

= FIFA World Cup =

The FIFA World Cup , often simply called the World Cup , is an international association football competition contested by the senior men 's national teams of the members of Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) , the sport 's global governing body . The championship has been awarded every four years since the inaugural tournament in 1930 , except in 1942 and 1946 when it was not held because of the Second World War . The current champion is Germany , which won its fourth title at the 2014 tournament in Brazil .

The current format of the competition involves a qualification phase , which currently takes place over the preceding three years , to determine which teams qualify for the tournament phase , which is often called the World Cup Finals . 32 teams , including the automatically qualifying host nation (s) , compete in the tournament phase for the title at venues within the host nation (s) over a period of about a month .

The 20 World Cup tournaments have been won by eight different national teams . Brazil have won five times , and they are the only team to have played in every tournament . The other World Cup winners are Germany and Italy , with four titles each ; Argentina and inaugural winners Uruguay , with two titles each ; and England , France and Spain , with one title each .

The World Cup is the most widely viewed and followed sporting event in the world , exceeding even the Olympic Games ; the cumulative audience of all matches of the 2006 FIFA World Cup was estimated to be 26 @. @ 29 billion with an estimated 715 @. @ 1 million people watching the final match , a ninth of the entire population of the planet .

= = History = =

= = = Previous international competitions = = =

The world 's first international football match was a challenge match played in Glasgow in 1872 between Scotland and England , which ended in a 0 ? 0 draw . The first international tournament , the inaugural edition of the British Home Championship , took place in 1884 . As football grew in popularity in other parts of the world at the turn of the 20th century , it was held as a demonstration sport with no medals awarded at the 1900 and 1904 Summer Olympics (however , the IOC has retroactively upgraded their status to official events) , and at the 1906 Intercalated Games .

After FIFA was founded in 1904 , it tried to arrange an international football tournament between nations outside the Olympic framework in Switzerland in 1906 . These were very early days for international football , and the official history of FIFA describes the competition as having been a failure .

At the 1908 Summer Olympics in London , football became an official competition . Planned by The Football Association (FA) , England 's football governing body , the event was for amateur players only and was regarded suspiciously as a show rather than a competition . Great Britain (represented by the England national amateur football team) won the gold medals . They repeated the feat in 1912 in Stockholm .

With the Olympic event continuing to be contested only between amateur teams , Sir Thomas Lipton organised the Sir Thomas Lipton Trophy tournament in Turin in 1909 . The Lipton tournament was a championship between individual clubs (not national teams) from different nations , each one of which represented an entire nation . The competition is sometimes described as The First World Cup , and featured the most prestigious professional club sides from Italy , Germany and Switzerland , but the FA of England refused to be associated with the competition and declined the offer to send a professional team . Lipton invited West Auckland , an amateur side from County Durham , to represent England instead . West Auckland won the tournament and returned in 1911 to successfully defend their title .

In 1914 , FIFA agreed to recognise the Olympic tournament as a " world football championship for amateurs " , and took responsibility for managing the event . This paved the way for the world 's first

intercontinental football competition , at the 1920 Summer Olympics , contested by Egypt and 13 European teams , and won by Belgium . Uruguay won the next two Olympic football tournaments in 1924 and 1928 . Those were also the first two open world championships , as 1924 was the start of FIFA 's professional era .

= = = World Cups before World War II = = =

Due to the success of the Olympic football tournaments , FIFA , with President Jules Rimet as the driving force , again started looking at staging its own international tournament outside of the Olympics . On 28 May 1928 , the FIFA Congress in Amsterdam decided to stage a world championship itself . With Uruguay now two @-@ time official football world champions and to celebrate their centenary of independence in 1930 , FIFA named Uruguay as the host country of the inaugural World Cup tournament .

The national associations of selected nations were invited to send a team , but the choice of Uruguay as a venue for the competition meant a long and costly trip across the Atlantic Ocean for European sides . Indeed , no European country pledged to send a team until two months before the start of the competition . Rimet eventually persuaded teams from Belgium , France , Romania , and Yugoslavia to make the trip . In total , 13 nations took part : seven from South America , four from Europe and two from North America .

The first two World Cup matches took place simultaneously on 13 July 1930 , and were won by France and USA , who defeated Mexico 4 ? 1 and Belgium 3 ? 0 respectively . The first goal in World Cup history was scored by Lucien Laurent of France . In the final , Uruguay defeated Argentina 4 ? 2 in front of a crowd of 93 @,@ 000 people in Montevideo , and in doing so became the first nation to win the World Cup .

After the creation of the World Cup , the 1932 Summer Olympics , held in Los Angeles , did not plan to include football as part of the schedule due to the low popularity of the sport in the United States , as American football had been growing in popularity . FIFA and the IOC also disagreed over the status of amateur players , and so football was dropped from the Games . Olympic football returned at the 1936 Summer Olympics , but was now overshadowed by the more prestigious World Cup .

The issues facing the early World Cup tournaments were the difficulties of intercontinental travel , and war . Few South American teams were willing to travel to Europe for the 1934 and 1938 tournaments , with Brazil the only South American team to compete in both . The 1942 and 1946 competitions , which Nazi Germany and Brazil sought to host , were cancelled due to World War II and its aftermath .

= = = World Cups after World War II = = =

The 1950 World Cup , held in Brazil , was the first to include British participants . British teams withdrew from FIFA in 1920 , partly out of unwillingness to play against the countries they had been at war with , and partly as a protest against foreign influence on football , but rejoined in 1946 following FIFA 's invitation . The tournament also saw the return of 1930 champions Uruguay , who had boycotted the previous two World Cups . Uruguay won the tournament again after defeating the host nation Brazil , in the match called " Maracanazo " (Portuguese : Maracanazo) .

In the tournaments between 1934 and 1978 , 16 teams competed in each tournament , except in 1938 , when Austria was absorbed into Germany after qualifying , leaving the tournament with 15 teams , and in 1950 , when India , Scotland , and Turkey withdrew , leaving the tournament with 13 teams . Most of the participating nations were from Europe and South America , with a small minority from North America , Africa , Asia , and Oceania . These teams were usually defeated easily by the European and South American teams . Until 1982 , the only teams from outside Europe and South America to advance out of the first round were : USA , semi @-@ finalists in 1930 ; Cuba , quarter @-@ finalists in 1938 ; North Korea , quarter @-@ finalists in 1966 ; and Mexico , quarter @-@ finalists in 1970 .

= = = Expansion to 32 teams = = =

The tournament was expanded to 24 teams in 1982 , and then to 32 in 1998 , also allowing more teams from Africa , Asia and North America to take part . Since then , teams from these regions have enjoyed more success , with several having reached the quarter @-@ finals : Mexico , quarter @-@ finalists in 1986 ; Cameroon , quarter @-@ finalists in 1990 ; South Korea , finishing in fourth place in 2002 ; Senegal , along with USA , both quarter @-@ finalists in 2002 ; Ghana , quarter @-@ finalists in 2010 ; and Costa Rica , quarter @-@ finalists in 2014 . Nevertheless , European and South American teams continue to dominate , e.g. , the quarter @-@ finalists in 1994 , 1998 , and 2006 were all from Europe or South America and so were the finalists of all tournaments so far .

Two hundred teams entered the 2002 FIFA World Cup qualification rounds ; 198 nations attempted to qualify for the 2006 FIFA World Cup , while a record 204 countries entered qualification for the 2010 FIFA World Cup .

= = = Possible expansion to 40 teams = = =

In October 2013 , Sepp Blatter spoke of guaranteeing the Caribbean Football Union 's region a position in the World Cup . In the 25 October 2013 edition of the FIFA Weekly Blatter wrote that : " From a purely sporting perspective , I would like to see globalisation finally taken seriously , and the African and Asian national associations accorded the status they deserve at the FIFA World Cup . It cannot be that the European and South American confederations lay claim to the majority of the berths at the World Cup . " Those two remarks suggested to commentators that Blatter could be putting himself forward for re @-@ election to the FIFA Presidency .

Following the magazine 's publication , Blatter 's would @-@ be opponent for the FIFA Presidency , UEFA President Michel Platini responded that he intended to extend the World Cup to 40 national associations , increasing the number of participants by eight . Platini said that he would allocate an additional berth to UEFA , two to Asia Football Confederation and Confederation of African Football , two shared between CONCACAF and CONMEBOL , and a guaranteed place for the Oceania Football Confederation . Platini was clear about why he wanted to expand the World Cup . He said : " [The World Cup is] not based on the quality of the teams because you don 't have the best 32 at the World Cup ... but it 's a good compromise It 's a political matter so why not have more Africans ? The competition is to bring all the people of all the world . If you don 't give the possibility to participate , they don 't improve . "

In 2016 FIFA president Gianni Infantino stated his support for a 40 @-@ team World Cup in 2026 .

= = = 2015 FIFA corruption case = = =

By May 2015 , the games were under a particularly dark cloud because of the 2015 FIFA corruption case , allegations and criminal charges of bribery , fraud and money laundering to corrupt the issuing of media and marketing rights (rigged bids) for FIFA games , with FIFA officials accused of taking bribes totaling more than \$ 150 million over 24 years . In late May , the U.S. Justice Department announced a 47 @-@ count indictment with charges of racketeering , wire fraud and money laundering conspiracy against 14 people . Arrests of over a dozen FIFA officials were made since that time , particularly on May 29 and December 3 .

By the end of May 2015 , a total of nine FIFA officials and five executives of sports and broadcasting markets had already been charged on corruption . At the time , FIFA president Sepp Blatter announced he would relinquish his position in February 2016 .

On 4 June 2015 Chuck Blazer while co @-@ operating with the FBI and the Swiss authorities admitted that he and the other members of FIFA 's executive committee were bribed in order to promote the South African , 1998 and 2010 World Cups .

On 10 June 2015 Swiss authorities seized computer data from the offices of Sepp Blatter .

Also , on 10 June 2015 FIFA postponed the bidding process for the 2026 FIFA World Cup in light of the allegations surrounding bribery in the awarding of the 2018 and 2022 tournaments . Then @-@ secretary general Jérôme Valcke stated , " Due to the situation , I think it 's nonsense to start any bidding process for the time being . "

On 28 October 2015 , Blatter and FIFA VP Michel Platini , a potential candidate for presidency , were suspended for 90 days ; both maintained their innocence in statements made to the news media .

On 3 December 2015 two FIFA vice @-@ presidents were arrested on suspicion of bribery in the same Zurich hotel where seven FIFA officials had been arrested in May . An additional 16 indictments by the U.S. Department of Justice were announced on the same day .

= = = Other FIFA tournaments = = =

An equivalent tournament for women 's football , the FIFA Women 's World Cup , was first held in 1991 in China . The women 's tournament is smaller in scale and profile than the men 's , but is growing ; the number of entrants for the 2007 tournament was 120 , more than double that of 1991 .

Football has been included in every Summer Olympic Games except 1896 and 1932 . Unlike many other sports , the men 's football tournament at the Olympics is not a top @-@ level tournament , and since 1992 , an under @-@ 23 tournament with each team allowed three over @-@ age players . Women 's football made its Olympic debut in 1996 , and is contested between full national sides with no age restrictions .

The FIFA Confederations Cup is a tournament held one year before the World Cup at the World Cup host nation (s) as a dress rehearsal for the upcoming World Cup . It is contested by the winners of each of the six FIFA confederation championships , along with the FIFA World Cup champion and the host country .

FIFA also organises international tournaments for youth football (FIFA U @-@ 20 World Cup , FIFA U @-@ 17 World Cup , FIFA U @-@ 20 Women 's World Cup , FIFA U @-@ 17 Women 's World Cup) , club football (FIFA Club World Cup) , and football variants such as futsal (FIFA Futsal World Cup) and beach soccer (FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup) . The latter three do not have a women 's version , although a FIFA Women 's Club World Cup is planned for 2017 .

When the U @-@ 20 Women 's World Cup is held the year before the Women 's World Cup , both tournaments are awarded in a single bidding process . The U @-@ 20 tournament serves as a dress rehearsal for the larger competition , the same role as the Confederations Cup plays in the men 's game .

= = Trophy = =

From 1930 to 1970 , the Jules Rimet Trophy was awarded to the World Cup winning team . It was originally simply known as the World Cup or Coupe du Monde , but in 1946 it was renamed after the FIFA president Jules Rimet who set up the first tournament . In 1970 , Brazil 's third victory in the tournament entitled them to keep the trophy permanently . However , the trophy was stolen in 1983 and has never been recovered , apparently melted down by the thieves .

After 1970 , a new trophy , known as the FIFA World Cup Trophy , was designed . The experts of FIFA , coming from seven countries , evaluated the 53 presented models , finally opting for the work of the Italian designer Silvio Gazzaniga . The new trophy is 36 cm (14 @.@ 2 in) high , made of solid 18 carat (75 %) gold and weighs 6 @.@ 175 kg (13 @.@ 6 lb) . The base contains two layers of semi @-@ precious malachite while the bottom side of the trophy bears the engraved year and name of each FIFA World Cup winner since 1974 . The description of the trophy by Gazzaniga was : " The lines spring out from the base , rising in spirals , stretching out to receive the world . From the remarkable dynamic tensions of the compact body of the sculpture rise the figures of two athletes at the stirring moment of victory . "

This new trophy is not awarded to the winning nation permanently . World Cup winners retain the trophy only until the post @-@ match celebration is finished . They are awarded a gold @-@ plated

replica rather than the solid gold original immediately afterwards .

Currently , all members (players , coaches , and managers) of the top three teams receive medals with an insignia of the World Cup Trophy ; winners ' (gold) , runners @-@ up ' (silver) , and third @-@ place (bronze) . In the 2002 edition , fourth @-@ place medals were awarded to hosts South Korea . Before the 1978 tournament , medals were only awarded to the eleven players on the pitch at the end of the final and the third @-@ place match . In November 2007 , FIFA announced that all members of World Cup @-@ winning squads between 1930 and 1974 were to be retroactively awarded winners ' medals .

= = Format = =

= = = Qualification = = =

Since the second World Cup in 1934 , qualifying tournaments have been held to thin the field for the final tournament . They are held within the six FIFA continental zones (Africa , Asia , North and Central America and Caribbean , South America , Oceania , and Europe) , overseen by their respective confederations . For each tournament , FIFA decides the number of places awarded to each of the continental zones beforehand , generally based on the relative strength of the confederations ' teams .

The qualification process can start as early as almost three years before the final tournament and last over a two @-@ year period . The formats of the qualification tournaments differ between confederations . Usually , one or two places are awarded to winners of intercontinental play @-@ offs . For example , the winner of the Oceanian zone and the fifth @-@ placed team from the Asian zone entered a play @-@ off for a spot in the 2010 World Cup . From the 1938 World Cup onwards , host nations receive automatic qualification to the final tournament . This right was also granted to the defending champions between 1938 and 2002 , but was withdrawn from the 2006 FIFA World Cup onward , requiring the champions to qualify . Brazil , winners in 2002 , were the first defending champions to play qualifying matches .

= = = Final tournament = = =

The current final tournament has been used since 1998 and features 32 national teams competing over the course of a month in the host nation (s) . There are two stages : the group stage followed by the knockout stage .

In the group stage , teams compete within eight groups of four teams each . Eight teams are seeded , including the hosts , with the other seeded teams selected using a formula based on the FIFA World Rankings and / or performances in recent World Cups , and drawn to separate groups . The other teams are assigned to different " pots " , usually based on geographical criteria , and teams in each pot are drawn at random to the eight groups . Since 1998 , constraints have been applied to the draw to ensure that no group contains more than two European teams or more than one team from any other confederation .

Each group plays a round @-@ robin tournament , in which each team is scheduled for three matches against other teams in the same group . This means that a total of six matches are played within a group . The last round of matches of each group is scheduled at the same time to preserve fairness among all four teams . The top two teams from each group advance to the knockout stage . Points are used to rank the teams within a group . Since 1994 , three points have been awarded for a win , one for a draw and none for a loss (before , winners received two points) .

If one considers all possible outcomes (win , draw , loss) for all six matches in a group , there are 729 (= 3⁶) different outcome combinations possible . However a certain number (207) of these combinations lead to ties between the second and third places . In such case , the ranking among these teams is determined as follows :

Greatest combined goal difference in all group matches

Greatest combined number of goals scored in all group matches

If more than one team remain level after applying the above criteria , their ranking will be determined as follows :

Greatest number of points in head @-@ to @-@ head matches among those teams

Greatest goal difference in head @-@ to @-@ head matches among those teams

Greatest number of goals scored in head @-@ to @-@ head matches among those teams

If any of the teams above remain level after applying the above criteria , their ranking will be determined by the drawing of lots

The knockout stage is a single @-@ elimination tournament in which teams play each other in one @-@ off matches , with extra time and penalty shootouts used to decide the winner if necessary . It begins with the round of 16 (or the second round) in which the winner of each group plays against the runner @-@ up of another group . This is followed by the quarter @-@ finals , the semi @-@ finals , the third @-@ place match (contested by the losing semi @-@ finalists) , and the final .

= = Hosts = =

= = = Selection process = = =

Early World Cups were given to countries at meetings of FIFA 's congress . The locations were controversial because South America and Europe were by far the two centres of strength in football and travel between them required three weeks by boat . The decision to hold the first World Cup in Uruguay , for example , led to only four European nations competing . The next two World Cups were both held in Europe . The decision to hold the second of these in France was disputed , as the South American countries understood that the location would alternate between the two continents . Both Argentina and Uruguay thus boycotted the 1938 FIFA World Cup .

Since the 1958 FIFA World Cup , to avoid future boycotts or controversy , FIFA began a pattern of alternating the hosts between the Americas and Europe , which continued until the 1998 FIFA World Cup . The 2002 FIFA World Cup , hosted jointly by South Korea and Japan , was the first one held in Asia , and the only tournament with multiple hosts . South Africa became the first African nation to host the World Cup in 2010 . The 2014 FIFA World Cup is hosted by Brazil , the first held in South America since Argentina 1978 , and is the first occasion where consecutive World Cups are held outside Europe .

The host country is now chosen in a vote by FIFA 's Executive Committee . This is done under an exhaustive ballot system . The national football association of a country desiring to host the event receives a " Hosting Agreement " from FIFA , which explains the steps and requirements that are expected from a strong bid . The bidding association also receives a form , the submission of which represents the official confirmation of the candidacy . After this , a FIFA designated group of inspectors visit the country to identify that the country meets the requirements needed to host the event and a report on the country is produced . The decision on who will host the World Cup is usually made six or seven years in advance of the tournament . However , there have been occasions where the hosts of multiple future tournaments were announced at the same time , as was the case for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups , which were awarded to Russia and Qatar respectively .

For the 2010 and 2014 World Cups , the final tournament is rotated between confederations , allowing only countries from the chosen confederation (Africa in 2010 , South America in 2014) to bid to host the tournament . The rotation policy was introduced after the controversy surrounding Germany 's victory over South Africa in the vote to host the 2006 tournament . However , the policy of continental rotation will not continue beyond 2014 , so any country , except those belonging to confederations that hosted the two preceding tournaments , can apply as hosts for World Cups starting from 2018 . This is partly to avoid a similar scenario to the bidding process for the 2014 tournament , where Brazil was the only official bidder .

= = Performances = =

Six of the eight champions have won one of their titles while playing in their own homeland , the exceptions being Brazil , who finished as runners @-@ up after losing the deciding match on home soil in 1950 and lost their semifinal against Germany in 2014 , and Spain , which reached the second round on home soil in 1982 . England (1966) and France (1998) won their only titles while playing as host nations . Uruguay (1930) , Italy (1934) and Argentina (1978) won their first titles as host nations but have gone on to win again , while Germany (1974) won their second title on home soil .

Other nations have also been successful when hosting the tournament . Switzerland (quarter @-@ finals 1954) , Sweden (runners @-@ up in 1958) , Chile (third place in 1962) , South Korea (fourth place in 2002) , and Mexico (quarter @-@ finals in 1970 and 1986) all have their best results when serving as hosts . So far , South Africa (2010) has been the only host nation to fail to advance beyond the first round .

= = Attendance = =