



Netherlands dismantle Sweden 5-1 to move top of Group F

Hussain Almaskati

The Netherlands produced a dominant attacking display at Houston Stadium yesterday, sweeping aside Sweden 5-1 in their FIFA World Cup 2026 Group F Matchday 2 clash.

Ronald Koeman's side arrived under pressure after a chaotic 2-2 draw with Japan in their opening game, but responded in emphatic fashion to take control of the group. Sweden, coached by Graham Potter, came into the match off a 5-1 win over Tunisia, yet were undone by a relentless Dutch performance that underlined their attacking depth.

The breakthrough arrived in the 5th minute, when Brian Brobbey opened the scoring after winning an aerial duel and combining in a slick move with Tijjani Reijnders and Cody Ga-



Sweden became the first nation in World Cup history to win their opening match by a four-goal margin, only to lose their next game by the same margin



Brobbey is swarmed by Dutch teammates after scoring the opening goal

kpo. Gakpo then whipped a low cross into the box, which Brobbey converted from close range.

Brobbey struck again in the 17th minute to double the lead. Donyell Malen released Dumfries on the right, and the full-

back delivered a first-time ball into the box, allowing Brobbey to finish clinically and make it 2-0.

Sweden briefly thought they had a route back just before half-time when Gustaf Lagerbielke headed in from a set-piece, but the goal was ruled out for off-

side, leaving the Dutch firmly in control at the break.

The second half began in the same manner. Within minutes of the restart, Dumfries provided his second assist of the match, setting up Cody Gakpo for a simple finish at the back post to

make it 3-0.

Seven minutes later, Gakpo completed his brace. Substitute Crycencio Summerville drove forward and slipped a pass into the forward, who took a touch inside before drilling a low effort into the bottom corner to extend

the lead to 4-0.

Sweden did manage a consolation in the 59th minute through Anthony Elanga, who finished neatly after Alexander Isak split the Dutch defence with a precise through ball from midfield.

However, Oranje had the final say. In the 89th minute, Summerville capped a standout performance by driving through the Swedish defence and firing into the bottom corner to complete the 5-1 scoreline.

The result sends the Netherlands top of Group F heading into the final round of fixtures. Koeman's side will face Tunisia in Kansas City on Friday at 2am (Bahrain time), knowing that even a point will secure qualification for the Round of 32.

Meanwhile, the Swedes face a tougher path as they prepare to meet Japan in their final group match.

Belgium look to rediscover form against resilient Iran



Lukaku carries the ball back to the centre circle after Belgium's equaliser in their Group G opener

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Belgium continue their 2026 FIFA World Cup campaign tonight when they face Iran in Group G at the Los Angeles Stadium, with kick-off scheduled for 10pm Bahrain time.

With all four teams level on one point after the opening round of fixtures, victory could prove crucial in the race for a

place in the knockout stages, while defeat would leave either side facing an uphill task.

Belgium began their tournament with a disappointing 1-1 draw against Egypt. After falling behind to a stunning strike from Emam Ashour, the Red Devils were forced to rely on substitute Romelu Lukaku, whose presence helped force an own goal from Mohamed Hany and salvage a point. The result

World Cup Schedule

Today

Time	Match	Group	Venue
7:00 PM	Spain vs Saudi Arabia	H	Atlanta Stadium
10:00 PM	Belgium vs Iran	G	Los Angeles Stadium

Tomorrow

8:00 PM	Argentina vs Austria	J	Dallas Stadium
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(All games in Bahrain time)



Iranian players celebrate after a spirited comeback in their opening match

extended Belgium's winless run at the World Cup to three matches, a stark contrast to the side that won 11 of its previous 13 games in the competition. Despite their status as one of Europe's leading nations, they suffered a group-stage exit at Qatar 2022 before falling in the last 16 at Euro 2024.

Now under head coach Rudi Garcia, Belgium remain a formidable side. Ranked ninth in the world by FIFA, they topped their

qualifying group with 18 points from a possible 24, scoring 29 goals and conceding just seven.

Iran, meanwhile, arrive in Los Angeles after a spirited 2-2 draw with New Zealand. Amir Ghalenoei's side twice came from behind through goals from Ramin Rezaeian and Mohammad Mohebi to earn a valuable point in their opening match.

While Iran have qualified for six World Cups, they have yet to progress beyond the group

stage. Their tournament record stands at three wins from 19 matches, while they have lost seven of their 10 previous World Cup meetings with European opposition.

The build-up to the tournament has also presented challenges. Due to ongoing geopolitical tensions, Iran are required to return to their base in Tijuana after matches played in

the United States, creating an unusual travel schedule during the competition. This will be the first senior international meeting between Belgium and Iran, with the Europeans entering as favourites on paper. Iran, however, showed plenty of character in their opening draw with New Zealand and will believe they can cause problems once again.

Spain under pressure ahead of Saudi Arabia clash

Hussain Almaskati
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Spain continue their 2026 FIFA World Cup campaign tonight when they take on Saudi Arabia in Group H at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, with kick-off scheduled for 7pm Bahrain time.

After being held to a frustrating goalless draw by Cape Verde on Matchday 1, La Roja know they cannot afford another slip-up if they are to take control of their qualification hopes. Despite dominating possession and creating chances, Luis de la Fuente's side were repeatedly denied by an inspired Josimar Dias in the Cape Verde goal.



Saud Al Amri celebrates after putting Saudi Arabia ahead in their opening World Cup match

The result left Group H delicately poised, with all four teams level on one point after the opening round of fixtures.

Spain will still draw confidence from the quality at their disposal. Rodri anchors a midfield that also features the crea-



Lamine Yamal during Spain's Group H opener

tivity of Pedri and Fabián Ruiz, while exciting wingers Lamine Yamal and Nico Williams offer the pace and direct running capable of unsettling even the most

organised defences.

Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, arrive buoyed by a disciplined 1-1 draw against Uruguay that briefly lifted them to the top

of the group standings. Under Georgios Donis, who succeeded Hervé Renard earlier this year, the Green Falcons have shown encouraging resilience and organisation.

Much of their attacking threat continues to come through captain Salem Al-Dawsari, whose influence will be vital if the Gulf side are to trouble one of the tournament favourites. However, containing Spain's relentless possession game for long periods presents a very different challenge. History also favours the two-time world champions. Spain have won all three previous meetings between the sides, including a 1-0 victory at the 2006 World Cup.