

Kane saves England after DR Congo scare

AFP | Los Angeles, United States

Harry Kane scored twice to rescue England from the brink of a humiliating World Cup last-32 exit on Wednesday with a come-from-behind 2-1 victory over the Democratic Republic of Congo in Atlanta.

DR Congo had threatened to pull off one of the greatest upsets in World Cup history after winger Brian Cipenga fired the lowly-ranked African qualifiers into a shock lead on seven minutes at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium.

But Kane finally equalised with a 75th-minute header and then lashed home a superb winner 11 minutes later to secure a win that sends England into a dream last-16 clash with co-hosts Mexico at the Estadio Azteca in Mexico City on Monday. "We spoke about people having hero moments, it could be anyone in the team. A save from (goalkeeper Jordan) Pickford, a block from a defender, whoever it is. We have hero moments, and for me it was the day," said a beaming Kane.

England had entered Wednesday's game with doubts swirling around their makeshift defence.



England's forward #09 Harry Kane celebrates after winning the match.

And those fears came to fruition after just seven minutes, with Cipenga finding himself in acres of space on England's vulnerable right flank before beating Pickford at the near post with a vicious strike.

England looked utterly discombobulated by the goal and although they dominated possession thereafter, they were unable to find a breakthrough.

Congo goalkeeper Lionel Mpsi pulled off a string of remarkable saves to frustrate England, who also had a strong penalty claim just before half-

time when Kane was upended in the area by Mpsi after being put through on goal.

With desperation rising, England manager Thomas Tuchel made a flurry of changes, and the introduction of new Barcelona signing Anthony Gordon on 60 minutes proved decisive.

The former Newcastle winger provided the cross that allowed Kane to nod England level in the 75th minute and then supplied the pass for Kane's 86th-minute winner.

"This team today did not accept a defeat as an outcome," England boss Tuchel said. "It makes me very proud, because they did what was necessary.

"The going got tough, and they showed up, and we got a deserved win, even if it was a late one."

World Cup Schedule (Round of 32)

Today

Time	Match	Venue
10:00 PM	Spain vs Austria	Los Angeles Stadium

Tomorrow

02:00 AM	Portugal vs Croatia	Toronto Stadium
06:00 AM	Switzerland vs Algeria	Vancouver Stadium
09:00 PM	Australia vs Egypt	Dallas Stadium

(All games in Bahrain time)



Mexico see off Ecuador to break 40-year World Cup curse

Quinones scores and sets up goal

AFP | Mexico City

Mexico turned on the style at their iconic Azteca Stadium, brushing Ecuador aside 2-0 to break their World Cup knockout curse dating back 40 years.

The round-of-32 match was delayed for an hour due to stormy weather and when it started the co-hosts flew out of the blocks, mounting wave after wave of attacks.

In a supercharged atmosphere, Julian Quinones gave Mexico a deserved lead midway through the first half with a thunderous strike and then turned provider for Raul Jimenez.

Ecuador desperately needed to wrest back the momentum after the break but struggled to shift through the gears, with the home side largely in control. Mexico had not won a World Cup knockout game since 1986, when they last hosted the tournament.

The win means they are now unbeaten in 10 World Cup games at the Azteca and will fancy their chances against England or the Democratic Republic of Congo in the round of 16.

Mexico were one of only three teams in the group phase to win all three of their matches, alongside France and Argentina, and did not concede a single goal.



Mexico's forward #09 Raul Jimenez celebrates scoring his team's second goal with forward #16 Julian Quinones

Ecuador finished third in their group, scoring just two goals.

Gilberto Mora, 17, was named in the starting line-up for Mexico, becoming the second-youngest player to start a knockout match at the World Cup finals behind Pele in 1958.

The home team started on the front foot, refusing to allow a shell-shocked Ecuador to settle.

Jimenez wasted a glorious headed chance in the seventh minute and Mora flashed just wide.

At the other end, John Yeboah muscled his way into the penalty area in a rare foray forward for the visitors, clipping the out-

side of the near post.

Mexico took the lead in the 22nd minute when Saudi-based Quinones received the ball from Roberto Alvarado and tore down the left before driving into the box and unleashing an unstoppable shot past goalkeeper Hernan Galindez, raising the roof.

The first hydration break failed to change the script and Mexico doubled their lead after half an hour when Quinones fed Fulham striker Jimenez, who fired a rocket into the top corner.

Raul Rangel produced a fine save to keep out another Yeboah effort as Ecuador got a foothold

in the match but chances kept flowing at the other end.

Ecuador coach Sebastian Becacece made a number of changes after the break in an effort to find a way back into the match.

But Mexico, largely content to sit back, still looked the more threatening team, with Cesar Montes twice going close.

Ecuador substitute Kevin Rodriguez poked just wide with just over a quarter of an hour but their chances ran out.

Piero Hincapie was sent off in stoppage time after covering his mouth during a confrontation with an opposition player to cap a miserable night for Ecuador.

Mexico will hope the Azteca, which hosted the World Cup final in 1970 and 1986, works its magic again in the last 16 on Sunday.

From the quarter-finals onwards, all the matches at the World Cup will be taking place in the United States.

Sinner sinks Borges to step up Wimbledon title defence



Italy's Jannik Sinner in action

AFP | London

Jannik Sinner moved into the Wimbledon third round as the defending champion held his nerve in a pair of tie-breaks to beat Portugal's Nuno Borges yesterday.

Once again, Sinner wasn't at his best but the world number one did just enough to advance 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/2), 6-4 on Centre Court.

The 24-year-old Italian had narrowly avoided an embarrassing first-round exit when he fought back from two sets to one down to beat Serbian Miomir Kecmanovic on Monday.

Sinner was left bloodied against Kecmanovic by an awkward fall that injured his right foot.

The four-time Grand Slam champion did not appear impeded by that blow on his return to action in the second round, but he struggled to impose himself against the spirited world number 48.

"The second set was very tough. First couple of sets we

were serving very well. These matches, where you don't have a lot of control, I'm happy to win," Sinner said.

"I didn't do a lot of practice because the first match was very long.

"There's a couple of things I need to improve. I felt some moments where I still need to get back to this rhythm."

Sinner ended Carlos Alcaraz's two-year reign as Wimbledon champion with a brilliant final victory over the Spaniard last year.

He is still some way from those lofty heights heading into his third-round tie against American world number 81 Jenson Brooksby.

Having opted not to play a Wimbledon warm-up event for the first time in his career, Sinner has looked a little underprepared at the start of his title defence.

Sinner hasn't reached a Grand Slam final this year and blew a two-set lead in a shock French Open second-round defeat against Juan Manuel Cerundolo in June.

Sabalenka sets up third-round clash with Ostapenko



Aryna Sabalenka in action

AFP | London

World number one Aryna Sabalenka battled through a tough second set against American McCartney Kessler to reach the Wimbledon third round.

The four-time Grand Slam champion, who has reached 14 successive major quarter-finals, won 6-1, 7-6 (11/9) on Court One to secure a last-32 meeting with former French Open winner Jelena Ostapenko.

"That was a true battle and I'm super happy that I was

able to stay in that second set to get into that tie-break," said Sabalenka.

"She really tested me and I'm super happy to pass the test."

Sabalenka has never won Wimbledon, losing in the semi-finals on each of her past three visits.

Kessler missed two set points when serving for the second set at 5-3 ahead, before Sabalenka fought back and took a tie-break, in which her 57th-ranked opponentsaw another two set points come and go.