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Wollongong's World Cup guide: Where to watch and can the Socceroos stun the world?



By [Tyler Welch](#)
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FIFA World Cup action is approaching rapidly, with the Socceroos taking the pitch on June 14 in Vancouver. Despite qualifying for six straight World Cups, Australia has yet to surpass the round of 16, falling at that stage in 2022 to Argentina, the eventual champion.

As Australia seeks a run to its first-ever World Cup trophy, here is everything to know leading up to the opening match of the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

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WHO IS AUSTRALIA PLAYING AGAINST?

June 14: Australia v Turkey at Vancouver, 2pm

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June 20: Australia v United States at Seattle, 5am

June 26: Australia v Paraguay at Santa Clara, 12pm

Australia is in Group D of the tournament, which includes the United States, Turkey and Paraguay. The Socceroos will take on Turkey first, which is making its first World Cup appearance since a third-place finish in 2002. Turkey has a young core led by 21-year-old Real Madrid star Arda Guler, who was recently named the UEFA Champions League Young Player of the Season.

The Socceroos face the tournament hosts for their second group stage match. The United States, similar to Australia, was knocked out in the round of 16 in 2022, but comes back as a strong contender to win Group D. Christian Pulisic is still the star of the American side.

A match with Paraguay rounds out Australia's schedule. Paraguay has not played in the World Cup since 2010, and just squeaked into this year's tournament with the sixth and final slot out of the CONMEBOL qualifier. A potential round of 32 matchup will depend on Australia's performance in the group stage.

WHERE AUSTRALIA IS PLAYING

All of Australia's matchups are situated on the west coast of North America. The Socceroos will start in Vancouver, Canada, for their game against Turkey, then head to the United States.



📷 Nestory Irankunda looms as a breakout star for the World Cup as Lionel Messi, right, attempts to lead Argentina to victory again. Pictures AAP

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BC Place Stadium typically hosts Vancouver's Major League Soccer and Canadian Football League teams, and can accommodate 54,500 people. Australia's subsequent matches will be at Lumen Field and Levi's Stadium, homes of the NFL's Seattle Seahawks and San Francisco 49ers, respectively. Both stadiums fit more than 70,000 fans.

Lumen Field traditionally uses artificial turf for Seahawks games. As such, FIFA has worked with the stadium since early February to install real grass above the turf, according to a report by the [Seattle Times](#). Of the 11 host cities in the United States, seven previously used fully synthetic turf.

Perhaps getting into the American spirit, the Socceroos announced an [NFL x Australia crossover jersey](#) ahead of the World Cup. The unique merchandise still has the classic green-and-gold look, but has the fit of an NFL jersey.

WHO IS IN THE AUSTRALIA SQUAD

The 26-man Socceroos squad was finalised and announced on June 1, with 17 first-time selections for the tournament. The new blood includes winger Connor Metcalfe, left back Jordan Bos and star attackers Nestory Irankunda and Mohamed Touré. Tete Yengi and Cristian Volpato are first-time call-ups, with Volpato making the switch from Italy just days before the roster was set.

Goalkeeper Mathew Ryan and forward Mathew Leckie, each playing in their fourth World Cup, will give Australia a strong veteran presence.

The pair will tie a national record for World Cup appearances, matching Socceroos legends Tim Cahill and Mark Milligan. Other notable returners are central midfielder Jackson Irvine and centre-back Harry Souttar, who recently recovered from an Achilles rupture.

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[*Full roster here:*](#)

- Goalies: Mathew Ryan, Paul Izzo, Patrick Beach
- Defenders: Aziz Behich, Jordan Boz, Cameron Burgess, Alessandro Circati, Milos Degenek, Jason Geria, Lucas Herrington, Jacob Italiano, Harry Souttar, Kai Trewin
- Midfielders: Cameron Devlin, Ajdin Hrustic, Jackson Irvine, Connor Metcalfe, Aiden O'Neill, Paul Okon Engstler
- Forwards: Nestory Irankunda, Mathew Leckie, Awer Mabil, Mohamed Touré, Nishan Vellupillay, Cristian Volpato, Tete Yengi

A DRINKS LIMIT? WHAT'S NEW AT THE WORLD CUP

No more alcohol ban! Well, sort of. After alcohol sales were banned in and around stadiums during the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, the United States will allow alcohol consumption during games, but fans will be

limited to two drinks a match, and no liquor will be allowed after halftime.



📷 Australia fans cheer on the Socceroos in a friendly against the New Zealand All Whites on Sept. 5, 2025 at GIO Stadium. Picture by Keegan Carroll

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The World Cup experience is changing for the players, too. Multiple rule changes have been introduced for this year's tournament, including countdowns on substitutions, throw-ins and goal-kicks to prevent time wasting.

The tournament will have expanded powers for VAR as well, as referees can now review whether a second yellow card was wrongfully attributed and overturn incorrect awarding of corners and goal kicks. The video assistant referees can also force a penalty or corner kick to be retaken if a foul was committed before the ball was in play.

HOW TO WATCH THE MATCHES

All of Australia's matches will be free to watch on SBS and SBS On Demand. If you are looking for a location in Wollongong to watch the matches, [The Fraternity Club](#) in Fairy Meadow will be showing Australia's games as well as other World Cup contests.

On June 5, the Minns Labor Government announced extended trading hours in NSW, meaning that pubs and bars can operate for longer hours to accommodate World Cup viewing. Additionally, Tumbalong Park at Darling Harbour and Cathy Freeman Park at Sydney Olympic Park were announced as free public live viewing sites.

"The FIFA World Cup is the biggest sporting event on the planet and expected to draw strong crowds to venues across NSW," Minister for Gaming and Racing David Harris stated.

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"Extended trading hours mean fans can come together and enjoy 'the beautiful game' while supporting local venues. This is a great opportunity for fans to get together at their local pub or club, get behind the Socceroos and hopefully celebrate some big wins."

World Cup viewing locations in Wollongong:

- *The Fraternity Club*
- *Warilla Hotel*
- *Lake Illawarra Hotel*
- *The Illawarra*
- *North Wollongong Hotel*
- *Dapto Leagues Club*
- *North Norwa Tavern*
- *The Illawarra Brewery*

WHY ARE TICKETS SO EXPENSIVE?

Still thinking about flying to North America to catch a Socceroos game? At minimum, a match ticket will set you back more than AU\$300, and if you want to see Australia square off against the United States, the cheapest available option on Vivid Seats is about AU\$1,020.

Ticket prices at the World Cup have been a major source of controversy. Prospective attendees have complained about record-high ticket prices and misleading seat maps. New York and New Jersey, the states jointly hosting the World Cup final (where ticket prices are a minimum of AU\$8,335), filed a subpoena to investigate FIFA's ticketing system.

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Tyler Welch covers sports news for the Illawarra Mercury. All the way from Dallas, Texas, Tyler is spending the summer as an intern in Wollongong. He's excited to cover new sports and leagues in Australia. You can email Tyler at...