



# GROUP H

## POLAND

10

WORLD  
RANKING

Poland captain Robert Lewandowski scored 16 goals in World Cup qualifying matches, setting a European record for most goals in one qualifying campaign.

## COLOMBIA

16

WORLD  
RANKING

James Rodriguez netted six goals in five games and won the Golden Boot award at the 2014 World Cup, where Colombia advanced to the quarterfinals for the first time.

## SENEGAL

28

WORLD  
RANKING

Senegal coach Aliou Cisse was the captain of Senegal's 2002 World Cup team, which reached the quarterfinals in its only other World Cup appearance.

## JAPAN

60

WORLD  
RANKING

Just two months before the World Cup, Japan fired coach Vahid Halilhodzic and replaced him with Akira Nishino, the Japanese soccer association's technical director.

# JUN MARQUES DAVIDSON

## WHEN FOOTBALL BECOMES AN AVENUE

To Japanese footballer Jun Marques Davidson, religion always seemed far too complicated. The rules. The regulations. The structure.

Raised in Tokyo, Japan, he had little interest in Christ, even though his mother was a follower of Christ. Instead, he had his sights set on one thing: football.

There were early signs he could be special, and at 15 years old he left Japan to play football at an international school in England. Success, money and fame became his primary drive in life. But it was in England, while he was alone, barely able to communicate, that he realized there may be more to life than football.

"It was tough to be alone in another country," Davidson said. "But it was there that I began to understand my own



need for God. I started attending church on my own and learned more about what it meant to be a follower of Christ. I committed my life to Him and found a peace and confidence I had not felt before. My purpose for going to England had been for football, but His purpose was to shape me for my future."

After England, Davidson and his family moved to California, where he was surrounded by other strong believers on the team. It was as if God was bringing him to maturation after the start of faith he had in England.

"Again, God was shaping me by providing Godly friends, fellowship and encouragement," Davidson said.

Following schooling, Davidson moved back to Japan to play professional football — and it was a clash of two worlds. When he left Japan four years prior, his heart and mind were in a completely different state. He was selfishly driven. When he returned four years later, he was becoming more of a selfless person, and he wanted football to be an opportunity to impact others who had hardly heard of Jesus Christ.

"I think God created me as a football player to do something greater, to serve God," Davidson shared. "There are not many followers of Christ in Japan, so it is very hard to follow and study and have the solid faith in Christ. I believe God took me to England and to California to put me in a situation and environment where I saw a lot of followers of Christ and people with great faith. And so that helped me inside as a person to grow and learn more about God."

His return home made him realize how much he had changed, how much work God had done in him, and how much God wanted to do something through him.

"Since giving my life to God, my perspective has changed," Davidson said. "I began to think about how I could use my role to share my faith in Christ. God was showing me that my career was less about me and all about Him."

Once he moved back to Japan, the defensive midfielder's performance was steady. He spent his next few seasons playing in Japan, followed by playing in Canada and the United States, then a season in Thailand, then back to the United States.

"Serving God through sport is important to me," he said. "I try to share the Gospel, serve others, and be an example. It's not always easy when the competition gets tough, but even then I seek forgiveness and pray God will use me. My career is in His hands and I seek to follow Him wherever that may lead me."

Davidson's surrender to a much better Author of his story has led to both purpose and peace.

