

## Netherlands reach last 16



Cody Gakpo of the Netherlands, left, celebrates after scoring

AFP

Cody Gakpo scored again as the Netherlands booked their place in the World Cup last 16 as group winners with a straightforward 2-0 victory over the hosts yesterday.

The Netherlands, needing just a point to be sure of progressing, put one foot in the next round inside the first half-hour as Gakpo scored for a third straight group game.

Frenkie de Jong added another in the 49th minute as the Dutch cruised through in a flat atmosphere.

Louis van Gaal's Dutch side ended with seven points at the top of Group A, while Senegal joined them in the knockout phase as runners-up after beating Ecuador 2-1.

The Oranje will next take on the second-placed team from Group B for a quarter-final spot on Saturday.

# Koulibaly sinks Ecuador to fire Senegal into knockouts

African champions progress to the knockout phase courtesy of captain Kalidou Koulibaly's second-half winner

## Senegal reach the last 16 for the first time since 2002

AFP

Kalidou Koulibaly sent Senegal into the World Cup knockouts for just the second time in their history with the winner in yesterday's dramatic 2-1 win over Ecuador.

The Netherlands' dominant victory in the other match meant only a win would see Senegal through to the knockouts from Group A, while Ecuador would have progressed with a draw.

Senegal opened the scoring through Ismaila Sarr's penalty late in the first half, but despite managing to keep Ecuador captain Enner Valencia quiet throughout, Brighton's Moises Caicedo levelled in the 67th minute before Koulibaly sent his team through and Ecuador



Senegal's Kalidou Koulibaly, right, celebrates with teammates scoring his side's second goal

home.

Senegal manager Aliou Cisse promised before the game his experienced side "would not overthink" the occasion and it was the Africans who opened the game furiously, with Everton's Idrissa Gana Gueye lashing the ball just wide of an open goal

after only three minutes.

Less than a minute later, Ecuador goalkeeper Hernan Galindez needed to bail out his side's high backline, sliding in to stifle a counter well outside his box.

On the 10 minute mark, Senegal's Boulaye Dia found himself one-on-one with Galindez, but

## FIFA World Cup results

Ecuador	1 - 2	Senegal
Iran	0 - 1	USA
Wales	0 - 3	England

## Today's matches

Australia v Denmark	6PM
Tunisia v France	6PM
Poland v Argentina	10PM
Saudi Arabia v Mexico	10PM

he cut the ball just wide of the post.

Seemingly sparked into life by Senegal's fierce opening, Ecuador pushed forward and won a free-kick 30 metres from goal, with the South Americans taking the opportunity for a rare breather before Valencia slammed the ball into the wall.

After the furious opening exchanges, both sides began to settle and the first half looked set to end goalless before Ecuador defender Piero Hincapie clattered into Sarr, giving referee

Clement Turpin no choice but to point to the spot.

Sarr stepped up and coolly dispatched a fine spot-kick past Galindez, maintaining eye contact with the keeper as the ball went in.

Ecuador started the second half fresher and more determined, perhaps reassured that the Netherlands' dominance meant they only needed a draw to go through.

From a free-kick, defender Felix Torres rose high to head the ball on to Caicedo, who was waiting at the far post and slammed the ball home.

Senegal struck back immediately and in almost identical fashion, with Koulibaly lurking unmarked at the far post following a free-kick which was deflected into his path by Hincapie.

Coming into the match on a yellow card, Gueye picked up a second-half booking and will miss Senegal's last-16 game against the winners of Group B.

## My first goal could have been Ronaldo's, says Portugal's Fernandes

AFP | London

Portugal midfielder Bruno Fernandes said a goal awarded to him - the first of his two in a 2-0 win over Uruguay on Monday - might in fact have been scored by Cristiano Ronaldo, but what mattered was securing Portugal's place in the World Cup's next phase.

Fernandes was named as the scorer of Portugal's opening goal in the 54th minute when his cross seemed to sail just past the head of Ronaldo and dropped into the net with Uruguayan goalkeeper Sergio Rochet confused by Ronaldo's leap.

Portugal's captain appeared to be claiming the goal with his



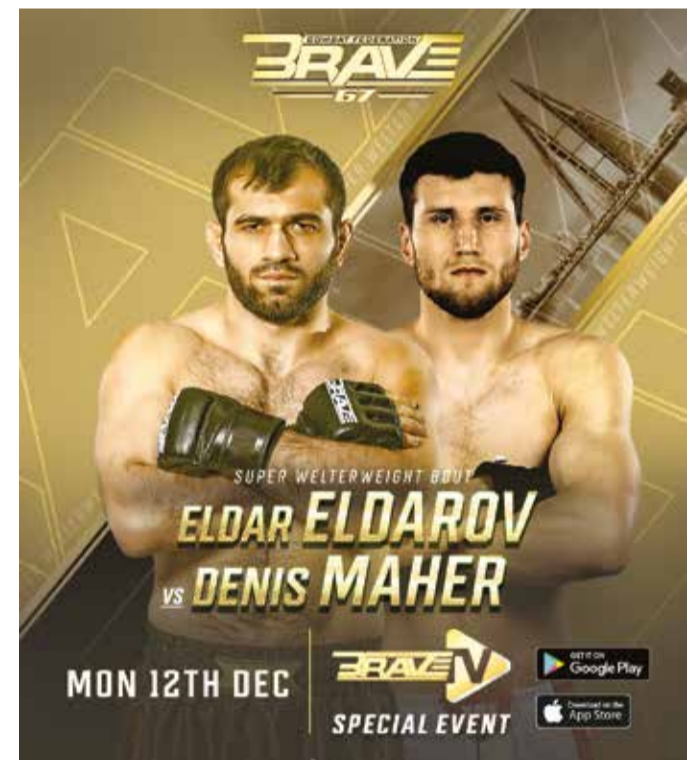
Cristiano Ronaldo and Bruno Fernandes celebrate after a goal celebrations and was then seen announced as the official scorer laughing when Fernandes was on the stadium's loudspeakers.

“The feeling I had was that Cristiano touched the ball. I was passing the ball to him. What matters is that we're going through to the next round after playing a very tough opponent

BRUNO FERNANDES

“The feeling I had was that Cristiano touched the ball. I was passing the ball to him.” Fernandes told reporters. “What matters is that we're going through to the next round after playing a very tough opponent.”

## BRAVE CF 67 main event to feature the return of Eldarov



TDT | Manama

**BRAVE CF 67 will be a closed show featuring the top Arab athletes from around the region**

BRAVE Combat Federation will see the return of MMA royalty as Super Lightweight champion Eldar Eldarov will once again step into the cage at BRAVE CF 67, in a Super Welterweight bout for a special BRAVE TV event taking place on December 12th.

Eldarov will face Belarus' Denis Maher in the main event of the evening for the penultimate card of the 2022's BRAVE CF calendar.

Eldarov is riding an incredible 12-fight win streak, with his only loss ever coming against Khabib Nurmagomedov - more than ten years ago.

Maher - yet to be beaten in his professional career - will make his second BRAVE CF walk following his stoppage win over Kazakhstan's Rinat

Sagyntay at BRAVE CF 51.

In the co-main event, France's Yannis Ghemouri aims to continue building on his successful BRAVE CF debut when he meets Russia's Bair Shtepin in a 63-kilogram Catchweight bout.

BRAVE CF 67 will be a closed show featuring the top Arab athletes from around the region. Five days after the show, the promotion will wrap up the year with a return to Germany on December 17th for BRAVE CF 68, which takes place in association with NFC. For more information on BRAVE CF 67, visit [www.bravecf.com](http://www.bravecf.com).

## France coach Deschamps refuses to discuss holidaying Benzema

AFP

France coach Didier Deschamps refused to discuss Karim Benzema after the injured Ballon d'Or winner was spotted arriving on holiday on the Indian Ocean island of Reunion following his withdrawal from the World Cup.

The Real Madrid striker pulled out of the France squad with an injured left thigh on the eve of the tournament and departed their team hotel soon afterwards.

He arrived on Reunion, a French overseas department, early yesterday morning following rumours in Spain that he might return to training with his club.

Sources close to Benzema said the player would stay on the island for a week.

Asked about Benzema, who is still officially part of the France squad at the World Cup having not been replaced, Deschamps dismissed the question.

“You are fishing for things



France's coach Didier Deschamps (L) greets Karim Benzema (R) after being substituted during a match (file photo)

there, but these things are not on my mind. I don't know who is saying what, where or how,” the France coach said at a press conference ahead of Wednesday's final group game against Tunisia.

“I spoke to Karim after his departure, and you know what his situation is and how long he will be out for.

“I am focusing on the 24 play-

ers who are here. I'll let you talk about that and debate it if you want, but I am not going to talk about things that don't affect what we are doing here from day to day.”

The French Football Federation said Benzema would be sidelined for three weeks after he picked up the injury, technically meaning he could be fit to return for the end of the World

**YOU KNOW WHAT**

**The French Football Federation said Benzema would be sidelined for three weeks after he picked up the injury, technically meaning he could be fit to return for the end of the World Cup should France go that far**

Cup should France go that far.

France have won both Group D games so far at the tournament against Australia and Denmark and a draw against Tunisia on Wednesday will guarantee that they progress to the last 16 as winners of their section.