

The Greatest Individual Performances in World Cup History



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The FIFA World Cup is the most prestigious soccer tournament, and it only comes around once every four years. The best soccer nations then battle to win it all to be considered the best soccer team on Earth. It's certainly no easy feat for anyone, but teams make an effort every World Cup to the best.

We've looked through the history of the World Cup and identified the greatest individual World Cup performances. Let's get into the teams with the most impressive World Cup runs, what key moments happened throughout the tournament and how these performances solidified their country's legacy.

1986 World Cup: Argentina

The 1986 Mexico-based World Cup was Diego Maradona and Argentina's for the taking. Although they had a tough group stage with only 5 total points (1982

World Cup victors Italy were in their group along with Bulgaria and South Korea), they still came out first in Group A to play against South American rivals Uruguay in a tight 1-0 victory playoff match first-round.

From here on, Argentina's route to the final was anything but easy, facing off against England in the quarter-finals and then Belgium in the semis. Neither team was enough to stop the dominant force of Argentina on their rampant run to the finals, where they'd play an extremely difficult opponent of West Germany. In the end, Argentina would come out World Cup champions in a 3-2 victory.

2002 World Cup: Brazil

Brazil has always been a widely-renowned soccer nation, but their 2002 performance, in particular, was one to remember to the end. With players like Ronaldo Luis Nazario, Ricky Kaka, and Ronaldinho, the 2002 Brazilian national team would instill fear in the hearts of its opponents. Easily making the playoffs, Brazil would first showdown against Belgium in a 2-0 victory before barely overcoming England in the quarter-finals 2-1.

Then, with a narrow 1-0 victory against Turkey, Brazil would head to the finals and face Germany, one of two particular favorites to win the World Cup at the time. However, Brazil dispatched the Germans 2-0, thanks to two goals from Ronaldo. With years of success and loads of talent under their belt, it's no surprise the 2002 Brazil Men's National Team had one of the best individual World Cup performances to date.

2010 World Cup: Spain

Another of the best performances in the World Cup was the 2010 Spanish National Team's merciless domination of all other teams. With only one loss coming out of the group stage, Spain finished first in Group H ahead of Switzerland and Chile. But from then on, the one team you didn't want to come across was Spain, full of all-star players from La Liga's best clubs Barcelona and Real Madrid.

To give just an idea of the talent on this team, Spain had the likes of Xavi Hernandez, Andres Iniesta, Gerard Pique, Carles Puyol, David Villa, Sergio Ramos,

Xabi Alonso and more. With such a talented team on the pitch, Spain would beat Portugal, then Paraguay, Germany, and then the Netherlands in the finals all by 1-0 margins. Even though the games may have appeared close on the scoreline, Spain's defense was impeccable, letting in 0 goals against them throughout the playoffs.

2014 World Cup: Germany

In response to countless finals but only one World Cup victory in 1990, the German national team was back in tip-top form after years of being ousted by other teams. In particular, this 2014 World Cup was a statement to most, with Germany finishing first out of their group with 7 points before beating top prospect teams such as Brazil 7-1 in the semi-finals and Lionel Messi's Argentina in the finals 1-0.

The team's midfield and defense were nearly impossible to bypass, with players such as Mesut Ozil, Toni Kroos, Bastian Schweinsteiger, Mats Hummels and goalkeeper Manuel Neuer. Throw in a leading goalscorer like Miroslav Klose and Thomas Muller and you have one of the most competent national teams with one of the greatest international performances ever.

2015 Women's World Cup: USA

Achieving just 1 draw with 2 wins coming out of the group stage, the US Women's national team would make 2015 their revenge tour from the 2011 World Cup. While the women would be coming off a devastating finals loss in the 2011 World Cup against Japan (the US were favorites to win), they'd find themselves in the same scenario four years later against Japan in the finals again. This time, they'd obliterate them in regulation 5-2, with no mercy, although they didn't get there for free.

By the time they reached the Semi-finals against Germany, the US Women's Team had only let in one goal, showcasing how strong their defense was. The team's success can be largely credited to star players such as Carli Lloyd (with 3 goals in the final, 1 goal from half field), Alex Morgan, Abby Wambach, Hope Solo and Megan Rapinoe. However, the team had so much depth of talent compared to

other teams that taking the 2015 World Cup was to be expected from this revenge-hungry US Women's National Team.