

I'd like you to pick yourself a high scoring team for the FIFA World Cup 2026 fantasy football game. I will track your results against others to see how well your choices compare. The World Cup has already started but assume it hasn't and that we are about to go into MatchDay 1. You need a team of 15, the starting XI for the first round and whether you want to use any boosters for that round. Any choices you make will need to comply with the FIFA fantasy game rules. Please use any public data source you like to make your team choices but don't use sources created since the World Cup started such as round 1 fixture results or commentary on player performance in this World Cup as that would be cheating. Later on, I'll ask you what transfers and boosters you want to apply for the next round. I'll ask you for these changes once per round until the end of the tournament. May the best team win!

I'll build this as a pre-MatchDay 1 squad, using current public info for rules, fixtures, likely squads, and pre-tournament strength—but avoiding anything based on MatchDay 1 results or World Cup performance.

Thought for 38s

I'm entering **GPT-5.5 Thinking FC** with a **3-4-3**, using **Maximum Captain in MatchDay 1**.

I've kept this within the official-style constraints: **15 players, \$100.0m budget, 2 GK / 5 DEF / 5 MID / 3 FWD, max 3 per country in the group stage**. FIFA says the game uses a \$100m budget for 15 players, and FFGeek's rule summary gives the group-stage country cap as max 3 per nation.

Squad: 15 players, total \$99.3m

Pos	Player	Country	Price	MD1 fixture	Role
GK	Hernán Galíndez	Ecuador	\$4.2m	Côte d'Ivoire	Start
GK	Maxime Crépeau	Canada	\$4.0m	Bosnia & Herzegovina	Bench
DEF	Denzel Dumfries	Netherlands	\$5.7m	Japan	Start
DEF	Nuno Mendes	Portugal	\$5.8m	DR Congo	Start

Pos	Player	Country	Price	MD1 fixture	Role
DEF	Nico O'Reilly	England	\$4.7m	Croatia	Start
DEF	Willian Pacho	Ecuador	\$4.4m	Côte d'Ivoire	Bench
DEF	Joel Ordóñez	Ecuador	\$3.9m	Côte d'Ivoire	Bench
MID	Raphinha	Brazil	\$8.2m	Morocco	Start
MID	Florian Wirtz	Germany	\$7.5m	Curaçao	Start
MID	Bruno Fernandes	Portugal	\$8.5m	DR Congo	Start
MID	Marcel Sabitzer	Austria	\$6.8m	Jordan	Start
MID	James Rodríguez	Colombia	\$6.5m	Uzbekistan	Bench
FWD	Erling Haaland	Norway	\$10.5m	Iraq	Start
FWD	Mikel Oyarzabal	Spain	\$8.1m	Cape Verde	Start
FWD	Harry Kane	England	\$10.5m	Croatia	Start

Starting XI

Formation: 3-4-3

GK: Galíndez

DEF: Dumfries, Nuno Mendes, O'Reilly

MID: Raphinha, Wirtz, Bruno Fernandes, Sabitzer

FWD: Haaland, Oyarzabal, Kane

Bench order: James Rodríguez, Willian Pacho, Joel Ordóñez, Crépeau.

Booster choice for MatchDay 1

Use: Maximum Captain

Reason: MD1 has several elite captaincy spots spread across the round: Wirtz vs Curaçao, Oyarzabal vs Cape Verde, Haaland vs Iraq, Bruno vs DR Congo, Kane vs Croatia. Fantasy Football Scout's pre-MD1 captaincy guide had Haaland top of its Round 1 xPts projections, with Germany and Spain carrying especially strong win probabilities, and also listed Oyarzabal, Wirtz, Mbappé, Kane, Bruno, Messi and Raphinha among standout Round 1 captaincy options. Maximum Captain removes the risk of picking the wrong one.

Captain plan without the booster, for tracking

Because I'm using **Maximum Captain**, the game should auto-double the best scorer in the XI. For audit purposes, my preferred manual captain ladder would have been:

1. **Florian Wirtz** vs Curaçao
2. **Mikel Oyarzabal** vs Cape Verde
3. **Erling Haaland** vs Iraq
4. **Bruno Fernandes** vs DR Congo
5. **Harry Kane** vs Croatia

Why this squad

The core idea is to attack the best MD1 scoring environments while still leaving a playable 15. Haaland had 16 goals in qualifying and was highlighted as the top Round 1 xPts captain option; Oyarzabal is Spain's central forward, likely penalty option, and starts against Cape Verde; Kane remains England's focal point and penalty taker; Raphinha was rated as a top premium-mid value for Brazil; and Wirtz gets Germany's excellent Curaçao fixture.

At the back, I've gone for attacking full-backs plus cheap Ecuador value. O'Reilly is a low-cost route into England's defence, with FFScout noting England's excellent qualifying defensive numbers and his expected first-choice left-back role; Pacho and Ordóñez are cheap Ecuador defenders from a side that conceded only five goals in CONMEBOL qualifying; Dumfries and Nuno Mendes add attacking upside.

No World Cup MatchDay 1 results or post-kickoff player-performance commentary were used to choose the team.

Thanks. Ok, MD1 has now ended. Please let me know any transfers you wish to make and your booster selection (if any) for MD2. You are allowed to consider all results from MD1 when making your decision. We are a few days into MD2 in practice, so please

ignore results and commentary that corresponds to MD2. If you have any thoughts on your teams performance in MD1 I'd be interested to hear it. May the best team win!

I'll treat this like a locked historical cutoff: use MD1 results and player scoring, then deliberately avoid MD2 reports/results. I'll also keep the transfer plan legal under the fantasy rules and preserve squad structure/budget.

I've found the key legal constraint for this round: before MatchDay 2 there are **2 free transfers**, and one group-stage free transfer can be carried over. I'm leaning toward using both because we have at least one clear underperforming bench slot and one cheap defender upgrade.

Thought for 44s

MD2 decisions for GPT-5.5 Thinking FC

Transfers — use both free transfers

Out	In	Reason
Joel Ordóñez, Ecuador DEF	Nathaniel Brown, Germany DEF	Brown is the obvious cheap defender upgrade after a 14-point MD1 : goal, assist, and strong attacking role in Germany's 7-1 win over Curaçao. Germany also remain a strong MD2 team to target.
James Rodríguez, Colombia MID	Ismael Saibari, Morocco MID	James was a failed punt — FFScout's MD1 notes literally flag "James flops" in Colombia's 3-1 win. Saibari scored from an advanced/OOP role against Brazil and gives us a cheaper, form-based Morocco attacker with Haiti still to come in MD3.

This uses the **2 free transfers available before MD2**, so no points hit. FIFA's rules list **2 transfers before Matchday 2**, with one group-stage free transfer carryable if unused.

Booster

Use: 12th Man

12th Man pick: Kylian Mbappé, France

Reason: I already used **Maximum Captain** in MD1, so the best remaining aggressive booster for a group-stage mismatch is 12th Man. FFScout specifically says Round 2 is a

good 12th Man window and names **Mbappé v Iraq** as a high-upside option; the 12th Man scores but cannot be captained, substituted, or transferred.

MD2 starting XI

Formation: 3-4-3

GK: Galíndez

DEF: Nathaniel Brown, Nuno Mendes, Pacho

MID: Raphinha, Wirtz, Bruno Fernandes, Saibari

FWD: Haaland, Oyarzabal, Kane

Bench order: Dumfries, O'Reilly, Sabitzer, Crépeau

12th Man: Mbappé

Captain plan

Because 12th Man can't be captained, I'll play this as a rolling captaincy plan:

1. **Raphinha** vs Haiti
2. **Wirtz** vs Côte d'Ivoire
3. **Oyarzabal** vs Saudi Arabia
4. **Bruno Fernandes** vs Uzbekistan
5. **Kane** vs Ghana

Oyarzabal is still very tempting despite Spain's MD1 blank; RotoWire had him as the top MD2 captain pick against Saudi Arabia, noting Spain's strong favourite status and his penalty edge.

Thoughts on MD1 performance

Not bad, but not elite. **Haaland and Kane saved us:** Haaland scored twice in Norway's 4-1 win over Iraq, and Kane scored twice in England's 4-2 win over Croatia.

The weaker calls were mostly the support cast: Brazil only drew 1-1 with Morocco, Portugal drew 1-1 with DR Congo, Spain blanked against Cabo Verde, and the Ecuador defensive double-up was punished by Côte d'Ivoire's 1-0 win. FFScout's MD1 notes also show our James Rodríguez bench punt failed.

Overall: **good premium spine, poor value picks.** MD2 is about correcting the cheap slots without blowing up a squad that still has Haaland, Kane, Bruno, Raphinha, Wirtz and Oyarzabal.