

Restructuring for a Biennial FIFA World Cup

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Advantages of the restructuring:

- Biennial World Cups
- Absolutely No Draws
- Indiscriminate Qualification (rather than by confederate allocation)
- Maximum 4 game qualification process for teams ranked 1-93
- Maximum 8 game qualification process for teams ranked 94 or worse
- Increased significance of the FIFA Ranking System
- No such thing as international “friendlies”

Flaws of the Current Structure of the FIFA World Cup

In the history of the FIFA World Cup, there has been a consistent desire to increase the frequency of world cups to a biennial rather than a quadrennial format. The main reason for which this is impossible is due to the current qualification process which takes longer than three years when we consider the draws and matches together. The current format of the qualification process is flawed for the following reasons:

- Currently, the qualification is confederation based. Each confederation is granted an allocation of a set number of world cup entrants and all associations within the confederation have to qualify by playing matches exclusively within their confederation. So it must be decided by FIFA as to how many entrants are allocated for each confederation, prior to the qualification process. This is flawed for the simple reason that FIFA does not have the for-knowledge to assume how many competitive associations exist in each confederation at a given time. **The qualification process simply cannot be confederation discriminatory.**
- The current qualification process for the FIFA World Cup is **way too long.**
- The staging of the FIFA World Cup and its qualification process currently includes three draws; the original qualifying draw, the play-off draw and the draw for the world cup finals. This is flawed, there should be **absolutely no draws involved in the FIFA World Cup.**

- Currently, there is little or no significance to the FIFA/Coca-Cola World Ranking. The ranking only has significance in determining seeding and pods for the draws. This is flawed because the ranking system has no real significance. **If we have a ranking it should be significant.** The ranking should be used to determine the whole qualification process for the FIFA World Cup, and it should do so in a manner that eliminates the need for any draws whatsoever.
- Currently, other than the World Cup and the Confederation Cup, international friendlies are the only form of competition that FIFA operates amongst its member associations. These matches are insignificant because they only determine an association's standing in the FIFA Ranking system which has no significance (for the reason stated above). This is flawed for the reason that **all international matches should grant the competing teams a reward for their competition.** If the FIFA World Cup was restructured the way we suggest here, then the matches we refer to as international "friendlies" would not be so friendly after all because they would have significance in determining the ranking, World Cup and qualification process.

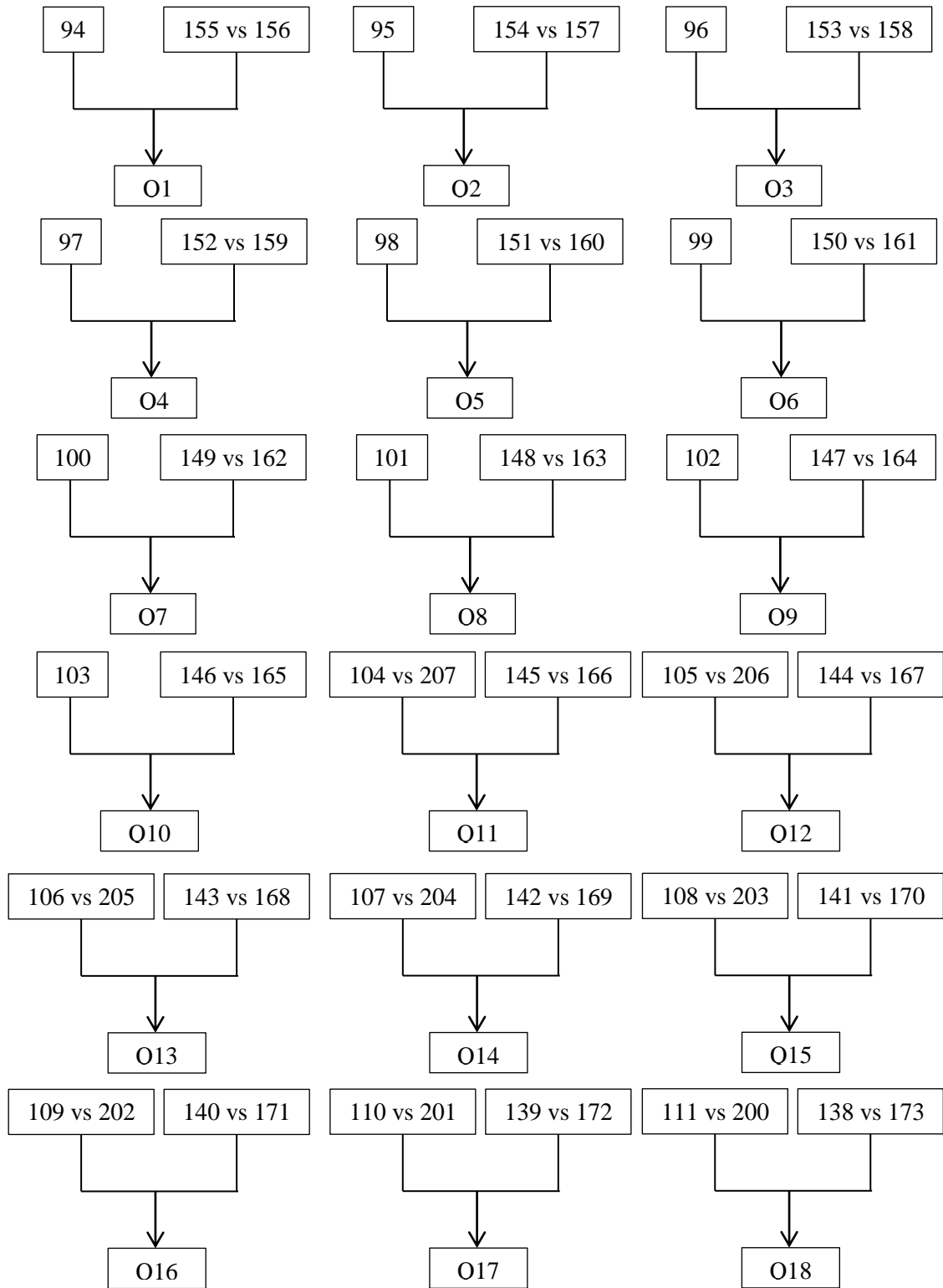
These reasons for which the FIFA World Cup is flawed are exhaustive as there are many deficiencies to the current format that will all be resolved by simply changing to a new modern format of the FIFA World Cup that involves three stages; Pre-Qualification, Qualification and Finals. The three stages are all shown below and all have a bracket-type structure based upon the FIFA/Coca-Cola World Ranking. The FIFA ranking system ranks the national teams of FIFA member associations from 1 to 207.

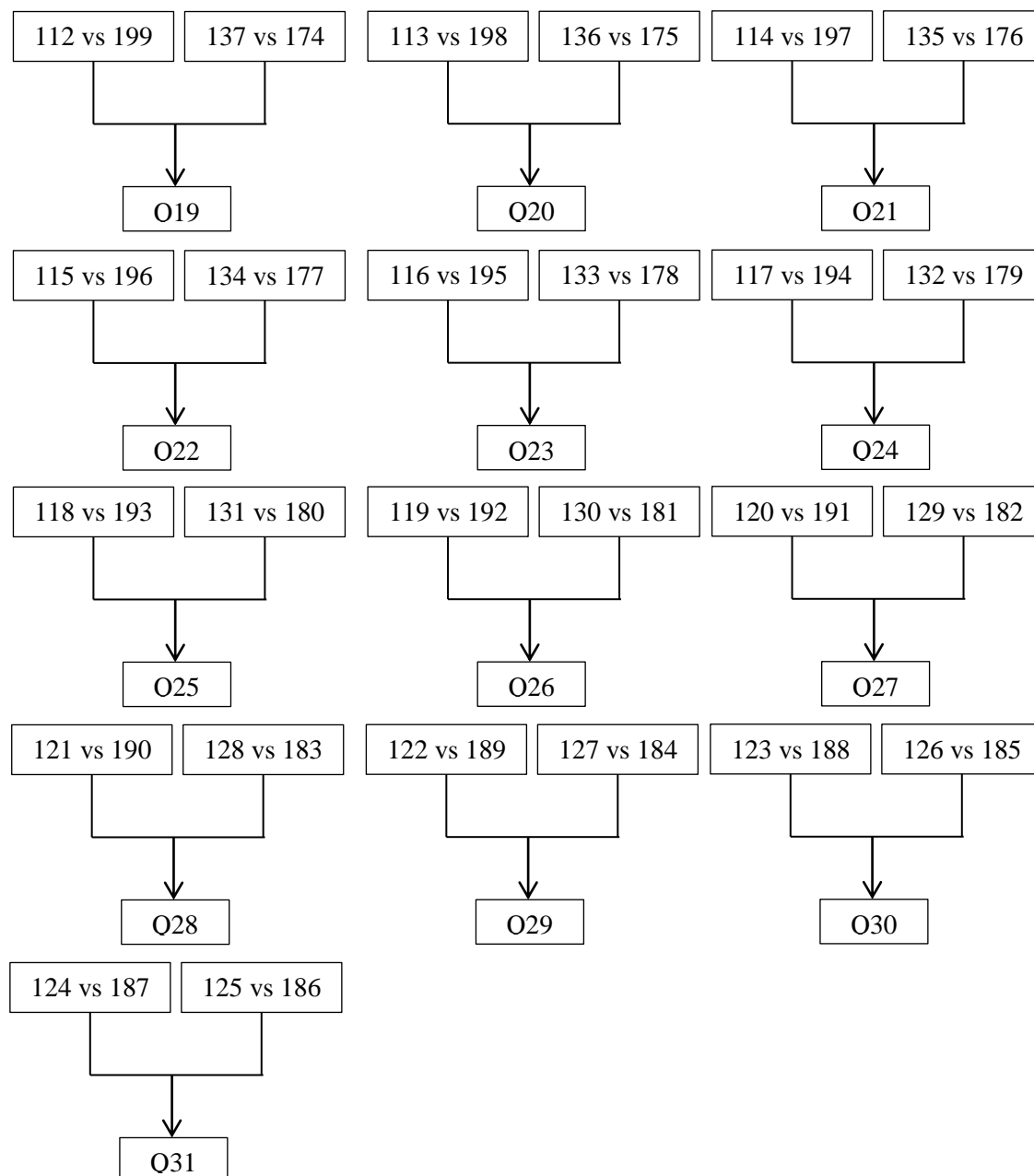
(For the purposes of the writing of this format we assume that the host nation of a given world cup has its national team removed from the ranking due to automatic qualification. This team only enters the format in the third stage, the Finals Stage. This format also assumes that the host team is ranked between 1 and 93. This format also assumes that all 207 ranked national teams have the right to compete in the FIFA World Cup.)

Pre-Qualification Stage (for teams ranked 94-207 in the FIFA Ranking)

This stage decides 31 national teams that will advance to the next stage, the Qualification Stage. This stage consists of 114 teams ranked from 94 to 207. This stage is broken into four pods of national teams with rankings of 94-124 (31 teams), 125-155 (31 teams), 156-186 (31 teams) and 187-207 (21 teams). These pods are used to seed a pre-qualification format that is structured in the brackets illustrated below (where the bracket structure dictates that each bracket should have one team from the first pod playing one team from the fourth pod and one team from the second pod playing one team from the third pod, and the winners of each contest play one another). The total pre-qualification has 31 brackets which lead to 31 advancing teams labelled Q1 to Q31. Due to the peculiar number of teams in pre-qualification there are three teams in the first 10 brackets and four teams in the other 21 brackets. The first ten brackets all have a team which gets a bye to the second round of pre-qualification, where the best ranked teams (94 to 103) are the teams with a bye. The other 21 brackets all have a simple four team bracket format. The separating of teams into differing brackets is done with an emphasis of having the most even distribution of competitive teams per bracket.

The pre-qualification brackets are illustrated on the next two pages.





This is the conclusion of the pre-qualification stage of the format. The 31 teams labelled Q1 to Q31 enter the qualification stage which is described below.

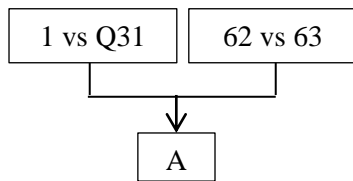
Qualification Stage (for teams ranked 1-93 in the FIFA Ranking and Q1-Q31 from Pre-Qualification)

I remind the reader that the host country of the FIFA World Cup is excluded from the FIFA Ranking in order to establish this qualification process. This stage includes a total of 124 teams which are divided into four pods as is indicated in the illustration below. The teams ranked 1 to 31 are in the first pod/row of the illustration. The teams ranked 32 to 62 are in the second pod/row of the illustration. The teams

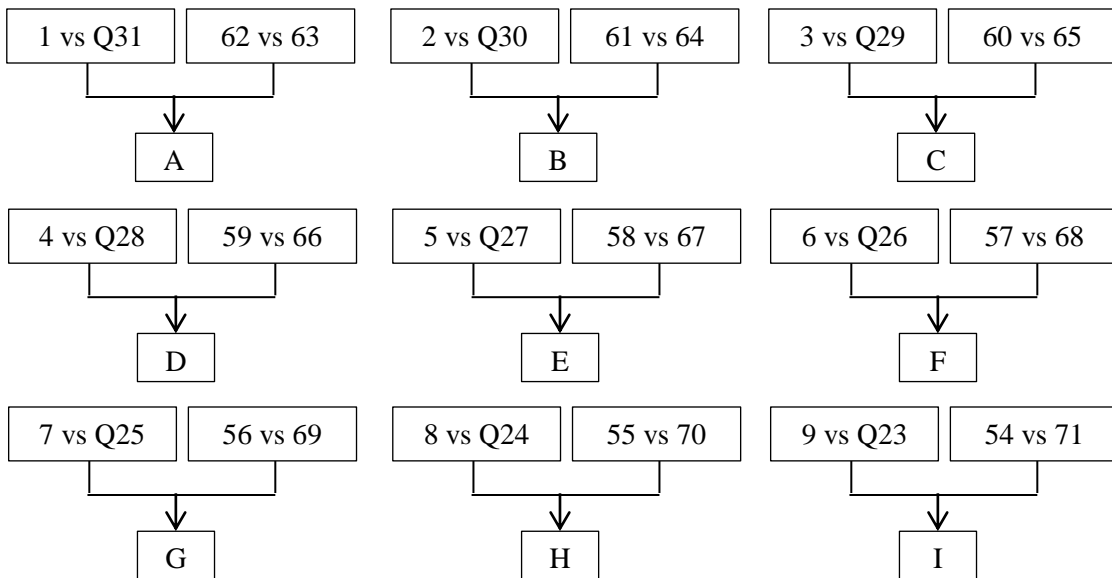
ranked 63 to 93 are in the third pod/row of the illustration. The teams Q1 to Q31 (from pre-qualification) are in the fourth pod/row of the illustration.

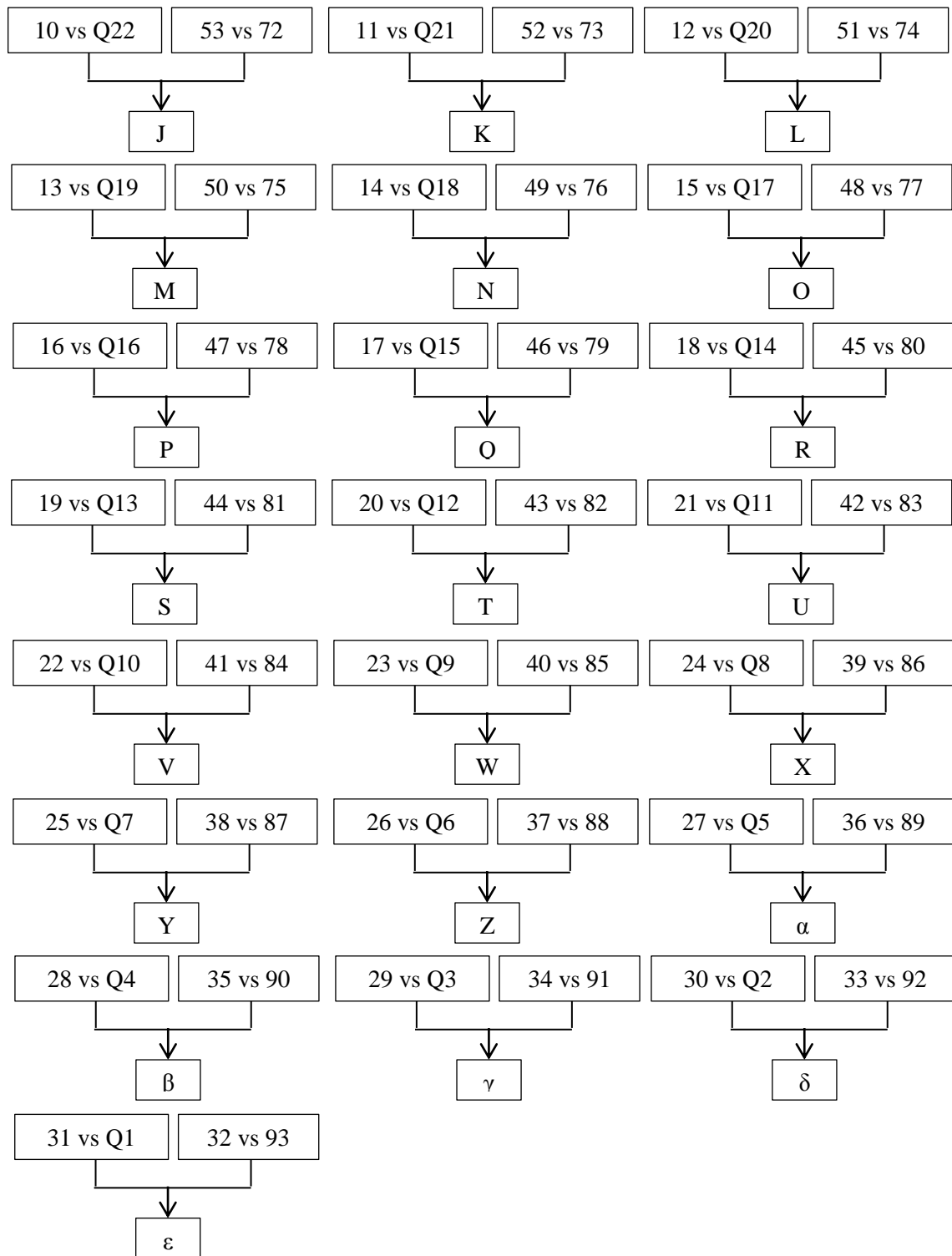
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
62	61	60	59	58	57	56	55	54	53	52	51	50	49	48	47	46	45	44	43	42	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32
63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93
Q31	Q30	Q29	Q28	Q27	Q26	Q25	Q24	Q23	Q22	Q21	Q20	Q19	Q18	Q17	Q16	Q15	Q14	Q13	Q12	Q11	Q10	Q9	Q8	Q7	Q6	Q5	Q4	Q3	Q2	Q1

With the above illustration of the four pods we may easily select each column as a bracket in the qualification process. For example, the first column has teams 1, 62, 63 and Q31. The bracket will thus be formed by having the first team (team 1) play against the fourth team (team Q31) and the second team (team 62) play against the third team (team 63). The bracket is finalized by having the winners also play one another to determine the bracket champion that qualifies for the final stage of the FIFA World Cup. The Bracket champion is assigned a title (team A) for the finals stage of the FIFA World Cup. Our example of the first column (the bracket that determines team A) is illustrated below.



All other brackets of the qualification stage are similarly determined, and each has an assigned label for the bracket champion (31 teams labelled A to Z and α to ε). The full set of brackets for the qualification stage is illustrated below and on the following page of this document.





This is the conclusion of the qualification stage of the format. The 31 teams labelled A to Z and α to ε will enter the finals stage which is described below.

Finals Stage (for the 32 teams including the host and the teams from the qualification stage labelled A to Z and α to ϵ that have qualified for the FIFA World Cup)

It is a matter of historical convention that is the reason for which the finals stage of the FIFA World Cup always has a draw for the finals stage. This is wrong. The FIFA World Cup should have no such draw, so we propose a format of the finals tournament that directly follows the qualification and pre-qualification stages of the tournament that we have proposed thus far. Why do we believe so strongly that no draw is appropriate, for the simple reason that the teams which are ranked the highest in the FIFA ranking should be granted the right to a reward for their superior competitive status. This reasoning is no different from that of the current draw format of FIFA which seeds the highest ranked teams. The current FIFA format has the unnecessary inclusion of a draw, whereas our modernized structure does not.

The finals stage is determined in our format with the simple seeding of the 32 qualified teams into four pods as is illustrated below. The determination of the pods follows the simple logic that would best distribute the competitive teams in the most even manner.

Host	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
ϵ	δ	γ	β	α	Z	Y	X
P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W
O	N	M	L	K	J	I	H

With the above format we have 8 groups of 4 teams each. The groups are shown as columns in the illustration. For example, the second group has teams A, δ , Q and N. This would have the final tournament format of games played in the group as follows:

Match Day 1: A vs δ and Q vs N

Match Day 2: A vs Q and δ vs N

Match Day 3: A vs N and δ vs Q

The logic of this format is simple. The most competitive team (in the group) plays the least competitive team on match day one. The most competitive team then plays the third most competitive team on match day two. Finally, the most competitive team plays the second most competitive team on the third match day. This group format naturally continues beyond the group stage in the typical structure of a FIFA World Cup. This concludes the Finals Stage of our restructured biennial format.

(In the Finals Stage there is one option for a change to the format, consideration can be given to the possibility of interchanging the second and third pods so that the most competitive team plays the second most competitive on the second match day of group competition.)

Final Remarks & Summary

One might remark that this type of logically oriented system is too “all-determining”. If one thinks such then they should consider the alternative, the current system of multiple draws. Would you rather allow FIFA the right to perform a draw for which they might be the determining factor themselves? In the end, even with the format I have suggested there is no way possible to predict the outcomes ahead of time, there are too many outcomes to predict. The beauty of this format is that one could *in principle* perform such a calculation or prediction ahead of time if one so desires. The whole bracket of the FIFA World Cup finals competition would be made available to the fans of the game (the financial providers of the game) immediately after the publishing of the original FIFA/Coca-Cola World Ranking that would be used for the pre-qualification stage. This ranking publication need only be finalized about a year prior to the staging of the FIFA World Cup finals tournament because the whole pre-qualification + qualification process would only require 4-5 months to complete. Imagine a full bracket of the FIFA World Cup made available to the fans prior to the qualifying stages.

Obviously, the main advantage of this format is the reduction of time required for the qualifying/draw process. By eliminating draws and reducing the qualification to a 5 month time period, the whole qualification process of the FIFA World Cup needn't be longer than 1year. This allows for the FIFA World Cup to be staged biennially. It goes without saying that **in our modernized world of the information age we could easily increase the frequency of world cup events to a biennial format**. FIFA must be awakened from its dogmatic quadrennial slumber. In the original era of FIFA when the World Cup was first staged, the FIFA World Cup was a quadrennial format for good reasons. Back then (the 1930's) there was no access to air transportation, little or no access to information technology, fewer competing associations, etc. Things have changed drastically since then, and over the years people have argued that the time had come to change the FIFA World Cup to a biennial format. It is only recently that we can confirm these suspicions and that the time has actually come for a biennial format.

Have a nice day.