



The England players were in a rush during a relaxed training session in Saint Petersburg, playing what almost seems like a game of tag, ahead of their World Cup quarterfinal against giant-killers Sweden. England will be in high spirits after their first-ever World Cup penalty shootout win, but the Swedes will be looking to add to their impressive collection of scalps today. PHOTO: REUTERS

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Giant-killers in England's path

AFP, Rapino
Enthusied by an exciting young squad and a potentially kind draw against Sweden in Saturday's quarterfinal, England fans are starting to believe they can end a 52-year wait to win the World Cup.
But the obdurate Scandinavians have a habit of upsetting the odds, particularly against England, having lost just one of eight previous competitive meetings.
Confidence in England is soaring after the team ended a long wait to win a World Cup penalty shootout, squeezing past Colombia in a tense and bad-tempered last-16 tie in Moscow.
"We'd like to bring it home," said England defender John Stones on Thursday. "I'd love to win a World Cup, England would love to win a World Cup."
"It's been a long time since we last won it. We want to make people proud back home."
England, World Cup winners in 1966, have already won over a public disaffected by an early exit in Brazil four years ago and an embarrassing defeat to Iceland at Euro 2016.
Gareth Southgate's men have been drawing more viewers for their matches in Russia than May's royal wedding, with 23.6 million tuning in for the shootout against Colombia.
"It's great to see the support back home. Everyone's getting behind us in their thousands," added the Manchester City player.
"I'm getting videos and pictures from my friends back home watching the game, in the pubs, wherever they are in the country."
With just a four-day turnaround to facing Sweden in Samara, though, England have little time to replenish

their energy.
And while some are already making plans for a potential semifinal against hosts Russia or Croatia, Stones warned of complacency against Sweden.
"I think if you say it's an easy game in a quarter-final of a World Cup then you are pretty stupid to say that."
"Sometimes they can throw you, these teams. They can go kind of under the radar, but there is no question they are a good team. They wouldn't be where they are if they weren't."
Normally the other teams have better players on paper and we let them have the ball in the places we want them to have the ball," said Sweden captain Andreas Granqvist.
"If you look at the games we have played of course the opponent has more ball possession, but we have created more dangerous chances. This is how we play... this is our way to have success."
Sweden's solid defence has kept three clean sheets in four games in Russia, but coach Janne Andersson will be forced into at least one change at the back, with Celtic's Mikael Lustig suspended.
Set-pieces and the aerial battle will be another key area in the match, with both teams excelling in that regard so far.
Sweden have scored twice from set plays, while England have scored three, the most at the tournament.
"Sweden are good on the counter-attack and we need to be aware of that," warned England wing-back Kieran Trippier.
"We just need to move the ball quickly if they do sit off. We need to manage the game well and make the pitch as wide as possible."

their opportunity on the counter-attack, they will let England have most of the ball.
But other than in a 6-1 thrashing of Panama in the group stages, England have struggled to create chances from open play, with seven of their nine goals so far coming from set-pieces and penalties.
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Under siege by the English press since the start of the World Cup, Raheem Sterling (L) was in a jovial mood at training as he played dodgeball. PHOTO: COLLECTED

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THE COUNTRY'S FIRST METRO RAIL



Led by inspirational midfielder Luka Modric (L), Croatia will be hoping to defeat a host nation for the first time at the World Cup when they take on Russia in a quarterfinal encounter tonight. However, to do that they must get past the imposing figure of veteran goalkeeper Igor Akinfeev. PHOTO: REUTERS/ AFP

Croatia looking to seize the moment

AFP, Sochi
Croatia are targeting the World Cup semifinals for the first time since 1998 -- when they made their debut as an independent nation on football's biggest stage.
It is unwise to look too far ahead at an event so full of surprises, but will a Croatian team facing host nation Russia in the last eight ever get a better chance to outdo the heroes of two decades ago? Zlatko Dalic's side showed in their comprehensive dismantling of Argentina during the group phase that they have no fear of the big names, and there is a strong case to say they are the best team left in their half of the draw.
However, while Croatia needed penalties to beat Denmark in the last round, they have come to Sochi full of confidence.
"We have shown in this World Cup that we have the right to hope for big things. We are playing really well and we have such players that we certainly should believe can go to the very end," said defender Domagoj Vida.
Any team boasting a player of Luka

You say people are euphoric but we are not the people who should be euphoric, that is for you journalists. We Russians like extremes so let's not go to these extremes.
RUSSIA COACH STANISLAV CHERCHESOV

but the strength in depth for such a small country is remarkable.
Putin had attended Russia's opening day win over Saudi Arabia but has not yet said whether he will come to Sochi. Chereshev, however, said Putin has been in touch.
"He has been calling me, he called me before and after the game with Spain," Chereshev said. "When the president supports you that makes us comfortable and this is an extra boost for us in terms of motivation."
A stern Chereshev told reporters he was not getting carried away by the euphoria.
"I will tell you openly that as a coach I am trying not to watch TV and not read newspapers," he said. "I am concentrated on my job and I think it is the same for the players."
"This is a great step but let us look forward. The quarterfinal is a different level. You say people are euphoric but we are not the people who should be euphoric, that is for you journalists."
"We Russians like extremes so let's not go to these extremes."



Croatia's wealth of midfielders also includes Ivan Rakitic, a creative presence who also possesses the ability to strike the ball into the back of any net. PHOTO: COLLECTED

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INFO-ZONE

SWEDEN	HEAD-TO-HEAD MATCH	ENGLAND
23	7 WIN, 9 DRAW, 7 LOST	23

RESULT OF THEIR LAST MEETING: SWEDEN 4-2 ENGLAND (14 NOVEMBER, 2012)

KEY PLAYERS

ANDREAS GRANQVIST	HARRY KANE
76 CAPS, 8 GOALS SCORED, 2 WC GOALS	27 CAPS, 19 GOALS SCORED, 6 WC GOALS

RUSSIA	HEAD-TO-HEAD MATCH	CROATIA
3 WIN, 0 DRAW, 2 LOST	3 WIN, 1 DRAW, 2 LOST	3 WIN, 1 DRAW, 0 LOST

RESULT OF THEIR LAST MEETING: RUSSIA 1-3 CROATIA (17 NOVEMBER, 2015)

KEY PLAYERS

ARTEM DZYUBA	IVAN PERISIC
27 CAPS, 14 GOALS SCORED, 3 WC GOALS	70 CAPS, 19 GOALS SCORED, 3 WC GOALS

TOURNAMENT STATS

GOALS SCORED	YELLOW CARDS
146	189
AVERAGE	AVERAGE
2.6	3.4
OWN GOALS	RED CARDS
10	4

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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: _____
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Sweden had a far more intense training session than their opponents as they geared up for their gritty gameplan for tonight's World Cup quarterfinal in Sochi. PHOTO: AFP

'Easy to analyse, tough to beat'

REUTERS, Samara
Sweden coach Janne Andersson has full confidence in his team's straightforward but effective tactics as he prepares his side for a World Cup quarterfinal clash with England today.
Andersson's men are aiming to reach the last four for the first time since 1994 when they finished third in the United States. Sweden's success at this year's tournament has been built on defensive organisation and clinical counter-attacks.
"There was a coach once who said his team was quite easy to analyse but difficult to beat. That is a good description of us," Andersson told reporters on Friday. "It shouldn't be that difficult to get an idea of what we do."
"We are strong in our beliefs and have been from the outset. The players are very loyal to our ideas."
Captain Andreas Granqvist embodies this collective philosophy most of all. The 33-year-old defender has formed a formidable pairing with Manchester United's Victor Lindelof, as well as scoring twice from the penalty spot in Russia.
"We are a team and we do this together, on and off the pitch and this is behind our success so far," said Granqvist. "We might not have the best team on paper or individually, but as a team we are very high achievers and this symbolizes all of us."
One area where the game could be decided is on set-pieces, where both teams excel. "The set piece situation will be a clear factor -- for the first time I think we are coming up against a country that is more or less on par with us."

The battle off the field

JANNE ANDERSSON
Janne Andersson managed Halmstad and Norkoping, clinching the title with the latter in 2015. He took the reins of Sweden after EURO 2016 and qualified for Russia by edging Italy in a play-off.
CHALLENGE: Southgate's success has been built on defensive organisation and clinical counter-attacks. Devoid of a

freescoring talisman in the wake of Zlatan Ibrahimovic's international retirement, the Swedes have worked hard on being difficult to breakdown and a major threat from set-pieces.
"There was a coach once who said his team was quite easy to analyse but difficult to beat. That is a good description of us," Andersson told reporters.
FORMATION: 4-4-2

STANISLAV CHERCHESOV
A former goalkeeper Stanislav Chereshev won four titles with Spartak Moscow. In August 2016, Chereshev was named as the new head coach of Russia. Under his management Russia reached the quarterfinals of the World Cup for the first time since 1970.
CHALLENGE: A stern

reserved in his manners but he an outstanding team with brilliant players like Modric and Rakitic at his disposal. Croatia already caused a major upset by beating Argentina. The task for Dalic now is to emulate or do better than the 1998 Croatian side considered their best ever.
FORMATION: 4-2-3-1



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Round 02 Prizes: 1st Prize - Toshiba 40" LED TV, 2nd Prize - Toshiba Freezer, 3rd Prize - Toshiba Refrigerator
Question: Who scored the most number of goals in a World Cup match?
Answer: _____
Name: _____ Phone: _____
Address: _____
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