

community



GROUP STAGE WALL CHART

GROUP A — FRI., JUNE 13, 5 A.M.
BRAZIL vs. CROATIA
 —
 "Neymar Santos is gonna be our best player: fast, young, very skillful, he has very good ball control and he anticipates opponents' moves in a very intelligent way." — **Daniel Lima (Brazilian)**

GROUP A — SAT., JUNE 14, 1 A.M.
MEXICO vs. CAMEROON
 —
 "Samuel Eto'o doesn't have many opportunities left to show what he can do for his country, and the World Cup will certainly be the greatest opportunity." — **Serge Edongo (Cameroonian)**

GROUP B — SAT., JUNE 14, 4 A.M.
SPAIN vs. NETHERLANDS
 —
 "I was in the main square in Amsterdam for the final of the last World Cup, and there were 100,000 people out there. It was a really emotional defeat, so I'd really like to get payback." — **Luite Douma (Dutch)**

GROUP B — SAT., JUNE 14, 7 A.M.
CHILE vs. AUSTRALIA
 —
 "We're the underdog, but if we manage to get through the first round — it's gonna be tough — we may have a chance in the second. I expect Japan to easily get through its group." — **Justin Sears (Australian)**

GROUP C — SUN., JUNE 15, 1 A.M.
COLOMBIA vs. GREECE
 —
 "Striker Radamel Falcao got an injury, so we are hoping he'll get his strength back. If he's not ready, we can rely on James Rodriguez, Carlos Bacca and Juan Guillermo Cuadrado — very good players, all of them." — **Ricardo Quintero (Colombian)**

GROUP D — SUN., JUNE 15, 4 A.M.
URUGUAY vs. COSTA RICA
 —
 "I'm most looking forward to Costa Rica vs. Uruguay, which is the first game Costa Rica is playing. Uruguay hasn't been doing very well up to the playoffs, so people are kind of looking forward to this game." — **Rodrigo Gonzalez (Costa Rican)**

GROUP D — SUN., JUNE 15, 7 A.M.
ENGLAND vs. ITALY
 —
 "The one I'm looking forward to most is the Italy-England game. Both Italy and England have well-developed leagues, and both sides are very close to each other, so I expect them to know each other inside out. It's gonna be a titanic clash." — **Nwibo Daniel Don (Nigerian)**

GROUP C — SUN., JUNE 15, 10 A.M.
COTE D'IVOIRE vs. JAPAN
 —
 "For Didier Drogba and Yaya Toure, it's their last World Cup, so they want to win. And you have Japan going. We have to prove that Japan is a strong leader in Asian football, so I think this is going to be the most interesting match of this World Cup." — **Sako Lancine (Ivorian)**

GROUP E — MON., JUNE 16, 1 A.M.
SWITZERLAND vs. ECUADOR
 —
 "Ecuador plays first against Switzerland, and I'm really hoping they'll win. The second match is versus Honduras, which shouldn't be that difficult. If they do well in those two, the last one, against France, won't be so important." — **David Villagomez (Ecuadorian)**

GROUP E — MON., JUNE 16, 4 A.M.
FRANCE vs. HONDURAS
 —
 "Mathieu Valbuena will be someone to really watch. He's undervalued by almost everybody, but I'm a Marseille fan and I've seen him playing for quite a lot of years. The guy can make a difference." — **Guillaume Boyer (French)**

GROUP F — MON., JUNE 16, 7 A.M.
ARGENTINA vs. BOSNIA
 —
 "Of course, I'm looking forward to seeing Lionel Messi this time, as usual. He is the best player in the world. I am very proud he is from Argentina. I'm looking forward to Argentina going very far — at least to the semifinals." — **Mariana Varela (Argentine)**

GROUP G — TUE., JUNE 17, 1 A.M.
GERMANY vs. PORTUGAL
 —
 "This will be the most fun group game because Cristiano Ronaldo's playing — he basically kicked out Bayern Munich, where lots of Germany players play, (from the Champions' League by scoring for Real Madrid,) so there's a bit of revenge there." — **Felix Lill (German)**

GROUP F — TUE., JUNE 17, 4 A.M.
IRAN vs. NIGERIA
 —
 "Iran's man to watch is midfielder Javad Nekounam. Iran will get to the best eight, Japan the best 16. Brazil will win, but Japan is a dark horse, as they've won every game since they drew with the Netherlands and beat Belgium in November." — **Aria Vazdary (Iranian/Japanese)**

GROUP G — TUE., JUNE 17, 7 A.M.
GHANA vs. USA
 —
 "Honestly, America, I don't think they're gonna make it that far. Their group's called the 'group of death,' and I think it's kind of unfair because they put Ghana in there again, and Ghana has knocked us out the past two times, so, c'mon." — **Travis Garcia (American)**

GROUP H — WED., JUNE 18, 1 A.M.
BELGIUM vs. ALGERIA
 —
 "I'd watch out for Thibaut Courtois, our goalie, and Vincent Kompany, because they are among the best players in the world. Together they make a really good defensive line, and I'd be surprised if we ship more than one or two goals in the group phase." — **Melanie Godart (Belgian)**

GROUP A — WED., JUNE 18, 4 A.M.
BRAZIL vs. MEXICO
 —
 "There's El Chicharito — Javier Hernandez, from Manchester United — he's close to becoming our all-time top goal scorer. I'm looking forward to seeing what Oribe Peralta, Andrew Guardado, Giovanni Dos Santos and Carlos Pena can do." — **Erick Serrano (Mexican)**

GROUP H — WED., JUNE 18, 7 A.M.
RUSSIA vs. SOUTH KOREA
 —
 "Our man to watch is Alan Dzagoev, because the Russian side is not so young but Dzagoev is one of the few bright young players. He had the chance to prove himself at Euro 2012, and I think that this World Cup is his big chance." — **Vladimir Yangirov (Russian)**

GROUP B — THU., JUNE 19, 1 A.M.
AUSTRALIA vs. NETHERLANDS
 —
 Esther: "We are starting where we ended last time, and we have to make up for it this time." Luite: "If we beat Spain, it will be a successful World Cup for us." Esther: "That will make them stronger for the Australia game." — **Esther Stolp and Luite Douma (Dutch)**

GROUP B — THU., JUNE 19, 4 A.M.
SPAIN vs. CHILE
 —
 "Our man to watch is Alexis Sanchez. He's playing for Barcelona, and this year he played very well, so I hope he also plays well for the Chilean team. I think Japan and Chile, if we're lucky, can go to the next stage, probably." — **Rolly Arros (Chilean)**

GROUP A — THU., JUNE 19, 7 A.M.
CAMEROON vs. CROATIA
 —
 "The guy to watch is Real Madrid's Luka Modric, probably one of the best midfielders in the world. Croatia's first game is against Brazil, but then there's Cameroon and Mexico, so they've got a good chance of qualifying." — **Antun Percic (Croatian/English)**

GROUP C — FRI., JUNE 20, 1 A.M.
COLOMBIA vs. COTE D'IVOIRE
 —
 "It's Didier Drogba's last World Cup, so his mindset is like, 'I've got to put in everything I have, I've got to demonstrate that I've been the best player in Ivory Coast, ever,' so he is going to be the man to watch." — **Sako Lancine (Ivorian)**

GROUP D — FRI., JUNE 20, 4 A.M.
URUGUAY vs. ENGLAND
 —
 "There's been a lot of talk recently about Luis Suarez's injury (from an English league match), so people in Uruguay think this is a plot against Suarez and Uruguay. So, more than before, I really want to see this match." — **Helen Rivero (Uruguayan)**

GROUP C — FRI., JUNE 20, 7 A.M.
JAPAN vs. GREECE
 —
 "Japan's man to watch has got to be Yuto Nagatomo, because, well, I thought he must be the first human clone or something like that, because he seems to be everywhere on the pitch, whenever they switch the camera." — **Motokneq Nuque (Japanese)**

GROUP D — SAT., JUNE 21, 1 A.M.
ITALY vs. COSTA RICA
 —
 "Statistically speaking, Italy reaches the final of the World Cup every 12 years, and the last time was eight years ago, so I think, looking at the group's lineup, Italy's run may well end in the group stage." — **Francesco Formiconi (Italian)**

GROUP E — SAT., JUNE 21, 4 A.M.
SWITZERLAND vs. FRANCE
 —
 "Bayern Munich's Xherdan Shaqiri is very fast, a very good player, very accurate in passing — definitely the man to watch in the Swiss team. Switzerland and Japan could meet in the semis, and I really hope that's going to be an exciting game." — **Sarah Fuchs (Swiss)**

GROUP E — SAT., JUNE 21, 7 A.M.
HONDURAS vs. ECUADOR
 —
 "Roger Rojas is one of our best young players. We have Carlo Costly — the son of a player from our first World Cup team, in 1982 — and we have brothers Wilson and Jerry Palacios. We have a lot of good players right now." — **Carlos Mendoza (Honduran)**

GROUP F — SUN., JUNE 22, 1 A.M.
ARGENTINA vs. IRAN
 —
 "I hope Argentina wins the World Cup, but if not, Brazil will be fine. Any dark horses? Probably South Korea. As for Japan, I don't have high hopes. If it was the girls' team, it would be another story, but I don't think the guys are so strong." — **Mariana Varela (Argentine)**

GROUP G — SUN., JUNE 22, 4 A.M.
GERMANY vs. GHANA
 —
 "There is this new guy, very much unknown to the football community. His name's David Accam and I really like him — very talented and very, very fast in attacking. I think he'll be the new revelation in Ghana's side." — **Effah Kwabena (Ghanaian)**

GROUP F — SUN., JUNE 22, 7 A.M.
NIGERIA vs. BOSNIA
 —
 "Well, centrally, the man to watch is always John Obi Mikel of Chelsea. However, I'm looking out for Emmanuel Emenike of Fenerbahce, Turkey. I expect Nigeria to get to the semifinals. Anything less than that is a kind of failure." — **Nwibo Daniel Don (Nigerian)**

GROUP H — MON., JUNE 23, 1 A.M.
BELGIUM vs. RUSSIA
 —
 "Our performance often depends more on psychological stability than football skills. If we clear the group, then we can go quite far, but even if we go to the last eight, we'd probably meet Germany or Portugal. My prediction: second round at best." — **Vladimir Yangirov (Russian)**

GROUP H — MON., JUNE 23, 4 A.M.
SOUTH KOREA vs. ALGERIA
 —
 "There are a lot of great players in the Korean team, but I'd pick Jong-Woo Park, because he was the one who really did a good job in South Africa in 2010. Korea will hopefully go to the semifinals, and Japan to the semis — or further." — **Sunnie Han (South Korean)**

GROUP G — MON., JUNE 23, 7 A.M.
USA vs. PORTUGAL
 —
 "The current man to watch is Cristiano Ronaldo, FIFA World Player of the Year. If we start well against Germany, I think we can go all the way through to the final — finally." (Portugal has never reached the final.) — **Ivo Crisostomo (Portuguese)**

GROUP B — TUE., JUNE 24, 1 A.M.
NETHERLANDS vs. CHILE
 —
 Luite: "The man to watch is Robin van Persie, our top scorer ever, but he always underperforms for the national team." Esther: "I think this time the team will give him more space to perform better — at least I hope so." — **Luite Douma and Esther Stolp (Dutch)**

GROUP B — TUE., JUNE 24, 4 A.M.
AUSTRALIA vs. SPAIN
 —
 "Andres Iniesta is Spain's man to watch. I think Japan will not pass the group stage, and Spain the quarterfinals. The winner will be Germany and the dark horse may be Colombia, as it's a strong team and I have Colombian friends." — **Antoni Rubio Lopez (Spanish)**

GROUP A — TUE., JUNE 24, 5 A.M.
CAMEROON vs. BRAZIL
 —
 "I'm really optimistic about Brazil, but I also think Spain, Germany and maybe Portugal have a chance. Portugal and Brazil have this rivalry, so I think Portugal's gonna have a special feeling about this World Cup and will try to spoil Brazil's plan." — **Daniel Lima (Brazilian)**

GROUP A — TUE., JUNE 24, 5 A.M.
CROATIA vs. MEXICO
 —
 "It'd be awesome if Mexico surprise everybody as the dark horse, but maybe Colombia? I think one of the South American teams will win because of the home-continent advantage: Brazil, Argentina or Uruguay." — **Erick Serrano (Mexican)**

GROUP D — WED., JUNE 25, 1 A.M.
ITALY vs. URUGUAY
 —
 "I really want to see Luis Suarez, but now I think it is a bit difficult because of his recent knee surgery, so I think we have to pay attention to Abel Hernandez. He's another striker. Maybe he'll be a good replacement for Suarez." — **Helen Rivero (Uruguayan)**

GROUP G — WED., JUNE 25, 5 A.M.
JAPAN vs. COLOMBIA
 —
 "Japan's man to watch is Shinji Okazaki. He's a very aggressive player and plays in Germany, and he's scored the most goals for us recently, so I'm expecting him to do well. I really hope that they get through to the best four." — **Madoka Kaneuchi (Japanese)**

GROUP C — WED., JUNE 25, 5 A.M.
GREECE vs. COTE D'IVOIRE
 —
 "Attacker Kostas Mitroglou is our man to watch. In January, he moved to Fulham on one of the most expensive transfers in the history of Greek football. He was the top scorer at Olympiacos, but due to injury has not played at Fulham yet." — **Marios Mathioudakis (Greek)**

GROUP F — THU., JUNE 26, 1 A.M.
NIGERIA vs. ARGENTINA
 —
 "Argentina-Nigeria is gonna be a good match. They've met three times and had some real corkers — Argentina's won them all, but I'd say that'll be the match of the round. Second round: anything with Germany and, hopefully, England." — **Travis Garcia (American)**

GROUP F — THU., JUNE 26, 1 A.M.
BOSNIA vs. IRAN
 —
 "I'm rooting for Bosnia and Ecuador, so those are the dark horses, I guess. I hope one of these two — maybe Ecuador — wins the World Cup. It's my way of thanking them for defending Julian Assange of WikiLeaks and freedom of speech!" — **Sulejman Brkic (Bosnian)**

GROUP E — THU., JUNE 26, 5 A.M.
HONDURAS vs. SWITZERLAND
 —
 "I'm looking forward to the semis, where Switzerland could meet Japan. If Japan doesn't make it, we may meet Spain, who we beat in the last World Cup, so I think we can do that again." — **Sarah Fuchs (Swiss)**

GROUP E — THU., JUNE 26, 5 A.M.
ECUADOR vs. FRANCE
 —
 "Everybody's going to be focused on Manchester United's Antonio Valencia, who's playing in the Mexican league, where he is scoring a lot of goals." — **David Villagomez (Ecuadorian)**

GROUP G — FRI., JUNE 27, 1 A.M.
PORTUGAL vs. GHANA
 —
 "I wish Ghana well. I think they'll play Brazil in the final, but before that they have to beat Argentina. I foresee Japan going past the group stage and Croatia probably taking them out, unfortunately." — **Effah Kwabena (Ghanaian)**

GROUP G — FRI., JUNE 27, 1 A.M.
USA vs. GERMANY
 —
 "Germany's quite similar to Japan — lots of midfielders and no real striker. Anything but the World Cup will be disappointing — that's how it's seen in Germany — but they might just lack that leading personality." — **Felix Lill (German)**

GROUP H — FRI., JUNE 27, 5 A.M.
SOUTH KOREA vs. BELGIUM
 —
 "Belgium has the talent to get out of the group, then anything can happen. Japan has a good chance to be second in theirs, after Colombia. Japan beat us late last year, so they're a good team." — **Melanie Godart (Belgian)**

GROUP H — FRI., JUNE 27, 5 A.M.
ALGERIA vs. RUSSIA
 —
 "One to watch is the player who made Algeria qualify for the World Cup — the captain, Madjid Bougherra. Algeria only just qualified, so if they can clear the group, that would be something." — **Mustapha Mokrane (Algerian)**

Mark Buckton has been collecting the views of Japan-based representatives of the 32 nations taking part in the FIFA World Cup. You can see all the vox-pop videos at <http://jtm.es/x/sgws>.

Ones to watch: The most hotly tipped games in the group phase, according to our interviewees: **England vs. Italy (6 mentions)**, **Brazil vs. Croatia (5)**, **Germany vs. Portugal, Spain vs. Netherlands (both 4 mentions)**

Which dark horses could upset the favorites' plans? Six upstart teams were mentioned by more than one interviewee: **Colombia (5 times)**, **Uruguay (5)**, **Japan (4)**, **Belgium (4)**, **Portugal (3)**, **England (2)**

Who will win the World Cup? In response to this question, four teams were mentioned as contenders far more often than the others: **Brazil (26 mentions)**, **Argentina (14)**, **Germany (13)**, **Spain (12)**

How far can Japan go? About half of the interviewees who gave a clear answer believe Japan's World Cup will end in the second phase: **Second round (13 tips)**, **Quarterfinals (5)**, **Semifinals (5)**, **Group stage (4)**, **Final (1)**

What do you think? You can cast your vote on how far you expect Japan to progress on the Japan Times website. Send all your comments to community@japantimes.co.jp

Boys in blue: Japan players cited by our interviewees: **Keisuke Honda (5 times)**, **Shinji Kagawa (2)**, **Yuto Nagamoto (2)**, **Shinji Okazaki (1)**, **Makoto Hasebe (1)**, **Yoshito Okubo (1)**

Current FIFA rankings: 1) Spain, 2) Germany, 3) Brazil, 4) Portugal, 5) Argentina, 6) Switzerland, 7) Uruguay, 8) Colombia, 9) Italy, 10) England, 46) Japan