

A friendly football joust

CEOs pledge support for The Business Times Budding Artists Fund

THE World Cup enters the knockout stage on Saturday night, with 16 teams still in the chase for global football's most prestigious prize. In conjunction with the tournament in Russia, *The Business Times* is running a BT-World Cup CEO Challenge – to have some fun and raise some funds for a worthy cause. We have invited a group of top business executives to take part in this special challenge. They are each randomly assigned one of the 16 World Cup teams, and they will have a "face off" in BT whenever their respective teams are playing each other. Among those who have agreed to participate are NTUC FairPrice CEO Seah Kian Peng, Singapore Sports Hub CEO

Oon Jin Teik, Singapore Press Holdings CEO Ng Yat Chung, OCBC Bank Group CEO Samuel Tsien, and Singapore Diamond Investment Exchange executive chairman and founder Alain Vandenborre. The rules of the CEO Challenge are: If a CEO's team wins, he will continue in the tournament. However, if his team loses, he will make a S\$1,000 donation to The Business Times Budding Artists Fund (BT BAF). The amount will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Singapore government, and the CEO will also be eligible for a 250 per cent tax deduction for this donation. The CEO Challenge goes on until the new World Cup

champion is crowned after the grand final at the Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow on Sunday July 15. The BT BAF was initiated back in 2004 and adopted by *The Business Times* a year later. It originated from a conviction that no child with a strong interest and potential in the arts should be denied the opportunity to develop his or her talents due to a lack of financial resources. BT BAF aims to level the playing field and reaches out to children and youths from financially disadvantaged backgrounds (aged six to 19) providing opportunities and access to the arts. The beneficiaries receive their arts training and education at The Little Arts Academy and 10 Square Youth.

BT BAF, The Little Arts Academy and 10 Square Youth are all managed by The Rice Company Limited, a registered charity and not-for-profit arts organisation with Institution of a Public Character status. The first four games of the World Cup's Round of 16 take place this weekend, with the standout match being the 1998 winners France versus two-time champions Argentina on Saturday (10pm kickoff, Singapore time). The action continues on Sunday with three more games – Uruguay face Portugal (2am) and Spain take on Russia (10pm), followed by Croatia's battle with Denmark (Monday 2am).

BY LEE U-WEN

Who's backing who for the BT-World Cup CEO Challenge



Ron Tan
Group CEO, Cityneon Holdings Limited



Robson Lee
Partner at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP



Ng Yat Chung
CEO, Singapore Press Holdings



Desmond Ong
Senior Partner, JLC Advisors



Alain Vandenborre
Executive Chairman and Founder, Singapore Diamond Investment Exchange



Samuel Tsien
Group CEO, OCBC Bank



Jeffrey Seah
Partner, Mettle and Salt Partners



Oon Jin Teik
CEO, Singapore Sports Hub



Julian Neo
Head of Commercial, DHL Singapore



Victor Khaw
General Manager, Allalloy Dynaweld Pte Ltd



Edmund Koh
Head, Wealth Management (Asia-Pacific), UBS



Steve Ting
Managing Partner, Gryphus Capital Partners Pte Ltd



Seah Kian Peng
CEO, NTUC FairPrice



Nicholas Narayanan
Partner at Nicholas & Tan Partnership LLP



Kim Teo
Group CEO, Boardroom Limited



Leslie Pillay
Director, MLA Pte Ltd

ROUND OF 16 MATCHES THIS WEEKEND

MATCH 1

June 30, Sat 10pm
France VS Argentina



"Les Bleus possess a scary amount of depth in their squad. They have an impressive pool of talent to draw from, from the likes of Lloris and Varane in defence, the solid midfield duo of Pogba and Kante, and the lethal striking partnership of Mbappe, Dembele and Griezmann. The powerful midfield combined with the attacking depth and a strong defence leaves me no choice but to believe that we will see France in the finals."

Steve Ting



"Argentina started slowly at the World Cup. However, their late win against Nigeria showed that they were able to perform under pressure to secure the result when it was needed most. The deep French squad make a venerable opponent, but it's primetime for Lionel Messi to prove his worth, and more often than not, he has delivered!"

Ng Yat Chung

MATCH 2

July 1, Sun 2am
Uruguay VS Portugal



"Uruguay goes into this game with a perfect record of 3 wins from the group stage. They are playing well as a team. The midfield is well oiled and the Suarez-Cavani combination will pose problems to Portugal who were lucky to get into this stage. Still, Uruguay cannot be complacent and with Ronaldo, he can make something out of nothing. So, let us shut out their midfield and CR7. Uruguay to win 1-0 :)"

Seah Kian Peng



"Portugal's history of football excellence goes back to the days of Eusebio to present times with Luis Figo, and now Cristiano Ronaldo. Their star talisman has pulled his weight for his country this World Cup, scoring four goals thus far. Uruguay may have been unbeaten in the group stages, but they have not faced off an opponent like the Euro 2016 Champions yet, who will be hungrier to add the World Cup to their list of accomplishments."

Oon Jin Teik

MATCH 3

July 1, Sun 10pm
Spain VS Russia



"Spain entered the tournament as an unheralded favourite – with a good mix of veterans and a new generation of wide players. 'The Spanish Inquisition' 48 hours before the start added more *Telenovela* flavour to their campaign. Hierro has utilised his playing *libero* organisation skills to weave the Madrid and Barca factions together to top their group. We might see a 2-goal win, with the Catalan faction demonstrating Spain's dependence on Iniesta's Nou Camp unit."

Jeffrey Seah



"Spain is obviously the better team, but looking at how the underdogs have been performing way above expectations so far, you can't rule them out. I think there are a few things in Russia's favour: 1) their loss to Uruguay after 2 high scoring games is a wake-up call 2) the temptation of a quarter final place is irresistible 3) they've got home ground and fan advantage. Don't rule Russia out!"

Leslie Pillay

MATCH 4

July 2, Mon 2am
Croatia VS Denmark



"Considered by many to be the dark horse of the World Cup, Croatia is blessed with one of the most stacked midfields in international football. While Croatian talisman Mario Mandzukic has yet to score a goal in Russia, head coach Zlatko Dalic has labelled the striker the 'soul of the team' ahead of their clash with Denmark. This should galvanise Mario to perform in the knockout stages. I expect a close fight but the Croats should emerge victorious."

Robson Lee



"If goalie Kasper Schmeichel plays like his father Peter (my favourite player) and Christian Eriksen continues to be stellar for Denmark, there's a chance they might topple favourites Croatia. On top of that, being stronger 'on paper' hasn't counted for much this World Cup, just ask Germany. I hope it stays that way for this fixture :)"

Victor Khaw