

## Unofficial Football World Champions 2011 UPDATE

Japan began 2011 as Unofficial Football World Champions, having taken the UFWC title from Argentina in the previous October. The Blue Samurai took the title into the Asian Cup Finals in Qatar, and successfully defended it all the way to the final, where they beat Australia to become official Asian champions as well as unofficial world champions. The devastating earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan in March 2011 placed football into perspective and put the UFWC on hold. But Japan recovered, and football resumed, with the Blue Samurai extending their reign as champions to 16 games. Finally, in November, the unofficial title was prised out of Japanese hands by one of the most unlikely champions in UFWC history – North Korea. There were 15 title matches, 40 goals and two champions in 2011. This update, to accompany the *Unofficial Football World Champions* book, covers some of the highlights. For more info visit the UFWC website at [www.ufwc.co.uk](http://www.ufwc.co.uk).

### 2011 RESULTS

839	09/01/2011	JAPAN	1-1	JORDAN		Doha	AC
840	13/01/2011	SYRIA	1-2	JAPAN		Doha	AC
841	17/01/2011	SAUDI ARABIA	0-5	JAPAN		Al Rayyan	AC
842	21/01/2011	JAPAN	3-2	QATAR		Doha	AC
843	25/01/2011	JAPAN*	2-2	SOUTH KOREA	*PEN	Doha	AC
844	29/01/2011	JAPAN	1-0	AUSTRALIA		Doha	AC
845	01/06/2011	JAPAN	0-0	PERU		Niigata	FR
846	07/06/2011	JAPAN	0-0	CZECH REPUBLIC		Kanagawa	FR
847	10/08/2011	JAPAN	3-0	SOUTH KOREA		Sapporo	FR
848	02/09/2011	JAPAN	1-0	NORTH KOREA		Saitama	WQ
849	06/09/2011	UZBEKISTAN	1-1	JAPAN		Tashkent	WQ
850	07/10/2011	JAPAN	1-0	VIETNAM		Kobe	FR
851	11/10/2011	JAPAN	8-0	TAJIKISTAN		Osaka	WQ
852	11/11/2011	TAKIJISTAN	0-4	JAPAN		Dushanbe	WQ
853	15/11/2011	NORTH KOREA	1-0	JAPAN		Pyongyang	WQ

**Saudi Arabia 0-5 Japan****17 January 2011**

Asian Cup

Al Rayyan

*Scorers: Okazaki (3), Maeda (2)*

UFWC champions Japan defended their title in fine style, putting five goals past a hapless Saudi Arabia, in this Asian Cup group stage match in Qatar. Japan had taken the UFWC title into the Asian Cup for the very first time, and this result saw them progress to the knockout stages. But things could have been very different. The Samurai Blue's opening match of the tournament saw them trail 1-0 against Jordan, only for Maya Yoshida to head an injury time equaliser. A narrow 2-1 win over Syria followed, with Keisuke Honda scoring a late winner from the penalty spot. But, against Saudi Arabia, Japan were three goals up within 20 minutes. In the eighth minute, Shinji Okazaki beat the offside trap and flicked the ball over the Saudi keeper before tapping it into the net. Three minutes later, Okazaki doubled his tally, taking advantage of some appalling Saudi defending to head home from a Shinji Kagawa cross. On 19 minutes it was three, and this goal was the best so far, with Ryoichi Maeda flicking a Yuto Nagatomo cross into the net with the outside of his right boot. The second half was no less enjoyable for Japanese fans. Goal number four saw Maeda bursting into the box to nod home a right wing cross. Then Okazaki claimed his hat-trick on 79 minutes, combining with Maeda to turn in the box and shoot past the keeper. By the end, even the Saudi fans were cheering a marvellous Japanese display.

**Japan 3-2 Qatar****21 January 2011**

Asian Cup quarter final

Doha

*Scorers: Kagawa (2), Inoha (Japan);**Sebastian, Cesar (Qatar)*

Japan took their UFWC title into the quarter finals of the 2011 Asian Cup, and came up against hosts Qatar. Controversy had surrounded the decision to award the 2022 World Cup to Qatar, but the nation was proving to be a capable Asian Cup host – and was doing pretty well on the pitch, too. Star man Sebastian Soria had failed to score thus far in the tournament, but with just 12 minutes played, and Japan looking decidedly lacklustre, Soria beat the offside trap and gave the hosts the lead. Neither the Annabi (the Maroon) nor the Samurai Blue impressed with their football, but a rare moment of class involving Keisuke Honda and Shinji Okazaki allowed Shinji Kagawa to head an equaliser from close range. The score remained 1-1 until the 61st minute, when Maya Yoshida was harshly sent off, and Brazilian-born Fabio Cesar Montezine scored brilliantly from the resultant free kick. Qatar were on course to record one of the biggest shock results in UFWC history, until a defensive blunder allowed Kagawa to net his second goal of the game, and make the score 2-2. Neither side looked like scoring a winner, and the match seemed destined to go to extra time. But, in the final minute, the ball again fell to Kagawa in the box. Shaping to score his hat-trick goal, he was tackled, only for the ball to fall to Masahiko Inoha, who stabbed home a last-gasp winner for Japan.

**Japan 2-2 South Korea (after extra time,  
Japan wins 3-0 on penalties)**

**25 January 2011**

Asian Cup semi final

Doha

*Scorers: Maeda, Hosogai (Japan);*

*Sung-Yeung, Jae-Won (South Korea)*

Japan's UFWC / Asian Cup adventure continued, and there was even more excitement. Things started badly for the UFWC champions, with Park Ji-Sung winning a dubious penalty for South Korea, and Ki Sung-Yueng converting the kick. However, Japan struck back, with a brilliant Yuto Nagatomo pass finding Ryoichi Maeda to score. Both sides pushed forward in an attempt to regain the lead, with both goalkeepers tested. There were no further goals in the first half, or in the strangely muted second half, but the game really came alive in extra time. First there was another dubious penalty award, this time to Japan. Shinji Okazaki was fouled, Keisuke Honda took the kick, Jung Sung-Ryong saved, and Hajima Hosogai scored from the rebound. 2-1 to Japan, and the Samurai Blue seemed destined to reach the Asian Cup final. But there was another twist in the tale – in the very last minute of extra time – as a long ball caused chaos in the crowded Japanese penalty area, eventually falling to Hwang Jae-Won, who somehow found the net to equalise. The game would be decided by a penalty shoot-out, and Eiji Kawashima was the hero for Japan, saving two South Korean penalties. Yasuyuki Konno scored the winner, and the Samurai Blue took the UFWC title into the Asian Cup final.

**Japan 1-0 Australia (after extra time)****29 January 2011**

Asian Cup final

Doha

*Scorer: Lee*

For the first time in the Unofficial Football World Championships' long lineage, the UFWC title was contested at the Asian Cup final, with Japan and Australia competing to unify the Asian and UFWC title. And it was a gripping match, with extra time needed to separate two excellent teams. The match began at a lively pace, with both sides pushing forward. Japan impressed with their passing game, but Australia quickly demonstrated that they held an aerial advantage – Tim Cahill going closest with a header. Japan were enjoying a fair share of the possession, without really creating any clear cut chances, and midfielders Yasuhito Endo and Keisuke Honda struggling to find a pass that would penetrate the Socceroos back line. Harry Kewell went close for Australia, then Japan's Ryoichi Maeda fired a shot narrowly over the bar. The first half finished goalless, but it was clear that Japan would have to get to grip with the succession of high balls being pumped into the box by Australia. As the second half began, The Socceroos' aerial dominance continued to cause havoc in the Japanese defence. Luke Wilkshire's cross hit the crossbar, then hit Cahill, bounced along the goaline, and was cleared. Cahill claimed a goal, Australia celebrated, but the referee waved play on. Replays showed that the ball had not crossed the line, and it was a great call from the referee and linesman. Gradually, Japan began to get a

better foothold in the game. Maeda went close, driving a shot into the side netting, and Shinji Okazaki headed a great chance wide. Australia had great chances too, with Harry Kewell finding himself through with the keeper to beat, only for Eiji Kawashima to make a good save with an outstretched boot. But neither side was able to break the deadlock, and, with the score 0-0 after 90 minutes, the game went into extra time. Japan had suffered through extra time and penalties in their semi final against South Korea, while Australia were potentially fresher, having strolled past Uzbekistan in 90 minutes. Extra time began with the Japanese defence in disarray, the ball ricocheting around the six-yard box before eventually being hacked clear. Aussie subs Brett Emerton and Robbie Kruse both went close, and Japan's Honda curled a shot past the post. But the first half of extra time ended scoreless. Japan had proved their penalty shoot-out mettle in the semi final, but any thoughts they might try to play out this match were dispelled as the second half of extra time began, with a period of intense Japanese pressure, testing Australia. Then, finally, after 109 minutes of play, the deadlock was broken. Nagatomo's cross from substitute Tadanari Lee in rare space, and he made no mistake, brilliantly left-foot volleying past Schwarzer. 1-0 to Japan. It was only the second goal Australia had conceded in the tournament. As time ticked away, Australia were given one last chance with a free-kick on the edge of the box. Carney drove the ball into the Japanese wall, and a scramble ensued, but eventually the ball was cleared – and the final whistle was blown. So Japan won 1-0 after extra time, retaining the UFWC title and winning the Asian Cup, unifying the titles for the very first time.

**Japan 8-0 Tajikistan****11 October 2011**

World Cup qualifier

Osaka

*Scorers: Havenaar (2), Okazaki (2), Kagawa (2), Komano, Nakamura*

This World Cup Qualifying group match win against hapless Tajikistan was all too easy for UFWC champs Japan. Big striker Mike Havenaar came in for his full debut up front, and he powered a header past Alisher Tuychiev in the Tajikistan goal to give Japan a 12th-minute lead. The Blue Samurai totally dominated the game, and Shinji Okazaki, Yuichi Komano and Shinji Kagawa all scored before half-time. Within two minutes of the restart it was 5-0, Havenaar scoring with another header. The impressive Kengo Nakamura scored Japan's sixth. Goal number seven was the strangest of the lot, as a 67th-minute Kawaga cross sailed over the Tajikistani keeper's head and into the net. Okazaki scored Japan's eighth goal in the 76th minute, heading home from a Nakamura cross. By this point, the Japanese players seemed faintly embarrassed to celebrate. The 8-0 win was one of the biggest in UFWC history. The last team to score 8 goals in a UFWC title match was Germany in 2000, when they won 8-2 versus Lichtenstein. The last team to win a UFWC title match 8-0 was the Netherlands, versus Malta in 1990. The bad news for Tajikistan was that they had to play Japan again in a return WC qualifying group match in the following month. And Japan completely dominated the return fixture, too, but this time only won 4-0.

**North Korea 1-0 Japan****15 November 2011**

World Cup qualifier

Pyongyang

*Scorer: Pak Nam-Chol*

This WC qualifier looked like something of a ‘dead rubber’, with Japan already through to the next qualifying stage, and North Korea already eliminated. However, the UFWC title and a good deal of pride were at stake. There were 50,000 people inside the Kim Il-Sung Stadium, many of them army and public workers. Less than 150 of them were Japanese fans. The match began pretty evenly, and was goalless at the break. The game’s defining moment came on 49 minutes. A long ball was floated into the Japanese box, headed on by Kwang-Ryong Pak, then headed goalwards by Pak Nam-Chol. Japan’s stand-in keeper Shusaku Nishikawa was completely eluded by the bounce of the ball, which ended up in the back of the net. North Korea led 1-0. Japanese spirits must have been raised when North Korea were reduced to ten men, with Jong Il-Gwan sent off. Then a nice move saw Japan put the ball in the back of the net – only for Mike Havenaar to be correctly flagged offside. The announcement of five minutes of stoppage time gave Japan some hope, but most of those five minutes were taken up by injuries to two North Korean players. The clock ticked down, and the final whistle blew. Japan’s long reign as unofficial champions came to an end, and North Korea, at the time ranked just 124th in the world by FIFA, become one of the most unlikely champions in UFWC history.

*Want to read more? The official UFWC book tells the complete story of football's most exciting tournament, from the very first international football match right up to 2011, focussing on 100 classic title matches, and featuring complete results for all 800-plus games:*

## **Unofficial Football World Champions**

The Official UFWC Book

by Paul Brown

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*'A fascinating history of football. \*\*\*\*\*' - FourFourTwo*

Unofficial Football World Champions traces football's alternative history from the very first international match in 1872 via more than 800 matches, involving legendary teams and footballing minnows, classic finals and forgotten friendlies, celebrated players and unsung heroes. The book uncovers untold football stories, and reveals the real world champions.

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