

# Belgium late show floors Senegal

Dramatic extra-time comeback seals Belgium's place in the World Cup round of 16

● **Belgium beat Senegal 3-2**

● **Senegal led by two goals**

● **Lukaku sparked late comeback**

● **Tielemans scored twice**

AFP | Seattle

**Y**ouri Tielemans scored the latest winner in World Cup history as Belgium mounted an incredible comeback from two goals down to beat Senegal 3-2 and qualify for the last 16 of the World Cup.

Senegal appeared on course for a first win in a World Cup knockout match since their 2002 debut after taking a 2-0 lead through strikes from Habib Diarra and Ismaila Sarr in Seattle.

However, Belgium forced extra time as Romelu Lukaku and Tielemans scored in the final five minutes, before the Aston Villa midfielder completed a remarkable turnaround by converting a penalty in the 125th minute.

"In football, anything is always possible as long as you believe



Youri Tielemans #8 of Belgium celebrates with teammate Nicolas Raskin #23 after scoring his team's third goal from the penalty spot

in it," said Belgium coach Rudi Garcia.

"We're out -- it hurts. We must congratulate the team, who gave it their all, but unfortunately we weren't able to hold on to our two-goal lead," rued Senegal coach Pape Thiaw.

A defeat would surely have signalled the end of the road for the last remnants of Belgium's golden generation -- Lukaku, Kevin De Bruyne and perhaps Thibaut

Courtois -- but instead they live to fight another day.

After a 5-1 win over New Zealand that clinched top spot for Belgium in Group G, Garcia named an unchanged side with Atalanta forward Charles De Ketelaere leading the attack and Lukaku on the bench.

Thiaw made three changes to the Senegal side that thrashed Iraq 5-0, which allowed them to squeak through as the last of

the eight best third-place teams.

Pape Gueye started after scoring twice as a substitute in that match, while Pathe Ciss and Everton winger Iliman Ndiaye came into the line-up.

Senegal nearly went ahead through the in-form Sarr, who hit the post after Courtois inadvertently diverted a cross into the Crystal Palace forward's path.

The Lions of Teranga did take



**Belgium scored twice in the final five minutes of normal time to erase a two-goal deficit before completing the comeback with a penalty deep into extra time**

the lead, however, when Sarr's header from Sadio Mane's cross came back off the same post, with Diarra reacting quickest to turn the rebound home.

Belgium's best chance of the half fell to Maxim De Cuyper, whose curling effort from outside the area drew an outstanding full-stretch save from Mory Diaw.

Diaw was again filling in for Edouard Mendy, who returned to Saudi Arabia for tests on a knee injury he suffered in Senegal's second game of the tournament.

#### Belgian fightback

Belgium unsurprisingly turned to their all-time leading scorer at the interval, with

Lukaku having already proven his value as a substitute against Egypt and New Zealand in the group phase.

But Belgium fell further behind six minutes into the second half when Sarr chested down Moussa Niakhate's long pass over the defence before firing an emphatic finish beyond Courtois.

De Bruyne and Jeremy Doku were hauled off as Belgium appeared to be heading out, but Lukaku -- limited to barely an hour's play with Napoli this season -- grabbed his team a lifeline in the 86th minute.

He swept home from a Thomas Meunier cross and, just three minutes later, Belgium were level. Diaw failed to deal with Leandro Trossard's delivery into the box and Tielemans held off two defenders to nod into an empty net.

Belgium substitute Dodi Lukebaki clipped the crossbar late in the second period of extra time as the match appeared destined for a penalty shootout.

But there was one final twist when Tielemans went down under a challenge from Lamine Camara, prompting referee Said Martinez to award a penalty after a VAR review.

Tielemans stepped up and dispatched with aplomb to cap a stunning fightback and break Senegalese hearts.

## Balogun scores and sees red as US beat Bosnia 2-0

Malik Tillman's late free kick seals a historic knockout victory for the Americans

AFP | Santa Clara

**F**olarin Balogun scored and was sent off as the United States beat Bosnia and Herzegovina 2-0 to reach the last 16 of the World Cup.

The co-hosts' first World Cup knockout victory in nearly a quarter-century -- and only their second ever -- sets up a clash with Belgium in Seattle on Monday.

Balogun's goal on the stroke of half-time had sent the California crowd into delirium, with some 30 million Americans expected to be watching the blockbuster clash across the nation.

But the striker saw red as VAR intervened following a nasty clash with Bosnia's Tarik Muharemovic. But even with the US forced into a 10-man rearguard action, Malik Tillman curled in a free kick to secure the win.

US supporters had flocked into the San Francisco Bay Area stadium in festive mood, their exuberant confidence summed up by the traditional pre-match fighter jet flyover in the bright California skies.

Bosnia's tactics were made clear from the kickoff -- an immediate long ball -- while the US defense quickly camped out on the halfway line, always pushing forward.

Still, Bosnia had the best early chances. Forty-year-old captain Edin Dzeko held up a launched pass from his goalkeeper and laid it off for Ermedin Demirovic, who shot right at Matt Freese.



Folarin Balogun #20 of the United States scores his team's first goal

The US 'keeper made another good save moments later from a Kerim Alajbegovic corner, which threatened to swing straight into his net.

But the US pressure began to tell. Balogun had a decent penalty shout for a clumsy Amar Dedic tackle waved away. Soon after the American striker had the ball in the net, but was offside from Weston McKennie's smart pass.

Those near misses enlivened an increasingly anxious crowd. But their nerves were soon reduced, as Balogun scored in the 45th minute.

US captain Tim Ream had in-

tercepted a Bosnian goal kick, swiftly playing it to Tillman. His through ball deflected into the path of Balogun, who tucked it under the goalkeeper.

Impressive holding midfielder Tyler Adams nearly created a second before the break. He found Sergino Dest, who headed back to Balogun. His shot from the six-yard line clipped the crossbar on its way over.

#### Historic win

Just five minutes into the second half Dzeko limped off. Bosnian coach Sergej Barbarez made a triple substitution.

A younger, more mobile front

line featuring Wisconsin-born, US-raised Esmir Bajraktarevic immediately pressed higher and faster.

In the 64th minute, Balogun was shown a straight red after VAR review, harshly judged to have stamped on the back of Muharemovic's foot.

With the crowd stunned, Demirovic spurned a chance to add insult to injury, shooting straight at Freese from a dangerous position.

US coach Mauricio Pochettino used the hydration break to gather his squad in a tight huddle on the field, rallying his outnumbered troops to hold out



**After Balogun's dismissal, coach Mauricio Pochettino gathered his players into a huddle during the hydration break before the 10-man side successfully protected their lead**

for the game's final phase.

Despite his team suddenly being on the backfoot, Christian Pulisic put the ball in the net, but was comfortably offside.

And in the 82nd minute, the US won a free kick on the edge of the Bosnian box from a pull on Dest. Tillman curled it over the wall and to the right of Nikola Vasilj, whose fingertips could not keep it out.

The Americans rode out a nervy 10 minutes of stoppage time, substitute Ermin Mahmic's shot flashing inches wide of the far post.

But they ultimately holding out for a clean sheet and a historic win, keeping alive their World Cup journey on home soil, as "USA" chants and "Take Me Home, Country Roads" reverberated around the giant arena that hosted this year's Super Bowl.

## West Ham's Fernandes joins Spurs



Mateus Fernandes

AFP | London

**W**est Ham's Portugal midfielder Mateus Fernandes has joined Spurs after the Hammers' relegation from the Premier League, the clubs announced yesterday.

Fernandes, 21, arrived in London in 2025 and his move across the capital city is worth a reported club record fee of 85 million pounds (\$113.4 million).

The most Spurs had paid for a player before Fernandes was the 52 million pounds they spent on Netherlands attacker Xavi Simons from RB Leipzig last August.

The one-time international arrives as Roberto de Zerbi attempts to re-build a Spurs squad who narrowly avoided dropping to the Championship last season.

"Spurs is a massive club and the head coach was a key part of why I have decided to join," Fernandes said.