



# Switzerland beat Colombia on penalties to reach World Cup quarter-finals

Switzerland advance to face defending champions Argentina

● **Switzerland win 4-3 on penalties**

● **Match ended goalless**

● **Kobel saves decisive spot-kick**

AFP | Vancouver

Switzerland beat Colombia 4-3 on penalties after a goalless draw to set up a World Cup quarter-final with defending champions Argentina.

The two teams cancelled each other out in the final game of the last 16 -- the game in Vancouver was also the last at the 2026 tournament to be played outside the United States.

Colombia's Davinson Sanchez hit the bar in a nerve-wracking shootout but Switzerland defender Manuel Akanji ballooned his effort over, meaning it was all square again.

Swiss goalkeeper Gregor Kobel then regained the initiative for his team, brilliantly saving Cucho Hernandez's effort.

After two more successful kicks, Ruben Vargas stepped up to take the decisive penalty and made no mistake.

It is the first time Switzerland have reached the last eight of the World Cup since they hosted the tournament in 1954.



Leandro Campaz #21 of Colombia shoots and misses a chance against Gregor Kobel #1 of Switzerland

Victorious captain Granit Xhaka said the current generation of players was a "special one".

"We, the more experienced players, are being pushed by the younger ones, and at the same time we have to lead by example every single day and every single game," Xhaka told Swiss broadcaster SRF.

"Of course, we try to pass on our experience, but above all the

mentality that, even as a small nation, anything is possible at this level, in elite football.

"From the coaching staff to the last player, we can all be proud of what we've achieved."

## Tight match

Colombia, once again backed by thousands of passionate fans, had conceded just once in their four games before Tuesday's match and the Swiss had also

proved difficult to break down.

The first action of note came in the 21st minute when Kobel was forced into a flying save to keep out Gustavo Puerta's curling effort from the edge of the penalty area.

Murat Yakin's Switzerland stepped up a gear immediately after the first hydration break, with Camilo Vargas beating away a shot from Fabian Rieder before denying Dan Ndoye.

72

years have passed since Switzerland last reached the World Cup quarter-finals, matching their 1954 achievement

But the match was goalless at half-time, with two well-matched teams struggling for inspiration.

The Swiss started the second half on the front foot but Colombia also had their moments, with Luis Suarez lashing wastefully wide.

Both coaches made multiple changes in the second half but again struggled to create meaningful openings, with Colombia's star winger Luis Diaz kept quiet.

Ndoye flashed a shot across goal in stoppage time but nobody was able to get on the end of it and the match was 0-0 at the end of normal time.

## World Cup Schedule (Quarterfinals)

Time	Match	Venue
11:00 PM	France vs Morocco	Boston Stadium

(All games in Bahrain time)



# Mbappe revels in captain's role for France at World Cup

● **France captain eyes third World Cup title**

● **Star leads quarter-final clash with Morocco**

● **Mbappe becomes all-time France top scorer**

AFP | Foxborough

Kylian Mbappe's critics might say he has not always been a true team player but the France superstar is revelling in his role as captain at this World Cup, as he seeks to lead Les Bleus to a third title.

The 27-year-old had a difficult end to last season with Real Madrid, being booed by supporters who questioned his commitment to the cause as he nursed an injury.

He has always been a prolific finisher, but his tally of 86 goals in two seasons was not enough to deliver a major title for Real.

Similarly, he left Paris Saint-Germain in 2024 as their all-time top scorer but without winning the Champions League. It might not entirely be a coincidence that they have gone on to be champions of Europe two years running since his departure.

But it is his relationship with the World Cup that has really shaped Mbappe, and he has looked like a man on a mission

over the last month in the United States.

Mbappe has so far netted seven goals in his team's five games before Thursday's quarter-final against Morocco at the Gillette Stadium near Boston.

The breakthrough star in the France team that won the 2018 World Cup, and scorer of a hat-trick in the epic 2022 final defeat by Argentina, Mbappe recently became his country's all-time top scorer.

He is currently chasing down Lionel Messi in his attempts to win the golden boot at this World Cup, and become the tournament's all-time leading marksman. But he keeps insisting those personal goals are not his priority.

"I know people talk about the stats. I watch the TV too. But my only focus is on helping the team and getting us back here on July 19," he said after the 3-0 win over Sweden in the last 32 at the MetLife Stadium, the venue for the final.

Mbappe also scored the winner against Paraguay in the last 16 in Philadelphia, a game in which he caught the eye for his attitude in the face of opposition aggression.

He was a regular target of Paraguayan provocation but stood up to it. At the end of a

bad-tempered match, he refused to shake the hand of Paraguay goalkeeper Orlando Gyllas he led his teammates to celebrate with the French fans.

## 'On a mission'

When he was racially abused by a Paraguayan politician online after that

game, he responded, calling Celeste Amarilla "despicable" and "unworthy" of her position.

Mbappe, who was defended by the French President, Emmanuel Macron, and FIFA chief Gianni Infantino, will not be fazed by that as he remains focused purely on World Cup glory. "You make him out to be a dictator but people have an image of Kylian which is really not the reality," coach Didier Deschamps said.

"He is an extraordinary player and when he talks he does so in the name of the whole team." There were doubts as to whether Deschamps had made the right decision when he gave Mbappe the armband in March 2023, following the retirement of Hugo Lloris.

Antoine Griezmann was the other candidate and a more senior player, but Deschamps felt Mbappe could handle the responsibility.

Euro 2024 did not go entirely to plan, with Mbappe breaking his nose in the team's opening

7

goals have been scored by Mbappe across France's five games at this World Cup

game. He scored only one goal, from a penalty, and France never performed to their best despite reaching the semi-finals.

His commitment to the international cause was called into question in the months after that tournament, as Deschamps left Mbappe out of a couple of squads just as he was settling into life in Madrid.

But he came back with a bang as the World Cup approached, scoring eight goals in seven international appearances between June last year and this March.

He has a close relationship with Deschamps, as shown when he celebrated his first goal against Sweden by running across to embrace the coach whose mother died only a few days earlier.

"He is on a mission and has been since the first day," said Deschamps, who is counting on Mbappe to lead France to a third straight World Cup final before the coach steps down after 14 years at the helm.

# Belgium's Onana ruled out for rest of World Cup with ACL injury



Amadou Onana lies on the pitch after being injured  
AFP | Brussels

Belgium's Amadou Onana will miss the remainder of the World Cup after suffering a torn anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in his right knee during his country's last-16 win over co-hosts the United States, the Belgian Football Federation announced on Tuesday.

The 24-year-old Aston Villa midfielder was forced off early in Belgium's 4-1 victory over the US in Seattle on Monday.

"Unfortunately, the medical examinations have confirmed that Amadou has suffered a rupture of the anterior cruciate ligament. This is devastating news, both for him personally and for the team," Belgium team doctor Brahim Hacene said in a statement.