

Giroud and Mbappe take ruthless France into last 8

'THERE IS NO RECIPE TO STOP MBAPPE IN THE FORM THAT HE IS IN RIGHT NOW'

AFP
Doha

Kylian Mbappe set up a history-making goal for Olivier Giroud and then scored two himself as holders France eased into the World Cup quarter-finals with a 3-1 win over Poland yesterday.

Giroud's opening goal a minute before half-time was his 52nd for his country, allowing him to pass Thierry Henry and become France's all-time record marksman.

Stats		
FRANCE		POLAND
	3	1 
16	Shots	12
8	Shots on Target	3
11	Chances Created	6
7	Corners	1
1	Saves	5
54.9%	Possession	45.1%
3	Offsides	8
10	Fouls	12
0	Yellow Cards	2
0	Red Cards	0

Mbappe's lethal strike in the 74th minute killed off any prospect of a Poland comeback and he netted again at the death to move to nine goals in just 11 World Cup appearances. At the other end, the threat of Robert Lewandowski was snuffed out by the French defence, although the 34-year-old Poland captain did get the consolation of scoring a stoppage-time penalty.

France march on to the quarter-finals and are on course to become the first team to successfully defend the World Cup since Brazil 60 years ago.

"It wasn't easy because Poland were well organised and tried to counter us," France coach Didier Deschamps told broadcaster TF1.

"Then there is Kylian with his ability to resolve all sorts of problems, and that's just as well for us.

France's forward Kylian Mbappe (also right) celebrates with teammates after scoring his team's second goal during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Round of 16 match against Poland at the Al Thumama Stadium in Doha yesterday. (AFP)

"This team has been united from the beginning and obviously a result like this one confirms that. The joy is shared among everyone."

France were overwhelming favourites against a Poland side who limped through the group stage and who had not won a World Cup knockout tie since 1982. "We got out of the group stage for the first time since 1986. That was our main objective," said Poland coach Czeslaw Michniewicz. But he added: "There is no recipe to stop Mbappe in the form that he is in right now"

Mbappe returned as one of nine changes following their inconsequential

defeat by Tunisia, with goalkeeper and captain Hugo Lloris also coming back to win his 142nd cap. That saw him equal the record for most France appearances, held by Lilian Thuram, whose son Marcus came off the bench here.

It was a history-making occasion for France but what Deschamps wanted above all was a routine victory and progression to the last eight. The sky should be the limit for a French side led by Mbappe, but it is not just him.

Ousmane Dembele and Antoine Griezmann were lively in a strong start at a hushed atmosphere at Al Thumama Stadium. The fans were happy

to sit back and be thrilled as the big screen at one point showed Mbatia had reached a top speed of 35 kilometres (21 miles) per hour.

France's pace and pressing was too much for Poland as Przemyslaw Frankowski gave possession away, leading to Demebele crossing to the back post for Giroud to put the ball wide.

Poland recovered from a tentative start to almost go ahead in the 38th minute when Lloris blocked Piotr Zieliński's shot and Jakub Kamiński's follow-up was stopped on the line by Raphael Varane. Those misses proved crucial as France seized the



made a minute before half-time. Patient build-up play ended with Mbappe having a glance as he received the ball just outside the box before playing in Giroud, who took a touch and finished into the far corner.

Poland were left to chase the game in the second half and they sent on Juventus striker Arkadiusz Milik to support Lewandowski for the final half-hour. However, their attack was no match for France, who picked off Poland to make it 2-0. A Griezmann clearance was brought down by Giroud and he released Dembele, whose ball into the middle was controlled before being blasted home by Mbappe.

It was an emphatic finish and was followed by another of a similar calibre from a Thuram assist in stoppage time.

Only Just Fontaine, who scored 13 in 1958, has scored more World Cup goals for France than Mbappe. Lewandowski pulled one back right at the end, converting a retaken penalty that was awarded for handball by Dayot Upamecano.



A dejected Robert Lewandowski of Poland after the match. (AFP)

World Cup is my obsession, says Mbappe

AFP
Doha

Kylian Mbappe said yesterday he dreamed of winning the World Cup for a second time after his brace helped France to a 3-1 win over Poland which advanced the holders to the quarter-finals in Qatar.

"Of course, this World Cup is an obsession for me, it's the competition of my dreams," said the 23-year-old who burst onto the global stage by starring when France won the title in Russia four years ago. "I have built my season around this competition and around being ready both physically and mentally for it."

"I wanted to come here ready and so far things are going well, but we are still a long way from the objective we set and that I set."

The Paris Saint-Germain su-

LEADING SCORERS

5 goals: Kylian Mbappe (France)
3 goals: Enner Valencia (Ecuador), Cody Gakpo (Netherlands), Marcus Rashford (England), Alvaro Morata (Spain), Lionel Messi (Argentina), Olivier Giroud (France), Bukayo Saka (England)
2 goals: Bruno Fernandes (Portugal), Mehdi Taremi (Iran), Cho Gue-sung (South Korea), Andrej Kramaric (Croatia), Mohamed Kudus (Ghana), Richarlison (Brazil), Ferran Torres (Spain), Ritsu Doan (Japan), Vincent Aboubakar (Cameroon), Saleem al-Dawsari (Saudi Arabia), Aleksandar Mitrovic (Serbia), Niclas Füllkrug (Germany), Kai Havertz (Germany), Breel Embolo (Switzerland), Giorgian de Arrascaeta (Uruguay), Julian Alvarez (Argentina), Robert Lewandowski (Poland)

perstar now has five goals in just four games at the tournament and is already France's second-top scorer ever at the World Cup with nine goals in 11 appearances overall. Only just Fontaine, who scored an incredible 13 times at the 1958 tournament in Sweden, has more World Cup goals for France.

However Mbappe insisted he was not bothered about the prospect of winning the Golden Ball

for the tournament's best player. "The only objective for me is to win the World Cup which means now to win the quarter-final," said Mbappe, who also set up the opening goal against Poland for Olivier Giroud. "That is what I am dreaming of. I didn't come here to win the Golden Ball. That is not why I am here. I am here to win and help the French national team."

While the veteran Giroud netted his 52nd international goal to move past Thierry Henry and become France's all-time top scorer, Mbatia was once again France's outstanding player. He had been named man of the match in France's opening two wins over Australia and Denmark only to shun his post-match media duties, exposing the French Football Federation to a fine from FIFA as a result. However, this time he showed up to speak to reporters. "There were lots of people wondering why I was not speaking but it was nothing personal against the journalists," he said. "I just needed to concentrate on my competition and when I need to focus it needs to be at 100 percent. I can't lose energy on other things. That is why I didn't speak before. I have learnt that the federation is going to get a fine but I have promised personally to pay it."



France's forward Kylian Mbappe (right) celebrates their win with teammate Olivier Giroud yesterday. (AFP)





Spotlight

Ronaldo draws focus, but Fernandes proves to be Portugal’s heartbeat

Bruno Fernandes is emerging as the team’s true creative leader, as Portugal qualified for the last 16 with a game to spare

AFP
Doha

Cristiano Ronaldo's shadow looms large over Portugal at the World Cup, but away from the flash of camera phones and rolling headlines, Bruno Fernandes has taken the reins.

Fernando Santos' team are synonymous with their leading man, a black hole for media attention and fan admiration, reducing his colleagues to a supporting cast, inadvertently or not.

However in Qatar, playmaker Fernandes is emerging as the team's true creative leader, sealing qualification for the last 16 with a game to spare.

With several changes but Ronaldo still leading the side, Portugal fell to a 2-1 defeat by South Korea on Friday but finished top of their group and face Switzerland.

Fernandes was rested, wrapped in cotton wool, and without him Portugal failed to create many clear chances.

Still, supporters swooned over veteran striker Ronaldo – save some Korea fans who instead chanted for “Messi” – even as the all-time record international goalscorer floundered up front.

Instead it is Fernandes, no longer a club teammate of Ronaldo after his dramatic departure by mutual consent ahead of the World Cup, who has been the beating heart of the side this year.

It was Fernandes who picked up the pieces in Portugal's press conference ahead of their open-



Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo (left) and Bruno Fernandes take part in a training session at Al Shahaniya Sports Club yesterday. (AFP, Reuters)

ing game against Ghana, fielding questions on the Ronaldo drama.

Then on the pitch he was a quiet mastermind, providing two assists in the 3-2 win, even as Ronaldo basked in the limelight after winning a soft penalty and dispatching it to open the scoring.

The former Real Madrid forward became the first man to score in five separate World Cups, at 37 years old. It's an age where most players would have retired by, but Ronaldo chugs on, having pledged to play until 40, at least.

ther, but under it, Portugal have a lot of younger, dynamic talent, itching for a chance to break through.

FIGUREHEAD FERNANDES
Rafael Leao, Andre Silva and Goncalo Ramos are all interesting, young attacking options but

started on the bench against Korea, with Ronaldo failing to make an impact.

Manchester City midfielder Bernardo Silva is another underrated, smooth presence but at the 2022 World Cup it is Fernandes who has taken on the role of floor manager, the

pearing to claim a goal against Uruguay which was ultimately given to Fernandes.

The 28-year-old, like Ronaldo a former Sporting Lisbon player, is set to return to the side against Switzerland tomorrow, and Portugal should look more like themselves again after their Korea blip.

Fernandes is an established star, but still young enough to take on the role of creator-in-chief, and as a figurehead is a different prospect to Ronaldo – where all roads end, the man who applies the finishing touch.

Even on that front, Fernandes is ahead in 2022, with seven goals for his country in 11 games, to Ronaldo's three in 10.

The Manchester United playmaker is also capable of providing them, unselfishly saying he thought Ronaldo had headed home his cross against Uruguay which found the net.

“I celebrated as if it had been Cristiano's goal,” he explained. “It seemed to me that he had touched the ball. My aim was to cross the ball for him. We are happy with the victory regardless of who scored.”

Fernandes has often been diplomatic when speaking to the media, even when repeatedly questioned about Ronaldo. “It was a dream to play with him,” he said, of their days together at Manchester United. “But nothing lasts.”

Wise, measured responses, issued like the kind of perfectly weighted passes Fernandes aims to deliver Ronaldo and co, as Portugal set their sights on a first World Cup trophy.

Focus

Pragmatic style pays off for Van Gaal’s Netherlands



AFP
Doha

Louis van Gaal's Netherlands have been repeatedly criticised for being “too boring” but a clinical counter-attacking display on Saturday saw them pick off the United States to reach the quarter-finals of the World Cup.

The veteran coach suggested a reporter should “go home” if he thought the Dutch were not entertaining enough after a 2-0 win over Qatar in the group stage.

The Netherlands’ 3-1 victory on Saturday will silence some of the critics, with many of van Gaal's big decisions paying off.

His side sat back in the first half against the USA and cut through them with a wonderful move of 20 passes to score the opening goal through Memphis Depay, exposing the wide spaces left in behind the American defence.

“It was a great goal...It was the perfect goal I think,” said

midfielder Davy Klaassen.

When Daley Blind swept home their second shot on target on the stroke of half-time, the United States had a mountain to climb. Haji Wright pulled one back late on, but the Netherlands, who did not qualify in 2018 but have only conceded six goals in 11 World Cup games under van Gaal, secured progression through Denzel Dumfries.

In truth, a comeback was never likely against the well organised Netherlands, traditionally known for expansive football.

“Of course we want to (play in a ‘Dutch style’), but in the end you want to win and this is the most important (thing),” added Klaassen.

Van Gaal took over for a third time last year to lead the Netherlands until the end of this tournament and remains unbeaten excluding penalties at World Cups.

He earned plenty of praise in 2014 when his team finished third, beating hosts Brazil after losing on penalties to Argen-

tina in the semi-finals.

That side kept clean sheets in both those matches and the quarter-final shootout victory over Costa Rica was led by van Gaal who moved to Manchester United after the World Cup.

“We’re unbeaten with him so definitely big credit to him,” said captain Virgil van Dijk.

“He’s been very good for Dutch football.”

The 71-year-old has been under pressure in Qatar, though, since declaring the Oranje are targeting becoming world champions for the first time. One reporter put it to van Gaal that fans were “grinding their teeth” on social media about perceived drab performances. “That’s your opinion but I don’t think your opinion is the correct opinion,” he replied.

Marshallled by van Dijk and Nathan Ake, the Dutch have been hard to break down.

Giant goalkeeper Andries Noppert has impressed when called upon since being given his international debut by van

Gaal in the opening win over Senegal. “I get enough appreciation from the people surrounding me, I know what the media will say about me – they don’t always report in a positive way. That’s a given in football,” said van Gaal.

With Depay fit to start after only being used as a substitute in the first two matches, the Netherlands appear primed to go even further ahead of their last-eight tie against Argentina next Friday at Lusail Stadium. The USA enjoyed the majority of possession at Khalifa International Stadium but always struggled to create chances more than their opponents. The comfortable nature of the victory even allowed van Gaal to rest Depay and Ake late on in a day when almost everything went right for him.

“He’s Louis van Gaal and he never changes. What you see is what you get,” said wing-back Daley Blind.

“He’s a great personality and we’re very happy that he’s with us.”

Familiar US shortcomings exposed but best yet to come

A fresh-faced United States squad arrived in Qatar with modest expectations and although they may leave with a sense of disappointment after another last-16 exit, their performances offered hope of a longer run when they co-host the 2026 tournament.

After an encouraging group campaign, a young team brimming with confidence entered the knockout phase believing they could deliver another plot twist in a tournament where underdogs have consistently punched above their weight. The US largely outplayed Wales in their opener but let victory slip after conceding a late penalty, and went toe-to-toe with heavy favourites England in a scoreless stalemate.

Needing a win over Iran to advance, Gregg Berhalter's side delivered, surviving nervous moments at the end to earn the first victory of their campaign. The US frustrated opponents with their excellent pressing style as well as an organised and disciplined defence in those games, offsetting their profligacy in front of goal and poor set-piece delivery.

Those shortcomings caught up with them against the Netherlands on Saturday when the US, the only team not to concede from open play during the group stage, found themselves trailing for the first time in the campaign.

Their three defensive lapses were punished as the Dutch scored on each occasion, with Denzel Dumfries the architect of their demise in a Netherlands side whose attack strung together one-touch passes like clockwork to carve open the American midfield.

Christian Pulisic spurned a gilt-edged early chance before a vintage Dutch build-up that included 20 uninterrupted passes,

helped along by an uncharacteristic error from US captain Tyler Adams, was rounded off by Memphis Depay's crisp finish.

“We don’t have a Memphis Depay,” Berhalter said.

“Their first attack was basically a goal. They were clinical with their opportunities in the first half. Other than that, there wasn’t a ton separating the two teams.”

Daley Blind's goal, scored just before the break in almost identical fashion, was a true gut-punch and although Haji Wright fortuitously gave the Americans a lifeline with a deflected shot, Dumfries soon restored his team's two-goal cushion.

The American campaign may have ended in disappointingly familiar fashion – they have exited in the first knockout round in their last three appearances – but their next World Cup match will be on home soil when key players in the current squad should be in their prime.

On their return to the world stage after eight years, the US fielded four of the five youngest line-ups of the competition and were the second youngest of the 32 squads with an average age of 25 years 214 days when the tournament began.

Pulisic, Adams, Weston McKennie, Yunus Musah, Tim Weah and Sergino Dest were among 19 players making their World Cup debuts. The previous record for the US team stood at 16, set in the 1990 tournament when they bowed out in the group stage.

The quality of the squad combined with their progress during the tournament sparked discussions about the next American golden generation. Berhalter was reluctant to place that burden on his players but this time it does not feel like promotional bluster. (Reuters)



US coach Gregg Berhalter and player Christian Pulisic look dejected after the match as United States are eliminated from the World Cup after their loss to Netherlands at the Khalifa International Stadium in Doha on Saturday. (Reuters)



Match_____Report

England outclass Senegal 3-0, set quarters date with France

Jordan Henderson, Harry Kane and Bukayo Saka score the goals for the 1966 FIFA World Cup champions

By Rizwan Rehmat
Doha

England yesterday crushed Senegal 3-0 to reach their second successive FIFA World Cup quarter-finals.

Goals from Jordan Henderson (38), Harry Kane (45 +3) and Bukayo Saka (57) saw England complete a resounding victory at Al Bayt Stadium.

Trophyless since 1966, England found their players in scoring form to set up a quarter-finals date with defending champions France who beat Poland 3-1 at Al Thumama Stadium yesterday.

The first few minutes easily belonged to England, who were playing with 4-1-2-3 formation as Southgate took charge of his 11th World Cup match as a coach. Southgate's counterpart Aliou Cisse, who was running a temperature the last couple of days, was back in the saddle and watched the initial action of the knockout clash from the dugout.

In the fifth minute, Senegal's Boulaye Dia charged into the England box but he was well chased and eventually tackled by Harry Maguire as goalkeeper Jordan Pickford collected the ball. Krepin Diatta brought down Jude Bellingham with a tackle from the back resulting in a free kick 20 yards away from the Senegal box. Shortly afterwards Declan Rice, on the edge of the box, slipped in a lob to Maguire who could not jump high enough for a deflection after Kane decided to take the indirect free kick in the 8th minute.

Bellingham, close to the flag post, slipped in a cross but Saka was tad behind pace as the ball slipped away without causing any damage.

In the 13th minute, Saka outran his marker and slipped in a ball but none of the white shirts were present to take the cross. Seconds later, Kane delivered a near-perfect cross from close to the corner flag but Saka didn't have the pace to meet the ball for a header from inside the six-yard box. England won the first corner in the 20th minute but Phil Foden's kick was deflected wayward by John Stones who couldn't time his jump well from close range.

Senegal missed a good chance to score in the 23rd minute when Maguire's poor cross was intercepted by Diatta near the England box. Dia tried to flick the ball from close to the penalty spot but his shot bounced off Stones' knee and onto his forearm. Sarr picked up the ball and fired a wayward shot from close range. A VAR check showed Stones' handball was not deliberate.

Soon after the half-hour mark, Ismaila Sarr cut into the box and instead of shooting quickly played a back pass to Dia. Dia fired a shot that was blocked by 'keeper Pickford by sticking out his left arm. Dia was unable to grab the rebound as Senegal wasted their second chance in quick time.

In the 38th minute, Henderson opened the scoring for Eng-



England's Harry Kane scores his team's second goal against Senegal during their Round of 16 FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 match at Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor yesterday. (Reuters)

‘Really chuffed, you know. Knockout games are never easy. We’ve showed great maturity through the tournament. It’s 3-0 against a really good side. Credit to the boys. Their mentality was top from the beginning, and we took our chances when they came. We feel good. We’ve got good runners. Good players. We’re solid at the back. Three clean sheets in a row is really important. A really good day for us. We have a great mixture of youth and experience. Another knockout win. It was a very good night. We’ll enjoy this one, but our focus turns to France. It’ll be a really tough game, they’re reigning champions, it’ll be a good battle. We’ll recover nicely and get ready for the game.’
— Harry Kane

land. Kane found Bellingham on the left flank with a short cross. Bellingham charged into the Senegal box where he rolled a pass to Liverpool star Henderson who easily deflected the ball in the net with a left-footed flick past 'keeper Edouard Mendy.

England doubled the lead on the last kick before the first-half whistle on Kane's deadly strike. Bellingham stole the ball in the Senegal half before he charged ahead. A few metres later, he slipped a cross for Foden who found Kane unmarked down the inside right. With thousands of British fans anticipating a goal, Kane entered the Senegal box – under pressure from marker Abdou Diallo – and fired a bullet past Mendy's right hand as

the ball hit the net at high speed. It was Kane's first goal of World Cup Qatar 2022. It was Kane's 52nd career goal, one shy of Wayne Rooney's tally of record 53 goals for England.

Soon after the resumption of play, substitute Pape Matar Sarr attempted a long-range drive but mistimed his shot that bounced away to the left of Pickford. In the 54th minute, Kane picked out Saka on the right. Saka charged ahead with the ball before unleashing a powerful shot that sailed away from the Senegalese goalmouth as England started taking better control of the match. Kane produced a rasping shot from long range but the ball – which dipped at the last second – was smartly

blocked by Mendy. In the 57th minute, England jumped to a 3-0 lead after Arsenal midfielder Saka – on a brilliant cross from Foden – smartly clipped the ball into the net from close range. Foden, who picked up a loose ball after a fumble by Kane, charged towards the Senegal box.

With Senegal skipper and defender Kalidou Koulibaly threatening a charge, Foden fired a low cross as Saka arrived with perfect timing for the deflection with his left foot near the six-yard box. It was Saka's third goal of the tournament, having scored a double against Iran in the opening clash. Both Saka and Foden were benched by manager Southgate soon afterwards as England looked to give the substitutes some much-needed match practice.

Marcus Rashford and Jack Grealish replaced Saka and Foden. In the 74th minute, Pape Sarr curled in a right-footed free-kick from outside the England box but the ball swung to the left of 'keeper Pickford.

When Koulibaly was slapped with a yellow card for his reckless tackle on English skipper Kane in the 75th minute, it pretty much summed up Senegal's dismal performance.



England's Bukayo Saka celebrates scoring their third goal against Senegal during their Round of 16 FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 match at Al Bayt Stadium. (Reuters)

Stats		
	3	
ENGLAND	0	SENEGAL
8	Shots	10
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Bottom_____Line

Football legends Desailly and Toure savour the atmosphere at Qatar 2022



Marcel Desailly

By Sports Reporter
Doha

Legendary former players Marcel Desailly and Yaya Toure have praised every aspect of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 – including the exciting action on the pitch, family-friendly atmosphere and vast array of entertainment options.

Desailly, a FIFA World Cup winner with France in 1998, said the compact nature of the event was proving a huge benefit for fans and players.

“In the group stage, we had four matches almost every day and it was amazing – fans were going to two games a day and really enjoying the atmosphere and the fact everything is close by. I’m very pleased by what I’ve seen so far – the intensity of games has been high and the organi-

sation has been superb. It’s going to be the best World Cup ever,” said Desailly, who won 116 caps for France.

Toure, who played in three editions of the FIFA World Cup for the Ivory Coast, said Saudi Arabia's upset win over Argentina was his stand-out moment so far.

“It was an unbelievable game. My ex-coach, Hervé Renard, from my time with the national team, produced something special with Saudi Arabia,” said Toure. “Every tournament, you always have an underdog that comes in and makes a big impression, so I’m pleased that Saudi Arabia achieved that as a team from the Arab world.”

Desailly also praised the FIFA Fan Festival at Al Bidda Park, which has been hosting up to 40,000 supporters daily throughout the tournament.

“I was there for the official opening of the festival and there was a lot of joy among the fans in attendance,” said Desailly.



Yaya Toure