



Portugal 1-1 DR Congo: Wissa's Historic Strike Earns Leopards Stunning World Cup Point

Description

One of football's most extraordinary moments at World Cup 2026 unfolded at Houston's NRG Stadium on Wednesday evening, when Yoane Wissa powered a stoppage-time header past Diogo Costa to earn DR Congo their first ever FIFA World Cup goal and point in 52 years. For a nation making their return to the tournament for the first time since appearing as Zaire in 1974, it was a moment of pure, historic joy.

Portugal, widely expected to cruise through Group K alongside Colombia, were left shaken. Cristiano Ronaldo, starting his 23rd World Cup match at the age of 41 years and 132 days, became the oldest outfield player in history to start a World Cup fixture yet could not find a ninth World Cup goal as his side were held to a 1-1 draw that sent reverberations across the tournament.



Yoane Wissa celebrates Congo DR's historic first World Cup goal in stoppage time
(Photo: Lars Baron/Getty Images via FIFA)

How It Unfolded

Portugal struck early. In the sixth minute, Bruno Fernandes spread a pass wide to Pedro Neto, whose inviting cross was met at the near post by midfielder Joao Neves, who rose highest to head past Lionel Mpsi. It was a polished set-piece routine, beautifully executed, and Portugal appeared to be on their way to a comfortable opening-game victory.

Congo DR, however, refused to be subdued. Playing in their first World Cup since 1974 — when the country was known as Zaire — Sebastien Desabre's side pressed high and disrupted Portugal's build-up play throughout the opening period. Wissa himself curled a left-footed effort narrowly wide after just 10 minutes, serving notice of his intent.



Joao Neves, who went on to win Player of the Match, heads Portugal into an early lead
(Photo: Julian Finney/FIFA via Getty Images)

Wissa's Historic Equaliser

Moments before half-time, in the fifth minute of first-half stoppage time, DR Congo made history. Arthur Masuaku floated a cross towards the back post and Wissa – a Brentford striker familiar to Premier League fans – powered a header home with authority. The NRG Stadium erupted in a fashion seldom seen for a team ranked well outside the world's top 30.

It was Congo DR's first World Cup goal. Ever. The nation last appeared at the tournament as Zaire in 1974, when they were famously trounced 9-0 by Yugoslavia. Fifty-two years on, they had not merely participated – they had held one of Europe's finest nations to a draw. The full-time whistle brought tears, embraces, and wild celebrations that felt thoroughly deserved.



Ronaldo, 41, became the oldest outfield player to start a World Cup match but could not find the net (Photo: Michael Regan/FIFA via Getty Images)

Ronaldo's Record and Portugal's Frustration

For Ronaldo, the match was a study in personal frustration. He had two clear half-chances in the second half and blazed both wide. The ninth World Cup goal that would have moved him clear of all-time scorers at the tournament will have to wait – a stark contrast to Lionel Messi, who bagged a hat-trick for Argentina against Algeria 24 hours earlier.

Yet the historical footnotes are substantial. Ronaldo's 23rd World Cup appearance drew him level alongside Paolo Maldini on the all-time appearances list. His appearance at 41 years and 132 days confirmed him as the oldest outfield player to start a World Cup fixture – behind only goalkeeper Roger Milla, who played for Cameroon at 42 in 1994. Whatever the result, Ronaldo continues to redefine what is possible at the highest level of the game.

What It Means for Group K

The draw leaves Group K wide open. Portugal's Roberto Martinez admitted after the match that his side must "grow a lot" from this experience, noting that Portugal lost "attacking depth" and "fluency" after the goal. Their next opponents in Group K are Colombia and Uzbekistan will now study the blueprint DR Congo provided: press high, stay compact, and wait for the set-piece moment.

For Congo DR, the mood in their camp and across the African footballing community could not be more different. Coach Desabre said he was "very proud" of his players, who he felt "executed the game plan exactly as wanted" and "represented the Congo in a very positive way." With this point on the board, the Leopards will believe they can compete for a place in the knockout round.

Date Created

19/06/2026

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