

INTERNATIONAL QATAR 2022

– CANADA COMPETES IN THE 22ND FIFA WORLD CUP



It's the most popular sports event on Earth. Some five billion fans – over half the world's population – will watch it and cheer for their favourite team. This major athletic display takes place only once every four years. But it's not the Olympic Games. It's the FIFA World Cup.

QATAR 2022

And the latest go-round is about to kick off. The 22nd FIFA World Cup tournament begins in the Middle East country of Qatar on November 20. Over four weeks, 32 men's national teams will compete in 64 matches. They will bring the world's best soccer to eight stadiums and to fans around the world.

Teams play for their nation and for a share of \$440 million (US) in prize money. That's the most

ever in the World Cup's 92-year history. The tournament ends on December 18. The champions will raise up the World Cup trophy and bag \$42 million (US).

As the host nation, Qatar is guaranteed a **berth** in the competition. The other 211 FIFA member countries competed against one another over the last three years. Winners clinched one of the 31 remaining spots.

FIFA divides the 32 qualifying teams into eight separate groups. Teams play one game against each of the three other members in their group. The top two teams from each group then move on to the playoff stage. At that point, the competition becomes do-or-die. Just the winning teams advance until two remain in the final.

Only eight nations have ever won the World Cup: Germany, Brazil, Argentina, Spain, Uruguay, France, England, and Italy. It's a tough contest. So even qualifying for the tournament is a badge of honour.

DID YOU KNOW...?

This is the first World Cup not held in May, June, or July. It is taking place in the autumn due to Qatar's intense summer heat.

CANADA GETS TO PLAY!

This time, we've earned that badge. After a long dry spell, Canada's team, nicknamed Les Rouges, made the cut. The players qualified after beating Jamaica 4-0 in March before 30,000 thrilled fans in Toronto. So for the first time in 36 years,

DEFINITIONS

BERTH: a spot or a place on a team or in a tournament

FIFA: Fédération Internationale de Football Association – the international governing body of soccer. (The game that Canadians call 'soccer' is known as 'football' outside North America.)



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we'll be playing with the best footballers on the planet.

"When I first took over I said, 'We're going to qualify for the World Cup. We've got to give this country something to believe in,'" head coach John Herdman beamed after the Toronto win.

IT'S AN UPHILL BATTLE...

What are Canada's chances of winning the trophy? It won't be easy. We face a tough first round.

FIFA determines the initial match-ups. We'll have to do well against Belgium, Croatia, and Morocco to advance to the second round. Belgium is ranked number two. Croatia was a 2018 runner-up for the Cup. It is ranked 16th. Morocco is ranked 24th. It was the only unbeaten country in African qualifying rounds. Canada is ranked 38th.

"We're the underdogs," defender and midfielder Alphonso Davies admitted. "It doesn't matter. We're there to compete – and we will."

...BUT THERE'S HOPE

Still, we have reasons to hope for a strong outcome. Canada has a great group of talented players. They could cause an upset.

Mr. Davies is one such star. He plays for a German team, and has picked up a number of trophies there. Another

standout, forward Jonathan David, has been a powerhouse goal scorer playing in Lille, France and Canada. For his part, forward Cyle Larin currently has 25 international goals to his credit. That makes him Canada's top world scorer. And team captain Atiba Hutchinson was once Player of the Year in Denmark.

"We've got a lot of confidence and we believe that we can do well," Mr. Hutchinson said.

QATAR GEARS UP

This is the first time the World Cup will be staged in the Middle East.

Qatar is tiny. At 11,610 square kilometres, it's about twice the size of Prince Edward Island. It has built stadiums, five-lane highways, and a new subway system for the occasion.

As a result, this will be the most expensive World Cup in history. It will cost an astonishing \$220 billion (US).

More than 1.3 million fans are expected to attend the tournament. That's almost half of Qatar's population of 2.9 million. Hosting so many visitors will be a struggle. Even renting a tent in a campsite could cost up to \$380 per night.

QATAR'S MIGRANT WORKER TRAGEDY

The human rights group Amnesty International says Qatar is hosting the World Cup at a terrible cost. According to one news report, since 2010 more than 6500 laborers from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka have died helping to build the stadiums, hotels, and other structures for the event. Critics say the poorly-paid migrants were forced to work under dangerous conditions and in extreme heat. Many have been injured or died as a result.

The worldwide soccer players' union FIFPRO sent an open letter criticizing Qatar for its treatment of the migrants.

Amnesty International wants FIFA to set aside at least \$440 million to help the abused workers. That's the same sum as the World Cup cash prize.

THE AMERICAS IN 2026!

Next time, it will be our turn to welcome the world. Canada, the U.S., and Mexico won a bid to jointly host the 2026 World Cup! And with four more years of practice, there may be no stopping Les Rouges.

Meanwhile, let's cheer them on this year. ★



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What does **FIFA** stand for? How many countries belong to this organization?

2. Which soccer tournament will take place in Qatar from November 20 to December 18?

3. Why is the tournament being held at this time?

4. Describe the popularity of this international competition. Explain.

5. How many teams will compete?

6. Describe how the World Cup tournament works in the first round.

7. Describe how the World Cup tournament works in the second round.

8. List at least three important facts about the host country.

9. How much will it cost to host this tournament?

10. What concerns have some human rights groups expressed related to the 2022 World Cup?



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QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

1. The article quotes Canadian defender and midfielder Alphonso Davies who says, “*We’re the underdogs. At the end of the day, it doesn’t matter. We’re there to compete – and we will.*”

How might the fact that the Canadian team is ranked 38th in the world, and that it is going into this event as the underdog, affect the mindset of the team? Give reasons to support your ideas.

2. Often, professional athletes use their platform to support causes that they believe in. Several 2022 World Cup team captains have been campaigning to be able to wear rainbow armbands during the tournament to protest Qatar’s discrimination against the LGBTQ community:

<https://www.cbc.ca/sports/soccer/world-cup-captains-rainbow-armbands-1.6590003>

As you see it, for what reasons should athletes competing for their country in international competitions express their support for causes that may be politically sensitive? For what reasons should they not? Support your thinking with examples.
