



Mbappe strikes again as France beat Morocco to reach World Cup semi-finals

France keep third straight knockout clean sheet as Morocco fell short despite strong support

● **Mbappe scores opener after penalty miss**

● **Dembele adds second goal for victory**

AFP | Foxborough

Kylian Mbappe recovered from having a first-half penalty saved to score a magnificent opener that set France on their way to a 2-0 win over Morocco in their World Cup quarter-final showdown on Thursday.

Mbappe's weak spot-kick was easily saved by Moroccan goalkeeper Yassine Bounou, but he made up for that by producing a brilliant curling finish to make it 1-0 on the hour mark.

That was Mbappe's eighth goal at the tournament, moving him level again with Lionel Messi in the race for the Golden Boot, before he came off late on and watched the final minutes with an ice pack around his right ankle.

Before exiting, he set up Ousmane Dembele to run through and settle the contest watched by 63,811 at the Gillette Stadium, as France knocked Morocco out, just as they did in 2022.

Their 2-0 win four years ago

in Qatar came in the semi-finals, and this time the victory for Les Bleus takes them through to the last four. They will face Spain or Belgium in Dallas next Tuesday.

France are looking to reach a third consecutive World Cup final in their last tournament before long-serving coach Didier Deschamps stands down.

Win-

ners in

2018

and run-

ners up

in 2022, it

has felt like

they have eased

through to another

semi-final and

they were

too strong for

a Moroccan

team lacking

firepower in

the absence of

the injured Ismael

Saibari.

Mbappe

is one of

the greatest

goal-scorers of his

generation, and the

World Cup

continues to bring the

very best out of him.

After netting braces

in the group-stage

wins over Senegal and

Iraq, as well as the

last-32 defeat

France's forward #10 Kylian Mbappe celebrates scoring

of Sweden, he got the only goal from the penalty spot against Paraguay in the last round.

He has now scored 20 goals in 20 World Cup appearances, within one goal of Messi's overall tournament record of 21.

More could have been expected from Morocco, who had more of the crowd behind them but lacked a cutting edge in

attack as France kept a third clean sheet in as many knockout games.

Dembele also on target

Nevertheless, they have plenty of exciting young talents -- including former France Under-21 captain Ayyoub Bouaddi in their midfield -- and will surely be a force to be reckoned

20

goals have been scored by Mbappe across his 20 World Cup appearances

with again when they co-host the next World Cup in 2030 alongside Spain and Portugal.

On Thursday they were just the latest team to find containing Mbappe at a World Cup to be an impossible task.

The Real Madrid star provoked the penalty as he was scythed down in the area by Nussair Mazraoui after a quick breakaway in the 25th minute.

Argentinian referee Facundo Tello immediately pointed to the spot, although a review was needed to rule out a foul on

Lucas Digne crashed a shot onto the top of the bar from distance as the opening half ended goalless, but France got the reward for their pressure 15 minutes after the restart.

Doue slipped the ball to Mbappe just outside the area, and he controlled before using Issa Diop as a screen to direct a superb strike into the net.

France's all-time leading marksman now has 64 international goals from 104 appearances. His lay-off in the 66th minute allowed Dembele to advance on goal and curl a shot low into the same corner, a hand from Bounou proving unable to make it 2-0.

Dembele is the reigning Ballon d'Or and now has five goals at this World Cup, but Mbappe continues to hog the limelight.

Moroccan captain Achraf Hakimi in the build-up.

Maybe the wait got to Mbappe, whose kick was uncharacteristically weak and easily stopped. It was a reminder that he remains human, just like Messi who has squandered two penalties at this World Cup.

The excellent Bounou frequently kept France at bay in the first half, notably tipping a Desire Doue shot around the post after Bouaddi was robbed of the ball.

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England chase glory as Haaland allows Norway to dream

AFP | Miami

England's quest to end 60 years of World Cup pain comes up against Norway's scoring machine Erling Haaland in a Miami showdown for a place in the semi-finals on Saturday.

After overcoming high altitude and a fervent home crowd in Mexico City to progress to the last eight in an all-time World Cup classic, an England side boasting the in-form Harry Kane and Jude Bellingham are favourites to reach the semis in south Florida.

However, the Three Lions' defensive deficiencies will be severely tested by Haaland, who put Brazil to the sword in the last 16 and has seven goals in his first four World Cup appearances.

Haaland, who was born in England and plays his club football for Manchester City, insisted there was no pressure on his side.

"I think there's some clear favourites out there, England's one of them," he told reporters.

"I think all of you should put



every single pressure on the English lads."

In their first World Cup for 28

World Cup Schedule (Quarter-final)

Tomorrow

Time	Match	Venue
12:00 AM	Norway vs England	Miami Stadium
04:00 AM	Argentina vs Switzerland	Kansas City Stadium

(All games in Bahrain time)

years, the nation of just over five million people have far exceeded expectations.

Even before setting off for the United States, a team photo of the squad dressed up as Vikings in front of longships went viral.

The theme has persisted with each victory celebrated by their fans performing a Viking row, from the stands of the United States to Times Square in New York, to the streets of Oslo. Haaland was the man to beat the drum to conduct that row after his brilliant late double sent Brazil home. That made history as Norway reached the quarter-finals for the first time.

"Playing against Brazil was kind of crazy for us Norwegians and to win against Brazil and then go and play England in the quarter-finals in the World Cup in the USA is quite special," added Haaland.

"I think if you watch the scenes back in Norway, this is not normal for Norway to be, so it's super special."

Quansah banned

England are in their third consecutive quarter-final, but needed their own momentous moment to get there.

Thomas Tuchel's men survived a second-half onslaught when down to 10 men in Mexico City for a 3-2 win that will go down as arguably England's greatest World Cup win on foreign soil.

Although their long wait for major tournament glory persists, this generation of England players have come as close as any since 1966 to end that drought.

They have lost in the last two finals of the European Championship and also reached a semi-final and quarter-final in the last two World Cups.

"We've been here a few times," said England winger Bukayo Saka. "But the best team on the day is going to be the team that wins, so we're aware of that and that's where our focus is."

Bellingham and Kane have

been as pivotal to England's progress as Haaland for Norway.

The Real Madrid midfielder and Bayern Munich striker have combined for 10 of their side's 11 goals so far.

England's issues have been at the other end of the field and are exacerbated by a two-match ban

handed to Jarell Quansah for his red card in the last 16.

Quansah has deputised out of position at right-back in the absence of Reece James, who remains a doubt for Saturday due to a hamstring injury.

Tuchel could be forced into a defensive reshuffle with Ezri Konsam moving to right-back and John Stones coming in at centre-back.

Another challenging factor for both sides will be the extreme heat and humidity forecast for Miami.

England have so far escaped energy-sapping conditions with three of their five matches played in the rain, while the other two were in air-conditioned stadiums in Atlanta and Dallas.

Jude Bellingham and Harry Kane

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