

General

Since its inception in 1977, the FIFA World Youth Championship, which in 2005 returned to Europe (the Netherlands) for the first time in 14 years, has made stops in every confederation: Africa (2x), Asia (5x), Oceania (2x in Australia), North and Central America (1x), South America (2x) and Europe (3x).

A total of 75 associations have taken part in the WYC to date and 1991 even saw the participation of a united Korean team. Of the 25 associations that have qualified just once for the tournament, only Angola and Ecuador made it to the second round (both in Argentina in 2001).

The 2005 edition of this tournament in the Netherlands welcomed debutants Switzerland and Benin to the FIFA World Youth Championship fold.

South America and Europe, the two "grand old men" of the footballing world, have left an indelible mark on this championship. Argentina (5x) and Brazil (4x) have claimed the lion's share of titles in the 15 competitions held to date, with the remaining six going to Europe. Spain's triumph in 1999 gave the Spanish the opportunity to celebrate their first ever FIFA competition title.

While four out of nine tournaments in the under-17 age category have been dominated by Ghana and Nigeria (two wins each), both teams have also been involved in two WYC finals each; Ghana in 1993 and 2001, defeated in both by Argentina, and Nigeria in 1989 when they lost to Portugal and in 2005 when they were defeated by Argentina.

The Asian confederation has twice been represented in a WYC final, with both Qatar (1981 against Germany FR) and Japan (1999 against Spain) suffering 4-0 defeats.

As for the number of times that teams have taken part, Brazil (14x, except for 1979) are practically evergreens. They lead Australia (12x) and Argentina and Spain (each 11x), all of whom are a step ahead of the other participants.

Only two host teams have ever claimed the championship crown. In Lisbon in 1991, a strong Portuguese side featuring Luis Figo, Rui Costa and

co. struck gold. In 2001, Argentina's *goleador* Javier Saviola and his team were irresistible. The Soviet Union (1985), Chile (1987) and Australia (1993) nonetheless also managed to exploit home advantage to reach the semi-finals.

Throughout the history of the tournament, three teams have taken home the trophy on successive occasions. In Tbilisi, Leningrad and Moscow in 1985, Brazil's goalkeeper Taffarel was instrumental in helping his team successfully defend the title secured in Mexico two years earlier by players of the calibre of Bebeto, Dunga and Jorginho. In 1991, Fernando Couto, Paulo Sousa et al retained the trophy won by their predecessors in 1989, and in Malaysia in 1997, Argentina, captained by Juan Riquelme, ensured that they took the trophy home for another spell.

Matches

After the FIFA World Cup™, the WYC is not only the second oldest FIFA competition, but with 24 participating teams, it is also the second largest. Since 1997, each tournament has embraced two dozen teams, having grown from the original 16-team format used for the first ten competitions.

In terms of the sheer volume of matches, the FIFA World Youth Championship again comes second only to the FIFA World Cup™. Since the inaugural tournament in Tunisia, 576 matches have been hosted under the auspices of the WYC. The FIFA World Youth Championship UAE 2003 provided the backdrop for the 500th match when Spain met Uzbekistan in Sharjah on 4 December 2003.

Brazil have contested the most WYC matches (78), followed by Argentina (60) and Spain (53).

All in all, 13 different teams have qualified for the 15 final matches. A select group of 27 sides, representing every confederation, has reached the semi-finals, indicating a considerably level playing field in this age group.

The final match has not always been as clear-cut as some of the most recent competitions would suggest (1999: 4-0; 2001: 3-0). In 1977, 1987 and 1991, the final was decided on penalties and on each occasion, a European team came out on top.

In 1985, the final between Brazil and Spain was determined by a single goal in extra time.

Throughout the 15 editions of the WYC, teams from the same confederation have met in the final match on four occasions, with Brazil and Argentina the first teams to do so in 1983. Interestingly, these two sides met again in the final twelve years later. Never ones to shy from the limelight, Argentina also met fellow South Americans Uruguay in the 1997 final. As for Europe, 1987 saw Germany FR and Yugoslavia share the field for the final match.

Goals

Tournament: the most goals scored in a tournament was in Malaysia in 1997 (165 goals), ahead of Nigeria in 1999 (158), Argentina in 2001 (149) and the Netherlands in 2005 (143). The highest average of goals per match was recorded during the 1995 tournament in Qatar (3.28 goals per match), with Malaysia 1997 taking second place (3.17) and Nigeria 1999 in third (3.04).

Players: the tournament's top goalscorer to date is Argentina's Javier Saviola with 11 goals in 7 matches (WYC 2001), ahead of Adailton from Brazil, who notched 10 goals in 5 games (WYC 1997). In third place is Argentina's Ramon Diaz, who scored 8 goals in 6 matches during the 1979 tournament. Both Saviola and Diaz went on to win the title with their Argentine team-mates. Adailton's tournament ended at the quarter-final stage.

Hat-tricks: Argentina's Ramon Diaz and Javier Saviola have both scored two hat-tricks in the FIFA World Youth Championship (Diaz 1979 against Algeria and Indonesia; Saviola 2001 against Egypt and France). Brazil's Adailton dazzled with a rare double hat-trick during his team's 10-3 victory over Korea Republic. Australia's Salapasis tallied four goals in one match when his team defeated eventual champions Argentina 4-3 in 1997. Eight years later, in 2005, Llorente of Spain equalled this feat, scoring four goals in their 7-0 victory over Chile.

In a historical overview, Brazil have scored a total of 178 goals in the FIFA World Youth Championship (an average of 2.28 per match). In second and third place are Argentina with 121 goals (2.02 per match) and Spain with 101 (1.91). Did you know that, despite having played only 9 matches in their two appearances in the WYC, Yugoslavia nonetheless notched up 22 goals, giving them a very impressive average (2.44)? They took the

trophy home from Chile in 1987 when Prosinecki and Suker led them to victory.

The most famous player in a long list of fastest goalscorers is certainly Thierry Henry, who opened France's 4-2 victory over Korea Republic in the first minute of the match in 1997. His team-mate David Trezeguet doubled the lead a minute later. Spaniard Goikoetxea managed to keep a cool head in the Moscow 1985 semi-final against the home side, equalising in the last minute of extra time to take the match to 2-2, thereby setting up his team's penalty shoot-out victory.

The world champions have managed to crown one of their own as top goalscorer on only five occasions. In 1979 Ramon Diaz at Diego Maradona's side, in 1983 Geovani Silva for Brazil, in 1999 Spain's Pablo, in 2001 Argentina's Javier Saviola and in 2005 Lionel Messi, also for Argentina. In 1981, Australian Mark Koussas celebrated his Golden Shoe award in front of his home crowd.

The two most goal-laden matches in the WYC were held in Kuching (Malaysia) in 1997, with Brazil inflicting maximum damage. The favourites first crushed Korea Republic 10-3 before turning their attentions to Belgium in a 10-0 defeat. However, other than sealing the Golden Shoe for Adailton, the shower of goals reaped a meagre harvest, as Brazil were humbled in the quarter-finals by soon-to-be world champions and age-old rivals Argentina.

A nine-goal extravaganza put 1999's quarter-final showdown between Mali and Cameroon in Enugu, Nigeria, in third place in the ranks, although in terms of entertainment the game was streets ahead. Mali knuckled down to come back from 3-1 down to defeat favourites Cameroon 5-4 in extra time.

Other action-packed games include the match between the Soviet Union and Nigeria in Dammam, Saudi Arabia in 1989. The Soviet youngsters were 4-0 up (thanks in part to a goal by subsequent World Cup striker Salenko) when the West Africans fired off a rapid four-goal round (all scored within 24 minutes) and sneaked home via the back door thanks to a 5-3 penalty shoot-out victory.

In contrast, the Netherlands v. Honduras match in Qatar in 1995 met with an inglorious end. Following four sendings-off and an injury, the Central American side was decimated. With only six Hondurans left on the park, regulations required that the game be abandoned.

Players, Coaches, Referees, Crowds

The WYC has certainly earned its reputation as a talent showcase, with 362 former WYC players going on to participate in the FIFA World Cup™. 31 of these players have played in a WC final match and 21 have even won the world title (BRA 12, ARG 5, FRA 2, FRG 1, ITA 1). Of this group, only one player, Burruchaga, has scored in a World Cup final (for Argentina in 1986).

The youngest ever player is Jason Byrne (Ireland Republic), who featured in the 1991 FIFA World Youth Championship at the tender age of 13 years and 3 months.

Only one player has appeared in three editions of the WYC – Al Roomi from Saudi Arabia (1985, 1987, 1989) – although almost 80 players have played in two different tournaments.

Alongside the numerous outfield players who went on to further fame and fortune are the goalkeepers who have since claimed their place in the football hall of fame. Goycochea (ARG), Buyo/Canizares/Casillas (ESP), Wohlfahrt (AUT), Wandzik (POL), Cherchesov (URS), Taffarel and Dida (BRA), El Ouaer (TUN), Forrest (CAN), Meola and Keller (USA), Bosnich (AUS) and Cameroon's Olympic Champion Kameni all bear witness to the importance of the tournament for young goalkeepers.

A penalty hero on the subs' bench: in the 1977 WYC in Tunisia, Russia's substitute goalkeeper Yuri Sivuha was brought onto the field shortly before the penalty shoot-out in both the semi-final and final. Prevailing in both instances, he certainly contributed to his team's World Championship title.

As for the coaches, Australia's Les Scheinflug coached teams at 7 different tournaments. Along with Pekermann from Argentina (who won three of the four tournaments in which he coached), Scheinflug heads the table for the number of coaching appearances.

Several WYC coaches went on to bring their experience to bear in FIFA World Cup™ matches. However, Berti Vogts, Germany (WYC 1987 + WC 1994/1998) and Philippe Troussier, France (WYC 1999 with Japan + WC 1998/2002 with South Africa and Japan) are the only ones to have coached

twice at the FIFA World Cup™. In fact, Berti Vogts can also point to personal playing experience in the FIFA World Cup™ (1970-1978), including one FIFA World Cup™ title in 1974.

The WYC has also served as a springboard for referees, some of whom officiated at important matches during subsequent FIFA World Cups – Antonio Marquez Ramirez from Mexico refereed the semi-final between Argentina and Belgium in 1986; Frenchman Joel Quiniou officiated at the playoff for third place between Italy and England in 1990; Denmark's Kim Milton Nielsen kept control of Brazil v. Turkey in the 2002 semi-final and Saad Mane from Kuwait officiated at the 2002 play-off for third place between Korea Republic and Turkey. The honour of participating in the 1990 final between Argentina and Germany was bestowed upon Mexican referee Codesal.

The highest accumulative audience total for a tournament was registered at the FIFA World Youth Championship Mexico 1983 (1,155,160), at an average of 36,099 spectators per match. The individual record, however, is still held by hosts Portugal in their match against Nigeria at the Estadio da Luz. 127,000 people formed the second biggest crowd ever at a FIFA finals match, a feat topped only by the 1950 FIFA World Cup™ final between Brazil and Uruguay in the Maracana.