

World Cup Football, Germany 2006

The Greatest Show on Earth

Nawshad Shah

The count down has already started for the biggest sporting event the 18th World Cup Football finals to be held in Germany. Sporting purists might say the Olympic Games are the bigger and grander. But when host Germany kick-off the opening game against the Costa Rica in Munich on June 9; no sporting tournament will ever have received such global attention.

World Cup 2006 will be considered to be the *biggest, most expensive, most technological festival* in the sporting history. From humble beginnings in 1930, the World Cup Football has become the most watched and lucrative sporting event in the world. At the 2002 tournament in Korea and Japan, FIFA earned \$A1.53 billion and they are expected to bring in even more from this year's finals in Germany.

Australia will be making their first finals appearance since 1974. With five-time winners and reigning champions Brazil in their group (Group F), Australia are expected to be in a three-way fight with Croatia and Japan for the second qualifying spot in what promises to be a thrilling clash of very different cultures and footballing styles.

World-renowned Dutch coach Guus Hiddink, who led Netherlands and Korea to the semi-finals of the last two World Cups, is now in charge of Australia. They have dozens of players who have proven themselves in Europe's top leagues. Kewell is their best talent, while captain Mark Viduka, Tim Cahill, Lucas Neill and Mark Schwarzer are proven Premiership players. It is easy to dream of glory, not so easy to triumph in reality. Australia with the Premiership experience of such talented players will be tough to break down and could cause a surprise.

Australia will play against Japan on June 12 (Live SBS at 11:30 PM AEST), against Brazil on June 19 (Live SBS at 1:30 AM AEST) and against Croatia on June 23 (Live SBS at 4:30 AM AEST).

Over the previous three years, 197 teams who entered the worldwide regional tournaments have been whittled down to the elite 32 competing in Germany for the greatest prize in football. The final tournament involves 32 nations competing over a four-week period from June 9 to July 9 in the host nation of Germany. It is divided into two stages: a group and a knockout stage. In each group, a round-robin tournament is played, with each team playing three matches. Three points are awarded for a win, one for a draw and none for a loss.

The top two teams from each group advance to the knockout stage where teams play each other in sudden-death matches, with extra-time and penalty shootouts used to decide the winner if scores are level. In the Round of 16, the winner of each group plays against the runner-up from another group, followed by the quarter-finals, semi-finals and final. The losing semi-finalists also contest a third-place match.

Details groupings and LIVE TV (SBS) broadcast timings are in the attached file.

So fastened your seatbelt for some bumper rides in June and July with many sleepless nights and bleary-eyed from countless hours of compulsive viewing and endless slow motion replays. So let the fun begin on June 9 2006.

Here are some of the Fast Facts of the World Cup Football:

- All but one of the previous World Cup winners will take part in Germany 2006: Brazil, Germany, France, Italy, Argentina and England. The missing link? Uruguay, winners in 1930 and 1950.
- The inaugural World Cup was held in Uruguay in 1930. In total 13 nations competed in the event which was won by the host nation.
- Trinidad and Tobago, Togo, Angola, Ivory Coast and Ghana are all making their World Cup finals debut in Germany.
- Brazil is the most successful nation overall, having won the tournament five times, finished as runners-up twice and above all is the only nation to have participated in every World Cup.
- Lothar Matthaus (Germany) and Antonio Carbajal (Mexico) are the only two players to appear in five World Cup finals.
- Just Fontaine of France scored a record 13 goals at the 1958 World Cup final in Sweden.
- Cameroon's Roger Milla is the oldest player to appear in World Cup finals, aged 42 years and 39 days.
- The fastest goal in a World Cup match took place in 2002, when Hakan Suker scored for Turkey only after 11 seconds against South Korea.
- Franz Beckenbauer (West Germany) and Mario Zagallo (Brazil) are the only persons to win the World Cup as both player and Manager. Beckenbauer won as a player in 1974 and manager in 1990; Zagallo was a dual winner with Brazil in 1958 and 1962 as a player, and in 1970 as a manager.
- In 1997, Australia became the only country not to qualify for the World Cup finals despite not losing a single match (drew with Iran 2-2 in the final match at Melbourne).
- Pickles the dog found the World Cup (then Jules Rimet Trophy) under a bush after it was stolen while on public display at Westminster Hall in London in 1966.
- A cumulative TV audience of 28.8 billion people watched the 2002 World Cup in Korea and Japan. More than 30 billion people are expected to watch this year.
- Pele played in the 1958, 1962, 1966 and 1970 World Cups. Diego Maradona took part in 1982, 1986, 1990 and 1994 World Cup finals.
- In 2002, France became the only defending champion to fail to score a single goal in the tournament.
- Burma was the only country excluded by FIFA from entering the qualification for the 2006 World Cup.
- The largest margin of victory in a World Cup match occurred in 1982 when Hungary defeated El Salvador 10-1.

World Cup history

Year	Host	Winner	Runner up	Score
1930	Uruguay	Uruguay	Argentina	4-2
1934	Italy	Italy	Czechoslovakia	2-1
1938	France	Italy	Hungary	4-2
1950	Brazil	Uruguay	Brazil	(No final)
1954	Switzerland	West Germany	Hungary	3-2
1958	Sweden	Brazil	Sweden	5-2
1962	Chile	Brazil	Czechoslovakia	3-1
1966	England	England	West Germany	4-2
1970	Mexico	Brazil	Italy	4-1
1974	West Germany	West Germany	Netherlands	2-1
1978	Argentina	Argentina	Netherlands	3-1
1982	Spain	Italy	West Germany	3-1
1986	Mexico	Argentina	West Germany	3-2
1990	Italy	Germany	Argentina	1-0
1994	USA	Brazil	Italy	0-0 (3-2)
1998	France	France	Brazil	3-0
2002	Japan/Korea	Brazil	Germany	2-0