

La Máquina Deportiva com

MAGAZINE

MEXICO FINISHES MEXTOUR WITH A DRAW

LAST GAME OF TOUR IS
AUGUST 31, 2022
VERSUS PARÁGUAY IN
ATLANTA, GA

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USMNT'S MIXED PERFORMANCE LACKED POLISH IN SCORELESS DRAW TO URUGUAY

The United States men's national soccer team said it wanted a tough test when it scheduled two World Cup-bound opponents for this international window. On Sunday, the U.S. got precisely that in a 0-0 draw with Uruguay. It was a result that in some ways the U.S. was fortunate to walk away with. Goalkeeper Sean Johnson produced a superb reflex save from Mathias Olivera's close range effort in the 63rd minute, and then the normally lethal Edinson Cavani squandered a clear opportunity in second-half stoppage time.

The U.S. had some chances, with Jesus Ferreira failing to convert a pair of first-half opportunities. But overall, while a draw was deserved given the balance of the game, it could easily have ended in a loss, one that would have snapped what is now a 25-game home unbeaten streak.

Ferreira's failure to find the back of the net will do little to stop questions about who the team's starting striker will be going forward. But this was a match in which Uruguay seemed to grind down the home side, and the U.S. attack fizzled as the game wore on.

Some of the U.S. team's difficulties in attack were down to Uruguay's quality. Later this year, La Celeste will take part in its sixth consecutive World Cup, and on this day, Uruguay lived up to its reputation as a defensively solid side.

The plethora of second-half changes didn't do much to help fluidity either. The fact that Ferreira's replacement, Haji Wright, touched the ball all of four times in 29 minutes of work speaks to the degree in which the U.S. attack struggled in the final third.

So, while U.S. manager Gregg Berhalter called the performance an "A-plus effort from the group in tough conditions, warm conditions," the Americans' end product was lacking, as was the quality of the team's set piece deliveries.

"We got the ball into really good positions and then just didn't take advantage of that," Berhalter said. "They blocked some crosses. We got some corners. The final pass was a bit off."

It wasn't a great day for some players hoping to state their case for more first-team minutes, either. Joe Scally struggled mightily with his defensive positioning in the first half and looked almost overwhelmed. He appeared a tad more comfortable after moving to his more customary right back position midway through the second half, and while he deserves credit for hanging in there, the search for a backup to presumed starting left back Antonee Robinson goes on.

Erik Palmer-Brown is another player fans are clamoring to get more playing time. But he came up second best on a couple of occasions, including one instance late when Diego Rossi surged past him and it was left to defender Walker Zimmerman to stifle the attack with a critical block of the former LAFC forward's shot.

Berhalter seemed to be speaking for all of his recent call-ups when he said in relation to his forwards, "There were moments and we came up a little bit short, but we'll keep working with these guys." He added, "It's just something to build on. That was the whole idea with team performance, individual performances. We wanted guys to set a baseline to now keep improving."

Among the positives was that Weston McKennie made it through his 45-minute stint unscathed as he works his way back from a broken foot he sustained in February.

Another plus was the play of Yunus Musah. The Valencia midfielder has long brought something unique to the U.S. midfield through his ability to dribble the ball up field. But on this day, he utilized his range of passing to a greater degree, especially in linking up with Timothy Weah and DeAndre Yedlin on the right flank.

"Yunus is a guy that just blows me away at his age what he can do, crazy level of talent," Berhalter said. "We need to work with Yunus on this final, the final product, the final pass, the finishing, because he has a huge ceiling."

Defensively, the U.S. bent but didn't break, and it seemed that whenever a mistake was made, a teammate was there to provide cover.

"I thought we stuck with their runs well," Zimmerman said. "They have clever movement in the box. We had a couple plays where we had to slide and get in good positions to prevent them from good goal-scoring opportunities. So ultimately kept another zero against the quality opponent, so we can take that as a positive."

And on those occasions when the back line didn't come through, Johnson was there in goal to come to the rescue. It's almost mind-boggling to think that Johnson has been involved in the national team program for 11 years. The fact that he now has just 10 caps shows the difficulty he has faced in trying to crack the U.S. lineup.

To be clear, Johnson is still battling it out to be the team's third goalkeeper at the World Cup later this year, but he did his prospects no harm; and as the year progresses, he might end up being the only U.S. keeper getting steady playing time. Time will reveal the extent to which that counts for something.

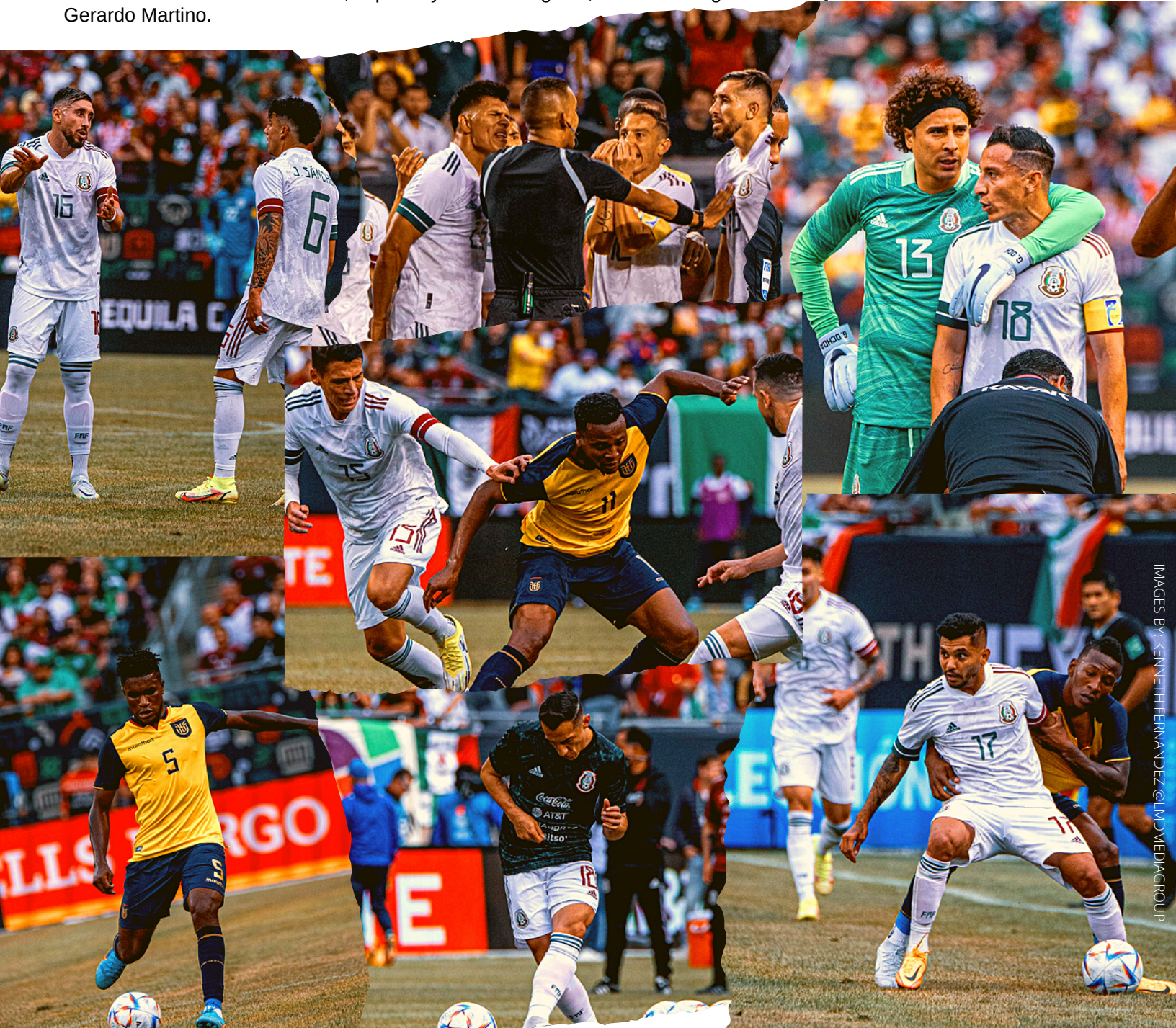
"As a professional player who's been around the national team for a while, who's been around this group for a while, the opportunity meant everything," Johnson said. He later added, "Maintaining a good level, good form, good rhythm coming into these camps helps, definitely, so there's a smooth transition to the game today."

The current international window now enters a new phase, with a pair of CONCACAF Nations League games against Grenada and El Salvador coming up. The competition certainly won't be as intense, but El Salvador proved to be a tough opponent during World Cup qualifying, and it should provide a decent enough test for those players still pushing to be a more consistent presence on the team.

MEXICO FINISHES MEXTOUR WITH 0-0 DRAW AGAINST ECUADOR

Mexico finished their MexTour of friendlies with a 0-0 tie against Ecuador, and after the match they announced they would make changes for the upcoming Concacaf Nations League matches. Mexico sent 16 players out of the roster, which all but points to those 16 players being part of the team that will be at the World Cup in Qatar. Mexico had previously announced they would have an alternate squad for the Nations League before combining both Nations League and MexTour call ups. The division of both leads to some players being given time off as a form of passing the test, while some of the players had few minutes or none at all although certain cases where of players who did have significant action in the three friendlies to mixed criticisms.

After a terrible performance in a 3-0 loss against Uruguay, Mexico improved somewhat in a tough matchup against Ecuador which was filled with chances for both teams. Mexico was the better side in the early minutes, coming close with a shot from Jesus Corona that was saved by Ecuador's goalkeeper Alexander Dominguez. Unfortunately during the play, Corona went down injured and minutes later had to be subbed out. Once Corona came off, Mexico lost control of the match and Ecuador came close to scoring with a close range shot from Romario Ibarra that Guillermo Ochoa brilliantly saved. The second half had Ecuador starting out better and having control of the match before Mexico once again finished as the better side. They came close to scoring with a shot from Raul Jimenez that went just wide in the best chance of the half. In the end, the score held up and although it had been entertaining and Mexico improved, the lack of a result and the troubles on offense and defense, especially the lack of goals, continued to grow the criticism on the team and Coach Gerardo Martino.



A RECAP OF COSTA RICA'S 2-0 WIN OVER MARTINIQUE AT CONCACAF NATIONS LEAGUE

In front of a sparse yet vocal home crowd, Los Ticos played out a comprehensive 2-0 victory over a plucky Martinique. Goals either half from Joel Campbell and Francisco Calvo ensured that Costa Rica gained their first victory of the CONCACAF Nations League campaign and put the defeat to Panama 3 days ago firmly behind them.

Before kick-off, the squad were knocked by the recent news that defender Juan Pablo Vargas and goalkeeper Esteban Alvarado have come down with COVID and will miss the World Cup play-off fixture on June 14th, particularly in the case of Vargas, a considerable blow for the side.

In team news, coach Luis Fernando Suárez rang the changes, with only left-back Bryan Oviedo retaining his place from Friday's defeat in Panama, as Suárez opted for a more experienced line-up, with key players Óscar Duarte, Francisco Calvo, Celso Borges, Yeltsin Tejeda and Joel Campbell coming into the starting line-up.

In huge contrast to Los Ticos, it was a vastly inexperienced Martinique side, with 5 players making just a second international appearance and 3 debuting.

Costa Rican controlled the first quarter, in which they held 70% possession and nearly scored in the 15th minute when Celso Borges's spectacular control and volley sailed narrowly over the bar.

In the 25th minute, Martinique hit the bar after a superb free-kick effort, a warning to Costa Rica of what they could offer. However, minutes later, Los Ticos opened the scoring with a composed finish from Joel Campbell after he latched onto an intelligent through ball from Johan Venegas.

The rest of the half was dominated by La Sele, with the ball behind the high Martinique defensive line a persistent threat. The beginning of the second half was a relative lull in proceedings until the 58th minute when Costa Rican goalkeeper Aarón Cruz produced a smart save at his near post; this was followed by an even better one 13 minutes later, after some sloppy defensive work, as the away side began to look more and more dangerous on the counterattack.

Joel Campbell nearly doubled the scoreline in the last 10 minutes with a fantastic individual effort which flew just wide.

Moments later, Cruz made yet another outstanding save after sloppy work from Óscar Duarte.

Finally, Costa Rica settled the tie with just 3 minutes to go, with the impressive Francisco Calvo tapping-in a smart cross from his centre-back partner Duarte. And with the goal, a huge sigh of relief was let out all around the Estadio Nacional.

The lively Anthony Contreras nearly added a third in stoppage time, but his effort was painstakingly cleared off the line by the Martinique defender.

In the end, La Sele had to settle for a 2-0 victory and gain a valuable clean sheet, for a side built on a solid defensive unit, this was nearly as important as scoring. A nice send off to the loyal fans as the team now prepares to set off for Doha to face New Zealand in just 9 days!



CALLLED UP



FOUR CHICAGO FIRE FC AND CHICAGO FIRE FC II PLAYERS CALLED TO NATIONAL TEAMS DURING FIFA INTERNATIONAL WINDOW

Chicago Fire FC today announced that Miguel Navarro, Sergio Oregel Jr. and Xherdan Shaqiri, as well as Chicago Fire FC II forward Omari Glasgow, have joined their respective National Teams for the international FIFA window.

Defender Miguel Navarro has joined the Venezuela

Men's National Team for a pair of international friendlies, traveling to face Malta at 12:00 p.m. CT today, Wednesday, June 1 at Ta'Qali National Stadium in Ta'Qali, Malta. La Vinotinto will then travel to Murcia, Spain for an international friendly against Saudi Arabia at 12:00 p.m. CT at the Estadio Nueva Condomina.

Midfielder Shaqiri has been called up to represent Switzerland for four UEFA Nations League Group A2 matches, beginning with a match against the Czech Republic at 1:45 p.m. CT on Thursday, June 2, at SINOBO Stadium in Prague, Czech Republic. Switzerland will then travel to face Portugal at 1:45 p.m. CT on Sunday, June 5 at the Estádio José Alvalade in Lisbon, before hosting Spain at 1:45 p.m. CT on Thursday, June 9 at the Stade de Genève in Geneva. The Swiss will close out the Nations League window at home, once again facing Portugal at 1:45 p.m. CT on Sunday, June 12.

Homegrown midfielder Sergio Oregel Jr. joins the U.S. U-19 Men's Youth National Team for the second time this year under head coach Marko Mitrović. The U.S. traveled to Marbella, Spain, where the U.S. U-19 MYNT will play two international friendly matches. The U.S. will first face England on Monday, June 6, before taking on Norway on Thursday, June 9. Both matches will kick off at 11:00 a.m. CT at the Marbella Football Center's Dama de Noche pitches.

Chicago Fire FC II forward Omari Glasgow joins the Guyana Men's National Team for a series of Concacaf Nations League matches. Guyana was drawn into Group B of League B along with Bermuda, Haiti and Montserrat. Guyana will kick off the June matches on against Montserrat at 6:30 p.m. CT on Saturday, June 4, at the Estadio Olímpico Félix Sanchez in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic before hosting Bermuda at 3:00 p.m. CT on Tuesday, June 7 at the National Track and Field Centre Leonora in Leonora, Guyana. The Golden Jaguars will then play against Haiti in back-to-back matches, first hosting Haiti at 3:00 p.m. CT on Saturday, June 11 at the National Track and Field Centre Leonora before traveling back to the Dominican Republic to face the Red and Blue at 5:00 p.m. CT on Tuesday, June 14 at the Estadio Olímpico Félix Sánchez.

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