

Co-hosts Mexico **first team** into knockout rounds

Luis Romo capitalises on goalkeeping error to secure qualification

● Mexico beat South Korea 1-0

AFP | Guadalajara

Co-hosts Mexico became the first team to reach the knockout rounds of the World Cup with a 1-0 win over South Korea at a delirious Guadalajara Stadium on Thursday.

Luis Romo's goal just after half-time put Mexico through as Group A winners with a match to go following a goalkeeping clanger.

In contrast, Mexico stopper Raul Rangel made a superb double save in the dying minutes to preserve their lead.

Finishing top keeps Mexico at home in the last 32 with a game against a third-placed team in Mexico City.

South Korea are second on three points, with the Czech Republic and South Africa also still alive on one.

Both teams went into the clash in front of a passionate home crowd knowing that victory would guarantee progress in double-quick time.

Mexico coach Javier Aguirre made three changes from the side that beat South Africa 2-0



Mexico's midfielder #07 Luis Romo shoots and scores his team's first goal

a week ago to open the tournament.

His counterpart Hong Myung-bo made just one alteration, largely keeping faith with the team that fought back to defeat the Czech Republic 2-1.

South Korea skipper Son Heung-min had the first sniff at goal after 15 minutes, looping the ball over Rangel only for Edson Alva-

rez to prevent it going in with a bicycle kick on the line.

Los Angeles FC attacker Son was belatedly flagged for offside although replays suggested it was a close call.

Julian Quinones, who scored the opening goal of the tournament, then forced South Korea goalkeeper Kim Seung-gyu into a good save from a header, rais-

ing the decibels.

The rest of an uneventful half belonged to South Korea as they stroked the ball around at will, without ever creating a clear chance, but they did succeed in silencing the home support.

Jeers rang out at half-time from the Mexico fans.

The hosts started the second



Mexico's winning goal came after South Korea goalkeeper Kim Seung-gyu collided with his own teammate while attempting to claim a high ball, leaving Luis Romo with an open net

period with far more intent, and five minutes in they went ahead when the goalkeeper Kim came for a high ball and clattered into his own player, spilling it straight to Romo.

He just needed to poke the ball first time into an unguarded net, triggering pandemonium.

Hong surprisingly hauled off the veteran talisman Son before the hour and threw on Hwang Hee-chan of Wolverhampton Wanderers.

But the Koreans were mostly toothless going forward until the final few minutes, when Guadalajara native Rangel came to Mexico's rescue.

Real Madrid move 'huge step' up, says Cucurella



Marc Cucurella speaks during a press conference

AFP | Chattanooga

Marc Cucurella said the chance to sign for Real Madrid was too good to turn down after leaving Chelsea to join Jose Mourinho's rebuild of the club.

Cucurella's 55 million euro (\$63.8 million) move to the 15-time European champions was confirmed just hours before he took to the field for Spain's opening World Cup match against Cape Verde on Monday.

The 27-year-old won the Club World Cup and Conference League during four years with Chelsea, but the Blues failed to qualify for Europe next season after finishing 10th in the Premier League.

"I didn't expect to leave Chelsea, but in life you sometimes have to start new chapters you didn't see coming," Cucurella told a press conference at Spain's World Cup training base on Thursday.

Canada announce themselves with **six-goal** rout

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Co-hosts Canada produced a historic performance at the FIFA World Cup 2026 in Vancouver, thrashing Qatar 6-0 to secure their first-ever victory at the tournament. The emphatic result moved the Canadians to the brink of qualification for the knockout stages from Group B.

Jonathan David stole the headlines with a superb hat-trick, while Cyle Larin and Nathan Saliba also found the net. An own goal from Mohamed Manai completed an emphatic win in a chaotic encounter that saw Qatar reduced to nine men.

Canada made a bright start and took the lead in the 16th minute. David's volley was parried by goalkeeper Mahmoud Abunada, but the rebound fell kindly to Larin, who reacted quickest to slot home his second goal of the tournament.

The Canadians doubled their advantage in the 29th minute when David met a cross with a right-footed volley that flew into the back of the net, ending a year-long wait for a goal from open play.

Qatar's task became even more difficult four minutes later when Homan Ahmed was shown a red card for a challenge on Tajon Buchanan. The referee initially awarded a penalty and a yellow card, before a VAR review over-



Jonathan David celebrates after opening his hat-trick against Qatar

turned the decision to a free kick outside the box and upgraded the booking to a dismissal.

Canada capitalised on their numerical advantage just before halftime. Following a scramble in the penalty area, a shot struck the crossbar before falling kindly for David, who converted from close range to make it 3-0.

The second half was overshadowed by a serious injury to Ismael Koné, who was stretchered off after a challenge from Assim Madibo. The Qatar midfielder was shown a straight red card, reducing his side to nine men and handing Canada an even greater advantage.

Substitute Nathan Saliba added a fourth in the 64th minute with a well-taken free kick. Eleven minutes later, Canada's relentless pressure forced another breakthrough when Mohamed Manai inadvertently turned the ball into his own net.

David completed a memorable evening in stoppage time, securing his hat-trick and becoming only the second player, after Lionel Messi, to score three goals in a match at this year's World Cup.

The victory leaves Canada in a strong position in Group B after opening their campaign with a 1-1 draw against Bosnia-Herze-

Bench 'heard bone snap': Marsch on Kone horror injury

AFP | Vancouver

Canada coach Jesse Marsch said midfielder Ismael Kone was in hospital with a suspected broken leg after the horrific injury that marred the game.

Marsch told reporters after the game the Canadian bench had realised the severity of Kone's injury immediately.

"It was right in front of us, and everyone could hear the bone snap," Marsch said.

"I haven't spoken to Ismael yet, but he's at the hospital. He will prepare for a surgery. I'm going to go see him after this press conference. We'll see exactly what we decide to do for him.

"Everybody's a little shaken by the whole experience because of the nature of the injury, and also because Ismael is a big part of the heart of our team. It will be a big loss for us."

Kone, 24, who plays for Italian Serie A side Sassuolo, waved to the crowd as he was stretchered off the field while



Canada coach Jesse Marsch embraces Ismael Kone as he is stretchered off the field

receiving oxygen.

"He was waving to the crowd and almost making everybody else feel at ease with the fact that he's injured and that's an incredible statement about Ismael as a person," Marsch said.

"Everybody was crushed when it happened, but we had to find a way to stay focused, we knew that Ismael wanted us to finish the job. There's a

lot of thoughts that go through our heads right now, we're all thinking about him, but we're all very proud of what we are."

Marsch though was unimpressed with the reaction of Qatar's bench, who had protested vociferously when Madibo was given a red card for the challenge on Kone after initially being shown a yellow.

govina. Switzerland's 4-1 victory over Bosnia and Herzegovina earlier in the day means the Canadians are now firm-

ly on course for a place in the last 32.

For Qatar, the heavy defeat marked another disappointing

chapter in their World Cup history as they continue their search for a first victory on football's biggest stage.