

# BetFan

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## TODAY'S FREE SPORTS BETTING TIPS...

### Equine Equity

Win Bet - Downpatrick 16:50 - Touchedbyanangel @ 3/1

### Betting Development

Win Bet - Ffos Las 18:00 - Cafe Au Lait @ 7/2

### Lucky 7 Naps

Win Bet - York 14:05 - Diamond Oasis @ 5/1

# France Can Edge It Against Croatia In The World Cup

**Final** - By Ian Hudson

Just two countries have only won the World Cup on home soil and there was a potential final this time that could have brought them together. France won their own World Cup in 1998 and England were world champions in 1966 at their own tournament. Croatia did not read the script so they meet France in Moscow in Saturday's final while England play Belgium the previous night in the match that determines which countries finish third and fourth.

Usually I'd say that the third place playoff is the most meaningless fixture in the sport. It matches the two losing semi-finalists who just want to go home. Motivation and team selection will be key and both teams will want to end the tournament on a high. However, deep down the players will be yearning to be playing in the final. England and Belgium had chances but ultimately Croatia and France were better teams and deserve their place in the final. England can reward the fans with a win in this match nobody wants to play.

Croatia were second best against England in the first half. They were outpaced at the back and created very little going forward. Crucially England did not score the second goal and Croatia were still in the match. They took the game to England in the second half and created numerous crossing opportunities and one paid dividends. Extra time was even but Croatia had more drive and scored a deserved winner and England came up just short. All roads now lead to the final of Euro 2020 at Wembley.

Belgium were the equal of France in the other semi-final but lost to a set piece goal. There was very little between the sides but Belgium could not break down the French defence. There were few clear cut chances and France won the battle of the superstars. Belgium's golden generation took them so far as did England's young team but neither could take that step of reaching the final of the World Cup and Croatia and France earned their place in the biggest match in the sport.

On the face of it France have the better all-round team and Croatia have gone to extra-time in their three knockout matches. France are strong in defence, have a solid midfield and have some magic at the top end of the field. Croatia are playing for the flag and it would be huge for this relatively new nation if they won the World Cup. They had the strength to peg back England and win the game in extra-time. However, France are more capable than England of holding firm.

Croatia have arguably the best midfield in the tournament, drawing on player's from Europe's top clubs. They have a solid defence and a variety of decent scoring options as England found out. Off field problems have been a distraction in the past but the players have performed when it matters most. France have created a team from the individual talent and that could be the decisive factor. France can be the world champions for the first time overseas in 2018.



## **Today's Sports Betting Preview** - By Rick Elliott

### **Croatia And Modric Were Magnificent Against England**

You have to say Croatia were magnificent against England during the second half and extra time in the World Cup semi-final the other night. Their defence looked a shambles before the break and the forwards offered very little up front. But once the stagger had worked its way out Croatia were worthy winners and deserved their place in the final. England play Belgium in the meaningless 3rd/4th place match.

England could not score the crucial second goal and tired under the onslaught. Croatia repeatedly shifted the play and it was only a matter of time before they equalised. England played some decent stuff at the start of extra time but Croatia came again in the second period and the winning goal did not flatter the team. The relatively new nation of CROATIA are 7/4 with **Ladbrokes** to win the World Cup.

In Norway there is an expression for that player who can find the killer pass to break down teams at the highest level. The can opener is that man on the pitch who delivers the ball that opens up a well organised defence in matches that matter most. England have played admirably and possibly were one poor decision from Harry Kane to be in the final of the World Cup.

However, ultimately they lack a can opener and finding one should be in Gareth Southgate's in-tray over the next two years. Croatia do possess a can opener in Luca Modric who took control of the match with England. He was at the helm of a dominant midfield in a match in which experience told in the end. MODRIC is now 2/1 with **William Hill** to be the player of the tournament.

Roger Federer is out of Wimbledon so the semi-final between Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal could identify the winner of the championships. Kevin Anderson and John Isner, the other semi-finalists, would probably disagree but the big match involves former champions. Losing at the semi-final stage can be hard to take but NADAL won't be feeling like England and he is the bet at 10/11 with **Betfair**.

It's the second day of the July Festival at Newmarket and the highlight is the Falmouth Stakes (3.35pm). It's a Group 1 contest for fillies' and mares over one mile. Alpha Centauri has won Group 1 races in her own age group which is horses aged three. She gets 9 pounds from the older horses but the main rivals do as well. Alpha Centauri will start odds-on but THREADING offers some value at 9/1 with **bet365**.