

THE 2026 WORLD CUP ALPHABET

K is for

Karl, Lennert – Lennert Karl is the teenage prodigy at Bayern München that everyone is getting excited about. The 18 year old Karl is a winger who, after only one full season as a professional, is likely to be included in the Germany squad.

As you can see he is barely old enough to grow a moustache! When he debuted for Germany earlier this year he was, in fact, only the seventh youngest person to play for Germany - teammate Jamal Musiala was younger when he first played for die Towelboys.

Of course, the impetuosity of youth means that you can sometimes do stupid things, as this clip shows:

[a stepover too far?](#)



Kane, Harry - At 32 years old, Harry Kane is at an age where centre-forwards typically start to wind down on the road to retirement. Instead, England's record goalscorer is in the form of his life, having scored over 50 goals for Bayern München this season (*ed: at the time of writing 55 goals in only 49 games!*) and over 500 goals in professional football. Not only is he England's all-time top scorer with 78 goals in only 112 games he is only 13 caps away from becoming the most-capped Englander. Other records he holds are that of top-scoring English player in the Champions League (45), Highest scoring Englander in the Bundesliga (95 goals) and he is the second-highest all-time scorer in the Premier League with 213 goals.

But Kane's game is far more than just goals. He has compensated for his declining pace by developing a superb playmaking side, dropping deeper and spraying pinpoint passes.

Even the most partisan of football fans would not begrudge 'Arry some success after all those years of nothing at Tottenham. For not only is he a world-class player he is a quiet person off-the-field and does not seem obsessed with making money from advertising.

Harry will be the talisman for England's push for World Cup glory – so that makes him doomed to pick up an injury in May and be only half-fit for the finals....!

Kansas City – Kansas City will have six games at the 73 000 capacity GEHA Field – better known as Arrowhead Stadium – which is home to the Kansas City Chiefs football team.



Kansas City –most of which is not in the state of Kansas, but Missouri (*ed: proving how bad Americans are at geography!!*) – is probably the least interesting of all the World Cup venues. Even the stadium is unexceptional – so much so that in 2030 the Chiefs will abandon it for a new one in the state of Kansas (*ed: finally!*)

It can get above 30°C in summer in Kansas/Missouri so all the matches here have been given evening kickoffs. Even more problematic could be rain at this open-air stadium – it comes occasionally, but when it rains it really pours!

Karius, Loris – Remember Loris Karius? He was the reserve goalkeeper that had a nightmare game playing for Liverpool in the 2018 Champions League Final, gifting opponents Real Madrid two goals.

[karius champions league final](#)

Long exiled from Liverpool, he has been a revelation back in his home country of Germany playing for Schalke in the 2 Bundesliga. Has he a chance to make Germany's World Cup squad? Unlikely – but it would be an amazing redemption story if it happened!



English patriots in Dorset have made this giant mural of Harry Kane. (This is what happens when you live in a village with no broadband, but lots of cider.....)

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Kardashians, the – It will be interesting to see if the shy, reclusive Kardashian family (“America’s favourite Armenian-Americans”[©]) try to get in on the World Cup somehow.

Here’s the only known image of Kim Kardashian at a “soccerball” game. (Rumours that she requested to keep the ball for use as an implant are incorrect).



Kes – Kes was a British film made in 1969 (adapted from the book “A Kestrel For A Knave” by Barry Hines) about a working-class boy growing up in Northern England.

We include it as it features a classic school scene where a sadistic and egoistic sports teacher (brilliantly played by Brian Glover who had himself been a teacher!) takes a class for football:

the football match from Kes

Younger readers (i.e. below the age of 40!) should note not only that there is not a single replica football shirt or pair of coloured boots to be seen, but also the absence of any synthetic fabrics worn by the children!! Not only does this remind me of sports classes when I was at school, but it probably explains why that generation of youth never produced any good English footballers!!

Kettle – an essential piece of equipment for the armchair British football fan is the kettle. For watching the game with a “brew” of tea is a tradition that the founding fathers of football insisted. (Remember, the game was invented in England). And the ritual of having the kettle boiling to be making fresh cups of tea can be used as a way of keeping one’s wife happily occupied (and out of the way) whilst football is on the TV. Indeed, advanced footballing husbands who have succeeded in training their wives have even been known to integrate ‘brewing up’ and ironing into their wives’ matchday activities.



Once upon a time you could even get a cup of tea whilst on the pitch....

Khusanov, Abdukodir – If you look at the squad for the Uzbekistan team do not be surprised if you’ve not heard of most of the players. In fact, only one plays for a team west of the Bosphorus. And that is Abdukodir Khusanov. The 21 year old was spotted by French club Lens, who subsequently sold him to Manchester City.

He is what one would consider a “proper old-fashioned” central defender – strong in the air aggressive-but-fair in the tackle and able to take knocks without rolling around on the ground feigning death spasms, with the bonus of having lightening pace.

Not only is he being coached by Pep Guardiola he also has the added benefit of being managed for Uzbekistan by Fabio Cannavaro, the former Italy centre-back.

Playing for rank outsiders who will be on the back foot for most of their games Khusanov is likely to be noticed a lot in the matches of the “White Wolves”.

Kick off – one of the first things that was agreed in the first rules of football was that the game would commence by means of a kick off. If that seems obvious now, it should be recalled that it had been the custom in several places for the game to start with the ball being “thrown up” in the middle of the field of play by a neutral official (like in basketball). And a game played on Christmas Day 1841 is recorded as having been started with the ball placed in the middle of the field of play, with each team attempting to play the ball as soon as possible after the firing of a pistol! (That would be popular in the USA!)

Kick off times – Because the USA/Canada/Mexico is in time zones that differ from Europe by 6 to 10 hours (*ed: more if you include Hawaii!*) the kickoff times at this World Cup will be rather spread out. Most games involving European teams will kick off between 18:00 and 22:00 (all times here are CET) but there will be some matches at ungodly hours. For example, Spain v Uruguay will kick off at 02:00, Austria v Algeria at 04:00 and Belgium v New Zealand at 05:00. (*ed: I wonder if they’ll show that game live on a big screen in the square in Stockel?*)

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Kilts – Be very confident that at all of their matches the Scotland fans will be wearing kilts – an item of clothing that is worn only at weddings and international sporting events.

Despite what souvenir shops in Edinburgh may tell you the kilt was traditionally a full-length sari-like garment worn only by peasants in the highlands of Scotland – the Scots version of denim jeans, in fact. It was Prince Albert – the sausage-eating German husband of Queen Victoria – who made tartan fashionable and shortened the design of kilt to become skirt-sized. During his time, in order to suck up to him, Scottish aristocrats and landowners suddenly started wearing tartan (usually whilst still kicking genuine kilt-wearers off their land.



Clad in their kilts the Scots fans will feel at home in a nation where being trans is now a badge of honor (sic) – but I wouldn't advise kilt-wearing in macho Mexico (though it could be useful after the Mexican food.....)

King Charles III – Will King Charles of Great Britain turn up at the World Cup? Well, Charlie has never shown any interest in football (unlike his balding son, who claims to be an Aston Villa fan) – and he is probably still in therapy after his recent visit to meet President Trump.

However, the British royals have, since Prince Albert's time, been sorely obsessed with all things Scottish, including sport. There's nothing Charles enjoys more than dressing up in a kilt and watching a big, sweaty Scot tossing his caber. So perhaps Charlie will put on his skirt and attend a Scotland game.....



Kissing – FIFA has over the years made strict rules on many things. For example, players must tuck their shirts into their shorts, they must wear shin pads to prevent the spread of AIDS (seriously!), they must not remove their shirts when celebrating goals, they must not wear jewellery, etc. Yet FIFA has never sought to ban the act of kissing to celebrate goals. Makes you wonder why, as there must be health & safety implications



The USA is very prudish about all things sexual so players would be advised not to indulge in too much kissing during matches; otherwise they may feel the wrath of ICE.

Kits – So fascinated are we by that exploitative nature of the sports-industrial complex in its marketing of kits that we'll do a separate rant, sorry article, just on this topic.

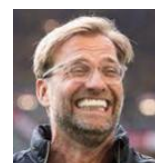
Klose, Miroslav - it still seems impossible to believe that a donkey like Miroslav Klose is the top scorer at World Cups. But it is true. Playing for Germany he scored a total of 16 goals - five each in 2002 and 2006, four in 2010 and two in 2014 – though never in the final itself. All 16 came from inside the penalty box, seven with headers.



Klose also holds the record for most goals (71) and second-most caps (137) for Germany.

Miro was a very reliable, if unspectacular, striker who played his club football at Kaiserslauten, Werder Bremen, Bayern Munich and Lazio. The sort of honest and unselfish player that fans like to have at a club.

Klopp, Jurgen – Overgrinning, histrionic German former manager of Mainz, Dortmund and Liverpool. He is now the “Head of Global Soccer” for Red Bull GmbH, whatever that means in practice. Someone should warn him that consumption of sugary drinks is bad for one's teeth.....



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Knee, taking the - A symbolic gesture against racism whereby an individual kneels upon one knee in place of standing to attention for an anthem or other such occasion. It was originated by American gridiron football player Colin Kaepernick in 2016, in protest against the lack of attention given to the issues of racial inequality and police brutality in the United States.



So, taking the knee is ‘coming home’ this summer. But will anyone – let alone any team – be brave enough to take the knee in the USA? I very much doubt it..... (Remember all the furore before Qatar2022 about LGBTQRS+++ armbands – and that didn’t happen either!)

Not to be confused with the English expression “taking the piss”.

Koeman, Ronald – Ronald Koeman is the current manager of Holland. A star defender he played for Barcelona as well as all of the three ‘big’ teams in the Dutch league as was part of the Dutch team that won EURO88. He holds the record for being the all-time highest scoring defender, scoring 238 goals (including 88 at Barcelona). He was particularly noted for his free kicks and reliability with penalty kicks.



In a varied career as manager he has been successful in Holland, but less so elsewhere. His time at Barcelona was particularly horrific, ending like a car crash in slow motion. And he is another who has had the dubious privilege of managing Everton (needless to say without anything to show for it, other than an enlarged bank balance).

This is his second spell as boss of manager – having being lured away the first time to Barcelona – and has been in the job since 2023 when Louis van Gaal retired.

Current record as coach of Holland: W21 D8 L8

Kolo Muane, Randal - from playing in the 2022 World Cup Final after a €75 million transfer to PSG and comparisons with Thierry Henry to fighting relegation with Tottenham and comparisons with Henry the vacuum cleaner. Indeed, it is questionable if he’ll even make the French squad for this World Cup. How the fate of a footballer can change quickly.

He’s still only 27 so perhaps he’ll emulate fellow Frenchman Ousmane Dembele and resurrect his career – though probably not if he stays at Tottenham....

Korea, Republic of– the “dog lovers” will be playing at their twelfth World Cup finals, and have been present at every finals from 1986 onwards. However, apart from when they were co-hosting the tournament in 2002 they do not have a great record at the finals. Indeed 2002 was the only one of the eleven previous tournaments where they won more than one game.

Coach Hong Myung-Bo will be hoping for better things this time and as they are in a group containing Mexico, Czechia and South Africa failure to get through to the second round this year would be a disaster for Korea.

World Cup record: PL38 W7 D10 L21

Current FIFA World Ranking: 22nd

Star Player: Son Heung-min (Los Angeles FC)

Koubek, Miroslav – the 74 year-old stepped into the job of Czech boss after the team missed out on automatic qualification and had to go into the playoff round, where they won both games on penalties. He thus has the bizarre distinction of leading his team to the World Cup without actually having won any competitive games with them!!



Prior to taking the top job MK has spent his entire management career in charge of Czech club teams, most notably three spells with Viktoria Plzen with whom he won the league title.

Record as boss of Czech Republic: Pl 2 Wo D2 Lo