



Brazil talisman Neymar (L) will have to tune out all the noise surrounding his histrionics at the World Cup and focus on the task at hand against Belgium in their quarterfinal today. Meanwhile, Belgium ace Eden Hazard (R) was left scratching his head in training, probably as he wondered how to break down the Selecao's impressive defence.

PHOTO: COLLECTED/AFP






Let's Enjoy Eid

with

BRAND NEW CAR

Buy Walton Fridge, TV, AC & Get
Brand New Car along with
Thousands of Fridge, TV, AC &
Crores of Taka Cashback



Brazil aim to melt 'Golden Generation'

AFP, Kazan

Belgium coach Roberto Martinez has admitted he has no secrets as he plots to end Brazil's bid for a record-extending sixth World Cup ahead of their "dream" quarter-final in Kazan on Friday.

But the nation's "Golden Generation" have been reminded that the match against the favourites could represent the last chance for them to shine on the world stage.

"It's a dream match for our players," Martinez told Belgian press after sealing qualification for the last eight with a last-gasp 3-2 victory over Japan in the first phase of the knockout rounds.

"There won't be many secrets to the game. We have to defend as well as we can and then punish them when we have the ball.

"It's that simple, and this team is ready for that." On paper, a Belgium side containing the talents of Chelsea's Eden Hazard, Kevin De Bruyne of Manchester City and Manchester United striker Romelu Lukaku have the potential to cause a World Cup upset.

But despite sailing through the group stage, Martinez's ambitious Red Devils have their work cut out if they are to go all the way to the July 15 final in Moscow.

Third-ranked Belgium reached the quarter-finals in 2014 in Brazil but before that the last time they got so far was in 1986, when 'Little Prince' Frank Vercauteren steered them to the semi-finals before a Diego Maradona

double ended their hopes in a 2-0 defeat in Mexico.

Vercauteren said before the tournament that Russia represented "perhaps one of the last chances for this generation of players to live up to expectations, because in 2022 a lot of them won't be there".

On Monday, Belgium mounted a stirring fightback to beat Japan, with Nacer Chadli scoring the winner in the 94th minute.

Becoming the first team in 48 years to overcome a 2-0 deficit in a World Cup knockout match was a "proud" moment for Martinez, who said: "That was a test for the team and its character."

Despite scoring nine times in wins over Panama (3-0), Tunisia (5-2) and England (1-0) before the Japan game, Belgium will have to lift their game significantly to beat a

well-drilled Brazil side increasingly dancing to the tune of star forward Neymar.

Neymar signalled he had well and truly put a recent injury lay-off behind him with an incisive performance in a 2-0 win over Mexico in Samara, where he scored the opener and set up Roberto Firmino for his maiden World Cup goal.

Even more is expected from Neymar, whose pace, technique and all-round vision allied to Willian's slick movement gave Brazil another dimension.

For all Brazil's attacking riches, Belgium's biggest problem could be piercing a robust defence that has conceded just once, in their 1-1 opening draw with Switzerland.

Brazil centre-back pairing Joao Miranda and Thiago Silva have been solid and will aim to keep it that way as the five-time champions target a place in the semi-finals and a match with either France or Uruguay.

"We're progressing, that's evident," Silva said after their win over Mexico. "It was a complicated match against a dangerous side, but we were solid at the back."

Mistakes such as the ones that allowed Japan to grab a two-goal lead are sure to be punished by Neymar but it is Brazil's defence that is also catching the eye of observers.

"As a former defender, I love watching Silva and Miranda play," former France defender William Gallas said in his role as a consultant for French radio station RMC.

"They're the best centre back partnership of this World Cup."

Coach Tite confirmed that Marcelo, Brazil's crucial cog in defence and attack, would be back in the team for their quarterfinal against Belgium.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



The Daily Star

World Cup Football Quiz-2018

Round 02: Prize - 125 CC Motorcycle

Question:

Which Asian country appeared at the World Cup most number of times?

Answer:

Name:

Phone:

Address:

• It's send the coupon to The Daily Star office (64-65 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1215) directly or by post within 07 July 2018.
 • A person can participate as many times as s/he wants.
 • Photocopy of this coupon is not acceptable.
 • One lucky winner will be selected from the participants in each round, through lottery, based on correct answer.
 • While sending by post, please mention "Runner - The Daily Star World Cup Football Quiz - 2018, Round - 02" in the envelope.
 • The Daily Star and Runner hold the right to amend, modify or substitute any of the above rules under any circumstances.




www.runnerbd.com

RunnerMotorcycles

Tite backs under-fire Neymar Uruguay mum on Cavani

REUTERS, Kazan

Brazil coach Tite has defended Neymar from criticism over his histrionics on the pitch and said he was just happy to have the team's talisman playing "at his best" ahead of Friday's quarter-final against Belgium.

Neymar has scored two goals in Brazil's four matches, but he has been slammed by soccer pundits across the world for diving and rolling on the ground theatrically in Russia.

He has, however, also suffered a disproportionate number of fouls in the tournament so far, with his tally of 23 more than Uruguayan duo Luis Suarez and Edinson Cavani combined.

"I've already talked about Neymar and I've been very specific about what happened," Tite told reporters on the eve of the quarterfinal at Kazan Arena.

"You should look at the videos. All you have to do is look at the images.

"What makes me happy is to have him playing at his best. It's not just with the ball, it's not just dribbling. There are actions, there are transitions, defensive transitions and if you look, you see how much he has contributed."

Tite confirmed that his preferred

Brazil coach Tite (R) and his captain for the quarterfinal against Belgium, centre-back Miranda, attend a press conference.

PHOTO: REUTERS

left back Marcelo would return to the starting side in place of Filipe Luis after the Real Madrid defender missed the 2-0 win over Mexico through injury.

"I've spoken with both Marcelo and Filipe Luis. Filipe played very well in both matches. But now we are going with Marcelo again," said Tite.

Fernandinho is also expected to replace the suspended holding midfielder Casemiro who picked up a second yellow card against Mexico.

The dominant win over the Mexicans cemented Brazil's status as favourites to win a record-extending sixth World Cup trophy, but Tite said it would take a whole team effort to get past Roberto Martinez's Belgium and their array of attacking stars.

"It will be a great match. Both teams excel with a beautiful football. Belgium have great players and a great coach as well. I've always put them in the group of favourites [for the title].

"It's the same now."

REUTERS, Nizhny Novgorod

Edinson Cavani trained lightly on Thursday, but his coach would not be drawn on whether the Uruguay forward had recovered sufficiently from injury to have a chance of being fit for Friday's World Cup quarter-final with France.

Cavani trained gently, but apart from the rest of the squad, in a session open to media at Uruguay's base just outside Nizhny Novgorod yesterday.

"He's a very important player for us and he was really playing very well. As soon as he got injured, he has worked hard to recover and fulfil his dream," Uruguay coach Oscar Tabarez told reporters.

"I'm not going to say anything more about Cavani, I don't want to get into games... Soon you will know who will play and who will be on the bench... Forgive me that you're not going to have all the information, as I have neither about the French."

Tabarez said he had given no thought to the significance of having a referee from neighbouring Argentina, Nestor Pitana, to handle such an important inter-continental match.

"It's a coincidence. But we've never won a game with this referee. But I don't want to start these games. It doesn't really matter if he's Argentine or not. He's a good referee."

In charge of Uruguay since 2006 and through three World Cups, Tabarez had warm words for hosts Russia.

"I think this is one of the greatest World Cups organised, and in my personal experience, it's the best ever."