

Australia's young stars shine in draw with Paraguay

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Simon Campbell

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On a night when neither team wanted to lose, a draw seemed to suit Australia and Paraguay just fine.

A tense and occasionally tetchy 0-0 draw, played out in front of another sell-out crowd at Levi's Stadium the San Francisco Bay Area Stadium, guaranteed Australia a place in the second round of the 2026 World Cup and left Paraguay almost certain to join them thanks to the vagaries of FIFA's expanded 48-team competition.

Both nations had beaten Turkiye and lost to the USA in their previous Group B matches. And although they finished level on points, Australia clinched second place thanks to scoring more goals in the tournament.

Neither team threatened to score in this game.

The combined expected goals tally of 0.83 xG was the lowest of the tournament so far. Despite the lack of goalmouth action both teams provided the many partisan fans in the

68,827 crowd, that included at least 12,000 Australians and a sizable number of Paraguayan supporters, occasion to cheer.



Australia fans packed the San Francisco Bay Area Stadium. (Elysia Su/SoccerBayArea)

“We at no stage felt that we were playing for a draw,” said Australia coach Tony Popovic. “I thought we controlled the game quite well and were in control, and had the better opportunities.

“I think we just gave one away at the end from the edge of the box, which was a heart in the mouth moment ... but apart from that, we didn’t look like conceding a chance, and I thought we were quite dangerous in and around the box. We tried to win the game.”

Paraguay, defensive, stubborn and obdurate throughout, were reliant on Julio Enciso for most of their attacking moves. The Strasbourg midfielder was a consistent out-ball, progressing play with direct dribbles and carries. He faded a little after colliding with an advertising hoarding but was able to complete the match.

The result sees Australia qualify for the knockout round for the second World Cup in succession — they lost to eventual champion Argentina in the second round in Qatar in 2022.

Australia fans, players and coaches were jubilant after the game. The performance of two of the team's most inexperienced players provided an additional boost for Popovic who made six changes to the team that started the 2-0 loss the US on June 19.

Center back Lucas Herrington, who made his World Cup debut at 18, played with the composure of a veteran. While 23-year-old Jordan Bos underlined his burgeoning reputation with an explosive performance that saw him come closest to scoring after a storming 90th minute dribble.



Jackson Irvine #22 of Australia, Diego Gomez #8 of Paraguay, Gustavo Gomez #15 of Paraguay and Lucas Herrington #25 of Australia battle for position. (Elysia Su/SoccerBayArea)

“Age is no barrier,” Popovic said of Herrington who plays for Colorado Rapids in MLS and is rumoured to have attracted transfer attention from Liverpool and FC Barcelona. “The age doesn’t matter to us. He deserved to play, he was ready to play, he’s probably frustrated in not getting minutes against the US, which I love to see, and today he was outstanding.”

“He is a special talent ... and it’s why he was selected in the squad, not to just make up the numbers, and again we trusted this talented young man in the most important game of the three (World Cup group games).”

Normally a left back, Bos showed off his outstanding attacking potential when he switched to the right wing. Explosive, direct, but skillful, his performances in this World Cup suggest Feyenoord may have trouble keeping him in the Netherlands beyond the European summer transfer window.



Jordan Bos #5 of Australia controls the ball during the FIFA World Cup 2026 Group D match. (Elysia Su/SoccerBayArea)

“We’ve seen him play for (Belgian team) Westerlo on the right, and he did come on for us against New Zealand early in the year in a friendly, so we’ve seen that he can adapt to play on that side,” said Popovic of Bos. “It’s the best game he’s played of the three (in this tournament) by far.”

The draw left Paraguay in third place and still awaiting confirmation of their place in the second round. But with four points they should be almost certain to progress barring a freakish set of results in the remaining first round group fixtures.

“I’m satisfied with what we did in defence but Bos was making it hard for us on the right flank,” said Paraguay coach Gustavo Alfaro after the game. “Now we wait.”

Levi’s Stadium will host its last game of the 2026 FIFA World Cup on July 1 when the USMNT face Bosnia and Herzegovina in Santa Clara in the round of 32.

It has hosted a series of thrilling games so far.

[Qatar's stunning late tie with Switzerland](#); Jordan's tenacity in defeat against [Austria](#) and [Algeria](#); and [Paraguay's desperate, unlikely, backs-to-the-wall win over Turkiye](#), Levi's Stadium has seen some thrilling matches.

Hosting the US will be a suitably intense finale.

Fernando Mendoza has a job at Newmark if the NFL doesn't work out

 bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/news/2026/04/23/fernando-mendoza-nfl-newmark-real-estate-intern.html

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By [Simon Campbell](#) – Special Projects Editor, San Francisco Business Times

Story Highlights

- Fernando Mendoza interned at Newmark in commercial real estate before becoming the expected first NFL Draft pick.
- "We think he'd do phenomenal in real estate finance," Newmark executive tells the Business Times.
- Mendoza has 220,000 LinkedIn followers and partners with the Microsoft-owned company as Captain Super Connection Bro.

Fernando Mendoza is expected to be the first player selected in the NFL draft, but If things had played out differently, he would be starting his commercial real estate career in San Francisco.

"We think he'd do phenomenal in real estate finance," said [Steve Golubchik](#), executive vice chairman and president of Western Region Capital Markets at [Newmark](#).

Mendoza was not on the NFL radar when he met Golubchik at a careers event for student athletes at UC Berkeley in 2023. Golubchik attended Cal when Aaron Rodgers and Marshawn Lynch were the stars of the football team, and is a volunteer at the Cameron Institute, which prepares Berkeley student athletes for life after graduation through career development, community engagement and mental performance programs.

When Golubchik spoke about commercial real estate internships, he noticed Mendoza paying close attention.

"He was engaged from the moment that he was there, asking questions, diving in, really wanting to understand and absorb the information," Golubchik told the Business Times. "You could really tell a lot about his character pretty quick."

After starting for Cal in the 2023 season and winning the hearts of Bears fans with a heartfelt speech upon beating Stanford in the Big Game, Mendoza interned with Newmark in the

summer of 2024. He combined athletic training in Berkeley with a deep dive into spreadsheets, financial models and the CRE playbook in San Francisco.

“We had them go through a finance boot camp,” Golubchik said. “We really wanted to get them grounded on finance itself, as it relates to commercial real estate. We had presenters come in, we had analysts come in, we had a bunch of tutorials.”

Mendoza took it seriously. The Miami native originally committed to Yale before enrolling at Cal, where he graduated with a degree in business administration from the Haas Business School.

“He's got an unbelievable EQ and IQ,” Golubchik said. “He was very quick to grasp the information, but very quick to also understand how to distill it for the people around him.”

Transferrable skills

Newmark is one of a number of Bay Area companies offering internships to Cal athletes, and Golubchik noted their ability to transfer on-field skills to the business environment.

“That's part of the reason we've had great success working with student athletes,” Golubchik said. “In Fernando's position, you could just tell this guy's got phenomenal character traits.”

After finishing the internship, Mendoza transferred to Indiana University in December 2024, where he led the Hoosiers to a record-breaking, unbeaten season and the school's first national championship. After leaving Berkeley he transformed from a promising athlete into a generational one, noted by football analysts for his poise under pressure, elite passing accuracy and mental processing.

“You could tell that he had leadership traits,” Golubchik said. “A lot of the other players that were in the internship looked up to him. He helped make sure everyone was reviewing what was being discussed and on task, and he was also the one that was confident enough to raise his hand and push back and engage in dialogue.”

He also knows how to network like a CRE star. When Mendoza declared for the 2026 NFL draft in February, where he is expected to be selected first by the Las Vegas [Raiders](#), he changed his LinkedIn status to “Open to Work” and an accompanying post went viral. His LinkedIn page — which still lists his Bay Area CRE internships at Newmark as well as Pleasanton-based Acre Investment Co. — is his main social-media presence, and he now has a partnership with the Microsoft-owned company.

“What stands out about Fernando is just how intentional his approach is,” LinkedIn Chief Brand Officer Heather Freeland told the Business Times. “He's been very candid that there

was a point where he didn't know if football would ultimately be the long-term path for him. Because of that, he didn't wait until the end of his career to start thinking about what comes next — he got a head start.”

Since 2021, LinkedIn has seen a 30% increase in the number of U.S.-based athletes using the platform, Freeland said. Global stars like former tennis ace Rafael Nadal are active on the platform promoting various companies and investments, while seven-time NFL champion Tom Brady has 143,000 followers. Formula 1 driver Lewis Hamilton has 645,000 LinkedIn followers.

Mendoza has appeared in ads promoting LinkedIn with comedian Guillermo Rodriguez, adopting the persona of a professional networking superhero, Captain Super Connection Bro. He has 220,000 LinkedIn followers and is part of a new generation of athletes using the platform to build their brand.

“Fernando represents a broader shift toward athletes building their professional identity earlier in their careers. For us, this partnership is about recognizing and supporting that, and elevating a voice that's already using the platform with real intention,” Freeland said.

Mendoza will face a lot of scrutiny as the No. 1 overall pick, but if he ever wants to get out of the spotlight, he won't need to use LinkedIn. There is a job in San Francisco commercial real estate waiting for him.

"Newmark is an open platform to him, to the extent that he ever wanted to come back and sink his teeth into it," Golubchik said.

Vincius and Brazil kept quiet by Munoz and Colombia

Soccer Bay Area soccerbayarea.com/2024/07/03/vincius-and-brazil-kept-quiet-by-munoz-and-colombia

Simon Campbell

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Vinicius Junior began the 2024 Copa America on the shoulder of greatness.

The Brazil forward was the star performer in Real Madrid's Champions League and La Liga double.

Yet at the conclusion of the Copa America group stages a season that had looked destined to propel him toward a possible first Ballon d'Or is stuttering.

Brazil played Colombia at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara on Tuesday. The match was for first place in Group D, and a chance to face off against Panama in the quarter-final.

Colombia had won its opening games of the tournament: 2-1 against Paraguay and 3-0 against Costa Rica. Brazil, meanwhile, struggled, drawing 0-0 with Costa Rica before a redemptive 4-1 victory over Paraguay.

Vinicius performed like a world beater in that game, scoring twice, terrorizing the Paraguayan defense with speed, skill and a rainbow flick. His first goal is one of the best of the tournament so far, a team goal that saw him involved first on the left wing and finally applying the finish in the inside right position.

So, the stage was set for Vinicius to guarantee Brazil's progression.

A win for either side would have seen them top the group, while a draw would see Brazil qualify in second place, regardless of how Costa Rica got on against Paraguay.

But within the opening minute, it was clear that Colombia, on a 25-game unbeaten run, was going to provide Brazil with their strongest test of the tournament so far.

Colombia right-back Daniel Munoz had the task of attempting to stop Vinicius. The Crystal Palace player began the game by kicking his opponent and spent the rest of the game trying to get close enough to continue doing so.



Colombia, set up in a 4-2-3-1, did a good job of keeping the ball away from Brazil's left side.

Despite some early Colombian pressure, Brazil took the lead on 12 minutes through a spectacular free kick from FC Barcelona's forward Raphinha.

Colombia thought they had equalized when Davison Sanchez headed in a free kick that was ruled out for offside after a VAR check.

That Munoz had Colombia captain, James Rodriguez, a player notoriously averse to the defensive side of the game in front of him, underlined the task facing the Palace man. Handling the world's premier player was going to be a solo mission.

And yet, he had the better of the opening exchanges, getting close to his vaunted opponent as soon as possible, disturbing Vinicius' rhythm and minimizing the space for the Brazilian to utilize his blistering speed.

A harsh yellow card on seven minutes, which means Vinicius will miss Brazil's next game, may have removed some of the starman's shine. Aside from one dribble, Brazil's talisman was relatively quiet for much of the first half, with much of the credit going to Munoz.

Then with three minutes before halftime Vinicius had the chance to square up his opponent, dribbling past him and luring Munoz into a lunge inside the Colombia box that looked like a clear penalty. Yet, after some deliberation and a VAR check the Venezuelan referee, Jesus Valenzuela, awarded a corner amid much consternation from the Brazilian players and fans.



Vinícius Júnior of Brazil battling with Davinson Sánchez of Colombia during a Copa America 2024 Group D match between Colombia and Brazil at Levi's Stadium on July 2, 2024, in Santa Clara, California. (Robin Alam / ISI Photos)

CONMEBOL would later issue a video admitting the penalty should have been awarded.

The non-foul foul was the one time Vinicius had the beating of Munoz in the first 45 minutes. And Munoz soon turned the tables.

Two minutes into first half stoppage time Munoz scored a deserved equalizer for Colombia, racing onto a Jhon Cordoba through ball, he finished emphatically past Alisson in the Brazil goal.

In the second half, Vinicius, perhaps reacting to Munoz's close attention to that, adopted a deeper position, often waiting for the ball ten yards deeper. The tactic seemed to be to stretch the pitch and increase his space to run into.

Munoz, though, appeared liberated rather than intimidated by Vinicius' ploy and took advantage of his opponent's remoteness to join Colombia's increasingly frequent attacks. As the second half progressed, Colombia looked more likely to score, going close on a couple of occasions.

The game finished 1-1, allowing both teams to progress to the quarterfinals, and it was played with real intensity.

Rodriguez, who had clipped the Brazilian bar in the first half, was full of invention and creation. It might be ten years since his career zenith at the 2014 World Cup, but James has created 11 chances so far at this Copa, more than any other player. When he is on it, he remains a supremely gifted and elegant forward.

After Brazil's win against Paraguay, Vinicius voiced his dissatisfaction with all things Conmebol, critiquing the South American federation for the small pitches being used at the tournament—100 by 64 meters is the absolute minimum allowed—the quality of refereeing and general disorganization.

As the game reached its conclusion, Colombia had the better chances. A victory would not have been undeserved. They will face Panama in the quarterfinals, while Brazil faces Group C winners Uruguay.

The winners of those ties would face off in the semi-finals, and if Brazil and Colombia were to meet again, the 70,971 fans in attendance at Levi's Stadium would have few complaints.

Although Munoz kept Vinicius quiet here, the Real Madrid forward has enjoyed a spectacular season. A starring role in his team's Champions League and La Liga double has seen many pundits tipping him as a potential winner of the Ballon d'Or in October.

Indeed, with Kylian Mbappe playing behind a broken nose and inside a mask and Jude Bellingham masking poor performances with [“Who else?” wonder-strikes at Euro 2024](#), the race to be named the world's best player appears quite open at the moment.

Brazil will surely need Vinicius if they are to win the Copa this year. Whether they will get past Uruguay without him is a big question.

One thing that can't be denied after this contest however, the £6.9 million (\$8.7 million) Crystal Palace paid to sign Munoz from Belgian side Racing Genk in January looks like a ridiculous bargain. His Premier League displays under new Palace coach Oliver Glasner have earned widespread praise.

Vinicius certainly appeared impressed. At the final whistle, he embraced Munoz, and the two shared a few words with Liverpool's Luis Diaz.

Keeping Vinicius quiet for 90 minutes underlies Munoz's quality and also that the race for the 2024 Ballon d'Or is not a foregone conclusion.

On this evidence, Brazil, beaten finalists in the last Copa, may have to wait a little longer before reclaiming the title they last held in 2019.