



FIFA World Cup 2026:

Spain gore France 2-0, march into final for second time

SPAIN, JULY 15: Spain secured a 2-0 victory over France in the FIFA World Cup semi-final in Arlington, Texas, on Tuesday (local time), extending their winning streak against Les Bleus to three matches after previous triumphs in the UEFA Euro 2024 semi-finals and the 2025 UEFA Nations League semi-finals. Mikel Oyarzabal has scored 18 goals in his last 20 games for Spain. His penalty made him the sixth man to reach 30 goals for Spain after David Silva (35), Alvaro Morata (37), Fernando Torres (38), Raul (44) and David Villa (59), according to the FIFA Website.

Pedro Porro of Spain was named Player of the Match. Mikel Oyarzabal gave Spain the lead from the penalty spot in the first half after Lamine Yamal was brought down inside the box. Pedro Porro doubled the advantage early in the second half, helping Spain book a place in the World Cup final, where they will face either England or Argentina on July 19 in East Rutherford. Soccer



France's problems deepened midway through the first half when central defender William Saliba was forced off with a back injury and replaced by Maxence Lacroix. Spain dominated possession and kept France's attacking trio of Michael Olise, Kylian Mbappe and Ousmane Dembele largely quiet to carry a 1-0 lead into the interval. France also had history

against them, with only Argentina (against Italy in 1990) and Croatia (against England in 2018) having previously recovered from a halftime deficit to win a World Cup semifinal. Head coach Didier Deschamps introduced Manu Kone for Adrien Rabiot at the break and later brought on Desire Doue for Bradley Barcola in an attempt to change the momentum. However, Spain main-

tained control through relentless pressing and crucial saves from goalkeeper Unai Simon. Porro then finished off a flowing attacking move to score Spain's second goal, effectively putting the contest beyond France's reach. With the victory, Spain equalled Italy's record of 37 consecutive matches unbeaten and advanced to only their second FIFA World Cup final.

Gill's fitness, Rohit's form in focus as India eye series win over England in 2nd ODI



ENGLAND, JULY 15: Skipper Shubman Gill's fitness and Rohit Sharma's form are major concerns for India as they seek to lock a much-needed series victory over England in the second ODI here on Wednesday. India's six-wicket win in the first match in Birmingham gave them a 1-0 lead in the three-match series, but it also highlighted some worrying aspects of the team's performance. Batting on 80, Gill had to walk off the field in palpable pain and India would hope that it was nothing more than cramps. A similar exit by Gill last year during the first Test against South Africa at Kolkata had led to hospitalisation, rendering him unavailable for the remainder of that engagement. So, the Men in Blue will not want an encore as Gill's presence is imperative as leader and a tone-setting opener. History While his opening partner Rohit does not carry any such fitness issues, the management will certainly look at his batting numbers. The Mumbai man seemed to have shelved his brazen aggression since losing captaincy, but the changed approach has not brought any bigger dividend yet.

The 'Hitman' has played 13 ODIs just as a senior member in the team since October last year, making 563 runs at an average of 46.91 with a hundred and four fifties. It's not a record to scoff at. But the current dynamics within the Indian dressing room and the absence of the safety net of captaincy around him have made it mandatory for Rohit to deliver on almost every outing. It will be a stretch of imagination to think that Rohit will be out of contention in the race to 2027 ODI World Cup even if he courts a couple of more failures, but the way the think tank looked over Suryakumar Yadav and Sanju Samson recently offers a warning note to him. At 39, Rohit would not like to leave anything for chance as India also have an explosive top-order option in Ishan Kishan in the shed. GeographicReference Comparatively, Kohli, another one-format player, is in a better place both in terms of fitness and statistics. From October 1, 2025, the 37-year-old has churned out 621 runs from 10 matches at an average of 77.62 with three hundreds and as many fifties. So, the Delhi man would be expecting a far kinder

treatment from the management at the moment. A major positive for India is the way pace ace Jasprit Bumrah returned to the 50-over set-up for the first time since the 2023 World Cup final. He was a delight to watch. Bumrah seemed to have regained his magic after a temporary loss of form during the IPL this year where he struggled for rhythm and wickets. Similarly, the return to form of all-rounders Axar Patel and Washington Sundar would also please the management to no end. Changes in the eleven After the Edgbaston victory, Gill had indicated that the management will try different combinations according to the conditions. The Sophia Gardens pitch often offers good bounce and carry, keeping pacers firmly in the mix. In that context, India can bring in seasoned left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh in place of Gurnoor Brar. Brar took the wickets of Ben Duckett and Jacob Bethell but conceded 61 runs in nine overs. So, Arshdeep can be included in the eleven if the bigwigs feel the need of more experience in the bowling line-up in a crucial match. History

But it also means that left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav will, in all likelihood, remain in the dugout. Both Shivam Dube and Washington did well in the previous match to warrant another go at England. From an England perspective, they will expect a more rounded effort from the top-order batters to end an agonising sequence of 13 defeats in 19 ODIs since 2025. But Harry Brook's side has a reasonable record at Cardiff, winning 10 out of 17 matches that they have played here, while losing just three. Teams: India: Shubman Gill (Captain), Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer (Vice-Captain), KL Rahul (WK), Ishan Kishan (WK), Washington Sundar, Axar Patel, Shivam Dube, Kuldeep Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Prasidh Krishna, Arshdeep Singh, Gurnoor Brar, Prince Yadav. England: Harry Brook (captain), Ben Duckett, Jos Buttler (wk), Tom Banton, Joe Root, Jacob Bethell, Will Jacks, Rehan Ahmed, Liam Dawson, James Coles, Sam Curran, Gus Atkinson, Jofra Archer, Jos Tongue, Saqib Mahmood, Adil Rashid.

Asian U-19 & U-23 Boxing Championships:

India clinches 3 gold, 10 silver, 4 bronze in women's section

JAKARTA [JAPAN], JULY 15 : India capped off a stellar campaign in the women's section at the Asian U-19 & U-23 Boxing Championships, securing a total of five gold, 10 silver, and four bronze medals across U-19 and U-23 categories in the finals held in Jakarta on Wednesday. In the U-19 women's category, India secured two gold and six silver medals, underlining the depth of its youth programme, according to a press release. Chandrika Bhoresh Pujari (51kg) delivered a dominant performance to clinch gold with a 5:0 win over Uzbekistan's Nazokat Mardonova, while Prachi also secured gold with a convincing victory over Indonesia's Dira Artika. India's other finalists in the U-19 category put up strong fights but settled for silver, contributing to the team's overall tally. GeographicReference In the U-23 women's category, India registered an equally impressive showing with one gold, four silver, and four bronze medals. Nisha (54kg) led the charge with a commanding 5:0 victory over Japan's Koiin Kokufu to clinch gold. India's other gold medallists in the category



continued their strong form to finish on top of the podium. Meanwhile, Nikita Chand (60kg), Kajal (65kg), and Muskan (75kg) fought hard in their respective finals but settled for sil-

ver after facing strong opponents from Uzbekistan. The bronze medals came from semifinal finishes, further highlighting India's consistency across weight categories. India's overall perfor-

mance in the women's section reflects its growing dominance in age-group boxing at the continental level, with a strong pipeline of talent delivering across both U-19 and U-23 divisions. (ANI)

FC Goa youth coach Israil hails Spain's "program, plan, playing system" after La Roja reach FIFA WC final

FUKUOKA [JAPAN], JULY 15: After Spain's qualification for the FIFA World Cup final 2026, FC Goa youth coach and former Indian footballer Israil Gurung hailed the 2010 champions for their "program, plan and playing system". He also anticipates the second semifinal between defending champions Argentina and England to be a great match. < A goal each from Mikel Oyarzabal and Pedro Parro helped Spain reach their first WC final since their landmark 2010 title win, overcoming a Kylian Mbappe-led France which had largely looked unstoppable. After winning the trophy in 2018 and ending up as runners-up in 2022 edition, Mbappe and France completes a fine three World Cup run with plenty of records, individual/team milestones to their name. For Spain, after a shock group stage exit in 2014 and round of 16 finishes in the next two editions, the qualification for the final continues an upward trajectory. Heading into the tournament, they had won Euro 2024, won a UEFA Nations League title in 2022-23, besides finishing as runners-up in the latter to Portugal in 2024-25 season. Speaking to ANI, Israil ex-



pressed sadness for his preferred side, France amd also added that the second semifinal between a Messi-led Argentina and Harry Kaneled England would be a great contest, with both teams strong. "It is sad because I usually support France, but France is out already. Spain is like, you know, I think they have been dominating football because of their program, their plan, their playing system, it is fantastic," he said. And I think, we cannot say exactly, the second semi-final, but I feel that both teams are strong. And I do not know which one to

choose because my team is already out. So, I do not have a prediction, but I hope, it should be a good match," he added. Mikel Oyarzabal has scored 18 goals in his last 20 games for Spain. His penalty made him the sixth man to reach 30 goals for Spain after David Silva (35), Alvaro Morata (37), Fernando Torres (38), Raul (44) and David Villa (59), according to the FIFA Website. History In the semi-final against France on Tuesday, Pedro Porro of Spain was named Player of the Match. France suffered an early

setback when central defender William Saliba was forced off with a back injury midway through the first half and was replaced by Maxence Lacroix. Spain dominated possession and kept France's attacking trio of Michael Olise, Kylian Mbappe and Ousmane Dembele largely quiet to take a 1-0 lead into the interval. France also had history against them, with only Argentina (against Italy in 1990) and Croatia (against England in 2018) having previously recovered from a halftime deficit to win a World Cup semifinal.

Japan Open 2026: Lakshya Sen, Ayush Shetty crash out as India's men's singles campaign ends

TOKYO [JAPAN], JULY 15: India's challenge in the men's singles draw at the Japan Open 2026 came to an early end after Lakshya Sen and Ayush Shetty suffered first-round defeats at the BWF Super 750 tournament at the Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium on Wednesday. World No. 14 Lakshya Sen was outplayed by Japan's Koki Watan-

abe, going down 21-16, 21-14 in a match that lasted just 38 minutes. The Indian struggled to find his rhythm throughout the contest, trailing 11-6 and 11-5 at the mid-game intervals of the two games before Watanabe comfortably sealed victory in straight games, according to Olympics.com. The defeat marked Lakshya's third

loss in seven career meetings against the world No. 17 Japanese shuttler. Ayush Shetty, meanwhile, produced a spirited display against world No. 2 Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand before bowing out in a hard-fought three-game contest. The Indian went down 19-21, 25-23, 15-21 against the Paris 2024 Olympic silver medallist.