

## Sports

# Four-goal Mbappe fires France to World Cup finals, Belgium also qualify

## Netherlands made to wait after 'outrageous' performance

PARIS: World champions France booked their place at next year's World Cup in Qatar in style as Kylian Mbappe fired in four goals in an 8-0 thrashing of Kazakhstan at the Parc des Princes on Saturday. Karim Benzema scored twice and there were further goals for Adrien Rabiot and Antoine Griezmann whose penalty marked his 42nd goal for France, taking him ahead of Michel Platini. Only Thierry Henry (51) and Olivier Giroud (46) have scored more for France.

The French will be joined at the finals by neighbors Belgium as the world's top-ranked team saw off Estonia 3-1 in Brussels to ensure top spot in Group E ahead of Gareth Bale's Wales who beat Belarus 5-1 in Cardiff. The Netherlands, who missed out on the 2018 World Cup, looked on course to join them as they led Montenegro 2-0 going into the last 10 minutes of their encounter in Podgorica. However, the Dutch conceded two goals in the last 10 minutes to draw 2-2. They still top Group G but are just two points ahead of Turkey and Norway.

On the sixth anniversary of the 2015 attacks in Paris which claimed the lives of 130 people, France put on a spectacular show for their supporters. Mbappe set the ball rolling when he put the world champions ahead after just six minutes. The Paris Saint-Germain star, playing on his home ground, added a second six minutes later and completed his first hat-trick for France with a thundering header just after the half-hour.

Leading 3-0 at the break, France turned up the heat even more in the second half as Benzema struck twice before Rabiot and Griezmann had their moments in the spotlight. It was fitting that Mbappe

had the final say, stroking home his fourth to complete the rout three minutes from time.

France top Group D, leaving Finland and Ukraine to scrap over second place. "A World Cup is a dream, an aim, it's everything and it's a unique chance to play in a team that can win it. We're going over there to win it," Mbappe said.

The Finns have a two-point advantage going into the final round of matches after seeing off Bosnia-Herzegovina 3-1. The Finns had Jukka Raitala sent off before half-time but goals from Brentford forward Marcus Forss, Robin Lod and Daniel O'Shaughnessy sealed the win.

### Belgium comfortable

Belgium had dropped just a single point in qualifying up to this point and knew that victory over Estonia would guarantee them top spot in Group E. Manager Roberto Martinez, however, was without first-choice strikers Romelu Lukaku, Mitchy Batshuayi and Touri Tielemans who were all injured.

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That meant a call-up for Christian Benteke and the Crystal Palace forward did not disappoint, taking his chance to press his claims by netting the opener after just 11 minutes. "I know I'm only the third choice in the hierarchy of the forwards but I'm not giving up," said Benteke. "The place in the squad for Qatar will be earned on the pitch."

Yannick Carrasco doubled the lead eight minutes into the second half and although Erik Sorga pulled one back for the visitors, Thorgan Hazard put the game to bed shortly after. That win meant that Wales, who had already secured a place in the play-



PARIS: France's forward Kylian Mbappe celebrates after scoring a goal during the FIFA World Cup 2022 qualification football match between France and Kazakhstan at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris, on Saturday. — AFP

offs, would not be able to catch them. The Welsh, however, boosted by the presence of Bale making his 100th appearance, produced their own impressive show with Aaron Ramsay scoring twice on a noisy night in Cardiff.

The Dutch, meanwhile, who would have qualified with a win over Montenegro, will rue careless defending after Memphis Depay had scored twice to give them a 2-0 lead. Ilija Vukotic marked his international debut with a goal in the 82nd minute to give the home side some hope and four minutes later Nikola Vujnovic looped in a header to halt the orange march to Qatar. "The way we played in the second

half was just outrageous," Dutch captain Virgil Van Dijk told Dutch broadcaster NOS. "Our organization was just awful. We should have qualified here."

The Dutch are just two points ahead of Turkey, who put six past Gibraltar, and Norway who proved toothless without the injured Erling Braut Haaland as they were held to a 0-0 draw against Latvia in Oslo. The Dutch host Norway in Rotterdam on Tuesday in the final round of matches while Turkey travel to Montenegro. France and Belgium join Denmark and Germany as confirmed qualifiers from Europe with the other six automatic places to be settled over the course of the final matchday. — AFP

### News in brief

#### Gallagher gets first call

LONDON: Crystal Palace midfielder Conor Gallagher has been drafted into the England squad for today's World Cup qualifier in San Marino after Jordan Henderson, Jack Grealish, Raheem Sterling, Mason Mount and Luke Shaw withdrew yesterday. The Three Lions only need to avoid defeat against the minnows in Serravalle to secure their place in next year's tournament in Qatar. Liverpool captain Henderson and Manchester City's Grealish have returned to their clubs for further assessment on injuries. City forward Sterling is unavailable due to a personal matter, while Chelsea midfielder Mount requires dental surgery and Manchester United left-back Shaw is following a concussion protocol. Gallagher steps up from the Under-21s for his first senior call-up. The 21-year-old has impressed for Palace this term, scoring four goals for Patrick Vieira's side.

#### Italy lose three players

MILAN: Italy were on Saturday hit with another round of injuries as the European champions prepare for their crucial final 2022 World Cup qualifier against Northern Ireland. Having already had captain Giorgio Chiellini and first-choice striker Ciro Immobile among the several players ruled out of Friday's 1-1 draw with Switzerland, coach Roberto Mancini has now lost three more for today's clash at Windsor Park. Alessandro Bastoni and Davide Calabria are out injured while fellow defender Cristiano Biraghi leaves the Azzurri camp for "personal reasons", the Italian Football Federation said. Mancini has called up Davide Zappacosta to his squad for the match, which will decide whether Italy qualify for next year's tournament in Qatar after missing out in 2018. Italy lead Switzerland at the top of Group C on goal difference with one match remaining and a single guaranteed spot for the tournament.

#### Saudi launches women's league

RIYADH: The Saudi football federation on Saturday said it was launching the first edition of a women's league later this month. The November 22 launch is part of a program set up by the Saudi Arabia Football Federation in 2017 to support women's football. According to the federation, the new women's league will be playing in two phases within the regional league. Sixteen teams will take part in the first phase with games played in three cities — the capital Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam. Six teams from each region will play in the matches, with the exception of Dammam where only four teams will play. Those who qualify will be able to play in a knockout competition at the Kingdom Final Championship due to be held early next year in the Red Sea city of Jeddah.

## Clippers torch Timberwolves, Heat hold off Jazz

LOS ANGELES: Paul George ignited Los Angeles' offense by scoring a game-high 23 points as the Clippers won their seventh straight game with a 129-102 NBA victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves on Saturday.

Reggie Jackson added 21 points for the Clippers, who beat the Timberwolves for the third time in 11 days in front of a crowd of 19,060 at Staples Center arena in downtown Los Angeles. Ivica Zubac and Isaiah Hartenstein both put up double-doubles for the Clippers, who took advantage of a tired Timberwolves team one night after Minnesota clobbered the Los Angeles Lakers on the same court.

Zubac had 10 points and 12 rebounds, Hartenstein tallied 12 points and 12 rebounds. Eric Bledsoe had 14 points and nine assists and George also had nine rebounds for the Clippers in the win. "It was an all-around team win," Clippers coach Tyrone Lue said. "Everybody did their part." Anthony Edwards led the Timberwolves with 21 points after he had contributed just nine points to Friday's 107-83 win over

the Lakers.

Karl-Anthony Towns was held to eight points on just three-of-11 shooting from the field on Saturday night. For Towns, it marked his first single-digit scoring game since 2018 and it came one night after scoring 29 points against the Lakers. "We're fronting him on the post and coming with the low man," Lue said of guarding Towns. "We just try to switch everything so he can't get shots off. We just want to slow him down."

In Salt Lake City, the Miami Heat snapped a three-game losing skid and swept the season series against Utah with a 111-105 victory over the Jazz. Tyler Herro powered the Heat with 27 points and eight rebounds in front of a crowd of 18,300 at Vivint Arena. Duncan Robinson scored 22 points and added a half dozen three pointers and Kyle Lowry finished with 21 for the Heat.

"We were physically and mentally ready to go into this game," Lowry said. "We lost three games on this road trip - two of them we had an opportunity to really win. We just got to continue to build and today was a good building block for us."

Bojan Bogdanovic scored 19 of his 26 points in the fourth quarter to lead the Jazz, who lost for the fourth time in their last five games. The two teams meet just twice this season. Miami also won the first meeting 118-115 on November 6 in Florida.



LOS ANGELES: Reggie Jackson (left) and Paul George of the LA Clippers are interviewed after the game against the Minnesota Timberwolves on Saturday at STAPLES Center in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

"I wouldn't say we're out here panicking, but I think it's upsetting," Jazz player Donovan Mitchell said. "I think that'll be the word I use. It's upsetting because we know each other, we know what we're doing. And it's just time for us to go out there and do it."

Miami jumped out to a 23-7 lead in the first quarter thanks to some solid three-point shooting from Robinson and Bam Adebayo. Clarkson carried the Jazz on his back to slash the deficit, scoring 11 consecutive points in just 76 seconds

to trim the lead to 27-24.

The Heat led by as many as 27 points in the second half before the Jazz used another late rally to pull within 109-105 with just 14 seconds to go in the fourth quarter. But four seconds later, Herro drained two more free throws to ice the win for the Heat. Elsewhere, Darius Garland scored 22 points and hit two free throws with nine seconds left to lift the Cleveland Cavaliers a 91-89 come-from-behind victory over the Boston Celtics. — AFP

## MS Dossary's Game On Kuwait PS5 e-football tourney kicks off tomorrow

KUWAIT: Esports athlete Musaed "MS Dossary" Al-Dossary has put together an e-football tournament of his own designs, and it will be taking place in Kuwait in November 2021. This e-football esports tournament is MS Dossary's Game On Kuwait. The tournament will be played on Sony's PlayStation 5 gaming console. This is Sony's recently released next-gen gaming machine.

The qualifiers round will be held offline and begin from November 11 and 12. The qualifiers will continue on November 16 and 17, 2021. The MS Dossary's Game On Kuwait final will be on November 19, 2021. All of the teams that have passed in the qualifiers will automatically become eligible to compete during the final.

E-football 22 is the video game that will be used during competitive play. E-football 22 is the latest iteration of EA's bestselling football video game series, and the most popular football simulation. It is enjoyed by fans and gamers around the world. Most people who play football games are familiar with e-football, but there are some important differences that MS Dossary has brought to Game On Kuwait.

The first and most important is the rule system of switching, or substituting between teammates, where all teams consist of two players that rotate once certain conditions are met in-game. Teammates will switch between each other at halftime, as an example. Teammates will also switch when a red card is handed out, or in the event of a tie, at which point the game will go straight into golden goal rules. If a game



remains tied after the golden goal period, teammates will switch again and go into a penalty shootout. Players switch between each penalty attempt to keep the game lively.

Teams will be allowed one free player switch exchange at any time that the ball is not in play. This is at the discretion of the teams to decide. Those interested and looking to enroll, and register can do so at the following website: <https://www.redbull.com/mean/events/ms-dossary-game-on/registration>

Registrations are currently open for all teams. The only conditions are that there are two players per team, and they must be able to attend offline and in person in Kuwait during the course of the tournament days.

MS Dossary is a champion esports athlete who specializes in the football sports simulator e-football franchise. He is the first esports athlete to win two championships in the same year, and the only athlete to take back-to-back wins at the Xbox E-FOOTBALL World Championships. He lives and trains in his home country of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

## Osimhen scores as Nigeria move closer to topping World Cup group

JOHANNESBURG: Napoli forward Victor Osimhen scored to set up Nigeria for a 2-0 win over Liberia on Saturday that moved them closer to a fourth consecutive World Cup appearance. The Super Eagles host Cape Verde in a top-of-the-table Group C clash tomorrow and will win the section provided they avoid defeat in Lagos.

Nigeria have 12 points and Cape Verde 10 after five rounds while the Central African Republic (four) and Liberia (three) are out of the running. Should the six-time World Cup qualifiers top the table, they join nine other section winners in a draw that will create five two-leg ties with the winners going to the 2002 finals in Qatar.

Osimhen converted a 15th-minute penalty after Kelechi Iheanacho was fouled and substitute Ahmed Musa added the second goal, also from a spot kick, in added time. The qualifier was staged in the Moroccan coastal city of Tangiers because no stadium in Liberia meets international standards.

Cape Verde, an island nation of 560,000 people that has never competed at the World Cup, kept their hopes alive by coming from behind to beat the Central African Republic 2-1 in Mindelo. Julio Tavares netted early in the second half to cancel the lead Isaac Ngoma gave the visitors after 11 minutes, and Ianique 'Stopira' Tavares notched the 75th-minute winner. Ivory Coast will take a one-point lead over Cameroon to Douala tomorrow for a showdown that will decide who progresses from Group D. — AFP