

Vargas sends Switzerland to World Cup quarterfinals

Team has shootout win over Colombia

BY ANNE M. PETERSON
AP SOCCER WRITER

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Ruben Vargas converted his penalty and Switzerland advanced to the World Cup quarterfinals with a 4-3 shootout win over Colombia after a scoreless draw on Tuesday.

Switzerland will next face defending champion Argentina on Saturday at Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, Missouri. Argentina defeated Egypt 3-2 earlier in the day.

Switzerland had not reached the quarterfinals of a World Cup since hosting the tournament in 1954. And the Swiss were short-handed Tuesday without young midfielder Johan Manzambi, who was injured in training on Monday.

Vargas, who has scored two goals in the World Cup, also left Monday's training early but was available off the bench and came on in stoppage time at the end of regulation.

Colombia defender Davinson Sanchez's penalty attempt hit the crossbar and Switzerland goalkeeper Gregor Kobel saved an attempt by Cucho Hernandez.



Switzerland's Granit Xhaka, center, tries to get past Colombia's James Rodriguez, left, and Jefferson Lerma during the World Cup round of 16 soccer match between Switzerland and Colombia in Vancouver, British Columbia, on Tuesday.

Lindsey Wasson | Associated Press

FIFA President Gianni Infantino was among those at BC Place, where the sellout crowd was overwhelmingly clad in yellow in support of Colombia. Colombia failed to qualify for

the last World Cup in 2022. The team made the quarterfinals at the 2014 tournament in Brazil, defeating Uruguay in the round of 16 before losing to the host country 2-1.

The Swiss reached the round of 16 at the past three World Cups but failed to advance with a smaller field of 32 teams.

The match was tightly contested by two teams with con-

trasting styles, the Swiss with a more organized approach and Colombia more attack oriented. Switzerland had a slight edge in possession.

Manzambi, a 20-year-old midfielder who plays for German club Freiburg, had three goals in the World Cup and was one of the tournament's breakout stars. The Swiss were also without Luca Jaquez and midfielder Michel Aebischer.

Gustavo Puerta had the first good chance for Colombia with a shot from distance in the 21st minute that was pushed away by Kobel.

The Swiss got one of their best opportunities in the 30th with Fabian Reider's blast at Camilo Vargas, who punched the ball down. Minutes later, Vargas smothered another attempt from Dan Ndoye.

The Swiss had a free kick in the 52nd minute, but Reider's attempt curled around the wall and went into the side netting.

In the first extra time period, Jhon Lucumi's header hit the cross bar and caromed away as Colombia put pressure on Kobel.

Colombia and Switzerland also met in the group stage at the 1994 World Cup in the United States, with South American team winning 2-0.

What's offside? And other World Cup questions, answered

BY STEVE DOUGLAS
AND STEVE REED
AP SPORTS WRITERS

This World Cup has prompted some questions we simply can't answer for you.

Can anyone stop Messi? Did Merlin the duck like wearing that jersey? What would have happened if the Congo's statue fan had to sneeze?

That said, if you're a first-time soccer watcher still confused by all this footie, we're here to help! Free kicks, hydration breaks, stoppage time, the situation with Folarin Balogun ... there's a lot to know. We put out a call for your burning World Cup questions — and we'll keep answering them if you have more. We're compiling answers to your FAQs below.

Now to some new questions...

slightly in the sense that his ban for the red card was placed on suspension for one year.

HOW ARE WORLD CUP REFEREES CHOSEN AND VETTED?

Brazilian ref Raphael Claus — the match official President Donald Trump described as “a little bit suspect” in light of the red card for Balogun — was one of 52 referees selected for the tournament based on their “quality and consistency of performances” over the previous three years in international and domestic competitions, FIFA says. They've been monitored, attended seminars and even received support from mental specialists. “The very best in the world,” is how FIFA referee chief Pierluigi Collina put it.

WHO ARE THE KIDS ACCOMPANYING PLAYERS AT THE BEGINNING OF MATCHES?

Lucky souls, aren't they? Those children holding hands and sometimes talking with the best soccer players in the world before games are officially called “player escorts” — even though many would describe them as “mascots.” One of FIFA's sponsors is food company Quaker, who has teamed up with dozens of community organizations to give kids “from underserved communities” the chance to walk players onto the field.

WHAT DOES 'OFFSIDES' MEAN?

Well, first off, it's “off-side,” per the AP Stylebook.

Secondly, this is a common question — and one that can make you appear a soccer aficionado if you know the answer. Essentially, a player is offside if he or she is closer to the opponent's goal line than the ball and second-to-last opposition player (the goalkeeper is usually the last) the moment the ball is passed by a teammate. There are various caveats — for example, you cannot be offside inside your own half — but that is the gist. It can be confusing and a source of great debate.

When a team loses a player due to a red card, does it play with just 10 men the following match?

No, the team only plays short-handed for the rest of the current match.

A red card, which is handed out by an official when a player does some-

tionally striking another player, means the player has been ejected and must leave the pitch. From that point on, the team would play a “man down,” meaning it can only field 10 players instead of 11. In some cases, teams have had two red cards in a single game and had to play with nine.

The player must serve a one-game suspension for the following match. However, the team itself is not penalized, and can return to its full starting strength of 11 players.

How many players are at this World Cup in total? How many of them are first timers?

Each of the 48 teams were allowed 26 players on their roster, so 1,248 players. Of those, more than half — 891 to be exact — are participating for the first time.

WHY ARE WORLD CUP TICKETS SO EXPENSIVE?

A lot of people would like to know that. FIFA came under scrutiny about a month before the tournament for their high-price tickets and sales tactics, leaving some fans upset. That caused demand for the tickets to drop, while other fans had to make tough financial sacrifices.

WHY ISN'T IT FREE TO WATCH ON TV?

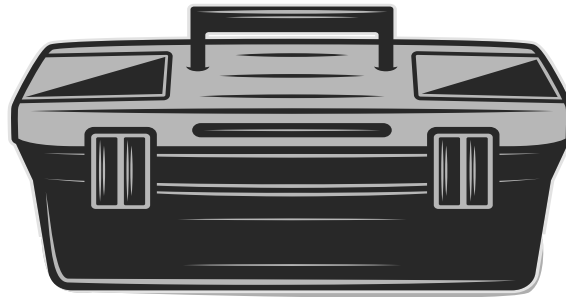
They are free — if you have a subscription to Fox or Telemundo through a cable provider or streamer. Every single game of the World Cup is fully televised on Fox and FS1. Matches can also be streamed live on the FOX One app.

HAS WHAT HAPPENED WITH BALOGUN EVER HAPPENED BEFORE AT A WORLD CUP?

Not for 64 years. Back then, in the 1962 World Cup and at a time when there were no physical red cards in soccer, Brazil midfielder Garrincha was sent off the field by the referee in the semifinals for kicking a Chilean opponent away from the ball. However, Garrincha escaped a ban for the final — a scenario Brazil officials feared — as a result of the intervention of host nation Chile's president, who argued that Garrincha should be allowed to play. The Balogun case differs

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