

England Sits Atop Group B, U.S. & Wales Draw, Qatar Become First Host Nation To Lose Opening Match In World Cup History

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GROUP B

UNITED STATES 1, WALES 1

Gareth Bale, who recently helped Los Angeles Football Club win the Major League Soccer championship, converted an 82nd-minute penalty kick to give Wales a 1-1 draw with the United States in both teams' Group B opener at the FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

The penalty was given when Bale was brought down in the box by Walker Zimmerman, with Bale's powerful shot eluding goalie Matt Walker to bring the Dragons level. Both teams had good opportunities to bring home a winner, but couldn't do so, with the Yanks being forced to settle for the draw and the shared points.

In the first half, Tim Weah scored off a brilliant pass from Christian Pulisic in the 35th minute to give the United States the lead to climax a brilliantly played first half by the Americans. Wales, making their first appearance in the World Cup since 1958, had the much better of the play in the second half to come away with the draw.

Two players on the USMNT World Cup roster reign from the St. Louis area. Defender Tim Ream and forward Josh Sargent both graduated from St. Dominic High School in O'Fallon, Missouri. Both of them made the start against Wales and played some significant minutes in the draw.

ENGLAND 6, IRAN 2

Bukayo Saka's brace (two goals) and a goal from 19-year-old first-time player Jude Bellingham sparked England to their 6-2 thrashing of Iran in the first game of the day on Monday.

It was a tight game at the start, but Bellingham's goal in the 35th minute helped to break open the gates for the Three Lions, with Saka scoring his first goal in the 43rd minute and Raheem Sterling scoring in the first minute of first-half stoppage time to give England a 3-0 halftime lead. Saka scored his second goal in the 62nd minute and both Marcus Rashford in the 71st minute and Jack Grealish in the 90th minute completed England's scoring. Rashford and Grealish were both subbed into the game in the 70th minute. Rashford scored with his first touch of the ball.

Mehdi Taremi had both of Iran's goals, in the 65th minute and on a penalty kick in the 13th minute of second-half stoppage time.

The results put England on top of Group B with three points, the United States and Wales tied for second with one point each, and Iran in fourth place with no points. The Yanks play against the Three Lions Friday afternoon at 1 p.m. St. Louis time, with the game televised on Fox.

GROUP A

NETHERLANDS 2, SENEGAL 0

In the second match of Group A, the Oranje got two late goals from Cody Gakpo in the 84th minute and Davy Klaassen in the ninth minute of second-half stoppage time to take the win over the Dakau Lions, the current holder of the African Nation's Cup championship.

The two late goals broke open a tight, defensive battle in which the Netherlands took home all three points to begin their quest for a long-awaited first championship, having near misses in 1974, 1978, and 2010.

SUNDAY'S RESULT

GROUP A

ECUADOR 2, QATAR 0

The World Cup got started on Sunday, with Ecuador dealing the host country a loss on a first-half brace (two goals) by Enner Valencia, converting a 16th-minute penalty kick before scoring in the 31st minute to clinch the three points for Ecuador.

Qatar, becoming the first host country since Italy in 1934 to make its debut in the World Cup, also became the first host nation to lose its opening match in the 92-year history of the event.

The tournament continues Tuesday and Wednesday, with the final coming on Dec. 18.