

THE World Cup 2022 Book

The content of this book was carefully researched. All information is supplied without liability. Neither the author nor the publisher will be liable for possible disadvantages, injuries, or damages.

Please note that at the time of publication, the information in this book was up to date. However, with competitions, the events are ever-changing, and it is possible that after printing, the information may have changed.

Shane Stay



**Everything You Need to Know
About the Soccer World Cup**

Meyer & Meyer Sport

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

THE World Cup 2022 Book

Maidenhead: Meyer & Meyer Sport (UK) Ltd., 2022

ISBN: 978-1-78255-250-5

All rights reserved, especially the right to copy and distribute, including the translation rights. No part of this work may be reproduced—including by photo copy, microfilm or any other means—processed, stored electronically, copied or distributed in any form whatsoever without the written permission of the publisher.

© 2023 by Meyer & Meyer Sport (UK) Ltd.

Aachen, Auckland, Beirut, Cairo, Cape Town, Dubai, Hügendorf, Hong Kong, Indianapolis, Maidenhead, Manila, New Delhi, Singapore, Sydney, Tehran, Vienna

 Member of the World Sports Publishers' Association (WSPA), www.w-s-p-a.org

ISBN: 9781782558941

Email: info@m-m-sports.com

www.thesportspublisher.com

Credits

Cover and interior design: Annika Naas

Layout: Annika Naas

Cover and interior images: © AdobeStock

Managing editor: Elizabeth Evans

CONTENTS

Introduction	7
World Cup 2022 Superstars to Watch.....	12
The Teams From Europe (13)	33
Germany	33
Spain.....	46
England	53
France	65
Belgium	75
Netherlands	81
Croatia	89
Denmark.....	95
Poland.....	103
Portugal	110
Serbia.....	117
Switzerland.....	123
Wales	130
The Teams From South America (4½)	138
Brazil	138
Argentina.....	150
Uruguay.....	161
Ecuador	168
The Teams From North America (3½)	175
United States	175
Mexico.....	189
Canada.....	197
Costa Rica	205

The Teams From Africa (5).....	212
Morocco	212
Senegal	218
Tunisia	224
Ghana	230
Cameroon	235
The Teams From Asia (4½)	242
Australia	242
Iran	250
Japan.....	257
Saudi Arabia.....	264
South Korea.....	271
Qatar	277
The Teams From Oceania (1/2)	286
World Cup History	289
Organizing the World Cup	296
Stadiums in Qatar and Local History.....	306
Closing Words	314
Bonus Material	316
Author's Note	318
Endnotes & Citations.....	319

INTRODUCTION

The best teams in the world will kick off the 2022 FIFA World Cup in November with more than a billion fans watching. A new champion will emerge. International soccer supremacy—and the right to be called one of history’s greatest teams—is at stake in Qatar. Star-studded teams from every corner of the globe will arrive in the Middle Eastern oasis—social media will be abuzz, cameras will flicker, as countries will collide and a new champion will emerge as one of history’s greatest teams!

CRISTIANO RONALDO, MESSI, NEYMAR, HARRY KANE, and MBAPPÉ are but a handful of stars that will sparkle at the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. It’s an exciting time when the best players in the world flaunt their stuff in stadiums filled with eager fans. Ticket stubs will be saved, souvenirs purchased as the best nations in the world battle it out for the illustrious FIFA World Cup. The beat of Brazil’s samba, the ferocity of Argentina’s presence, the grace of the French, the daunting Germans, the impressive English, Mexico, the unequivocal rock stars of CONCACAF Mexico...all 32 nations will have a chance as the month-long event plays out.

The most anticipated sporting event is back. The FIFA World Cup will be played in Qatar. Proponents argue that this is a grand opportunity for the Middle East to showcase its love for soccer. Indeed, this is the first time that a Middle Eastern nation has hosted the FIFA World Cup. Critics point out issues such as allegedly accepting bribes, unsuitable weather, a lack of experience (not to mention prestige) as a top soccer-playing nation, alleged human rights violations, along with geographic and economic challenges for travelers to arrive and watch the games. Despite the criticism, however, Qatar—a small, oil-rich nation jutting out into the Persian Gulf that neighbors Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates—will go down in history as the twenty-second nation to host the FIFA World Cup. Prior to Qatar 2022, there have been 21 World Cup champions—an elite group.

Previous World Cup winners:

2018: France	1974: West Germany
2014: Germany	1970: Brazil
2010: Spain	1966: England
2006: Italy	1962: Brazil
2002: Brazil	1958: Brazil
1998: France	1954: West Germany
1994: Brazil	1950: Uruguay
1990: West Germany	1938: Italy
1986: Argentina	1934: Italy
1982: Italy	1930: Uruguay
1978: Argentina	

Previous host nations include Russia, Brazil, South Africa, Germany, Korea-Japan, France, United States, Italy, Mexico, Spain, Argentina, West Germany, Mexico, England, Chile, Sweden, Switzerland, Brazil, France, Italy, and Uruguay.

For Qatar, 2022 will be its first opportunity to host the World Cup. Instrumental in organizing the Cup were Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (whose older brother is Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of Qatar), Hassan Al Thawadi, Nasser Al-Khater, and Colin Smith. In 2010, when FIFA announced Qatar as the 2022 host, infrastructure planning began right away. In the lead-up to the competition, many new stadiums have been erected specifically for the World Cup and with the help of German engineering. Each new stadium was made to be unique and beautiful to reflect the local culture. With the exception of Al-Shamal Stadium, which is situated in the north, the games will be played on the eastern side of Qatar.

Everything you could possibly want in a tournament is present: drama, tension, rivalries, top goal-scorers, elite defenders and goalies, midfield magicians, free-kick specialists, penalty-kick tendencies, coaches, strategies, formations,

possession-based and free-flowing styles; it will be one for the record books! Later in the book, we'll get into the background of each stadium, detailed predictions for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, overviews of past World Cups, and much more.

Once again, the United States—the all-time leader in the Olympics—is competing for the World Cup.

The United States is intertwined in international sports in more ways than one.

Broadly speaking, the United States hosts the biggest competitions in the world. The upcoming 2026 FIFA World Cup will be jointly hosted by Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Notably, during the 1994 FIFA World Cup, the US set attendance records that have yet to be broken. What's more, the Super Bowl, NBA Championship, World Series, NHL Stanley Cup, and the tennis US Open are highly anticipated sporting events that captivate international audiences. These sports conjure up a myriad of athletes such as Tom Brady, Kobe Bryant, Babe Ruth, Wayne Gretzky, and Roger Federer.

The FIFA World Cup, on the other hand, is the world's passion—the most popular sporting event on earth! The amount of beer to be consumed: mind-boggling! (And the list of the many beers to be consumed would almost require its own chapter.) The amount of smartphone activity in Qatar: head-spinning! The largest sporting event the world has ever known captivates more than a billion fans!

World Cup champions make up an exclusive list. There are also the great teams, such as Brazil 1970, Brazil 2002, Italy 2006, Spain 2010, and Germany 2014. Not to mention, there are a few teams over the years that didn't hoist the trophy but gained recognition, including Brazil (1982) "arte de futebol"; Cameroon (1990), "the indomitable lions"; and South Korea (2002), the first Asian team to make the semi-finals.

The largest sporting event in history has now attracted millions of passionate soccer fans from the United States, who,

to the best of their ability, are duplicating the frenzy of emotion felt around the world. Reflecting fervor worldwide, the pastime of watching a game at the local bar only seems to be intensifying in the US. It's a firm reminder that, after all, the United States—the standing record-holder for highest attendance in World Cup history (World Cup 1994)—has officially joined the world's game and has bars across the nation fully equipped for World Cup action in Qatar, and subsequently for World Cup 2026. Around the world, bars from England, Germany, Japan, Egypt, Australia, Argentina, and Brazil—every corner of the globe—will be filled to capacity with eager fans celebrating each game.

For people interested in the finer nuances, a few of the rules and procedures for the World Cup have been adjusted over the years. For example, back in 1994 there were 24 teams in the tournament. By 2018, FIFA banged the table and said 32 teams will compete. (More on this to come.)

For this World Cup, all 32 teams—from Europe, South America, North America, Africa, and Asia—went through an accelerated qualification process* due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which had set things back. Despite the pandemic, which affected people worldwide, each team worked hard to arrive at this point and become a major part of history. We'll take a constructive look at each team, the players, and coaches, and break down all aspects of World Cup Qatar. And what fun it's going to be!

Throughout my life some people have asked me why soccer is so great. They know people worship the sport; they know of its allure; yet they don't quite understand its popularity. Most people might answer something about the “beautiful game” and how “Pele learned to play with a grapefruit.” But my answer would be that it's great because there is no prerequisite to qualify at the highest levels. Have you ever seen an NBA lineup? Seven feet

* Qatar automatically qualified as the host nation.

tall is not normal. There aren't too many 6'9" and taller people in the world, and if they do exist, they tend to find their way onto a basketball court. That's the nature of basketball; it has always been an above-the-rim sport.

Soccer, on the other hand, is based on pure skill. You can be any height to succeed. Though, common sense has shown that players shorter than 6'3" tend to do better as such physiques have a quicker response time. Some players, such as Zidane, Henry, and Ibrahimovic do excel at heights 6'2" and above, but most tend to be under six feet. There's a famous picture of Pele, riding on the shoulders of others after winning the legendary 1970 FIFA World Cup in the Azteca before over 100,000 spectators—and he's all of 5'5", thought to be one of the best players of all time.

So in soccer, only the best stand out, and the players are elite, fit athletes who are better than the best in the world. This, I believe, in part, is why soccer is so endearing to people across continents. Of course, there is the simplicity of the game (just get the ball into the goal) combined with the complexities of the game (formations, defensive posturing, athletic one-on-one ability) that make simply getting the ball into a goal challenging. The FIFA World Cup represents the biggest stage in the world for these elite players.

When Uruguay hosted the first World Cup in 1930, it's fair to assume that no one predicted how big it would become. Nothing that came before it really compared. The most recent World Cup in Russia in 2018 carried on the multimillion-dollar tradition. Qatar 2022 will, no doubt, create new memories and new legends. To win the Cup takes a lot of skill, perseverance, and luck, whether it's the ball hitting off the post, an offside call that wasn't offside, a foul that wasn't called, or something else altogether (like the late Maradona's "hand of God"). Eventually, there will only be one team standing.

The Cup happens only once every four years. Enjoy the ride!

WORLD CUP 2022 SUPERSTARS TO WATCH

Welcome to the superstar section. These players led their respective teams through the qualifiers, which we'll get to in a bit. However much or however little you know about the game, whether a seasoned fan or new to the game, it should be known these are the top, elite, players of the world, and represent the highest echelon category of the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar. While you might not agree with a certain player—or two—left off this list, this list still highlights the best of the best.

RATING KEY

All ratings are judged on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest. All ratings are based on comparisons with legends of the game, such as Pele, Maradona, and Rivaldo. For instance, Rivaldo would represent the standards for Shot Power with a 10, as would Puskas, Podolski, Littbarski, and Igor Belanov (the canon blaster). Pele, Garrincha, Maradona, Denilson, and Ronaldinho would be the standards for Dribbling with a 10. The Nigel Tufnel factor (*This Is Spinal Tap*) does come into play here, as perhaps Denilson would earn an 11 with dribbling. (Though an 11 is very rare and should not be thrown around loosely!)

A QUICK GUIDE TO THE RATING SYSTEM

Shot Power obviously speaks to the power of a shot. How hard can someone hit it? That's the question here.

Shot Accuracy refers to the pinpoint accuracy, the placement, of one's shot.

Scoring Prowess refers to the vibe a player has, combined with their overall scoring percentage, and their likelihood to score.

Dribbling refers to a player's ability to use creative dribbling as a means to 1) defensively get away from opposition and hold the ball for possession and 2) to offensively cause problems for other teams.

Speed obviously refers to outright speed covering a distance of over 40 yards or more. A distinction should be made between speed and quickness.

Quickness refers to one's ability to maneuver fast in a short time over a range of up to 40 yards.

Agility calls into question one's ability to maneuver comfortably forward, backward, and from side to side while using speed and quickness, both with and without the ball.

Skill Level represents skill on the ball: dribbling, passing, shooting, trapping, and overall touch.

Technique refers to the elegance of one's body while executing various skills.

Passing Vision refers to a player's ability to see the field and deliver smart passes to allow teammates to continue the move.

Passing Touch refers to the "weight of the ball" with respect to delivering a pass, whether it be directly at a player or by leading them.

Passing Placement is obviously related to Passing Accuracy, but slightly different in that placement has to do with *an idea of* where a player wants to pass the ball (e.g., 10 yards in front of a teammate for them to run on to it). The next step would be the practicality of placing the ball and whether the player placed the ball with good accuracy.

Passing Accuracy refers to accurately passing the ball to a given target.

Aerial Ability refers to a player's head-ball ability particularly around goal and for both offense and defense.

Toughness refers to one's ability to bounce back from being tackled or fouled.

Will to Win refers to one's ability to win each moment on the field, be it dribbling or passing, and the overall winning vibe a player has.

Soccer IQ refers to a player's knowledge of the game and how well they read the field. Do they make their teammates look good? Is their vision good? Do they choose the right moments to dribble? Do they orchestrate possession play with superior ability? These are a few questions that come into play with respect to Soccer IQ.

LIONEL MESSI (ARGENTINA)

Shot Power: 9-9.2

Shot Accuracy: 10

Scoring Prowess: 10

Dribbling: 11

Speed: 8*

Quickness: 9**

Agility: 10

Skill Level: 11

Technique: 11

Passing Vision: 10

Passing Touch: 10

Passing Placement: 9.9

Passing Accuracy: 9.9

Aerial Ability: 5

Toughness: 9.9

Will To Win: 10

Soccer IQ: 10

Brief Superstar Description

Rosario, Argentina—a city just a short drive northwest of Buenos Aires—became synonymous with perhaps the greatest player of all time: **Lionel Messi**. Messi might be getting older, yet, based on the passionate adoration that Argentinian fans bestow upon

* As an aging player, Messi's speed has declined somewhat in recent years. In his prime, Messi's speed was 9.9.

** As with Messi's speed, his quickness has declined somewhat. However, in his prime Messi's quickness was an 11.

him, it could be assumed that he'll return for FIFA World Cup 2026 in North America.

For years now, Messi has been the face of the German powerhouse soccer brand Adidas. "The athletic apparel company is not only the official sponsor for Argentina's national team through 2022, Messi also has a separate deal with Adidas worth \$10 million a year.¹"

His skills, shot, passes, quickness, and ability to make something happen are all at the highest level. He is not quite as quick as "Messi 2006," yet his natural talent, which comes across with ease, can hardly be repudiated. The only thing holding Messi back at this point is Father Time. Still, this great player is only in his mid-30s, the 2021 Ballon d'Or winner, and can still wheel and deal with every touch of the ball. He's never showcased fancy moves, but he has a gift to dribble around opponents with change of direction and acceleration unlike but a few others in the history of the game; he's shifty, smart, and intuitive. Always a threat. Currently, his passing ability has usurped his dribbling skill, and he places the ball into the paths of teammates with touch and precision like that of Platini and Ronaldinho. If this is his last World Cup, fans should know that he is one of the three greatest players in the history of the game along with Pele and Maradona. Messi's skills will be on full display as he carries on the rich tradition of Argentinian talent.

NEYMAR (BRAZIL)

Shot Power: 8.7-9

Shot Accuracy: 10

Scoring Prowess: 11

Dribbling: 11

Speed: 10

Quickness: 10

Agility: 10

Skill Level: 11

Technique: 11

Passing Vision: 9.9

Passing Touch: 9.9

Passing Placement: 9.9

Passing Accuracy: 9.8

Aerial Ability: 8.1

Toughness: 9

Will to Win: 9.9

Soccer IQ: 10

Brief Superstar Description

Back when Pele and Maradona roamed the field as the two greats, Puma-brand boots were on their feet. They made Puma cool. Then there was a time in the post-Maradona era when Puma was worn by many, yet a true superstar was not one of them. In 2020, **Neymar** made the bold move to vacate his time with Nike and sign with the German sportswear company dynamo: Puma. *Forbes Middle East* reported, “Earlier in August UOL announced that Neymar and Nike failed to reach a deal on how much the player would be paid by the company in exchange for renewing his contract.”² Furthermore, “It also disclosed the relationship between the football player and Nike had been soured for months.”³ It was a huge multimillion-dollar deal for Puma who agreed to pay Neymar in the neighborhood of \$29.1 million per year! Puma is, indeed, cool again thanks to one of soccer’s biggest stars in the world, the goal-scoring magician from Brazil: Neymar da Silva Santos Júnior. “Neymar is a social media sensation and has the title of the second most popular athlete on social media with a total of 244 million followers on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.”⁴ All things considered, “his earnings in 2020, including endorsements, were estimated to be \$95.5 million.”⁵ The Brazilian star is also a passionate video gamer. Yet the shoes are the focal point. The shoes in question, one of Puma’s proudest moments in the world of soccer, will be gliding upon the perfectly cut grass of the soccer field with grace, almost perfect technique, showmanship, dexterity, speed, and quickness. Interestingly, as one of the best players in the world for years now, Neymar has suffered injuries and is shadowed by Ronaldo and Messi, so he hasn’t quite achieved the title of world’s greatest player. *If* Neymar can win a World Cup for Brazil, he will go down as perhaps the greatest player in the country’s history.

LUIS SUAREZ (URUGUAY)

Shot Power: 9.5

Shot Accuracy: 9.9-10

Scoring Prowess: 9.9-10

Dribbling: 9.3

Speed: 8.6

Quickness: 9.2

Agility: 10

Skill Level: 9.8

Technique: 9.8

Passing Vision: 9.4

Passing Touch: 9.4

Passing Placement: 9.4

Passing Accuracy: 9.4

Aerial Ability: 8.3

Toughness: 8.1

Will to Win: 10

Soccer IQ: 10

Brief Superstar Description

Luis “El Pistolero” Suarez is truly a gifted scorer and ranks as one of the top forwards of all time. Around the box, he pounces on scoring chances; he has a crafty dribbling touch that moves the ball with purpose into dangerous areas, usually just out of reach of an opponent; he uses his muscular frame effectively by bopping defenders with his hips to get an edge on using space to create shots on goal. And his shots on goal—lethal with accuracy and typically driven low (a goalkeeper’s nightmare!). For a forward of his talent, his best years were spent with Barcelona as part of the Suarez–Messi–Neymar frontline—a rare combination of brilliant play. How far will he go this World Cup? Hard to say as his talents are underutilized with a less-than-spectacular Uruguayan side.

CRISTIANO RONALDO (PORTUGAL)

Shot Power: 10

Shot Accuracy: 9.9-10

Scoring Prowess: 10

Dribbling: 10

*Speed: 9.3**

*Quickness: 9.7***

* During his prime Ronaldo’s speed was a 10.

** During his prime Ronaldo’s quickness was an 11.

Agility: 10

Skill Level: 11

Technique: 10

Passing Vision: 9.8

Passing Touch: 9.7

Passing Placement: 9.6

Passing Accuracy: 9.7

Aerial Ability: 11

*Toughness: 7**

Will to Win: 10

Soccer IQ: 10

Brief Superstar Description

Cristiano Ronaldo—a human Lamborghini—was once best known for his speed and quickness, though currently his value lies in his experience and wisdom. The brilliant winger is likely going to be linked with the greatest players never to win a FIFA World Cup. Such company includes Matthias Sindelar, Alfredo Di Stefano, Ferenc Puskas, George Best, Johan Cruyff, Socrates, a basketful of English talent since 1966 (such as Bryan Robson, Gary Lineker, and Wayne Rooney), Platini, Marco van Basten, George Weah, Carlos Valderrama, Hristo Stoichkov, and Ariel Ortega. However, this should not take away from his individual skill, which ranks among the best. As one of the richest athletes on earth, Ronaldo (Nike's billion-dollar man) has a European Championship, which he dropped out of with an injury, but he has not yet attained the ultimate prize, the FIFA World Cup Trophy. This might be the aging superstar's last World Cup, though he might have a place with Portugal in some capacity in 2026. For now, he still has that creative spark to make a play happen at any given moment, and all eyes will be focused on his every touch of the ball, which is still electric. As for free kicks, the right-footed magician always has a few tricks up his sleeve, including a deadly dipping strike that constantly causes problems for keepers.

* Ronaldo is often unfairly lambasted for his toughness or lack thereof. It should be noted that despite "whining a lot" he does take a lot of fouls.

LUKA MODRIC (CROATIA)*Shot Power: 9**Shot Accuracy: 9.4**Scoring Prowess: 8.4**Dribbling: 9.3**Speed: 7.3**Quickness: 8.9**Agility: 10**Skill Level: 10**Technique: 10**Passing Vision: 10**Passing Touch: 10**Passing Placement: 10**Passing Accuracy: 10**Aerial Ability: 5**Toughness: 8-9**Will to Win: 10**Soccer IQ: 10***Brief Superstar Description**

Not the quickest around, nor the fastest, **Luka Modric**—the pride of Croatia—is a passing savant. Any pass he makes looks elegant. The placement is pristine, the touch is light. His vision is phenomenal, and his ability to link passes together with precision touch, timing, and accuracy is next level. He’s a gifted possession-oriented field general, full of fortitude, with a knack for making teammates look good. His vision and eagerness to share the ball make him a special threat; he reads the field and each moment of a game with an intuitive eye that allows him to control the tempo of play with dangerous consequences for opponents.

In 2018 he led Croatia to a second-place finish in the FIFA World Cup, and he holds the distinction of breaking the 10-year cycle between Cristiano Ronaldo and Messi for the Ballon d’Or which he won in 2018; in that same year, he also won the Best FIFA Men’s Player award.

Furthermore, he won the 2022 UEFA Champions League final with Real Madrid. This occurred just months before the 2022 FIFA World Cup. With Modric on the field, Croatia is in a good place.

ANTOINE GRIEZMANN (FRANCE)

Shot Power: 9

Shot Accuracy: 9.9-10

Scoring Prowess: 10

Dribbling: 9.8

Speed: 9.3

Quickness: 9.6

Agility: 10

Skill Level: 10

Technique: 10

Passing Vision: 9.8

Passing Touch: 9.8

Passing Placement: 9.8

Passing Accuracy: 9.8

Aerial Ability: 7

Toughness: 8

Will to Win: 10

Soccer IQ: 10

Brief Superstar Description

Antoine Griezmann, whose countenance goes from calm and steady to outright passionate upon scoring a goal, has been steadily encroaching on France's all-time scoring list and is soon to take the number one spot which until now has been held by Henry. Griezmann has superstar playmaking ability that rests in buildup play with teammates, smart dribbling in tight areas, and a creative awareness as he finds spaces around the box to deliver telling, accurate, and cultured shots on goal. Everything with Griezmann is smart, crafty, and skillful. He's a forward with an innate sense for creating magic around the box using a one-two combination with teammates and dangerous passes.

MBAPPÉ (FRANCE)

Shot Power: 9.9

Shot Accuracy: 9.7-9.8

Scoring Prowess: 10

Dribbling: 10

Speed: 10

Quickness: 10

Agility: 10

Skill Level: 9.9

Technique: 9.9

Passing Vision: 9.6

Passing Touch: 9.6

Passing Placement: 9.6

Passing Accuracy: 9.6

Aerial Ability: 8

Toughness: 8

Will to Win: 10

Soccer IQ: 10

Brief Superstar Description

Mbappé—who is agile, in stellar shape, and about 5'10"—often bounces forward with electric, formidable, and seemingly unbeatable speed. Determined, he shakes off defenders on his way down the line into open space to create opportunity for a shot on goal, a piercing low-driven strike—a nightmare for keepers. Typically, the outcome of his dashing runs will mean a goal, leaving opposition's fans to commiserate over what just happened. Now in his early 20s and already a 2018 World Cup champion, the French star is an integral part of Les Bleus in Qatar, and his scoring prowess will be counted on both by his teammates and his supporters back home.

HARRY KANE (ENGLAND)

Shot Power: 9.9

Shot Accuracy: 9.9-10

Scoring Prowess: 10

Dribbling: 8.5

Speed: 7.5

Quickness: 8

Agility: 10

Skill Level: 10

Technique: 10

Passing Vision: 9.6

Passing Touch: 9.7

Passing Placement: 9.7

Passing Accuracy: 9.7

Aerial Ability: 9.4

Toughness: 9

Will to Win: 10

Soccer IQ: 10

Brief Superstar Description

Harry Kane is one of those special forwards who isn't fast, but who uses his body exceptionally well to gain position on defenders, hold them off, all while constructively—and certainly methodically—setting up the next move for his teammates. Call it an “innate skill.” It's certainly one coaches try to teach but to routinely pull it off is another thing altogether. When it comes to finishing, Kane is a threat to goalkeepers, and his every touch around goal is clinical, his movement is clinical, his finishing is clinical...be it on the ground or by air, Kane is going to get the ball in the net. The result often is magical.

EDEN HAZARD (BELGIUM)

Shot Power: 9.8

Shot Accuracy: 9.8-9.9

Scoring Prowess: 10

Dribbling: 11

Speed: 9.6

Quickness: 11

Agility: 10

Skill Level: 11

Technique: 10

Passing Vision: 9.7

Passing Touch: 9.7

Passing Placement: 9.7

Passing Accuracy: 9.7

Aerial Ability: 5-6

Toughness: 7.2

Will to Win: 10

Soccer IQ: 10

Brief Superstar Description

Eden Hazard has a propensity for shifting past bewildered defenders with extraordinary technique, explosive quickness, change of pace, and change of direction that is second to none. This ability sets him apart as a superstar in Qatar. When not on injured reserve, Hazard is a special talent worth the price of admission.

He has been in the “best player in the world” conversation for a few years now. However, those pesky leaders, Messi and Ronaldo, have had something to say about it still. Others in the mix have been Neymar and Mo Salah. Still, Eden Hazard is truly a great player in his own right. His skill and technique will be on full display throughout the tournament. For Hazard, Qatar represents yet another opportunity to remind everyone just how talented he is.

KEVIN DE BRUYNE (BELGIUM)

Shot Power: 10

Shot Accuracy: 9.9-10

Scoring Prowess: 10

Dribbling: 9.8

Speed: 9.2

Quickness: 9.4

Agility: 10

Skill Level: 10

Technique: 10

Passing Vision: 9.8

Passing Touch: 9.7

Passing Placement: 9.7

*Passing Accuracy: 9.7**Will to Win: 10**Aerial Ability: 7-8**Soccer IQ: 10**Toughness: 8***Brief Superstar Description**

His play is purely clinical. It seems anything a coach would want in a player can be found in **Kevin De Bruyne**. He's deadly on counters; he's brilliant in possession play; his passing vision, technique, placement, accuracy, and timing are immaculate. The average viewer may not see anything special, but that is often the sign of real talent—they make it look easy! Part of De Bruyne's brilliance is his ability to play with grace; every move he makes is effortless. In addition, his shot is like a bullet from a gun, and, more often than not, it's driven low, making him a real threat to his opponents.

MEMPHIS DEPAY (NETHERLANDS)*Shot Power: 9.7**Passing Vision: 9.6**Shot Accuracy: 9.6**Passing Touch: 9.6**Scoring Prowess: 9.3**Passing Placement: 9.6**Dribbling: 9.3**Passing Accuracy: 9.6**Speed: 9.6**Aerial Ability: 8**Quickness: 9.7**Toughness: 8**Agility: 10**Will to Win: 9.8**Skill Level: 10**Soccer IQ: 10**Technique: 10***Brief Superstar Description**

Memphis Depay is like a middleweight boxer: fast, nimble, and powerfully built. He skillfully presses his opponents, coming at them from all angles, usually getting a shot off. With over 60 goals with Lyon (where he sat comfortably in French professional soccer from 2017-21), he eventually made the move to Barcelona in 2021 to show off his skills on a larger stage, validating his status as a superstar. Since 2013, the 5'9" forward also has scored over 30 goals for his home nation.

TIMO WERNER (GERMANY)

Shot Power: 9.9

Shot Accuracy: 9.8

Scoring Prowess: 9.7

Dribbling: 9.3

Speed: 9.5

Quickness: 9.7

Agility: 10

Skill Level: 10

Technique: 10

Passing Vision: 9.6

Passing Touch: 9.6

Passing Placement: 9.6

Passing Accuracy: 9.6

Aerial Ability: 8.5

Toughness: 8

Will to Win: 9.8

Soccer IQ: 10

Brief Superstar Description

Timo Werner—nicknamed “Turbo Timo”—possesses speed, quickness, and good acceleration. This combination has helped him score many goals throughout his career—78 with RB Leipzig before his move to Chelsea in 2020. He’s a clever and formidable German forward who can step back and join link-up play with mids and defenders during possession. All the while, his speed and awareness during the offensive buildup give him advantage over defenders around the box where his shooting is dangerous both from distance and up close.

ROBERT LEWANDOWSKI (POLAND)

Shot Power: 9.8

Shot Accuracy: 10

Scoring Prowess: 11

Dribbling: 8

Speed: 8

Quickness: 8.6

Agility: 10

Skill Level: 10

Technique: 10

Passing Vision: 9.8

Passing Touch: 9.7

Passing Placement: 9.6

Passing Accuracy: 9.6

Aerial Ability: 10

Toughness: 8.8

Will to Win: 10

Soccer IQ: 10

Brief Superstar Description

Robert Lewandowski—lean, mean, and sporting an impressive six-pack—is a goal-scoring mega-force! He’s a classical technician around goal, a clinical finisher with accuracy, a strong shot with both feet, good in the air, and he has an uncanny ability to score with confidence. Don’t look for super speed, outright quickness, or fancy dribbling from him as the Polish wonder is a number nine without those attributes. Rather he’s a natural scorer similar to Ian Rush. What’s more, Lewandowski can successfully hold off defenders with his back to goal, allowing for a strong buildup in possession. This, in turn, creates solid chances for him to score more often. With over 70 goals for Poland, he’s a scoring wizard who will go down as one of the all-time greats in his position.

GARETH BALE (WALES)

Shot Power: 9.9

Shot Accuracy: 9.9

Scoring Prowess: 9.9

Dribbling: 9.8

Speed: 9.9

Quickness: 9.6

Agility: 10

Skill Level: 9.9

Technique: 9.9

Passing Vision: 9.7

Passing Touch: 9.7

Passing Placement: 9.6

Passing Accuracy: 9.6

Aerial Ability: 9.9

Toughness: 8.8

Will to Win: 10

Soccer IQ: 10

Brief Superstar Description

Gareth Bale is an outright gamer who exhibits powerful speed down the wing, skillful play, a strong shot, and the ability to create scoring chances for himself and others. With Bale on the field, there’s a feeling that he can break a play open at any given moment. While Wales might not pull its weight in the tournament, Bale will be a star to watch. Wales is a quality side, yet it’s a smaller nation with a weak track record in World Cup

competition. If anyone can lead the team forward on a miraculous run, it will be Gareth Bale.

KOKE (SPAIN)

Shot Power: 9

Shot Accuracy: 9.5

*Scoring Prowess: 5**

Dribbling: 9.8

Speed: 9.3

Quickness: 9.6

Agility: 10

Skill Level: 10

Technique: 10

Passing Vision: 9.9

Passing Touch: 9.9

Passing Placement: 9.9

Passing Accuracy: 9.9

Aerial Ability: 6-7

Toughness: 8

Will to Win: 10

Soccer IQ: 10

Brief Superstar Description

Koke has been lauded by Xavi and others as Spain's future in the midfield. Like Xavi, he is a passer's passer, one who looks to set up teammates within Spain's dominant passing attack that favors out-possessing opponents. While Koke might not sparkle on the stage with fancy Garrincha-like dribbling moves, he will lead Spain's attack with fluid, brilliant, methodical, and technically superior passing. As he likely won't be the main goal scorer, any and all goals will likely result from his possession play.

PEDRI (SPAIN)

Shot Power: 9

Shot Accuracy: 9.5

Scoring Prowess: 5

Dribbling: 9.8

Speed: 9.4

Quickness: 9.6

Agility: 10

Skill Level: 10

Technique: 10

Passing Vision: 9.9

* This is tricky for Koke. With the national team, he's not a scorer but assists his teammates in scoring. Whereas with his club side, Atletico Madrid, he's done more scoring.

Passing Touch: 9.9

Toughness: 8

Passing Placement: 9.9

Will to Win: 10

Passing Accuracy: 9.9

Soccer IQ: 10

Aerial Ability: 5-6

Brief Superstar Description

Typically, **Pedri** is a midfielder. Still, he's also comfortable operating out of central areas and out wide. He is almost what one could call a "free player" as he roams the field and can be found making play options in wide areas and even making penetrating runs at times. Within Spain's immaculate passing network, Pedri has the luxury to find moments here and there to punch holes in defenses around the touchline and make dangerous runs toward goal. Pedri, with his technical ability, passing skill, and field vision, is one of the world's fastest growing stars.

CHRISTIAN PULISIC (UNITED STATES)

Shot Power: 9.3

Passing Vision: 9.7

Shot Accuracy: 9.8-9.9

Passing Touch: 9.7

Scoring Prowess: 9.5

Passing Placement: 9.7

Dribbling: 9.8

Passing Accuracy: 9.7

Speed: 9.8

Aerial Ability: 6-7

Quickness: 10

Toughness: 9

Agility: 10

Will to Win: 10

Skill Level: 10

Soccer IQ: 10

Technique: 9.9

Brief Superstar Description

Christian Pulisic—a confident player—is like a mix between Landon Donovan and Clint Dempsey with a tiny hint of George Best.

Pulisic can operate in tight spaces with very defined dribbling ability, and he can also break open a 50-yard solo run

to goal. Always dangerous, Pulisic is faster than Dempsey and about a half step slower than Donovan in the open field. As two of the greatest players in US history, Donovan and Dempsey are getting a run for their money with Pulisic. Donovan was an outright speedster, world-class wheels at that, and very good at going north to south. Dempsey was not fast or excessively quick but very crafty. Dempsey, like Xavi and Carlos Valderrama, had the ability to make a simple pass that had flow and created momentum for teammates; it always felt like there was something going on when he had the ball.* Bottom line: Pulisic has speed to cover the full field like Donovan and the craftiness of Dempsey. There is already talk of Pulisic being the best player in the history of the USMNT. Perhaps even better than Donovan and Dempsey.

Soaring forward in the blink of an eye, Pulisic creates opportunities to step past a defender or two, while always on the lookout for a clever pass to a teammate which places defenders on their heels.

Pulisic's natural ability to dart around sets him apart from the class.

JESUS CORONA (MEXICO)

Shot Power: 9.1

Shot Accuracy: 9.3

Scoring Prowess: 9.1

Dribbling: 10

Speed: 9.3

Quickness: 9.6

Agility: 10

Skill Level: 10

Technique: 10

Passing Vision: 9.6

Passing Touch: 9.6

Passing Placement: 9.6

* Was Dempsey a world-class passer of the ball like Xavi and Valderrama? Not quite in their class. For starters, he was a different position as a forward and attacking midfielder. Yet he, like many others, possessed some of their qualities with respect to passing.

Passing Accuracy: 9.6

Will to Win: 8

Aerial Ability: 6

Soccer IQ: 10

Toughness: 8

Brief Superstar Description

Within CONCACAF, Mexico—El Tri—is the coolest kid in school. When Mexico plays in the US, the fans come out in droves. If players show up to an event, a restaurant, anywhere, they are mobbed by overly enthusiastic supporters. Right now, the player on Mexico’s roster with the most superstar glitter is **Jesus Corona**, or “Tecatito.” The nickname refers to the beer Tecate which is different from his last name Corona, another beer. Mr. Tecatito—the elusive 5’9” winger who signed with FC Porto in 2015—is as cool as it gets in all of CONCACAF right now. When he touches the ball, electricity is in the air. His dribbling is marvelous; the feeling one gets when he heads down the line is that something spectacular could happen at any moment—and it often does. Tecatito’s skill is remarkable. El Tri has a gift in Corona who works his magic out wide.

ALPHONSO DAVIES (CANADA)

Shot Power: 8.3

Passing Vision: 8.8

Shot Accuracy: 8

Passing Touch: 8.8

Scoring Prowess: 8

Passing Placement: 8.8

Dribbling: 8.9

Passing Accuracy: 8.8

Speed: 10

Aerial Ability: 8.6

Quickness: 10

Toughness: 8.9

Agility: 10

Will to Win: 10

Skill Level: 8.8

Soccer IQ: 9

Technique: 8.8

Brief Superstar Description

Alphonso Davies is fast. He’s one of those speedsters with a boost, especially around the box where he has a way of zipping

around defenders. He's played with the clubs Vancouver Whitecaps and Bayern Munich. He's a versatile left fullback, left wing, and he adds attacking value to his team. So far, Davies has achieved a lot, including winning the Golden Boot Award at the 2017 CONCACAF Gold Cup, becoming a 2018 MLS All-Star, and being named the Bundesliga Rookie of the Season in 2019-20. As Canada works its way through Qatar in very unfamiliar territory (a FIFA World Cup!), Davies, with Tajon Buchanan and Cyle Larin, will add punch to the offense.

SON HEUNG-MIN (SOUTH KOREA)

Shot Power: 9.4

Shot Accuracy: 9.9-10

Scoring Prowess: 9.4

Dribbling: 8.9

Speed: 9

Quickness: 9.5

Agility: 10

Skill Level: 9.5

Technique: 9.8

Passing Vision: 9

Passing Touch: 9

Passing Placement: 9

Passing Accuracy: 9

Aerial Ability: 8.6

Toughness: 8.9

Will to Win: 10

Soccer IQ: 10

Brief Superstar Description

In the company of many talented South Korean players, **Son Heung-min** is the real deal in the forward position who has been making big news in Europe with over 75 goals scored at Tottenham. He's also a scoring sensation for his national team, having hit the 30-goal mark and climbing. At 6'0" he can play forward and out wide with good speed, finishing technique, and scoring instincts that set him apart as an attacking threat.

TAKUMI MINAMINO (JAPAN)

Shot Power: 10

Shot Accuracy: 9.6

Scoring Prowess: 9

Dribbling: 9.1

Speed: 9

Quickness: 9.5