

GREAT PRO SPORTS CHAMPIONSHIPS

GREAT FIFA WORLD CUP MATCHES

by Ethan Olson



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AT A GLANCE

- The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) first organized a men's World Cup in 1930. It has been played every four years since with two exceptions. The 1942 and 1946 tournaments were canceled because of World War II (1939–1945).
- The first Women's World Cup was played in 1991. It has continued every four years since.
- The men's World Cup is widely considered the most-watched sporting event on Earth. Roughly 1.5 billion people watched the final in 2022.
- The 1966 World Cup featured the hosts, England, against a talented West Germany team. England, the country where soccer was created, won the trophy for the first time in the nation's history.
- In 1986, Argentina was led by superstar forward Diego Maradona. He made himself a legend on the way to beating West Germany in the final.



- The 2011 Women's World Cup final saw the United States upset by a Japan team trying to lift its nation's spirits after a massive earthquake.
- France was defending its 2018 title at the 2022 men's final. It came up short against Argentina. The Argentines were led by the legendary Lionel Messi.

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INSPIRING A NATION

On March 11, 2011, a powerful earthquake rumbled under the ocean 80 miles (128 km) off the coast of Sendai, Japan. It caused a huge **tsunami** to crash over the shores of the island nation. The flooding killed more than 18,000 people and injured nearly 9,000 others. It also caused

a meltdown at the Fukushima nuclear power plant. The tragedy cost an estimated \$235 billion for recovery. It was the most expensive disaster in world history.

While the country rebuilt, the Japanese soccer team traveled to Germany in June.

Rachel Buehler (left) of the United States battles for the ball with Japan's Aya Miyama in the 2011 Women's World Cup final.



They were there for the 2011 Women's World Cup. At the time, Japan did not even have a fully professional league for women. Japan had skilled players. But few experts expected the nation to win.

Germany came into the tournament as a favorite. It was the two-time defending champion. But Japan shocked

FINDING MOTIVATION

Japan manager Norio Sasaki motivated his team against Germany with a slideshow. It had images of the damage from the earthquake and tsunami. The team eventually won the match on a goal by forward Karina Muruyama in the 108th minute.

the Germans 1–0 in the quarterfinals. Japan then beat Sweden to set up a matchup with the United States in the final. Along the way, the Japanese media latched on to the team as a beacon of hope.

AN EVEN BATTLE

Like Germany, the United States was one of the sport's top teams. The Americans had won the 1991 and 1999 World Cups. The team featured superstars such as forward Abby Wambach and goalie Hope Solo. And after a dramatic quarterfinal win over Brazil, they came into the final with momentum.



Hope Solo stops a penalty kick during the United States' quarterfinal win over Brazil.

The United States had usually dominated Japan. That looked like it would continue early in the match. American midfielder Lauren Cheney came within inches of a goal off winger Megan Rapinoe's cross. In the 28th minute, a shot from Wambach hit the crossbar. But it was still 0–0 at halftime.

GLOSSARY

counterattack

when a team regains possession and immediately attacks the opponent with speed

hat trick

when a player scores three goals in a game

penalty area

a large rectangular area extended around the goal at each end of the field

penalty kick

a free kick from the penalty spot awarded to the attacking team after a foul within the penalty area

pitch

another name for a soccer field

tsunami

a large wave caused by a volcanic eruption or an earthquake

volley

a kick that is taken when the ball is falling out of the air

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CHAPTER THREE: INSPIRING A NATION

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