

My 2026 FIFA World Cup Predictions



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Abstract

This report presents a probabilistic forecasting model for the 2026 FIFA World Cup. The model estimates how national teams are likely to progress through the expanded 48-team tournament format by combining country-level strength indicators, recent performance signals, squad-quality features, match-level expected-goals estimation, exact-score probabilities, and full-tournament Monte Carlo simulation.

The final production forecast is generated from **500,000 tournament simulations** using model version `p3-2026-tournament-prediction-v1` and seed 2026. The model identifies **Spain** as the leading title candidate with an estimated championship probability of **16.05%**, followed by **England** at **15.49%**, **Argentina** at **14.78%**, and **France** at **11.70%**. Together, these four teams account for **58.02%** of the simulated title probability, forming the model's primary contender tier.

The report should be read as a probability study rather than a deterministic prediction. The model does not claim that one bracket path is certain. Instead, it estimates the likelihood of group qualification, round-by-round advancement, final appearances, title outcomes, and exact-score distributions across a large simulation set. The central finding is that the tournament separates structural quality during the group stage, then compresses sharply in the knockout rounds. Strong teams generally advance, but the expanded format, best third-place qualification, penalty resolution, and narrow knockout margins create significant path dependency. In the model's deterministic bracket visualization, Spain survives this compression most efficiently, defeating England in a final projected at 1-1, with Spain advancing on penalties.

This report is intended as a transparent, repeatable, and analytically grounded forecasting exercise. It combines quantitative prediction with interpretive tournament analysis to explain not only who is favored, but how the tournament structure shapes each team's path to the title.

Model Methodology

Objective

The objective of the model is to estimate the probability distribution of team outcomes across the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

The model is designed to answer five questions:

1. Which teams are most likely to qualify from each group?
2. Which teams have the highest probabilities of reaching each knockout round?
3. Which teams have credible title paths?
4. Which fixtures have asymmetric, balanced, or upset-prone score profiles?
5. How do team strength, squad quality, bracket path, and match randomness interact in the expanded 48-team format?

The model is built as a research-style forecasting system. Its emphasis is transparency, repeatability, diagnostic calibration, and probabilistic interpretation. Every output should be read as a probability estimate, rather than a certainty claim.

Data Architecture

The production forecast is built from local model artifacts generated during the P1, P2, and P3 modeling phases.

Input	Role
<code>teams_master_p1_full_reviewed.csv</code>	Reviewed 48-team P1 master with ranking, form, macro, and squad variables
<code>p3_2026_team_master_production.csv</code>	Production team master with final strength, attack, defense, depth, set-piece, and penalty features
<code>p3_2026_group_match_score_probabilities.csv</code>	Group-stage expected goals, exact-score probabilities, and 1X2 probabilities
<code>third_place_path_map.csv</code>	Round-of-32 routing for best third-place teams
<code>final-prediction/ p3_2026_group_predictions.csv</code>	Final group-stage probability output
<code>final-prediction/ p3_2026_knockout_path_predictions.csv</code>	Final round-by-round probability output
<code>final-prediction/ p3_2026_title_probabilities.csv</code>	Final title probability table
<code>p2_source_clean_p1_v1_backtest_outputs/ p2_backtest_metrics.csv</code>	Historical calibration metrics for the source-clean P1 layer

The current production team master contains 48 teams and 107 variables. The historical calibration layer contains 128 team-edition rows across the 2010, 2014, 2018, and 2022 World Cups.

The modeling process follows a layered structure:

1. **Build base country strength.**
2. **Add squad-quality signals.**
3. **Convert team strength into match expected goals.**
4. **Convert expected goals into exact-score probabilities.**
5. **Simulate the full tournament path.**
6. **Aggregate outcome probabilities across 500,000 simulations.**

Base Team Strength

The P0 foundation estimates country strength from 3 broad components:

Component	Weight	Included signals
Ranking	0.65	FIFA rank, FIFA points, Elo rating
Form	0.25	Recent points per match, recent goal-difference performance
Macro/context	0.10	Host/travel context and qualification-strength proxy

This creates the base strength layer used to compare teams before squad-specific production adjustments.

The P1 layer adds squad and player-quality information. In historical calibration, the selected source-clean P1 market-value adjustment uses:

```
p1_squad_adjustment_source_clean_v1 =
  clamp(p1_squad_market_value_index * 0.14, -0.35, 0.35)

team_strength_score_p1_source_clean_v1 =
  team_strength_score_p02_source_clean + p1_squad_adjustment_source_clean_v1
```

The selected adjustment weight is 0.14. This weight was chosen after testing multiple market-signal adjustment levels during historical backtesting.

The 2026 production layer converts the reviewed P1 master into match-oriented features. The production signal combines attack, defense, squad depth, experience, balance, knockout profile, set-piece quality, penalty strength, and age profile:

```
production_signal =
  0.26 * attack_strength
+ 0.22 * defense_strength
+ 0.17 * squad_depth_score
+ 0.09 * experience_score
+ 0.07 * balance_score
+ 0.06 * knockout_score
+ 0.05 * set_piece_score
+ 0.04 * penalty_score
+ 0.04 * age_profile_score
```

The final production adjustment is:

```

production_p1_adjustment =
  clamp(0.14 * production_signal + injury_penalty, -0.45, 0.45)

team_strength_score_production =
  team_strength_score_v2 + production_p1_adjustment

```

The 0.45 production cap is a production-layer assumption. It allows the broader 2026 feature bundle to express attack, defense, depth, penalty, and set-piece effects. The historical market-value calibration cap remains 0.35.

Match xG Model

Each fixture is converted into expected goals for both teams. The match model uses:

```

log(lambda_team) =
  log(1.18)
  + 0.165 * strength_difference
  + 0.135 * tactical_edge
  + 0.035 * set_piece_score
  + 0.025 * squad_depth_score
  + 0.300 * injury_penalty
  + host_bonus

```

Where:

<code>lambda_team</code>	Expected goals for the team
<code>strength_difference</code>	Difference in <code>team_strength_score_production</code> between the team and its opponent
<code>tactical_edge</code>	Team attack strength minus opponent defense strength
<code>set_piece_score</code>	Team-level set-piece edge
<code>squad_depth_score</code>	Depth and quality beyond the first-choice XI
<code>injury_penalty</code>	Negative adjustment for availability risk
<code>host_bonus</code>	0.10 in log-goal space for host teams

Expected goals are clamped between 0.18 and 3.25. This keeps extreme score environments controlled while still allowing large mismatches to appear in the forecast.

Exact-Score Probability Model

The exact-score layer converts expected goals into scoreline probabilities. Conditional on the estimated expected goals for each side, the model assumes independent Poisson goal counts:

$$P(\text{score} = a-b) = \text{Poisson}(a; \lambda_a) * \text{Poisson}(b; \lambda_b)$$

The exported exact-score table reports scorelines from 0-0 through 6-6. Outcome probabilities are calculated from a wider 0-12 score grid and normalized. This wider grid captures residual high-score probability mass while keeping the public exact-score table readable.

For each group-stage fixture, the model exports:

- Team A win probability
- Draw probability
- Team B win probability
- Expected goals for both teams
- Most likely scoreline
- Top scoreline probabilities
- Over-goal probabilities
- Both-teams-to-score probability
- Clean-sheet probabilities

Tournament Simulation Method

The final forecast uses 500,000 full-tournament simulations with seed 2026.

Each simulation follows this process:

1. Simulate all group-stage matches using exact-score probability distributions.
2. Rank teams within each group by points, goal difference, goals scored, production strength, and a small random tie-break term.
3. Advance the top two teams from each group.
4. Select the eight best third-place teams.
5. Route third-place teams into the Round of 32 using `third_place_path_map.csv`.
6. Simulate the Round of 32, Round of 16, quarterfinals, semifinals, third-place match, and final.
7. Resolve drawn knockout matches using a shootout probability based on production strength and penalty score.
8. Aggregate group qualification, round advancement, final appearance, title probability, and match-path probabilities.

The knockout rounds use a production Poisson engine based on the same core features: team strength, attack, defense, depth, set pieces, injury pressure, and host context.

Historical Calibration

The P2 source-clean calibration tested whether adding the P1 squad-market signal improved historical forecasting performance over the P0.2 baseline. The calibration used the 2010, 2014, 2018, and 2022 World Cups. The selected P1 v1 weight was 0.14 .

Metric	Source-clean P0	Source-clean P1 v1	Reading
Actual champion log loss	1.7771	1.7494	Improved
Actual champion probability	17.52%	18.10%	Improved
Actual champion rank	2.25	2.25	Flat
Actual finalists final probability mass	48.79%	50.65%	Improved
Actual semifinalists semifinal probability mass	128.15%	132.63%	Improved
R16 Brier	0.1905	0.1929	Regression
QF Brier	0.1312	0.1310	Improved
SF Brier	0.0859	0.0865	Regression
Final Brier	0.0464	0.0464	Stable
Winner Brier	0.0253	0.0253	Stable
Top-1 champion hit	25.00%	25.00%	Flat
Top-3 champion hit	100.00%	100.00%	Flat

The calibration supports the inclusion of the squad-market signal. It also shows that stronger squad information improves champion-level signal while adding mild pressure at specific knockout-stage layers, especially the Round of 16 and semifinal layers.

Interpretation

The model should be interpreted as a probabilistic tournament engine. A team with a 16% title probability should be read as a strong favorite in a 48-team tournament, especially when multiple elite teams have credible title paths. A match with a 12% exact-score probability can still be the most likely scoreline, because football score distributions are naturally spread across many possible outcomes. The model's central thesis is that the group stage rewards structural strength and defensive control, while the knockout phase compresses the margins between elite teams. As the tournament advances, bracket path, penalty resilience, and small scoreline differences become increasingly decisive.

2026 Title Probabilities

Rank	Team	Group	Production Rank	R32	Semifinal	Final	Title
1	Spain	H	1	99.49%	40.31%	26.09%	16.05%
2	England	L	3	98.43%	39.29%	25.51%	15.49%
3	Argentina	J	2	97.87%	40.02%	24.71%	14.78%
4	France	I	4	96.68%	33.55%	20.61%	11.70%
5	Portugal	K	5	94.91%	23.61%	12.31%	6.13%
6	Germany	E	6	97.78%	22.22%	11.70%	5.69%
7	Brazil	C	8	95.15%	19.82%	10.54%	5.00%
8	Belgium	G	12	95.22%	17.99%	8.61%	3.84%
9	Morocco	C	7	92.24%	14.85%	6.97%	3.05%
10	Netherlands	F	9	92.27%	14.57%	6.81%	2.93%
11	Norway	I	13	83.22%	11.49%	4.86%	1.91%
12	Mexico	A	11	91.36%	11.11%	4.76%	1.83%

The title distribution is relatively concentrated among 4 teams: **Spain, England, Argentina, and France** together account for 58.02% of the simulated title probability.

Group-Stage Predictions

The group-stage output reveals a model that strongly rewards structural superiority while keeping scorelines conservative.

The predicted tournament environment is low-scoring, with most fixtures clustering around 1-0, 1-1, 2-0, and 0-1 outcomes, which suggests that the model sees the group phase as a control-and-efficiency game rather than an open scoring contest.

The clearest separation appears in groups where elite teams combine high attacking strength with defensive suppression: Spain finish Group H with a 7:0 goal profile, England close Group L at 5:0, while Germany, Belgium, Argentina, Portugal, and Mexico all produce perfect 9-point group campaigns with clean defensive records.

At the same time, the model exposes several compressed middle zones where qualification depends on tie-breakers rather than dominance. Group A, Group E, Group G, and Group J all contain

second/third-place teams tied on points, goal difference, and goals scored, meaning production strength becomes the decisive ranking layer.

This creates a realistic bracket tension: the favorites generally advance, but the best third-place system keeps high-variance teams such as Czechia, Senegal, Austria, Ivory Coast, Egypt, Bosnia and Herzegovina, DR Congo, and Scotland alive.

In strategic terms, the model's group-stage picture is controlled at the top, fragile in the middle, and highly path-dependent for the third-place qualifiers, which makes the Round of 32 bracket the first major volatility point of the tournament.

Match Predictions

Id	Group	Round	Team A	Team B	Score	Score_Probability	Winner	Winner_Probability
G001	A	1	MEX	RSA	1-0	14.45%	MEX	66.74%
G002			KOR	CZE	1-1	13.23%	CZE	38.28%
G003		2	MEX	KOR	1-0	13.35%	MEX	53.06%
G004			RSA	CZE	0-1	14.82%	CZE	52.08%
G005		3	MEX	CZE	1-0	12.94%	MEX	50.55%
G006			RSA	KOR	0-1	14.74%	KOR	49.34%
G007	B	1	CAN	BIH	1-0	13.92%	CAN	57.12%
G008			QAT	SUI	0-1	14.63%	SUI	68.64%
G009		2	CAN	QAT	2-0	14.03%	CAN	70.65%
G010			BIH	SUI	0-1	14.78%	SUI	55.20%
G011		3	CAN	SUI	1-1	13.17%	CAN	36.98%
G012			BIH	QAT	1-0	14.29%	BIH	48.85%
G013	C	1	BRA	MAR	1-1	13.00%	BRA	40.07%
G014			HAI	SCO	0-1	14.59%	SCO	58.66%
G015		2	BRA	HAI	2-0	14.91%	BRA	81.01%
G016			MAR	SCO	1-0	13.89%	MAR	56.08%
G017		3	BRA	SCO	1-0	12.66%	BRA	61.40%
G018			MAR	HAI	2-0	15.66%	MAR	76.43%
G019	D	1	USA	PAR	1-1	12.25%	USA	48.60%
G020			AUS	TUR	0-1	13.98%	TUR	52.07%
G021		2	USA	AUS	1-0	12.86%	USA	50.53%
G022			PAR	TUR	0-1	13.08%	TUR	50.24%
G023		3	USA	TUR	1-1	12.19%	TUR	39.49%
G024			PAR	AUS	1-1	13.48%	PAR	37.18%

G025	E	1	GER	CUW	2-0	14.86%	GER	88.08%
G026			CIV	ECU	1-1	13.43%	ECU	37.36%
G027		2	GER	CIV	1-0	13.41%	GER	60.01%
G028			CUW	ECU	0-1	16.74%	ECU	70.17%
G029		3	GER	ECU	1-0	13.69%	GER	57.36%
G030			CUW	CIV	0-1	16.58%	CIV	68.52%
G031	F	1	NED	JPN	1-1	12.86%	NED	41.74%
G032			SWE	TUN	1-1	12.53%	SWE	46.57%
G033		2	NED	SWE	1-0	11.32%	NED	61.77%
G034			JPN	TUN	1-0	14.79%	JPN	63.10%
G035		3	NED	TUN	2-0	13.79%	NED	69.31%
G036			JPN	SWE	1-0	12.07%	JPN	55.14%
G037	G	1	BEL	EGY	1-0	12.02%	BEL	56.22%
G038			IRN	NZL	1-0	15.52%	IRN	55.45%
G039		2	BEL	IRN	1-0	13.62%	BEL	57.26%
G040			EGY	NZL	1-0	14.08%	EGY	59.23%
G041		3	BEL	NZL	2-0	14.35%	BEL	77.45%
G042			EGY	IRN	1-1	13.26%	EGY	37.95%
G043	H	1	ESP	CPV	2-0	14.31%	ESP	86.94%
G044			KSA	URU	0-1	15.36%	URU	58.09%
G045		2	ESP	KSA	3-0	13.76%	ESP	88.23%
G046			CPV	URU	0-1	16.37%	URU	56.56%
G047		3	ESP	URU	2-0	13.05%	ESP	70.38%
G048			CPV	KSA	1-1	13.53%	CPV	35.24%
G049	I	1	FRA	SEN	1-0	12.85%	FRA	59.10%
G050			IRQ	NOR	0-2	13.16%	NOR	70.64%
G051		2	FRA	IRQ	2-0	14.39%	FRA	83.77%
G052			SEN	NOR	1-1	12.56%	NOR	41.87%
G053		3	FRA	NOR	1-1	10.95%	FRA	55.48%
G054			SEN	IRQ	1-0	14.75%	SEN	63.53%
G055	J	1	ARG	ALG	1-0	13.25%	ARG	63.37%
G056			AUT	JOR	1-0	14.10%	AUT	58.32%
G057		2	ARG	AUT	1-0	13.19%	ARG	65.47%
G058			ALG	JOR	1-0	14.13%	ALG	60.46%
G059		3	ARG	JOR	2-0	14.07%	ARG	84.64%

G060			ALG	AUT	1-1	13.24%	ALG	37.84%
G061	K	1	POR	COD	1-0	13.59%	POR	65.86%
G062			UZB	COL	0-1	14.07%	COL	53.79%
G063		2	POR	UZB	2-0	14.22%	POR	70.41%
G064			COD	COL	0-1	13.05%	COL	48.65%
G065		3	POR	COL	1-0	11.48%	POR	54.74%
G066			COD	UZB	1-0	14.11%	COD	39.92%
G067	L	1	ENG	CRO	1-0	12.59%	ENG	60.16%
G068			GHA	PAN	1-1	13.25%	PAN	38.42%
G069		2	ENG	GHA	2-0	13.14%	ENG	83.04%
G070			CRO	PAN	1-0	15.04%	CRO	56.36%
G071		3	ENG	PAN	2-0	14.44%	ENG	79.28%
G072			CRO	GHA	1-0	13.57%	CRO	60.63%

Rankings Predictions

GROUP A	W	D	L	GLS	Pts
Mexico	3	0	0	3:0	9
Korea Republic	1	1	1	2:2	4
Czechia	1	1	1	2:2	4
South Africa	0	0	3	0:3	0

GROUP B	W	D	L	GLS	Pts
Canada	2	1	0	4:1	7
Switzerland	2	1	0	3:1	7
Bosnia & Herzegovina	1	0	2	1:2	3
Qatar	0	0	3	0:4	0

GROUP C	W	D	L	GLS	Pts
Morocco	2	1	0	4:1	7
Brazil	2	1	0	4:1	7
Scotland	1	0	2	1:2	3
Haiti	0	0	3	0:5	0

GROUP D	W	D	L	GLS	Pts
Turkiye	2	1	0	3:1	7
United States	1	2	0	3:2	5
Paraguay	0	2	1	2:3	2

Australia	0	1	2	1:3	1
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GROUP E	W	D	L	GLS	Pts
Germany	3	0	0	4:0	9
Ecuador	1	1	1	2:2	4
Ivory Coast	1	1	1	2:2	4
Curacao	0	0	3	0:4	0

GROUP F	W	D	L	GLS	Pts
Netherlands	2	1	0	4:1	7
Japan	2	1	0	3:1	7
Sweden	0	1	2	1:3	1
Tunisia	0	1	2	1:4	1

GROUP G	W	D	L	GLS	Pts
Belgium	3	0	0	4:0	9
Iran	1	1	1	2:2	4
Egypt	1	1	1	2:2	4
New Zealand	0	0	3	0:4	0

GROUP H	W	D	L	GLS	Pts
Spain	3	0	0	7:0	9
Uruguay	2	0	1	2:2	6
Cape Verde	0	1	2	1:4	1
Saudi Arabia	0	1	2	1:5	1

GROUP I	W	D	L	GLS	Pts
France	2	1	0	4:1	7
Norway	1	2	0	4:2	5
Senegal	1	1	1	2:2	4
Iraq	0	0	3	0:5	0

GROUP J	W	D	L	GLS	Pts
Argentina	3	0	0	4:0	9
Algeria	1	1	1	2:2	4
Austria	1	1	1	2:2	4
Jordan	0	0	3	0:4	0

GROUP K	W	D	L	GLS	Pts
Portugal	3	0	0	4:0	9
Colombia	2	0	1	2:1	6
DR Congo	1	0	2	1:2	3
Uzbekistan	0	0	3	0:4	0

GROUP L	W	D	L	GLS	Pts
England	3	0	0	5:0	9
Croatia	2	0	1	2:1	6
Panama	0	1	2	1:4	1
Ghana	0	1	2	1:4	1

Knockout Path Probabilities

The knockout path confirms the model's core tournament thesis: the 2026 World Cup becomes progressively less about open dominance and more about controlled survival through narrow-margin elimination games.

The best third-place layer creates the first structural pressure point, with Senegal, Austria, Czechia, Ivory Coast, and Egypt all reaching four points and entering the Round of 32 with enough stability to complicate the bracket, while Scotland, DR Congo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina complete the field despite thinner margins.

Once the knockout phase begins, the model strongly favors elite teams against lower-probability qualifiers: Germany over Scotland, France over Egypt, Spain over Algeria, England over DR Congo, and Argentina over Uruguay all clear with high advancement probabilities above 76%.

The tournament then compresses sharply from the Round of 16 onward. Brazil eliminates Switzerland, Spain controls Croatia, England removes Mexico, and Portugal beat Canada, but the quarterfinals mark the shift into an elite attrition game: France beat Brazil on penalties, Spain survive Belgium, England edge Morocco, and Argentina beat Portugal on penalties.

The semifinal structure then becomes the decisive strategic fork of the bracket. Spain defeats France by penalties with a 53.56% advancement probability, while England beat Argentina by an even thinner 51.43%, creating a final where the two most balanced tournament profiles meet.

The final itself is almost perfectly balanced, projected at 1-1 with Spain advancing on penalties at 50.35%.

Best Thirds

Rank	Group	Team	W	D	L	GLS	GD	Pts
1	I	Senegal	1	1	1	2:2	0	4
2	J	Austria	1	1	1	2:2	0	4
3	A	Czechia	1	1	1	2:2	0	4
4	E	Ivory Coast	1	1	1	2:2	0	4
5	G	Egypt	1	1	1	2:2	0	4
6	C	Scotland	1	0	2	1:2	-1	3
7	K	DR Congo	1	0	2	1:2	-1	3
8	B	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	0	2	1:2	-1	3

Match Predictions

Id	Stage	Team A	Team B	Score	Score_Probability	Winner	Winner_Probability
M73	round_of_32	GER	SCO	1-0	12.38%	GER	76.23%
M74		FRA	EGY	2-0	12.84%	FRA	81.32%
M75		KOR	SUI	0-1	13.15%	SUI	55.99%
M76		NED	BRA	1-1p	12.65%	BRA	55.00%
M77		COL	CRO	1-1p	12.94%	CRO	55.31%
M78		ESP	ALG	2-0	12.39%	ESP	80.11%
M79		TUR	BIH	1-0	13.43%	TUR	76.64%
M80		BEL	CZE	1-0	12.47%	BEL	69.06%
M81		MAR	JPN	1-1p	13.17%	MAR	53.83%
M82		ECU	NOR	1-1p	12.54%	NOR	62.57%
M83		MEX	CIV	1-0	13.36%	MEX	65.35%
M84		ENG	COD	2-0	14.05%	ENG	87.30%
M85		ARG	URU	1-0	13.57%	ARG	80.37%
M86		USA	IRN	1-1p	12.48%	USA	58.98%
M87		CAN	AUT	1-1p	13.05%	CAN	54.27%
M88		POR	SEN	1-0	12.47%	POR	65.58%
M89		round_of_16	GER	FRA	1-1p	12.37%	FRA
M90	SUI		BRA	0-1	13.24%	BRA	68.45%
M91	CRO		ESP	0-1	12.12%	ESP	73.71%

M92		TUR	BEL	1-1p	12.21%	BEL	58.84%
M93		MAR	NOR	1-1p	12.63%	MAR	54.30%
M94		MEX	ENG	0-1	11.68%	ENG	71.27%
M95		ARG	USA	2-0	11.23%	ARG	77.62%
M96		CAN	POR	0-1	12.05%	POR	66.86%
M97	quarterfinal	FRA	BRA	1-1p	12.37%	FRA	58.55%
M98		ESP	BEL	1-1p	10.80%	ESP	67.11%
M99		MAR	ENG	1-1p	12.26%	ENG	66.32%
M100		ARG	POR	1-1p	12.35%	ARG	59.89%
M101	semifinal	FRA	ESP	1-1p	12.14%	ESP	53.56%
M102		ENG	ARG	1-1p	12.52%	ENG	51.43%
M103	third_place	FRA	ARG	1-1p	12.65%	ARG	51.89%
M104	final	ESP	ENG	1-1p	12.02%	ESP	50.35%



Limitations

This model is a probabilistic forecasting system. It estimates likelihoods across matches, groups, knockout paths, and title outcomes. Its outputs should be read as probability distributions, rather than fixed event predictions. Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the results.

1. Football contains high randomness at match level. A single red card, injury, tactical change, referee decision, penalty, goalkeeper performance, or finishing anomaly can meaningfully change the result of one match. This matters especially in knockout rounds, where one low-probability event can reshape the entire bracket.
2. Exact-score probabilities are naturally diffuse. A scoreline with a probability around 10~15% can still be the most likely score because football outcomes are spread across many possible scores. Therefore, exact-score picks should be interpreted as the highest-probability scoreline among many alternatives, rather than a high-certainty forecast.
3. The match model uses an independent Poisson framework conditional on estimated expected goals. This gives the model transparency and repeatability, while simplifying tactical dependencies between teams. Real matches can contain correlated scoring effects, game-state shifts, late tactical risk-taking, and momentum changes that a static pre-match score model captures only indirectly.
4. The 2026 production layer includes squad-strength and player-quality assumptions built from the reviewed P1 master. Late squad changes, injuries, suspensions, lineup choices, tactical systems, and player availability updates can alter team strength after the forecast is produced.
5. The historical calibration layer covers the 2010, 2014, 2018, and 2022 World Cups. This provides a useful validation base, yet the 2026 tournament has a different 48-team structure, a Round of 32, expanded third-place qualification mechanics, and a broader bracket path. Structural changes increase path complexity and reduce direct comparability with previous tournament formats.
6. The third-place qualification system creates strong path dependency. Small differences in one group can change which third-place teams qualify and where they are routed in the Round of 32. As a result, bracket forecasts should be read together with qualification probabilities, rather than as a single locked path.
7. The model's production cap and feature weights are calibrated assumptions. The selected P1 historical market adjustment weight is 0.14, while the 2026 production layer uses a wider cap to express a broader set of squad, tactical, penalty, and set-piece features. This creates a practical production forecast, while leaving room for future refinement as more verified squad data becomes available.
8. All model outputs represent a pre-tournament forecast snapshot. They reflect the data, assumptions, and model versions available at the time of generation. The model should be updated only through a clearly versioned process when new information is intentionally incorporated.

Disclaimer

This report is provided for research, analytical, and informational purposes. The predictions, probabilities, scorelines, rankings, and tournament paths presented in this report are model-generated estimates based on the inputs, assumptions, and simulation process described in the methodology section. They represent probabilistic forecasts, not guarantees of future outcomes.

The report should be interpreted as a sports analytics exercise and forecasting study. It is not betting advice, financial advice, investment advice, or a recommendation to place wagers or make financial decisions based on the model outputs. Any use of the report for betting, gambling, trading, commercial decisions, media claims, or public commentary is the sole responsibility of the user. Football matches are uncertain events, and actual results may differ materially from the model's projected probabilities.

The model creator makes no claim that the forecast will correctly predict match results, exact scores, group standings, knockout paths, or the tournament winner. All probabilities should be read in context, especially exact-score probabilities, which are spread across many possible outcomes.

Team names, competition references, and country identifiers are used for descriptive and analytical purposes only. This report is an independent forecasting project and is not affiliated with, endorsed by, sponsored by, or officially connected to FIFA, the FIFA World Cup, national federations, teams, players, or tournament organizers.

The methodology, assumptions, data structure, and outputs may evolve in future versions. Any updated model run should be clearly labeled with a model version, forecast date, simulation count, seed, and output freeze reference.