



Qatar Seizes FIFA World Cup Qualifiers 2026 Top Spot by Dwayne Manaor and Carl Ajero

On October 14, 2025, history was made by the Qatar National Football team as they came out triumphant over the UAE in their final Fourth Round match in the AFC FIFA World Cup Qualifiers at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium here in Qatar. A fitting end to what was a long and arduous road to World Cup qualification.

It was a long night of close shaves and scares for the Maroons, having to deal with many shots by the UAE in the first half, but the scoresheet remained blank heading into the second half. It only took five minutes after the restart for Qatar to showcase their strength, with **Akram Afif** delivering a wonderful free-kick for captain **Boualem Khoukhi** to head into the goal, which put Qatar in the lead.

Meanwhile, the UAE started to pile the pressure on Qatar, searching for a goal that would bring them back into the contest. That would not be the case as Qatar doubled their advantage with

Pedro Miguel heading into the back of the net from another **Akram Afif** free-kick, which made him top the assists chart in the Qualifiers. Qatar then hunkered down into a defensive state, trying to maintain their lead, but their aggressive approach led to **Tarek Salman** getting sent off after a rash challenge on the UAE's **Erik**. This would prove to be consequential as Qatar conceded a late goal with **Sultan Al-Amiri** volleying it home to get the UAE back into the game. In the end, it only proved a consolation as Qatar held on to win the game 2-1, securing their spot in next year's World Cup.

It was a rollercoaster of a ride to qualify for the World Cup for Qatar. Being higher in rank in the FIFA standings, they played in the Second Round of qualifying, which was composed of 9 groups in which the top two of each group would advance to the next round of qualifying. Qatar were unbeaten in their group with 5 wins and a draw throughout the Second Round. Striker **Almoez Ali** scored 7 goals in the Second Round, going on to be the joint top scorer across all FIFA World Cup Qualifiers alongside **Erling Haaland** with 12 goals.

However, the Third Round was a different story for Qatar. Qatar had a difficult run in the Third Round, losing 5 matches and conceding 24 goals. They managed to claw their way to fourth in their group, thus giving them another shot at World Cup qualification in the Fourth Round of qualifying. Two groups composed the Fourth Round, with the top team in each group qualifying for the World Cup. After a goalless draw with Oman, Qatar needed to win against the UAE to qualify for the World Cup.

The match was attended by over twelve thousand fans of both the Emirates and Qatar, almost completely filling up Jassim Bin Hamad's capacity of fifteen thousand guests. The win was not only celebrated in the stadium as laughter and cheers flooded the walkways of Souq Waqif with fans waving their banners and flags as both Qatari citizens and expatriates felt as if they were on top of the world as their home and host nation qualified for one of the biggest events in sports.

The coach of the Qatar National Team, Julen Lopetegui, mentioned in an interview days before the match about how pivotal this qualification would be for the team and the nation. Lopetegui also expressed a bright future for the team, saying that previous losses should be kept in the past and that the team should look forward to qualifying.

*"What's happened before is history. The present and future begin tomorrow against the UAE. We're ready and fully focused on this match."
-Julen Lopetegui*

Assim Madibo, The Midfield Anchor for the Qatar National Team, mentioned before the match the importance of the home crowd support in boosting the team's confidence, as well as the team's full concentration to win the match.

“Our strength comes from our fans. We hope to feel their presence and hear their support throughout the match, just as always. The atmosphere in the camp and in training is very positive. This match demands full concentration from everyone. We’ll do everything we can to stay focused, minimize mistakes, and get the win.”

For many, the FIFA World Cup is an incredible honor to compete in, giving the opportunity to wave their flag high on the global stage as their players stand beside many legendary teams and players. As the team progresses through the tournament, Qatari citizens and expatriates alike will be cheering with great pride and patriotism for the Maroons.