

BETTOR'S GUIDE TO THE

2018 WORLD CUP

PRESENTED BY



7^{OF}8

ISSUE 7 FEATURES:

**SEMI-FINALS
OVERVIEW**

Who Will Qualify for the Finals?

BET ACCUMULATOR

For Upcoming Games

**IN-DEPTH MATCH
PREDICTIONS**

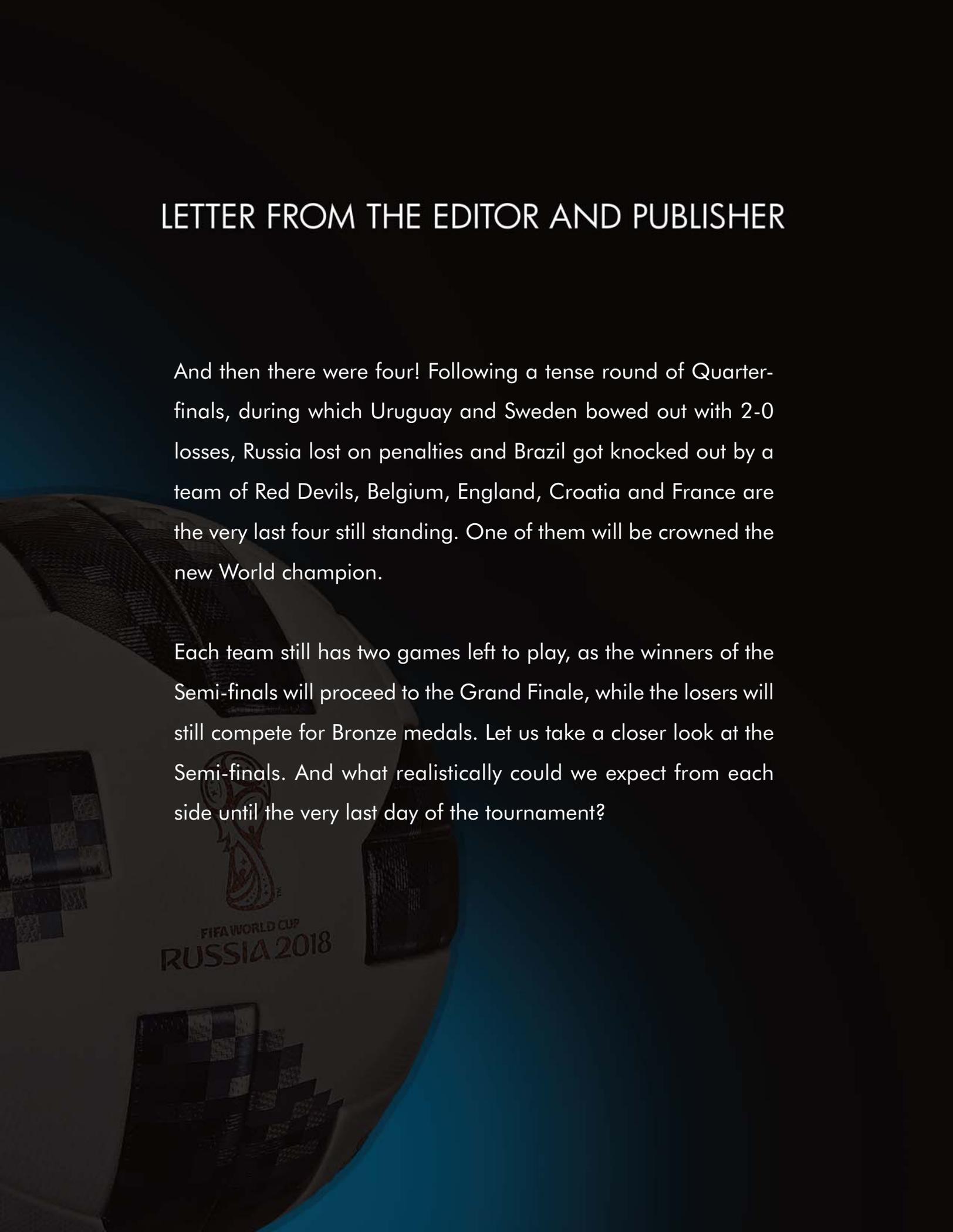
For matches July 10 - July 11



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

And then there were four! Following a tense round of Quarter-finals, during which Uruguay and Sweden bowed out with 2-0 losses, Russia lost on penalties and Brazil got knocked out by a team of Red Devils, Belgium, England, Croatia and France are the very last four still standing. One of them will be crowned the new World champion.

Each team still has two games left to play, as the winners of the Semi-finals will proceed to the Grand Finale, while the losers will still compete for Bronze medals. Let us take a closer look at the Semi-finals. And what realistically could we expect from each side until the very last day of the tournament?

A soccer ball with a checkered pattern is visible in the background. The FIFA World Cup Russia 2018 logo is also visible, featuring a stylized trophy and the text "FIFA WORLD CUP RUSSIA 2018".

FIFA WORLD CUP
RUSSIA 2018



GOLDEN BOOT & BALL UPDATE

RACE FOR THE GOLDEN BOOT

With only two games left and just four teams in the picture, the competition for the top goalscorer award is still alive.

HARRY KANE (ENGLAND)

6 GOALS (-700 to win the Golden Boot)

If you hadn't chosen Harry Kane as your Golden Boot winner already ahead of the Quarter-finals, there is no point in doing so now. The current odds of -700 present no value whatsoever. And while the captain of the Three Lions is still likely to bank the award, he might, in fact, have to share it with Romelu Lukaku, who is just two goals away from matching his current tally.

ROMELU LUKAKU (BELGIUM)

4 GOALS (+1000)

Romelu Lukaku has notched 17 goals in his last 13 appearances for Belgium. And while he has not found the back of the net in his last two starts, being just two goals away from tying Harry Kane for the lead to win the Golden Boot is not something the burly striker could not manage in the upcoming two fixtures. Both bets will win if both Kane and Lukaku finish with the same amount of strikes. Perfect!

KYLIAN MBAPPE (FRANCE)

3 GOALS (+2500)

Against Argentina, Kylian Mbappe became the first teenager to score two goals in a World Cup game since Pele did so 60 years ago. That achievement alone has almost guaranteed the 19-year-old Frenchman the Best Young Player Award of the current tournament. To hope that he will score at least three more times in the remaining two fixtures, with Harry Kane remaining scoreless, is a bit too optimistic, though. Mbappe has been a nightmare to the opposing defenses with his pacy runs, but has only managed just one shot on target per game so far.

ANTOINE GRIEZMANN (FRANCE)

3 GOALS (+2500)

A lot more, when it comes to goalscoring, was expected from Antoine Griezmann during the 2018 FIFA World Cup. The 27-year-old Atletico Madrid forward finished the UEFA Euro 2016 tournament two years ago as the winner of the competition's Golden Boot, having netted six times in total. He currently leads France with 14 shots and is the second player of the whole tournament (behind Neymar) with most attempts on goal (8). Still, with just two outings remaining and some tight battles ahead, don't expect Griezmann to get past or even match Harry Kane.

OTHERS

There are three players, still in the competition, with two goals to their name. Belgium's Eden Hazard (+2000) scored twice against Tunisia. England defender John Stones (+5000) netted twice versus Panama, while Croatia captain Luka Modric (+2500) banked a penalty against Nigeria before striking a rocket past Argentina. He almost got his third marker in the clash versus Denmark, only to end up with a missed spot-kick. But with just two goals scored and just two matches left, there is little hope for either of the three to snatch the Golden Boot this year in Russia.

BEST BET: ROMELU LUKAKU (+1000)

RACE FOR THE GOLDEN BALL

The Best Player of 2018 FIFA World Cup is a player in the final four teams. Who is the likeliest winner, though?

FRANCE

Kylian Mbappe, alongside England's Harry Kane, currently leads all players as the absolute favorite to win the Golden Ball. At +350, he is considered a more realistic candidate to bag the award than Antoine Griezmann (+1200), Paul Pogba (+3300) and K'Golo Kante (+4000). It is quite surprising, as neither teenager has ever won the award (they have their own Best Young Player trophy), nor Mbappe's contribution has been so vital for the team thus far to even consider him for the title. A great performance versus Argentina, yes! But other than that?

ENGLAND

With excellent team spirit, unfazed focus and tremendous organization, the whole squad of England definitely is one of the most unexpected surprises of the 2018 FIFA World Cup. While its main inspiration arguably comes from head coach Gareth Southgate, captain Harry Kane (+350), the current top goalscorer of the ongoing tournament, has definitely done his bit as well, restoring the long-lost belief in his national side's true potential, netting 12 goals in nine overall appearances while wearing the captain's armband. Dele Alli (+1000), Jesse Lingard (+1500), Kyle Walker (+5000) are all unrealistic choices. If an Englishman gets the Golden Ball this year, it will be Kane!

BELGIUM

Eden Hazard (+450) is the captain of Belgium. And while he has contributed two goals and a couple of assists during the current World Cup, he still hasn't really come through as the most influential player of the Red Devils. Nor has Kevin De Bruyne (+800). In fact, it is Romelu Lukaku who has seemed the most inspirational figure of the Belgium squad thus far, netting four goals, notching an assist, directly being responsible for the last two winning goals of his team and showing tremendous leadership both during games and after the final whistle. At +1400, he is a pretty good option to consider.

CROATIA

Although Croatia has only gone through to the last-four of the 2018 FIFA World Cup after two narrow penalty shootouts, the team's first appearance in the Semi-finals of the world's biggest international soccer tournament since 1998 is no less impressive. There is, however, only one real candidate for the Golden Ball from this side. And his name is Luka Modric! The Real Madrid midfielder has been an influential figure as the captain of his national team and, providing Croatia matches or better the Bronze-medal heroics of 20 years ago, could well be worth consideration at +700.

BEST BET: HARRY KANE (+350)

RACE FOR THE GOLDEN GLOVE



Four teams are left to fight it out in the World Cup. Four goalies are there to compete for the Golden Glove - a trophy awarded to the best keeper of the tournament

HUGO LLORIS (FRANCE) (+225)

Tottenham Hotspur goalie Hugo Lloris, the captain of the national soccer team of France, has not played every game during the current tournament (Steve Mandanda registered a shutout in the borefest that was Les Bleus' 0-0 draw against Denmark). And it has not been all plain sailing for the 31-year-old, as Lloris conceded a penalty against Australia and three goals versus Argentina. So far, he has stopped eight shots and has registered a 66.7% save rate - the worst of any player still in the race for the Golden Glove. Nevertheless, his last-minute save in the first half of the Quarter-final meeting against Uruguay was definitely a game-changer.

JORDAN PICKFORD (ENGLAND) (+275)

Jordan Pickford, who was named Player of the Season, Player's Player of the Season and Young Player of the Season at his club team Everton this year, started his first World Cup campaign with some nerves, but has slowly grown into the rhythm of the tournament, producing some absolute moments of pure magic in the knock-out stages for England. The last-minute save against Colombia (before Los Cafeteros equalized from a corner kick) and subsequent heroics during the penalty shootout in the Round of 16 alongside his three second-period saves versus Sweden in the Quarter-final were incredible. If Pickford continues in the same manner, the Golden Glove is his!

THIBAUT COURTOIS (BELGIUM) (+275)

Out of all four goalies, still in the fight to lift the World Cup, there is no one with more saves than Thibaut Courtois. He has stopped 18 shots in total, with only Mexico's Guillermo Ochoa (25) and Denmark's Kasper Schmeichel (21) turning away more at this point. The 26-year-old Chelsea keeper is only 2nd behind Danijel Subasic in save percentage among goalies that are still competing in the competition (78.3%) and has registered two clean sheets. Both, however, have come against much weaker opponents - minnows Panama and an England team playing its B-squad.

DANIJEL SUBASIC (CROATIA) (+275)

Helping Monaco to reach its first French Ligue 1 title in 17 years in 2016-17 and the 2nd place this season, Danijel Subasic is now on a mission in the World Cup. He started the tournament with a couple of clean sheets (vs. Nigeria and Argentina). And while he allowed a goal against Denmark in the Round of 16 and two more in the Quarter-final versus Russia, the 33-year-old has been an ominous presence during penalty shootouts, stopping three attempts by the Danes, while allowing just three out of five strikes from the Russians.

BEST BET: JORDAN PICKFORD (+275)

WORLD CUP

*Extra
Bets*

Apart from the obvious odds on game results, the eventual champions and Golden Boot, Ball and Glove winners, there are plenty to choose from in special team markets. Here are some we would consider...

FRANCE:

ANTOINE GRIEZMANN - FRANCE TOP GOALSCORER (+135)

He takes the penalties and leads his national side in most shot attempts during the current tournament. Currently tied with Kylian Mbappe on three goals, Antoine Griezmann looks the likelier candidate to net some more...

FRANCE TO BE ELIMINATED IN THE SEMI-FINAL (+115)

France is the favorite to advance to the Final, but Belgium has arguably been the better team thus far. Much more determined, way more efficient and super lethal on the offense.

FRANCE VS. BELGIUM TO BE DECIDED ON PENALTIES (+450)

With the talent and potential both teams can offer, it would definitely not be surprising to see both go past the 90-minute mark. And with five of the past six World Cup matches, that went to extra-time, all reaching the penalty shootout stage.

ENGLAND:

GAME VS. CROATIA TO GO TO EXTRA-TIME (+210)

This is going to be a tough matchup for both sides. Croatia has already gone past the 90-minute mark in four consecutive knockout games in major tournaments, while England will definitely have trouble breaking the Vatreni down in just two 45-minute periods.

RAHEEM STERLING - MAN OF THE MATCH VS. CROATIA (+1200)

The 23-year-old attacking midfielder, who banked 23 goals for Manchester City this season, has only scored twice in 42 appearances for England. He does, however, come across some incredible scoring chances on a regular basis, so it really must be just a matter of time.

ENGLAND TO WIN THE WORLD CUP (+275)

France has been underwhelming, Croatia - super lucky, while Belgium - real good, but not unbeatable (just ask Japan, which came THIS close to snatching a win against the Red Devils). England, though, has some serious X-factor - unity, humility and a game-plan!

BELGIUM:

ROMELU LUKAKU - MAN OF THE MATCH VS. FRANCE (+900)

The Manchester United giant has been one of the best players for Belgium during the current tournament even when not scoring. He has the ability to influence games with his speed and physical presence, and will be a nightmare for the French defense.

BELGIUM TO FINISH AS RUNNER-UP

The odds for Belgium to win the World Cup currently trend at +280. It is a good bet, simply because the Red Devils have been one of the most consistently impressive teams, with coach Roberto Martinez able to tweak each situation in his favor. Runners-up at +310? Definitely good if you (like us!) believe the World Cup goes to England.

ROMELU LUKAKU - BELGIUM TOP GOALSCORER (-850)

Not the greatest of odds anymore (we do hope you took the bet when we first advised it in our 1st Issue). Still, only a miracle could prevent Lukaku from not finishing top of the Belgian scoring chart. Two goals ahead of Eden Hazard with two games remaining? You've got this, Big Rom!

CROATIA:

LUKA MODRIC - CROATIA TOP GOALSCORER (-160)

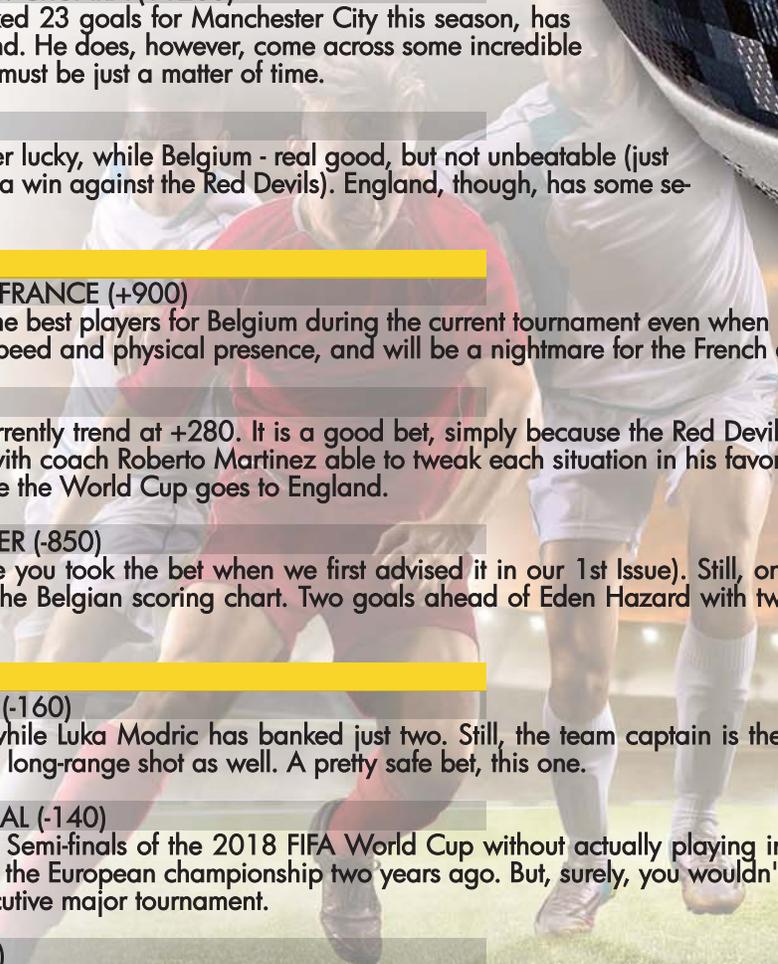
Seven Croatia players have netted one goal, while Luka Modric has banked just two. Still, the team captain is the designated penalty taker and can make a difference with a long-range shot as well. A pretty safe bet, this one.

CROATIA TO BE ELIMINATED IN THE SEMI-FINAL (-140)

Croatia has somehow squeezed through to the Semi-finals of the 2018 FIFA World Cup without actually playing incredibly impressive soccer. Portugal did the same and won the European championship two years ago. But, surely, you wouldn't expect luck to play such a major part for the second consecutive major tournament.

DRAW AFTER HALF-TIME VS. ENGLAND (-110)

Out of the 10 games, that both teams have played during the 2018 FIFA World Cup so far, six have finished tied after the first 45 minutes. Nine of the last 11 Semi-finals of the World Cup have ended the same ahead of the interval.





FRANCE vs BELGIUM PREDICTION



TUESDAY, 10 JULY, 2018 - 1:00 PM ET
SAINT PETERSBURG STADIUM, ST. PETERSBURG

HISTORICALLY KICKING OUT BRAZIL DURING THE QUARTER-FINALS, BELGIUM (3RD IN FIFA WORLD RANKINGS) HAS BOOKED A LAST-FOUR TIE VERSUS FRANCE (7TH IN THE WORLD), WHICH OVERCAME URUGUAY TO GET TO THE SEMI-FINAL.

Griezmann, Lloris Shine For France

A moment of magic by Hugo Lloris (Tottenham Hotspur) and a howler by Frenando Muslera decided the outcome of France's meeting with Uruguay at Nizhny Novgorod Stadium in Nizhny Novgorod on Friday, as Les Bleus grabbed a 2-0 win to advance to the Semi-final of the World Cup for the first time since 2006. Raphael Varane (Real Madrid) opened the scoring on the 40th minute with a header following a free-kick by Antoine Griezmann (Atletico Madrid). But it was France goalie Lloris with the game's most spectacular moment, denying Uruguay's Martin Caceres a golden opportunity to tie the proceedings with one minute left in the first half with a magnificent diving save.

Playing without injured Edinson Cavani, La Celeste failed to create anything worth a mention in the following 45 minutes, while Griezmann doubled France's score after Uruguay's goalie Muslera failed to handle his long-range shot, inadvertently hitting the ball into his own net. France has now gone unbeaten in all 20 games Griezmann has scored in (W18 D2) and has failed to lose in 10 consecutive World Cup contests against teams from South America (W6 D4). Alongside Kylian Mbappe (Paris Saint-Germain), Griezmann leads France with three goals during the 2018 FIFA World Cup and has already netted seven strikes in his last six appearances in the knockout stages of major tournaments.



Brazil Gets Knocked Out By Belgium

Belgium reached the World Cup Semi-finals for the first time since 1986 after expertly beating five-time champions Brazil with a count of 2-1 at Kazan Arena in Kazan on Friday. Seleccion dominated in ball possession (58%) and total shots (27 against Belgium's 9), but only managed to find the back of the net with 14 minutes remaining in the second half, with the Red Devils Already leading 2-0 after the opening period. A corner kick by Nacer Chadli (West Bromwich Albion) on the 13th minute found its way into the net off Brazil's Fernandinho, while a magnificent run by Romelu Lukaku (Manchester United) resulted in a deadly strike by Kevin De Bruyne (Manchester City) less than 20 minutes later.

Nine different players have now scored for Belgium during the 2018 FIFA World Cup (excluding own goals), with Lukaku leading the bunch with four strikes. He has been involved in 20 goals in his last 13 overall appearances for the national team, netting 17 while assisting on further three. Eden Hazard (Chelsea) has two goals and two assists during the current tournament. Dries Mertens (Napoli) and De Bruyne have notched a marker and a helper each, while goalie Thibaut Courtois (Chelsea) has stopped 18 shots, registering a 78.3% save rate. After picking up his second yellow card, Thomas Meunier (Paris Saint-Germain), who has collected two assists, will miss the Semi-final due to suspension.

GAME PREDICTION: Both teams were entering the 2018 FIFA World Cup as two of the most talented squads of the current competition. And while Belgium has really stepped up to the plate, scoring the highest amount of goals (14), hosting an incredible comeback against Japan in the Round of 16 and eliminating Brazil in the Quarter-final, France has been rather subdued. Efficient, yes! But definitely not a team that has dazzled the eyes as much as everyone expected. Out of the incredible 73 times both teams have played against each other, Belgium has the most wins (W30 D19 L24). Still, France has prevailed in the majority of competitive outings (W5 D3 L3) and is the favorite here. But don't underestimate the potential of the Red Devils. They have looked the better team during the whole tournament so far and have lost to Les Bleus just once since 2002 (W2 D2 L1).

BEST BETS:

- ▶ BELGIUM TO QUALIFY (+105)
- ▶ BOTH TEAMS TO SCORE (-125)



CROATIA vs ENGLAND PREDICTION



WEDNESDAY, 11 JULY, 2018 - 1:00 PM ET
LUZHNIKI STADIUM, MOSCOW

ANOTHER PENALTY-SHOOTOUT VICTORY HAS BROUGHT CROATIA (20TH IN FIFA WORLD RANKINGS) TO A LAST-FOUR CLASH AGAINST ENGLAND (12TH IN THE WORLD), WHICH WILL BE TAKING PART IN ITS FIRST WORLD CUP SEMI-FINAL SINCE 1990

Croatia Eliminates Russia

After notching the 3rd place in 1998 FIFA World Cup exactly 20 years ago, Croatia has reached the competition's Semi-final only for the second time in its history following a dramatic penalty-shootout victory over hosts Russia at Fisht Stadium in Sochi on Saturday. Each team scored a goal in the first 90 minutes. Both notched one apiece again in extra time, while Croatia proved more clinical in the eventual penalty shootout, beating the Russians with a count of 4-3, just six days after eliminating Denmark during the spot kicks in the Round of 16.

Andrej Kramaric (1899 Hoffenheim) equalized at 1-1 in the first half after Sbornaya opened the scoring on the 31st minute. Domagoj Vida (Besiktas) gave the Vatreni a 2-1 lead in the first extra time before the Russians made it all even again at the end of the second. Marcelo Brozovic (Inter Milan), Luka Modric (Real Madrid), Vida and Ivan Rakitic (Barcelona), meanwhile, buried their penalty shots, with only Mateo Kovacic (Real Madrid) missing his, as goalie Danijel Subasic (Monaco) saw only three spot kicks cross his goal line. He has already stopped 12 shots during the current tournament, registering an 80.0% save rate. Modric, meanwhile, leads the team with two goals, an assist and 2.8 key passes per game.



England Gets Job Done Versus Sweden

A couple of headed goals and a stellar performance by goalie Jordan Pickford (Everton) helped England to reach its first World Cup Semi-final in 28 years after the Three Lions disposed of Sweden with a score of 2-0 at Samara Arena in Samara on Saturday. Facing a team, which had kept three clean sheets during the 2018 FIFA World Cup prior to kick-off, England was once again deadly on set pieces, opening the scoring through a header by Harry Maguire (Leicester City), who scored on the 30th minute following a corner by Ashley Young (Manchester United). Raheem Sterling (Manchester City) had excellent opportunities to double the lead in the first half, but it was Dele Alli (Tottenham Hotspur) who sealed the deal for England, heading home a cool delivery by Jesse Lingard (Manchester United) in the following frame.

The Man of the Match award, though, deservedly went to 24-year-old Pickford, who, clocking in just his eighth appearance for his national team, made three match-winning saves in the second period, eventually earning his first clean sheet of the tournament. He has now stopped 10 shots in total during the ongoing competition, registering a save rate of 71.4%. Harry Kane (Tottenham Hotspur) still leads the team and the race for the Golden Boot with six snipes, while Kieran Trippier (Tottenham Hotspur) is providing a team-high 2.8 crosses and 3.3 key passes per game on average.

GAME PREDICTION: Although boasting one of the most fearsome midfield pairings in the world at the moment in Modric and Rakitic, Croatia has still not really delivered up to its full potential. The team was on fire against Argentina (the most disorganized squad of the 2018 FIFA World Cup), but was nowhere near as explosive versus Nigeria and Iceland, ending up in the Semi-finals only due to shootout-victories against Denmark and Russia. Interestingly, the last four appearances by the Vatreni in the knockout stages of major tournaments, dating back to UEFA Euro 2008, have all gone to penalties (W2 L2), which is one thing England will definitely be trying to avoid. The Three Lions have great momentum and team spirit, and have beaten Croatia in four of their seven previous encounters (W4 D1 L2). Still, both are more than capable of stinging each other in different aspects of the game. Expect a close one here!

BEST BETS:

- ▶ DRAW (+205)
- ▶ BOTH TEAMS TO SCORE (+110)