Stadium Express Buses:** This is the fastest way to get to the stadium! This service will operate from dedicated Stadium Express Bus Hubs and bring fans a minimum of a 30-minute walk from the stadium. Buses start running 4 hours before match kick-off and cease operations 1.5 hours after the final whistle. The last bus before the match will depart the bus hub 1 hour before kick-off.

**Departure Bus Hub**  
Barwa Madinatna  
Souq Waqif - North  
FIFA Fan Festival™  
West Bay  
Barwa Barahat Al Janoub

**Service No.**  
S991  
S992  
S993  
S994  
S995

**Min. Journey Time**  
60 minutes  
35 minutes  
30 minutes  
35 minutes  
55 minutes

**MATCHES**  
Nov. 22: Argentina vs Saudi Arabia (1pm)  
Nov. 24: Brazil vs Serbia (10pm)  
Nov. 26: Argentina vs Mexico (10pm)  
Nov. 28: Portugal vs Uruguay (10pm)  
Nov. 30: Saudi Arabia vs Mexico (10pm)  
Dec. 2: Cameroon vs Brazil (10pm)  
Dec. 6: Last-16 game (10pm)  
Dec. 9: Quarter-final  
Dec. 13: First semi-final  
Dec. 18: Final

Qatar will host the FIFA World Cup 2022 at eight stadiums spread across the country - none more than an hour away from one another. The iconic Khalifa International Stadium has been refurbished completely, while seven new stadiums have been designed in tribute to the region's rich culture, heritage and traditions - with features reflecting Qatar's commitment to sustainability and innovation. Every stadium offers a unique world of discovery - find out more below.

## Khalifa International Stadium

**Capacity: 40,000**  
**Location:** Aspire, 5km west of central Doha

Khalifa International Stadium has hosted a long list of momentous sporting events since its inauguration in 1976. In fact, rarely is football or athletics mentioned in Qatar without referring to this venue. Naturally, the stadium received a complete re-fit for the FIFA World Cup 2022™ as a reward for its long-standing service. On reopening in May 2017, it played host to the Amir Cup Final - the club football event close to the hearts of all Qataris. The stadium's magnificent dual arches were always its most recognisable features. These remain intact - but now feature a wide canopy stretched out below them. This complements the stadium's cooling system to maintain a comfortable temperature for players and fans alike. The new tier added 12,000 seats, while digital lighting and a modern facade brought new sparkle to an old friend. Having previously staged the Arabian Gulf Cup, the FIFA Club World Cup and IAAF World Athletics Championships, this venue is ready to excite the world as part of the greatest football show on earth.

**Metro**  
Sport City Metro Station (Gold line) is a minimum of a 15-minute walk from the stadium.

Tournament-time operating hours:  
• Saturday to Thursday: 6 AM - 3 AM  
• Friday: 9 AM - 3 AM

**Car parking**  
Residents and locals are encouraged to drive to the stadiums. Parking space is located close to the stadium. These car parks open 4 hours before kick-off and close 1.5 hours after the final whistle. Accessible parking options will be available. Please arrive early, because car parks will fill up fast.

**Stadium Express Buses:** This is the fastest way to get to the stadium! This service will operate from dedicated Stadium Express Bus Hubs and bring fans a minimum of a 30-minute walk from the stadium. Buses start running 4 hours before match kick-off and cease operations 1.5 hours after the final whistle. The last bus before the match will depart the bus hub 1 hour before kick-off.

**Departure Bus Hub**  
Barwa Madinatna  
Souq Waqif - North  
FIFA Fan Festival™  
West Bay  
Barwa Barahat Al Janoub

**Service No.**  
S941  
S942  
S943  
S944  
S945

**Min. Journey Time**  
30 minutes  
35 minutes  
30 minutes  
25 minutes  
30 minutes

**MATCHES**  
Nov. 21: England v Iran (4pm)  
Nov. 23: Germany v Japan (4pm)  
Nov. 25: Netherlands v Ecuador (7pm)  
Nov. 27: Croatia v Canada (7pm)  
Nov. 29: Ecuador v Senegal (6pm)  
Dec. 1: Japan v Spain (10pm)  
Dec. 3: Last-16 game (6pm)  
Dec. 17: Third-place game (6pm)

## Al Thumama Stadium

**Capacity: 40,000**  
**Location:** Al Thumama, 12km south of central Doha

Al Thumama Stadium's dynamic and imaginative shape celebrates local culture and traditions just as much as it does a new era for stadium design. This particular venue also has a significance that is close to the hearts of locals and resonates across the region. Its bold, circular form reflects the gahfiya - the traditional woven cap adorned by men and boys all across the Arab world. An integral part of family life and central to traditions, the gahfiya symbolises the coming of age for youth. A time of emerging self-confidence and ambition that marks the first steps into the future and a realisation of dreams. It is a fitting inspiration for this one-of-a-kind stadium. Fans' first glimpse of Al Thumama may come from above, as many international flights descend upon the venue. Its brilliant white exterior stands out amid its lush green surroundings - areas for play and relaxation. Al Thumama Stadium brings a vision beyond its inspiration and purpose - marking a coming of age for the beautiful game.

**Metro**  
Free Zone Metro Station (Red line) is the closest metro station to Al Thumama Stadium.

Tournament-time operating hours:  
• Saturday to Thursday: 6 AM - 3 AM  
• Friday: 9 AM - 3 AM

A shuttle bus service (Service Number S980) will run to/ from Free Zone Metro Station. Allow a minimum of 20 minutes for this bus journey. From the drop-off point, it is a minimum of a 35-minute walk to the stadium. The bus service starts 4 hours before kick-off and ends 1.5 hours after the final whistle. Expect busy metro carriages before and after matches.

**Departure Bus Hub**  
Barwa Madinatna  
Souq Waqif - North  
FIFA Fan Festival™  
West Bay  
Barwa Barahat Al Janoub

**Service No.**  
S981  
S982  
S983  
S984  
S985

**Min. Journey Time**  
25 minutes  
30 minutes  
35 minutes  
40 minutes  
20 minutes

**MATCHES**  
Nov. 21: Senegal v Netherlands (7pm)  
Nov. 23: Spain v Costa Rica (7pm)  
Nov. 25: Qatar v Senegal (4pm)  
Nov. 27: Belgium v Morocco (4pm)  
Nov. 29: Iran v United States (10pm)  
Dec. 1: Canada v Morocco (6pm)  
Dec. 4: Last-16 game (6pm)  
Dec. 10: Quarter-final (6pm)

## Al Janoub Stadium

**Capacity: 60,000**  
**Location:** Al Wakra, 22km south of central Doha

Al Janoub Stadium lies in the southern city of Al Wakra, one of Qatar's oldest continuously inhabited areas. A city rich in history but with its sights set on a new horizon - the future of football. As the FIFA World Cup 2022 plays out, the world will be invited into some of the most unique stadiums ever built for the beautiful game - Al Janoub Stadium sits firmly in that category. The stadium's captivating design reflects the wind-filled sails of Qatar's traditional dhow boats - in tribute to Al Wakra's fishing and pearl diving past. For centuries these beautiful crafts have sailed through Gulf waters and far beyond, returning laden with the sea's bounty. After the tournament, Al Janoub's capacity will be reduced, with seats donated to other sporting projects around the world. This will also guarantee an electric atmosphere for Al Wakrah SC matches. Beyond football, the venue's is surrounded by lush parkland featuring sport and leisure facilities which will benefit the whole community for years to come. The future is bright for this wonderful arena.

**Metro**  
Al Wakra Metro Station (Red line) is the closest metro station to Al Janoub Stadium.

Tournament-time opening hours:  
• Saturday to Thursday: 6 AM - 3 AM  
• Friday: 9 AM - 3 AM

A shuttle bus service (Service Number S920) will run to/ from Al Wakra Metro Station. Allow a minimum of 15 minutes for this bus journey. From the drop-off point, it is a minimum of a 15-minute walk to the stadium. The bus service starts 4 hours before kick-off and ends 1.5 hours after the final whistle. Expect busy metro carriages before and after matches.

**Departure Bus Hub**  
Barwa Madinatna  
Souq Waqif - North  
FIFA Fan Festival™  
West Bay  
Barwa Barahat Al Janoub

**Service No.**  
S921  
S922  
S923  
S924  
S925

**Min. Journey Time**  
15 minutes  
40 minutes  
40 minutes  
50 minutes  
15 minutes

**MATCHES**  
Nov. 22: France v Australia (10pm)  
Nov. 24: Switzerland v Cameroon (1pm)  
Nov. 26: Tunisia v Australia (1pm)  
Nov. 28: Cameroon v Serbia (1pm)  
Nov. 30: Australia v Denmark (6pm)  
Dec. 2: Ghana v Uruguay (6pm)  
Dec. 5: Last-16 game (6pm)

## Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium

**Capacity: 40,000**  
**Location:** Umm Al Afai, 20km west of central Doha

Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium stands proudly in Umm Al Afai - one of Qatar's most historic cities and close to the famous Al Rayyan SC. It is located right on the edge of the desert, the scene of many Qatari tales that live close to the hearts of the locals - a welcoming people who love their football as much as their fascinating past. The stadium's design, and that of its surrounding buildings, mirrors aspects of the local culture and traditions. The intricate facade reflects the undulations of sand dunes while intricate geometric patterns reflect the beauty of the desert, native flora and fauna, as well as local and international trade. It is the perfect home for Al Rayyan SC when the tournament ends. More than 80% of the construction material came from the original stadium that previously occupied the site, while existing trees were also carefully retained. When fans visit, they will be able to travel via an environmentally friendly new Doha Metro system - complementing a truly sustainable venue experience.

**Metro**  
Al Riffa Mall of Qatar Metro Station (Green line) is a minimum of a 15-minute walk from the stadium.

Tournament-time operating hours:  
• Saturday to Thursday: 6 AM - 3 AM  
• Friday: 9 AM - 3 AM  
Expect busy metro carriages before and after matches.

**Stadium Express Buses:** This is the fastest way to get to the stadium! This service will operate from dedicated Stadium Express Bus Hubs and bring fans a minimum of a 20-minute walk from the stadium. Buses start running 4 hours before match kick-off and stop 1.5 hours after the final whistle. The last bus before the match will depart the bus hub 1 hour before kick-off.

**Departure Bus Hub**  
Barwa Madinatna  
Souq Waqif - North  
FIFA Fan Festival™  
West Bay  
Barwa Barahat Al Janoub

**Service No.**  
S961  
S962  
S963  
S964  
S965

**Min. Journey Time**  
45 minutes  
50 minutes  
35 minutes  
30 minutes  
40 minutes

**MATCHES**  
Nov. 21: United States v Wales (10pm)  
Nov. 23: Belgium v Canada (10pm)  
Nov. 25: Wales v Iran (1pm)  
Nov. 27: Japan v Costa Rica (1pm)  
Nov. 29: Wales v England (10pm)  
Nov. 31: Croatia v Belgium (6pm)  
Dec. 3: Last-16 game (10pm)

## Education City Stadium

**Capacity: 40,000**  
**Location:** Al Rayyan, 7km north-west of central Doha

The stadium's ultra-modern design blends seamlessly with traditional Islamic architecture. On the exterior, triangles create complex diamond-like geometrical patterns that sparkle as the sun moves across the sky. At night, a digital light show illuminates the facade - giving fans a remarkable surprise performance. Around the campuses, you'll discover many first-in-class sporting and leisure facilities. After the tournament, more amenities will be added to the stadium precinct - keeping locals and the academic community fit for the future and stimulated outside the classroom. Education City Stadium is an extraordinary venue. It shines a brilliant light on Qatar's position as a dynamic learning hub for students and academics across the Arab World and beyond. Its namesake location, Education City, is a vibrant centre of learning and knowledge. The arena is empowered by its neighbouring universities whose corridors buzz with new ideas and stories of cutting-edge research - expressing visionary talent and innovation.

**Metro**  
Education City Metro Station (Green line) is a minimum of a 15-minute walk from the stadium.

Tournament-time operating hours:  
• Saturday to Thursday: 6 AM - 3 AM  
• Friday: 9 AM - 3 AM

Expect metro carriages to be busy before and after matches.

**Stadium Express Buses:** This is the fastest way to get to the stadium! This service will operate from dedicated Stadium Express Bus Hubs and bring fans a minimum of a 25-minute walk from the stadium. Buses start running 4 hours before match kick-off and stop 1.5 hours after the final whistle. The last bus before the match will depart the bus hub 1 hour before kick-off.

**Departure Bus Hub**  
Barwa Madinatna  
Souq Waqif - North  
FIFA Fan Festival™  
West Bay  
Barwa Barahat Al Janoub

**Service No.**  
S931  
S932  
S933  
S934  
S935

**Min. Journey Time**  
45 minutes  
35 minutes  
30 minutes  
25 minutes  
45 minutes

**MATCHES**  
Nov. 22: Denmark v Tunisia (4pm)  
Nov. 24: Uruguay v South Korea (4pm)  
Nov. 26: Poland v Saudi Arabia (4pm)  
Nov. 28: South Korea v Ghana (4pm)  
Nov. 30: Tunisia v France (6pm)  
Dec. 2: South Korea v Portugal (6pm)  
Dec. 6: Last-16 game (6pm)  
Dec. 9: Quarter-final (6pm)

## Stadium 974

**Capacity: 40,000**  
**Location:** Ras Abu Aboud, 10km east of central Doha

Stadium 974 made history even before its first match. Constructed entirely from shipping containers and modular steel, it is the first fully demountable covered football stadium - showing Qatar's commitment to cost-effective sustainability and daring design. This unique venue pays tribute to Qatar's long-standing tradition of worldwide trade and seafaring. Not only is 974 the international dialling code for Qatar, but it is also the exact number of shipping containers used in construction.

**Metro**  
Ras Bu Aboud Metro Station (Gold line) is a minimum of a 30-minute walk from the stadium.

Tournament-time operating hours:  
• Saturday to Thursday: 6 AM - 3 AM  
• Friday: 9 AM - 3 AM

Expect busy metro carriages before and after matches.

**Stadium Express Buses:** This is the fastest way to get to the stadium! This service will operate from dedicated Stadium Express Bus Hubs. It is a minimum of a 15-minute walk to the stadium from the drop-off location. Buses start running 4 hours before match kick-off and stop 1.5 hours after the final whistle. The last bus before the match will depart the bus hub 1 hour before kick-off.

**Departure Bus Hub**  
Barwa Madinatna  
Souq Waqif - North  
FIFA Fan Festival™  
West Bay  
Barwa Barahat Al Janoub

**Service No.**  
S971  
S972  
S973  
S974  
S975

**Min. Journey Time**  
20 minutes  
35 minutes  
35 minutes  
35 minutes  
30 minutes

**MATCHES**  
Nov. 22: Mexico v Poland (7pm)  
Nov. 24: Portugal v Ghana (7pm)  
Nov. 26: France v Denmark (7pm)  
Nov. 28: Brazil v Switzerland (7pm)  
Nov. 30: Poland v Argentina (10pm)  
Dec. 2: Serbia v Switzerland (10pm)  
Dec. 5: Last-16 game (10pm)





Focu\_\_\_\_\_s

# Six possible breakout stars of the World Cup

AFP  
Doha

The World Cup always provides a stage for young players to make a name for themselves and the younger generation will be eagerly awaiting tomorrow's start of the 2022 edition. AFP Sport takes a look at six of the possible breakout stars of the tournament in Qatar hoping to follow in the footsteps of Pele and Kylian Mbappe.

**Moises Caicedo (Ecuador)**  
Much of the focus of the opening match will be on hosts Qatar but Caicedo will be aiming to run the game from Ecuador's midfield. The 21-year-old has been a key player for Brighton in the Premier League since breaking into the first team last season. He has

been linked with a potential move to several big clubs, most notably Liverpool. Caicedo has already made 25 international appearances, including 15 starts in Ecuador's successful World Cup qualifying campaign. He is part of a Brighton trio in Ecuador's squad alongside Pervis Estupinan and Jeremy Sarmiento.

**Jude Bellingham (England)**  
The Borussia Dortmund midfielder is fast becoming a global star and is still only 19 years old. He is a member of the England squad that reached the European Championship final last year but was behind Declan Rice

and Calvin Phillips in the pecking order. Bellingham is now a sure starter for Gareth Southgate after a fine 12 months, capped by four goals in this season's Champions League group stage. Real Madrid and Liverpool are among the teams reportedly chasing his signature and he could further bolster any possible transfer move by helping to end England's 56-year wait for a second World Cup title.

**Cody Gakpo (Netherlands)**  
The 23-year-old winger only made one brief substitute appearance at Euro 2020 but is expected to feature far more heavily in Qatar. Gakpo has already netted 13 goals for PSV Eindhoven in all competitions this season, just seven fewer than his total tally last term. With Memphis Depay having been out of action since September due to injury, Gakpo could start the Netherlands' first outing against Senegal on Monday.

**Gio Reyna (United States)**  
Reyna has always drawn praise for his performances for Dortmund despite struggling with injuries in his short career so far. He made his league debut for

Dortmund in January 2020 aged 17, becoming the youngest American to play in the Bundesliga, taking now international teammate Christian Pulisic's record. Reyna, now 20, is likely to be competing with Lille forward Timothy Weah and Leeds' Brenden Aaronson for a spot in the United States' starting line-up.

**Jamal Musiala (Germany)**  
The 19-year-old has enjoyed a brilliant start to the campaign with Bayern Munich, scoring 12 goals and creating nine more. Musiala, who also played for England's youth teams before declaring for Germany, could start for Hansi Flick's men, even at the expense of veteran Thomas Mueller. Germany may need Musiala to fire

if they are to seal a record-equalling fifth World Cup, with the possibility Flick will play without an out-and-out striker following an injury to Timo Werner.

**Mohamed Kudus (Ghana)**  
Kudus was still playing for Ajax's youth team as recently as last year, before making an impact on the big stage with four goals in this season's Champions League. The 22-year-old from Accra has already made his mark for Ghana with five goals in 18 appearances. Kudus will be an important figure for the last African nation to reach a World Cup quarter-final, alongside the more experienced Andre Ayew and his brother Jordan.



## THE 'KEEPERS



From left: Argentina's goalkeepers Geronimo Rulli, Emiliano Martinez and Franco Armani attend a training session at the Qatar University in Doha yesterday. (AFP)

## Spotlight\_\_\_\_\_t

# Spirit of the Euros still present for Danes: Coach

Reuters  
Doha

Denmark coach Kasper Hjulmund believes the wave of emotive support that helped propel his side to the European Championship semi-finals 18 months ago is still present and hopes to use it for the World Cup in Qatar. Denmark bounced back from the shock of seeing midfielder Christian Eriksen suffer a heart attack in their opening game to reach the final four of the Euros, willed on by sympathetic support and a determined spirit. "I think definitely it's still here," he told Reuters in an interview yesterday as Denmark prepared for their opening Group D game against Tunisia on Tuesday. "When we went back after the Euros and started the World Cup qualification games, we didn't know if it was only Euro football fever in Denmark. But it turned it was just football fever and it's been crazy in Denmark

ever since." Hjulmund said the team had played even better in the World Cup qualifiers which came after the Euros, and where Denmark won nine of 10 matches and were among the first teams to qualify for Qatar. "I think we're in a good position but you cannot just go on emotions and play. We will need to have quality on the pitch. I think that the football quality is there and we're ready." But the coach does not believe his side are among the favourites, even after rising to 10th place in the FIFA rankings. "The team is very, very good, but I don't really think that we are up there with the very best. And it's a quality thing in our team. We also saw at Wembley (in the Euros semi-final), where we played well but I think England were better," he said. "We have been discussing that a lot with the players and asking how can we try to get there? We've tried to make sure we are proactive and make sure that we have the right mindset



Denmark coach Kasper Hjulmund speaks to the media in Doha yesterday. (Reuters)

and the toughness needed." Hjulmund agreed that underrated Tunisia could prove a tricky opponent. "It's a very difficult match. I have great respect for that match. They're a very passion-

ate team and they will have the whole crowd with them. We have to show professionalism otherwise we have problems," he warned. Denmark also meet France and Australia in their group.









Focus

# ‘World Cup is source of pride for the entire region’

**Q**atar football legends Ahmad Khalil and Ibrahim Khalfan believe the upcoming FIFA World Cup™ will be an historic event and are predicting Arab teams to spring a surprise during the tournament.

Four teams from the region have qualified for the first World Cup in the Middle East and Arab world.

Hosts Qatar will be joined by Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Morocco for the showpiece event, which will kick off at the magnificent Al Bayt Stadium on 20 November.

“Many teams have a shot at this World Cup – with Brazil the leading favourites,” said Khalil, who helped Qatar claim their first Arabian Gulf Cup in 1992.

“Argentina, Brazil, Germany and France are also strong teams. There are also some dark horses, like Serbia, who have a very talented squad, but I am certain a



Ahmed Khalil

team from the region will surprise everyone.”

He added: “As for the Qatar team, they are well prepared after taking part in the Copa America, Gold Cup and European qualifying matches. They have talent all

over the pitch and a good result against Ecuador in the opening match should put them in a great position to get through to the last 16.”

Khalfan, meanwhile, believes Qatar’s success in recent years

will boost their confidence, particularly the 2019 AFC Asian Cup victory.

“All the Qatar players are talented in their own right but there are three players who can make a difference on the day: Akram Afif,

Hassan al-Haydos and Boualem Khoukhi.

Al-Haydos is the captain and leader, Afif is a talented player with attacking prowess and Khoukhi is a versatile player who acts as a safety valve defensive-

ly,” said Khalfan, who led Qatar to second place in the 1981 FIFA World Youth Championship.

“With all due respect to Ecuador, I believe we will beat them – and that will put us in a great position to make it to the second

round. Ecuador have a strong team but we are capable of beating them.”

For Khalil and Khalfan, both Qatar Legacy Ambassadors, the tournament holds tremendous significance.

“This will be the most remarkable World Cup,” said Khalil. “The infrastructure that has been put in place, the compact nature of the tournament, the vast transportation network and the state-of-the-art stadiums are all exceptional.

“The tournament will be a source of pride for the entire region, and will impress the entire world.”

Khalfan added: “I share the pride that all Arabs are feeling at this historic moment. It is the first World Cup in our region and Qatar made it a reality for all of us to celebrate. After 12 years of preparation, we are ready to host a tournament that will create memories for a lifetime.”

Spotlight

# Tite’s call-up of Alves is right, says Ze Roberto

Retired midfielder says it is right to have an experienced player in the Brazil squad

Reuters  
Doha

**B**razil’s former midfielder Ze Roberto said criticism of Dani Alves’ call-up for the World Cup in Qatar was due to a cultural taboo on veterans that was still present in Brazilian football, something that he experienced in his last finals in 2006.

Brazil coach Tite drew criticism from local media after calling on Alves, 39, who last played in September and recently recovered from a knee injury.

“This issue of age is cultural. I experienced it first-hand when I returned to Brazil after the 2006 World Cup,” Ze Roberto told Brazilian website UOL.

“It’s difficult to change this mentality, because it’s part of the culture of the Brazilian fans, of the press.

“In my case, I had to kind of face a taboo. From what I see, this taboo hasn’t been broken yet, it exists to this day.”

Ze Roberto went to the 2006 World Cup in Germany aged 32 after returning to Brazil following a long career in Europe, something that also sparked criticism in his home country.

The now 48-year-old added that Alves’ experience will be of great value to a team who are among the favourites to lift the trophy in Qatar.

“Daniel Alves’s experience is crucial for the group. New players have emerged, who are excelling in Europe but will be playing in their first World Cup,” Ze Roberto said.

“You need players with experience to back you up. He’s been called up because of the great results he’s had in his career and because he can still add to the World Cup, both playing and out.”

Brazil will be start their campaign for a record-extending sixth World Cup ti-



Brazil's Dani Alves during training at Juventus Center, Turin, Italy. (Reuters)

tle on Thursday against Serbia. They also take on Switzerland and Cameroon in Group G.

## BRAZIL WILL ONLY PICK TITE SUCCESSOR IN JANUARY: CBF

Brazil will only choose the next coach of their national team in January, the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) said yesterday, denying rumours of talks with the likes of Pep Guardiola to replace outgoing boss Tite.

Tite, who has coached the “Selecao” since 2016, has announced he will leave the post after the World Cup, leading to a flurry of speculation in Brazil on who could be next.

But the CBF “is 100-percent focused on winning a sixth World Cup under Tite’s command,” it said in a statement yesterday.

CBF president Ednaldo Rodrigues, who took office in March, “has never spoken with any football director about the coaching job after the World Cup,” it said.

“Any news to the contrary is a lie,” Rodrigues said in the statement.

“That issue will only be addressed in January.”

The statement came after rumours this week that ex-national team coach Mano Menezes (2010-2012), currently at Brazilian league runners-up Internacional, could return to the job.

Other names floated include Dorival Junior, of Copa Libertadores champs Flamengo, and Manchester City boss Guardiola - though the latter would reportedly demand too high a price for the CBF.

Tite, 61, surprised the football world in February with the announcement he would leave the job after Qatar.

He has posted an impressive record since taking over from Dunga in 2016: 57 wins, 14 draws and five losses, winning the 2019 Copa America on home soil.

His Brazil side crashed out of the 2018 World Cup in the quarter-finals, losing to Belgium.

But they head to Qatar as favourites after an undefeated qualifying campaign.

Comment

# World champions France ‘only human’, says Australia’s Mabil

AFP  
Doha

**A**ustralia winger Awer Mabil said yesterday that France were only human as the underdogs prepared for their daunting World Cup opener against the defending champions.

Graham Arnold’s team face a tough task getting out of Group D, which also contains Tunisia and dark horses Denmark.

But Mabil, who plays for Cadiz in La Liga, said the Australians would not be overawed when they face one of the tournament favourites on Tuesday. “They’re human just like us,” he said.

“Obviously they play at a high level but you can’t go to the game thinking, you know, giving them so much respect, because then you’ve already lost the game.

“You’ve just got to go out there and do your thing and do it to the best of your ability. If it’s your day it’s your day. If it’s not your day then OK, but I’m not scared of facing anybody. That’s my mentality.”

Australia have not escaped from the World Cup group stage since 2006 in Germany and last won a match at a finals four years

later, against Serbia.

The golden generation of Mark Viduka, Harry Kewell and Tim Cahill is a distant memory and they only reached the tournament in Qatar after beating Peru in a play-off penalty shootout.

“We have the motivation to try to shock the world in our style,” said Mabil, who scored the crucial spot-kick against Peru.

“We’re really excited about the group, especially for the Denmark game as my girlfriend is from there and it would be nice to get one over her.”

Mabil, 27, moved to Australia as a 10-year-old after being raised in a Kenyan refugee camp by parents who had fled conflict in Sudan. He shared yesterday’s press conference with fellow former refugees Thomas Deng and 18-year-old attacker Garang Kuol, who was recently signed by Newcastle United.

“It’s a very exciting experience for me, obviously I’ve been watching the Socceroos for a long time. This is where I want to prove myself,” said Kuol, who will join the Magpies from A-League side Central Coast Mariners in January.

“I wouldn’t say it was intimidating - rather I find it more exciting to see what I can do against players of that calibre.”



Australia's Mitchell Duke (right) jokes with his teammate Awer Mabil (left) as they pose for the official team group photograph at the Aspire Academy in Doha. (AFP)

## PORTUGAL, GHANA ARRIVE IN QATAR



Portugal's players including Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo (center) arrive at the Hamad International Airport in Doha ahead of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. **Right:** Portugal's coach Fernando Santos gestures upon arrival in Doha yesterday. (AFP)



Ghana's Alidu Seidu and his teammates arrive in Doha yesterday. (Reuters)