

WORLD CUP 2022

# CEOs square off in World Cup friendly duel

16 business leaders pledge support for *The Business Times* Budding Artists Fund

THE 2022 Fifa World Cup tournament in Qatar is heating up with the knockout phase starting on Saturday night, as the 16 remaining teams continue their pursuit of world football's most prestigious trophy.

In conjunction with the month-long tournament, *The Business Times* (BT) is running a BT-World Cup 2022 CEO Challenge – to have a bit of fun and raise some funds for a worthy cause at the same time.

We have invited a group of top business executives to take part in this special challenge. They are each randomly assigned one of the 16 teams, and they will have a “face-off” in BT whenever their respective teams are playing each other.

Among those who have agreed to participate are UBS Singapore country head August Hatecke, Prudential Singapore CEO Dennis Tan and StarHub's chief of consumer business group Johan Buse.

We also have Adrian Staiti, the president (Asia-Pacific) of CAA Sports, which represents over 3,000 athletes in sports such as football, basketball and baseball. At this World Cup, CAA represents 53 players including Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo and South Korea's Son Heung-min.

Among the debutants taking part this year are OCBC Bank's head of group brand communications Koh Ching Ching and Timbre Group founder and CEO Danny Loong.

The rules of the CEO Challenge are simple. If a participant's team wins, he or she will continue in the tournament. However, if the team loses, he or she will make a S\$1,000 donation to The Business Times Budding Artists Fund (BT BAF).

The amount will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Singapore government, and the participant will also be eligible for a 250 per cent tax deduction for this donation. The CEO Challenge carries on until the new World Cup champion is crowned after the grand final at the Lusail Stadium in Qatar on Dec 18.

The last time BT organised a similar CEO Challenge was the Euro 2020 championships, with the 16 participating CEOs donating a total of S\$27,000 to the BT BAF.

The BT BAF was initiated back in 2004 and adopted by BT a year later. It originated from a conviction that no child in Singapore with a strong interest and potential in the arts should be denied the opportunity to develop his or her talents due to a lack of financial resources.

BT BAF aims to level the playing field and

reaches out to children and youths from financially disadvantaged backgrounds, providing opportunities and access to the arts. The beneficiaries receive their arts training and education at The Little Arts Academy and 10 Square Youth.

BT BAF, The Little Arts Academy and 10 Square Youth are all managed by The Rice Company Limited, a registered charity and not-for-profit arts organisation with Institution of a Public Character status.

The first game of the World Cup's Round of 16 takes place this weekend, with the Netherlands taking on the United States at the Khalifa International Stadium in Doha on Saturday (11pm kickoff, Singapore time).

The action continues on Sunday with three more big matches – two-time World Cup winners Argentina face Australia (3am) and the defending champions France square off against Poland (11pm). On Monday morning (3am), England will play African champions Senegal.

BY LEE U-WEN

ROUND OF 16 MATCHES THIS WEEKEND



**Johan Buse**  
Chief, Consumer Business Group, StarHub

The Netherlands' young, talented players are visibly hungry to avenge their second-place finish in 2010. With Cody Gakpo's blistering runs and early goals, Virgil Van Dijk's reliable defence and Frenkie De Jong guarding the midfield, “Oranje” is a real threat at this World Cup. They've already showed the prowess of champions, with stunning 2-0 wins over Senegal and Qatar propelling them to the top of their group. As a Dutchman myself, I'll be decked in orange and cheering hard from the sidelines. ‘Hup, Holland, Hup! – Oranje boven!’

**MATCH 1**  
**Dec 3 Sat, 11pm**

 VS 

The Netherlands VS United States



**Adrian Staiti**  
President, Asia-Pacific, CAA Sports

As an American working for an American company, I'm proud that the US stayed undefeated in a tough group that included England, Iran and Wales. Christian Pulisic scored the all-important winning goal against Iran to seal their place in the Round of 16, and hopefully he can overcome his injury to play against the Dutch. Our goalkeeper Matt Turner is also on form, and the whole team has a fighting spirit that will hopefully take them far.



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**Dennis Tan**  
CEO, Prudential Singapore

Despite the shock loss to Saudi Arabia in their first match, Argentina have regained their stride to record two wins to top their group and advance to the Round of 16. The match against Australia won't be easy, but I am confident La Albiceleste will prevail. With the legendary Lionel Messi leading the way and a solid team that plays well together, it will definitely be an exciting match to watch.

**MATCH 2**  
**Dec 4 Sun, 3am**

 VS 

Argentina VS Australia



**Arsh Chaudhry**  
CEO, Space Matrix

The Aussies have been solid at the back so far, securing two out of three possible clean sheets. Graham Arnold's men have demonstrated immense heart against teams of superior quality on paper. Mathew Leckie has done a decent job of leading the line and it was his goal which sent the Socceroos through to the Last 16, breaking Danish hearts. The ball is round, and we believe the Socceroos stand as good a chance as anyone else to bring the trophy back Down Under.



**Koh Ching Ching**  
Head, Group Brand and Communications, OCBC Bank

France have been one of the most dominant teams in Qatar, and it's easy to see why. The defending champions were impressive as they beat Denmark and Australia to be one of the first teams to book their spot in the Round of 16. The French will once again rely on the speedy Kylian Mbappe for the goals against Poland, and I foresee another victory for Les Bleus. Vive Le France!

**MATCH 3**  
**Dec 4 Sun, 11pm**

 VS 

France VS Poland



**Diron Chua**  
Executive Director, WiseNet Asia



Poland went through as their group's second-place team. The Polish attack is as strong as ever. Krzysztof Piątek and Arkadiusz Milik are fit and firing in Serie A following summer transfers, while Karol Swiderski has swiftly become a Major League Soccer star. There's also Robert Lewandowski, who is always a goal threat. Poland may not be a hot favourite, but this World Cup has proven so far that the dark horses are a force to be reckoned with.



**Patrick Lee**  
Cluster CEO, Singapore & Asean Markets, Standard Chartered

After hitting euphoria early in the group stage, England have the best opportunity to finally bring it home! Gareth Southgate needs to unlock the potential of the youth within this English team, with rising stars like Jude Bellingham, Marcus Rashford and Phil Foden who are taking the field by storm. While it's crucial to be clinical, they must not forget that the best defense is a good offense, and to stay in control of the game.

**MATCH 4**  
**Dec 5 Mon, 3am**

 VS 

England VS Senegal



**Nicholas Goh**  
Founder and Group CEO, Verztac Consulting

Senegal may not have their star forward Sadio Mane, but that has not stopped the Lions of Teranga from producing a masterclass performance at this World Cup. They also ride on the momentum of winning the Africa Cup of Nations earlier this year. Led by experienced coach Aliou Cisse, the team has formidable players like Watford's Ismaila Sarr, Chelsea's Edouard Mendy and Napoli's Kalidou Koulibaly. England will have to put in a shift against this African powerhouse.