

DAVIS CUP BY RAKUTEN 2021

WORLD GROUPS I AND II

5-6 MARCH – PREVIEW NOTES

WORLD GROUP I

Pakistan (c) v Japan (s)

Venue: Pakistan Sports Complex, Islamabad
Surface: grass, outdoors
Head-to-head: Japan leads 3-0

Ukraine (c) v Israel (s)

Venue: Marina Tennis Club, Kyiv
Surface: hard, indoors
Head-to-head: Ukraine leads 2-0

WORLD GROUP II

Bulgaria (c)* v Mexico

Venue: Sport Hall Sofia, Sofia
Surface: hard, indoors
Head-to-head: first meeting

Poland (c)* v El Salvador

Venue: Arena Kalisz, Kalisz
Surface: hard, indoors
Head-to-head: first meeting

(s) = seed; (c) = choice of ground; * choice of ground was decided by lot

WHAT'S AT STAKE THIS WEEKEND?

Of the 24 ties across World Group I and World Group II, 4 are taking place this weekend, with the remaining 20 ties taking place in September. Host nations were offered the choice of hosting in either March or September 2021. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2020 and 2021 editions of the competition have been combined – results from the Qualifiers, World Group I Play-offs and World Group II Play-offs last year have been carried forward to the 2021 competition.

The 8 highest-ranked* winning nations of the World Group I ties in March/September 2021 will automatically progress to the 2022 Davis Cup by Rakuten Qualifiers. The 4 lowest-ranked* winning nations will take part in an additional knock-out tie in November 2021, with the 2 winners progressing to the 2022 Qualifiers and the 2 losers contesting the 2022 World Group I Play-offs. The 12 losing nations in World Group I in 2021 will also contest the 2022 World Group I Play-offs.

The 8 highest-ranked* winning nations of the World Group II ties in March/September 2021 will automatically progress to the 2022 World Group I Play-offs. The 4 lowest-ranked* winning-nations will take part in an additional knock-out tie in November, with the 2 winners progressing to the 2022 World Group I Play-offs and the two losers contesting the 2022 World Group II Play-offs. The 12 losing nations in World Group II in 2021 will also contest the 2022 World Group II Play-offs.

The additional knock-out ties in November have been arranged to facilitate the transition from 18 teams at the Davis Cup Finals in 2021 to 16 teams at the Davis Cup Finals from 2022 onwards.

*based on the Davis Cup Nations Ranking of Monday 20 September 2021 (ie following the completion of all World Group I and World Group II ties this year)

STILL TO COME IN 2021

The remaining World Group I and World Group II ties will take place on either 17-18 or 18-19 September 2021. Venus for these ties will be announced over the coming months.

World Group I

Bolivia (c)* v Belgium (s)
 Argentina (s) (c) v Belarus
 Uruguay (c) v Netherlands (s)
 Slovakia (c) v Chile (s)
 Finland (c)* v India (s)
 Norway (c)* v Uzbekistan (s)
 Lebanon (c)* v Brazil (s)
 New Zealand (c) v Korea, Republic (s)
 Romania (c) v Portugal (s)
 Peru (c)* v Bosnia and Herzegovina (s)

World Group II

Zimbabwe (c)* v China, P.R.
 Switzerland (c)* v Estonia
 Tunisia (c)* v Dominican Republic
 Greece (c)* v Lithuania
 Denmark (c)* v Thailand
 Slovenia (c)* v Paraguay
 Turkey (c)* v Latvia
 Venezuela (c)* v South Africa
 Chinese Taipei (c)* v Morocco
 Barbados (c)* v Indonesia

(s) = seed; (c) = choice of ground; * choice of ground was decided by lot

Prior to those ties, four regional **Group III** events will take place, with the best-performing nations at those events progressing to the 2022 World Group II Play-offs.

- Asia/Oceania Group III – Tay Ninh City, Vietnam – 16-19 June 2021
- Europe Group III – Larnaca, Cyprus – 16-19 June 2021
- Africa Group III – Cairo, Egypt – 11-14 August 2021
- Americas Group III – dates and venue TBC

Additionally, three regional **Group IV** events will take place this year, with the best-performing nations at those events progressing to regional Group III in 2022.

- Africa Group IV – Brazzaville, Congo – 21-26 June 2021
- Europe Group IV – Skopje, North Macedonia – 22-26 June 2021
- Asia/Oceania Group IV – Ashgabat, Turkmenistan – 6-11 September 2021

Davis Cup by Rakuten Finals 2021

The 18 nations which qualified for the Davis Cup by Rakuten Finals 2020 will compete at the rearranged Finals this year. The draw for the Finals was conducted on Thursday 12 March 2020 and remains as published for the rearranged Finals. The Finals will take place on 25 November-5 December 2021 with further details to be announced in the coming weeks.

Group A

Spain (1)
 Russia
 Ecuador

Group B

Canada (2)
 Kazakhstan
 Sweden

Group C

France (3)
 Great Britain
 Czech Republic

Group D

Croatia (4)
 Australia
 Hungary

Group E

USA (5)
 Italy
 Colombia

Group F

Serbia (6)
 Germany
 Austria

PAST CHAMPIONS

In total, 15 nations have won the Davis Cup. Spain are the reigning champions, having won the title for a 6th time in 2019. None of the 8 nations in action this weekend have ever won the title, although Japan finished runners-up in 1921.

- USA	32
- Australia	28
- France/Great Britain	10
- Sweden	7
- Spain	6
- Germany	3
- Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic	3
- Croatia, Russia	2
- Argentina, Italy, Serbia, South Africa, Switzerland	1

COMEBACKS FROM 0-2 DOWN

Since the competition began in 1900 there have been 59 comebacks from 0-2 down in the Davis Cup – most recently when Ukraine recovered from 0-2 down to defeat Chinese Taipei in a World Group I Play-off tie in Zaporizhzhia last year.

PARTICIPATING NATIONS

142 nations will compete in Davis Cup in 2020-21.

DAVIS CUP NATIONS RANKING

The Davis Cup Nations Ranking was launched at the end of 2001. It measures success over the preceding 4-year period, with recent performances weighted more heavily. [The full ranking list can be found on the Davis Cup website.](#)

Latest Davis Cup Nations Ranking (9 March 2020)

1	France	26	Brazil
2	Croatia	27	Korea, Republic
3	Spain	28	Bosnia and Herzegovina
4	Belgium	29	Portugal
5	USA	30	Israel
6	Canada	31	Slovakia
7	Serbia	32	Uruguay
8	Germany	33	Finland
9	Italy	34	Pakistan
10	Great Britain	35	Ukraine
11	Australia	36	Lebanon
12	Kazakhstan	37	New Zealand
13	Russia	38	Peru
14	Sweden	39	China, P.R.
15	Austria	40	Bolivia
16	Argentina	41	Romania
17	Czech Republic	42	Belarus
18	Colombia	43	Mexico
19	Japan	44	Switzerland
20	Netherlands	45	Norway
21	Chile	46	Dominican Republic
22	India	47	Lithuania
23	Hungary	48	Thailand
24	Ecuador	49	Poland
25	Uzbekistan	50	Slovenia

WORLD GROUP I NOTES

Click the link for each tie to see full details of nominated players, captains, head-to-heads and matches once the draws are made.

[Pakistan v Japan](#)

- Head-to-head: Japan leads 3-0
- Last meeting: 2003 Asia/Oceania Group I relegation play-off – Japan defeated Pakistan 5-0 in Toyota, Japan
- **Pakistan's** Aisam Qureshi and Aqeel Khan guided the team to a 3-0 triumph over Slovenia in the World Group I Play-offs last year – and the pair, both now in their 40s, are likely to feature again this weekend as the team aim to reach the Qualifiers for the first time. Qureshi and Khan both made their debuts for Pakistan in 1998 and have both recorded more than 50 match-wins in the competition, with their Davis Cup careers now spanning 4 decades. Pakistan have proved difficult to beat on home soil – since 2017, they have won 4 of the 5 ties they have played at home, with their only home defeat in that time coming against Uzbekistan in an Asia/Oceania Group I second round tie in 2018.
- **Japan** have named a youthful team as they look to arrest a slump that has seen the team lose 3 consecutive ties. The team's last victory came against China, P.R. in the 2019 Qualifiers – but they fell to both France and Serbia in the 2019 Finals, before being upset by Ecuador in the Qualifiers last year. The team is contesting a grass court tie for the first time since 2008, when they fell to India in an Asia/Oceania Group I second round tie. None of their 5 players for this week's tie has ever contested a live match in the competition, with Yosuke Watanuki the only member of the team with Davis Cup experience, having won a dead fourth match in Japan's 2018 victory over Bosnia and Herzegovina. The remaining 4 members of the team – including former junior world No. 1 Shintaro Mochizuki – could all make their Davis Cup debuts this weekend.

[Ukraine v Israel](#)

- Head-to-head: Ukraine leads 2-0
- Last meeting: 2017 Europe/Africa Group I relegation play-off – Ukraine defeated Israel 5-0 in Ramat Hasharon, Israel
- **Ukraine** are aiming to continue the momentum from a dramatic 3-2 victory against Chinese Taipei in the World Group I Play-offs last March. After finding themselves 0-2 down after the first day of action, the team rallied to secure victory – Denys Molchanov and Sergiy Stakhovsky won the doubles match, before Stakhovsky levelled the tie with victory in the first reverse singles match and Illya Marchenko won the final, decisive singles clash. All 3 of those players return to the team for this tie, and the team will be in confident mood. In addition to their winning record against Israel, the Ukrainians have been in good form at home in recent years. Since the 2016 season, they have won 3 of the 4 ties they have played at home, with their only home defeat in that time a narrow 3-2 loss to Sweden in the 2018 Europe/Africa Group I first round.
- **Israel** are contesting their 5th consecutive away tie, having been on the road since the 2018 season. In that time they have won 2 of their 4 ties – including their most-recent outing, a 3-1 victory over Turkey on clay in Antalya in the World Group I Play-offs last year. The team are aiming to progress beyond Group I-level for the first time since 2014, when they advanced to the World Group play-offs before falling to Argentina. Israel are likely to look to 22-year-old Edan Leshem and 20-year-old Yshai Oliel in singles, both of whom will want to make their marks on the competition. Leshem sealed the victory against Turkey last year, but Oliel is bidding for his first win in a live Davis Cup match this weekend. Experienced player-captain Jonathan Erlich is in good form, having reached the final at the ATP event at Montpellier last week, and has been a reliable doubles option for Israel since making his debut in the competition in 2000.

For more information on each team, visit the [team profile pages](#) on the Davis Cup website. For information on individual players' Davis Cup records, use the [player search tool](#) on the Davis Cup website.

WORLD GROUP II NOTES

Click the link for each tie to see full details of nominated players, captains, head-to-heads and matches once the draws are made.

[Bulgaria v Mexico](#)

- Head-to-head: first meeting
- **Bulgaria** maintained their World Group II status with victory over Costa Rica in the World Group II Play-offs in March last year, avoiding dropping back to Group III, having competed at Group III-level in 2017-18. Now, the team are two wins away from World Group I, a level they have not competed at since 1988. They will be confident of victory again this weekend – their top 2 players, world No. 268 Dimitar Kuzmanov and world No. 382 Adrian Andreev, are both ranked higher than Mexico's singles options. Kuzmanov is now a Davis Cup veteran, having recorded 21 victories in the competition since making his debut a decade ago. Andreev, a former junior world No. 2, is making his 4th Davis Cup appearance this weekend, and arrives in good form. The 19-year-old won his first 2 professional titles since the tour's resumption in August last year, with victories on the ITF World Tennis Tour at M15 Heraklion in November and M15 Antalya in January.
- **Mexico** are aiming to bounce back from a narrow 3-2 defeat to Finland in the World Group I Play-offs last March. Prior to the introduction of World Groups I and II in 2019, the team had competed in Americas Group II since 2012 – and the majority of their Davis Cup success in that time came at home. The team defeated Paraguay in Asuncion in the Americas Group II first round in 2019, a victory that ended a 5-tie losing streak away from home that spanned the previous 5 years. The team are also contesting their first tie outside the Americas since 2006, when they travelled to Austria for a World Group play-off tie which ended in a 5-0 defeat. They will hope to avoid a similar fate on this European trip – and will likely look to Gerardo Lopez Villasenor to lead the way in singles, after the 25-year-old won both matches he contested in the defeat against Finland last year. Juan Alejandro Hernandez Serrano and Luis Patino are likely to compete for the second singles berth, while Hans Hach and Miguel Angel Reyes-Varela are both solid options for the doubles match.

[Poland v El Salvador](#)

- Head-to-head: first meeting
- **Poland** are aiming to extend an 8-tie winning streak as the team look to take the next step on a return to Group I-level for the first time since 2017. The Polish team recorded a convincing 4-0 victory over Hong Kong, China in the World Group II Play-offs in March last year, continuing their good form from a successful 2019 campaign which saw the Poles win promotion from Europe/Africa Group III. Playing at home should put Poland in a confident mood too – since the beginning of 2015, they have won 5 of the 6 ties they have contested at home. Their top player for this weekend's tie is Kamil Majchrzak, who broke the Top 100 in 2019, before struggling with a groin injury last season. He currently sits at No. 111, and is aiming for his 2nd Tour-level victory of the season, having reached the 2nd round at the Great Ocean Road Open in Melbourne prior to the Australian Open. World No. 232 Kacper Zuk, who made a successful debut in the victory against Hong Kong last year, winning the only match he contested, is likely to play in the second singles position.
- **El Salvador** are making their first Davis Cup appearance outside the Americas region this weekend – and victory in Poland will leave the team one victory away from competing at Group I-level for the first time in their history. The team earned their World Group II status with victory over Jamaica in the World Group II Play-offs last year – a win which ended a 4-tie losing streak, with the team having previously not recorded a victory since 2017. They are also aiming for a first away victory this weekend since defeating Puerto Rico in the 2015 Americas Group II first round. Central to the team's performances in recent years has been Marcelo Arevalo, the world No. 52 in doubles, who has recorded 44 victories in the competition since making his debut in 2005, including all 3 matches he contested in last year's triumph against Jamaica. Alberto Emmanuel Alvarado Larin, who will aim for his first Davis Cup match-win, and Lluís Miralles, who could make his Davis Cup singles debut, will provide support for Arevalo.

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