



Saturday, December 3, 2022
Jumada I 9, 1444 AH

GULF TIMES

SPORT



FIFA WORLD CUP Qatar 2022



Spotlight

It's war! Australia promise Argentina a battle in last 16



'YOU'RE GOING TO SEE THE BEST OF EVERY PLAYER ON THE PITCH FOR AUSTRALIA BECAUSE OF WHO WE'RE PLAYING AGAINST'

Reuters
Doha

Australia coach **Graham Arnold** has promised Argentina a war on Saturday (today) when the Socceroos look to spring an upset for the ages in the last 16 of the World Cup.

With a blend of team spirit and dogged determination, Arnold's unheralded underdogs have already notched up victories over Tunisia and Denmark in Qatar to reach the knockout stages for only the second time.

Arnold said they were not finished yet and

would be in Argentina's faces for 90 minutes to try and give the South Americans as little time on the ball as possible.

"No disrespect to Argentina or anything at all, but it's 11 vs 11, and it's 10 blue shirts against 10 yellow shirts, and it's a battle," he told a news conference yesterday. "It's a war, and we've got to fight that and make sure that the boys are in great physical shape, great mental shape, they've got great energy, and we go out there and give it all guns blazing."

Arnold, who as a player in 1993 came out on the wrong end of a two-legged World Cup playoff against an Argentina side featuring Maradona, said playing the twice champi-

ons was a big plus in terms of motivation. "You're going to see the best of every player on the pitch for Australia tomorrow night because of who we're playing against," he added.

"The brains need to be switched on and... be switched on for every second... because they play in two waves. Slow to try to make you relax, but when you relax, that's when they hit you."

Harry Souttar, who has been outstanding in Australia's last two games, reflected his coach's confidence but conceded that shutting down Leo Messi would be a tall order.

"We know it's going to be a difficult task,"

said the Scottish-born centre back. "Obviously, we respect the player massively. But I don't think it's just an individual thing. It's going to be a team effort, our team collective, I don't think it can come down to just one individual trying to stop him."

Having stunned the world with their success in Qatar, the Socceroos will take their country into the World Cup quarter-finals for the first time if they can upset Argentina.

"Australia are the underdogs and we love that," Arnold said. "We love the backs to the wall, and no one giving us a chance, and going out there and fighting the odds, the Aussie spirit way. That's our strength."

Dream bigger,
stay ambitious



QNB



FIFA WORLD CUP Qatar 2022



Match Report

Star Suarez left in tears as Uruguay, Ghana both exit

Suarez finished the match on the bench in tears as the news came in of South Korea's last-gasp victory over Portugal

AFP
Doha

Uruguay crashed out of the World Cup yesterday despite beating Ghana 2-0 after South Korea scored a late winner in the other Group H match to leapfrog the South American side.

Giorgian De Arrascaeta netted twice in quick succession in the first half, with 35-year-old Luis Suarez having a hand in both goals. However, Suarez finished the match on the bench in tears as the news came in of South Korea's last-gasp victory over Portugal, which meant the Asian side had moved above the Uruguayans into second place in Group H on goals scored.

Veteran striker Suarez had been at the centre of the pre-match build-up because of his infamous handball in the 2010 quarter-finals, which helped eliminate Ghana.

His name was booed loudly by the Ghana fans when it was read out by the stadium announcers and he got the same treatment every time he touched the ball.

He was also leading the protests when Ghana were awarded a penalty in the 19th minute.

Mohamed Kudus had initially been ruled offside when he was brought down by Uruguay goalkeeper Sergio Rochet but after that decision was overturned referee Daniel Siebert gave the spot-kick after checking the pitchside monitor.

But Andre Ayew's tame effort was easily saved by Rochet and

with Ghana's fans silent in disbelief, Uruguay made them pay.

Darwin Nunez was denied by Mohamed Salisu's brilliant goal-line clearance but in the 26th minute De Arrascaeta nodded in from close range after brilliant work from Suarez.

Collecting a poor cross from the right which evaded two Ghana defenders, Suarez cut inside Alidu Seidu and hit a powerful low shot that squirmed through Lawrence Ati Zigi's hands. It was edging towards the goal when De Arrascaeta pounced.

Six minutes later Uruguay gave Ghana a mountain to climb when Arrascaeta hit a sublime volley at the end of superb team move, Suarez providing a first-time assist from Nunez's knockdown.

Ghana were let off the hook by Siebert just before the hour mark when he ruled that Daniel Amartey had touched the ball while tackling Nunez in the area.

That decision would turn out to be crucial as another goal would have put Uruguay through.

Suarez was booed and cheered in equal measure by the crowd when he was substituted for Edinson Cavani in the 66th minute.

Ghana struggled to create anything in response. The closest they came to pulling a goal back came with nine minutes remaining, when Rochet brilliantly tipped away Kudus's powerful low drive.

Uruguay then realised they needed another goal and poured forward but were unable to find make the breakthrough.

The match ended with pushing and shoving, with Suarez distraught at his team's fate.

Match		GHANA	0	2	URUGUAY
10	Shots				12
4	Shots on Target				7
7	Chances Created				8
5	Corners				2
4	Saves				4
50.5%	Possession				49.5%
2	Offsides				2
18	Fouls				11
2	Yellow Cards				5
0	Red Cards				0

Ghana centre-back Daniel Amartey yesterday admitted that his team were determined that if they could not qualify for the World Cup knockout stage, they would at least prevent Uruguay from doing so.

The bad blood between the two nations dates back 12 years to the infamous Suarez handball that prevented a certain goal for Ghana but helped Uruguay go through to the World Cup semi-finals in South Africa.

Suarez was sent off but Asamoah Gyan missed the subsequent penalty and Uruguay triumphed in the shoot-out.

Ghana were thus prevented from becoming the first African side to reach a World Cup semi-final.

And in a drama-filled Group H clash in Qatar yesterday, Uruguay triumphed 2-0 but both sides were eliminated due to South Korea's 2-1 win over Portugal.



Uruguay's Luis Suarez looks dejected after his team was eliminated from the World Cup in Doha yesterday. (Reuters)

Late in the game, with Ghana chasing two goals to go through, Uruguay also realised they needed another one, creating a frantic end-to-end final 20 minutes.

"I just told my teammates that we need a goal now but they need a goal now so we have to defend for ourselves so that if we can't

go, they don't go," Amartey said. Asked if it was important to deny Uruguay a place in the last 16, Amartey said: "For me, yes."

"It was tough because you can see their centre back, everybody comes (forward). Uruguay needed one goal to go through and you can see we defend four

against five or three against two but we managed to defend." Amartey denied the Ghanaians had revenge on their minds for what happened in 2010, pointing out that no-one in the current squad, except captain Andre Ayew, was even at the South Africa World Cup. And he admitted

the team did have some regrets after Ayew missed a penalty minutes before Uruguay opened the scoring in the first half.

"It's football, it happens. If we score that penalty I think we kill them but we miss the penalty and you can see the game changed," he said.

Pre-view

Dutch can overcome strong US threat, says coach Van Gaal

Reuters
Doha

Netherlands will not underestimate the United States when they meet in the World Cup last 16 this weekend, manager Louis van Gaal told a media conference yesterday that had almost as many questions about his future as it did about the knockout clash.

Van Gaal described today's opponents as very strong, while reporters from neighbouring Belgium made overtures for the combative coach to take over their national team after Roberto Martinez stepped down following Belgium's exit on Thursday.

"You've got to convince my wife," he told the Belgians, which prompted a follow-up question from an African reporter about whether or not he would be prepared to move there.

"I don't think so but you've got to keep your options open," Van Gaal joked, before getting back to the business in hand.

"The USA has demonstrated that it has an excellent team, I would even say one of the best teams, a team that is fine-tuned (but) it's nothing we can't overcome," Van Gaal added ahead of the game at the Khalifa International Stadium.

"The USA that is a very energetic squad, they have physically strong players and that is tough for any opponent, and you can tell from their results, but we will do everything we can to win and to beat USA, that's it."

The Dutch made it through by winning Group A with Senegal joining them in the last 16 as runners-up, but Van Gaal's side have failed to impress so far, with the exception of forward Cody Gakpo, who netted three goals in their three group games.



Netherlands' Frenkie de Jong, Cody Gakpo, Nathan Ake, Tyrell Malacia, Xavi Simons and Wout Weghorst during training in Doha yesterday. (Reuters)

As the Netherlands coach has done throughout the tournament, Van Gaal rejected criticism of his side's performances.

"In principle I would say that we started off with a squad with lots of people who were not match fit, they've all been given the opportunity to play and we went through the group stage quite smoothly," he said.

Striker Memphis Depay, who netted 12 goals in qualifying for the Dutch, has said his recent injury problems are behind him and that he would prefer to play alongside Steven Bergwijn with Gakpo as the playmaker, but Van Gaal quickly shot that down.

"These things happen, that players ventilate their views, but whether it's sensible or not, that's another issue.

"Everybody has their own opinion, particularly in the

Netherlands," the 71-year-old said. The winners of today's game will advance to a quarter-final meeting with either Argentina or Australia on Dec. 9.

US coach Gregg Berhalter said Christian Pulisic was on track to return for today's last 16 tie after sustaining a pelvic injury during Tuesday's nerve-shredding 1-0 win over Iran in their final Group B match.

Chelsea forward Pulisic scored the goal that secured the Americans' passage to the knockout round but clattered into Iran goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand in the process and was forced off at half-time.

"It looks pretty good, but we'll have to see him today on the pitch to get confirmation of that," Berhalter said.

Pulisic said he was feeling better and hoped to recover in time to face the Netherlands.

USA vs Netherlands

When: Today, 10pm
Where: Khalifa International Stadium, Doha
Capacity: 45,857

Key stats:

- ◆ The Netherlands have been World Cup runners-up three times - in 1974, 1978 and 2010 - but have yet to win it.
- ◆ The Dutch secured a spot in the Round of 16 by finishing top of Group A, beating African champions Senegal 2-0, hosts Qatar 2-0 and drawing 1-1 draw Ecuador.
- ◆ The Dutch are unbeaten in their last 18 games after their elimination at Euro 2020.
- ◆ Cody Gakpo has three goals in three games for the Dutch.
- ◆ The United States reached the knockout stage by finishing second behind England in Group B, beating Iran and drawing with England and Wales.
- ◆ The United States are returning to the World Cup after failing to qualify for Russia 2018.
- ◆ DeAndre Yedlin is the only player in the US squad with any World Cup experience.

Previous meetings: US and the Dutch have met 5 times with the latter winning 4. The Americans won their last meeting in 2015.

Focus

Berhalter hoping to draw on Dutch lessons in last 16 tie

Reuters
Al Rayyan

United States coach Gregg Berhalter said he will look to draw on the lessons he learnt in the Netherlands during his playing career when the two teams face off today for a place in the World Cup quarter-finals.

Former American international Berhalter signed his first professional contract with Dutch side PEC Zwolle and also played for Sparta Rotterdam and Cambuur Leeuwarden during an 18-year playing career.

The US, who have not reached the quarter-finals since 2002, will be underdogs against three-times finalists Netherlands but will fancy their chances against a Dutch team that stuttered through the group stage.

"I learnt so much in Holland," Berhalter old reporters yesterday. "It's almost like, what concepts haven't I taken from Dutch football? It was a great experience being there."

"After every training session

and every game, you have a debate with your players about it. People love to discuss soccer and you really learn a lot. And it was a great time for me.

"If I wasn't in Holland, I don't think I would have had that background that really helped shape my ideas."

Berhalter is not the only person in the American camp with Dutch experience. Right back Sergino Dest was born to a Dutch mother and Surinamese-American father in Almere, Netherlands and grew up in Holland.

Dest, currently at AC Milan on loan from Barcelona, rose to prominence with Dutch giants Ajax and was eligible to represent both US and the Netherlands at international level.

"When you're at a club like Ajax, there's a lot of attention on you, especially as a young player. It's a very good club to develop players and he did really well there," Berhalter said.

"He has been fantastic for us this camp. I'm really happy for him and hopefully he has a great game tomorrow."



USA's players take part in a training session at Al Gharafa Stadium in Doha on the eve of the Qatar 2022 World Cup match against the Netherlands. (AFP)



Spotlight

German team's once fearsome reputation in tatters

THE SIDE NEEDED SPAIN TO AT LEAST DRAW WITH JAPAN BUT THE SPANISH WENT DOWN 2-1 AND GERMANY LOST OUT ON GOAL DIFFERENCE

AFP
Doha

Perhaps the most damning indictment in the inquest into Germany's second consecutive exit from a World Cup at the group stage came from 23-year-old forward Kai Havertz, who said simply, "I don't think we're a tournament team anymore!"

With four World Cups and three European championship wins, Germany's reputation for turning up when it truly matters was once so well-earned, there is a word for it in German: Turniermannschaft, or "tournament team". After Hansi Flick's team crashed out in Qatar, having never really recovered from a stunning opening 2-1 defeat to Japan, that reputation is in tatters.

Germany crashed out four years in Russia and also went out in the last 16 in last year's European Championship.

So just 18 months away from hosting the next Euros in 2024, they are in the unfamiliar position of being outsiders for a tournament held on home soil.

The 4-2 win against Costa Rica on Thursday was too little, too late.

Germany needed Spain to at least draw with Japan but the Spanish went down 2-1 and Germany lost out on goal difference. As the dejected squad boarded a plane from Doha back to Frankfurt yesterday, German Football Association (DFB) President Bernd Neundorff refused to guarantee that Flick's job was secure, while hinting that the root cause of the problems ran much deeper. Neundorff announced a series of inquiries into "the development of the national team and our football since 2018".

The DFB would "look ahead" with a focus on "developing perspectives (for) the Euros in our own country".

Flick, who said on Thursday he wanted to stay in his job but knew "it isn't up to me", called for an overhaul of the junior development system. Starkly, he recognised that Jamal Musiala, one of the few bright sparks in



President of the German Football Association Bernd Neundorff speaks to the media at the Hamad International Airport, Doha, yesterday after Germany were eliminated from the World Cup.

Qatar, "was not trained in Germany, he was trained in England". The Bayern Munich teenager represented England at youth level before switching to Germany.

'END OF A FOOTBALL NATION'
Germany's newspapers roundly criticised the team's performance with tabloid *Bild* lamenting that: "On this December 1st, 2022, we witnessed the end of a once great and proud football nation."

The lukewarm reaction to the tournament from German fans should also concern German football administrators. An average of 14.7mn tuned in to watch the three games – well down on the 25mn four years ago.

The German public has not fallen out of love with football completely – 17.9mn tuned in to see Germany's 2-1 loss to England in the women's

Euros in July. National set-up director Oliver Bierhoff, who scored two goals in the Euro 1996 final when Germany last won the tournament, lamented the wastefulness in front of goal.

Germany dominated possession against Japan but missed countless chances. The side "lacked the German efficiency that we've always had", Bierhoff said.

Jürgen Klinsmann, a 1990 World Cup winner and former Germany coach, said the side "didn't deserve to go through" while recognising the short turnaround to the 2024 Euros "may be a good thing, helping them to re-focus quickly".

Another World Cup winner, Bastian Schweinsteiger, slammed the side's poor defence, highlighting that Germany has not kept a clean sheet at the World Cup since the 2014 final it glori-

ously won in Rio de Janeiro. "If you don't defend well, you won't advance and you won't win," Schweinsteiger said.

Captain Manuel Neuer, 36, said "today we did everything that was asked of us", while striker Niclas Füllkrug said Germany was eliminated "because we fell asleep a little bit against Japan."

Joshua Kimmich hinted at deeper problems, saying "we can't always talk about bad luck" while Real Madrid defender Antonio Rüdiger insisted the "hard reality we find ourselves in" was to do more with attitude than talent.

"We have plenty of talent, but we need more than just talent. We need a little bit of greed, a little bit of filth, that's what we are missing."

The once steely masters of tournament football had, he said, become "a very, very friendly team".



Jamal Musiala was one of the few bright sparks in Qatar. (Reuters)

German football needs rapid overhaul, says Flick after exit

Coach Hansi Flick called for urgent changes to Germany's football youth development, after the "huge disappointment" of elimination at the group stage for the second World Cup in a row.

Despite beating Costa Rica 4-2 on Thursday, Germany were dumped out on goal difference after Japan pulled off a shock 2-1 defeat of Spain in the group's other game on a nailbiting night in Qatar.

Prior to the match, 1990 World Cup winner and former Germany manager Jürgen Klinsmann said another group stage elimination would be "ten times more of a disaster" than the side's early exit from Russia four years ago.

After Klinsmann's worst fears came true, Flick said Germany needed significant changes to its junior development system to remain competitive with other nations.

Flick, who took over from Joachim Löw after the European Championship last year, said Germany needed to look to other countries for ways to improve, singling out Spain. Acknowledging that there was "huge disappointment" in the dressing room, Flick said: "We have players who play with top clubs and we do have the quality (but) I believe that for the future of German football, we need to do things differently in training." "For years we have been talking about new goalkeepers, new wing backs, but what was always good (in the past) is that we could defend well – these elements are things we need."

"We need the basics. Even though Spain lost, we should look at Spain. Spain are very good in defence, they focus on the training of younger players and they know their attacks well." With Germany hosting the next Euro in 2024, Flick also suggested the side needed to pursue a generational change. "It will be very important to focus on the new generation of footballers," he said.

"There are good players for the future, but for the next ten years, it is very important that we make the right steps now." Flick pointed to 19-year-old midfielder Jamal Musiala – who came through the English football development system before switching to Germany in 2021 – saying "it is just unfortunate a player like that cannot stay in the tournament."

"He's fantastic. His skills in the tackles, the one-on-ones – he is outstanding." Flick said wanted to stay on as head coach and lead Germany into their home European Championship, but admitted "it won't be up to me."

"From my side, there is no reason not to continue. I enjoy it, we have good players coming through," the 57-year-old coach said. "My coaching team and I did a good job – we prepared the team well. But it wasn't enough." (AFP)



Focus

'Total loss of control' a warning for Spain: Enrique

AFP
Doha

Spain coach Luis Enrique blamed five minutes of "total loss of control" for his team's shock 2-1 defeat by Japan on Thursday, which saw them qualify for the World Cup last 16 second from Group E.

La Roja, among the favourites to win the tournament, would have been eliminated if Costa Rica had held on to beat Germany, although Los Ticos eventually fell to a 4-2 defeat. Alvaro Morata sent Spain in front early on but two strikes in four minutes from Japan at the start of the second half turned the game on its head.

"(It was) five minutes of total lack of control, of panic, even," said Luis Enrique.

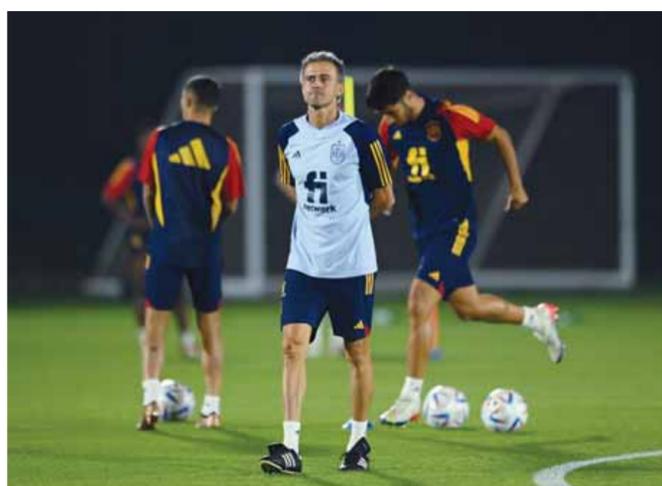
"They scored two goals against us, and if they had needed to score two more, then they would have scored them too, I'm sure."

"This is a World Cup and when a team like Japan does not have anything to lose, well, they decide to risk it all and flew past us like they were aeroplanes. "The situation was under control once Japan decided to recover their previous position on the pitch and shut up shop at the back."

Ritsu Doan netted the equaliser for Japan in the 48th minute before Ao Tanaka bundled home an extremely controversial second. The ball appeared to go out of play before Kaoru Mitoma crossed the ball to him, but after a long VAR check, officials granted the goal. "I have seen a photo that must have been tampered with, it cannot be that this photo is real. It has to be manipulated," said Luis Enrique.

"I felt that something fishy was going on when the VAR took as much time as it did to decide...I have nothing to say."

"Luckily the team only goes into collapse mode once every four years, otherwise I



Spain coach Luis Enrique during a team training session at the Qatar University training site, Doha, yesterday.

wouldn't be able to cope."

MOURNING AND WARNING

Spain will face Morocco in the last 16 after the defeat and Luis Enrique believes his team did not deserve to finish as group winners. "Japan go through first and it's deserved because they beat Germany and Spain," said the coach.

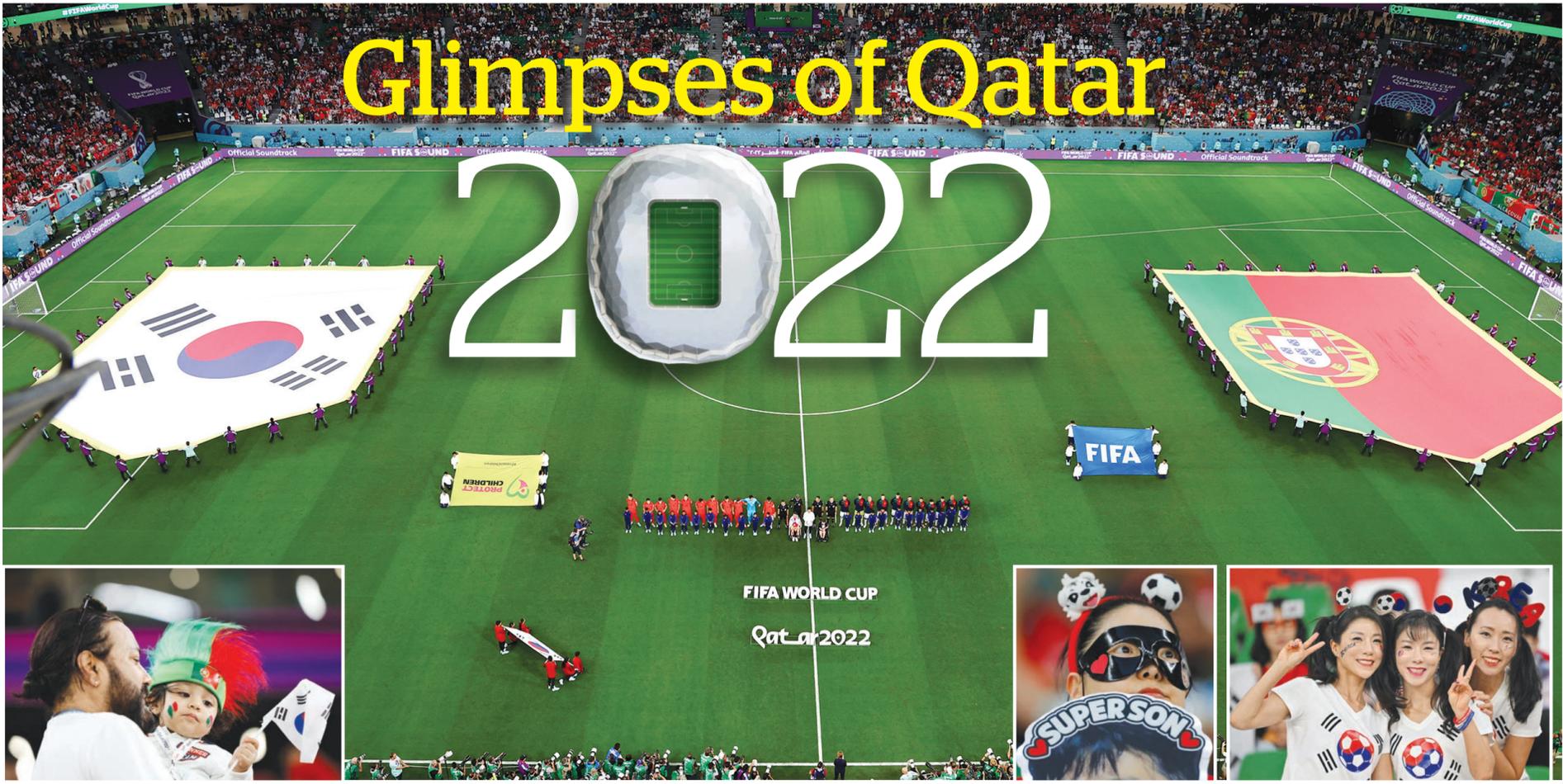
"The mourning and the pain, we'll go through that tonight, there's nothing to celebrate."

"We have gone through second, yes, but this has to serve as a warning to be aware that this is going to happen. "If against Morocco we have the fortune to go in front,

Morocco, will risk it all at full pelt again. "We have to show more strength in the moments when the opposition is pressing us."

Luis Enrique was on the edge of his technical area during the game and did not realise there was a period of time where Spain were heading for elimination.

With Costa Rica 2-1 up against Germany, Spain were temporarily in third place for a few minutes, before Kai Havertz levelled the game at 2-2. "We were going out?" asked Luis Enrique. "I did not know it because I was focused on my game, not speculating (on the other). "If I had found out, I would have had a heart attack."





FIFA WORLD CUP
Qatar 2022

SPORT





Spotlight

Canada head home with lessons learned

'I think for all of us we need to take a deep breath and enjoy what we have experienced here and ask the hard questions because that is part of growth...'

Reuters
Doha

Back at the World Cup for the first time in 36 years, Canada came to Qatar with high expectations and a bit of swagger but stumbled out of the tournament on Thursday after a third straight loss and head home licking their wounds.

Coach John Herdman praised his men for their fearlessness and attacking style but after Thursday's 2-1 defeat by Morocco the end result was the same as in Canada's only other World Cup appearance in 1986 — three losses.

Canada arrived in Doha with a long to-do list and to prove they belong among the top soccer nations.

Reaching the round of 16 was a bridge too far however and so was a first win — the highlight of their tournament being the country's first ever goal in a men's World Cup from Alphonso Davies in a 4-1 shellacking by Croatia.

But it was in the hard lessons learned on and off the pitch that Canada can find some value as the country looks ahead to co-hosting the 2026 World Cup with the United States and Mexico.

"I think there's been some big moments," said Herdman.

"As a football country we can definitely be proud of the performances."

"We always said the world level is the next level and I don't think we were far off tonight...from getting our first result."

"I think for all of us we need to take a

deep breath and enjoy what we have experienced here and ask the hard questions because that is part of growth as we move through to 2026.

"This isn't Canada walking away with our heads down, we can keep our heads up."

MASSIVE STEP UP

After finishing top of CONCACAF qualifying ahead of regional powerhouses the United States and Mexico, Canada discovered there is a massive step up in class and quality at a World Cup.

At times Canada, while playing with boundless energy, appeared overwhelmed on the pitch and off it, fumbling routine tasks like showing up on time for news conferences.

Herdman was also tripped up by his own words, claiming after the 1-0 loss to Belgium that Canada was going to defeat Croatia. A few days later Croatia provided Herdman with their response, a 4-1 thrashing.

Canada produced another exuberant performance against Morocco but again could not deliver the result they came for.

"When you talk about that opportunity to grow through a tournament that's part of it," said Herdman.

"This is the first time we have been here in 36 years."

"We've enjoyed the ride. Our players turned up here to compete and we showed that we've been fearless over each of the three games."

"We're a young team, we're developing, we're here for the first time in a long time. It's been a hell of an experience."



Canada's English coach John Herdman watches his players from the touchline during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group F match against Morocco at the Al Thumama Stadium in Doha on Thursday. (AFP)

Opinion



Griezmann says Euro exit memories still fresh ahead of clash with Poland

France are back in the last 16 of a major tournament after reaching that stage at last year's European Championship and memories of their shock elimination by Switzerland will still be fresh when they take on Poland at the World Cup tomorrow.

Les Bleus were 3-1 up against the Swiss but conceded two goals in the last 10 minutes before going out on penalties.

"I think we were too relaxed against Switzerland," attacking midfielder Antoine Griezmann told a news conference yesterday. "When we were 3-1 up we thought it was over. In big competitions you realise that there are no easy opponents, it's going to be the same against Poland. Nothing is guaranteed, we will need to be focused from the first to the last second. "We have to bear in mind that nothing can be taken for granted."

France's forward Antoine Griezmann (right) during a training session at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium in Doha, yesterday. (AFP)

Poland have two major assets — striker Robert Lewandowski, and goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny, who has already stopped two penalties in three games here. The best way not to test Szczesny from the spot would be to seal qualification within regulation time. "We're going to do everything to avoid going to penalties," said defender William Saliba. "We however have to work on that during training."

France have not been awarded a penalty at this World Cup yet and Griezmann would not say who would be taking them should the opportunity present itself at the Al Thumama stadium. "Who takes penalties is very clear for us. But I will not give Szczesny any info, he's already good enough. Let's keep it a surprise," said Griezmann.

"We're going to work on this today, or more likely tomorrow because today's training session is open to the media," he added with a smile. The winner of the France versus Poland clash will face either England or Senegal in the quarter-finals.

Tunisia striker Khazri announces retirement from national team

Reuters
Tunis

Tunisia striker Wahbi Khazri announced his retirement from international soccer after the national side were eliminated at the group stage of the World Cup in Qatar.

Khazri scored to give Tunisia a 1-0 win over holders France on Wednesday, joining Saudi duo Salem al-Dawsari and Sami al-Jaber as the all-time leading Arab scorers at World Cups with three goals each.

"After the Tunisia match, and in a meeting that included all the players and the technical and administrative staff, I told everyone that this moment is appropriate, and I thanked everyone and wished them success," Khazri told Bein Sports French. "I am proud of what I gave my country over the past years, and I believe that the future for this generation is bright."

The 31-year-old Montpellier striker said: "To beat France, to score and be decisive, that is more beautiful." Tunisia began their World Cup campaign with a goalless draw against Denmark, then



Tunisia's Wahbi Khazri celebrates scoring their first goal during the match against France at the Education City Stadium in Al Rayyan, on Wednesday.

lost 1-0 to Australia.

The win against France was not enough to save Tunisia as Australia beat Denmark to book their place in the last 16 where they will meet Argentina. Khazri, who was born in France and played one game for the French national side in 2012, switched to play for Tunisia and won 74 international matches with them, scoring 25 goals along the way.

Focus

Over the line? Japan goal adds fuel to VAR debate

Reuters
Doha

England's fiercely disputed third goal in the 1966 World Cup final was often cited as the kind of incident that VAR would erase from the game forever but Japan's victory over Spain on Thursday triggered a new "was it over the line?" debate.

Kaoru Mitoma's cutback for Ao Tanka to give Japan a 2-1 lead was initially adjudged by the referee to have been from outside the field of play but the official reversed his decision after a lengthy VAR consultation.

TV and still pictures immediately swamped the Internet apparently showing clear green grass between the ball and the line before winger Mitoma was able to play it back to his teammate. Retired Spanish referee Iturraspe Gonzalez, however, said such incidents were not always clear to the naked eye and expressed his full confidence in

FIFA's technology.

"It is a matter of perspective, making the images very tricky. The perspective that is clear is from above, and the belly of the ball is very big," he said.

"If there's a little of it inside the pitch, it's in play. Everyone can take and use the photo they want, it doesn't matter, but the ball didn't go out."

While the laws require part of the ball to be on the line to remain in play, that does not mean it has to be touching the ground as the curvature of the ball overhanging the white stripe also counts. As with Geoff Hurst's strike at Wembley 56 years ago, the country which the decision impacted most was Germany, who would have progressed to the last 16 if the Japan-Spain match had finished as a 1-1 draw but instead went home.

FIFA, who declined to comment on the incident yesterday, have invested heavily in VAR technology since introducing it at the World Cup four years ago in Russia.

The match ball now contains a chip that transmits data to the VAR operations room 500 times a second, while 12 cameras in each stadium track 29 points on the body of each player.

A simulation of offside decisions is later displayed in the stadium and to TV viewers but, unlike in the English Premier League, fans cannot see the images the VAR officials are considering or hear their deliberations. Former Scotland midfielder Graeme Souness said FIFA needed to be more transparent over VAR decisions. "There are 80mn Germans right now going mad, waiting for a picture that shows that ball didn't go out of play," he told ITV. "Why would you create confusion and not want to clear it up immediately?"

MARGINAL CALLS

While most will accept the evidence when and if it is produced, others are concerned about how VAR is being used at this World Cup to overturn marginal calls made by referees over

incidents technology was not previously involved in.

Two of the highest-profile penalties at the tournament, involving Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo and Argentina's Leo Messi, were highly debatable calls, one initially given and one waved away by the referee.

Robert Wurtz, considered by many to be the best Frenchman ever to have wielded a whistle, said FIFA risked fatally undermining match officials.

"When I have to decide on a penalty in the fifth minute and I say 'It's a penalty; and then VAR tells me 'No it's not a penalty'; then my authority is gone," the 80-year-old told *L'Alsace* newspaper.

"So how can I have the respect of the players for the remaining 85 minutes?"

That is all the more a possibility when decisions are highly technical and subjective, such as ruling on whether a defender made a "deliberate play" at the ball and therefore played an opponent inside or not.



Japan's forward Kaoru Mitoma (left) crosses the ball for his team's second goal during the World Cup Group E match against Spain at the Khalifa International Stadium in Doha on Thursday. (AFP)

Match Report

Aboubakar on target as Cameroon stun Brazil 1-0

The Cameroon skipper strikes late in the second half and then gets thrown out of the game for taking his jersey off

Reuters Doha

A late goal by skipper Vincent Aboubakar ended Cameroon's 20-year wait for a win at the World Cup as the Indomitable Lions bowed out in style by beating a much-changed Brazil 1-0 at the Lusail Stadium yesterday.

With qualification already in the bag after wins over Serbia and Switzerland, Brazil still won Group G, ahead of Switzerland on goal difference, and will face Group H runners-up South Korea, who beat Portugal 2-1, in the next round.

Cameroon, whose last win at the World Cup was in 2002 against Saudi Arabia, were on the back foot for most of the match but sprung to life at the death. Aboubakar powered a header past Ederson then was sent off for collecting a second yellow for taking off his jersey in celebration. The match played out in a relatively subdued atmosphere in the cavernous Lusail Stadium, the tournament's biggest venue, with Brazil's reserves eager to impress but Tite's side unable to

assert their usual flair. Gabriel Martinelli was Brazil's liveliest player and nearly put the five-time champions ahead in the 14th minute when he was picked out by Fred's ball over the top, but the Arsenal forward's header drew a fine reaction save from Devis Epassy.

Cameroon offered nearly no attacking threat until the first half injury time, when Nicolas Moumi Ngamaleu's cross was met with a powerful downward header by Bryan Mbeumo that Ederson clawed away one-handed at full stretch. Tite had seen enough and made a triple change soon after the interval, bringing on Marquinho for the injured Alex Telles, and replacing Rodrigo and Fred with Everton Ribeiro and Bruno Guimaraes.

The substitutes stirred Brazil into a sudden flurry of chances with Epassy forced into action three times in as many minutes.

First, Martinelli stung the Cameroon keeper's palms with a snap shot in the 56th minute.

Next, Eder Militao tried his luck from the ensuing corner coaxing a fumble out of the Cameroon keeper, who recovered to scramble the ball out to safety, before the lively Antony got in on the act, forced Epassy into a diving save to keep out his curling effort.

Tite sent on Pedro in the 64th minute and Rafinha in the 79th as Brazil sought to save their perfect record in the group, but Cameroon clung on until Aboubakar arrived in the right place at the right time to seize his moment.



Cameroon's Vincent Aboubakar scores his team's only goal against Brazil during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Group G match at Lusail Stadium. (Reuters)

Stats	
BRAZIL	CAMEROON
0	1
21	7
7	3
16	7
11	3
2	7
64.8%	35.2%
1	0
14	14
2	3
0	1

Pele has respiratory infection, but doing 'better': doctors

AFP Sao Paulo

Brazilian football legend Pele, who was hospitalised this week amid ongoing cancer treatments, has developed a respiratory infection, but is in stable condition and "showing general improvement," his doctors said yesterday.

The 82-year-old icon, who has been in fragile health in recent years, was hospitalized on Tuesday in Sao Paulo for what

doctors said was a "reevaluation" of the chemotherapy he has been undergoing since surgery to remove a colon tumour in September 2021.

"The medical team diagnosed him with a respiratory infection, which is being treated with antibiotics," the hospital said in a statement.

"The patient's response has been adequate, and he remains in a standard room," not intensive care, it said.

"He is stable and his health is showing general improvement. (He) will remain in the hospital in the coming days to continue

treatment."

Pele's public appearances have grown increasingly rare, but he maintains an active presence on social media.

On Thursday, he took to Instagram to thank well-wishers for their messages, posting a photo from World Cup host country Qatar, where his picture was projected in lights on a skyscraper.

"It's always nice to receive positive messages like this. Thanks to Qatar for this tribute, and to everyone who sends me good vibes!" he wrote, describing his hospital stay as a routine visit.

Pele got more messages of support ahead of five-time champions Brazil's World Cup match against Cameroon yesterday.

Fans at Lusail stadium held up a giant green-and-yellow banner with a picture of Pele in his iconic number 10 jersey and the message, "Get well soon!"

The same message was displayed on the avenue outside the stadium.

Considered by many the greatest footballer of all time, Edson Arantes do Nascimento - Pele's real name - is the only player in history to win three World Cups (1958, 1962 and 1970).

Pre-view

We will break our backs to beat Australia, says Scaloni ahead of knockout tie today

Reuters Doha

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni complained about the limited recovery time ahead of his squad's World Cup last-16 clash against Australia but promised his team would play out of their skins to ensure there are no more surprises at the tournament.

Argentina beat Poland late on Wednesday to book their spot in the knockout stages and must play Australia today, a turnaround time that Scaloni had previously described as "absolute madness".

Scaloni and midfielder Rodrigo De Paul said they have yet to train, instead focusing on down time and recovery over the past two days.

"Australia, who finished second in the group, played at 6 p.m. and we finished first (in our group) but played at 10 p.m. We went to bed at 4 a.m. and that has an impact when you have a game in 48 hours," Scaloni told reporters yesterday.

"We will break our backs on this pitch to compete, we know how difficult this World Cup is, this is football."

"We saw what happened yesterday (when Germany and Belgium were knocked out in the group stage) but this is not surprising. When you say big national teams deserve to be in the next stage, that doesn't always happen."



Argentina's forward Lionel Messi dribbles the ball during a training session at Qatar University in Doha on the eve of the Qatar 2022 World Cup match against Australia. (AFP)

Box

ARGENTINA vs AUSTRALIA

When: Today, 10pm **Where:** Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium

Capacity: 45,032

Key stats:

- Argentina have played eight round of 16 matches since the current tournament format was introduced in 1986, losing only to Romania in 1994 and eventual champions France four years ago.
- Including two in Qatar, Argentina forward Leo Messi has scored eight World Cup goals over five tournaments since 2006. None of them have been in knockout matches.
- Australia have played only one previous last 16 match in their six visits to the World Cup, losing 1-0 to Italy courtesy of a controversial penalty in 2006.
- Australia did not concede a goal in their last two group matches in Qatar, their first clean sheets since their maiden trip to the finals in 1974.

Previous meetings:

Argentina have played Australia seven times since 1988, winning five, drawing one and losing one. The teams have never met at the World Cup finals but Argentina won a two-legged intercontinental playoff to qualify for the 1994 tournament.

There were concerns winger Angel Di Maria was injured when he was taken off in the 2-0 win over Poland.

Scaloni said they would assess player fitness before taking a call on the starting lineup. "Di Maria is feeling fine, we hope he will be fine and is able to play. At the moment we don't have a clear picture," Scaloni said.

"If you've seen our matches, you know I don't always play the same players. I focus on every single match and adapt the team for the match. Very rarely have I repeated the starting 11."

"What's important is everyone knows what they need to

do. We will go match by match and won't always play the same team if it isn't necessary."

Australia are back in the knockout stages for the first time since 2006.

Scaloni said Argentina must shed the "favourites" tag going into the contest, while De Paul said they had analysed the team that beat Tunisia and Denmark in the group stage.

"It will be a similar game to that of Poland, we'll have the ball but they'll have wide players on the flanks - coverage will be important," De Paul said.

"I think it's a very fast team, focusing on wide players, and they have tall centre backs as well. I think we shouldn't make fouls near the area."

The midfielder pointed to the Socceroos' flying wingers Craig Goodwin and Mathew Leckie as the danger men.

"They have very fast wingers and their main strength is their counter-attack, so we need to be very careful. We shouldn't be on the back foot... It will be difficult for our midfield and defence so our forwards are free to roam."

"Tall guys, tall centre-backs, we'll have to avoid giving away free-kicks around the box. We'll have to be careful (of their) very fast wingers, that's their strength, counter-attacking."

Australia got off to a poor start at the World Cup despite taking an early lead against France, eventually succumbing 4-1.

But 1-0 victories over Tunisia and Denmark booked the world's 38th-ranked side a surprise ticket to the knockout phase.

However, coach Scaloni said it was not a shock to see the Socceroos progress in Qatar.

"It didn't surprise me because they are a good team... with a World Cup history, which makes them difficult," he told a pre-match press conference on Friday.

"Whether or not they are inferior to us remains to be seen. I don't agree that they are. This is football - eleven against eleven. Forget who is theoretically favourites and let's play football."

Scaloni is expecting the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium to be teeming with Argentina fans today, as the Stadium 974 was for Wednesday's victory over Poland.

"The Argentine fans always make themselves heard and when the stadium is 80 to 90 percent Argentines you notice it more," he said.

"Hopefully tomorrow it will be like the Poland match because that was like playing in Argentina."

Images have been shared from across the world of Argentina fans cheering on the team, even from as far away as Bangladesh.

"For many years now, with Diego (Maradona) with Leo (Lionel Messi) the jersey has always generated hysteria, for the colours, for the Argentine passion," said Scaloni.

"It fills us with pride that a country like Bangladesh supports Argentina."



Match Report

Hwang the hero as South Korea reach Round of 16

'I believe these tears are tears of happiness. We waited really long for this moment and we believed we could do this'

By Rizwan Rehmat
Doha

There were tears of joy at Education City Stadium for South Korean players and fans while there were tears of dejection at Al Janoub Stadium among the Uruguay supporters and team players.

An injury-time goal by Hwang Hee-chan last night helped South Korea to a stunning 2-1 win over Portugal in the last group stage match of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. The late goal by the Wolverhampton Wanderers' forward was enough to push out Uruguay who beat Ghana yesterday 2-0 in the other Group H clash as the South Americans fell short in their bid to reach the Round of 16.

Luis Suarez sobbed uncontrollably at Al Janoub Stadium whereas South Korea skipper Son Heungmin had tears of joy as his team reached the Round of 16 in the most dramatic of finishes.

"I believe these tears are tears of happiness," he said. "We waited really long for this moment and we as players believed altogether we could do this."

"There were moments when I wasn't able to do my best and I am thankful for my teammates that they were able to cover me in the moments I wasn't able to fulfil my duties, and I'm very proud of them."

Already-qualified Portugal, the 2016 Euro champions, finished top of the group with 6 points with Cristiano Ronaldo starting the game yesterday despite a big concern over his injury. South Korea and Uruguay ended with 4 points each but the



South Korea players celebrate at the Education City Stadium after qualifying for the knockout stages yesterday. (Reuters)

Asians went ahead by virtue of scoring more goals in the three matches of the group stage.

Seconds before the first goal of the match, a fan seated behind banned Paulo Bento, remonstrated with the Portuguese coach for blocking his view. Bento, who picked up a red card during his team's match against Uruguay for a verbal spat against the referee, could barely restrain himself while arguing with the fan.

South Korea's Son Heung-min celebrates after winning their Group H match against Portugal yesterday. (Reuters)

Ricardo Horta scored for Portugal in the 5th minute in what was the first genuine attempt at goal. Horta charged into the box with a defender in tow but he wasted little time in deflecting from close range to the right of the outstretched hand of keeper Kim Seunggyu.

Pepe found Diogo Dalot with a long ball from the Portuguese half line. Dalot picked up the cross and went far to the edge of the Korean box. Dalot found Horta with a low shot which was easily sent into the net by the Braga forward from seven yards.

Korea continued to press on in the first 12 minutes of the match with numerous moves but with a goal's advantage, the Portuguese backline remained firm to every threatening move.

In the 17th minute, Kim Jinsu tapped a loose ball into the Portuguese net after keeper Diego Costa had effected a save on an indirect corner kick. Jinsu's tap from close range was on target but the linesman rightfully correctly called it off-side.

In the 23rd minute, Ronaldo was in the right position for a close range deflection - on a long cross from Mathues Nunes - but Korea's Kim Younggwon outpaced the Portuguese captain with a clearance for a corner.

Three minutes from the first half hour, Younggwon was quick to drill home a ball that landed at his feet off Ronaldo's body who was trying to duck away on a corner kick. Ronaldo turned his back to the ball which

Match		SOUTH KOREA	2	1	PORTUGAL
13	Shots	13			13
6	Shots on Target	6			6
8	Chances Created	8			8
5	Corners	4			4
5	Saves	4			4
38.5%	Possession	61.5%			
1	Offsides	5			
9	Fouls	10			
2	Yellow Cards	0			
0	Red Cards	0			

tonio Silva blocked a shot of Korean captain Heungmin who was inside the Portuguese box. Moments later, Korean midfielder Lee Kangin and Mathues Nunes rammied into each other causing a stoppage in play. At this point, the camera panned on Bento in the stands talking to one of his assistants.

bounced off his right shoulder and landed near unguarded Younggwon who produced a left-footed shot.

Shortly afterwards, Ronaldo was one-on-one with the Korean keeper but the Portuguese captain - in an attempt to shoot into the right of the net - failed to get the elevation on his shot that was slapped away by Seunggyu. Moments later, Ronaldo charged to receive a long cross but the Korean keeper reached first to catch the ball on the edge of his box.

Dalot added to the Portuguese momentum in the 33rd minute when he unleashed a rasping left-footed drive 30 yards out but the shot was blocked by the Korean keeper.

Six minutes from the first-half whistle, Korean captain Son Heungmin also rifled in a powerful shot from outside the Portuguese box but keeper Costa collected the ball to kill the move. Seconds later, Ronaldo went midair to head home - after the keeper had fumbled with his collection on a long-range shot by Vitorinha, but the ball sailed away as Portugal kept Korea under sustained pressure.

Close to the hour-mark, Antonio Silva blocked a shot of Korean captain Heungmin who was inside the Portuguese box. Moments later, Korean midfielder Lee Kangin and Mathues Nunes rammied into each other causing a stoppage in play. At this point, the camera panned on Bento in the stands talking to one of his assistants.

The irritated fan who was infuriated with Bento for blocking his view at the start of the match seemed to have probably swapped his seat with somebody else. Five minutes later, Ronaldo walked off after being benched. Before he took off, Ronaldo handed his captain's armband to Pepe, 39.

Hwang Inbeom, in the 66th minute, unleashed a rasping shot that hit the palms of keeper Costa and trickled away.

In a missed opportunity, Jinsu sent a cross to Heungmin who connected with a bullet shot that hit Cancelo on his elbow inside the Portuguese box.

South Korea vainly pleaded with the referee for a penalty in the 70th minute.

Six minutes later, Dalot found Horta with a neat cross but Portugal's goal scorer for some strange reason backtracked inside the six yard box.

Just as everyone thought the game was over, South Korea turned things around in dramatic fashion in injury time. Korean captain Heungmin ran from his own box to the rival team's box. He found Hee-chan with a neat cross near the edge before the substitute slotted home on his first attempt.

Spotlight

Switzerland edge Serbia to reach knockouts

Reuters
Doha

Switzerland reached the World Cup knockout round for the third successive tournament after prevailing 3-2 over Serbia yesterday to finish runners-up in Group G and set up a last 16 showdown with Portugal.

In a contest that ebbed and flowed at breakneck speed in the first half at Stadium 974, Xherdan Shaqiri put Switzerland ahead but Serbia swiftly scored twice within 10 minutes through Aleksandar Mitrovic and Dusan Vlahovic to flip the game on its head.

Breel Embolo delivered another twist in an absorbing opening period by pulling Switzerland side level just before the break, while Remo Freuler scored three minutes after the restart to restore their one-goal advantage again.

Switzerland had fired warning shots with barely 30 seconds on the clock, as captain Granit Xhaka's strike was blocked by the Serbian defence before goalkeeper Vanja Milinkovic-Savic denied both Embolo one-on-one and also Xhaka on the rebound.

Serbia enjoyed a spell of pressure after that early scare, with Nikola Milenkovic heading wide from Dusan Tadic's corner before Andrija Zivkovic took aim from outside the penalty area and rattled the left post with a powerful effort.

Ricardo Rodriguez's cross in the 20th minute was cleared and fell to Djibril Sow, who picked out Shaqiri on the right. The midfielder fired home a strike that took a slight deflection off Strahinja Pavlovic on its way into the net.

Fulham frontman Mitrovic headed in Tadic's cross to deservedly draw Serbia level six minutes later. Tadic was involved again and slipped the ball through to Vlahovic, who steered a low shot past goalkeeper Gregor Kobel to complete the Serbian turnaround. But Embolo slotted home Silvan Widmer's low cross in the 44th minute and Freuler kept the momentum going by thumping in the fifth goal of the evening, as two wonderfully worked moves from the Swiss attack proved to be Serbia's undoing. Midway through the second half, Mitrovic went down too easily after a challenge from Fabian Schaefer but his appeals for a penalty were turned down, and the Serbian

Match		SWITZERLAND	3	2	SERBIA
14	Shots	12			
7	Shots on Target	4			
11	Chances Created	9			
0	Corners	2			
2	Saves	4			
46.4%	Possession	53.6%			
0	Offsides	0			
14	Fouls	18			
4	Yellow Cards	6			
0	Red Cards	0			

dugout spilled onto the pitch protesting the referee's decision.

Switzerland finished with six points, level with Group G winners Brazil but behind on goal difference. Serbia, who needed a win to give themselves a fighting chance of advancing, finished bottom of the group with only one point.

They have never moved past the World Cup group stage since the breakup of Yugoslavia.



Switzerland's Remo Freuler (right) celebrates with teammate Ricardo Rodriguez after scoring his team's third goal during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group G match against Serbia at Stadium 974 in Doha yesterday. (AFP)

Group	Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	GD	PTS
Group A	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
Group B	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
Group C	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
Group D	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
Group E	1	Japan (Q)	3	2	0	1	1	6
	2	Spain (Q)	3	1	1	1	1	4
	3	Germany	3	1	1	1	1	4
	4	Costa Rica	3	1	0	2	-8	3
Group F	1	Morocco (Q)	3	2	1	0	3	7
	2	Croatia (Q)	3	1	2	0	3	5
	3	Belgium	3	1	1	1	-1	4
	4	Canada	3	0	0	3	-5	0
Group G	1	Brazil (Q)	3	2	0	1	+2	6
	2	Switzerland (Q)	3	2	0	1	1	6
	3	Cameroon	3	1	1	1	0	4
	4	Serbia	3	0	1	2	-3	1
Group H	1	Portugal (Q)	3	2	0	1	+2	6
	2	South Korea (Q)	3	1	1	1	0	4
	3	Uruguay	3	1	1	1	0	4
	4	Ghana	3	1	0	2	-2	3

P- Played • W- Won • D-Draw • L-Loss • GD- Goal Difference • PTS- Points • Q- Qualified into last 16