

Issue 3

THE CURRENT NOTION

A Magazine with Varied Topics



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FAVOURITE TEAMS

These are the teams that every football fan expects to win the World Cup but really, what are their chances of winning the World Cup. We analyse how and why?

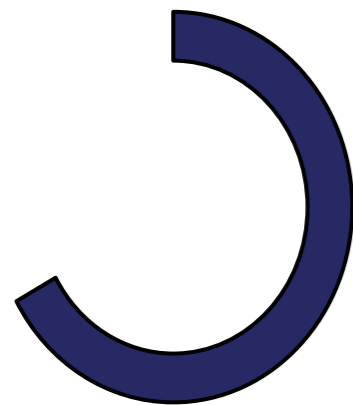
FRANCE

SQUAD
DEPTH



15%

CHANCE OF
WINNING THE 2026
WORLD CUP



70%

PREDICTED OPPORTUNITIES
CREATED
THE 2026 WORLD CUP

30

PREDICTED GOALS
EXPECTED TO BE SCORED
IN THE 2026 WORLD CUP

Having won the World Cup twice in their history, France is coming into this tournament with a deep squad. The 25 men that Didier Deschamps has selected show that he wants to win the World Cup in his final year as the French manager. The depth of the squad that Deschamps has selected shows real intent, and he wants to show the world that he can win two World Cups, a feat that has not been achieved since Italy's Vittorio Pozzo in 1938.

Deschamps has been questioned about his managerial style and his lack of tactical sophistication, but he has always done well at assembling a strong squad. The French team that won the 2018 World Cup in Russia had excellent team cohesion. It feels as though Deschamps has done the same thing for this World Cup with an 'Avengers' type of squad.

Although the squad is formidable and includes a super-attack force, many suggest that France will win the World Cup. However, this galáctico squad might prove to be a detriment, as they could struggle against teams that set up in a low block, similar to what Arsenal did to PSG in the Champions League final.

Many football fans believe that France is going to steamroll other teams, but this might not be the case if an opponent sets up a solid defensive structure and plays on the counterattack with fast runners on the wings.

France could struggle to break them down. However, if a team sets up to play France at their own game, which is possession-based football, then the score could turn into something resembling a basketball match.

France has been given a chance of winning the World Cup as they possess an £800 million strike force and are likely to score a lot of goals during this tournament. The defence is not as strong as fans and pundits think, as Saliba and Upamecano are not as quick as many believe.

There are players in the French team who will excel in this tournament, but the team will not reach the final because Deschamps lacks the tactical intelligence to steer the team back to winning ways if they struggle to break down a low block.

The only way France can win the World Cup is by playing as a collective and leaving their egos off the field. The superstar status within the French team could be their downfall, and there is a high probability that France might reach the semi-finals, but winning the tournament seems a step too far.

SPAIN



TEAM
COHESION

Some teams arrive at a World Cup hoping to make history. Spain arrives carrying the weight of it. Sixteen years after Andrés Iniesta's immortal strike in Johannesburg delivered La Roja its first and only World Cup crown, a new generation stands on the verge of writing its own chapter.

Since conquering Europe at UEFA Euro 2024, Spain has evolved from an exciting project into one of the most complete and formidable sides in international football. As the FIFA World Cup 2026 approaches, they are no longer outsiders looking to upset the established order; they are the benchmark.

What makes this Spanish side so dangerous is not the presence of one transcendent superstar but the collective brilliance that flows throughout the squad. In midfield, they possess a blend of control and creativity unmatched by any nation.

Rodri provides authority and composure at the base, while Pedri and Fabián Ruiz dictate the rhythm of matches with intelligence, precision and technical excellence. They form the engine room of a team built to dominate possession and suffocate opponents.

Yet Spain's evolution does not end there. Out wide, Lamine Yamal and Nico Williams offer something different: unpredictability and fearless attacking intent. Their ability to stretch defences and create moments of magic has added a devastating edge to Spain's traditionally possession-based approach, giving Luis de la Fuente's side the perfect balance between control and chaos.

Perhaps most importantly, this is a squad united by a common purpose. Every player understands their role, every position is supported by elite depth, and every challenge is met with unwavering belief. They are mentally resilient and technically gifted.

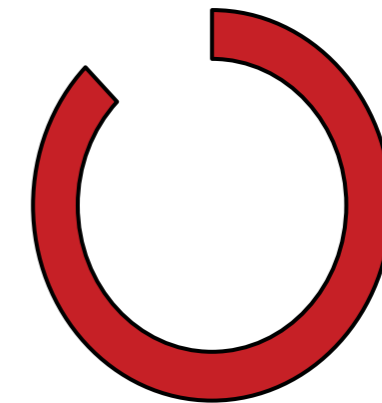
The eyes of the footballing world will be fixed upon them. Spain is not simply chasing a second star above their crest; they are pursuing a legacy. If this remarkable generation fulfils its potential, the World Cup 2026 could become the tournament that defines them forever.



25%

CHANCE OF WINNING THE 2026 WORLD CUP

90%



PREDICTED OPPORTUNITIES CREATED THE 2026 WORLD CUP

45

PREDICTED GOALS EXPECTED TO BE SCORED IN THE 2026 WORLD CUP

BRAZIL

FLAIR
MAGICIANS



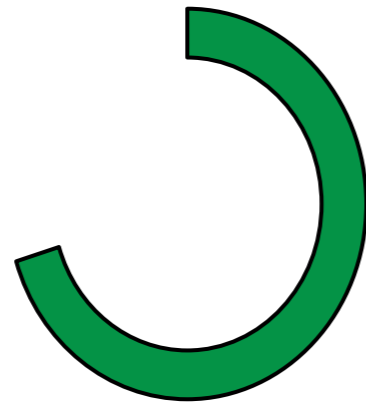


15%

CHANCE OF
WINNING THE 2026
WORLD CUP

70%

PREDICTED OPPORTUNITIES
CREATED
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30

PREDICTED GOALS
EXPECTED TO BE SCORED
IN THE 2026 WORLD CUP

Brazil has qualified for every World Cup since the tournament began in 1930. The Brazilian national team has always competed at the highest level, even without all of its best or most recognisable players. Brazil is always among the favourites to win the tournament, and fans and pundits alike take it seriously when the team is mentioned in that role.

With Carlo Ancelotti at the helm, Brazil is a force at this World Cup, and many people believe that they can win the tournament. Ancelotti is a winner, and he knows how to win cup competitions because he is sharp with his decision-making during matches.

It is difficult to predict what formation Brazil is going to play, and it appears they may adopt a flexible system in which squad rotation will play a significant role. Similar to the French squad, the Brazilian team is also full of galácticos, though Ancelotti's game management may give them an edge over Deschamps'.

Assembling a squad largely made up of flair players could be a problem for Brazil, as they will need to play as a team to win the World Cup. However, Ancelotti has been clever and has brought in experienced players to balance the squad.

Casemiro and Marquinhos will provide stability, using their experience in the tougher matches to help Brazil progress to the next stage.

The reason Brazil has been given a strong chance of winning the World Cup is that the squad is balanced and possesses considerable depth. It feels as though Ancelotti has got the balance right, and he will make intelligent in-game tactical decisions that could take Brazil to the latter stages of the tournament.

ARGENTINA



JUST MESSI

In the last World Cup in Qatar, Argentina had a decent squad, but the key difference was that Lionel Messi was in form. He was scoring for PSG and still performing at an elite level. In this World Cup, however, it feels as though they have much more to do if they are to reach the latter stages of the tournament.

The squad feels depleted, and it does not inspire much confidence among the fans, especially as Argentina will be the last team to publish their 23-man squad. Within the Argentine camp, it feels as though they are still relying on Messi to produce moments of brilliance, but the Messi magic is slowly fading, and he no longer looks like the magician he once was.

Argentina cannot rely on Messi all the time. He now plays in a slower league and does not face the same level of competition that he encountered when playing in Europe's top leagues and the Champions League. Argentina will need some of their players to step up and show supporters that they are ready to inherit Messi's crown and become the next Argentine footballing icon.

Several candidates could emerge as the country's next star, but it often feels as though these players either disappear on the biggest stage or become embroiled in controversy. Enzo Fernández and Julián Álvarez are the two most prominent candidates to take over from Messi. However, Fernández often finds

himself at the centre of controversy, while Álvarez can go missing in major tournaments, looking more like a national hero than a global superstar. The defence is also a concern for Argentina, as Lisandro Martínez and Cristian Romero are both injury-prone.

Argentine fans do not want to see either player involved in the warm-up matches because they fear they could suffer injuries before the tournament begins. If both defenders were to get injured, Argentina might struggle to progress beyond the group stage of the World Cup.

The reason Argentina has been given a chance of winning the World Cup is that Messi is still capable of producing moments of unexpected magic and could surprise many fans and pundits who believe that he has faded.

Argentina does have players who can perform on the biggest stage, but Emiliano Martínez may have to come to their rescue on several occasions during the tournament. The stage is also set for Enzo Fernández to deliver a standout performance if he wants to secure his dream move to Real Madrid this summer.

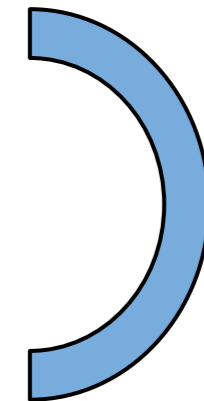


20%

CHANCE OF WINNING THE 2026 WORLD CUP

50%

PREDICTED OPPORTUNITIES CREATED THE 2026 WORLD CUP



18

PREDICTED GOALS EXPECTED TO BE SCORED IN THE 2026 WORLD CUP

PORTUGAL



MIDFIELD GURUS



No one is talking about Portugal, and the conversation always centres on the major footballing nations. In recent years, Portugal has assembled a team that has dominated European football, particularly in the Nations League, which they have won twice.

Few people are giving Portugal a chance to do well in this tournament, but true football fans know that Portugal has a genuine opportunity to win the World Cup because of the squad they possess. The Portuguese team is full of talented players who have enjoyed strong seasons for their respective clubs.

The squad is packed with midfield maestros who are capable of dictating matches and controlling play from start to finish. Portugal could be this tournament's version of Spain at the European Championship, when Spain dominated the competition and made every opponent look ordinary. If Portugal starts strongly at the World Cup, it will be difficult for other teams to stop them.

Bruno Fernandes, Vitinha and João Neves are capable of controlling matches and dictating the style of play imposed on their opponents. The intelligence within this midfield means they could outplay almost any team and perhaps score plenty of goals if the forward line, led by Cristiano Ronaldo, is clinical in front of goal. One of the key strengths of

the Portuguese team is that they play as a collective, and they have a coach who understands how to implement a system that suits the players at his disposal.

This Portuguese side could be the team to watch. Portugal has been given one of the highest probabilities of success among the teams selected because of its formidable midfield trio.

Cristiano Ronaldo will also want to prove a point at what is likely to be his final World Cup. Watching their warm-up matches leading into the tournament, the team has been phenomenal and continues to impress football fans, even those who are not from Portugal.

ENGLAND

INDIVIDUAL
TALENTS



When Thomas Tuchel announced his England squad, there were plenty of moans from disgruntled fans. People across the country could not believe that he had left key players out of the squad. The likes of Cole Palmer and Phil Foden were omitted, while names such as Jordan Henderson and John Stones made the World Cup squad.

At the time Tuchel published the squad, many fans posted on various social media platforms that England would exit the World Cup in the early stages. However, the squad selection could prove to be a stroke of genius from Tuchel, and here is why.

Selecting Henderson looks like a gamble, but he has been to several major tournaments with England and understands the pressure that comes with them. Henderson might not even get any game time, but his presence could be significant for the younger players in the squad.

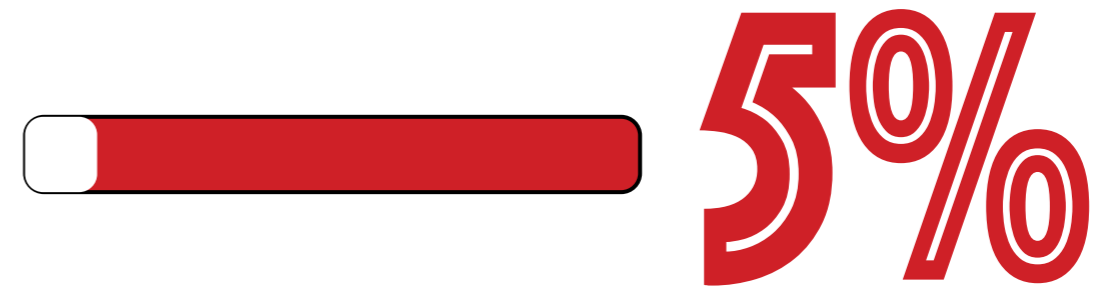
The same applies to John Stones. Bringing on Stones with 15 minutes remaining in a difficult match, when England is protecting a lead, is not a bad option.

However, leaving Cole Palmer out could come back to haunt Tuchel towards the end of the tournament, when he may need someone with Palmer's flair and agility to score a late goal. Tuchel could have taken Palmer ahead of some of the players

he selected. For example, Eze and Madueke have been fringe players for Arsenal this season, whereas Palmer has been Chelsea's talisman throughout the campaign. One thing Tuchel has got right is the balance of the team and his tactical intelligence.

The reason England has been given a chance of winning this World Cup is because of Harry Kane and Jude Bellingham. These two players have consistently stepped up for England in major tournaments, and they are expected to deliver again.

One reason England might not win is their individualistic mindset and approach to matches. Tuchel will need to eradicate this quickly, something Gareth Southgate was unable to remove from the team, and a factor that contributed to England losing two major finals.



CHANCE OF WINNING THE 2026 WORLD CUP



PREDICTED OPPORTUNITIES CREATED THE 2026 WORLD CUP



PREDICTED GOALS EXPECTED TO BE SCORED IN THE 2026 WORLD CUP

YOUNG PLAYERS

Who are the young players who are going to set the World Cup a light. These young players might get some recognition in this tournament and become the stars of the future.



KOBBIE MAINOO

Kobbie Mainoo is going to be the captain of England in the future. This is a bold claim, but the way the youngster plays football is as though the ball sticks to his feet. Mainoo has a gift, and it is a rare gift that only comes along once every fifty years in football. His composure is the reason why he is destined to become England's skipper one day.

When Mainoo was introduced to the England set-up at the age of 18 during the European Championship, many people thought he was too young and would struggle on such a big stage. However, once he was given a starting role, most England fans could see that he was special. D

uring the 2024 European Championship, it became clear that Mainoo and Lamine Yamal stood out as the most talented and gifted young players in the tournament, and that could well be the case again at the 2026 World Cup.

At the start of the 2025-26 season, many Manchester United fans thought that Mainoo's future at the club was uncertain. Rúben Amorim often left him out of the side but continued to insist that Mainoo remained part of his plans. Fans were baffled by this decision, and many initially believed Amorim was right.

However, when he was sacked in January, football supporters wanted to see a manager who could unlock Mainoo's potential, and Michael Carrick did exactly that. Throughout the period in which he was not playing regularly, Mainoo remained professional and never spoke negatively about the situation. That attitude is one of the reasons why he will be such an important player for England in the years ahead.

Since being unlocked by Carrick, Mainoo has been in tremendous form and has earned his place in the England team. He should start alongside Declan Rice and Jude Bellingham.

Mainoo is a natural ball player who carries possession better than either Rice or Bellingham. His style resembles that of Clarence Seedorf, particularly in the way he controlled midfield, carried the ball forward and played progressive football.

If England progresses deep into this tournament, Mainoo could be a strong contender for the Young Player of the Tournament award. Should that happen, his value could rise significantly, transforming him from an academy graduate into a player valued at around £120 million.

As the FIFA World Cup 2026 approaches, attention is already turning towards the players poised to define football's biggest stage. Among the emerging talents expected to make a significant impact is French sensation Désiré Doué.

France's attacking ranks are overflowing with world-class quality. With the likes of Kylian Mbappé, Ousmane Dembélé and Michael Olise spearheading Les Bleus' forward line, competition for places is fierce. Yet, amidst this wealth of talent, Doué has rapidly emerged as one of the most exciting prospects in world football.

The gifted attacker first attracted widespread attention after making his senior debut for Rennes at just 17 years of age. His technical brilliance, versatility and maturity beyond his years quickly established him as one of France's brightest young talents. Following a breakthrough 2023/24 campaign, Doué secured a high-profile £43.2 million move to Paris Saint-Germain in the summer of 2024, a transfer that underlined the growing belief in his extraordinary potential.

He wasted little time in justifying the investment. In his debut season in Paris, Doué registered an impressive 16 goals and 16 assists across all competitions, playing a pivotal role in PSG's success. His outstanding performances earned a host of individual accolades, including Ligue 1 Young Player of the Year, UEFA Champions League Young Player of the Year and the prestigious Golden Boy award.

Having already established himself as a key figure at club level, the next chapter of Doué's career could unfold on the international stage. At just 21, he possesses a rare blend of explosive acceleration, close control and fearless creativity.

DESIRE DOUÉ

His ability to glide past defenders, coupled with unwavering self-belief and composure under pressure, makes him one of the most captivating young players in the game.

Doué's rise has been nothing short of meteoric. As a new generation prepares to succeed France's established stars, he appears perfectly positioned to shoulder greater responsibility. With the old guard gradually making way, the Rennes academy graduate could become one of the faces of French football for years to come.

Should he continue on his current trajectory, the FIFA World Cup 2026 may provide the platform for Désiré Doué to announce himself to a global audience. For football supporters seeking the tournament's next breakout star, this scintillating young talent is undoubtedly one to watch.



YAN DIOMANDE



Few young players have generated as much excitement in world football ahead of the FIFA World Cup 2026 as the Ivory Coast's rising star, Yan Diomande. Still only 19, the electrifying winger has emerged as one of the most talked about prospects in European football, captivating supporters with his explosive pace, fearless dribbling and relentless attacking intent.

His journey took him from amateur football in America to Leganés in Spain, where he made his professional debut against Real Madrid in 2025. Although the club ultimately suffered relegation from La Liga, Diomande's performances stood out, earning him a £17 million move to Bundesliga side RB Leipzig just months later.

The transition to German football proved seamless. Blessed with exceptional acceleration, two-footed ability and an eye for goal, Diomande quickly established himself as one of the Bundesliga's most dangerous wide players. His debut campaign yielded 13 goals and 10 assists across all competitions, while a stunning hat trick against Eintracht Frankfurt further underlined his immense potential.

For the Ivory Coast, the emergence of Diomande could not have come at a better time. Les Éléphants boast a proud

footballing heritage, with legends such as Didier Drogba and Yaya Touré leaving an indelible mark on African football. Now, a new generation is looking to write its own chapter, and Diomande appears destined for greatness.

Having missed qualification for the previous two World Cups, the Ivory Coast arrives at the 2026 tournament with renewed optimism. Diomande has already made an impact on the international stage, scoring crucial goals during qualification and showcasing the confidence that has made him one of Europe's most coveted young talents.

If his meteoric rise continues, the FIFA World Cup 2026 could be the tournament that transforms Yan Diomande from an emerging prospect into a global superstar.

For supporters searching for the competition's next breakout star, look no further than the dazzling Ivorian winger.

PAST LEGENDS

Three underrated legends who
deserves a big shootout for their
flair, leadership qualities and
leading their team to a World Cup
glory.



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Usually, when Brazilian legends are mentioned in conversation, the names people bring up are Pelé, Ronaldo and perhaps Zico, but rarely does anyone mention Cafu. Cafu led Brazil to two World Cup finals, winning one of them in 2002, and his leadership qualities are unquestionable. For many Brazilians, Cafu was an inspiration, having grown up in the favelas before rising to become one of the greatest right-backs of the modern era.

Cafu is a legend of the game because he guided Brazil through a transitional period, from the disappointment of losing the 1998 World Cup final to France to becoming world champions in 2002. He demonstrated exceptional leadership by captaining and inspiring some of Brazil's most prominent footballers, including Ronaldo and Roberto Carlos, to World Cup glory.

Cafu mastered his position and helped transform the way football was played, single-handedly changing perceptions of what a modern right back could be.

Traditionally, a right back would remain deep and focus primarily on stopping opponents from scoring. However, in 1994, Cafu changed that perception.

He constantly surged forward, delivering crosses into dangerous areas, while also possessing the

stamina and discipline to recover defensively. He helped create the contemporary full-back role, now commonplace in football, in which defenders are expected to contribute in attack as well as defence.

Cafu brought energy to the game and introduced a tactical dimension that many coaches would later adopt as part of the modern game.

Cafu remains an underrated legend who does not always receive the same recognition as Pelé or Diego Maradona. However, his influence on football is undeniable. He innovated the game and introduced something different that few coaches or managers had previously considered.

Cafu remains the only player to have appeared in three consecutive World Cup finals and to have won two of them. He deserves greater recognition, which is why he has earned his place among the true legends of World Cup history.



JURGEN
KLEINSMANN





Goals came naturally to Jürgen Klinsmann, and he made the 18-yard box his domain. Klinsmann had an instinct for goals, always knowing where the net was and consistently finding a way to score. He also brought flair to his game, possessing the pace to run beyond defenders and an impeccable first touch that made him a constant threat.

In the midst of the Cold War era, Klinsmann helped bring hope and pride to German football as West Germany won the 1990 World Cup. Not only did West Germany lift the trophy, but Klinsmann also played a key role by scoring important goals throughout the tournament. His performances helped cement West

Germany, and later a unified Germany, as a footballing powerhouse. The way Klinsmann played from start to finish during that World Cup, including winning the foul that led to Pedro Monzón's red card in the final, became one of the tournament's major talking points.

Many people have argued that Klinsmann was a very good player rather than a true legend. However, that argument deserves closer examination. Klinsmann scored in every major international tournament he played in for his country and established himself as one of the most reliable goal scorers of his era. His movement inside the penalty area and his positioning within the six-yard

box were superior to many of his contemporaries. He had a remarkable ability to anticipate where the ball would arrive, making goalscoring opportunities look effortless.

Although Franz Beckenbauer may be many people's first choice when discussing German football legends, Klinsmann is not far behind. He helped influence the way modern forwards attack the ball inside the penalty area and demonstrated qualities that would become essential for future generations of strikers.

Jürgen Klinsmann is undoubtedly a legend of the game and deserves his place among the great figures in World Cup history.

ANDRES INIESTA





On 11 July 2010, an entire nation held its breath. Deep into extra time of the FIFA World Cup Final, Andrés Iniesta produced the moment that would change Spanish football forever. His decisive strike against the Netherlands delivered Spain's first World Cup and immortalised a player whose brilliance had long transcended statistics and headlines.

While others commanded attention through flair and spectacle, Iniesta built his legacy through intelligence, composure and an unrivalled understanding of the game.

The Spanish maestro possessed a rare ability to make football appear effortless. Blessed with exceptional close control, vision and spatial awareness, he could navigate the most congested areas of the pitch with remarkable ease. Opponents struggled to contain him, not because of overwhelming physical attributes, but because he always seemed to be several steps ahead. Iniesta's gift was seeing possibilities before they emerged, dictating the tempo of matches and creating opportunities where none appeared to exist.

At Barcelona, he became a cornerstone of one of the greatest club sides in football history. Alongside Xavi Hernández, Sergio Busquets and Lionel Messi, Iniesta helped redefine modern football,

winning every major honour while perfecting a style built on possession, movement and technical excellence.

Yet his greatest achievements came during Spain's golden era. As La Roja conquered Europe and the world between 2008 and 2012, Iniesta was the heartbeat of a generation-defining team. His performances embodied everything that made Spain great.

A World Cup winner, a serial champion and one of football's finest craftsmen, Iniesta's legacy is not measured solely by trophies but by the way he played the game. Humble, graceful and endlessly influential, he remains one of the greatest midfielders football has ever known.

RONALDINHO



Few footballers have captured the imagination of supporters quite like Ronaldinho. Defined by his infectious smile, boundless creativity and love for the game, the Brazilian icon transcended football to become one of the sport's most beloved and naturally gifted entertainers. When fans think of Ronaldinho, they think of Joga Bonito, the beautiful game played with freedom, flair and joy.

At his peak, Ronaldinho made the impossible appear routine. Defenders were left mesmerised by his dazzling footwork, audacious tricks and extraordinary vision, while spectators marvelled at a player who treated every match as a stage for self-expression.

His mastery of space, balance and technique allowed him to execute skills few others would even attempt, from the famous Elastico to defence-splitting no-look passes. He did not merely play football; he performed it.

His list of achievements reflects his immense talent. Ronaldinho reached the pinnacle of club football with Barcelona, where he inspired a golden era and won the Ballon d'Or.

On the international stage, he helped Brazil lift the 2002 FIFA World Cup alongside a generation of legends including Cafu, Roberto Carlos, Rivaldo and Ronaldo Nazário. His unforgettable free kick against England in the quarter finals remains

one of the tournament's defining moments.

Yet Ronaldinho's legacy extends beyond trophies and accolades. As his career entered its latter years, he played a pivotal role in nurturing a young Lionel Messi, recognising the extraordinary talent that would eventually shape football's future.

A magician, an innovator and a global icon, Ronaldinho embodied everything supporters love about the sport. Long after the final whistle, his greatest trick remains unchanged: making millions fall in love with football.



PLAYER OF

These are the candidates for the player of the tournament. These players are predicted to create a spark during the World Cup.

THE

TOURNAMENT

BRUNO

There is a feeling that Bruno Fernandes is going to have a strong tournament, and it looks as though the Portuguese side is set up to play to his strengths. This season, Bruno has excelled and reached new heights. Breaking the Premier League assist record has demonstrated the footballing ability required to make a significant impact at the World Cup. He has helped Manchester United secure third place in the Premier League and qualify for the Champions League, and it feels as though he is taking that same mentality into the World Cup.

Bruno looks ready and sharp for this tournament. Towards the end of the season, it was evident that he did not want to be substituted or rested because he wanted to remain match-sharp for the World Cup. Many players in the Portuguese squad could be named Player of the Tournament, and several could finish as the leading assist provider. However, no one in the squad possesses Bruno's ability to pick a pass or deliver a defence-splitting long ball. The World Cup assist record is there for him to challenge, a record associated with legends such as Diego Maradona and Lionel Messi. Based on his current form, Bruno will believe he has every chance of making history.

Bruno has a genuine opportunity to win this award, and it would not be surprising if he finished the tournament with an impressive goals and assists tally. Portugal's group stage fixtures appear favourable on paper, and if the team performs as expected, Bruno is likely to be heavily involved in many of their goals.

Although the latter stages of the tournament will present far tougher challenges for Portugal, that is often when elite players produce their finest performances. If Bruno can maintain his form and lead Portugal deep into the competition, he will strengthen his case for individual honours. Should Portugal go on to win the World Cup, Bruno Fernandes could have a realistic chance of being named Player of the Tournament.



YAMAL

Held by Lionel Messi as a baby and having graduated from La Masia at a young age, many Spanish fans already knew Lamine Yamal was a special talent with the hallmarks of becoming one of the game's greats. It is surprising that Yamal is not among the leading contenders for the Young Player of the Tournament award, despite being included in discussions for Player of the Tournament. In reality, he has the potential to win both honours and become the first player to achieve such a feat. There is a strong feeling that Yamal is going to have a major World Cup because the Spanish team has been built to maximise his strengths.

Yamal is set to take centre stage at this World Cup, just as he did at the European Championship two years ago. His footballing ability draws comparisons with Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, while his passing range reminds supporters of a young Andrés Iniesta. This season has not been entirely straightforward for him, with injuries affecting Barcelona at various points. However, whenever he has been on the pitch, he has played a significant role in helping Barcelona secure the La Liga title.

Spain will need to play to their strengths to get the very best out of him, and a strong start to the World Cup could place them firmly among the favourites. A slow start, however, could affect both the team and Yamal's individual performances. There are several factors that will influence how well he performs, and one of the most important is the synchronisation of Spain's midfield.

Pedri and Rodri will play a vital role, as they must control possession and dictate the tempo of matches, allowing Yamal to focus on attacking rather than spending long periods tracking back defensively. During his breakthrough tournament, Yamal benefited from Spain's ability to dominate possession, while the fluid movement and interchanging positions between him and Nico Williams made it difficult for opponents to identify Spain's shape and tactical approach.

Spain's group appears favourable on paper, and fixtures against Cape Verde and Saudi Arabia could provide opportunities for Yamal to make a significant impact. If Spain performs to expectations, there is every chance that he will contribute goals and assists while further enhancing his reputation on the global stage.

Should Spain go on to win the World Cup, Yamal would be a strong contender for Player of the Tournament. Even if Spain falls short, this tournament could further establish him as one of football's defining talents for the future and a player capable of leading the next generation of stars.



PEDRI

If Spain is to fulfil their ambitions this summer, much will depend on the influence of one man: Pedri. While the tournament will showcase some of the world's most devastating forwards and headline-grabbing stars, the Barcelona midfielder possesses something arguably more valuable: the ability to control an entire match. Should Spain make a deep run in the World Cup, Pedri has all the qualities required to emerge as the tournament's standout player.

Since breaking onto the scene as a teenager, Pedri has redefined the modern midfielder. Blessed with exceptional vision, technical precision and football intelligence beyond his years, he dictates games with a maturity rarely seen in players of his generation. Rather than relying on physical dominance, Pedri manipulates space, accelerates attacks with perfectly weighted passes and constantly positions himself to influence every phase of play. He does not simply participate in matches; he orchestrates them.

His impact on Spain has been transformative. La Roja's identity has always been built on possession and control, but Pedri has elevated that philosophy, becoming the focal point through which almost every attack flows. His composure under pressure allows Spain to dominate possession against elite opposition, while his creativity and movement unlock defensive structures that many teams struggle to break down. When Pedri is at his best, Spain plays with a rhythm and fluidity that few nations can match.

Now entering the prime years of his career, Pedri arrives at the World Cup with the experience of competing in football's biggest matches and the confidence gained from continued success at Barcelona. Surrounded by a talented generation, he is the player who brings everything together.

The Golden Ball is often awarded to the footballer who defines a tournament. Pedri has the intelligence and influence to do exactly that. If Spain is to lift the World Cup for the first time since 2010, their midfield maestro will almost certainly be at the heart of the journey and could leave the tournament as its outstanding player.



LUIS DIAZ



When discussing potential contenders for Player of the Tournament, few players arrive in finer form than Colombia's talisman, Luis Díaz. Since completing his high-profile move from Liverpool to Bayern Munich in the summer of 2025, the dynamic forward has elevated his game to new heights, producing the most prolific numbers of his career and establishing himself as one of the most influential attackers in European football.

Now firmly in his prime, Díaz enters the tournament as the focal point of Colombia's ambitions. Renowned for his relentless work rate, explosive acceleration and exceptional one-versus-one ability, he embodies the modern winger. Whether tracking back to regain possession, driving at defenders in transition or delivering decisive moments in the final third, Díaz consistently sets the standard with his intensity and commitment.

Nicknamed "Luchito" by supporters, he plays with an infectious energy that galvanises those around him. His direct running and technical quality make Colombia one of the most dangerous counterattacking sides in international football, with Díaz serving as the catalyst for many of their most devastating attacking moves. When Colombia break forward, it is often Díaz who provides the spark, turning defence into attack in a matter of seconds.

With the 2026 World Cup marking the biggest stage of his international career, the 29-year-old has an opportunity to cement his legacy. Colombia's hopes of a deep tournament run will rest heavily on his shoulders, but Díaz has never turned away from responsibility. If his club form translates to the world stage, he could be the player who defines the tournament and emerges as its standout performer.

VITINHA

When discussing the players most likely to dictate the course of the FIFA World Cup 2026, Portugal's Vitinha deserves a place near the top of the conversation. The Paris Saint-Germain midfielder has evolved into one of the most influential playmakers in world football, transforming himself from a promising talent into the heartbeat of both club and country.

Since arriving in Paris in 2022, Vitinha has become the driving force behind PSG's midfield. Operating as a deep lying playmaker, he combines technical excellence with tactical intelligence, controlling matches through his vision, composure and relentless work rate. His ability to manipulate space, evade pressure and progress possession has made him indispensable, with many now regarding him as one of the finest midfielders in the game. Roberto Martínez has described him as the player at the centre of both PSG's and Portugal's possession play, highlighting his intelligence, mobility and ability to control the rhythm of matches.

What separates Vitinha from his peers is his command of tempo. He is football's metronome, capable of accelerating attacks or slowing the game when required.

His positional awareness and tireless movement allow him to constantly offer passing options, while his technical quality ensures Portugal retains control in the most demanding moments. Recent analyses have even labelled him PSG's vital metronome and one of the world's elite midfielders.

Alongside Bruno Fernandes and João Neves, Vitinha forms part of a midfield unit blessed with creativity and intelligence. As Portugal pursues World Cup glory, his influence could prove decisive. Fresh from another trophy-laden campaign with PSG and arriving in North America brimming with confidence, Vitinha appears perfectly positioned to orchestrate Portugal's challenge. If the Seleção are to fulfil their ambitions, their midfield maestro will be at the centre of everything.



DARK

The teams that might surprise you during this tournament and they might even win the World Cup.

HORSE

Germany has often been dismissed ahead of major tournaments. At the start of many competitions in which Germany has competed, football fans and pundits have frequently ruled them out. At the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, Germany was not considered the leading favourite, and many football followers expected them to reach the semi-finals at best. Instead, they went on to win the tournament.

Although the 2014 squad featured outstanding players such as Philipp Lahm, Miroslav Klose and Mesut Özil, Germany was still viewed by many as being behind the likes of Brazil in the race for the trophy. The tournament was widely tipped to be Brazil's moment, but Germany delivered one of the most memorable results in World Cup history, inflicting Brazil's heaviest defeat in the competition and silencing the home crowd. That tournament allowed many members of the German squad to announce themselves on the world stage, with several players subsequently securing high-profile moves to some of Europe's biggest clubs.

Germany is traditionally a team that does not always start tournaments in spectacular fashion. Their squad on paper may not always be filled with the biggest names, but they consistently perform as a collective. In recent tournaments, Germany has perhaps lost some of the aura that once made opponents fear them, with smaller nations increasingly believing they can compete on equal terms.

However, while the current German side may lack some of the global superstars of previous generations, they possess a talented squad, an excellent coach in Julian Nagelsmann, and a strong core of defenders and midfielders. Playing as a team is what makes Germany such a dangerous opponent. They have the potential to surprise many people and could reach the latter stages of the tournament, including the semi-finals, or even challenge for the World Cup itself.

If Germany starts the tournament strongly, other teams could find themselves under significant pressure. Many German supporters believe there is a strong connection and unity within the squad, qualities that could help them progress deep into the competition. Germany enters the 2026 World Cup with a realistic chance of competing for the trophy and should not be underestimated.





Every World Cup produces a nation that captures the imagination of football supporters across the globe. A team that arrives without the fanfare of the traditional giants, yet possesses the talent and momentum to challenge the established order. At the FIFA World Cup 2026, the Ivory Coast could be that team.

For a nation with such a proud footballing heritage, recent World Cup history has been one of frustration. Having failed to qualify for the previous two tournaments, the Elephants have spent years rebuilding, searching for a new identity following the golden generation that featured icons such as Didier Drogba, Yaya Touré and Gervinho. Now, after years of transition, the Ivory Coast returns to football's grandest stage with renewed purpose and growing confidence.

Their triumph at the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations reignited belief throughout the nation and served as a reminder of the Ivory Coast's pedigree. That remarkable success was built on resilience, unity and an unwavering fighting spirit, qualities that continue to define this emerging generation. No longer burdened by comparisons with the past, they are beginning to carve out a legacy of their own.

What makes the Ivory Coast such a dangerous opponent is the blend of athleticism, technical quality and attacking dynamism throughout the squad. The emergence of exciting young talents, combined with experienced leaders who understand the demands of tournament football, has created a side capable of troubling even the strongest nations. Players such as Yan Diomande represent the future, bringing fearlessness and unpredictability to a team eager to make its mark on the world stage.

While many of the pre-tournament headlines will focus on the favourites, the Ivory Coast will quietly embrace the role of outsiders. They possess the hunger of a nation determined to prove itself and the quality to turn ambition into reality.

The world may view them as dark horses, but within the Ivory Coast camp, the objective will be far greater. This is more than a return to the World Cup; it is a statement of intent.

COAST

Articles that connect and inspire

Any queries or questions, please contact us by email

info@thecurrentnotion.com

This magazine is designed and written by

Fiddel Asamoah

Tommy Singh

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