



## FIFA World Cup 2026 Group A Preview: Mexico Targets Home Advantage Against Bafana Bafana, South Korea And Czechia

### Description

The FIFA World Cup 2026 kicks off on 11 June and with co-hosts Mexico anchoring Group A alongside South Africa, South Korea and Czechia, the tournament's opening group promises one of the more intriguing battles of the first round. With 48 nations competing across the United States, Canada and Mexico for the first time, the expanded format gives every team a realistic path to the round of 16. For Group A, however, the pressure falls squarely on El Tri's shoulders playing in front of passionate home support, with the weight of a nation's expectations on their backs.

As the world's eyes turn to North America, Little Big Red Dot previews all four teams in Group A and assesses who will be celebrating when the dust settles. For a look at another fascinating group, check out our [France World Cup 2026 Group I preview](#). You can also follow all our tournament coverage in the [Sports section](#).



Mexico face enormous expectation as co-hosts of the 2026 World Cup.

## Mexico – The Home Favourite

Javier Aguirre’s Mexico head into this tournament as clear Group A favourites, backed by the deafening roar of 87,000 fans at the iconic Estadio Azteca in Mexico City. Few venues in world football carry the mystique of the Azteca – the stage for two World Cup finals and some of the game’s most iconic moments – and El Tri will be desperate to honour that legacy with a deep run.

Raúl Jiménez leads the attack, and at 35 years old, the veteran striker is determined to cap an illustrious international career with a memorable World Cup. Supporting cast includes Edson Álvarez driving midfield, Santiago Giménez providing an additional goal threat up front, and Guillermo Ochoa lending crucial big-game experience in goal. Aguirre’s tactical pragmatism – hard to break down, dangerous on the counter – suits the demands of the group stage.

Mexico’s challenge is converting home support into results. Their streak of seven consecutive round-of-16 exits haunts the programme – a run known as the dreaded *Quinto Partido* – and breaking it begins here, against three opponents who will fancy their chances of unsettling the hosts.



Javier Aguirre carries the hopes of a football-mad nation into the group stage.

## South Africa – Africa’s Dark Horse

South Africa’s return to the World Cup is one of the tournament’s most compelling storylines. Sixteen years after hosting and exiting at the group stage in 2010 – Bafana Bafana are back on football’s biggest stage, having navigated a fiercely competitive CAF qualification campaign to book their place in North America. Their qualification ended a decade-and-a-half of near-misses and false dawns, and the squad that touched down on tournament soil carry the joyful energy of a football nation rediscovering its belief.

Percy Tau carries the creative burden for Hugo Broos’ side, while Ronwen Williams – regarded as one of Africa’s finest goalkeepers – provides a solid foundation at the back. Their physical, energetic style of play is well-suited to disrupting a Mexico side that can be susceptible to high-tempo pressing, and Bafana Bafana have genuine capacity to cause an upset if the stars align.

## South Korea – Chasing the 2002 Dream

For South Korea, every World Cup cycle carries the same tantalising question: can they recapture the magic of 2002? That semi-final run on home soil remains one of football’s most extraordinary achievements, and while expectations have evolved since, the Taeguk Warriors are a well-organised, technically capable side that will not be underestimated.

Son Heung-min, if fit, brings world-class quality – his goal-scoring ability and experience at the highest club level making him the most dangerous individual in Group A. A settled squad anchored around Premier League and Bundesliga-based players gives South Korea cohesion and physicality. Their tactical structure is disciplined and well-drilled, making them the group’s most likely challenger to Mexico.

## Czechia – The Wildcard

The Czech Republic return to the World Cup for the first time since 2006, and they arrive with genuine quality. Patrik Schick – one of the Bundesliga’s most reliable goal-scorers – heads a technically gifted, well-organised squad that qualified through one of UEFA’s most competitive paths. Czechia enter without the burden of expectation, and in tournament football, that freedom can be a powerful asset.

Their challenge will be handling the physical intensity of South Africa and the technical quality of South Korea. But a Schick goal on the opening matchday could shift the group’s entire dynamic – and Czechia have the game management to defend a lead.

## Group A Verdict

Mexico’s home advantage makes them near-certainties to advance from Group A, though South Korea – the most technically refined of the challengers – will push them hardest. The second qualification spot looks set to be a battle between South Korea and South Africa, with Czechia needing an upset performance to gate-crash the round of 16. Watch for Bafana Bafana to cause chaos in at least one match – Group A is far from a foregone conclusion.

The opening game – South Africa vs Mexico at the Estadio Azteca – promises to be one of the tournament’s most atmospheric encounters. Arrive early. Football history is about to be made.

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### Author

jadeyeo