

# France celebrates its 2nd World Cup title, beating Croatia 4-2

By Associated Press, adapted by Newsela staff on 07.18.18

Word Count **866**

Level **1040L**



France's Kylian Mbappe (front) celebrates after scoring his team's fourth goal during the final match between France and Croatia at the 2018 World Cup soccer match at Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow, Russia, July 15, 2018. Photo: Martin Meissner/AP

MOSCOW, Russia — Teenager Kylian Mbappe slid across the rain-soaked turf holding the World Cup trophy tight. He and the rest of France's soccer players celebrated on Sunday like the youthful bunch they are.

Nothing was going to stop the party. Not even a downpour, that soaked Russian President Vladimir Putin and everyone in the stadium, could slow the celebration.

The 19-year-old Mbappe became only the second teenager after Pele, the famous player from Brazil, to score in a World Cup final. Mbappe's goal helped France to beat Croatia 4-2 on Sunday, July 15.

"I don't really realize yet what it is. The World Cup, it's a lot," French player Antoine Griezmann said. "I'm very proud of this team."

## **Protesters Join The Play, Delay Game**

Mbappe had just shown his speed in the 52nd minute when play was held up by four protesters who ran onto the field. They were protesting Putin.

Putin was later on the field to award medals to the players in a ceremony soon drenched in rain and joy. As thunder boomed and lightning flashed, FIFA President Gianni Infantino handed France captain Hugo Lloris the World Cup trophy. FIFA is the international soccer governing agency.

Gold confetti stuck to the soaked Les Bleus team members as they paraded the trophy around the Luzhniki Stadium. It was a final act of a surprising tournament. Croatia reached its first final while soccer powers Brazil, Germany and Argentina went home early.

About 12 minutes after a protester gave Mbappe a high-five on the field, he sent a shot from 25 yards past goalkeeper Danijel Subasic. The goal put France up 4-1. That score closed the door on Croatia, which had been the better team until Mbappe came to life.

The only other teen to score in a World Cup final was Pele. He was 17 when Brazil beat Sweden 5-2 in 1958.

Mbappe was born just months after France won its only other World Cup title in 1998.

## **Goal-Scoring Frenzy**

Paul Pogba and Griezmann, France's two other key players, also scored.

However, it was Mbappe who put the match out of reach with a furious passage of play in the second half. In the 59th minute, a run from Mbappe started a play that involved Pogba. With his second attempt, Pogba curled his shot beyond Subasic and into the goal.

Griezmann scored in the 38th minute, four minutes after his kick was knocked out of play by Ivan Perisic's arm.

France took the lead in the 18th minute when Croatia's tallest outfield player, 6-foot-3-inch Mario Mandzukic, rose to meet Griezmann's free-kick with the top of his head. He deflected it past his own goalkeeper scoring a goal for France.

Perisic and Mandzukic both scored for Croatia. The first goal came in the 28th minute and the second in the 69th, embarrassing France goalkeeper Lloris with a flicked shot.

## **"It Is Very Difficult To Come Back"**

Yet the three-goal lead was too much for the squad that made a habit of coming back to beat the odds. The team had also played three straight 120-minute games before the final.

"After the fourth goal came in, I started thinking it would be difficult to come from behind for the fourth or fifth time," Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic said. After Mandzukic scored, "I started hoping again, but it is very difficult to come back against opposition as difficult as France."

France coach Didier Deschamps became only the third man to win the World Cup as a player and a coach. He joined Mario Zagallo of Brazil and Franz Beckenbauer, who captained West Germany.

Deschamps, France's captain 20 years ago, was lifted up by his players on the field and flung into the air several times and caught. The normally quiet coach did a few skipping dance steps in the rain before stopping and laughing.

It was that kind of evening for the French, who won with a joy not often seen in a mostly straightforward attempt at winning the cup.

Back home in France, thousands of fans headed to the Eiffel Tower to watch a broadcast on giant screens. Paris police had closed the area more than two hours before kickoff.

## **Presidents' Club**

Putin watched the game in a special section of the stadium with the presidents of France and Croatia, Emmanuel Macron and Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic.

Macron paced nervously out of his seat at one point of the game. He then kissed his Croatian counterpart on both cheeks to console her after the game. They joined the medal ceremony and both kissed the gold trophy before it got to Lloris.

## **Final Goals**

Goals were scored in the World Cup final without the need for extra time. The two previous finals were 0-0 after 90 minutes before being settled with a single goal deep into extra time.

Three goals in the first half were the most since 1974 when West Germany went into the break 2-1 up against the Netherlands. That was the final score.

The six-goal final was the most since England beat West Germany 4-2 in 1966. It also ensured the 2018 World Cup had only one scoreless game when France last played at Luzhniki Stadium against Denmark.