Experienced Player Quality Between The 2022 Qatar National Team And The 2025 Club World Cup Of The Americas

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to compare the quality of experienced players based on the number of caps, player age, minutes played during the tournament, the ratio of goal contributions in quarterfinal to final matches, and total goals throughout their international careers. The research employed a descriptive-comparative design involving eight national teams participating in the 2022 FIFA World Cup and eight clubs competing in the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup, selected using purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected through documentation from official football databases, including FIFA, Transfermarkt, and match reports, using observation sheets and comparison matrices as research instruments. Data were analyzed descriptively to identify patterns and differences between groups. The results indicate that players in the 2022 FIFA World Cup had a higher number of caps, greater goal contributions, and longer playing time. In contrast, players in the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup exhibited more varied levels of experience, a younger average age, and fewer minutes played due to player rotation. It is concluded that national team tournaments tend to emphasize the role of experienced players with significant influence on team performance, whereas club tournaments prioritize squad depth, player rotation, and performance consistency.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

A. Conception and design of the study;
B. Acquisition of data;
C. Analysis and interpretation of data;
D. Manuscript preparation;
E. Obtaining funding

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INTRODUCTION

Sport has now become a lifestyle for the general public and even a basic necessity in daily life (De Oliveira et al., 2019). Sport is inherently competitive, ranging from beginner to professional levels. These levels typically span from approximately 10 to 20 years of age, depending on the athlete's career maturity (Dhoni et al., 2019). The athlete development process generally begins at an early age through various competitive activities, both in schools and regional competitions (Aristandi et al., 2020). Introducing competition from an early age aims not only to develop fundamental motor skills in children but also to instill values such as sportsmanship, discipline, and teamwork (Aristandi et al., 2020). Participation in youth competitions is intended to enhance motor skills, promote sportsmanship, discipline, and teamwork, with early-age competitions
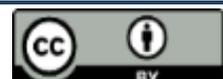
emphasizing experience rather than winning (Moseid, 2019). Competition plays a crucial role as a platform for developing technical abilities, competitive mentality, and achieving performance at higher levels (Mojtahedi et al., 2023). This topic is relevant because competition contributes not only to the development of individual skills from early age to the professional level but also to the sustainability of the sport development system and the production of elite athletes. Their performance when representing national teams consistently becomes a subject of analysis. The relationship between these two contexts is therefore crucial in determining the quality of international tournaments.

In the context of international football, the quality of a national team is often regarded as a reflection of the strength of domestic leagues within a country (Rompotis, 2024). Athlete development from an early age, their participation in club competitions, and their performance when representing the national team have consistently been prominent topics of analysis (Aristandi et al., 2020). According to Nilsen et al. (2024), players who perform consistently at the club level are generally expected to demonstrate similar performance when representing their national teams. Fundamental differences between national teams and clubs lie in their philosophies, development models, and competition systems. Clubs are oriented toward professionalism, financial sustainability, and possess the freedom to recruit players from across the world (Leifheit & Follert, 2021).

FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) organizes two types of World Cup tournaments, namely the national team World Cup and the Club World Cup, which often raises debate regarding which competition is more prestigious or more widely followed (Simiyu, 2016). From the perspective of football fans, the FIFA World Cup for national teams is generally considered more attractive than the FIFA Club World Cup, as it brings together the best national teams from around the globe (Passes et al., 2017). Historically, the FIFA World Cup has been regarded as more prestigious because it is held every four years and features the strongest national teams worldwide (Fan et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the FIFA Club World Cup also holds its own significance. According to Nilan (2023), the tournament brings together champions from major continental club competitions (AFC, CAF, CONCACAF, CONMEBOL, OFC, and UEFA), along with the host nation's representative. Although less popular than the national team World Cup, the Club World Cup remains important as it provides an opportunity for clubs from different continents to compete for the title of the best club in the world.

The quality of participants in the two competitions can be compared objectively. The 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar represents an international tournament between national teams, characterized by intense competition, with Argentina emerging as the world champion. In contrast, the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup, hosted in the United States, adopts a new format with a significantly larger number of participating teams compared to previous editions. Moreover, the FIFA Club World Cup, particularly with the new format introduced in 2025, features 32 teams and is considered the most competitive club tournament ever organized by FIFA (Guajardo & Krumer, 2024). The fundamental differences between national-team and club-based competitions make a comparative analysis of participant quality essential (Hodge et al., 2014).

By analyzing several key aspects such as team composition, player performance, and internal factors within national teams and clubs, this analysis is expected to identify fundamental differences in participant quality across the two tournaments and to reveal factors influencing performance. The quality of participants in the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar and the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup in the United States differs substantially due to the nature of the competing teams. The 2022 World Cup features national teams representing the best players from each country, selected based on regional qualification. National teams rely heavily on the depth of domestic talent and operate within relatively limited preparation periods (Nash & Mallett, 2019).

In contrast, the FIFA Club World Cup United States 2025 will bring together the best professional clubs from around the world. These clubs are built upon different philosophies and levels of investment, where quality is largely determined by financial capacity to recruit star players, tactical continuity developed throughout a full competitive season, and strong infrastructural support (Haryoprasetyo & Kiswara, 2013). These factors provide professional clubs with advantages in terms of performance consistency and deeper tactical integration compared to national teams (Jinnan & Hafidz, 2022).

The quality of participants in a tournament cannot be measured solely by individual skills, strategies, and team cohesion, but is also influenced by non-technical aspects such as infrastructure, organizational support, and financial resources (Rompotis, 2024). At the national team level, success is strongly affected by factors including youth development systems, the quality of domestic league competitions, and the role of national football federations (Evans et al., 2024). Differences in competition structures between international tournaments and club tournaments make comparative analyses of participant quality essential. Factors such as player composition, international experience, age, playing time, and goal productivity provide deeper insights into the characteristics of both tournament types. Therefore, this study aims to compare the quality of participants in the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and the FIFA Club World Cup United States 2025 through an analysis of five key indicators: national team caps, player age, total goals scored at the national team level, average goals scored from the quarterfinals to the final, and total playing time during the tournament.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive-comparative approach to analyze differences in player characteristics between the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and the FIFA Club World Cup United States 2025. The variables examined included national team caps, player age, total international goals, average goals scored from the quarterfinals to the final, and total minutes played during the tournament. This approach was selected because it allows for the description and comparison of characteristics across two distinct groups without manipulating research variables (Piggott et al., 2020). The research design focused on comparing and describing key aspects of two different populations, namely national teams and club teams, within elite-level football competitions (Sugihara et al., 2015).

The study participants consisted of two main groups: eight national teams that reached the quarterfinal stage of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and eight clubs that advanced to the quarterfinals of the FIFA Club World Cup 2025. These teams were selected because they were considered to represent the highest competitive quality in their respective tournaments, thereby enabling a more accurate comparison of elite player characteristics and performance.

The research population included all teams participating in both tournaments. However, to obtain focused and representative data, purposive sampling was applied (Palinkas et al., 2015). The sample comprised eight national teams and eight clubs selected based on their progression to the quarterfinal stage and their competitive performance in each tournament.

The research instruments consisted of observation sheets and a comparative matrix. Observation sheets were used to record research variables such as player age, number of national team appearances, total international goals, average goals scored from the quarterfinals to the final, and total minutes played during the tournament. The comparative matrix was utilized to classify, organize, and systematically compare data between the two groups (Anguera et al., 2017).

Data collection was conducted through documentation and indirect observation by accessing secondary data from official sources, including FIFA.com, Transfermarkt.co.id, and international match statistical reports. The collected data covered five primary variables: player age, national team caps, total international goals across the player's career, average goals scored from the quarterfinals to the final stage, and total minutes played during the tournament. All data were classified and organized into tables and comparative matrices prior to analysis. The analysis was performed systematically using official data from FIFA, Transfermarkt, and match statistics from the 2022–2025 period.

Data analysis was carried out in two main stages: descriptive analysis and comparative analysis. Descriptive analysis aimed to present the characteristics of each research group through tabulation, graphical visualization, and descriptive statistical measures, providing a comprehensive overview of the studied variables. Comparative analysis was then applied to examine differences between national teams and club teams based on the predefined variables. To identify statistically meaningful differences between the two groups, appropriate inferential statistical comparison techniques were employed (Thomas et al., 2017). All analytical procedures adhered to standard principles and practices commonly applied in sports science research.

This study has several limitations. The scope was limited to players from teams that reached the quarterfinal stage in both tournaments, meaning the findings do not represent all tournament participants. The study relied entirely on secondary data sourced from FIFA and Transfermarkt, making the validity of the results dependent on the accuracy and completeness of these databases. Furthermore, the descriptive-comparative design does not aim to establish causal relationships between variables. External factors such as coaching strategies, players' physical conditions, and match context were not examined in depth and should be considered when interpreting the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Result

Based on Table 1, four main variables of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar are presented, namely the number of players' caps in the national team, the average age of players, the total number of goals scored by players during their national team careers, and the total playing time of players throughout the tournament.

Table 1.
2022 World Cup

Player Name	Caps	Age (2022)	National Team Goals	Minutes Played
Daley Blind	98	32	3	520
Thiago Silva	113	38	7	450
Romain Saïss	70	32	2	540
Harry Kane	75	29	51	410
Lionel Messi	172	35	98	690
Cristiano Ronaldo	191	37	118	310
Luka Modrić	161	36	23	645
Antoine Griezmann	113	31	42	670
Average	**124**	**34**	**43**	**529**

Based on Table 2, four main variables of the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup in the United States are described, including the number of players' caps in their national teams, players' ages, the total number of goals scored by players during their national team careers, and the total playing time during the tournament.

Table 2.
2022 Club World Cup

Player Name	Caps	Age (2025)	National Team Goals	Minutes Played
Kalidou Koulibaly	95	34	2	480
Marcel Sabitzer	91	31	23	450
Thibaut Courtois	102	33	0	540
Thiago Silva	113	41	17	450
Gustavo Gómez	89	31	7	450
Manuel Neuer	120	39	0	450
Gianluigi	76	26	0	630
Moisés Caicedo	42	23	3	630
Average	**91**	**32**	**7**	**510**

Based on Table 3, the average age of players participating in the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup in the United States is presented.

Table 3.
Average Age of the 2025 Club World Cup

Team	Average Team
Al Hilal	26
Dortmund	26
Fluminense	28
Madrid	25
PSG	24
Chelsea	25
Fc Bayern	27
Palmeiras	27
Average	**26**

Based on Table 4, the average age of players participating in the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar is described.

Table 4.
Average Age of the 2022 World Cup

Team	Average Team
Belanda	26
Argentina	28
Brazil	28
Portugal	27
Maroko	26
Kroasia	27
Inggris	26
Prancis	27
Average	**27**
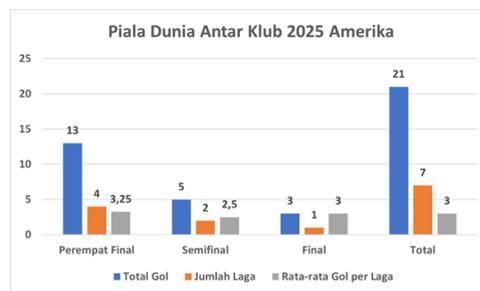
Figure 1.
2025 Club World Cup Goal Average

Based on Figure 1, the average number of goals scored in the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup in the United States is presented, covering matches from the quarter-final stage to the final.

Figure 2.
2022 World Cup Goal Average

Based on Figure 2, the average number of goals scored in the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar is illustrated, covering matches from the quarter-final stage to the final.

Discussion

This study analyzes a comparison of participants competing in two major tournaments organized by FIFA, namely the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar and the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup in the United States. The research data were obtained directly from reliable sources, including the official FIFA website (FIFA.com), WhoScored.com, and Transfermarkt.co.id. The analysis focuses on five main variables: the number of caps

obtained by players at the national team level, the average age of players, the total number of goals scored by players throughout their national team careers, and the total minutes played during the tournament.

Based on the results presented in Tables 1 and 2, the average number of caps (national team appearances) of players participating in the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar is higher than that of players competing in the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup in the United States. This difference occurs because players selected for the World Cup are generally experienced individuals who have repeatedly represented their countries in international competitions. In general, players with greater experience are considered to possess higher tactical maturity, composure under match pressure, and a better understanding of the game.

To facilitate the analysis of player experience, caps were categorized into five levels: novice players (0–10 caps), moderately experienced players (10–25 caps), experienced players (25–50 caps), highly experienced players (50–100 caps), and world-class or elite players (more than 100 caps until retirement) (Schmidt, 2015). This classification was used to examine differences in the characteristics of participants in both tournaments based on players' experience levels. For example, players with the highest number of caps, such as Lionel Messi, Luka Modrić, and Cristiano Ronaldo, have accumulated more than 150 international appearances. A high number of caps reflects extensive experience competing at the highest level of international football (Tirta Wahyu Prabowo, 2015).

Meanwhile, in the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup in the United States, many players come from clubs that apply high rotation policies and consist of relatively young squads, resulting in a lower level of international experience. Clubs such as Fluminense, Al Hilal, Manchester City, and Flamengo tend to rely on a combination of young potential players and senior players to enhance the experience of younger athletes (Herrebrøden & Bjørndal, 2022). Differences in tournament structure, in which clubs compete in a more congested schedule compared to national teams, lead to many players accumulating extensive playing time at the club level but limited exposure at the international level due to fewer national team appearances (Buchheit & Dupont, 2018).

From the perspective of playing time, the difference between the two tournaments is also notable. In the 2022 FIFA World Cup, players recorded an average of 450–600 minutes of playing time, whereas in the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup, the average ranged from 450–500 minutes. This discrepancy is partly due to differences in tournament formats: the 2022 FIFA World Cup included a third-place playoff, while the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup did not. Moreover, in tournaments often considered part of the pre-season, such as the FIFA Club World Cup, player rotation systems are commonly implemented to maintain physical condition ahead of the upcoming season and to strengthen team composition by integrating young and senior players to enhance team chemistry. In contrast, at the national team level, key players are more likely to play full matches due to the smaller number of games and the high prestige of international competitions, which are typically held once every four years.

Based on the number of goals scored at the national team level, players who participated in the 2022 FIFA World Cup recorded relatively higher goal tallies compared to those competing in the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup. On average, players involved in the 2022 World Cup scored approximately 10–15 goals for their national teams, whereas players in the 2025 Club World Cup recorded an average of 5–10 goals at the national team level. This difference is reasonable, as several players who regularly appear at the club level are not consistent starters or key players for their national teams. In addition, players in club competitions often perform roles tailored to team needs, meaning their primary responsibilities are not always focused on goal scoring.

Based on the data presented in Tables 3 and 4, the average age of players competing in the 2022 World Cup was approximately 27 years, while players in the 2025 Club World Cup were slightly younger, with an average age of 26 years. This finding indicates that national teams tend to prioritize players who are more mature and experienced in terms of physical, mental, and tactical aspects, whereas clubs are more likely to combine younger and senior players to maintain team balance.

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of total goals, number of matches, and average goals per match from the quarter-final to the final stages. In the quarter-finals, a total of 13 goals were scored across four matches, resulting in an average of 3.25 goals per match. The semi-finals produced a total of five goals from two matches, with an average of 2.5 goals per match. The final recorded three goals in a single match. Overall, the tournament generated 21 goals from seven matches, with an average of three goals per match.

Figure 2 illustrates the comparison of total goals, number of matches, and average goals per match during the quarterfinals, semifinals, third-place match, and final. In the quarterfinal stage, a relatively high number of goals was scored, with 10 goals from 4 matches. The semifinals produced 5 goals from 2 matches, while the third-place match recorded only 3 goals from a single match. The final generated 6 goals in one match, making it the most productive fixture. Overall, the 2022 Qatar World Cup produced a total of 24 goals from 8 matches, with an average of approximately 2 to 3 goals per match.

Based on the four indicators analyzed—caps, average age, total goals, average goals from the quarterfinals to the final, and total playing time during the tournament—the 2022 World Cup was predominantly composed of more experienced players who made greater contributions to their national teams and accumulated more playing minutes due to their crucial roles in securing match victories. In contrast, the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup featured players with more diverse international experience, a more mature average age, and fewer playing minutes as a result of squad rotation.

The comparison between the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup in the United States and the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar reveals differences in goal productivity patterns across tournament phases. In the 2025 Club World Cup, the average number of goals per match varied across phases, with 3.25 goals in the quarterfinals, 2.5 in the semifinals, and 3 goals in the final. This pattern indicates that clubs were able to maintain performance consistency even during decisive stages.

Meanwhile, the 2022 Qatar World Cup displayed a higher scoring trend. The average number of goals remained stable at 2.5 goals in both the quarterfinals and semifinals, increased to 3 goals in the third-place match, and rose sharply to 6 goals in the final. This condition suggests that national team matches in the final stages tend to be more open and intense, influenced by tactical strategies, competitive pressure, and the quality of key players. Overall, the Qatar tournament generated a higher total number of goals compared to the Club World Cup.

CONCLUSION

Based on the comparative analysis between the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar and the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup in the United States, it can be concluded that the two tournaments exhibit distinct participant characteristics, particularly in terms of player experience and contribution. Players competing in the 2022 World Cup tended to have a higher number of international caps, greater goal contributions, and longer playing time due to the more intense competitive demands. In contrast, the 2025 Club World Cup featured a more diverse player composition in terms of age and experience, with more frequent player rotation implemented to maintain fitness and ensure team balance. These differences indicate that international tournaments place greater emphasis on extensive playing experience, whereas club tournaments focus more on professionalism and performance consistency. Therefore, this study provides a comprehensive overview of player quality profiles across two different levels of competition.

For future research development, it is recommended to incorporate additional supporting variables such as players' physical data, match intensity, and tactical analysis to allow for a more detailed and relevant comparison of player characteristics. Further studies may also apply inferential statistical methods to examine the significance of differences among the investigated variables, thereby strengthening the robustness and measurability of the findings. For football clubs and federations, the results of this study may serve as a reference in designing player development strategies, player management, and long-term competition planning. A deeper understanding of the distinct characteristics of national team and club players can assist in determining effective talent development pathways and competition load management. It is expected that these findings will contribute positively to the advancement of player performance analysis in modern football and serve as a reference for future studies.

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