

World Cup

TIM VYNER
WORLD CUP
DRAW
NO 18 MOSCOW

The Moscow Metro is fantastic. Known as the “People’s Palace”, I have been waiting for the chance to draw it. Police and guards closely patrol each station, at the bottom of each escalator is a figure sitting in a booth watching CCTV footage, and on my first visit to Moscow earlier in the year these stations were full of serious faces getting to and from work in freezing temperatures.

Now, during the World Cup, they have been transformed into theatres of dreams, where supporters sing and chant on their way to and from the games. There are even designated “selfie” spots.

Russia play Spain today and thousands of Muscovites will take to the underground and head for Line One to the Luzhniki Stadium.

The Russian public began this tournament as bystanders, observing raucous fans from other countries expressing themselves on the streets of Russia. Now they are doing the same thing, and other nationalities are joining in to celebrate with the host nation. And England will be here on Tuesday for the Colombia game.

Ploschad Revolyutsii (Revolution Square) station was built in 1939 in red, yellow and black Armenian marble. There are bronze statues of people of the former Soviet Union, including a female athlete and a male footballer. It is great to see these grand stations full of smiles and laughter and noise in the summer of 2018.



Previews

Spain v Russia

Where
Luzhniki Stadium

Kick-off
Today 3pm BST

Referee
TBC

Odds
Spa 13/19, Rus 6/1, Draw 3/1

Head-to-head record
Spain 4, Russia 0, Draws 2

Form guide
Spain
DWBWD

Russia
LDWWL

Key clash
Carvajal v Cheryshev
Russia will need their most dangerous player to be at his best if they are to have any chance, so there will be extra scrutiny on Dani Carvajal, who is not always error-free in his displays at right-back.

Commentator's kit
Spain have not lost in 23 matches, a run stretching back to Euro 2016.

Omen
Russia have never won a World Cup match in which they have let in the first goal, a run that stretches to six games.

Probable teams

1 De Gea Man Utd	18 Alba Barcelona
2 Carvajal Real Madrid	15 Ramos Real Madrid
3 Pique Barcelona	10 Thiago Bayern Munich
5 Busquets Barcelona	6 Iniesta Vissel Kobe
10 Thiago Bayern Munich	5 Busquets Barcelona
6 Iniesta Vissel Kobe	22 Isco Real Madrid
22 Isco Real Madrid	19 Costa Atletico
19 Costa Atletico	21 Silva Man City
21 Silva Man City	6 Cheryshev Villarreal
6 Cheryshev Villarreal	16 Miranchuk Lokomotiv Moscow
16 Miranchuk Lokomotiv Moscow	19 Samedov Spartak
19 Samedov Spartak	8 Gazinsky Krasnodar
8 Gazinsky Krasnodar	11 Zobnin Spartak
11 Zobnin Spartak	4 Ignashevich CSKA
4 Ignashevich CSKA	13 Kudryashov Rubin Kazan
13 Kudryashov Rubin Kazan	3 Kутepov Spartak
3 Kутepov Spartak	1 Akinteev CSKA
1 Akinteev CSKA	2 Fernandes CSKA

Croatia v Denmark

Where
Nizhny Novgorod

Kick-off
Today 7pm BST

Referee
TBC

Odds
Spa 13/19, Rus 6/1, Draw 3/1

Head-to-head record
Croatia 2, Denmark 2, Draws 1

Form guide
Croatia
LWWWW

Denmark
DWWDD

Key clash
Modric v Eriksen
Not a direct head-to-head, perhaps, but there seems little doubt that whoever shines brightest out of these two extravagantly gifted playmakers will be looking forward to the quarter-finals next week.

Commentator's kit
Six of Croatia's seven goals have been scored in the second half, and five of their last six shots on target have gone in.

Omen
All 29 of Denmark's World Cup goals have been scored inside the box.

Probable teams

23 Subasic Monaco	21 Vidic Besiktas	3 Strinic Sampdoria
2 Vrsaljko Atletico	6 Lovren Liverpool	11 Brozovic Inter
18 Rebic Eintracht	10 Modric Real Madrid	7 Rakitic Barcelona
10 Modric Real Madrid	17 Mandzukic Juventus	9 Jorgensen Feyenoord
17 Mandzukic Juventus	8 Delaney Werder Bremen	10 Eriksen Tottenham
8 Delaney Werder Bremen	11 Poulsen RB Leipzig	4 Christensen Chelsea
11 Poulsen RB Leipzig	13 Stryger Larsen Udinese	14 Dalsgaard Brentford
13 Stryger Larsen Udinese	1 Schmeichel Leicester	

WORLD CUP DIARY

ADAM HURREY

Courtois cuts Pickford down



So much for the Goalkeepers' Union, which is clearly in summer recess.

After Jordan Pickford was left clutching thin air by Adnan Januzaj's winner for Belgium on Thursday, his opposite number had surprisingly little sympathy. "The goalkeeper is 10cm smaller than me," said Thibaut Courtois. "I would have caught it. He was too busy throwing his legs in the air."

First seven-goal thriller – ever!

That perfectly proportioned scoreline – popularised by mid-Nineties ding-dong battles between Newcastle and Liverpool – appeared in a World Cup for the first time (after 90 minutes) in Kazan. Argentina might feel aggrieved, but there is always room for a 4-3 in football. A seven-goal thriller is the purist's thriller. Thank you, World Cup 2018.

The Donald tries some Ronaldo banter

A preposterous narcissist who does whatever he wants and does not care what anyone says about it? Perhaps it was only a matter of time before Donald Trump and Cristiano Ronaldo collided.

The United States president met with his Portuguese counterpart, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa (pictured) this week and asked: "Will Christian [sic] ever run for president against you?"



The response was a superbly dry one: "Well, President, you know [there's] something I must tell you. Portugal is not the United States. It's a little different!"

Harry the Otter picks a winner

The World Cup continues to attract clairvoyant animals, for some reason we cannot fathom. The latest is Harry the Otter, resident of Sochi aquarium, who has predicted that Spain will beat the hosts in their last-16 encounter in Moscow today. We now have a veritable Noah's Ark of alleged zoological match-fixers on our hands.



World Cup fever I Diplomatic resolve 0

Sweden's unexpected progress to the knockout phase has meant a relaxing of their government's boycott of the tournament. "We're in another situation now," said foreign minister Margot

Wallstrom, with some admirable understatement. "It's not at all double standards," she added, presumably while hurriedly catching up with her World Cup wallchart.

Russia 2018 fixtures guide

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Round of 16

Uruguay L Portugal L (match 49) Fisht Stadium	Brazil v Mexico (53) Tomorrow, Samara Arena	3pm ITV
France 4 Argentina 3 (50) Kazan Arena	Belgium v Japan (54) Tomorrow, Rostov Arena	7pm BBC
Spain v Russia (51) Today, Luzhniki Stadium	Sweden v Switzerland (55) Tuesday, Saint Petersburg Stadium	3pm BBC
Croatia v Denmark (52) Today, Nizhny Novgorod Stadium	Colombia v England (56) Tuesday, Spartak Stadium	7pm ITV

Quarter-finals

Winner 49 v France (57) July 6, Nizhny Novgorod Stadium	3pm TV tbc	Winner 51 v Winner 52 (59) July 7, Fisht Stadium	7pm TV tbc
Winner 53 v Winner 54 (58) July 6, Kazan Arena	7pm TV tbc	Winner 55 v Winner 56 (60) July 7, Samara Arena	3pm TV tbc

Semi-finals

Winner 57 v Winner 58 July 10, Saint Petersburg Stadium	7pm TV tbc	Winner 59 v Winner 60 July 11, Luzhniki Stadium	7pm TV tbc
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THE FINAL

Luzhniki Stadium, Moscow

Third place play-off

July 14, Saint Petersburg Stadium, 3pm

