

## WORLD CUP FINAL IN PULA ARENA

The stunning Pula Arena will be open to football fans on Sunday to watch the final between Croatia and France. Located in Pula, Croatia, it is the only remaining Roman amphitheatre to have four side towers with all three Roman architectural orders entirely preserved.













## Belgium seal third place

AFP, Saint Petersburg

Belgium beat England in the World Cup third-place playoff on Saturday to ensure their best-ever finish as tournament top scorer Harry Kane admitted his side need to improve if they are to end their long trophy drought.

Goals from Thomas Meunier and Eden Hazard secured a deserved 2-0 victory in Saint Petersburg and meant Belgium bettered their performance at the 1986 World Cup in Mexico, where they finished fourth.

Belgium, who suffered a painful 1-0 defeat to France in the semifinals, also beat Gareth Southgate's England in the first round in Russia on their way to topping the group before beating Japan and Brazil.

"It's all about the achievement. This is Relgium's best

"It's all about the achievement. This is Belgium's best finish at a World Cup. The players deserve that and they wanted to make the country proud," Belgium coach Roberto Martinez said.

Southgate's men were forced to settle for England's joint-best performance at a World Cup abroad, matching that of the 1990 generation in Italy.

Tottenham's Kane remains the overwhelming favourite

to win the Golden Boot with six goals, although he admitted his frustration at failing to find the net in England's final three games.

He said despite England's run to the semifinals, where they were beaten by Croatia, the young team are still not the finished article.

"We closed it for sure (the gap to the top teams)," he said. "But today shows, and some other games show, that there is still room for improvement."

"Obviously I'm disappointed I couldn't get a goal in

the last few games," added the Tottenham Hotspur striker, who is aiming to become just the second England player after Gary Lineker in 1986 to win the Golden Boot.

"Sometimes it goes for you, sometimes it doesn't. But if I win it, it'll be something I'll be very proud of."



World of Endless Dreams...

the second goal.







PHOTOS: REUTERS

## Vatreni stand in Les Bleus' way to glory



AFP, Moscow

MOTION & EMOTION

© 01713091172

© peugeot.com.bd





A month on and 63 games later, the 2018 World Cup reaches its climax on Sunday as a young France side spearheaded by Kylian Mbappe and Antoine Griezmann look to win the trophy for the second time when they take on Croatia in Moscow.

It is a final very few people could have anticipated four weeks ago, when the competition in Russia was just beginning.

Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and Neymar have all gone home. So have the traditional powers of the international game -- Germany, Brazil and Argentina.

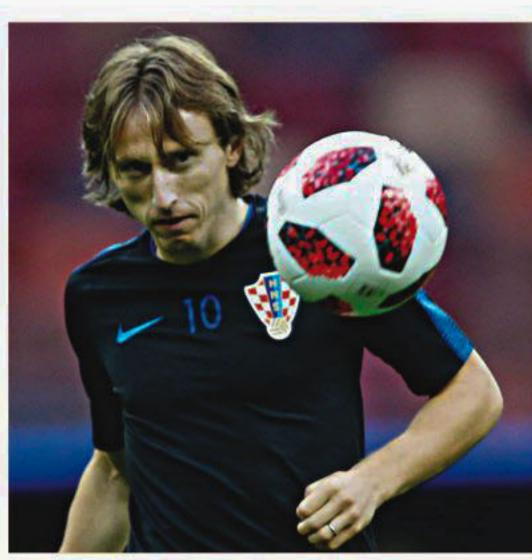
Instead it is a gifted French side with the second-youngest squad at the tournament, embodied by the lightning-quick Mbappe, who face a Croatian team inspired by Luka Modric, arguably the finest midfielder in the world at the moment.

Perhaps many neutrals will be disappointed that it has not come down to a clash between two genuine giants of the game, or that there is no South American presence.

It is just the second time that none of Brazil,

Germany, Italy or Argentina have made the final, after Spain's win over the Netherlands in 2010.

A tournament that will be remembered for the colourful presence of hordes of Latin American sup-



LUKA MODRIC

porters has a final between two European sides after the continent exerted its power in the latter stages. But this is still the World Cup final, and for

France there is the possibility to join Argentina and Uruguay in winning the trophy for the second time, after 1998.

Back then, Didier Deschamps was the captain. Now he is the coach, and he can become just the



KYLIAN MBAPPE

third man to win the trophy as a player and a manager, after Mario Zagallo and Franz Beckenbauer.

Beaten on penalties by Italy in the 2006 final, France's hunger is all the greater after the agony of their defeat as hosts against Portugal in the Euro 2016 final.

Half of France's team is different now, however, with Mbappe having burst onto the scene. His

explosive performance in the 4-3 win over Argentina in the last 16 lit up the competition, but apart from that France have played like a Deschamps side, with the emphasis on defence.

Les Bleus laboured through their group, beating Australia and Peru by the odd goal and drawing with Denmark in the only goalless game of the tournament.

They have since proved too strong for the Argentines, Uruguay and Belgium, and they are rightly favourites in the final, which is a repeat of the 1998 semifinal.

Back then, two Lilian Thuram goals sunk a Croatia team playing in their first World Cup as an independent nation. Twenty years on, this side have written their own history and the nation of just over four million people is the smallest to

reach the final since Uruguay in 1950.

After winning all three group games, outclassing Argentina, they have beaten Denmark and Russia on penalties and defeated England in extratime in the semifinals.

It has been a gruelling, exhausting run for Zlatko Dalic's team, and they must rouse themselves for one last effort.

The great, cavernous Luzhniki, by a bend in the Moscow River, will be the scene of the drama, but the biggest celebrations will take place on the streets of the winning country.







Danish