



Germany's midfielder #08 Toni Kroos Portugal's forward #07 Cristiano Ronaldo (R) and defender #03 Pepe Spain's defender #24 Marc Cucurella Former German player and manager Bernard Dietz brings the Henri Delaunay Cup

# Get ready for blockbuster

Showdowns, young guns and own goals as Euro 2024 heads into quarter-finals

AFP | Stuttgart, Germany

Euro 2024's quarter-finals kick-off on Friday with a blockbuster match between hosts Germany and Spain as the tournament heads towards its decisive final week.

Here let us look at the state of play with some of the Euro's heavy hitters facing off in the least eight:

### Big boys clash

Germany's clash with Spain in Stuttgart pits the Euros' two best performing sides against one another at least one round earlier than fans would have liked, due to an unbalanced knockout bracket which has four serious candidates for overall victory



### Confident Kroos says Germany-Spain clash 'won't be my last game'

Herzogenaurach, Germany

Retiring Germany veteran Toni Kroos said he was confident Friday's blockbuster Euro 2024 quarter-final against Spain would not be the last game of his career.

Kroos announced in May he would hang up his boots after the Euros on home soil, meaning this week's match in Stuttgart could be his final game. Real Madrid teammate Jose-

lu said this week he wanted to "send Kroos into retirement" but the 34-year-old midfielder had his sights set on the July 14 Euros final in Berlin.

"We will still be in the tournament for a while," Kroos told reporters on Wednesday at Germany's base camp in the Bavarian village of Herzogenaurach. "I don't think tomorrow will be my last game. I think we'll see each other again -- and I look forward to it," he added.

Spain a 1-0 win over Spain in one of the most-anticipated games of the group stage.

Spain's Robin Le Normand, Czech defender Robin Hranac and Austria's Maximilian Woeber all found their own net in similar fashion as attempted clearances to low crosses have gone wrong.

### Underdogs light up Euro 2024

The plodding, static performances of France, Belgium, England and Portugal -- FIFA's four highest ranked sides before the tournament -- have been offset by some brilliant underdog showings.

Despite being the lowest-ranked team Georgia's run to the last 16 lit up the tournament, particularly their 2-0 victory over Euro 2016 winners Portugal.

Romania had won just one of their 16 games at the championships heading into Euro 2024 but topped a group featuring Belgium, Ukraine and Slovakia, before going down to the Netherlands in the last 16.

Turkey have however emerged as the tournament's true dark horses, booking a spot in the quarter finals with a brilliant 2-1 win over fellow upstarts Austria on Tuesday.

Vincenzo Montella's Turkey and Georgia also played the best game of the group stage, a 3-1 win for the Turks in front of a pulsating crowd in Dortmund.

Yamal, 16, is dazzling in Germany having become the youngest player ever to feature at a European Championship. Should he strike in the quarter-finals or beyond, he will become the youngest scorer in the tournament's history.

By contrast Croatia's Luka Modric set a new record for the oldest at 38 by netting against Italy and Portugal duo Ronaldo, 39, and Pepe, 41, could yet surpass the Real Madrid midfield maestro.

Pepe is now the oldest-ever Euros player and Portugal are among 12 of the 24 teams whose record for oldest Euros player record was set at this tournament.

### Own goals on fire

While the continent's star strikers have failed to fire, there

have been nine own goals at this Euros and the record of 11 set at the last championships three years ago looks sure to be broken.

Prior to Euro 2020 there had just been 11 in the tournament's history. UEFA's looser application of what constitutes an own goal has played its part but there have been some spectacular efforts in Germany.

The most comical came in Turkey's 3-0 thumping at the hands of Portugal, when Samet Akaydin unwittingly doubled the deficit by playing a sloppy back pass which ended with Zeki Celik and goalkeeper Altay Bayindir bundling into the net in a vain attempt to keep the ball out.

The majority, though, have come from dangerous crosses, like Riccardo Calafiori handing

on one side.

The winner of Friday's tie will face either Portugal or France, both former European champions and teams packed with players from the continent's biggest clubs, in the semi-finals.

Meanwhile England face Switzerland on Saturday after having scraped past Slovakia -- ranked 45th in the world -- in the last 16 and find themselves in the last eight having played way below expectations in each of their four matches.

### Big name flops

The Euros has brought together some of the best footballers on the planet but none of the biggest stars have shone so far as the big teams -- Spain and

Germany apart -- have mostly been below-par.

Cristiano Ronaldo looks like he's gone one tournament too far while Kylian Mbappe has just a group stage penalty to his name and is a long way from the phenomenal form which won him the golden boot at the last World Cup.

England pair Jude Bellingham and Harry Kane, respectively La Liga player of the year and the Bundesliga top scorer, have played way below expectations despite scoring all four of England's goals.

### Young guns & ageing icons

Records have fallen in Germany at both ends of the age spectrum. Spain winger Lamine



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## GCC States underline spreading Rights values in sports

Hussain Almaskati  
TDT | Manama

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states emphasized the critical role of spreading human rights values through sports, advocating for the practice of sports free from discrimination and as a means to promote principles such as freedom, tolerance, mutual respect, and peace.

Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the UN Office in Geneva, Dr. Hind Abdulrahman Al Muftah, delivered a statement on behalf of the GCC States during a panel discussion on promoting human rights



through sport and the Olympic ideal at the 56th Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. In her capacity as Chair of the Gulf Group, Dr. Al Muftah highlighted the collective belief in the power of sports as a universal language that promotes respect, dignity, diversity, and equality. She not-

ed that sports can bridge differences, overcome prejudices and stereotypes, and support the integration and empowerment of marginalized groups.

The GCC States have undertaken various measures to support human rights through sports. They have focused on advancing the sports sector by developing strategies that promote Olympic principles, sportsmanship, and preserving sports identity within the region. Efforts include encouraging the principle of citizenship through sports and collaborating with media and educational institutions to achieve these goals.

## Italy makes history in FIBA Olympic Qualifier

Hussain Almaskati  
TDT | Manama

Italy etched its name in the records of FIBA history with a resounding victory over Bahrain, marking the largest margin of victory in the modern era of Olympic Qualifying Tournaments.

Led by Danilo Gallinari and Nicolò Melli, who each contributed 14 points, Italy dominated from the start, achieving an impressive 61-point lead (114-53). The team showed impeccable shooting, hitting 60% from the field and sinking 11 three-pointers out of 27 attempts.



### Italian team celebrate

Their performance was evident by 39 assists, demonstrating a cohesive and relentless offensive strategy.

This win places Italy third in the record books for sin-

gle-game scoring in Olympic Qualifying history, trailing only Greece and Slovenia. Bahrain, ranked 71st in the FIBA World Rankings, faced a tough challenge in their debut at this level of competition.