



FIFA World Cup 2026

Argentina, France, England among heavy weights as last 8 battle for semi-final spots

BOSTON [USA], JULY 8 : The FIFA World Cup 2026 has entered the quarter-final stage after an eventful Round of 16, with only eight teams remaining in the race for football's biggest prize. The 48-team tournament has now been narrowed down to Argentina, France, Morocco, Spain, Belgium, England, Norway and Switzerland, setting up four intriguing quarter-final clashes.

Defending champions Argentina survived a dramatic scare to stay in the competition, while European powerhouses France, Spain, England and Belgium continued their campaigns. Morocco remain Africa's sole representatives after a brilliant run so far, while Norway and Switzerland will also look to extend their impressive campaigns.

The last-eight fixtures promise a combination of tactical battles, historic rematches and high-profile individual duels as teams compete for places in the semi-finals.

France will meet Morocco in a repeat of their 2022 FIFA World Cup semi-final in Qatar. Didier Deschamps' side secured a place in the quarter-finals with a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Paraguay, courtesy of a second-half penalty converted by captain Kylian Mbappe.

Morocco, meanwhile, produced one of the most convincing performances of the Round of 16 by defeating co-hosts Canada 3-0. Led by an energetic midfield and a disciplined defensive structure, Mohamed



Ouahbi's side became the first African nation to reach consecutive World Cup quarter-finals. Having fallen to France in the semi-finals four years ago, the Atlas Lions now have an opportunity to gain revenge and move one step closer to another historic achievement.

Spain vs Belgium

Spain and Belgium will square off in another fascinating encounter between two sides with contrasting approaches. Spain edged neighbours Portugal 1-0 in a closely contested Round of 16 clash, with substitute Mikel Merino scoring a dramatic stoppage-time winner.

Luis de la Fuente's side now faces a Belgium team that has looked clinical in attack throughout the tournament.

Belgium advanced with an emphatic 4-1 victory over co-hosts the United States, with Charles De Ketelaere scoring twice in an impressive display. The contest is expected to pit Spain's control of possession against Bel-

gium's pace and direct attacking football.

England vs Norway

England's meeting with Norway is expected to be one of the standout ties of the quarter-finals. Thomas Tuchel's side showed resilience in their 3-2 victory over Mexico despite playing much of the second half with 10 men following Jarell Quansah's red card. Jude Bellingham starred with two goals to help England secure progression.

Norway, meanwhile, registered one of the biggest upsets of the tournament by defeating five-time champions Brazil 2-1. Erling Haaland scored twice late in the match to complete a memorable comeback and send Norway into the last eight. The clash is set to feature two of the Premier League's biggest stars as Norway's Haaland and England captain Harry Kane lead their respective attacks.

Argentina vs Switzerland

The final quarter-final sees defending champions Ar-

gentina face Switzerland. Lionel Scaloni's side produced a remarkable comeback against Egypt after trailing 2-0 with just 15 minutes remaining. Despite Lionel Messi missing an early penalty, Argentina recovered to claim a dramatic 3-2 victory and keep their title defence alive.

Switzerland progressed after eliminating Colombia in a penalty shootout following a disciplined defensive performance. The Swiss have reached the World Cup quarter-finals for the first time since 1954 and will look to frustrate Argentina as they chase a place in the semi-finals.

The quarter-finals will also see the race for the Golden Boot heat up. Argentina's Lionel Messi leads the scoring charts with eight goals, followed by Kylian Mbappe and Erling Haaland with seven each. Harry Kane, who won the award in 2018, is close behind with six goals, while Jude Bellingham, Ousmane Dembele, Ismael Saibari and Johan Manzambi will also look to improve their goal tally in the remaining matches.

Notably, for the first time in World Cup history, neither Germany nor Brazil have reached the quarter-finals. While Germany and Brazil have each failed to make the last eight in previous editions, this is the first time both teams have been eliminated before the quarter-final stage in the same tournament, according to the FIFA website.

Oriental Cup 2026

Defending champions DPS RK Puram, Govt Girls School Faridabad begin campaigns with commanding wins

NEW DELHI [INDIA], JULY 8 : Defending champions Delhi Public School, RK Puram and Government Girls Senior Secondary School, Faridabad, began their title defences with commanding victories as the fourth edition of the Oriental Cup got underway at Dr. Ambedkar Stadium on Tuesday.

DPS RK Puram defeated Vasant Valley School 5-0 in the Boys' category, while Government Girls Senior Secondary School registered a 5-0 victory over Navy Children School in the Girls' category, according to a press release.

Indian footballer Rohit Kumar was present in the opening ceremony as the Chief Guest and interacted with the young footballers participating in the tournament.

The opening day featured seven matches across the Boys' and Girls' categories, along with an exhibition match between NGOs STRIVE and Mera India Mera Adhikaar (MIMA).

Speaking on the occasion, Rohit Kumar said, "It is wonderful to see a tournament like the Oriental Cup giving young footballers a platform to showcase their talent and passion for the game. Watching these students reminded me of my own school days, when tournaments like these motivated us to dream bigger and work harder. Talent alone is not enough—dedication, love for the sport, and opportunities like the Oriental Cup are what help shape the next generation of footballers. I congratulate the Oriental Group for this fantastic initiative and wish the tournament continued success."

In the opening match of the competition, defending Boys' champions DPS RK Puram began their campaign with a convincing 5-0 victory over Vasant Valley School. After a goalless first half, Abhav Bhardwaj broke the deadlock in the 18th minute before scoring twice more within eight minutes to



complete his hat-trick. Aditya Lal and Riddit Dang added a goal each to complete the victory.

Vasant Valley School responded strongly in the first Girls' match of the tournament, defeating DPS RK Puram 3-0. Naavya Gogoi opened the scoring in the sixth minute before Unjila Khan doubled the advantage in the 13th minute. Tanvie Gogoi added the third in the final minute to seal the win.

Defending Girls' champions Government Girls Senior Secondary School, Faridabad also made an impressive start to their title defence with a 5-0 victory over Navy Children School. Somya opened the scoring in the eighth minute and went on to score three more goals to finish with four goals in the match, while Ishu added the fifth in the 24th minute.

Navy Children School secured a 3-1 victory over Venkateshwar International School in an entertaining Boys' encounter. Vansh Raj Rana opened the scoring in the seventh minute before Dhruv Kumar Jha doubled the lead early in the second half. Daiwik Rana pulled one back for Venkateshwar International School in the 19th minute, but Vansh Raj Rana struck again in the 24th minute to seal the victory.

Sanskriti School edged Modern School 1-0 in the Boys' category, with Mannan Machhan's second-minute strike proving to be the difference between the two sides.

In the corresponding Girls' fixture, Modern School registered a convincing 4-0 victory over former champions Sanskriti School. Aihra Sachdev gave Modern School the lead in the 12th minute before Dhvani Bidada scored a second-half hat-trick, finding the net in the 16th, 22nd and 30th minutes to complete the win.

Delhi Public School, Vasant Kunj rounded off the school fixtures with a 3-0 victory over Dev Samaj Modern School in the Boys' category. Kanav Sharma scored twice in the first half, in the eighth and 13th minutes, before completing his hat-trick in the 23rd minute.

Earlier in the day, in the exhibition match between participating NGOs STRIVE and Mera India Mera Adhikaar (MIMA), STRIVE prevailed 3-1 on penalties after the match ended 1-1 in regulation time. Aditya opened the scoring for STRIVE in the first half before Rishant equalised for MIMA with four minutes remaining. STRIVE converted three penalties to MIMA's one to secure the victory.

The Oriental Cup 2026, being held from July 7 to July 16, is

expected to feature over 1,500 student-athletes representing more than 48 teams from across Delhi-NCR. The fourth edition features a more than doubled prize pool and a Rs 2.5 lakh scholarship programme for 10 deserving student-athletes, further strengthening the tournament's commitment to supporting young footballers on and off the field.

The fourth edition is supported by Oriental Structural Engineers Pvt. Ltd. as the title sponsor, with Nivia Sports as the Football Partner, Ocean Beverages as the Hydration Partner and Central Park Resorts as an Associate Partner.

Match Day 1 Results
Boys' Category
 * Delhi Public School, RK Puram 5-0 Vasant Valley School
 * Navy Children School 3-1 Venkateshwar International School
 * Sanskriti School 1-0 Modern School
 * Delhi Public School, Vasant Kunj 3-0 Dev Samaj Modern School
Girls' Category
 * Vasant Valley School 3-0 Delhi Public School, RK Puram
 * Government Girls Senior Secondary School, Faridabad 5-0 Navy Children School
 * Modern School 4-0 Sanskriti School
 Exhibition Match (NGO)

Windies win series against Sri Lanka after North Sound run-fest ends in draw

NEW DELHI, JULY 08: West Indies sealed a 1-0 victory over Sri Lanka on Tuesday, their first test series win in three years, after the rain-affected second and final test in North Sound ended in a draw.

Sri Lanka won the toss and elected to bat, piling up 549-9 before declaring their first innings, with opener Lahiru Udara top-scoring for the tourists with 188.

West Indies replied with 499, built on centuries from player-of-the-match Justin Greaves (180) and Shai Hope (112). Sri Lanka then declared their second innings on 251-9, but repeated rain delays denied either side the chance of forcing a decisive result in a high-scoring contest. The 1,408 runs scored in the match are



the most in a test match involving West Indies and Sri Lanka.

Having already won the opening test at the same ground by an innings and 217 runs, West Indies claimed their first test series triumph since 2023.

"We sit down and we plan for this Test Championship and we said last year it was going to be tough and it was tough," home captain Roston Chase said after West Indies' first victory in the current World Test Championship cycle.

"But we said this year we think that the two series at home especially, these are series that we'll be looking to dominate and to win. So I just want the guys to continue from this and let this be a stepping stone."

"And not just leave it there and think, 'oh, we won one series and that's enough'. I think we need to just have that consistency. I think winning games consistently, that would be great for us in terms of growth."

Sri Lanka captain Dhananjaya de Silva conceded his spinners had drawn little help from the pitch. "How to take 20 wickets, that's the only thing in my mind when playing test cricket. For that we have to have that x-factor, to take wickets at anytime," he said.

Telangana to host 2026 Khelo India Youth Games: Mansukh Mandaviya

NEW DELHI [INDIA], JULY 8 : The Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports, Mansukh Mandaviya, on Wednesday announced that Telangana will host the Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG) 2026 edition.

The eighth iteration of KIYG is expected to be held in November this year. Telangana will be the second southern Indian state in three years to host Khelo India Youth Games. Tamil Nadu hosted the 2024 edition while the last edition was hosted by Bihar in May 2025, according to a press release.

"In keeping with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to spread major national events in all regions of



the country, it is appropriate that Telangana should get the opportunity to host the prestigious Khelo India Youth Games. The state has the infrastructure and the enthusiasm to host these Games where at least 8000 athletes, officials and support staff are expected to participate," said Man-

daviya. "We should see some quality performances this year. The Khelo India Youth Games 2026 are coming at the back of the Asian Games in Japan and our athletes should be in peak form. The Games in Telangana will be a good time to celebrate as upcoming athletes will be

able to see their heroes up and close," said Mandaviya.

Maharashtra, Haryana and Rajasthan finished No. 1, 2 and 3 in Khelo India Youth Games in 2025. Hosts Bihar finished 15th while Telangana were 13th on the medal standings. In KIYG 2024, hosts Tamil Nadu finished No. 2 behind Maharashtra while Telangana were in 6th position.

The Bihar edition saw 28 sports. Medals were given away in 27 sports while e-sports were introduced as a demonstration event. Twenty-six records were created in KIYG 2025, of which 13 were national youth records, all in weightlifting. The rest were meet records and all in athletics. (ANI)

'Best player in the world': Julian Alvarez hails 'legend' Messi after Argentina's win in FIFA World Cup R16 clash

ATLANTA [US], JULY 8 : Argentina forward Julian Alvarez showered praise on captain Lionel Messi after the latter inspired a dramatic comeback victory over Egypt, describing him as "the best player in the world and in history" following another record-breaking performance at the FIFA World Cup 2026.

Speaking to reporters after Argentina's thrilling 3-2 win in the Round of 16, Alvarez said Messi's contributions in the ongoing tournament continue to leave even his teammates running out of words.

"Leo, honestly, there aren't many words left to describe. The World Cup he's having is impressive. And well, we try to help him, to accompany him, to enjoy every moment by his side. We also thank him for everything he does for us, for how he is with us, too. And well, he's a legend, the best player in the world and in history," Alvarez told the reporters, as quoted by ESPN FC.

Messi once again proved decisive as Argentina recovered from two goals down to



keep alive their hopes of retaining the World Cup title. After the defending champions fell 2-0 behind against Egypt, the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner scored the equaliser in the 83rd minute before Enzo Fernandez struck a stoppage-time winner to complete a remarkable 3-2 turnaround.

The goal further cemented Messi's place in World Cup history. He be-

came the first player ever to score in nine consecutive FIFA World Cup matches and took his tally in the ongoing tournament to eight goals -- his highest return in a single World Cup edition.

The strike also extended Messi's all-time World Cup record to 21 goals. According to Opta, he is now the first player in tournament history to score in six successive knockout-stage

matches and drew level with Guillermo Stabile's long-standing Argentina record of eight goals in a single World Cup, set in 1930.

Despite his heroics, the 39-year-old endured a frustrating first half after seeing a penalty saved by Egypt goalkeeper Mostafa Shobeir. The miss made Messi the

first player to fail from the penalty spot twice in a single FIFA World Cup edition, excluding shootouts, while his four career World Cup penalty misses are the most by any player.

Messi nevertheless responded in trademark fashion to guide Argentina's comeback.

Cristian Romero sparked the revival with a header in the 79th minute before Messi levelled with a thunderous strike from outside the penalty area that went in off the goalkeeper's gloves and the underside of the crossbar.

Argentina's victory booked a quarter-final meeting with Switzerland as the defending champions moved a step closer to retaining the World Cup title.