

Mokoena Penalty Earns South Africa Draw Against Czechia

Teboho Mokoena's late penalty rescued a vital point for South Africa as they drew 1-1 with the Czech Republic on Thursday, keeping both sides' hopes of reaching the World Cup knockout stage alive.

Michal Sadílek had given the Czech Republic an early lead and they appeared on course for a crucial victory that would have strengthened their bid for the last 32. However, Mokoena's composed spot-kick seven minutes from time ensured the points were shared in an evenly contested Group A encounter.

The result leaves both teams on one point, two behind co-hosts Mexico and South Korea, who meet later in the group. South Africa will next face South Korea, while the Czech Republic must take

on Mexico at the Estadio Azteca in a decisive final round of fixtures.

Czech Republic midfielder Sadílek opened the scoring



Teboho Mokoena celebrates after his 83rd-minute penalty earns South Africa a hard-fought draw against Czechia

in the sixth minute, finishing calmly after Adam Hložek's cross was cushioned into his path by Alexandr Sojka.

The early goal came after Patrik Schick missed a clear chance inside the opening minute, heading wide when unmarked.

Despite their advantage, the Czechs were unable to extend their lead, with South Africa growing into the game under coach Hugo Broos. The South Africans, competing in their fourth World Cup appearance, are still seeking their first-ever progression beyond the group stage.

Broos said his side had shown enough quality to deserve more from the match and insisted

their performance gave them belief heading into the decisive final fixture.

"We played a very good game," he said. "If we can make another performance like today, we have a chance to go to the second round."

South Africa's equaliser came after Thapelo Maseko's shot struck the arm of Pavel Šulc, with referee Tori Penso awarding the penalty following a VAR review. Mokoena stepped up to convert confidently, scoring South Africa's first World Cup goal in 16 years.

Both teams pushed for a winner late on, with Matej Kováč denying Relebohile Mofokeng, but neither could find a decisive breakthrough in front of a crowd that largely backed South Africa in Atlanta.

Subs send Swiss to World Cup rout of Bosnia-Herzegovina

Super subs Johan Manzambi and Ruben Vargas fired Switzerland to a 4-1 win over 10-man Bosnia-Herzegovina in a late rush of goals in Los Angeles on Thursday.

The result gave the Swiss a strong chance of reaching the knockout round as one of the top two teams in Group B.

They had been controlling a largely tepid stalemate at the SoFi Stadium until coach Murat Yakin rang the changes in the 72nd minute, bringing on the pair of forwards who immediately transformed the game.

Bosnia's attempted clearance from a Vargas cross felt to Manzambi who volleyed home with his first touch of the game, before Manzambi turned creator for a Vargas finish.

In between those goals, Bosnia had Tarik Muharemović sent off for a desperate sliding tackle on Breel Embolo, who was clear through on goal.

The afternoon got worse for Bosnia as Vargas then assisted



Switzerland's midfielder #10 Granit Xhaka takes a penalty kick and scores his team's fourth goal

another finish for 20-year-old Freiburg star Manzambi.

Ermin Mamhić pulled back a spectacular consolation from a corner, but a Granit Xhaka penalty in stoppage time sealed the rout.

Switzerland go top of Group B on four points, three clear of the other teams, with Canada and Qatar playing later Thursday.

England's new era begins with convincing Croatia win

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

England sent out a clear message of intent at the FIFA World Cup 2026, producing a dominant second-half showing to defeat Croatia 4-2 in an absorbing Group L encounter.

The Three Lions were forced to respond twice in the opening period after a Harry Kane double, but second-half strikes from Jude Bellingham and Marcus Rashford ultimately secured a deserved victory.

England made a shaky start at Dallas Stadium but were gifted a ninth-minute penalty when Noni Madueke went down following contact from Luka Modrić as the Croatian captain attempted to clear the danger.

Kane took responsibility from the spot but saw his hesitant effort kept out by Dominik Livaković. However, with Joško Gvardiol encroaching and the goalkeeper adjudged to have strayed off his line, the kick was ordered to be retaken. The England skipper made no mistake the second time around.

Croatia, though, responded in spectacular fashion to draw level nine minutes before half-time, as Martin Baturina brilliantly curled Petar Šućur's cutback into the top-left corner, beyond the reach of Jordan Pickford.

England reclaimed the advantage six minutes later when Kane climbed highest in the box to power home Declan Rice's corner. Yet Croatia responded once more deep into first-half stoppage time, as Petar Musa volleyed Ivan Perišić's deft headed assist into the net to send the sides into the break level at 2-2.

The match continued at a re-



Captain Harry Kane fires England into the lead from the penalty spot

lentless pace after the restart, and England struck again just 85 seconds into the second half. Jude Bellingham latched onto Elliott Anderson's raking pass down the right and drove into the box before rifling a finish in off the left post.

Croatia still carried a threat in the closing stages, but England added a fourth five minutes from time through substitutes Bukayo Saka and Marcus Rashford. Rashford cut inside Josip Stanišić before calmly rolling the ball into the bottom-right corner.

England's last major tournament triumph remains the 1966 World Cup, and under German head coach Thomas Tuchel they will be determined to end that long wait for glory.

They next face Ghana on Tuesday at 11pm in Boston, while Croatia meet Panama a day later in Toronto. All times are Bahrain time.

Tuchel team talk transformed 'nervy' England

AFP | Arlington

Captain Harry Kane credited Thomas Tuchel with delivering a half-time team talk that propelled England to their 4-2 win over Croatia. Asked how they had pulled away after the break, Kane said of the coach Tuchel: "He gave a great speech to be honest, especially the way we conceded that second goal just before the half-time."

"He just told us to let the shackles off, calm down, what are we scared of? Let's just go."

"The way we conceded that second goal, it's not the team we want to be, dropping deep, waiting and conceding an-

nyway. "He kind of just said, what's the worst that can happen? We lose a match, first group game, we get on with it, we move on, let's just go and show the world who we can be."

"And I think we've done exactly that second half." The German Tuchel, tasked with taking England to their first major trophy since 1966, said he thought his side were nervy and passive in the first half.

Tuchel called the first 45 minutes "complicated".

"I felt a bit nervy," he told ITV. "The decisions we took were basically, we chose to go safe and play too many balls

backwards.

"We struggled to find the rhythm, didn't have the confidence to go through the gaps and find the rhythm in some short passes and then the switch of play."

Tuchel was much happier after the break as England ran out ultimately fairly comfortable winners.

"I love the reaction of the players into the second half, the second half was excellent," he said.

"We deserved to win, but it was emotional, a lot of emotions involved and it took us a while to get going, but we did get going, and that's positive."

Luis Diaz shines as Colombia beat Uzbekistan in World Cup group game



Colombia's forward #07 Luis Diaz controls the ball past Uzbekistan's defender #02 Abdukodir Khusanov and Colombia's midfielder #21 Jaminton Campaz

AFP | Mexico City

Colombia beat World Cup debutants Uzbekistan 3-1 in their opening Group K game on Wednesday thanks to an inspired performance from Luis Diaz at the Estadio Azteca.

The Bayern Munich forward provided an assist, a goal and also hit the post as the Colombians resisted a battling performance from the Uzbeks in front of 80,824 spectators in Mexico City.

Diaz's superb lofted pass allowed Daniel Muñoz to volley in after 40 minutes, but

Abbosbek Fayzullaev equalized with his nation's maiden World Cup goal as he reacted first to head in a rebound from Eldor Shomurodov's saved volley.

Diaz put Colombia back into the lead as he fired a shot that Uzbek goalkeeper Utkir Yusupov should have stopped.

In the dying seconds Jaminton Campaz made it three for Colombia with a fine header.

The win put Colombia top of a group that also features Portugal and the Democratic Republic of Congo, who drew 1-1 earlier.

World Cup Schedule

Today			
Time	Match	Group	Venue
10:00 PM	USA vs Australia	D	Seattle Stadium
Tomorrow			
1:00 AM	Scotland vs Morocco	C	Boston Stadium
3:30 AM	Brazil vs Haiti	C	Philadelphia Stadium
6:00 AM	Türkiye vs Paraguay	D	San Francisco Bay Area Stadium
8:00 PM	Netherlands vs Sweden	F	Houston Stadium
11:00 PM	Germany vs Ivory Coast	E	Toronto Stadium

(All games in Bahrain time)