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POWER TMT

THINK TOMORROW

HURT BY SNUB, HART TURNS TO CRICKET

Joe Hart played cricket on Saturday rather than watch Jordan Pickford keep a clean sheet for England in the World Cup quarterfinals. The 31-year-old said he was "gutted" at not making Gareth Southgate's squad and turned out for his hometown cricket club, Shrewsbury.



আসল চিনিগুঁড়ার স্বাদ ও সুগন্ধ পেতে

চিনিগুঁড়া চাল

একটাই অপশন

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KYLIAN MBAPPE



EDEN HAZARD



LUKA MODRIC



HARRY KANE

4 teams, 4 key attributes

The semifinal line-up is complete and two intriguing, all-European ties lie in wait. But while the teams in the last four of Russia 2018 hail from the same continent, the similarities end there. France, Belgium, England and Croatia all boast very different attributes. This article on FIFA.COM takes a look at the salient features of the four semifinalists.

FRANCE: VERSATILITY
Not so long ago, Didier Deschamps would have been criticised for this aspect of his France team, with some journalists alleging that Les Bleus had a thousand faces and no real identity. In fact, it is emerging as a vital attribute. Functional during their group matches, France were spectacular against Argentina, then solid and efficient against Uruguay. Three different French teams? No – the same, but with different tactics.

France know how to adapt their style depending on their opponents, and that is a rare and precious ability. The tactical set-up can be 4-3-3 one match and 4-2-3-1 the next, while Deschamps can decide to use Olivier Giroud's size or Kylian Mbappe's speed to destabilise defences. As we've seen during this World Cup, there are no weak teams anymore and even giants like Germany and Spain had a hard time playing 'their game'. Possession doesn't ensure victory and experience doesn't guarantee success. Options are everything.

BELGIUM: TEAM SPIRIT
The Belgians arrived with one of the best squads on paper, but their biggest success in Russia has been establishing strong collective values.

This may represent their most important asset simply because it has not always been present in the past. Nor has this Belgium team

previously been famed for resilience, which they showed in bucket-loads against both Japan and Brazil. Their star individuals, including the magic trio of Eden Hazard, Kevin de Bruyne and Romelu Lukaku, have stepped up when needed. But it's also worth noting that the Red Devils have had nine different goalscorers in Russia. Everyone is playing their part.

Roberto Martinez, too, seems to be the right man at the right time, as he looks to have found a way to get the best from his collection of stars and bring them together as a unit. In this Belgian squad, everyone is fit to play and ready to make sacrifices on the pitch or, in some cases, to accept their status as substitutes and support their team-mates.

ENGLAND: VARIETY
Picking a single strength to define England is increasingly difficult, as Gareth Southgate's side continue to find new and different ways to win. We're all becoming accustomed to how this young, ever-improving side uses confidence, a modern system and togetherness to its advantage. They are prepared for any match situation, any opposition and their game management is ruthlessly effective.

England have even won their first World Cup penalty shootout here in Russia, and that is before we even begin to examine the individual stars, from their heroic goalkeeper Jordan

Pickford to the talisman and tournament top-scorer, Harry Kane - each just 24 years of age.

This could be the most complete England side we have seen since 1990, the last time the Three Lions reached a semi-final. Yet this team, with its modern, patient and composed approach to the game, is also breaking the Three Lions mould. They are here to make their own history.

CROATIA: MIDFIELD TALENT
Given the manner in which they sailed through arguably Russia 2018's most difficult group, and survived two stern tests in the knockout stages, Croatia have been one of the teams of the tournament. The greatest asset that Zlatko Dalic's side possess is undoubtedly their midfield, which ranks as one of the best at this World Cup. The players in that department of the team almost always seem composed, organised and unruffled.

Luka Modric and Ivan Rakitic are the lynchpins of this Croatia team. It is not often that players from Madrid and Barcelona combine to such devastating effect, but that is exactly what Rakitic is doing with Modric at the heart of the Vatreni engine room. They are far from alone though. Add in Inter Milan's Marcelo Brozovic, Real Madrid's Mateo Kovacic, Fiorentina's Milan Badelj and it all adds up to a truly superb generation of Croatian midfielders.

Semifinal record for Belgium, France

BELGIUM
*Belgium's only previous semifinal appearance came at the 1986 finals, where Diego Maradona turned on the second half magic and ensured for Argentina a place in the final with both goals in a 2-0 victory.

*In that tournament, Belgium squeezed through the first round in third place in their group after losing to hosts Mexico, before needing extra time to beat the Soviet Union in the last 16 and penalties to overcome Spain in the quarterfinals.

*Defender Eric Gerets rated the class of 2018 as more talented footballers than his 1986 team mates but said he did not believe they had the same fighting spirit until he saw their 2-1 win over Brazil in Friday's quarterfinal.

*After losing in the 1986 semifinal, Belgium faced France in Puebla for the bronze medal in the third place playoff and were beaten 4-2 after extra time despite taking an early lead.

*Belgium made it to the last eight at the last World Cup in Brazil but their hopes of a semifinal spot were snuffed out by one early Gonzalo Higuain goal for Argentina.

*There are 15 players from the 2014 Belgian squad who have returned for the tournament in Russia, having picked up considerable experience in the meantime.

FRANCE
*Just Fontaine's record of 13 goals in a single tournament from the 1958 finals still stands as he helped propel the French to their first-ever semifinal, where they lost 5-2 to Brazil in Stockholm, with teenager Pele scoring a hattrick.

*France lost on post-match penalties to West Germany in Seville in the 1982 semifinal, best remembered for an unpunished kung-fu style challenge by goalkeeper Harold Schumacher on France's Patrick Battison that saw the Frenchman stretched out 10 minutes after coming on as a substitute with a cracked vertebra and damaged teeth.

*Four years later in Mexico, France were again semifinalists but once more thwarted by the Germans, losing 2-0 in Guadalajara.

*France won the World Cup when they hosted the 1998 finals, beating Croatia in the semifinal 2-1 with both goals from defender Lilian Thuram.

*Didier Deschamps captained France that year as they lifted the trophy for the first time. He is now chasing the double of winning the World Cup as both a player and a coach.

*France's fifth semifinal appearance came in 2006, when Zinedine Zidane's penalty was enough to beat Portugal 1-0.

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TODAY'S MATCH

SEMIFINAL

BELGIUM

FRANCE

Time: 12.00am [Wednesday]

BANGLADESH TIME

THE RUSSIAN RECORD

Volunteer drivers and the Russian Versailles

AL-AMIN From Saint Petersburg

Adaptability is a great virtue if you are in Russia to be part of the World Cup. We were desperate to get flight tickets from Kazan to Saint Petersburg so that we could cover today's first semifinal between France and Belgium. With no flights available, we decided to take a hired van instead of taking the hazardous route of going to Moscow first and then taking another train to Saint Petersburg.

The distance between Kazan and Saint Petersburg is just over 1,500 kilometers and the impression we got from our 'would be' driver was that it would take 17 hours. But when a 30-seater minibus arrived to pick us up, we were surprised to see that it was a common transport that picks passengers from different spots.

After a small matter of 26

hours, we finally reached Saint Petersburg. It was more like my first long ride from Dhaka to Cox's Bazar via Chittagong way back in 1982. The driver was constantly communicating with passengers he had to pick up. At midnight he stopped the bus at a place which was more like Ramu, with no establishments on the horizon.

After about 20 odd minutes the passenger arrived with his family in a car. There were several unscheduled stops until the bus was full. After that it was an otherwise uninterrupted journey. Halfway through, the self-starter of the vehicle conked so it needed some pushing to restart the engine, and the driver dared not stop the engine for the remainder of the journey.

Along the road we could hardly see anything but the long ranges of birch and pine trees.



Surely, the transport drivers are the busiest workers during the World Cup in Russia. They do overtime to earn some quick money. We had come across a driver who claimed to have been behind the wheels for two days without sleeping for even an

hour. It was evident when he, for a brief period, actually happily complied with a request of a volunteer to drive for a while so that the official driver could sleep.

PETERHOF PALACE
If you are in Saint Petersburg

and don't visit the Peterhof Palace you are going to miss something very special. We took a taxi in the morning and it took us about 40 minutes to reach Peterhof Palace. The popular tourist destination was brimming with travelling World Cup fans from many nations, including a 20-member Bangladeshi group. The Palace on the upper ridge of the huge facility will give you an impression of any other palace in Russia, but the beauty of its lower ridge and the fountains leading up that lavish garden takes the breath away.

If the Grand Palace of Peter the Great is the biggest attraction, then the Grand Cascade below the grotto and on either side is really captivating.

There are 64 fountains but the most attractive one is the Samson Fountain that depicts the moment when Samson tears

open the jaws of a lion, representing Russia's victory over Sweden in the Great Northern War. You will be amazed to see jet of water from the gilded lion's mouth shoot up 21 metres, and the display of power hints at why the Germans destroyed it during the Second World War. Now what we see is a replica of the statue installed in 1947.

The amazing aspect is that no pump is used to operate all the fountains. The natural spring water, coming from the upper ridge, is channelled through reservoirs. The garden in the lower ridge of the vast facility is also a beholder's delight and you can hardly feel tired if you walk along the greens covered with big trees. The Russian version of the famous Versailles is an ideal place to enjoy your weekend with your family.