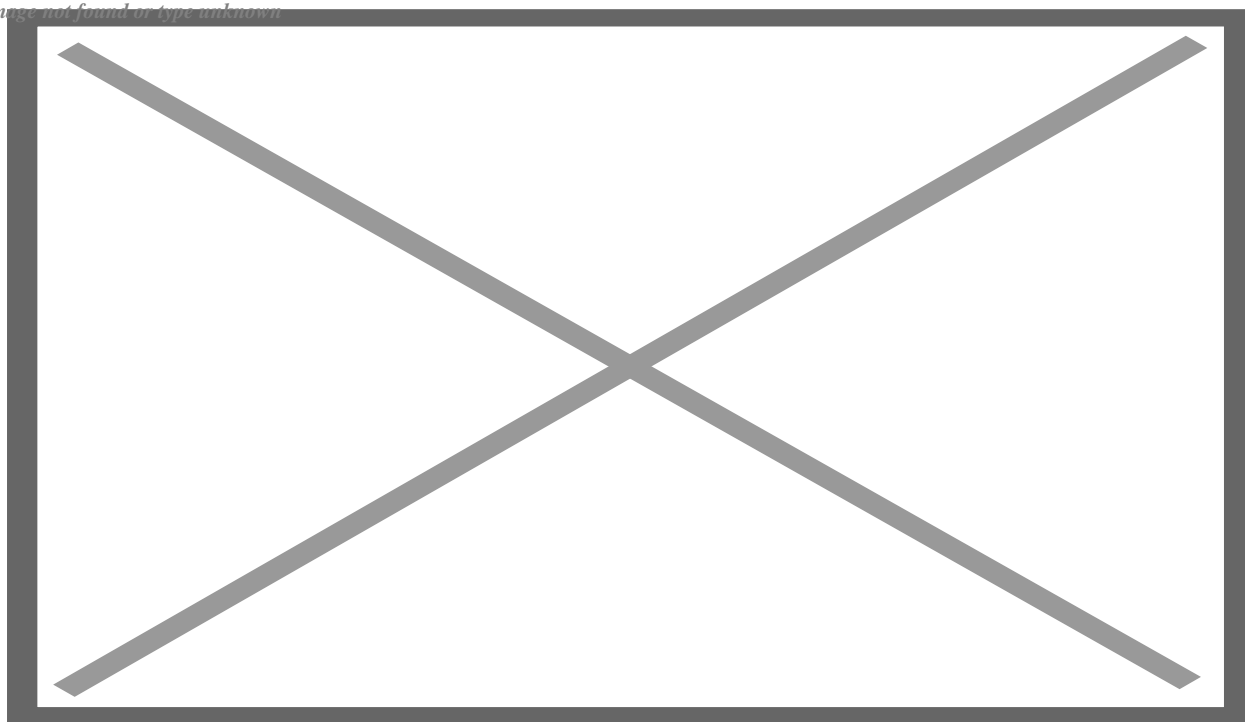


Brazil to topple Croatia in Qatar quarterfinals

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Croatia-Brazil

Doha, December 9 (PL) - Brazil will appeal here today to the strength and forcefulness of its attack to break down the resistance of Croatia in the start of the quarterfinals of the Qatar 2022 soccer World Cup. The South Americans start as favorites after their 4-1 drubbing of South Korea in the round of 16 to arrive more rested than the Europeans, who needed a penalty shootout to beat the Japanese (3-0) after drawing in regular time and extra time.

Since the 2008 European Championship, the Balkans have always won a knockout round at major tournaments on penalties, with seven of their last eight knockout matches going to extra time. Only the final of Russia 2018 ended in 90 minutes.

The Canarinha will be hoping to break that streak after handling the match against the Asians with complete authority, scoring four goals in little more than half an hour in order to dose their game.

That match marked the return of Neymar da Silva after missing two games with a sprained right ankle, and he scored from the penalty spot with great composure to move within one goal of equaling Pele as

the top scorer in the history of the pentamonarchs of the world.

He has also scored three of the last five goals scored by the South American side against the Croatian team, which has lost four of its five World Cup challenges against South American teams, two of them against the Auriverde.

Brazilians Eder Militao, Bruno Guimaraes and Frederico Rodrigues de Paula "Fred" are all cautioned and would miss a hypothetical semifinal against either the Netherlands or Argentina.

Left back Alex Sandro, now rehabilitated from muscular discomfort, could start. If he does not play, Danilo Luiz will play on the left and Militao will return to right back.

Croatia has a situation because coach Zlatko Dalic will bring back Borna Sosa, who has been suffering from a virus in recent days and was ruled out of the match against Japan.

However, it is possible that Dalic will not start him against the Brazilians and will keep the defensive line that was successful against the Japanese.

Full-back Josip Stanisic will be the only injury absentee in the Croatian squad due to a muscle ailment in his right leg.

Dalic is sure to start with goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic and will keep the backline with Josip Stanisic, Dejan Lovren, Josko Gvardiol and Josip Juranovic. The midfield is also fixed with Luka Modric, Mateo Kovacic and Marcelo Brozovic.

On Friday, Andrej Kramaric is expected to start to accompany Ivan Perisic in attack, although Nicola Vlasic, who started the tournament in the eleven until he got injured, or Marko Livaja may also play.

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