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FIFA WORLD CUP Qatar 2022



Match Report

Morocco roar past Canada into World Cup last 16

'IT WASN'T EASY. WE'VE MADE LOTS OF PEOPLE HAPPY THIS EVENING, BUT LET'S NOT STOP HERE'

AFP Doha

Morocco powered into the last 16 of the World Cup for the first time in 36 years yesterday with a 2-1 victory over eliminated Canada.

Goals from Hakim Ziyech and Youssef En-Nesyri ensured the North Africans finished top of Group F ahead of 2018 World Cup runners-up Croatia.

Morocco, who last reached the knockout stages of the World Cup in 1986, will face the runners-up from Group E in the last 16, with the identity of their opponents decided later yesterday.

"It wasn't easy, but when you have an opportunity to make history, you remember it," Morocco coach Walid Regragui said.

"We've made lots of people happy this evening, but let's not stop here.

"Before the tournament we set an objective - we said we wanted to give everything we've got and get out of the group stages. We can tick that box now."

Canada's defeat capped a disappointing World Cup for the CONCACAF side, who depart after losing all three of their group games on their long-awaited return to the finals.

But coach John Herdman said his team would leave Qatar with heads held high.

"It's been the first time in a long time we've been here. We'd liked to have been longer but we've enjoyed the ride," Herdman said.

"Our players turned up here to compete. We've been fearless in each of the three games and in each of the three

Stats

MOROCCO	2	1	CANADA
6	Shots	5	
2	Shots on Target	0	
3	Chances Created	4	
2	Corners	6	
0	Saves	0	
41.2%	Possession	58.8%	
4	Offsides	4	
14	Fouls	14	
0	Yellow Cards	4	
0	Red Cards	0	

games we've had something to celebrate.

"This isn't Canada walking away with our heads down - we leave with our heads held high."

Morocco put themselves firmly on course for the second round after upsetting Belgium 2-0 on Sunday, a result that left them needing only a point against Canada yesterday to be sure of advancing.

Achieving that objective never looked in doubt after the Moroccans grabbed the lead after only four minutes in front of 43,102 fans at the Al Thumama Stadium.

Canada captain and goalkeeper Milan Borjan raced off his line to clear an underhit backpass from Steven Vitoria but could only watch in horror as the ball fell to Morocco's Ziyech.

The Chelsea star seized the opportunity ruthlessly, coolly lifting a finish over the stranded Borjan into the empty net for 1-0.

That early setback winded Canada,

who struggled to gain any sort of a foothold against a rampant Morocco who were soon 2-0 up. Right-back Achraf Hakimi's long ball caught the Canadian defence napping and En-Nesyri darted in behind before smashing home a finish at the near post to beat Borjan.

Canada pulled a goal back on a rare foray forward five minutes from half-time when defender Sam Adekugbe skipped clear down the left and rifled in a low cross.

Defender Nayef Aguerd stuck a leg out and the ball deflected into the net past Morocco goalkeeper Yassine Bounou to make it 2-1.

Morocco thought they had restored their two-goal cushion in first-half stoppage time when En-Nesyri lashed home eight yards out only for the effort to be deemed offside.

Canada started the second half brightly, with Alphonso Davies jabbing a shot just wide after a promising attack. But Morocco dropped deeper and Canada lacked the inventiveness to seriously threaten.

Their best chance of drawing level came from a set-piece on 71 minutes, when substitute Atiba Hutchinson's header from a corner crashed off the underside of the crossbar and bounced off the goal-line.

Full-back Alistair Johnston failed to control the rebound and Morocco's lead remained intact.

Canada captain Borjan almost got caught out again in another risky advance in injury time, but Davies was on hand to snuff out the danger before Morocco's raucous fans erupted in celebration at the whistle.



Morocco's coach Walid Regragui is thrown into the air after winning the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group F match against Canada at the Al Thumama Stadium in Doha yesterday. (AFP)

Focus

Croatia reach last 16 and send Belgium packing

AFP Doha

Jed Court Romelu Lukaku missed a string of late chances as Belgium crashed out of the World Cup in the group stage after a 0-0 draw with Croatia yesterday which sent the 2018 runners-up into the knockout phase.

Roberto Martinez announced after the game he was stepping down as Belgium coach after a six-year spell in charge. Croatia had a penalty award controversially cancelled by VAR early in a largely uneventful first half.

The introduction of Lukaku at the interval changed the game, but he was guilty of three dreadful misses as Zlatko Dalic's side rode their luck to hold on.

Croatia progressed as runners-up in Group F behind winners Morocco who beat Canada 2-1 to also qualify for the last 16.

The Croatians will face the winners of Group E, containing Spain, Germany, Japan and Costa Rica, for a quarter-final place. "We had some chances against us but it didn't change



Croatia's players celebrate at the end of the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group F match against Belgium at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium in Al Rayyan yesterday. (AFP)

our mindset," said coach Dalic. "We were lucky they didn't take their chances." Belgium, the world's second-ranked side, saw their run of reaching at least the quarter-finals at four straight major tournaments come to an abrupt end.

Martinez's men managed just one goal in the tournament in a fortunate opening 1-0 win over Canada. It may have been the final chance for several of their ageing stars to win a major title. "Today, if we would've gone through I think we would've

seen the real Belgium and could've been very competitive in the next rounds," said Martinez, whose contract was due to run out after the World Cup. Martinez dropped captain Eden Hazard to the bench as one of four changes which also

Stats

CROATIA	0	0	BELGIUM
11	Shots	16	
4	Shots on Target	3	
9	Chances Created	12	
2	Corners	4	
3	Saves	4	
48.3%	Possession	51.7%	
4	Offsides	0	
7	Fouls	9	
0	Yellow Cards	1	
0	Red Cards	0	

saw Leandro Trossard and Dries Mertens start for the first time in Qatar. The build-up to the match had been dominated by rumours of an altercation between senior Belgian players, involving Eden Hazard, which Martinez described as "fake news".

Croatia almost took the lead inside the first 10 seconds, as the ball was played forward to Ivan Perisic after kick-off and the Tottenham man cut inside and drilled a shot just wide of the far post. The likelihood of

Belgium needing to win was increased when Morocco scored an early goal across Doha. Yannick Carrasco had a chance to open the scoring but his shot was blocked.

Mertens curled over after a trademark Kevin De Bruyne run and pass, before Croatia were awarded a penalty seconds later when Carrasco tripped Andrej Kramaric in the box.

But the decision was overturned following a lengthy VAR check which detected that a tiny fraction of Dejan Lovren's shoulder was offside. Desperate for the goal which would have sent them through after a first half in which neither side mustered a shot on target, Martinez sent on Lukaku, Belgium's record scorer, for Mertens at half-time.

They immediately carried more threat, with Lukaku, who struggled with injury in the lead-up to the tournament, heading straight at Croatia goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic. Thibaut Courtois was then called into action for the first time, stretch-

ing to tip over Mateo Kovacic's curling effort as the game opened up. That also suited the Croatian attackers though and Courtois had to twice get down to keep out low shots from Marcelo Brozovic and Luka Modric. Belgium should have taken the lead on the hour mark. Carrasco almost bundled the ball in but was denied by Livakovic, before Lukaku contrived to hit the post with the goal gaping on the rebound.

Lukaku was guilty of an even worse miss two minutes later, heading over an empty net from six yards out, although replays suggested the ball may have been out of play when De Bruyne crossed it in. Martinez also threw on Thorgan Hazard, Youri Tielemans and Doku as Belgium searched for that all important goal. Lukaku saw another chance come and go in the 87th minute, deflecting the ball wide from Thomas Meunier's volley. The striker, on loan at Inter Milan from Chelsea, still had another golden opportunity, but he opted to chest the ball towards the open net from three yards out and directed it into the arms of Livakovic.



Pre__view

Ronaldo a question mark as South Korea seek points

Portugal, the 2016 Euro champions, have already qualified for Round of 16 while South Korea are third in Group H

By Rizwan Rehmat
Doha

Portugal coach Fernando Santos yesterday said captain Cristiano Ronaldo is not a certainty against Asian giants South Korea when the two teams clash in the last match of the group stage at Education City Stadium today.

Group H points leaders Portugal, however, are under no pressure to include Ronaldo, 37, who missed training on Wednesday. Portugal, the 2016 Euro champions, have six points after wins over Ghana and Uruguay.

"I think it is 50-50 if he plays the match or not. We will see how it goes," Santos said at a news conference yesterday. "It will depend on if and how he feels during practice. If we see he is in good condition, maybe he will play the match. There is a plan if he is not available," Santos added.

Ronaldo spent the morning recovering at a gym where the backroom staff was trying to get the Portugal captain ready for the Round of 16 clash. Later in the evening, Ronaldo was in seen doing light training.

The Portugal camp yesterday also confirmed that Nuno Mendes' Qatar campaign has ended following a thigh injury the PSG star sustained in their match against Uruguay.

When asked about Mendes' injury, Santos said yesterday: "He will continue to stay in Qatar because the player wanted it. PSG allowed him to stay here with us at the World Cup. This reflects the spirit of the team and how united we all are."

Raphael Guerreiro, the Borussia Dortmund full-back, is likely to replace Mendes as he did against Uruguay.

With Otavio and Danilo Pereira

Box

PORTUGAL vs SOUTH KOREA

When: Today, 6pm
Where: Education City Stadium, Al Rayyan
Capacity: 44,667

Key stats:

- Portugal are already through to the knockout stage and can secure top spot with a draw or a win, while South Korea will be out if they fail to win.
- Forward Cho Gue-sung is the first player to score two goals in a World Cup match for South Korea.
- Portugal have lost only one of their last 14 World Cup group-stage matches (W8 D5).
- South Korea are the only Asian country to have reached the semi-finals of the World Cup, when they were co-hosts in 2002, while Portugal's best achievement was the third-place finish in 1966.

Previous meetings: South Korea defeated Portugal 1-0 in a group game at the World Cup in 2002 as Park Ji-sung scored for the Asian side, which was then managed by Guus Hiddink.

ra also out injured, Santos said he expects the players in the reserves to step up against South Korea.

"I have complete confidence in all my players," Santos said. "I'm already missing three players, let's see about others. Playing every four days is tough, players get tired and then they experience fatigue."

"Fatigue leads to stress and stress leads to injuries. We want to win and finish top in our group because this will give us an extra day to recover the players in the best way possible," Santos said.

South Korea's Portuguese coach Paulo Bento yesterday sought a dedicated performance from his players against Portugal.

"We played our first two matches with a lot of passion. We will have to show that passion again (against Portugal)."

"But we'll also need a bit of luck. If we have all that, we can



Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo (left) takes part in a training session at the Al Shahania SC training site, northwest of Doha, on the eve of the Qatar 2022 World Cup match against South Korea. (AFP)

create a miracle," Bento said yesterday. Bento candidly admitted that Portugal - who are ranked 9 in the world - are a force even without Ronaldo or the absent injured players. South Korea are aiming to qualify for the Round of 16 for the third time after

2002 and 2010.

"He (Portugal coach) can play in different ways, with different formations, he can make three or four changes in his team and they will stay at the same level," Bento explained. "In addition, the context is favourable for

them because they are already qualified and a draw will ensure first place," Bento added.

Bento, who played for Portugal 35 times, will not be available for his side following a red card he picked up in the match against Ghana. Bento

said: "They (the assistants) make most of the decisions, they suggest them to me. It's not going to be a problem. This time they will be on their own but it won't change much. The players are also in line with the technical staff."

South Korean defender Kim Young-gwon said facing Portugal would be a tough challenge. He said: "They have all these talented players. To contain them we'll have to play as a team, as one unit. We don't have anywhere else to go than forward."

We played our first two matches with a lot of passion. We will have to show that passion again (against Portugal). But we'll also need a bit of luck. If we have all that, we can create a miracle.

— Paulo Bento

They have all these talented players. To contain them we'll have to play as a team, as one unit. We don't have anywhere else to go than forward.

— Kim Young-gwon

South Korea's Portuguese coach Paulo Bento (left) and South Korea's defender Kim Young-gwon arrive to give a press conference at the Qatar National Convention Center in Doha. (AFP)

I couldn't sleep over World Cup injury fear, says veteran Pepe

Doha: Veteran Portugal defender Pepe admitted yesterday he lost sleep before the World Cup because he was worried he would miss the tournament through injury.

The 39-year-old became the third-oldest outfield player to feature at a World Cup on Monday, starting for the first time in almost two months in the 2-0 win over Uruguay. Pepe suffered a knee sprain in early October and made his return as a substitute for his club Porto in their final match before the World Cup on November 12.

"When I had the injury, I couldn't sleep to be honest," Pepe told a press conference, a day before his team play South Korea in their final Group H match.

"I couldn't sleep because I wanted to recover as soon as possible and play in another World Cup, to contribute to my national team, to achieve victory."

"So the journey seemed very long, but it is now over."

"I have to look ahead, to look forward with objective of doing the best I can to secure a win." Portugal have already qualified for the last 16 but can guarantee top spot if they win or draw against South Korea today.

Daniilo Pereira started at centre-back alongside Ruben Dias in the first game but fractured three ribs in training, allowing Pepe to step in and produce a strong display to shut out Uruguay.

He said even after 130 appearances he was still enjoying playing for his country.

"I can't say if it's the last World Cup that I will play," said Pepe.

"I am here to enjoy the tournament. It's a privilege to do what I love, to play football."

Portugal have one of the stronger squads at the tournament, featuring Cristiano Ronaldo, Bruno Fernandes and Bernardo Silva. However, Pepe believes that talent alone will not be enough to earn Portugal their first World Cup trophy.

"We have several ingredients, and if we don't put all the ingredients together, as our coach has said, (it doesn't work)."

"If we prepare a salad, you can't have tomato on one side and onion on the other side, you have to put them all together."

"We have a high-quality national team, but unless we work very hard, respect our opponents and do what our coach says, we won't benefit so much from this quality."

Bottom__Line

'El Diabolo' Suarez defiant over role in Ghana's 2010 World Cup exit

Reuters
Doha

Uruguay's Luis Suarez refused to apologise to Ghanaians yesterday for his role 12 years ago in their biggest World Cup setback, arguing it wasn't his handball that denied Ghana a quarter-final winner but their missed penalty that followed.

A win for Ghana against Uruguay in today's final Group H match could avenge their acrimonious defeat by the South Americans in 2010, when Suarez used his hand to block an extra-time winner for Ghana, who missed the resulting spot-kick and lost the penalty

shootout that followed.

A reporter asked Suarez if he would say sorry to a nation that considered him "El Diabolo", or "the devil himself".

"I don't apologise about that... but the player is gonna miss a penalty," he said, responding in English.

"Maybe I can say (I) apologise if I injure the player and take a red card."

"But in this situation I take a red card and the ref said penalty. This is not my fault because I didn't miss."

"It's not my responsibility to shoot the penalty," he added.

Bitterness remains entrenched among fans in Ghana over the incident in Johannesburg, which denied Ghana the

accolade of becoming the first African country to reach the World Cup semi-finals.

A win in Al Wakra will see Ghana advance to the last 16, but they could still go through with a draw if Portugal, who have already qualified, beat South Korea.

The Ghana team seemed less interested in casting Suarez as a villain, however, and said today's match with Uruguay was not about revenge.

"What happened some years ago will be always history that is in our mind. But this is a totally different game," said Thomas Partey, a midfielder with English club Arsenal.

Exasperated by a succession of questions about Suarez,

coach Otto Addo said the public saw the game as a chance to settle scores, but for his side it was only about qualification.

Referring to the Suarez handball, he said the 2010 defeat was a very sad day for Ghana but teams needed players who can make sacrifices.

"It's all about perspective. If the same incident would have happened the other way around and Ghana would proceed to the semi-finals, everybody would say OK, it's normal that a player will do anything he can," he said.

"This is what I wish from every player, to do all he can to help his team qualify to serve and sometimes sacrificing himself with a red card!"



Uruguay's Luis Suarez and Darwin Nunez are seen during team training session in Doha yesterday. (Reuters)



Star Player

Gakpo set for bigger things after breakthrough World Cup

'HE HAS A WONDERFUL PERSONALITY TO BECOME A STAR BECAUSE HE TAKES IN ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING'

AFP
Doha

Cody Gakpo was heavily linked with a big-money move to the Premier League before the World Cup and the 23-year-old responded with three goals in as many group-stage games for the Netherlands.

The PSV Eindhoven forward, who usually plays as a winger but has been part of a front two for Louis van Gaal's Oranje, will be expected to make an impact on the knockout phase when the Dutch face the United States in the last 16 tomorrow.

Gakpo already had 13 goals and 17 assists for PSV this season before becoming the first Dutch player to score in his first three World Cup matches.

"He has only been playing with PSV for two or three years and always played on the left," said coach Louis van Gaal.

"He did not want to play up front or at 10, but he did have to for me. Now he thinks I am a great head coach.

"He has everything it takes to become a star.

"He has a wonderful personality to become a star because he takes in anything and everything."

Gakpo is reportedly close to a January move to Manchester United and media reports have said Liverpool also are interested. First he will

shoulder plenty of responsibility as the Dutch attempt to set up a quarter-final against either Argentina or Australia.

"It's no surprise, I knew him from PSV Eindhoven," said wing-back Denzel Dumfries after the 2-0 win over Qatar.

"He's an incredible player and now we're seeing his qualities at the highest level. I'm proud of him but he has to keep it up as this is when the tournament really begins."

Gakpo was not even a regular starter for PSV during the last World Cup, first establishing himself in the side during the 2019-2020 season.

He has steadily improved since, hitting double figures for goals for the first time in 2020-21 before scoring 21 last term.

Gakpo only made his debut for the senior national team last year at Euro 2020 - a brief substitute appearance against North Macedonia.

'VERY IMPORTANT' FOR DUTCH HOPES

But his breakthrough on the biggest stage has come at the perfect time for Van Gaal's men, with key player Memphis Depay only fit enough for a place on the bench in the first two games after a hamstring injury.

The Dutch will be hoping the pair can continue to fire up front together, after Depay impressed as a starter on Tuesday against the hosts. "Gakpo is very important, he has already shown

his value," said midfielder Teun Koopmeiners.

"We hope that he will continue like this because he is very important for us."

It would be a big decision for Gakpo to leave PSV

mid-season, having been at his hometown club since the age of eight.

But with every goal he scores in Qatar, it appears more likely that his future lies away from Eindhoven. "I had more or less expected that he would evolve this way but I believe that he's going to evolve even further, much further, so I'm not surprised (by his performances) at all," Van Gaal said.

But for now, Gakpo is focused on fulfilling his nation's dream of finally lifting the World Cup after three previous final defeats.

"We want to win each game, one after the other, because our goal is to be world champions," said Gakpo, who has scored with a header, with his left foot and with his right foot in the tournament.

"We are working hard for that. Having scored three goals... It's always important to score, of course, but I'm happy to help the team."



Netherlands' Cody Gakpo celebrates scoring goal against Qatar at the Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor on Tuesday. (Reuters)

Spotlight

No social media and no milkshakes: How Australia upset World Cup odds

AFP
Doha

Old-school values, a ban on social media and some moments of quality have propelled Australia into the last 16 of the World Cup and a date with Lionel Messi's Argentina tomorrow.

In the build-up to Qatar, expectations at home were rock-bottom and the days of Harry Kewell, Tim Cahill and Mark Viduka - the Socceroos from the 2006 run to the last 16 - were a distant memory. Now coach Graham Arnold, who himself faced questions over his position in the build-up to the World Cup, has proclaimed the 2022 vintage could be a new "golden generation".

That is an optimistic view because the Australia team thumped 4-1 by holders France before narrow wins over Tunisia and Denmark does not have established players in top European leagues and few stars are coming through.

But what this Socceroos side does have is a strong sense of togetherness, a fighting spirit and a coach who combines tactical nous with what some would consider old-fashioned values. If there is one thing that the 59-year-old Arnold hates, it is social media.

"You look at underdogs and they achieve something and they get a great result and then they're celebrating and they're very emotional," the straight-talking Arnold said after Mathew Leckie scored the winner against Denmark on Wednesday.

"And again - I hate saying this - they're on social media until four or five in the morning reading all these comments and pats on the back, all that stuff."

"I've been in the game and been around long enough to know that the most important thing is recovery, sleep and making sure that you do everything to be ready for the next game."

Arnold replied "wow" when informed that England manager Gareth Southgate had promised he would reward his players at the World Cup by allowing them to have a milkshake. Asked if he would let his men have a treat, Arnold held up a bottle of water, albeit with a smile. He then trained his sights back on social media, railing against "what it can do to players mentally".

"If they are reading negative stuff then they don't sleep well," he said.



Australia coach Graham Arnold celebrates with Riley McGree, Craig Goodwin and Mitchell Duke after qualifying for the knockout stages of the Qatar 2022. (Reuters)

"So I always say to the boys 'have a laugh before you go to sleep, listen to popular music that you like - that's Australian music - and make yourself happy before you go to sleep'."

But to portray Arnold, or "Arnie" as Leckie calls him, as some kind of dinosaur would be to do him a disservice on the basis of his team's achievements in Qatar.

He preaches hard work, fight and "the right mentality", but he also got his game plan spot-on against a disappointing Denmark team that reached the semi-finals of the European Championship last year.

Australia suffocated Manchester United playmaker Christian Eriksen and ultimately won fairly comfortably, thanks to Leckie's fine finish. It was a similar story against Tunisia, a hard-fought 1-0 win coming thanks to a deft header by journeyman centre-forward Mitchell Duke. On both occasions a

defence marshalled by the impressive Stoke City centre-back Harry Souttar held firm, and Australia have now won back-to-back World Cup games for the first time.

Arnold has been here before. He was assistant to Guus Hiddink when the Dutchman led the Socceroos to the knockouts 16 years ago, where they were edged out 1-0 by Italy with a stoppage-time penalty. In addition to facing the brilliance of Messi, nerves could also be an issue against Argentina when the Socceroos aim to reach the quarter-finals for the first time in their history. Arnold put Australia's slow start against Denmark down to nerves.

"As much as I try to laugh around the place and keep them happy there were a few nerves because most of these players haven't been in this position before and it's a new experience for them," he said.

Focus

England should be 'feared' at World Cup, Rice

AFP
Doha

Declan Rice believes England should be feared by their World Cup rivals as they gear up for a last-16 showdown with Senegal on Sunday.

Gareth Southgate's side beat Wales 3-0 on Tuesday to finish as undefeated Group B winners, underlining their status as one of the leading contenders for the title in Qatar.

England's next test comes against Senegal at the Al Bayt Stadium, where a victory over the Africa Cup of Nations holders would set up a potential quarter-final date with world champions France.

While they will face tougher opponents after the group stage - in which they played Iran, the United States and Wales - Rice is adamant that England deserve maximum respect from even the best teams at the World Cup.

"Yeah, definitely," he said. "Other nations will look at our quality and why should we not be feared?"

"If you look at our attacking talent we have world-class talent. Across the board we have players who have won the biggest trophies."

"It is up to us to prove that. The likes of France have done that. We're not just here to get into the last 16, we want to go the whole way."

Rice believes a key factor in England's confidence in Qatar is the number of players in the squad who have achieved success at the highest level. Southgate's team is packed with Premier League title winners and players with vast Champions League experience, giving Rice belief they will not wilt under pressure in the latter stages of the World Cup.

"Our mentality now is

fantastic, we have players that have won trophies year in, year out, so they've brought that mentality and installed it to England," he said.

"It's about the manager too, the way he talks to us. He's so calm. He emphasises we're England, we're just as big as anyone else and we can achieve anything. When you have a manager like that, anything is possible."

Rice also highlighted England's strength in depth - Southgate made four changes to his line-up against Wales, including starts for Phil Foden and Marcus Rashford, who played decisive roles.

"It's always nice to know you can bring players off the bench that can instantly change the game," said the West Ham midfielder.

"We have got players who are world class. It ranks among the top squads at the tournament."

Having hammered Iran 6-2 and recovered from the frustration of a goalless draw against the US by brushing aside Wales, Rice, 23, feels England are hitting peak form at just the right time.

"We are building really well, we are in a really nice position," he said. "As the step up in quality arrives I think you'll see we are in a good position."

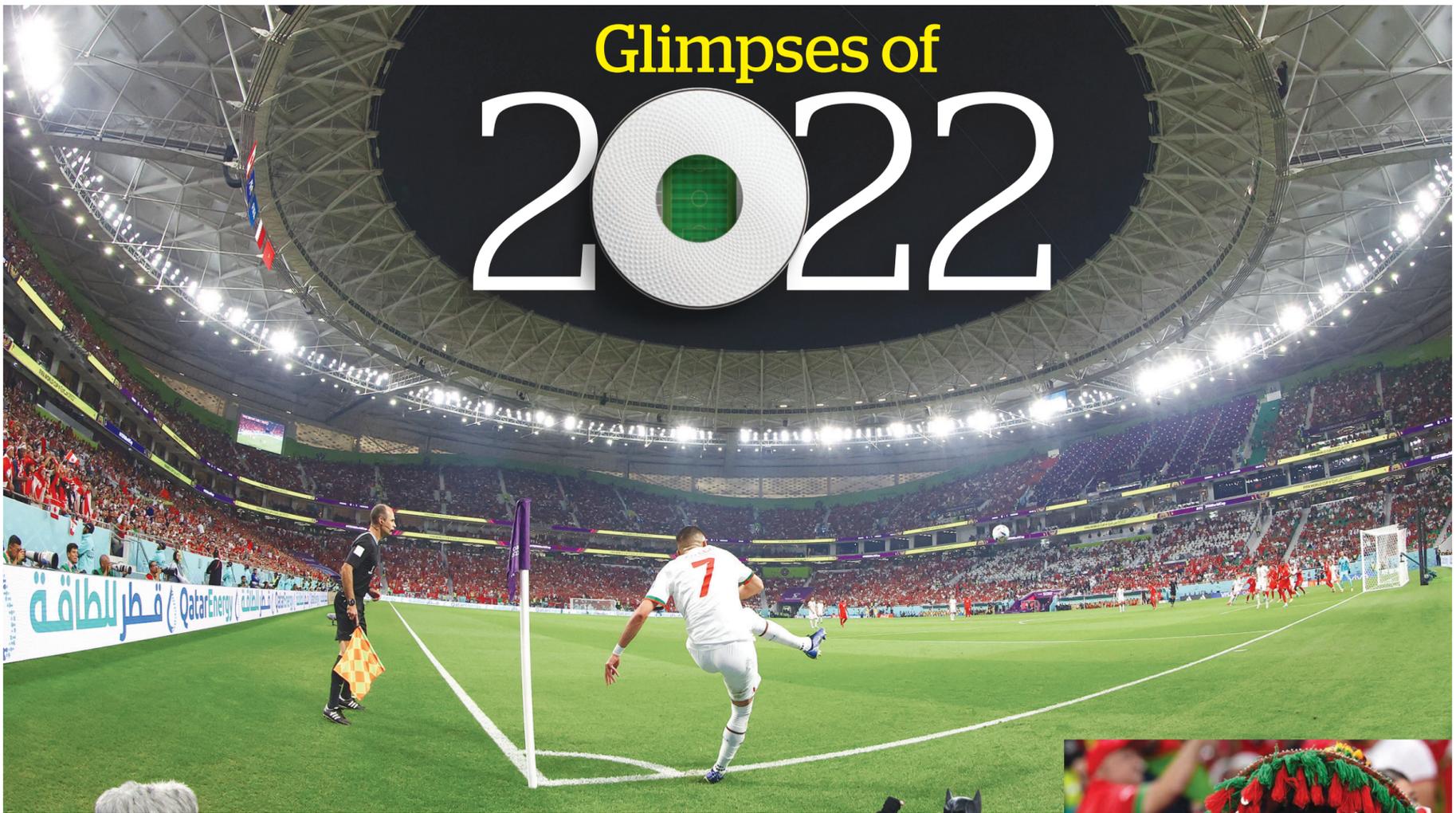
"We've had a real good focus through three tough group games. We know Senegal will be the toughest test so far. They've got some really strong players."

And if England do win the World Cup for the first time since 1966, Rice has come prepared.

"I knew taking a spare case would be needed. For now it's got clothes in, but it would be nice to bring the World Cup trophy home in it," he said.



England's Declan Rice during a training session at the Al Wakrah SC Stadium in Al Wakrah, Qatar yesterday. (Reuters)







Focus

Szczesny grabs chance to 'show off' skills to deny Messi

He has a reputation as one of toughest goalkeepers to beat and proved once again how crucial he is to Poland's hopes

Reuters
Doha

After saving a penalty against Saudi Arabia, Poland's goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny said he wanted to "face the best" at the World Cup - and true to his word, he was in the limelight again when he denied none other than Argentina's Lionel Messi from the spot.

The Juventus stopper has forged a reputation as one of Europe's toughest goalkeepers to beat from 12 yards and proved once again how crucial he is to Poland's hopes after they qualified for the last 16.

Poland may have ultimately lost 2-0 to qualify in second place in Group C, but not before Szczesny showed he was not one to be deterred on the big stage by a seven-times Ballon d'Or winner and a blue-white sea of Argentina fans behind him.

In doing so, Szczesny became the first goalkeeper to save two penalties at a World Cup tournament since American Brad Friedel in 2002 and only the third in all, along with compatriot Jan Tomaszewski who first achieved the feat in 1974.

The penalty awarded to Messi was questionable, with Szczesny's outstretched hand brushing the Paris St Germain forward's face after he had headed a cross wide, but the referee saw it as a foul after a VAR check.

"I immediately told the referee that I touched his face with my hand, but I only ran over the side of his face. I told him that the contact was there, but in my opinion there was no penalty," Szczesny told TVP Sport.

"The referee decided otherwise and that's good - I was able



Poland's Wojciech Szczesny saves a penalty from Argentina's Lionel Messi during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group C match at Stadium 974 in Doha on Wednesday. (Reuters)

to show off. "On some penalties Leo looks at the goalkeeper and on some he hits hard. I knew that if he was going to hit hard, it was more to my left. I saw that he didn't stop, so I went (left), I sensed it and I saved. I'm happy."

Since making his senior club debut in 2009, the 32-year-old

has saved 26 penalties in his career - barring shootouts - for Brentford, Arsenal, AS Roma, Juventus and the Poland national team. Standing at 6'5", his towering frame and long reach coupled with his ability to dive quickly to either side after shimmying on the line has made even

the most experienced penalty takers second guess at the last moment.

Szczesny has also denied several players when they try to score on the rebound, leaping quickly into their path.

These double saves, like the one where he denied Saudi Ara-

bia's Salem al-Dawsari from the spot before parrying Mohamed al-Breik's effort from the rebound, are popular fodder for the highlight reels.

Last season he saved three penalties in a row for Juve between October and March - twice against his former side

Roma which effectively sealed the points as Juve won both games by one-goal margins.

Should Poland be able to keep France's exceptional attack at bay in the last 16, there is no better player they can count on in penalty shootouts against the reigning champions. But for

now, he will celebrate Poland's progress to the knockout stages for the first time in 36 years.

"My whole family is sitting in Warsaw watching all together - my mother, my wife, my son," he said, adding to the camera: "I love you, Liam. Dad is not coming home!"

Spotlight

Australia's Degenek on mission to stop Messi

AFP
Doha

Australia will put their bodies on the line to stop Lionel Messi and spring a surprise against Argentina in the World Cup last 16, tough-tackling Milos Degenek warned yesterday.

The defender, who made his World Cup debut in Australia's 1-0 group win over Denmark on Wednesday, said Messi is his hero but all sentiments will be thrown aside when they meet tomorrow.

"You know I have always loved Messi, I think he is the greatest to have played the game," said the 28-year-old.

But he added: "It's not an honour to play against him because he is just a human, as we all are. It is an honour to be in the round of 16 of a World Cup. That is the honour in itself."

Australian goalkeeper Mathew Ryan has kept two clean sheets in a row in successive 1-0 victories to take the Socceroos into the knockouts for only the second time in their history.

They will be heavy underdogs against Argentina, but Degenek said: "We have to believe and we have to be confident in our abilities to stop every attack."

"Whether that is going to be possible or not, I am not sure, but I know we are going to give 110 percent to stop everything that goes towards Matty's goal!"

Degenek knows that Argentina, who bounced back from a shock defeat to Saudi Arabia in their opener, will be desperate to give Messi a first World Cup title in what will surely be his last at-



Australia's defender Milos Degenek fights for the ball with Denmark's midfielder Jesper Lindstrom during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group D match at the Al Janoub Stadium in Al Wakra. (AFP)

tempt. "For us, it is to stop that. Unfortunately I am a big fan of his but I would love to win the World Cup more than for him to win the World Cup," said Degenek, who plays for Columbus Crew in the MLS.

Australia revealed that the mother-in-law of another de-

fender, Bailey Wright, had died during the night but he will stay with the squad. The Sunderland player came on as a substitute against Denmark and devoted the win to her.

"It's not something you can wish upon anyone," said Degenek.

"He knows that we are his second family, we are going to be behind him."

Degenek said it highlighted the stresses that footballers go through behind the scenes.

"It is a lot more emotions, a lot more things involved in football than just playing," Degenek said.

Alvarez says he got carried away, apologises to Messi after threat

Mexican boxer Canelo Alvarez apologised for publicly threatening Lionel Messi after he took offence to a dressing-room video that appeared to show the Argentine striker nudging away a Mexican jersey on the floor with his foot. Messi scored in Argentina's 2-0 victory over Mexico at the World Cup on Saturday and Alvarez, who has 2.2mn followers on Twitter, said that the striker "should ask God that I don't find him" having taken offence at the video. On Wednesday, however, Alva-

rez tweeted that he got carried away and apologised to Messi and the people of Argentina. "These last few days I got carried away by the passion and love I feel for my country and I made comments that were out of place," Alvarez said. "So I want to apologise to Messi and the people of Argentina." Messi, 35, responded after Argentina's 2-0 win over Poland on the final day of Group C, which gave the "Albiceleste" a place in the last 16 of the World Cup. "I saw that he spoke now, but I

think it was a misunderstanding, those who know me know that I don't disrespect anyone (...) I don't have to apologise because I didn't disrespect the people of Mexico or the shirt or anyone," said the Argentina captain. Mexican captain Andres Guardado defended the striker saying the video showed nothing out of the ordinary. Mexico face Saudi Arabia in their final Group C match later on Wednesday, needing a win to have any chance of reaching the last 16 in Qatar.

Bottom Line

Injured US attacker Pulisic feels better, hopes to face Dutch

Reuters
Doha

US attacker Christian Pulisic said yesterday he was recovering from an injury sustained scoring a crucial goal against Iran and aspired to be fit enough to face the Netherlands in tomorrow's last-16 clash at the World Cup.

"I'm taking it day-by-day for now and I will do everything in my power to work with this medical team and make sure I can play," Pulisic said at the US training camp, adding that his pelvic contusion was painful but improving.

"That bone is there for a reason to protect you. It was sore. But it's getting better."

The 24-year-old is the star of a young US squad and his absence on Saturday would be a huge blow to their chances. But Pulisic was full of praise for the players around him.

"I'm really happy with the



US' forward Christian Pulisic gives a press conference in Doha yesterday. (AFP)

team spirit. To get out of the group is an unbelievable accomplishment," he said. "It feels great to be where we're at right now, but there's still more to come."

Pulisic described his confusion after being hurt as he bundled the ball in against Iran in the United States' final group game, and then his tension as he followed the second half via a trainer's telephone while receiving treatment.

"I realise the ball went in but

I was a bit confused. It didn't really feel like a celebration," he said.

"To score a goal and help the team in any way I can is what I'm here to do. I'm here to make big plays and do what I can to help the team... There's still a lot ahead."

Teammate Timothy Weah, who has also grabbed one goal in Qatar so far, said the United States were not underestimating the challenge against the higher-ranked Dutch despite the strong start.

"I think we all know that Netherlands is a big team, with a lot of quality players," he said, adding that he hoped his side were raising the profile of the sport in the United States where basketball, baseball and American football dominate.

"I think everyone back home is realising that their team has talent. It's up to us to take it as far as we can go and make a statement."

Pulisic, too, was hopeful about the domestic impact.

Pre__view

Brazil to rest key players against Cameroon today

'Age doesn't matter in football. Whether you are the youngest or oldest, all that matters is if you are good enough'

AFP
 Doha

Brazil coach Tite is set to follow the lead of France and rest key players for their final World Cup group game against Cameroon today with their place in the last 16 in Qatar already secure.

The World Cup favourites meet Cameroon at the Lusail Stadium needing just a draw to secure top spot in Group G after starting their campaign with wins over Serbia and Switzerland.

Even a defeat would not stop

them topping the section so long as the Swiss fail to win at the same time against Serbia, but France have already shown that changing most of your starting line-up does not necessarily work out.

The holders made nine changes for their final group game against Tunisia on Wednesday and put in a disjointed performance in a 1-0 defeat.

"I can only measure the players based on what they do on the field. It is a risk, yes, but it is an opportunity for them to show their quality," Tite said when asked about the pitfalls of mak-



From left: Brazil's forward Antony, Brazil's midfielder Fabinho and Brazil's forward Gabriel Jesus take part in a training session at the Al Arabi SC Stadium in Doha on the eve of the Qatar 2022 World Cup match against Cameroon. (AFP)

Fact Box

CAMEROON vs BRAZIL

When: Today, 10pm
Capacity: 88,966

Where: Lusail Stadium

Key stats:

- ◆ Brazil enter the contest having already qualified for the knockout stage with wins over Serbia and Switzerland.
- ◆ After a loss to the Swiss and a draw with Serbia, Cameroon need a win over Brazil to have any chance of advancing to the last 16.
- ◆ Cameroon have not qualified for the knockout phase since their quarter-final appearance in 1990 and are without a win at the finals since 2002, after missing out in 2018 and losing all of their group stage games in 2010 and 2014.
- ◆ Brazil will once again be without forward Neymar and right back Danilo, both ruled out of the group stage by ankle injuries.
- ◆ Brazil, unbeaten in qualifying for Qatar, have won the World Cup five times and are favourites to win a record-extending sixth title. * Brazil have played in every World Cup since 1930 but have not reached the final since they last won the title in 2002.

Previous meetings:

The two sides have met six times, including twice at World Cups, with Brazil winning five. Cameroon's lone victory came at the FIFA Confederations Cup in 2003.

ing too many alterations.

Brazil will still be without superstar Neymar and right-back Danilo, who both suffered ankle injuries against Cameroon, while left-back Alex Sandro is ruled out too.

Tite is expected to rest the likes of goalkeeper Alisson Becker, centre-back duo Thiago Silva and Marquinhos, Casemiro, Lucas Paqueta, Vinicius Junior and

Richardson against a Cameroon side who have to win to stand a chance of progressing.

Among the players set to come into the side are Manchester City goalkeeper Ederson, Liverpool midfielder Fabinho, and veteran right-back Dani Alves.

ALVES DECISION CRITICISED

The decision to include the 39-year-old Alves, who made his

international debut in 2006, in the squad was criticised in some quarters in Brazil.

Alves, who missed the 2018 tournament due to injury, ended a second spell at Barcelona at the end of last season and is now playing club football in Mexico.

"I have been playing for Brazil for many years and it gives me great satisfaction to be able to close out this cycle by playing

at a World Cup," said Alves, who could be joined in Tite's line-up by the likes of Antony and Gabriel Martinelli, who are aged 22 and 21 respectively.

"I have been here for 16 years and this is the most balanced squad we have had in that time," he said.

"Age doesn't matter in football. Whether you are the youngest or oldest, all that matters is if

you are good enough."

Brazil have lost just once in the first round of the World Cup since 1966, and that defeat in 1998 to Norway came after they had already sewn up top spot in the group.

If they top the group, they will play their last-16 tie on Monday against the runners-up in Group H, which features Portugal, Ghana, Uruguay and South Korea.

Foc__us

Brazil World Cup clash takes me back, says coach Song

AFP
 Doha

Rigobert Song leads Cameroon into their do-or-die World Cup clash with Brazil today and the game in Doha brings back memories for the Indomitable Lions coach of one of his first experiences at the tournament.

Song is now 46 but he was still just 17 when he played against Brazil with Cameroon at the 1994 World Cup in the United States and was sent off in a 3-0 defeat.

"You are taking me back.

These are memories, and it was every kid's dream to play against Brazil," Song said when asked about that red card at a press conference yesterday.

"I was 17, it was in the United States and I found myself starting in that game against one of the best teams in the world when I had come straight out of the Cameroonian league. I did what I could do and maybe I didn't know there were rules to be respected. The red card helped me mature as a player."

Song went on to play in four World Cups as a player during a remarkable career which saw him

turn out at club level for the likes of Liverpool and Galatasaray.

He then went to the 2014 World Cup as team manager of a Cameroon side who played Brazil in their last group game and lost 4-1.

Now at his sixth World Cup, Song knows Cameroon have to win Friday's match at the Lusail Stadium and hope Switzerland do not beat Serbia in the other Group G game at the same time if they are to advance to the last 16.

"We need a result to stay in the tournament and we will do everything to get three points," he said. "We have nothing to lose."



Cameroon coach Rigobert Song with the players during training at Al Saliya SC Stadium, Al Rayyan, yesterday. (AFP)

People want to watch more football: Collina

Doha: Pierluigi Collina, Chairman of the FIFA Referees Committee, said the reason for the rise in added time at the World Cup is that referees have been asked to calculate it more accurately.

The former referee added that the new recommendations have resulted in a considerable increase in playing time, which is close to one hour in matches held so far at the tournament.

"People want to watch football, more football. And we have been asked to do something about it for years," Italian Collina said in an interview on FIFA's website. "The matter of matches lasting for even less than 50 minutes of active time is something that comes from quite a long time ago.

"So already in Russia (2018 World Cup), we asked referees to calculate the stoppage time more accurately to be given at the end of each half. "And this recommendation was reiterated here, before Qatar 2022. A repeating order to offer more active time played during a match."

France-Australia has seen the highest amount of playing time (67 minutes and 30 seconds). The average amount of stoppage time in matches has risen to 10 minutes.

Collina said referees had been told that some specific incidents should be considered in an accurate way, particularly the timespan for injuries. "We're quite happy with this result."

Spot__light

Serbia hoping for holes in Swiss defences

Reuters
 Doha

Serbia coach Dragan Stojkovic hopes to find holes in Switzerland's defences, like in their famous cheese, when they meet in their final World Cup Group G game as they bid to qualify for the knockout stages for the first time.

Bottom side Serbia sit two points behind second-placed Switzerland and must win to have any hope of progressing to the last 16, while the Swiss would need only a draw if Cameroon do not beat Brazil.

Asked if Serbia would be up against a Swiss side that ticked over with the precision of their famous watches, Stojkovic said yesterday he would rather compare them to Swiss cheese and exploit the "holes".

"We'd really like to talk about their cheese and find their weak spots - the holes - to get

the result we aspire to," Stojkovic told reporters ahead of today's game at Stadium 974.

"We knew after the (group stage) draw was held that Brazil is an entirely different dimension and we would be fighting for second place with Cameroon and Switzerland. These forecasts brought us to this point.

"We knew the match with Switzerland would be of major importance as the last one in the group, and this is what we're now faced with... We've witnessed a lot of surprises at this World Cup, but we will be ready."

Serbia played the first two group games with just Aleksandar Mitrovic spearheading the attack. Stojkovic said Dusan Vlahovic is fit but would not confirm if the Juventus forward would be named in the starting lineup alongside Mitrovic.

"Vlahovic is ready for the match and his physical state is a lot better than it was when we came to Doha. He could start tomorrow but I cannot share this with you today," Stoj-

jkovic said.

"As for the formation, we will see tomorrow. One, two or three attackers - all options are on the table. Whatever we decide, they have to play together as a team. Since I became head coach, it has always been about team spirit.

"We've been working together on tactics... not only in terms of attack but also the defence to avoid the mistakes that cost us the win (against Cameroon in a 3-3 draw)."

Mitrovic looked off the pace in their group opener against Brazil after he arrived in Qatar nursing an ankle injury. But he scored against Cameroon and the Fulham striker said he was "physically fit".

"I believe in the first match against Brazil, physically I was fit but it was a difficult match against a top quality rival and we were under pressure," Mitrovic said.

"I feel really well, just like the entire team. We can't wait for tomorrow's match."

Fact Box

Serbia vs SWITZERLAND

When: Today, 10pm
Capacity: 44,089

Where: Stadium 974

Key stats:

- ◆ Bottom side Serbia sit two points behind second-placed Switzerland and must win to have any hopes of progressing to the last 16.
- ◆ Serbia have never qualified for the knockout stages.
- ◆ Switzerland are looking to reach the last 16 for the third time in a row and would need only a draw if Cameroon do not beat Brazil.
- ◆ Switzerland have never lost their final group game at their last four World Cups.

Previous meetings:

- ◆ Switzerland beat Serbia in the only meeting between the two sides, when they met at the same stage in the 2018 World Cup.
- ◆ Aleksandar Mitrovic opened the scoring early for Serbia in that match, before Granit Xhaka and Xherdan Shaqiri scored in the second half to seal the three points. All three players are in their respective squads this year as well.

Serbia's Filip Djuric during training at Al Arabi SC Training Facilities, Doha, Qatar, yesterday. (Reuters)



Match Report

Japan stun Spain but both reach knockouts

Match Stats	
JAPAN	SPAIN
2	1
6	12
3	5
6	9
0	2
4	1
17.7%	82.3%
2	2
9	6
3	0
0	0

'IT'S NOT LIKE WE HAVE REWRITTEN HISTORY, BUT WE'VE OVERCOME A BIG WALL'

AFP
Doha

Spain staggered through to the World Cup last 16 yesterday despite a 2-1 defeat by Japan, who remarkably won Group E on a rollercoaster night when four-time champions Germany were eliminated.

Japan secured another incredible triumph after beating Germany in their opening game, with their progression from the "group of death" one of the greatest achievements in the country's footballing history.

For a few heart-stopping minutes Spain were poised to head out when Costa Rica were leading in the other game, but the 2010 champions squeezed through after Germany did them a favour by coming back to beat Los Ticos. Spain and Germany ended on four points each, but La Roja progressed on goal difference in second place.

Alvaro Morata sent Spain ahead early on with a towering header, but Japan dramatically struck back at the start of the second half. Ritsu Doan and Ao Tanaka's goals saw them mount a sensational comeback, just as they did against Germany. Tanaka's goal was highly controversial after the officials relied on VAR to decide Kaoru Mitoma had kept the ball in play by a hair's breadth to set him up.

Spain struggled to create chances against a staunch Japanese defence in the final stages, with the Asian side aware that conceding another goal would see them eliminated.

Japanese players collapsed at full-time in celebration, exhausted and elated, while the substitutes raced on to celebrate.

Spain face Morocco in the last 16, while Japan play Croatia.

"It's not like we have rewritten history, but we've overcome a big wall," said Doan, who netted against both Spain and Germany.

"I think it's the result of fighting as a team."

Both sides made five changes, with Luis Enrique bringing in Morata to lead the line, and handing Alejandro Balde and Nico Williams their full debuts.

Japan started with five at the back, hoping to keep Spain at bay, but pressed high in attack to try and capitalise on any mistakes.

Spain are sometimes guilty of glaring defensive errors and Pau Torres exemplified that with a sloppy touch which led to Japan's first chance, fired into the side-netting by Junya Ito.

Morata sent La Roja ahead in the 12th minute with a towering header from Cesar Azpilicueta's cross, rekindling the connection which occasionally worked at Chelsea after the striker's arrival in 2017.

Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu replaced the

ineffective Takefusa Kubo and Yuto Nagatomo at the break with Mitoma and Doan, and it paid instant dividends.

Balde lost the ball under pressure and from the edge of the box winger Doan hammered past Unai Simon, who might have done more to keep it out.

Three minutes later and Japan had turned the game on its head, Tanaka bundling home from on the goalline after Mitoma had miraculously kept the ball in play as he crossed it - according to VAR.

Spain were shellshocked and struggled to react, with Luis Enrique making a raft of substitutions to try and regain control.

The coach, alone and perched on the edge of his technical area, was unaware that for a few moments his team faced elimination, when Costa Rica took the lead against Germany in the other game to go 2-1 ahead.

Spain survived, progressing thanks to their superior goal difference, on a night that was far more terrifying than they had anticipated - and Japan secured a hugely unlikely achievement.

"We are through, that's the important thing," Morata said.

"Another slip-up and we are going home.

"We have to continue with confidence in ourselves (but) it cannot happen again because we'll be going home."



Japan's midfielder Ao Tanaka (second from left) celebrates scoring a goal with his teammates during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group E match against Spain at the Khalifa International Stadium in Doha yesterday. (AFP)



Spotlight

Germany crash out despite 4-2 defeat of Costa Rica



Germany's Kai Havertz scores their third goal past Costa Rica's Keylor Navas during the Qatar 2022 Group E match at the Al Bayt Stadium yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP
Al Khor

Germany crashed out of the World Cup at the group stage for the second time in succession despite a 4-2 win against Costa Rica yesterday.

The four-time World Cup winners came into the match needing a win but were also relying on the result of Japan's game with Spain to progress.

But the Germans were eliminated due to goal difference as Japan followed up their defeat of Germany with another shock result by beating Spain 2-1.

Germany took an early lead but briefly fell behind in the second half as coach Hansi Flick made a flurry of changes, reacting to the live score of the Japan v Spain fixture. The Germans started positively, with Flick's all-Bayern Munich front line turning the screws early, battering the Costa Rica defence before Serge Gnabry

Match Stats	
GERMANY	COSTA RICA
4	2
32	7
11	5
26	5
14	1
4	7
68%	32%
3	4
9	3
0	1
0	0

got his head to a curling cross from Leipzig defender David Raum after 10 minutes to open the scoring.

Midfielder Leon Goretzka almost doubled Germany's lead just five minutes later but his header was directly at Keylor Navas.

Complacency began to creep into Germany's game. Keysher Fuller, Costa Rica's goal-scoring hero in a 1-0 win against Japan, forced Manuel Neuer into a fingertip save after some half-hearted defending from Raum and Antonio Ruediger.

Flick moved Kimmich back to his familiar defensive midfield position at half-time, bringing on Lukas Klostermann at the expense of Goretzka, who like Kimmich started the match on a yellow.

Just seven minutes into the second half, word crept around the vast Lusail Stadium that Japan had scored two quick goals to take the lead against Spain, a result which would force Germany out of the tournament.

Flick reacted immediately, bringing on Niclas Füllkrug and taking off another midfielder in Ilkay Gundogan.

Germany appeared disjointed as Costa Rica went on the counter on the

58-minute mark, the ball rebounding off Neuer and into the path of Yeltsin Tejeda, who slammed it home.

Flick continued to chase the game, making more changes but it was Costa Rica who scored next when Juan Pablo Vargas tapped a free kick past Neuer to put his side past Spain and into the Round of 16. The goal was later recorded as an own goal. Germany hit back minutes later through Chelsea forward Kai Havertz to draw level.

Havertz scored again in the 86th minute and Füllkrug added another in the 89th minute to bring the score to 4-2, but the side's focus remained nervously fixed on the group's parallel fixture. The night ended with Germany losing out to second-placed Spain on goal difference.

It means Germany, who had not missed out on the knockout stages of a World Cup for 80 years until the 2018 tournament in Russia, have been bundled out in the group stage for the second World Cup in a row.

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D																																																																																																																																																																					
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Pos</th> <th>Team</th> <th>P</th> <th>W</th> <th>D</th> <th>L</th> <th>GD</th> <th>PTS</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Netherlands (Q)</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>+4</td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>Senegal (Q)</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Ecuador</td> <td>3</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>Qatar</td> <td>3</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>3</td> <td>-6</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	GD	PTS	1	Netherlands (Q)	3	2	1	0	+4	7	2	Senegal (Q)	3	2	0	1	1	6	3	Ecuador	3	1	1	1	1	4	4	Qatar	3	0	0	3	-6	0	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Pos</th> <th>Team</th> <th>P</th> <th>W</th> <th>D</th> <th>L</th> <th>GD</th> <th>PTS</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>England (Q)</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>+7</td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>USA (Q)</td> <td>3</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>+1</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Iran</td> <td>3</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>2</td> <td>-3</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>Wales</td> <td>3</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>-5</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	GD	PTS	1	England (Q)	3	2	1	0	+7	7	2	USA (Q)	3	1	2	0	+1	5	3	Iran	3	1	0	2	-3	3	4	Wales	3	0	1	2	-5	1	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Pos</th> <th>Team</th> <th>P</th> <th>W</th> <th>D</th> <th>L</th> <th>GD</th> <th>PTS</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Argentina (Q)</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>+5</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>Poland (Q)</td> <td>3</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Mexico</td> <td>3</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>-1</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>Saudi Arabia</td> <td>3</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>2</td> <td>-2</td> <td>3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	GD	PTS	1	Argentina (Q)	3	2	0	1	+5	6	2	Poland (Q)	3	1	1	1	0	4	3	Mexico	3	1	1	1	-1	4	4	Saudi Arabia	3	1	0	2	-2	3	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Pos</th> <th>Team</th> <th>P</th> <th>W</th> <th>D</th> <th>L</th> <th>GD</th> <th>PTS</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>France (Q)</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>+3</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>Australia (Q)</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>-1</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Tunisia</td> <td>3</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>Denmark</td> <td>3</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>-2</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	GD	PTS	1	France (Q)	3	2	0	1	+3	6	2	Australia (Q)	3	2	0	1	-1	6	3	Tunisia	3	1	1	1	0	4	4	Denmark	3	0	1	2	-2	1					
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3	Mexico	3	1	1	1	-1	4																																																																																																																																																																	
4	Saudi Arabia	3	1	0	2	-2	3																																																																																																																																																																	
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1	France (Q)	3	2	0	1	+3	6																																																																																																																																																																	
2	Australia (Q)	3	2	0	1	-1	6																																																																																																																																																																	
3	Tunisia	3	1	1	1	0	4																																																																																																																																																																	
4	Denmark	3	0	1	2	-2	1																																																																																																																																																																	
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