



Brazil focus on Neymar

Reuters | Sochi

Brazil take on Costa Rica today needing a win to avoid equaling their worst ever World Cup run, but the focus of their concern is once again not on the team but on one individual - Neymar.

The Paris St Germain player loves the limelight but the attention ahead of today's game in St Petersburg has come for all the wrong reasons.

Neymar was criticised for his performance in Brazil's 1-1 draw with Switzerland in their opener last weekend.

He was hunted down mercilessly by the Swiss, drawing 10 of Brazil's 19 fouls, as many as some entire teams.

But he was also below par and showed little sign of the form that made him the world's most expensive footballer when Paris St Germain signed him from Barcelona last August.

Worse, many fans thought he was playing for himself rather than his country.

Neymar limped out of Tuesday's training session with a sore ankle, but he is expected to be fit for what could be Brazil's fourth World Cup match without a win, an unwanted streak that would equal their poorest such run ever, recorded in 1974-1978.

Their opponents in St Petersburg are also desperate for points after they lost their opener to Serbia.

Brazil **2**

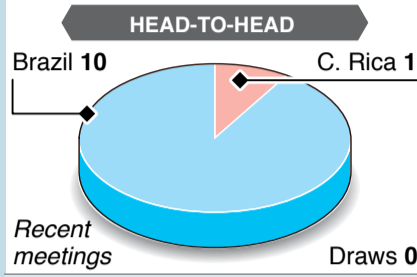
Possible line-ups: Alisson, Danilo, Silva, Miranda, Marcelo, Paulinho, Casemiro, Willian, Coutinho, Neymar, Jesus

Fred is a doubt for Brazil coming into this game, but the main concern is with their star player. Neymar limped out of training with a suspected ankle problem earlier this week, but is expected to play today. Thiago Silva has named Thiago Silva as captain for today's match in a continuation of their long-standing policy of rotating the team leadership.

FIFA rank

23 **Costa Rica**

BRA 1-1 SUI Match 1 CRC 0-1 SRB



2015	Costa Rica	0-1	Brazil
2011	Costa Rica	0-1	Brazil

WORLD CUP RECORD

70	Wins	5
18	Draws	4
17	Losses	7
2.11	Goals for*	1.06
0.98	Goals against*	1.50

Factbox

- » Brazil will have been left reeling from their 1-1 draw with Switzerland on Sunday and will hope to improve when they meet Costa Rica in Friday's early kick off.
- » Costa Rica, too, need to up the ante when they face Brazil. However, they face an uphill struggle in their bid to progress to the next round of the World Cup after their 1-0 loss to Serbia.
- » One would expect Brazil to improve when they take on Costa Rica and get their World Cup up and running here.

Possible line-ups: Navas, Acosta, Gonzalez, Duarte, Gamboa, Calvo, Borges, Guzman, Ruiz, Bolanos, Urena

Costa Rica head coach Óscar Ramírez may make one change to the XI that started the 1-0 loss to Serbia. Christian Bolanos could come in for Johan Venegas in attack after a bright showing from the bench.



BRYAN RUIZ

Stats

- » Costa Rica's only previous World Cup victory against South American opposition came in the 2014 tournament (3-1 vs Uruguay). They'd lost their previous three against CONMEBOL sides beforehand.
- » Philippe Coutinho's goal against Switzerland was his 11th for Brazil - five of those have come from outside the box.
- » Costa Rica lost their first match against Serbia, ending a five-game unbeaten run at the World Cup finals - they haven't lost back to back World Cup games since June 2006, when they lost four in a row.
- » Brazil are winless in three World Cup matches (D1 L2), their worst run since June 1978, when they went four matches without a win.
- » Against Serbia, striker Marco Ureña had just 14 touches in 67 minutes for Costa Rica, with three of those in the opposition box - his replacement, Joel Campbell, had 24 touches and four in the opposition box.
- » Brazil conceded from the first shot on target they faced at the 2018 World Cup - from their last 13 shots on target faced at the World Cup, they have conceded 10 goals.

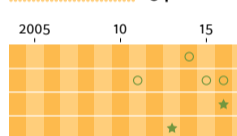
NEYMAR JR.

INTERNATIONAL CAREER RECORD

GOALS 54
MATCHES 84

GOALS
MATCHES

Paris SG
France
1.75 m / 68 kg

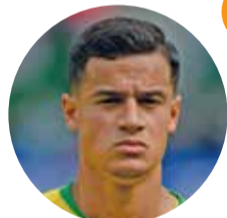


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It is going to be a difficult game as are all games in the World Cup. They are a good team. We saw the game against Serbia, and it was only decided through a dead ball situation. This is another opportunity for us

PHILIPPE COUTINHO



It's the same team that is going to start that stated against Switzerland. We want to win, it's a World Cup, but the coach is not going to play with the players' health. It's too big a risk

BRAZIL COACH TITE



Whenever the ball came to Neymar, he slowed the game down, irrespective of whether it was the right thing to do or not. Because he knows he has the talent to change games, you get the impression Neymar wants to be the one to do that something special

FORMER FRANCE DEFENDER MARCEL DESAILLY

Iceland step into the heat for Nigeria showdown

Reuters | Volgograd, Russia

Iceland will try not to melt in the fierce heat of Volgograd when they take on Nigeria in only their second ever World Cup match today after impressively holding twice champions Argentina to a draw at the weekend. World Cup debutantes Iceland are

dreaming of the knockout stage and writing a new chapter in one of the most outstanding stories of international football in recent years.

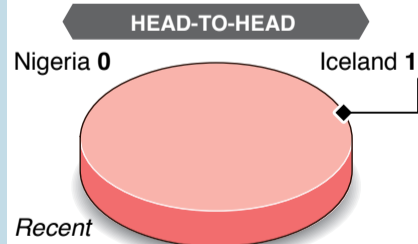
In their way stand not only Nigeria, who are desperate for a win after losing their opening game 2-0 to Croatia, but also the challenge of searing temperatures in the southern Russian city.

Nigeria



48 **FIFA rank** **22**

NGR 0-2 CRO Match 1 ISL 1-1 ARG



1981	Iceland	3-0	Nigeria
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WORLD CUP RECORD

5	Wins	0
3	Draws	1
11	Losses	0
1.05	Goals for*	1.00
1.47	Goals against*	1.00

Factbox

- » Nigeria need a positive result here to improve their chances of securing a last-16 spot here.
- » With Argentina out of the way, they'll be looking to secure a first ever World Cup win.
- » Indeed, Iceland could secure a narrow victory this one.



Iceland



Gylfi Sigurdsson

Possible line-ups: Halldorsson, Saevarsson, Arnason, Sigurdsson, Magnusson, Gudmundsson, Gunnarsson, Hallfredsson, Bjarnason, Sigurdsson, Finnbogason.

Johann Berg Gudmundsson is out with a calf problem, with Rurik Gislason expected to deputise.

Other than that, head coach Heimur Hallgrímsson will likely see no reason to tinker with the XI that started the 1-1 draw with Argentina.

EID Mubarak

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