

World Cup's greatest upsets

AFP, Doha

Saudi Arabia produced one of the greatest World Cup upsets in history on Tuesday, stunning South American giants Argentina in a 2-1 group stage victory in Doha.

Here, let's look at five other famous upsets in World Cup history.

1950: USA 1-0 ENGLAND

England arrived in Brazil as one of the tournament favourites after electing to play in the World Cup for the first time. But England's status as one of football's superpowers was destroyed by a rag-tag band of players representing the United States, Joe Gaetjens scoring the winning goal that sealed victory in Belo Horizonte.

1966: NORTH KOREA 1-0 ITALY

Pak Doo Ik wrote his name into World Cup folklore with the goal that stunned a powerful Italy team and sent the Azzurri crashing out of the tournament.

The Italian squad returned to Rome to be pelted with tomatoes by disgruntled fans. North Korea's run ended in the quarter-finals with a 5-3 defeat to a Eusebio-inspired Portugal.

1982: ALGERIA 2-1 WEST GERMANY

Algeria arrived at the World Cup finals in Spain as rank outsiders, the north African side playing in its first ever World Cup. But goals from Rabah Madjer and Lakhdar Belloumi either side of a Karl Heinz Rummenigge goal secured a famous victory. Algeria's tournament would end in heartbreak however with the infamous "Disgrace of Gijon", when West Germany beat Austria 1-0 in a mutually beneficial result that sent both teams through to the



Salem Al-Dawsari of Saudi Arabia curled in a scorching strike from the edge of the penalty area in the 53rd minute to complete a stunning comeback, leaving Argentina and Lionel Messi utterly shell-shocked in their Group C opener at the Lusail Stadium on Tuesday. [Inset] It was the Saudi stopper Mohammed ALOWAIS who took it upon himself to protect that 2-1 lead with fantastic saves till the referee blew the final whistle.

Saudis script 'totally crazy' game

AGENCIES

Saudi Arabia scripted a 'totally crazy' game of football during their famous 2-1 win over World Cup favourites Argentina at the Lusail Stadium on Tuesday, leaving Lionel Messi and Co ruing the mistakes.

For Saudi Arabia, the hero was forward Salem Al-Dawsari and their stopper Mohammed ALOWAIS. Al-Dawsari grabbed the world's attention with his match-winning wonder strike against Argentina but the winger has been a star in his home country for years.

After Saleh Al-Shehri's strike in the 48th minute levelled the score, the 31-year-old Al-Dawsari helped the Saudis to a stunning victory over the twice world champions when he took out two defenders with a clever turn before rifling the ball into the net in the 53rd minute. That helped his side to a stunning comeback after going 1-0 down in the first half from a Messi penalty.

It was a typical piece of brilliance from a player who has long been known as one of Asia's best.

Argentina could not make a comeback after that, thanks to the heroics of their keeper ALOWAIS, who made as many as five saves to keep Saudi Arabia on course for a sensational victory.

Talking about the loss, Messi said it was a "very heavy blow" but vowed the South American champions would bounce back from the defeat.

"It's a very heavy blow, a defeat that hurts, but we must continue to have confidence in ourselves," Messi said after their shocking defeat.

"This group is not going to give up. We will try to

beat Mexico," he added.

Messi also rued 'five minutes' of brilliance from Saudi Arabia that took the game away from the heavily tipped favourites for lifting the trophy of this edition of the World Cup.

In the second half, "in five minutes of mistakes that we made, we went 2-1 down and then it was really tough and we lost organization and started punting the ball," Messi said in comments broadcast by Todo Noticias.

While Messi and Co were left ruing the mistakes, Saudi Arabia's French coach Herve Renard focused in keeping the celebrations in check and prepare for the upcoming matches.

"This is football, sometimes totally crazy things can happen," said the French coach, who previously led Zambia and the Ivory Coast to Africa Cup of Nations glory.

As for enjoying the moment, Renard was eager to look ahead to the Saudis' next Group C matches against Poland and Mexico.

"(We can) just have a good celebration during 20 minutes and that's all, there are still two more games.

However, Renard said he was not entirely happy with his team, despite the stunning upset.

He added: "Some people don't understand but you can imagine that when you're playing against Saudi Arabia, the motivation is not the same as playing against Brazil."

However, Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni insisted otherwise, saying his side never took Saudi Arabia lightly. "We fully respect Saudi Arabia as we do with other teams, that's not the reason for our defeat," said Scaloni, whose team had not lost since July 2019.

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second round.

1990 CAMEROON 1-0 ARGENTINA

Argentina began the finals in Italy as defending champions after their Diego Maradona-inspired victory at the 1986 tournament in Mexico. But not even Maradona was able to prevent Cameroon's 'Indomitable Lions' from pulling off a huge upset with Francois Omam Biyik scoring the winner at the San Siro in Milan. Cameroon, who finished the game with nine men, would go on to reach the quarter-finals. Lionel Messi's Argentina could, however, take a leaf out of that edition of the World Cup as the Albiceleste went on to play the final even after the upsetting defeat in the opener.

2002: SENEGAL 1-0 FRANCE

The 1998 World Cup champions and Euro 2000 winners France were expected to once again make a deep run at the World Cup in South Korea and Japan. But Senegal, playing in their first World Cup, derailed French hopes with Papa Bouba Diop scoring the only goal in another tournament-opening upset. France would go on to be eliminated in the first round.



Kasper Schmeichel of Denmark makes a crucial save to deny Tunisia's Issam Jabeli late in the first half of their World Cup Group D encounter at the Education City Stadium in Al Rayyan on Tuesday. The game ended in a goalless draw.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Long added time: Risk or opportunity?

AFP, Doha

Do not adjust your television sets: England and Iran really did play nearly half an hour of injury time in their World Cup game.

And that was not the only match in Qatar to drag on well beyond the allotted 90 minutes.

It is early days at this World Cup, but already a very noticeable trend has emerged: games are going on much, much longer than normal.

So what is going on? It is no accident.

Prior to the World Cup kicking off on Sunday, Pierluigi Collina, chairman of FIFA's referees committee, said fourth officials would be keeping a firm eye on time lost during games.

That could be due to injuries, substitutions, red or yellow cards, video assistant referee interventions and also some old-fashioned time-wasting from teams trying to hang on to a lead.

"In Russia (World Cup 2018), we tried to be more accurate in compensating for time lost during games and that's why you saw six, seven or even eight minutes added on," he told reporters at a pre-tournament briefing.

"Think about it: if you have three goals in a half, you'll probably lose four or five minutes in total to celebrations and the restart."

For players and coaches already worried about the sheer amount of football squeezed into an already congested season, this can only be bad news.

England coach Gareth Southgate was delighted with many aspects of his side's 6-2 hammering of Iran on Monday, but noted the amount of stoppage time.



Largely because of a nasty facial injury to Iran goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand, the first half dragged on for nearly an hour instead of 45 minutes.

Similarly, Mehdi Taremi's consolation penalty, nearly the last kick of the game, came in the 13th minute of stoppage time.

According to statistics experts Opta, those elongated halves in the England-Iran game, plus added time in the second half of the United States versus Wales (10 mins 34 secs) and second half of Senegal against the Netherlands (10:03), were the most stoppage time in the World Cup on record, going back to 1966.

All happened on Monday, the second day of the Qatar tournament, suggesting this is just the start.

Marc Wilmots, the former Belgium coach, said it was harmful to the players.

"What amazes me are the cramps, the injury problems and the players are already exhausted," he told broadcaster RTBF.

The coaches – or least those winning the match in question – also may not like it, but observers sick of players time-wasting are applauding FIFA's headline stance.

"Enjoying the amount of time that is being added on by the officials at the Qatar World Cup 2022, there is too much time wasting in football!" former England defender Jamie Carragher tweeted.

Former Chelsea and Tottenham defender Jason Cundy, who is now a broadcaster, told his radio show that he would not be happy if it was England hanging on for victory at the end.

But he added: "Does it give the viewer, as a neutral, it's like, 'Oh my god, something could change, there's 10 minutes of injury time, 10 minutes!'"

"I think what it's doing is adding a little bit more jeopardy to the game."

Feisty Tunisia hold Eriksen's Denmark

AFP, Doha

Tunisia held Denmark to a goalless draw in their World Cup opener on Tuesday, kicking off their Group D campaign with a strong performance against one of the pre-tournament dark horses.

Tunisia have never reached the World Cup knockouts in five previous attempts but Jalel Kadri's side will be encouraged both with a point at Education City Stadium and with how they performed against the fancied Danes.

Since Kadri took charge of the team in January Tunisia have only lost to Brazil and they frustrated Denmark in front of thousands of noisy North Africans.

Christian Eriksen was largely anonymous on his return to major tournament football after nearly dying on the pitch at the European Championship last year, wilting in the face of ferocious defending.