

Countdown to 2026 World Cup begins; pressure is on US team to improve

BY MICHELLE KAUFMAN
mkaufman@miamiherald.com

Soccer is making big headlines in the United States lately with the kick-off of the Club World Cup at Hard Rock Stadium on Saturday and celebrations in 11 cities across the country on Wednesday commemorating one year to go to the 2026 World Cup.

All 16 World Cup host cities (11 in the United States, three in Mexico and two in Canada) unveiled countdown clocks as part of the festivities. The Miami clock was revealed at the Perez Art Museum (PAMM) in downtown in a ceremony that included city and county officials, the Miami World Cup host committee, and singer Marc Anthony.

The clocks will count down to the stroke of midnight on June 11, 2026, when the tournament opens in Mexico City.

The first 13 of 48 teams have already qualified, including co-hosts Canada, Mexico and the USA, who get automatic entry. The way things are going for Team USA of late, coach Mauricio Pochettino and the U.S. Soccer Federation are surely grateful for the automatic bid.

The U.S. team lost 4-0 to Switzerland in a friendly in Nashville on Tuesday night, with all four goals conceded in the first half. It was the fourth loss in a row for Team USA.

Among the headlines following the game: USMNT humiliated by Switzerland 4-0.

USMNT thrashed 4-0 by Switzerland in final Gold Cup tune up.

First half debacle dooms hapless USMNT in 4-0 friendly loss to Switzerland.



PEDRO PORTAL pportal@miamiherald.com

Miami-Dade County elected officials joined singer Marc Anthony and co-chairman Rodney Barreto as they unveiled the kick off countdown clock, during the 'One Year Out' celebration at the Pérez Art Museum Miami on Wednesday.

Former U.S. national team stars Alexi Lalas and Landon Donovan, now Fox Sports commentators and podcasters, have not minced words in their analysis of Team USA, questioning the heart, work ethic and commitment of some players.

Pochettino, an Argentine who was hired last Fall from Tottenham Hot-spurs to lead the American squad, has tried to instill more passion and pride in the national badge.

“We’re going through a period right now where this team is being looked at in a critical sense, and I think fairly so,” Lalas said on a conference call marking the year to go to the World Cup. “I think more concerning is a possible apathy that has crept in towards this team. And I

never thought if you would ask me, back in 1994, what the summer of 2025 a year away from the World Cup in 2026 would look like that this would be what I would come up with.”

Both Donovan and Lalas stressed that there is pressure on the U.S. team to rise to the occasion.

“I also don’t want to let this generation off the hook,” Lalas said. “This is a generation that, over those last 30 plus years, everybody has worked to make sure that they have everything that they possibly need in terms of the opportunities and the resources that they have.

“And with that comes higher expectations, and I do think fair expectations, and so whoever ultimately is on that field come next

summer, when that whistle blows, I hope that they recognize the opportunity, and I hope that they recognize the responsibility to further the game.”

Donovan said the team’s highest profile Europe-based players who have been considered locks to make the World Cup squad might be replaced by hungrier, lesser-known players if they are not careful.

“When you put the U.S. jersey on, or you get invited to a camp, it is a massive responsibility,” Donovan said, adding that he was moved by seeing 30,000 U.S. military members singing the Star Spangled Banner at a 2006 game in Germany. “That’s the level of dedication I think fans want to see.”

The last time the United States hosted a men’s World Cup was 1994. Lalas said the world will see next year how much soccer progress has been made in this country.

“I think the world is going to be pleasantly surprised by how far we have come in it’s still a relatively short period of time, but we still have a

ways to go,” Lalas said. “A World Cup is, for lack of a better word, this circus that comes to town with a huge tent. That tent has gotten bigger, and we want to make sure that we are as welcoming and accommodating as possible, because we recognize that a lot of people are going to come in and maybe again, as far as we’ve come, they’re going to be some people that taste test, and we hope that they get a little taste of it, and they want more, because the circus will leave town. The legacy that it leaves, that’s what’s important.”

Other teams who have punched their tickets to the World Cup are defending champion Argentina, first-time qualifiers Jordan and Uzbekistan, as well as Australia, Brazil, Ecuador, Iran, Japan, Korea Republic and New Zealand.

The remaining 35 teams will be confirmed by March 2026, when all the regional qualifying tournaments have concluded.

World Cup tickets will go on sale to the public in the coming months. Select ticket-inclusive hospitality packages are already available. Additional hospitality packages, including for matches in Canada and Mexico, are set to go on sale in July. Fans can learn more at FIFA.com/tickets.

COMMENTARY

No history at Oakmont was hardly a problem for Spaun

BY JASON MACKEY,
PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE
The Tribune Content Agency

PITTSBURGH

J.J. Spaun had seen the chatter on social media about Oakmont Country Club, site of the 125th U.S. Open. He knew the course would pack a punch ... and might knock a few of the best golfers in the world to the mat. The 34-year-old Los Angeles native also didn’t care.

Ignorance is bliss? Yeah, something like that.

As the lid lifted on the third major of the season, on a course Spaun had never played before this week, he breezed his way to 4-under 66 and the early lead courtesy of his first bogey-free round at a major.

Not bad for someone playing in just his second U.S. Open.

“I don’t know if that freed me up in any aspect,” Spaun said. “I just tried to take what the course gave me.”

While the course gave others fits, it produced highlights for Spaun, who has won exactly once on the PGA Tour - the 2022 Valero Texas Open - but has seen his game round into form with four top-10 finishes in 2025.

Starting at No. 10, Spaun chipped in from 20 feet, 2 inches for a birdie that he said set the tone for his round. He stopped by the Church Pews on No. 4 but exited with a bad-angle second shot that he jokingly said might’ve been aided by playing T-ball.

In all, Spaun authored



ANDREW REDINGTON Getty Images via TNS

In his first competition at Oakmont Country Club, J.J. Spaun looked like a seasoned veteran on Thursday, shooting a bogey-free 4-under-par 66 for the first-round lead at the U.S. Open.

just the eighth bogey-free round throughout U.S. Open history at Oakmont while also posting the lowest inward nine score (31).

Spaun, who has finished in the top 25 six times in 16 starts this season, finished with 3.94 strokes gained putting while reaching 12 of 18 greens in regulation, an opening-round masterpiece that made him the talk of the course.

“I was kind of nervous,” Spaun said. “All you’ve been hearing about is how hard this place is. It’s hard to not hear the noise. I tried to harness that, the nerves, the anxiety. It heightened my focus and made me swing better.”

These stories happen all the time at majors. A player nobody expects to do much steps out front with a terrific round, then often times falters late.

Maybe that happens here, though for Spaun’s sake, I certainly hope not. He’s humble and easy to like. It also appears that his game could really be rounding into form after a few near-misses.

Back in January, Spaun finished tied for third at the Sony Open in Hawaii. Less than two months later, Spaun shot an opening-round 64 and finished tied for second with a 17-under 267 at the Cognizant Classic in The Palm Beaches.

In mid-March, Spaun was the 54-hole leader at The Players Championship and finished tied with Rory McIlroy after four rounds, forcing a three-hour aggregate playoff. The next day, Spaun put his tee shot into the water on No. 17, stumbled to a triple-bogey, and lost to McIlroy.

It was obviously frustrating. But Spaun also said being oh-so-close has fueled him and given him confidence at Oakmont.

“I was consistently right there,” Spaun said. “Everyone knows the more you put yourself there, the better results you’re going to get. You’re eventually going to turn one of those close calls into a win.

“There’s gonna be a lot of pressure this week. Hopefully I can rely on those experiences.”

Due to his sparkling opening round, Spaun has become the hunted, no longer the hunter. It’s a place that used to make him nervous and uncomfortable. But over time, Spaun has learned to embrace being out front.

“You don’t want to go home thinking, ‘What if I didn’t embrace this? Who knows what I would have done?’” Spaun said. “That’s what all the great players want. If you want to be a great player, that’s the route you need to go.”

Classified

BUY.

SELL.

classifieds.kentucky.com

859.231.3100

VISA

MARCA

DISCOVER

AMERICAN EXPRESS

Legals

Legals & Public Notices

NOTICE OF HEARING FAYETTE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

The FAYETTE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION will hold a public hearing at John D Price Administration Building, 450 Park Place, Lexington, KY on Monday, June 23rd at 5:30 p.m. for the purpose of hearing public comments and complaints regarding a proposed resolution requesting the levy of an occupational license tax (OLT) of three-quarters of one percent (0.75%) on individuals residing and working or persons conducting business within Fayette County and to explain the reasons for the proposal.

The current OLT rate is one-half of one percent (0.5%) and produced revenue in the most recent full fiscal year (2024) of \$52,839,730.

The general areas to which the additional revenue is to be allocated are as follows: board initiatives; staff raises and instruction.

The Attorney General is of the opinion that public notice and hearing are required. This advertisement and the information contained within has been published in accordance with that determination.
IPL0239623
Jun 8-9, 15-16 2025

PUBLIC SALE

Available 6/26/25 9am. Units available for public bidding will be announced on the block. Public bidders must arrive between 8 & 8:30am, show photo ID, & pay a refundable \$1,000. ADESA- 672 Blue Sky Pkwy., Lexington, KY 40509
Regional Acceptance Corp: 3FA6P-0CD6KR236536, 19 Fusion, Westlake Financial Services: 1GAZGYF-G3F1199563, 15 Chevrolet Express 3500
IPL0240690
Jun 15 2025

Animals

Dogs

Golden Doodle pups, males, black, blonde, 1st shots, vet check, (859) 640-3529.

Malzer puppies Designer puppies for sale, m/f shots/wormed. Adorable. Call 276-566-7222

Announcements

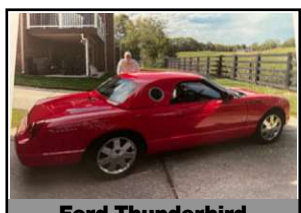
Announcements

Friendship Flea Market Friendship, Indiana

June 14-22, daily 9AM, 500 vendor spaces 812-667-5645
www.friendshipfleamarket.com

Automotive

Autos for Sale



Ford Thunderbird 2003

Call Bob
12.5 K miles
(859)-940-4505 \$31K

KENTUCKY.COM

Real Estate

For Rent

931 Edgewater water dive lexington ky 40502

1 bdr apt, appliances furnished, great location, beautiful view
859 963 8858 \$1,000/month

Real Estate Misc.

For sale. Indoor tandem crypt. Blue Grass Memorial Garden. Heated, A/C, 2nd row, \$15,000 firm.
502-542-4146

Recruitment

Employment

General Maintenance Worker

Duties to include:

- Perform minor fixes such as repairing broken locks, filling gaps on walls etc.
- Check control panels and electrical wiring to identify issues
- Install appliances and equipment; assist in property repairs
- Conduct maintenance tasks such as replacing light bulbs
- Inspect and troubleshoot equipment and systems (e.g. ventilation)
- Check functionality of safety systems (e.g. fire alarm)
- Collaborate with workers and other professionals during renovations/routine maintenance (plumbers, HVAC repair professionals, etc.)
- Report all issues to the maintenance manager immediately; troubleshoot possible resolutions
- Other duties as assigned

Full time, 48 hours/week, benefits eligible including medical, dental, vision, short term disability, and basic life insurance after 90 days of continuous employment. Hourly rate range \$18-\$20 per hour. Option to participate in 401k plan after 60 days of continuous employment with a 4% max employer match after 6 months of continuous employment. Opportunity for internal development and growth within the organization.
Resumes should be sent to: equinejobslex@gmail.com

HELP WANTED

Elmwood Stock Farm LLC, is hiring a full-time Harvest Manager in Georgetown, KY. Duties: plan and direct daily harvest, lead field harvest teams, and update produce logs. 60 months of experience in harvest mgmt required. Send resume to Ann Stone at ann@elmwoodstockfarm.com

Service Directory

Home & Business Improvement

Commonwealth Construction/ Handyman Services

859.699.9949
Do All Company-For All Your Needs
Licensed,Registered,Insured ,Bonded