

HOST COUNTRIES

Since its inception, the FIFA World Youth Championship has wandered from one continent to another, with stops in Tunisia, Japan, Australia, Mexico, Russia, Chile, Saudi Arabia, Portugal, Qatar, Malaysia, Nigeria, Argentina, the United Arab Emirates and the Netherlands. Australia has hosted the event twice, in 1981 and 1993.

FORMULA

From the first FIFA World Youth Tournament in 1977 until 1995, the final competition had comprised 16 teams. However, to enhance the prestige of FIFA's major youth competition, the number of contenders was increased from 16 to 24 as from 1997 (AFC 4, CAF 4, CONCACAF 4, CONMEBOL 4, UEFA 6, OFC 1, host 1). During the first two tournaments, the games only lasted 40 minutes each way (extra time was twice ten minutes). Since Australia 1985, matches have followed the traditional format of 45 minutes per half (with 15 minutes per half in extra time).

HISTORY

It began in Tunisia in 1977 modestly enough with the FIFA Technical Report bemoaning the paucity of spectators. But by the early 1990s the competition had grown into an event of enormous importance with worldwide media exposure. The FIFA World Youth Championship has indeed swept the football globe. Securing a committed long-term sponsor was crucial to the realisation of a project which Dr João Havelange had promised to launch when he became FIFA President in 1974. But, above all, the success of the concept of this competition has always depended upon the particular flavour of the games: that added dash of youth, spontaneity and adventure.

The inevitable teething problems experienced in Tunisia in 1977 were mostly smoothed out at the second series in Japan in 1979, one of the first major international football events in that country which helped to trigger interest and enthusiasm for the sport there. The role of the FIFA World Youth Championship as an "ambassador" to so-called

"developing" football countries continued in 1981 when it went Down Under for the first time. In 1983, however, the event enjoyed its first really enormous success in Mexico, a country steeped in football tradition, where the final between Brazil and Argentina drew a capacity crowd of 105,000.

The Soviet Union hosted the finals in 1985, in 1987 it went to South America for the first (and so far only) time when Chile played host and in 1989 the state-of-the-art King Fahd Stadium on the outskirts of Riyadh was the spectacular setting for several matches. The 1991 final saw even the 1983 attendance eclipsed when 127,000 - the second largest crowd ever to attend a FIFA match - crammed into Lisbon's Stadium of Light to cheer the home team to a repeat of their 1989 victory. In 1993 the Australians revived memories of the 1981 finals and surpassed them with a superbly organised championship to which the young Socceroos made their own thrilling contribution. Latin football dominated the 1995 event in Qatar (which had taken over the role of hosts at barely three weeks' notice after Nigeria had been considered unable to stage it) as well as the 1997 tournament in Malaysia. Africa was still unable to produce the winner in Nigeria 1999 but did succeed, nevertheless, to end up with three teams in the top eight. Africa also sent representatives Ghana to contest the 2001 final, but it was hosts Argentina who won the day - their fourth FIFA WYC title and a showcase for their budding star Saviola, the tournament's top scorer so far with 11 goals in 7 matches. The United Arab Emirates provided the venue for the 2003 edition of the tournament and even threw in the tournament's best player, Ismail Matar, into the bargain. A distinctive South American flavour permeated the Arabian air as they secured three of the four semi-final slots. Colombia and Argentina took third and fourth place respectively, while Brazil claimed their fourth WYC gold against Spain, simultaneously completing a trio of golds over all age levels in the men's game since the 2002 FIFA World Cup™.

The semi-finals in 2005 featured two African and two South American teams; Morocco eventually lost to Brazil in the playoff for third place, while Nigeria drew the short straw in the final against Argentina.

The Argentines claimed their fifth FIFA World Youth Championship title, and in Lionel Messi, they also boasted the tournament's best player and top goalscorer with six strikes.

WINNERS

With five gold medals to their name, Argentina now lead the all-time ranking with Brazil in second place on four. The Argentines triumphed in 1979 (with Diego Maradona and Ramon Diaz in their squad), 1995, 1997, 2001 and 2005. Brazil have also claimed two silver medals to add to their four golds. Portugal are the only other team to have won the event more than once (in 1989 and 1991).

South America won all three events from 1993 to 1997 (Argentina twice, Brazil once) but Spain triumphed in 1999 – their first ever win at a FIFA tournament – with Japan springing the surprises by coming second. Mali, taking part for the first time since 1989, performed superbly to take the bronze. The tournament proved beyond a doubt that there is no longer a clear distinction between “strong” and “weak” teams at global level in the youth category either and that walkover wins are a thing of the past. Standards among the different confederations have levelled out and the fact that four different confederations were represented in the semi-finals is further evidence of this.

The other winners were Soviet Union (in 1977 with a line-up featuring Vladimir Bessonov as the competition's outstanding player), West Germany (in 1981 against a surprise team from Qatar) and Yugoslavia, whose 1987 vintage included today's stars: Boban, Prosinecki and Suker.

African teams have finished in second place on four occasions. After a thrilling run to the final, Ghana claimed the runners-up spot in Australia in 1993 and again in Argentina in 2001, while Nigeria were pipped at the post by Portugal in 1989 and by Argentina in 2005.

ALL-TIME RECORDS

| YEAR | COUNTRY | TEAMS | FINAL | WINNERS |
|------|--|-------|--|--------------|
| 1977 | Tunisia | 16 | Mexico - Soviet Union 2:2 aet, 8:9 pso ♦ Golden Shoe: Quina, BRA (4 goals) | SOVIET UNION |
| | ♦ Golden Ball: Bessonov, URS ♦ Fair Play Prize: Brazil | | | |
| 1979 | Japan | 16 | Argentina - Soviet Union 3:1 ♦ Golden Shoe: Diaz, ARG (8 goals) | ARGENTINA |
| | ♦ Golden Ball: Maradona, ARG ♦ Fair Play Prize: Poland | | | |
| 1981 | Australia | 16 | Germany FR - Qatar 4:0 ♦ Golden Shoe: Koussas, AUS (4 goals) | GERMANY FR |
| | ♦ Golden Ball: Gabor, ROU ♦ Fair Play Prize: Australia | | | |
| 1983 | Mexico | 16 | Brazil - Argentina 1:0 ♦ Golden Shoe: Geovani Silva, BRA (6 goals) | BRAZIL |
| | ♦ Golden Ball: Geovani Silva, BRA ♦ Fair Play Prize: Korea Republic | | | |
| 1985 | Soviet Union | 16 | Brazil - Spain 0:0, 1:0 aet ♦ Golden Shoe: Losada, ESP (3 goals) | BRAZIL |
| | ♦ Golden Ball: Silas, BRA ♦ Fair Play Prize: Colombia | | | |
| 1987 | Chile | 16 | Yugoslavia – Germany FR 1:1 aet, 5:4 pso ♦ Golden Shoe: Witeczek, FRG (7 goals) | YUGOSLAVIA |
| | ♦ Golden Ball: Prosinecki, YUG ♦ Fair Play Prize: Germany FR | | | |
| 1989 | Saudi Arabia | 16 | Portugal - Nigeria 2:0 ♦ Golden Shoe: Salenko, URS (5 goals) | PORTUGAL |
| | ♦ Golden Ball: Bismarck, BRA ♦ Fair Play Prize: USA | | | |
| 1991 | Portugal | 16 | Portugal - Brazil 0:0 aet, 4:2 pso ♦ Golden Shoe: Cherbakov, URS (5 goals) | PORTUGAL |
| | ♦ Golden Ball: Peixe, POR ♦ Fair Play Prize: Soviet Union | | | |
| 1993 | Australia | 16 | Brazil - Ghana 2:1 ♦ Golden Shoe: Zambrano, CHI (3 goals) | BRAZIL |
| | ♦ Golden Ball: Adriano Silva, BRA ♦ Fair Play Prize: England | | | |
| 1995 | Qatar | 16 | Argentina - Brazil 2:0 ♦ Golden Shoe: Joseba, ESP (7 goals) | ARGENTINA |
| | ♦ Golden Ball: Caio, BRA ♦ Fair Play Prize: Japan | | | |
| 1997 | Malaysia | 24 | Argentina - Uruguay 2:1 ♦ Golden Shoe: Adailton, BRA (10 goals) | ARGENTINA |
| | ♦ Golden Ball: Olivera, URU ♦ Fair Play Prize: Argentina | | | |
| 1999 | Nigeria | 24 | Spain - Japan 4:0 ♦ Golden Shoe: Pablo, ESP (5 goals) | SPAIN |
| | ♦ Golden Ball: Keita, MLI ♦ Fair Play Prize: Croatia | | | |

| YEAR | COUNTRY | TEAMS | FINAL | WINNERS |
|------|----------------------------------|-------|--|-----------|
| 2001 | Argentina | 24 | Argentina – Ghana 3:0 | ARGENTINA |
| | ♦ Golden Ball: Saviola, ARG | | ♦ Golden Shoe: Saviola, ARG (11 goals) | |
| | ♦ Fair Play Prize: Argentina | | | |
| 2003 | United Arab Emirates | 24 | Spain – Brazil 0:1 | BRAZIL |
| | ♦ Golden Ball: Ismail Matar, UAE | | ♦ Golden Shoe: Ed Johnson, USA (4 goals) | |
| | ♦ Fair Play Prize: Colombia | | | |
| 2005 | Netherlands | 24 | Argentina – Nigeria 2:1 | ARGENTINA |
| | ♦ Golden Ball: Lionel Messi, ARG | | ♦ Golden Shoe: Lionel Messi, ARG (6 goals) | |
| | ♦ Fair Play Prize: Colombia | | | |

FIFA WORLD YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIP 1977-2005

| YEAR | COUNTRY | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
|------|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1977 | Tunisia | URS | MEX | BRA | URU | PAR | HON | ESP | FRA | IRN | HUN | IRQ | ITA | CIV | TUN | AUT | MAR | | | | | | | | |
| 1979 | Japan | ARG | URS | URU | POL | PAR | ESP | POR | ALG | KOR | YUG | MEX | JPN | CAN | HUN | GUI | IDN | | | | | | | | |
| 1981 | Australia | FRG | QAT | ROU | ENG | URU | BRA | AUS | EGY | ARG | POL | MEX | KOR | ESP | CMR | USA | ITA | | | | | | | | |
| 1983 | Mexico | BRA | ARG | POL | KOR | URU | SCO | TCH | NED | AUS | NGA | USA | CHN | MEX | CIV | URS | AUT | | | | | | | | |
| 1985 | Soviet Union | BRA | ESP | NGA | URS | MEX | BUL | CHN | COL | HUN | KSA | AUS | PAR | ENG | CAN | IRL | TUN | | | | | | | | |
| 1987 | Chile | YUG | FRG | GDR | CHI | ITA | SCO | BRA | BUL | COL | CAN | USA | AUS | BHR | NGA | KSA | TOG | | | | | | | | |
| 1989 | Saudi Arabia | POR | NGA | BRA | USA | URS | IRQ | ARG | COL | TCH | KSA | NOR | GDR | SYR | CRC | ESP | MLI | | | | | | | | |
| 1991 | Portugal | POR | BRA | URS | AUS | ESP | SYR | MEX | KOR* | EGY | ENG | SWE | IRL | CIV | ARG | URU | TRI | | | | | | | | |
| 1993 | Australia | BRA | GHA | ENG | AUS | MEX | URU | RUS | USA | GER | KOR | KSA | CMR | COL | NOR | TUR | POR | | | | | | | | |
| 1995 | Qatar | ARG | BRA | POR | ESP | CMR | RUS | AUS | JPN | NED | CRC | SYR | GER | CHN | QAT | BDI | HON | | | | | | | | |
| 1997 | Malaysia | ARG | URU | IRL | GHA | BRA | ESP | FRA | JPN | ENG | AUS | MAR | MEX | BEL | CAN | USA | UAE | PAR | CHI | CIV | RSA | CRC | KOR | HUN | MAS |
| 1999 | Nigeria | ESP | JPN | MLI | URU | GHA | MEX | BRA | NGA | IRL | PAR | USA | CMR | POR | CRO | CRC | ARG | ZAM | GER | KOR | AUS | KSA | ENG | HON | KAZ |
| 2001 | Argentina | ARG | GHA | EGY | PAR | BRA | FRA | CZE | NED | CRC | GER | UKR | ANG | USA | ECU | CHN | AUS | JPN | FIN | IRQ | CHI | JAM | ETH | IRN | CAN |
| 2003 | United Arab Emirates | BRA | ESP | COL | ARG | USA | JPN | UAE | CAN | IRL | AUS | BFA | SVK | PAR | CIV | EGY | KOR | GER | MLI | CZE | KSA | ENG | MEX | UZB | PAN |
| 2005 | Netherlands | ARG | NGA | BRA | MAR | NED | ITA | ESP | GER | COL | CHN | USA | UKR | SYR | TUR | CHI | JPN | KOR | BEN | SUI | AUS | CAN | EGY | PAN | HON |

* Unified Korean Team