

# Belgium squeeze to a 1-0 win over Canada

## Goalkeeper Courtois saves Davies' penalty

DOHA: Michy Batshuayi's first-half goal proved enough for a below-par Belgium to squeeze to a 1-0 win over a Canada side playing their first World Cup match for 36 years on Wednesday. Belgium goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois saved Alphonso Davies' early penalty and Batshuayi opened the scoring against the run of play in the 44th minute. John Herdman's Canada, roared on by their vocal support, also had another strong penalty appeal turned down and dominated the second half to no avail. Belgium were without injured record goalscorer Romelu Lukaku and struggled throughout with the pace of Canada's forwards.

But the 2018 semi-finalists clung on to move top of what could prove a hotly-contested Group F after Croatia and Morocco's goalless draw earlier on Wednesday. "Was it technically our 'worst game', yes, when you measure the performance," admitted Belgium coach Roberto Martinez. "Was it the 'worst game', no, because we won." "We defended well and we needed our goalkeeper." Canada will head into their game against Croatia on Sunday still full of confidence after more than matching the team ranked second in the world, who next face Morocco.

"They showed tonight that they do belong here. It's been a long time since we've been back," said Herdman, the first coach to lead teams at women's and men's World Cups. "I'm sure they (the fans) walked away proud and feeling like we are a football nation. "I think this group stage is wide open now after the Croatia-Morocco result." The North Americans, matching Belgium in formation by playing three at the back, made a bright start and Jonathan David's low effort was deflected wide.

From the resulting corner, Tajon Buchanan's strike was blocked by Yannick Carrasco with his arm and a penalty was awarded after a VAR check in the 11th minute. But Davies produced a weak effort which was saved low to his right by Courtois, before David lashed the rebound over the crossbar. Belgium's ageing defense were struggling with the pace of the Canada attackers and Junior Hoilett got in behind before firing a shot wide. The underdogs kept coming, as Courtois palmed away right wing-back Alistair Johnston's fierce drive and David headed off target.

### VAR controversy

Canada had a big penalty appeal turned down despite a VAR review when Axel Witsel was outpaced by Richie Laryea inside the area and then tripped his opponent. Belgium grabbed the lead out of nothing when a simple long ball over the top from Toby Alderweireld found the run of Batshuayi who hammered home left-footed. There was still time for Canada to create, and waste, another glorious opportunity before the break, as Laryea's low cross was fired over on the slide by Buchanan from six yards out.

Martinez made a double substitution at half-time to try and stem the tide, with Thomas Meunier replacing Carrasco and Everton youngster Amadou Onana coming into the midfield. Canada could have leveled just minutes after the restart, though, as David headed wide from Stephen Eustaquio's delicious cross after the Porto midfielder had nutmegged Kevin De Bruyne. Herdman's men continued to flood forward, but could not find the finishing touch required, with Buchanan miskicking horribly from the edge of the box.

The more men Canada committed, the more danger-



DOHA: Canada's forward #11 Tajon Buchanan fights for the ball with Belgium's midfielder #11 Yannick Carrasco during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group F football match between Belgium and Canada on November 23, 2022. —AFP

ous Belgium looked on the break and Laryea made a wonderful last-ditch tackle to deny Batshuayi a second goal. Substitute Cyle Larin, the top scorer in CONCACAF qualifying for the tournament, headed too close to

Courtois in a frantic finale. De Bruyne could have put the game to bed but blazed into the crowd, while Larin sent another header spinning over Courtois' bar as Belgium fell over the line. —AFP

## Fans pay homage to Maradona with shirts and chants

DOHA: Javier Maluf will quietly put on a shirt worn by Diego Maradona against England, but other fans at the World Cup have more noisy plans for Friday's second anniversary of the death of the flawed genius. Argentina's legion of supporters may also be praying to the sporting gods that the late football great can still inspire his country to victory over Mexico on Saturday to keep their hopes in Qatar alive.

Maluf is like many Argentina fans who have never fully recovered from Maradona's death from a heart attack at the age of 60. The shirt that Maradona wore during a game against England at Wembley in 1980 is the prized item in Maluf's collection of 1,000 game-worn football jerseys that he estimates is worth \$1 million. "I will put it on for a while as a sign of respect," he told AFP at his Doha home, where the shirts and other souvenirs are kept. "We all know his story but we all know his impact on the game."

A respected memorabilia sleuth, Maluf, 56, also has a blood-stained Argentina shirt worn by Mario Kempes in a 1978 World Cup game against France. That is folded near a River Plate shirt worn in 1931 by Carlos Peucelle, who played in the first World Cup a year earlier. Memorabilia is now big business, with Maradona items much sought after. In May, a shirt worn by the Argentina forward when he scored his infamous 1986 World Cup "Hand of God" goal against England sold at auction for \$9.3 million.

The ball that he fisted into the England net sold this

month for £2 million (\$2.4 million). The shirt is on display at the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum during the World Cup but Maluf is among fans who believe that it belongs in Argentina. "It would be good if it goes to Argentina one day, so that all the public can see it and feel the importance," he said. More than 30,000 Argentina fans are in Qatar for this year's tournament and while many worship current number 10 Lionel Messi, Maradona's name still carries an almost mystical force.

### Pilgrimage

Many have been on a pilgrimage to a giant Maradona mural near the Khalifa stadium in Doha. At Argentina's first game—a shock 2-1 defeat by Saudi Arabia—there were Maradona masks, banners and shirts on display in the stadium. And aficionados say there will be many public tributes to Maradona on Friday. One group plans a march to the Maradona FanFest at Doha's international airport.

The main attraction there is a hologram of the player plus a "tribute jet" bearing images of Maradona that will be auctioned, with a chunk of the proceeds going to charity. Diego and Churi Veliz went to Monday's game wearing headgear emblazoned with Maradona sitting on a camel. They took countless selfies with Arab football fans. Gonzalo, a 32-year-old Buenos Aires lawyer, recalled the shock of finding out about Maradona's death.

"I was on the beach, my girlfriend told me and I said we had to grab our things and go straight back to Buenos Aires." They were among thousands who waited outside Maradona's house. Claudio carried a flag showing Maradona embracing Messi, which will be seen again when Argentina take on Mexico. Laura Valero, who borrowed \$8,000 to make the trip to Qatar, said she was "recovering" from the defeat. "I will be wearing a Maradona shirt because you have to believe in something," she said of the looming anniversary and game. —AFP



LUSAIL: Saudi Arabia's goalkeeper #21 Mohammed Al-Owais (right) hits Saudi Arabia's defender #13 Yasser Al-Shahrani (center) in the head during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group C football match between Argentina and Saudi Arabia at the Lusail Stadium. —AFP

## Saudi's Al-Shahrani undergoes surgery

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia defender Yasser Al-Shahrani underwent successful surgery on his pancreas on Wednesday after a collision during his team's shock World Cup win over Argentina, the national team said. Medical examinations conducted in Doha revealed Al-Shahrani to be in a "stable condition" after "suffering a strong clash in the head, chest and abdomen", said a statement posted on the team's Twitter account. He was then "transferred by medical evacuation to the National Guard Hospital in Riyadh" for the operation. A follow-up statement on Wednesday night said the operation had been completed "with success".

Al-Shahrani collided with Saudi goalkeeper Mohammed Al-Owais in stoppage time at the end of the match against Argentina, which ended in an upset 2-1 victory for the Green Falcons. Al-Owais' left knee connected squarely with Al-

Shahrani's face. "I would like to ensure you that I am OK, pray for me and congratulations on winning," Al-Shahrani said in a video clip from his hospital bed posted on social media. Saudi Arabia were propelled to victory by a stunning goal from Salem Al-Dawsari, bringing Argentina's 36-match unbeaten run to a shuddering halt. The Saudis' next match is on Saturday against Poland. —AFP



LUSAIL: Argentina's supporters pose for pictures holding a flag depicting Argentina's forward #10 Lionel Messi (left) and football legend Diego Maradona outside the stadium in Lusail. —AFP

### Today's matches

FIFA World Cup 2022	
Wales v Iran	13:00
beIN Sports HD 1 Max	
Qatar v Senegal	16:00
beIN Sports HD 2 Max	
Netherlands v Ecuador	19:00
beIN Sports HD 1 Max	
England v United States	22:00
beIN Sports HD 2 Max	

# Classifieds

## Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

## Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804

Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
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