
FIFA U-20 World Cup

Host countries

Since its inception in 1977, the FIFA U-20 World Cup has made stops in every confederation: Africa (twice), Asia (five times), Oceania (twice in Australia), North and Central America (twice), South America (twice) and Europe (three times).

Format

From the first FIFA U-20 World Cup in 1977 until 1995, the final competition comprised 16 teams. However, to enhance the prestige of FIFA's major youth competition, the number of contenders was increased from 16 to 24 from 1997 (AFC 4, CAF 4, CONCACAF 4, CONMEBOL 4, UEFA 6, OFC 1, host 1). During the first two tournaments, the games only lasted 40 minutes each way (extra time was twice ten minutes). Since Australia 1985, matches have followed the traditional format of 45 minutes per half (with 15 minutes per half in extra time).

History

The tournament began modestly enough in Tunisia in 1977, with the FIFA Technical Report bemoaning the paucity of spectators. But by the early 1990s the competition had grown into an event of enormous importance with worldwide media exposure. The FIFA U-20 World Cup has indeed swept the football globe. Securing a committed long-term sponsor was crucial to the realisation of a project which Dr João Havelange had promised to launch when he became FIFA President in 1974. Above all, however, the competition's success has always depended upon the particular flavour of the games: that added dash of youth, spontaneity and adventure.

The inevitable teething problems experienced in Tunisia in 1977 were mostly solved at the second U-20 World Cup in Japan in 1979, one of the first major international football events in that country, which helped to trigger interest and enthusiasm for the sport there. The role of the FIFA U-20 World Cup as an "ambassador" to so-called "developing" football countries continued in 1981 when it went to Australia for the first time. In 1983, however, the event enjoyed its first major success in Mexico, a country steeped in football tradition where the final between Brazil and Argentina drew a capacity crowd of 105,000.

The Soviet Union hosted the finals in 1985; in 1987 it went to South America for the first time when Chile played host and in 1989 the state-of-the-art King Fahd Stadium on the outskirts of Riyadh was the spectacular setting for several matches. The 1991 final saw even the 1983 attendance eclipsed when 127,000 – the second-largest crowd ever to attend a FIFA match – crammed into Lisbon's Stadium of Light to cheer the home team to a repeat of their 1989 victory. In 1993 the Australians revived memories of the 1981 finals and surpassed them with a superbly organised championship to which the young *Socceroos* made their own thrilling contribution. Latin football dominated both the 1995 event in Qatar (which had taken over the role of host at barely three weeks' notice after Nigeria had been considered unable to stage the competition) and the 1997 tournament in Malaysia. Africa was still unable to produce the winner in Nigeria 1999, although three CAF teams did make it to the last eight. When an

African representative (Ghana) did make it to the final in 2001, it was hosts Argentina who won the day – their fourth FIFA U-20 World Cup title and a showcase for their budding star Saviola, the tournament’s top scorer so far with 11 goals in 7 matches. The United Arab Emirates provided the venue for the 2003 edition of the tournament and even threw the tournament’s best player, Ismail Matar, into the bargain. A distinctive South American flavour permeated the Arabian air as they secured three of the four semi-final slots. Colombia and Argentina took third and fourth place respectively, while Brazil claimed their fourth FIFA U-20 World Cup against Spain, thus adding to their triumphs at the 2002 FIFA World Cup™ and the 2003 FIFA U-17 World Cup and becoming world champions in all age categories.

The semi-finals in 2005 featured two African and two South American teams: Morocco eventually lost to Brazil in the play-off for third place, while Nigeria succumbed in the final against Argentina. The Argentines thus claimed their fifth FIFA U-20 World Cup title, and in Lionel Messi, they also boasted the tournament’s best player and top goalscorer with six strikes.

Winners

With six gold medals to their name, Argentina now lead the all-time ranking ahead of Brazil in second place on four. The Argentinians triumphed in 1979 (with Diego Maradona and Ramon Diaz in their squad), 1995, 1997, 2001 and 2005 and 2007. Brazil have also claimed two silver medals to add to their four golds. Portugal are the only other team to have won the event more than once (in 1989 and 1991).

South American countries won all three events staged between 1993 and 1997 (Argentina twice, Brazil once) but Spain triumphed in 1999 – their first ever win at a FIFA tournament – with Japan springing the surprises by coming second. Mali, taking part for the first time since 1989, performed superbly to take the bronze. This tournament proved beyond a doubt that there is no longer a clear distinction between “strong” and “weak” teams in international youth football and that certain victories are a thing of the past. Standards among the different confederations have levelled out and the fact that four different confederations were represented in the semi-finals in 1989 is further evidence of this.

The other teams that have won the tournament are the Soviet Union (in 1977 with a line-up featuring Vladimir Bessonov as the competition’s outstanding player), Germany FR (in 1981 against a surprise team from Qatar) and Yugoslavia, whose 1987 vintage included Boban, Prosinecki and Suker.

African teams have finished in second place on four occasions. After a thrilling run to the final, Ghana claimed the runners-up spot in Australia in 1993 and again in Argentina in 2001, while Nigeria were pipped at the post by Portugal in 1989 and Argentina in 2005.

General

A total of 80 associations have taken part in the FIFA U-20 World Cup to date and 1991 even saw the participation of a united Korean team. Of the 28 associations that have qualified just once for the tournament, only nine have made it to the second round.

The 2005 edition of this tournament in the Netherlands welcomed newcomers Switzerland and Benin to the FIFA U-20 World Cup fold, while the 2007 tournament in Canada saw Congo, Gambia, Korea DPR, Jordan and New Zealand make their debuts.

While four out of nine tournaments in the U-17 age category have been dominated by Ghana and Nigeria (two wins each), both teams have also been involved in two FIFA U-20 World Cup finals each: Ghana in 1993 and 2001, losing

to Argentina on both occasions, and Nigeria in 1989, when they lost to Portugal, and in 2005, when they were defeated by Argentina.

The AFC has twice been represented in a FIFA U-20 World Cup final, with both Qatar (1981 against Germany FR) and Japan (1999 against Spain) suffering 4-0 defeats.

As for the number of times that teams have taken part, Brazil (15) have been ever present with the exception of the 1979 tournament. They are followed by Australia, Argentina and Spain (12 each) and Mexico and the USA (11 each), all of whom are a long way ahead of the other participants.

Only two host teams have ever claimed the championship crown: in Lisbon in 1991 when a strong Portuguese side featuring Luis Figo, Rui Costa and co. struck gold and in Argentina in 2001. The Soviet Union (1985), Chile (1987) and Australia (1993) nonetheless also managed to exploit home advantage to reach the semi-finals.

Throughout the history of the tournament, three teams have taken home the trophy on successive occasions. In Tbilisi, Leningrad and Moscow in 1985, Brazil's goalkeeper Taffarel was instrumental in helping his team successfully defend the title secured in Mexico two years earlier by players of the calibre of Bebeto, Dunga and Jorginho; in 1991 Fernando Couto, Paulo Sousa et al retained the trophy won by their predecessors in 1989, while in Malaysia in 1997 Argentina, captained by Juan Román Riquelme, ensured that they took the trophy home for another spell. Argentina then went on to repeat this feat in 2005 (with Lionel Messi) and 2007 (with Sergio Aguero).

Matches

After the FIFA World Cup™, the FIFA U-20 World Cup is not only the second oldest FIFA competition, but with 24 participating teams, it is also the joint second-largest together with the FIFA U-17 World Cup.

In terms of the sheer volume of matches, the FIFA U-20 World Cup again comes second only to the FIFA World Cup™. Since the inaugural tournament in Tunisia, 628 matches have been hosted under the auspices of the FIFA U-20 World Cup. The FIFA U-20 World Cup UAE 2003 provided the backdrop for the 500th match when Spain met Uzbekistan in Sharjah on 4 December 2003.

Brazil have contested the most FIFA U-20 World Cup matches (82), followed by Argentina (67) and Spain (58). All in all, 14 different teams have qualified for the 16 final matches. A select group of 29 sides from all confederations has reached the semi-finals, indicating a considerably level playing field in this age group.

The final match has not always been as clear-cut as some of the most recent competitions would suggest (1999: 4-0; 2001: 3-0). In 1977, 1987 and 1991, the final was decided on penalties and on each occasion, a European team came out on top. In 1985, the final between Brazil and Spain was determined by a single goal in extra time.

Throughout the 16 editions of the FIFA U-20 World Cup, teams from the same confederation have met in the final match on four occasions, with Brazil and Argentina the first teams to do so in 1983. Interestingly, these two sides met again in the final twelve years later. Never ones to shy from the limelight, Argentina also met fellow South Americans Uruguay in the 1997 final. As for Europe, 1987 saw Germany FR and Yugoslavia share the field for the final match.

Goals

Per tournament: the most goals scored in a tournament was in Malaysia in 1997 (165 goals), ahead of Nigeria in 1999 (158), Argentina in 2001 (149) and the Netherlands in 2005 (143). The highest average number of goals per

match was recorded during the 1995 tournament in Qatar (3.28 goals per match), with Malaysia 1997 taking second place (3.17) and Nigeria 1999 in third (3.04).

Players: the tournament's top goalscorer to date is Argentina's Javier Saviola with 11 goals in 7 matches (FIFA U-20 World Cup 2001), ahead of Adailton from Brazil, who notched 10 goals in 5 games (FIFA U-20 World Cup 1997). In third place is Argentina's Ramon Diaz, who scored 8 goals in 6 matches during the 1979 tournament. Both Saviola and Diaz went on to win the title with their Argentinian team-mates. Adailton's tournament ended at the quarter-final stage.

Hat tricks: Argentina's Ramon Diaz and Javier Saviola have both scored two hat-tricks in the FIFA U-20 World Cup (Diaz against Algeria and Indonesia in 1979; Saviola against Egypt and France in 2001). This was topped by Brazilian Adailton's rare double hat-trick during his team's 10-3 victory over Korea Republic. Almost as impressively, Australia's Salapasis knocked in four goals in one match when his team defeated eventual champions Argentina 4-3 in 1997. Eight years later in 2005 Llorente of Spain equalled this feat, scoring four goals in their 7-0 victory over Chile.

All in all, Brazil have scored a total of 184 goals in the FIFA U-20 World Cup (an average of 2.24 per match). In second and third place are Argentina with 137 goals (2.04 per match) and Spain with 114 (1.97). Did you know that, despite having played only nine matches in their two appearances in the FIFA U-20 World Cup, Yugoslavia nonetheless notched up 22 goals, giving them a very impressive average (2.44)? They took the trophy home from Chile in 1987 when Prosinecki and Suker led them to victory.

Top of the list of fastest goalscorers is Thierry Henry, who opened France's 4-2 victory over Korea Republic in the first minute of the match in 1997. His team-mate David Trezeguet doubled the lead a minute later. Spaniard Goikoetxea managed to keep a cool head in the Moscow 1985 semi-final against the home side, equalising in the last minute of extra time to take the match to 2-2, thereby setting up his team's penalty shoot-out victory.

The world champions have managed to crown one of their own as top goalscorer on six occasions: 1979 (Ramon Diaz in an Argentina side featuring Diego Maradona), 1983 (Geovani Silva for Brazil), 1999 (Pablo for Spain) and 2001, 2005 and 2007 (Javier Saviola, Lionel Messi and Sergio Aguero, respectively, for Argentina). In 1981, Australian Mark Koussas won the Golden Shoe award in front of his home crowd.

The two highest-scoring matches in the FIFA U-20 World Cup were held in Kuching (Malaysia) in 1997, with Brazil inflicting maximum damage. The favourites first crushed Korea Republic 10-3 before inflicting a 10-0 defeat on Belgium. However, other than sealing the Golden Shoe for Adailton, the shower of goals reaped a meagre harvest, as Brazil were humbled in the quarter-finals by soon-to-be world champions and age-old rivals Argentina.

A nine-goal extravaganza put 1999's quarter-final showdown between Mali and Cameroon in Enugu, Nigeria, in third place in the ranks, although in terms of entertainment the game was streets ahead. Mali knuckled down to come back from 3-1 down to defeat favourites Cameroon 5-4 in extra time.

Other action-packed games include the match between the Soviet Union and Nigeria in Dammam, Saudi Arabia in 1989. The youngsters from the USSR were 4-0 up (thanks in part to a goal by subsequent World Cup striker Salenko) when the West Africans fired off a rapid four goals in 24 minutes and sneaked home via the back door thanks to a 5-3 penalty shoot-out victory.

In contrast, the Netherlands v. Honduras match in Qatar in 1995 met with an inglorious end. Following four sendings-off and an injury, the Central American side was decimated. With only six Hondurans left on the park, regulations required that the game be abandoned.

In Canada 2007, Chile's goalkeeper Christopher Toselli went 492 minutes without conceding a goal, thus breaking Brazilian Claudio Taffarel's 1985 record of 484 minutes.

Players, coaches, referees, crowds

The FIFA U-20 World Cup has certainly earned its reputation as a talent showcase, with almost 500 former FIFA U-20 World Cup players going on to participate in the FIFA World Cup™. 37 of these players have played in a FIFA World Cup™ final match and 21 have even won the world title (BRA 12, ARG 5, FRA 2, GER 1, ITA 1). Of this group, only one player, Burruchaga, has scored in a World Cup final (for Argentina in 1986).

The youngest ever player is Jason Byrne (Ireland Republic), who featured in the 1991 FIFA U-20 World Cup at the age of 13 years and 3 months.

Only three players have appeared in three editions of the FIFA U-20 World Cup – Al Roomi of Saudi Arabia (1985, 1987, 1989), Freddy Adu of the USA (2003, 2005, 2007) and David Edgar of Canada (also 2003, 2005 and 2007). Almost 100 players have played in two different tournaments.

Alongside the numerous outfield players who went on to further fame and fortune are the goalkeepers who have since claimed their place in the football hall of fame. Goycochea (ARG), Buyo/Canizares/Casillas (ESP), Wohlfahrt (AUT), Wandzik (POL), Cherchesov (URS), Taffarel and Dida (BRA), El Ouaer (TUN), Forrest (CAN), Meola and Keller (USA), Bosnich (AUS) and Cameroon's Olympic Champion Kameni all bear witness to the importance of the tournament for young goalkeepers.

A penalty hero on the subs' bench: in the 1977 FIFA U-20 World Cup in Tunisia, Russia's substitute goalkeeper Yuri Sivuha was brought onto the field shortly before the penalty shoot-out in both the semi-final and final. Prevailing in both instances, he certainly contributed to his team's World Cup title.

As for the coaches, Australia's Les Scheinflug has coached teams at seven different tournaments. Along with Pekerman from Argentina (who won three of the four tournaments in which he coached), Scheinflug heads the table for the number of coaching appearances.

Several FIFA U-20 World Cup coaches went on to bring their experience to bear in FIFA World Cup™ matches. However, Germany's Berti Vogts (FIFA U-20 World Cup 1987 + 1994 and 1998 FIFA World Cup™ with Germany) and France's Philippe Troussier (FIFA U-20 World Cup 1999 with Japan + 1998 and 2002 FIFA World Cup™ with South Africa and Japan) are the only ones to have coached twice at the FIFA World Cup™. In fact, Berti Vogts can also point to personal playing experience in the FIFA World Cup™ (1970-1978), including one FIFA World Cup™ title in 1974.

The FIFA U-20 World Cup has also served as a springboard for referees, some of whom officiated at important matches during subsequent FIFA World Cups – Antonio Marquez Ramirez from Mexico refereed the semi-final between Argentina and Belgium in 1986; Frenchman Joel Quiniou officiated at the play-off for third place between Italy and England in 1990; Denmark's Kim Milton Nielsen kept control of Brazil v. Turkey in the 2002 semi-final and Saad Mane from Kuwait officiated at the 2002 play-off for third place between Korea Republic and Turkey. The honour of participating in the 1990 final between Argentina and Germany was bestowed upon Mexican referee Edgardo Codesal.

The highest accumulative audience total for a tournament was registered at the FIFA U-20 World Cup Canada 2007 (1,195,239, an average of 22,985 spectators per match). The FIFA U-20 World Cup 1983 in Mexico retains the record for the highest average attendance, however (36,099).