

# France Edge Past Belgium to Reach World Cup Final

ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA (Dispatches) – They're young, they're brash and they're collectively worth a billion dollars. The one thing missing for this French squad is an international title.

Kylian Mbappe, Paul Pogba and France are about to get that chance. Les Bleus are headed to the World Cup final.

Samuel Umtiti clinched a 1-0 win over Belgium — and earned the approval of French President Emmanuel Macron from the VIP seats at St. Petersburg Stadium — by scoring on a header off a corner kick in the 51st minute on Tuesday. “Vive la France! Vive la Republique!” France forward Antoine Griezmann shouted during postgame celebrations.

Umtiti played his part in a strong defensive effort by the French, too, helping to shut out the highest-scoring team at the tournament and leaving Belgium's golden generation of Eden Hazard, Kevin De Bruyne and Romelu Lukaku to regret another missed opportunity at a major tournament.

“It's me that scored,” Umtiti said, “but we all delivered a big game.”

France's players celebrated on the field after the final whistle and their fans sang in the stands long past the end of the match.

They certainly hope to keep the party going on Sunday in the final in Moscow.

France — with an average age of 26 — have a shot at redemption after losing their last two major



*France's Samuel Umtiti heads in the only goal of his team's 1-0 victory over Belgium during the semifinals of the World Cup on Tuesday in St. Petersburg, Russia.*

finals — at the 2006 World Cup when Zinedine Zidane was sent off for a nasty headbutt and the 2016 European Championship on home soil.

“We're immensely privileged to be in the World Cup final,” France coach Didier Deschamps said. “It was so painful two years ago we have to savor it.”

Deschamps now has the chance to become the third person to win the World Cup as a player and a coach, after German great Franz Beckenbauer and Brazil's Mario Zagallo. As France captain, Deschamps raised the World Cup trophy in 1998.

Deschamps has faced some criticism for being too pragmatic and functional despite having a

squad of superstars, but his team was set up superbly against an opponent that was largely restricted to only minor chances and denied on two occasions in particular by France goalkeeper Hugo Lloris.

He dived to his right midway through the first half to claw away Toby Alderweireld's shot, then got in front of Lukaku to punch away one of the many crosses sent in by Belgium in the final stages.

In a tournament dominated by goals from set pieces, France's goal came off a corner when Griezmann curled in the ball from the right and Umtiti got in front of tall Belgium midfielder Marouane Fellaini to knock in his header at the near post.

Up in the corporate seats,

president Macron reacted to the goal by shaking the hand of King Philippe of Belgium as FIFA president Gianni Infantino looked on between them.

“Unfortunately for us, the difference is just a dead-ball situation, a set play,” Belgium coach Roberto Martinez said. “The game was, as you can imagine, very close, very tight, and it was going to be decided (on) maybe the one that could find that final touch in the box.”

With Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and Neymar no longer in Russia, Belgium's Eden Hazard and France's Mbappe have taken over as the stars of the World Cup and there was a buzz every time either got the ball.

Yet while Hazard — Belgium's captain — faded after a strong opening 30 minutes, Mbappe was a constant threat. His first touch was after 10 seconds and, after receiving the ball on the right wing, he sped past Jan Vertonghen and then Mousa Dembele on a thrilling run.

At 19, Mbappe wasn't even born when France won the World Cup for the first and only time with a squad that is just as diverse as the one Deschamps is leading 20 years later.

Umtiti was born in Cameroon. Mbappe has Algerian-Cameroonian roots.

“It's a pure pleasure to see these players grow,” Deschamps said, “and never give up.”

“The union's claim is that this new policy, imposed by the NFL's governing body without consultation with the NFLPA, is inconsistent with the collective bargaining agreement and infringes on player rights,” the NFLPA said on Twitter.

The NFL could not immediately be reached for comment.

## NFL Policy to Stop Anthem Protests Challenged by Players Union

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – The union representing National Football League players said it had filed a grievance against the NFL over its policy requiring players to stand for the national anthem or wait in dressing rooms, saying it infringed on their rights.

The NFL announced in May it would

require any player who did not wish to stand during the playing of “The Star Spangled Banner” before games to stay off the field until the ceremony ended.

The protests, which began two seasons ago, were intended to call attention to what critics say is often brutal treatment of minorities by U.S.

law enforcement.

Before the league announced the policy, the NFL Players Association (NFLPA) had offered to discuss other ways to defuse tensions over the protests, which were prompted by a series of police killings of unarmed black men in Missouri, New York and other cities.

## Juventus Sign Real Madrid Forward Ronaldo for €112mn



*Cristiano Ronaldo leaves Real Madrid for Juventus*

ROME, July 10 (Xinhua) – Real Madrid forward Cristiano Ronaldo has joined Juventus, the Spanish team announced.

The two clubs reached a deal reportedly worth 112 million euros (about 132 million U.S. dollars) and the 33-year-old Portuguese player signed a four-year deal with the Italian champions.

“Real Madrid inform that, as per Cristiano Ronaldo's wishes and at his request, the club has allowed the player to complete his move to Juventus,” the team said in a statement.

“Real Madrid would today like to

place on record it thanks to a player who has shown himself to be the best in the world and made his mark on one of the greatest periods in our club's history and on the world game.”

In his nine years at Real, Ronaldo became the Spanish team's leading scorer of all time, with 451 goals in his 438 appearances. He has won four Champions League titles in five years, and has been awarded the Ballon d'Or, or Player of the Year award, four times.

In a letter posted to the Real Madrid website, Ronaldo wrote that “the time has come to begin a new stage in my life.”

## Mahrez Joins Man City for Club Record £60mn

MANCHESTER (Dispatches) - Manchester City have broken their club record to sign winger Riyad Mahrez from Leicester City for £60mn.

The 27-year-old has signed a five-year deal to become the Blues' first recruit since they won the Premier League.

They walked away from a potential deal for the Algerian in January after being put off by Leicester's valuation.

Mahrez said the club's style of play is “perfect” for him and he wanted to be part of a club which is “redefining the English game”.

“Watching them from afar has been a pleasure,” said Mahrez.

“Pep Guardiola is committed to playing attacking football, and City's performances last season were outstanding.

“I think we can be successful over the coming years and I believe my own game can develop under Pep's management.”

Mahrez was named the PFA Players' Player of the Year during Leicester's surprise Premier League triumph in 2015-16, and leaves the club having scored 48 goals in 179 appearances.



*Mahrez described Manchester City's performances last season as 'outstanding'*

## Iranian Lifter Bags 3 Medals at IWF Junior World Championships



*Iranian weightlifter Hossein Soltani poses with the national Iranian flag during the 2018 IWF Junior World Championships in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on July 10, 2018.*

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iranian weightlifter Hossein Soltani has demonstrated admirable athletic skills at the 2018 International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) Junior World Championships in Uzbekistan, and received three medals at the high-status tournament.

On Tuesday and the fourth day of the prestigious event at the Uzbekistan Sport Complex in Tashkent, Soltani took part in the 77-kilogram weight category competitions.

He claimed the snatch silver medal with 149 kilograms. His Latvian opponent Ritvars Suharevs raised 156 kilograms overhead to win the gold medal.

Gayrat Aytmuratov, a representative from the host nation, pocketed the bronze

medal, having lifted up 146 kilograms.

Soltani raised 177 kilograms in the clean and jerk contests, and took away the bronze.

His Armenian rival Rafik Harutyunyan hoisted 179 kilograms and claimed the second spot, while Suharevs dominated the podium with a lift of 180 kilograms.

The Iranian contestant bagged the silver medal with an aggregate of 326 kilograms. The Latvian weightlifter's overall register hit 336 kilograms and finished in the first place, while the Armenian competitor secured the aggregate bronze medal with 324 kilograms.

The 2018 IWF Junior World Championships began on July 7, and will finish on July 14.

## Djokovic, Federer, Nadal Headline Wimbledon Quarterfinals



*Novak Djokovic of Serbia returns the ball to Karen Khachanov of Russia during their men's singles match on the seventh day at the Wimbledon Tennis Championships in London, Monday July 9, 2018.*

LONDON (AP) -Novak Djokovic, Roger Federer, and Rafael Nadal headline the men's quarterfinal lineup at Wimbledon as the trio bid to all reach the last four at the same Grand Slam for the time since the 2012 French Open.

Defending champion Federer will play in the unfamiliar surroundings of Wimbledon's No. 1 Court as he takes on eighth-seeded Kevin Anderson. It is the first time since 2015 that the eight-time champion will play away from Centre Court.

Having played three of his opening four matches away

from Centre Court, three-time champion Djokovic's request to have his quarterfinal with 24th-seeded Kei Nishikori played in the main stadium was granted.

Two-time champion Nadal is through to the last eight at Wimbledon for the first time since 2011. He faces fifth-seeded Juan Martin del Potro, who has reached the last eight at consecutive Grand Slams for the first time since 2012.

2016 runner-up Milos Raonic faces ninth-seeded John Isner, who is playing in his first Wimbledon quarterfinal.