

ELEVEN PARAGRAPHS

MATCH DAY TWO

This team of paragraphs covers match day two at World Cup 2022. The goalie provides a brief summary, including a mention of all the qualified and eliminated nations. The remaining paragraphs line up in a 4-4-2 and work together to provide all the scores, surrounded by pertinent sentences about the tournament so far. The four defenders cover the action from Groups A, B, C, and D. The four midfielders review the matches from Groups E, F, G, and H. Up front, two strikers preview Match Day Three – judgment day – for Groups A&B and C&D. On the bench, two substitutes enter and preview MD3 in Groups E&F and G&H.



FIFA WORLD CUP
Qatar 2022

By the way, here are the updated totals from each of the world's regions. A CONCACAF nation finally won a game in this tournament, but its other nations lost two and tied one, leaving the region with one win, four losses, three draws and only three goals scored in eight total matches. Participants from ASIA also continued with mixed results, earning two wins and three losses in MD 2. AFCON nations bounced back with three wins, one draw and one loss. South American nations again found 2 wins, 1 draw and 1 loss. European nations split its collective spoils with four wins, four losses and five draws.

ONE - Match Day Two is complete and fans of the beautiful game were treated to an incredible four days of football. Game after game provided intense football with everything in the world on the line. In the 16 matches played in Match Day Two, forty goals were scored, bringing the tournament total to 81. There was one more scoreless draw, making five in total. France, Brazil, and Portugal have qualified for the knock-out phase with a game to spare. England and Spain are very close to qualifying, while only two nations - Qatar and Canada - were eliminated. All other nations are in with a chance, needing maybe a draw, but likely a win and perhaps some help from the group's other match.



TWO - GROUP A - Ecuador continued its fine campaign with a great performance against Netherlands. Ecuador were quick and happy and created offence all game long. Unfortunately for the South Americans, the game ended 1-1, earning them only one point from their excellent endeavours. Holland clung on for its point, better losing that third point to no-one, than all three. The only good news for the Dutch was its fabulous early goal from Cody Gakpo, a beautiful strike in the 6th minute, which was worthy of getting his team that point. Senegal beat Qatar in the group's other game with a quite convincing 3-1 win over the hosts. Qatar played better than in game one, but drop out of contention ahead of its last match against Netherlands. Senegal get ready for a showdown with Ecuador for a place in the knock-out round.

THREE - GROUP B - Match Day Two began with a slog of a game between Iran and Wales. Don't get me wrong, it was intense and watchable, but it looked all game long like a 0-0 match. Only thing is, it ended 2-0 to Iran with two late goals that shook awake this writer and many others, just waking up for a great day of watching football. Wales (who have progressed in recent tournaments) was due for some bad luck. The England - USA game went to plan in some ways, however the roles were reversed. It was the USA that played better. It was the USA that looked more likely to score and in the end, it was England who were pleased to limp away with a point. England weren't great, but were solid if not productive. Overall, the Three Lions did do enough to get the point that puts them all but mathematically into the knock out stage. All four nations can land just about everywhere or anywhere from first to fourth in this group. Better get two screens ready for match day three.



FOUR - GROUP C - The big news of the tournament continues to be found in Group C, where Argentina fended off an early match point in this tournament. A win was required and a win was delivered by a vintage Argentine performance against a tricky and worthy Mexico outfit. Leo Messi owns the headlines as Batman with a super winning goal and an assist, while Angel De Maria was the perfect Robin, flying around with the intent and skill we expect from the Albicelestes. Poland went ahead and beat Saudi Arabia 2-0 in the group's other game, thanks to a goal and an assist from its talisman Robert Lewandowski. Hopes are renewed for the Polish fans, but Argentina await in Match Day 3. God only knows what will become of Saudi Arabia, who sticky gratefully to 3 points with one game left to play against Mexico.

FIVE - GROUP D - France speed into the knock out phase with its 2-1 victory over Denmark. It was by all accounts a heavy weight battle. No doubt Denmark is the real deal, but Kylian Mbappe was the difference with a masterful performance, highlighted by two spectacular goals, including the winner in the 86th minute. France look like a team expecting to repeat as champions and are daring anyone to stop them. Australia beat Tunisia 1-0 in the group's other game. It was essentially another home game for Tunisia, but it was Australia that settled quickly and controlled the first quarter of the match, culminating in the game's only goal in the 23rd minute. From then on, Tunisia controlled the match and threw everything into finding an equalizing goal that was not to be. The Socceroos welcomed the final whistle with equal parts joy and relief. Australia, Tunisia and Denmark all have a chance of joining France in the knock-out round, which will make for exciting viewing.



SIX - GROUP E - The two giants from Group E - Spain and Germany - met in the most intriguing match of the group stage. Before that titanic battle, Costa Rica delivered the group's second shock result, beating Japan 1-0. Japan offered much to the match and deserved something, anything, but got nothing. The goal arrived late and was a peach of a finish following a successful and telling high

pressure pinch. Both nations sit on 3 points after two matches and need something special on match day three to advance. Spain versus Germany was as good as advertised in so many ways finishing as a very watch-able 1-1 draw. Spain scored first, thanks to substitute Alvaro Morata's clinical near-post flick just after the hour mark. Germany's Niclas Fullkrug scored the tying goal with a thumping strike in the 83rd minute. A point each was justice on the day. However, it's extremely possible these opponents winked and smiled at each other, suggesting they finish this duel and settle this encounter in the final on December 18th.

SEVEN - GROUP F - Belgium were again second best on the day, but this time could not find even one point. All three points went to Morocco who scored a goal by guile and magic in the 73rd minute and by fitness and craft in the 90th (+2) minute to shock everyone but themselves. Belgium played okay at times, but hardly looked likely to breach the scoresheet. Morocco, who look a real handful for any opponent, have kept clean sheets in five straight games, including these two against Croatia and Belgium. In the other Group F game between Canada and Croatia, the Canucks took 67 seconds to score its first goal at a World Cup. It actually took 36 years, 1 game and 67 seconds to score this first goal. It was a great moment that stood alone in the middle of many lowlights, as Croatia fought back to win 4-1. In a sentence, Croatia taught the young Canadians a lesson about football at the top table and reminded the rest of the world that Croatia has what it takes to again be among the medals.



EIGHT - GROUP G - Serbia and Cameroon played a do or die match in Group G. Both nations were playing for the win, resulting in one of the most exciting games of the tournament. Cameroon jumped ahead in the first half, but just near halftime, Serbia turned the game right around with two fine goals. Serbia scored again early in the second half to make it 3-1 with a beautiful team goal. Cameroon fought back to score goals in 63rd and 66th minutes, both surviving nervy VAR decisions. Neither team got what they wanted (a win), but their single points keep them both alive with a game to play. The other match from Group G was a thrilling affair between Brazil and Switzerland, filled with plenty of intrigue and tension, along with tremendous skill, shape and fight, making it impossible to look away. Switzerland played its part, but Brazil were the better team throughout, if not with attacking intent and ideas, then certainly with its iron clad defending. A deserved winning goal arrived in the last ten minutes from that rock and rockstar Casemiro who floated forward and drilled a shot into side netting to give Brazil all three points and a place in the knock-out phase.

NINE - GROUP H - Ghana and Korea was such a good game to watch. It had all the intensity of all these world cup matches, where every moment is momentous. It had two teams that were both desperate for all three points. If they are going out, they will go down swinging. Also, the game had some shank defending here and there which boosted the number of forward forays, crosses and goals. In Ghana's favour, the 3-2 scoreline was just about right, although the Koreans will wonder how an equalizer wasn't found. To both fine nations, we scream thanks a million from all eight billion here on Earth, for producing such an enjoyable match. In the other match, Portugal and Uruguay also put on a great show for the world. Portugal edged it in every way, including importantly on the score board, registering a 2-0 victory. Bruno Fernandes scored both goals and secured his nation's place in the knock-out round. In the final quarter of the match, Uruguay showed some signs of awakening from its early tournament slumber and will need to be wide awake for Match Day Three to have any chance of advancing.



TEN - Match Day Three begins right away with final matches running Tuesday through Friday. In Group A, Netherlands will look to beat up on eliminated Qatar and win the group, while Ecuador and Senegal play a pseudo-knock out game with the winner advancing. A draw favours the Ecuadorians, who enter with an extra point. In Group B, England can lose to Wales and still qualify, but will like to win and top the group. In order to stay in Qatar, Wales need to win outright against England and also need a draw in the other game between Iran and USA. Iran may modify its tactics depending on the other game's score and may only need a draw to advance. On the other hand, USA must win or go home.

ELEVEN - In Group C, anything is possible with all four nations in with a chance for qualification to the Sweet Sixteen. Poland would love to claim at least a tie against Argentina, while Messi and company need a win to assure a place in the knock-out round. Mexico and Saudi Arabia likely know that only a victory will do and for Mexico, it may not even be enough. In Group D, France may play for the draw against Tunisia, as they need only one point to assure a 1st place finish. However, France will likely get this honour even with a loss, which could help Tunisia's cause, who need a win and some help. Denmark is in a win or go home situation, while a draw should be good enough for Australia to advance, unless Tunisia upset France.



OFF THE BENCH

TWELVE - In Group E, Spain are on course for the round of sixteen, needing only a point against Japan to top the group. The Spanish could even lose and survive. Japan look to tame another giant in this tournament and secure second

or maybe even first in the group. Germany need to win and hope Japan don't for a place in the knock-out round. A draw may be enough to put Costa Rica through, but as heavy underdogs against Germany, the Central American side may have to settle for its one enjoyable win. In Group F, Morocco went into the lion's den and survived Belgium (actually thrived), putting themselves in a great position to qualify. They need only one point against Canada to insure a place in the eighth-finals. The group's other underdogs Canada went into another lion's dens and got devoured by Croatia, who now need only a draw against the reeling Belgians to advance. Belgium need to find their championship legs and fast because, if not, the party's over.

THIRTEEN - In Group G, Brazil are through to the Round of 16 and need one point from its final game against Cameroon to secure top spot. Even with a loss, top spot is likely for the favoured Brazilians. The unmissable match is Serbia versus Switzerland, with the winner likely advancing. A draw would suit the Swiss, who would need only to worry about a Cameroon upset of Brazil. In Group H, Portugal also need only a point to top the group. Its opponent, South Korea, will be flying around trying to win and trying to score as many goals as possible to keep its World Cup dreams alive. Ghana play Uruguay in the other match and may only need a draw to advance. Uruguay need to win and hope South Korea don't, to take its place in the Round of 16.

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