

# France qualify for World Cup as Portugal, Norway forced to wait

Les Bleus secure their place as Portugal loses and Cristiano Ronaldo is sent off

● France beat Ukraine 4-0 to qualify

● Portugal lose 2-0 to Republic of Ireland

● Norway and Italy's race goes to final day

AFP | Paris

France reached the 2026 World Cup with a 4-0 win over Ukraine on Thursday as the country marked the 10th anniversary of the 2015 Paris attacks, while Portugal were made to wait after losing 2-0 in Dublin as Cristiano Ronaldo saw red.

Norway must also be patient after Italy struck late in Moldova to prevent them from stamping their ticket to next year's tournament in North America.

France's victory came in an emotionally-charged Parc des Princes, which observed a minute's silence to mark the 10th anniversary of the attacks in and around Paris on Friday, November 13, 2015.

Most of the 130 people killed in the attacks lost their lives at the Bataclan concert hall in the capital, where they were attending a concert.

But one person died near the Stade de France in the northern Paris suburb of Saint-Denis, where multiple explosions took place as suicide bombers attempted to enter the ground during a friendly between Les Bleus and Germany.

Didier Deschamps was the coach then and remains in charge now, with the approaching World Cup to be his final tournament before stepping down.

"Given the context tonight, we are pleased to have put some smiles on faces by securing qualification," said Deschamps.

"We have fulfilled our objective. I understand that it is seen as normal that France qualify but we still had to go out and do it, so we are very proud."

Second-half goals by Kylian Mbappe and Michael Olise, as well as a first international strike for Hugo Ekiti, gave Deschamps' side an unassailable six-point lead over both Iceland, who beat Azerbaijan 2-0, and Ukraine at the top of Group D.

While France can now look



Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo reacts during the match

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DIDIER DESCHAMPS

forward to the draw for the finals, which takes place in Washington, DC, on December 5, Ukraine and Iceland meet each other on Sunday in a shoot-out to decide who continues on into the play-offs next March.

Portugal would have secured top spot in Group F with a win against the Republic of Ireland.

But a Ronaldo red card for violent conduct when trailing 2-0 to a Troy Parrott brace meant Portugal remain on 10 points, three ahead of the Irish and two

ahead of Hungary, who won 1-0 against Armenia.

Portugal's final group match will be against Armenia in Porto on Sunday, while Hungary welcome Ireland in what will likely be a clash for second place.

Parrott headed the hosts into the lead on 17 minutes, before doubling up on the stroke of half-time.

Ireland then dug in deep to frustrate their fancied opponents, whose task effectively became insurmountable when 40-year-old Ronaldo swung an elbow into Dara O'Shea's back and was dismissed after a VAR review.

Ronaldo, the men's all-time top goalscorer in international football, could potentially miss the start of the World Cup if Portugal qualify, depending on the length of his ban.

"We didn't manage (to win), we're sad and disappointed with what we did here today," Portugal midfielder Bernardo Silva said.

Despite romping to an Erling Haaland-inspired 4-1 win over Estonia, Norway will also have to wait until the final matchday to wrap up their berth at the World Cup.

Forwards Alexander Sorloth and Haaland both netted doubles in the space of 12 second-half minutes earlier in Oslo, but the Norwegians had to wait on Italy's later match against Moldova before they could be certain of topping Group I.

The Moldovans looked to have done enough to send Stale Solbakken's side to the finals, until Gianluca Mancini struck on 88 minutes to send Italy on the way to a victory that kept their automatic qualification hopes alive.

Inter Milan forward Pio Esposito doubled Italy's lead in

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The match was played on the eve of the 10th anniversary of the 2015 Paris attacks, where one person was killed near the Stade de France during a France-Germany friendly

injury time to ensure Sunday's meeting between the Italians and Norway at the San Siro will be a blockbuster.

Three points separate the pair but Norway hold an imposing head-to-head record over Italy after cruising to a 3-0 win in their encounter in June.

"It wasn't easy... We also knew that Norway had won, so it was a bit of a strange atmosphere," Sandro Tonali told Sky Sport Italia.

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