



FIRST-ROUND SCHEDULE

All times Eastern

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14

Spain vs. Ukraine, 9 a.m. (ESPN2) in Leipzig ★
Tunisia vs. Saudi Arabia, Noon (ESPN2) in Munich ★

MONDAY, JUNE 19

Saudi Arabia vs. Ukraine, Noon (ESPN2) in Hamburg
Spain vs. Tunisia, 3 p.m. (ESPN2) in Stuttgart

FRIDAY, JUNE 23

Ukraine vs. Tunisia, 10 a.m. (ESPN2) in Berlin
Saudi Arabia vs. Spain, 10 a.m. (ESPN) in Kaiserslautern

★
KEY MATCHES

TEAMS AT-A-GLANCE



SAUDI ARABIA

Coach: Marcos Paqueta.
Appearance: Fourth.
How Qualified: Finished first in Asia's Group A.



SPAIN

Coach: Luis Aragonés.
Appearance: 12th.
How Qualified: Finished second in Europe's Group 7 and beat Slovakia in playoff.



UKRAINE

Coach: Oleg Blokhin.
Appearance: First.
How Qualified: Finished first in Europe's Group 2.



TUNISIA

Coach: Roger Lemerre.
Appearance: Fourth.
How Qualified: Finished first in Africa's Group 5.

STAR PLAYER » RAUL | F | SPAIN

For Spain, One Name Says It All

Raul Gonzalez Blanco cracked the roster at storied Real Madrid at age 17, began his international career at 19 and has scored at an abundant clip for club and country ever since. He has played for three Champions League winners at Madrid, and while his club's fortunes have dipped recently and several young forwards are nipping at his heels on the national team, Raul is still a vital figure this summer. The Spaniards have been underachievers in international play for some time, and he longs to reverse that pain.

Raul, a clinical finisher, scored three times in Spain's first four games of the 2002 World Cup, then watched in agony, injured, as his teammates lost to co-host South Korea on penalty kicks in the quarterfinals. No one has scored more goals for Spain, and this tournament could be the springboard to revitalize his form after struggling in 2005-06.

This will be his third World Cup, and quite possibly his last, with 22-year-old Fernando Torres (Atlético de Madrid) among those seemingly ready to start for Spain. It is hard to imagine this talented team finally achieving true World Cup glory without Raul, who turns 29 on June 27, and the clutch goals he so often delivers.



GROUP H

Note for Novices

Oleg Blokhin is not being paid to coach Ukraine's team. He also is a member of the country's parliament and, because it is illegal in Ukraine to hold two official government roles, he was permitted to do both only after he voluntarily gave up his coaching salary.



Spain's Raul scored three goals in the 2002 World Cup.

BY CHRISTOF KOEPEL — GETTY IMAGES

SAUDI ARABIA OUTLOOK

The Saudis have scored seven goals and conceded 25 in 10 World Cup matches. The entire roster comprises players from Saudi Arabia's modest domestic league. Its qualifying group included the likes of Uzbekistan, Indonesia and Turkmenistan. The defense may be stronger, with GK Mabrouk Zaid considered Asia's best, and the Saudis have a nice youth-and-experience blend up front with Yasser Al Qahtani (23 years old) and Sami Al Jaber (33), but it's hard to envision this team doing much.

- » **Best-Case Scenario:** Picking up a point or two to avoid embarrassment.
- » **Worst-Case Scenario:** 0-3, like 2002.

SPAIN OUTLOOK

The Spanish have been cursed to watch teams filled with brilliant individual talent fail to achieve collective goals for generations. A rich crop of youngsters just reaching their prime — especially Jose Reyes, Fernando Torres, Cesc Fabregas and Iniesta — could alter that perception. They boast superior talent in the spine, with Barcelona center back Carlos Puyol the consummate rock on defense, and were gifted a favorable draw as well.

- » **Best-Case Scenario:** Reaching the semifinals for the first time since 1950.
- » **Worst-Case Scenario:** Four more years of scorn after flopping in the round of 16.

TUNISIA OUTLOOK

Tunisia has emerged as a force on its continent, but has yet to translate that success to the World Cup, winning one of nine matches and exiting in the first round. Coach Roger Lemerre (France's coach for Euro 2000 and the 2002 World Cup) has a proven pedigree at this level, however, and Africa always seems to provide at least one surprise team in the first round. Key players: right back Hatem Trabelsi (Ajax) and midfielders Adel Chedli (Nuremberg) and Riadh Bouazizi (Erciyesspor, Turkey), the team captain.

- » **Best-Case Scenario:** Finishing second behind Spain and making the round of 16.
- » **Worst-Case Scenario:** A quick exit for a team that lost to Guinea in qualifying.

UKRAINE OUTLOOK

No discussion of the world's best strikers would last long without **Andriy Shevchenko's** name being mentioned, but his lingering knee injury might doom Europe's first team to qualify for Germany. The country has no World Cup experience, but Ukrainian players fueled many great Soviet teams in the past, and club Dynamo Kiev is steeped in history. MF-F Sergei Rebrov played alongside Shevchenko in the 1990s at Kiev, and now partners with 24-year-old MF Ruslan Rotan (three goals in seven qualifiers).

- » **Best-Case Scenario:** Shevchenko recovers quickly, leads Ukraine to the quarterfinals.
- » **Worst-Case Scenario:** A stumble vs. Tunisia or Saudi Arabia keeps team from advancing.

