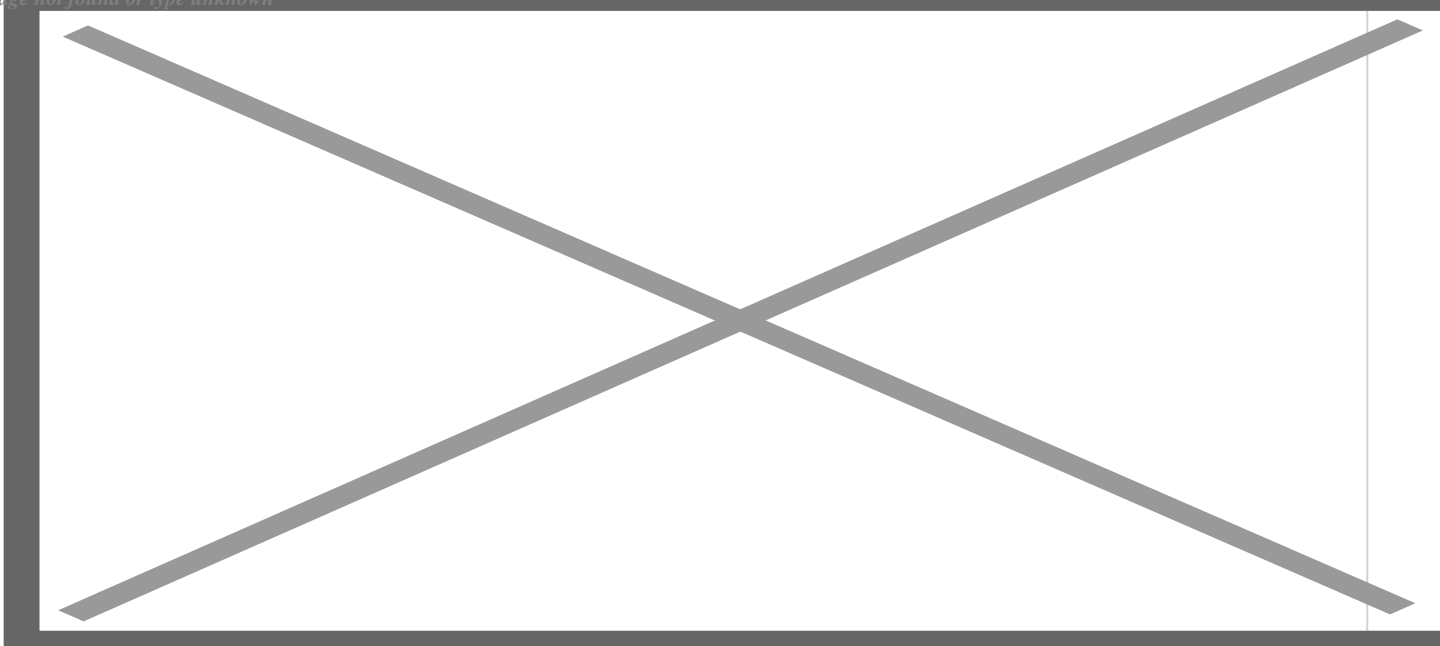


Croatia and Morocco for a consolation spot in Qatar 2022

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Croatia and Morocco for the consolation in Qatar 2022. Photo: Jit

Havana, December 16 (RHC)-- On Saturday, the Khalifa International Stadium in Rayan will host the match that nobody wants to play -- the third place match.

The teams of Croatia and Morocco will fight for the consolation prize in the run-up to the final of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

The Europeans - if they win - will have dropped one place from the previous edition, but will be looking to retain their place on the podium. Their opponents have far exceeded pre-competition expectations, but they have not come this far to give up.

There will be no tomorrow for them after the principal orders to play. Therefore, this will be an all-or-nothing game. However, the tactical framework, always subject to circumstantial modifications, will be as vital as ever.

Neither of these teams can spare a goal, so both will be looking to defend well and control the midfield. That may be the key, as there is no room for error at the back.

The Africans have shown a defensive fortress capable of withstanding strong teams without allowing any freedom. The bad news for them is the injury of the leader of the backline Romain Saiss; the good news is that his replacement, Amallah, did excellently in the semi-final against France.

On the Vatrene side, young Josko Gvardiol, except for a mishap with Messi in the semi-final - and who hasn't had a mishap with Messi? - was solid enough to deserve a place among the best center-backs of the tournament.

In midfield, the incombustible Amrabat will face a duel of high wear and tear against the veteran Luka Modric. The number of opportunities will depend on their ability or luck to cancel each other out, although the Croatian midfield will always have more pieces to pull the strings for the Madrid midfielder.

The pace of the runners-up is likely to be counterbalanced by the vertigo of the Atlas Lions, although the Red and Whites are no strangers to wear and tear and a high tempo.

It will also be a match for caution. The lack of goals could take it beyond 90 minutes and into another penalty shootout, the third for the Balkan side. In that case, both have excellent goalkeepers: Yassine Bounou on the Moroccan side and Dominic Livakovic on the other, who has already saved four such penalties to equal a World Cup record.

The match promises intensity from start to finish. The Croatians may look like favorites, but we've heard that all the other times the Moroccans have played. The duel even has a precedent in the group stage and resulted in a goalless draw.

True, the final will be the icing on the cake, but this duel for third place is sure to be an excellent appetizer.

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