

Brazil eliminated from the World Cup after losing to Croatia in penalty shootout

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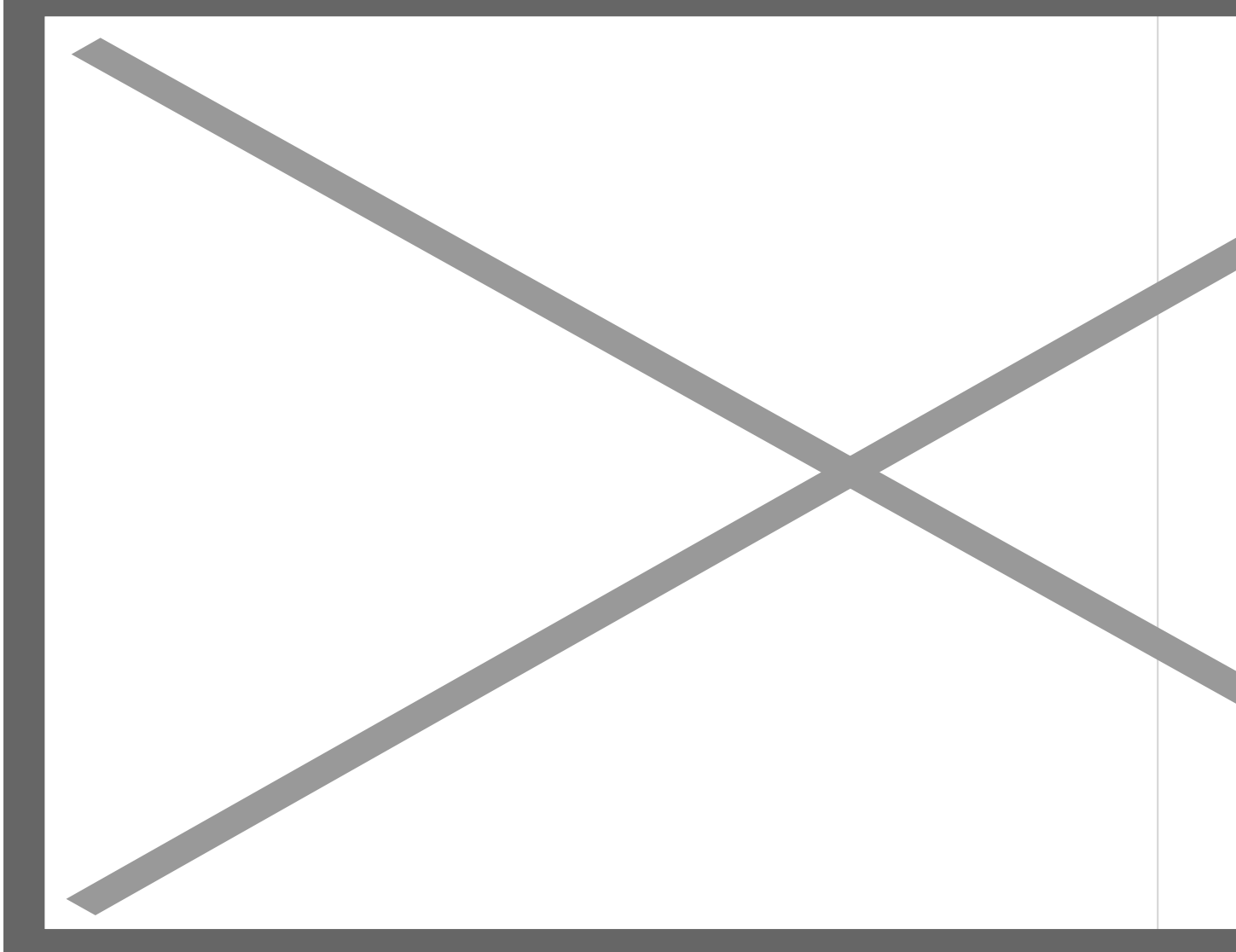


Photo: Nelson Almeida / AFP

Doha, December 9 (RHC)-- The Croatian national team defeated Brazil in a penalty shootout in the quarterfinal match played at the Education City stadium (Doha), thus reaching the semifinals of the World Cup in Qatar.

The reigning world runners-up thus retained their hopes of reaching their second consecutive final. The European team will now meet the winner of the match between Argentina and the Netherlands.

In the first half, both teams played a very evenly matched game, although neither side managed to open the scoring. However, the most significant episode occurred in the 25th minute, when Brazilian defender Danilo failed to stop Josip Juranovic on the touchline and kicked him in the head. The English referee Michael Oliver showed him a yellow card, despite the Croatians' demand for a straight red card.

During the second half, Tite's team generated more danger, with a total of 15 shots. However, the Baltic side defended tooth and nail, keeping a clean sheet until extra time.

Croatian goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic, who starred in the penalty shootout against Japan, was again impressive with eight saves throughout the match.

Finally, in stoppage time of the first half of extra time, Neymar managed to open the scoring. The PSG star started the play in midfield, exchanged passes with Lucas Paqueta and then dribbled past Livakovic, sending the ball into the net. With this goal, Neymar now has 77 goals in the national shirt, equaling Pele's record as the national team's top scorer.

Just when the match seemed to be decided in Brazil's favor, Croatian striker Bruno Petkovic equalized after collecting a rebound in the box in the 116th minute.

The penalty shootout ended 4-2 in favor of the Balkan team. Goalkeeper Livakovic once again shone in one of the kicks, while Marquinhos hit the post. Croatia have won all four penalty shootouts in the history of the World Cup.

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