

# A WORLD CUP OF FIRSTS

**FB** FOOTBALL  
BENCHMARK



# A WORLD CUP OF FIRSTS

The Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup™, kicking off on 20 November, will entail a number of firsts given the tournament's unprecedented timing: **never in the World Cup's history has it been held during the winter months of the northern hemisphere.** Consequently, the major European club competitions have been interrupted and their match calendars were squeezed in between August and November, creating an even more congested schedule prior to the assemblage of national teams.

The upcoming World Cup will also showcase technological and regulatory innovations: one is the **semi-automatic offside being introduced** by implementing special cameras underneath the roof of the stadia which detect the ball's and players' exact positions. Moreover, the **national teams' rosters have been expanded from 23 to 26 players**, with in-game **substitutions increased from 3 to 5** to help squads in terms of load management. These features are giving rise to some potential new strategies for managers that had the possibility to call up "specialist" players to their rosters.

Monumentally, the World Cup in Qatar will also be the **first time that women are taking part in the competition as match officials** – filling the role of three main referees and three assistant referees.

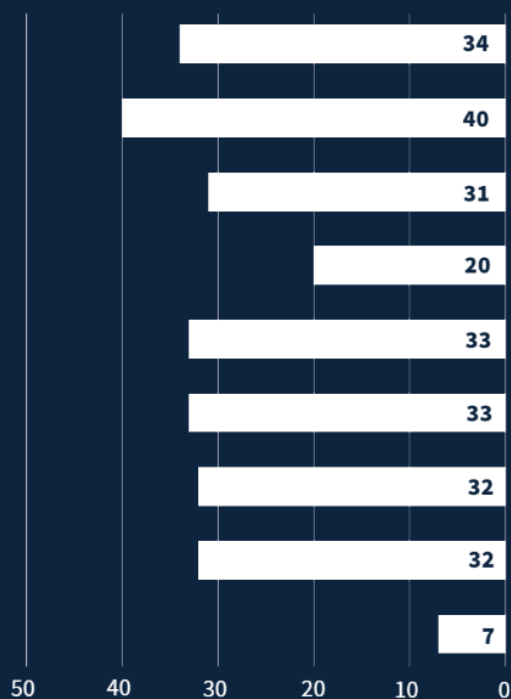
Unfortunately, this edition of the World Cup is already marked by numerous controversies, not only related to the timing of the event and the overall spending by the Qatari government, but especially to human rights violations and recognition. Also a first, considering the **magnitude and the perseverance of the criticism.**



# IS ONE WEEK ENOUGH TIME TO PREPARE FOR A WORLD CUP?

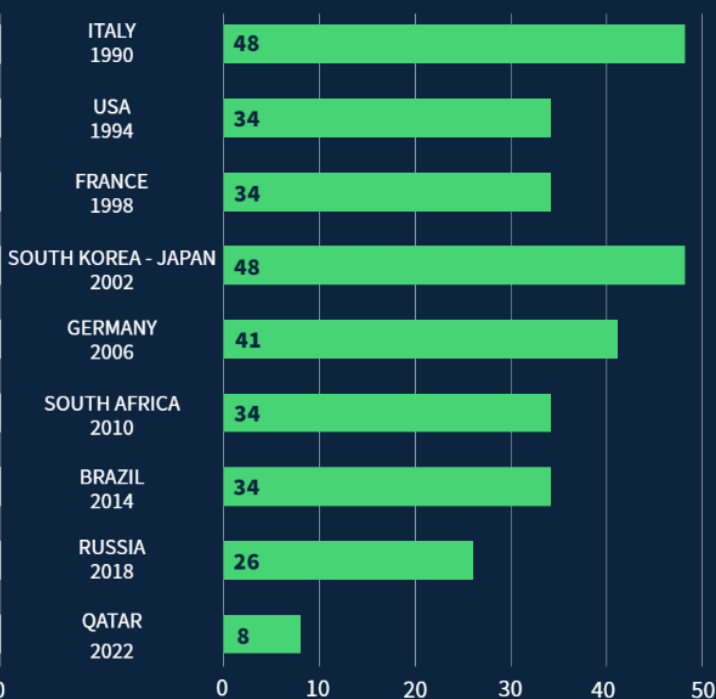
## PREPARATION

DAYS BETWEEN LAST PREMIER LEAGUE MATCH AND FIRST WORLD CUP MATCH



## RECOVERY

DAYS BETWEEN LAST WORLD CUP MATCH AND FIRST PREMIER LEAGUE MATCH



SOURCE: FIFPRO | FIFA WORLD CUP 2022™: THE PLAYER WORKLOAD JOURNEY

## NO PREPARATION, NO RECOVERY?

As mentioned earlier, the extraordinary timing of the World Cup's commencement in the middle of the regular European club seasons poses numerous challenges, most importantly in terms of calendar congestion and players' workload. By comparing the Qatar World Cup with previous ones, it is evident that the number of preparation and recovery days have dropped significantly. For instance, **the last Premier League (EPL) match was seven days before the World Cup kick-off and the EPL will resume only 8 days after the World Cup Final.** In comparison, the average number of preparation days and regeneration days before and after the previous World Cups were thirty-two and thirty-seven, respectively.

## EXTREME WORKLOAD

However, not all regions are suffering the consequences in the same manner. In many regions, additional fixtures have been crammed into an already saturated early part of the season, exposing players to increased workload risk. This is the case of Portugal and Brazil: for both countries the players selected for the squads played over 30,000 minutes combined. In other regions, players experienced underload in terms of competitive match opportunities due to inadequate calendar planning. For instance, out of five African teams, Cameroon, Ghana, Senegal and Tunisia have played 20,000 or less combined minutes. Asian teams show similar figures, with Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Australia falling below the 20,000-minute threshold.

In the week of the FIFA World Cup 2022™ in Qatar, FIFPRO, in cooperation with Football Benchmark, have published a report examining the intense schedule of the 32 national teams ahead of the tournament, and the challenging conditions facing players in the coming weeks. [The new FIFPRO report titled FIFA World Cup 2022™: The Player Workload Journey is available here.](#)



**HEUNG-MIN SON HAS TOTALLED  
146,104 KMS OF INTERNATIONAL  
TRAVEL WITH CLUB AND COUNTRY  
SINCE THE BEGINNING OF LAST  
SEASON, CROSSING  
132 TIME ZONES.**

SOURCE: FIFPRO  
FIFA WORLD CUP 2022™:  
THE PLAYER WORKLOAD JOURNEY

# TOP 10 PLAYERS PLAYING ON THE WORLD CUP

## BY NUMBER OF INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS

1. CRISTIANO RONALDO	495.6M
2. LIONEL MESSI	372.5M
3. NEYMAR	181.7M
4. KYLIAN MBAPPÉ	73.2M
5. KARIM BENZEMA	60.4M
6. PAULO DYBALA	49.4M
7. GARETH BALE	48.4M
8. ANTOINE GRIEZMANN	36.9M
9. ROBERT LEWANDOWSKI	30.8M
10. EDEN HAZARD	27.2M

## BY MARKET VALUE

1. KYLIAN MBAPPÉ	€222.9M
2. PHIL FODEN	€136.8M
3. VINÍCIUS JÚNIOR	€136.8M
4. JUDE BELLINGHAM	€125.1M
5. TRENT ALEXANDER-ARNOLD	€107.6M
6. PEDRI	€105.0M
7. MASON MOUNT	€99.2M
8. HARRY KANE	€98.1M
9. BRUNO FERNANDES	€96.7M
10. RÚBEN DIAS	€96.2M

SOURCE: FOOTBALL BENCHMARK SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS AND FOOTBALL BENCHMARK RESEARCH (AS OF NOVEMBER 15, 2022); FOOTBALL BENCHMARK PLAYER VALUATION TOOL AS OF SEPTEMBER 2022.

# MORE THAN A BILLION SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

Obviously, many of the sport's biggest stars will be representing their countries on this global stage. By comparing the top 10 players according to market value and the top 10 players playing in the World Cup by their number of social media followers, it is evident that a generational transition is taking place: **football icons with a huge fan base are no longer among the most valuable players**, mostly due to their age. Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo are clear examples in this regard, with their followers' totals approaching 900 million on Instagram. The only player present on both lists is Kylian Mbappé, who has the highest estimated market value (EUR 223m) and more than 73 million followers on Instagram.



# NATIONS WITH THE HIGHEST SQUAD VALUE

By expanding the scope of our analysis to the aggregate squad value of entire national teams, we see that England lead the nations included in this metric, with a total squad value of EUR 1.4 billion – EUR 100m more than the reigning world champions, France. Widely regarded tournament favourites, Brazil are third; Portugal are the only other one above the EUR 1 billion mark. Spain and Germany, winners of two FIFA World Cups in the 2010s, follow closely with squad values of EUR 984m and EUR 962m, respectively. Curiously, they are the only two nations in the top 10 who were drawn in the same group, and their battle for first place will surely be a sight to behold. After a modest drop-off in squad value come the Netherlands, Argentina and Belgium, and, lastly, Uruguay round out the top 10. **The composition demonstrates that yet again, the European clubs are in a very strong position coming into the World Cup, with seven of the 10 most valuable squads arriving from the continent. The only other continent represented on this shortlist is South America, with three national teams.**

1. ENGLAND	€1,431M
2. FRANCE	€1,298M
3. BRAZIL	€1,192M
4. PORTUGAL	€1,017M
5. SPAIN	€984M
6. GERMANY	€962M
7. NETHERLANDS	€716M
8. ARGENTINA	€669M
9. BELGIUM	€618M
10. URUGUAY	€436M

SOURCE: FOOTBALL BENCHMARK PLAYER VALUATION TOOL AS OF SEPTEMBER 2022; FOOTBALL BENCHMARK RESEARCH AS OF 15 NOVEMBER 2022.

# FC BAYERN MÜNCHEN TO SEND 17 PLAYERS TO THE WORLD CUP

German champions FC Bayern München are the club sending the most players, 17, to the FIFA World Cup. However, in terms of the value of players sent, Manchester City FC lead all clubs globally. Some usual suspects familiar to the audience are present in this list of course, such as El Clásico rivals FC Barcelona and Real Madrid CF, and English Premier League Big Six clubs such as Chelsea FC, Manchester United FC and Tottenham Hotspur FC. Finally, PSG are also amongst the most well-represented with 11 participants from the club. Al-Sadd SC from Qatar and Al-Hilal SFC from Saudi Arabia are the only clubs outside of Europe on this list – both clubs have several national team players for their home country.

CLUB	NUMBER OF PLAYERS	COMBINED VALUE OF PLAYERS
1. FC BAYERN MÜNCHEN	17	€921M
2. MANCHESTER CITY FC	16	€1,014M
3. FC BARCELONA	16	€896M
4. AL-SADD SC	15	€11M
5. MANCHESTER UNITED FC	14	€586M
6. REAL MADRID CF	13	€756M
7. CHELSEA FC	12	€492M
8. AL-HILAL SAUDI FC	12	€15M
9. PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN FC	11	€662M
10. TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR FC	11	€480M

SOURCE: FOOTBALL BENCHMARK PLAYER VALUATION TOOL AS OF SEPTEMBER 2022; FOOTBALL BENCHMARK RESEARCH AS OF 15 NOVEMBER 2022.



# PLAYERS ATTENDING THE WORLD CUP GROUPED BY THE LEAGUES WHERE THEY PLAY

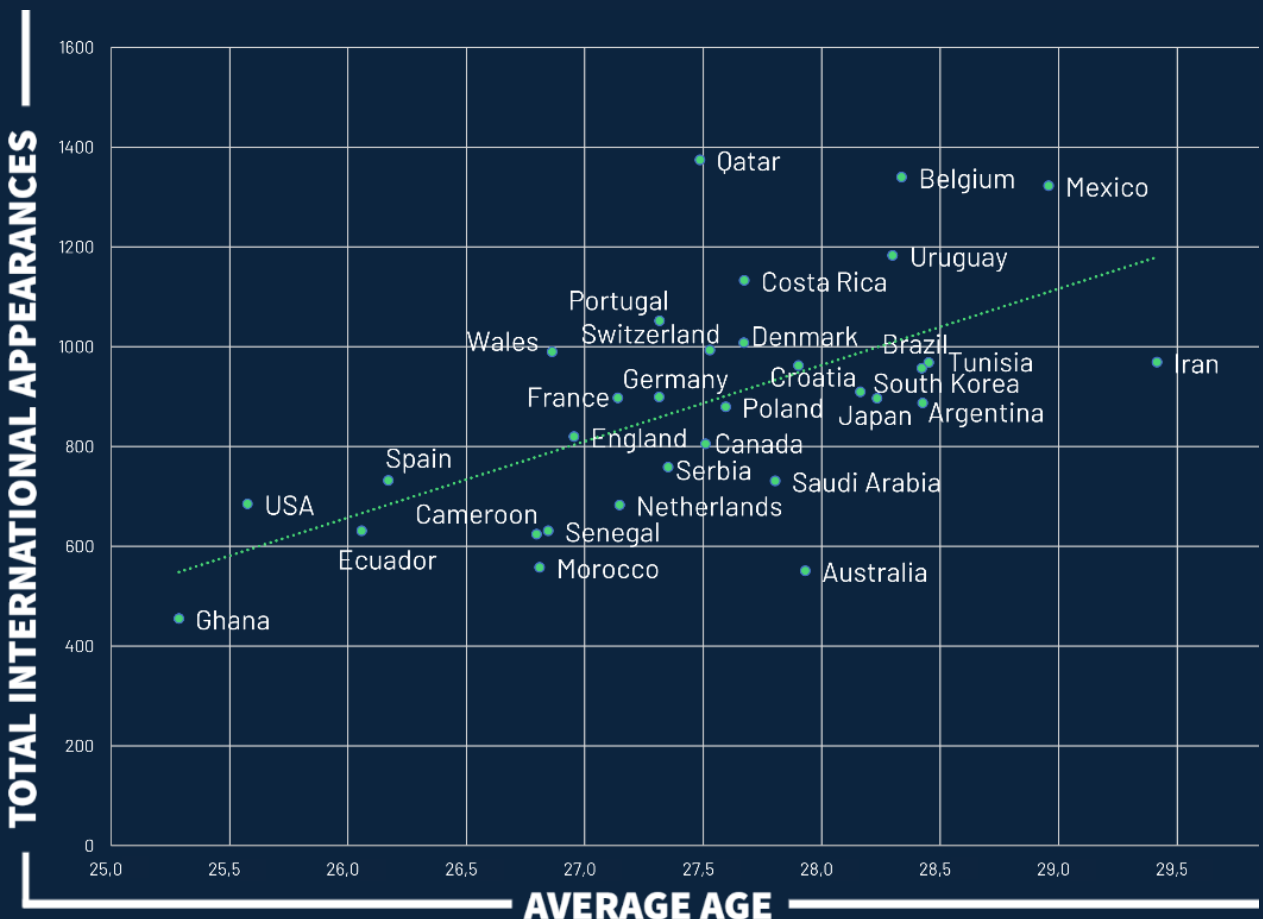
The dominance of top European clubs is perhaps even more evident when grouping players by the leagues in which they play. **Out of 831 total squad members registered for the World Cup, the “Big Five” European leagues are sending 418 players, slightly more than 50% of the total, and also more than what all the other domestic leagues around the globe are sending.** Narrowing our focus to an even more narrow list of elite clubs, the 16 remaining UEFA Champions League clubs have sent 151 players, or 18% of World Cup totals. While the number of players signals significant strength, what truly demonstrates the might of top European football is the aggregate market value of the players they are sending. The Big Five leagues combined for more than EUR 12 billion worth of players, a sum approximately 12 times as much as that of the other global domestic leagues.



# QATAR'S SQUAD HAS RECORDED THE MOST INTERNATIONAL APPEARANCES

The age and experience of the squads appearing are also intriguing characteristics for analysis. Qatar rank first in total international appearances, led by Hassan Al-Haydos, who has represented his nation at the highest level 169 times. Belgium and Mexico are the other two teams with the most experience, as Eden Hazard prepares for his third World Cup, and Andrés Guardado gets set for his fifth.

On the other end of the spectrum are Ghana, Australia, and Morocco – the squads with the least experience; Ghana is also the youngest squad in terms of average age in the entire tournament.



SOURCE: FOOTBALL BENCHMARK RESEARCH AS OF 15 NOVEMBER 2022.

# HAALAND, SALAH, AND MANY MORE TO MISS THE WORLD CUP

## TOP 10 MOST VALUABLE PLAYERS MISSING THE WORLD CUP

### BY MARKET VALUE

PLAYER	PLAYER VALUE
1. ERLING HAALAND	€165.6M
2. MOHAMED SALAH	€95.0M
3. LUIS DÍAZ	€89.2M
4. JADON SANCHO	€88.1M
5. FLORIAN WIRTZ	€82.6M
6. NICOLÒ BARELLA	€82.5M
7. REECE JAMES	€79.2M
8. DIOGO JOTA	€75.3M
9. GIANLUIGI DONNARUMMA	€70.2M
10. ALESSANDRO BASTONI	€70.0M

### BY NUMBER OF INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS

1. MOHAMED SALAH	53.5M
2. ERLING HAALAND	20.4M
3. JADON SANCHO	8.9M
4. GIANLUIGI DONNARUMMA	4.4M
5. LUIS DÍAZ	3.6M
6. REECE JAMES	2.2M
7. DIOGO JOTA	1.9M
8. NICOLÒ BARELLA	1.2M
9. ALESSANDRO BASTONI	0.7M
10. FLORIAN WIRTZ	0.3M

SOURCE: FOOTBALL BENCHMARK SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS AND FOOTBALL BENCHMARK RESEARCH (AS OF NOVEMBER 15, 2022); FOOTBALL BENCHMARK PLAYER VALUATION TOOL AS OF SEPTEMBER 2022.

Unfortunately, many players will miss making an appearance at the World Cup, either for management choices, injury, or failed qualification. According to Football Benchmark data, the top 10 players by estimated market value that will not take part in the competition all have valuations above EUR 70m. By perusing the number of their Instagram followers as an indicator of their exposure, **a combined 97 million social media followers will miss hearing from their favourite players that belong to the player value top 10.** Although they are not in the top ten most valuable players missing the World Cup, legends such as Sadio Mané and Sergio Ramos won't be there either.



# A WORLD CUP OF FIRSTS IN THE CONSTANCY OF EUROPE'S DOMINANCE

While this will be a World Cup of firsts for numerous reasons, our analysis suggests that many aspects remain constant: European clubs (especially in the Big Five leagues) are sending the most players to the tournament; European or South American national teams, meanwhile, are expected to take home the trophy, **and, despite some criticism, once the tournament will kick-off the level of excitement is expected to reach the level of past events.**





[FOOTBALLBENCHMARK.COM](https://www.footballbenchmark.com)



Photo cover by: Imago  
Main photo sources: Imago

The information contained herein is of a general nature and is not intended to address the circumstances of any particular individual or entity. Although we endeavor to provide accurate and timely information, there can be no guarantee that such information is accurate as of the date of publication or that it will continue to be accurate in the future and no one should act on such information without appropriate professional advice after a thorough examination of the particular situation.