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Russian Cosmonauts Unveil 2018 World Cup Logo

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The official logo of the 2018 World Cup was unveiled by Russian cosmonauts.

The official logo of the 2018 World Cup was unveiled Tuesday night by Russian cosmonauts aboard the International Space Station, before being projected onto the ivory facade of Moscow's Bolshoi Theater.

The logo, which FIFA president Sepp Blatter described as an embodiment of Russia's "heart and spirit," depicts a red and blue World Cup trophy with gold trim. The trophy — its cup festooned with stars, its base shrouded in flames — is reminiscent of a satellite launch.

The tournament's organizing committee explained in a statement that the emblem was meant to reflect the Soviet Union's pioneering space exploration, traditional Russian iconography and the universal love of football. The logo, which features what FIFA called a "magic ball," pays homage to Sputnik-1, the first artificial satellite, launched by the Soviet Union in 1957.

The stars are meant to depict "football stars as well as stars in the sky, along with the fairy-tale glitter and sparkle that creates a magical ... World Cup experience," according to FIFA.

Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko said the design — which was conceived by a Portuguese brand consultancy with the input of Russian and international designers — stemmed from Russia's "rich artistic tradition and its history of bold achievement and innovation."

The logo presentation was broadcast across the country via Channel One's most popular evening talk show, "Vecherny Urgant." Host Ivan Urgant welcomed Blatter, Mutko and former Italian defender Fabio Cannavaro — who in 2006 was a World Cup champion and FIFA's player of the year — in the studio to discuss the emblem and Russia's preparations for the 2018 tournament. Nearly a million Muscovites watched the presentation, according to R-Sport, an online Russian sports news site.

Just after midnight, Cannavaro told journalists gathered in front of the Bolshoi Theater that he was pleased with the logo, which he described as "colorful, bright and memorable."

Not all observers were so thrilled. Grant Wahl, a senior writer at Sports Illustrated and former FIFA presidential hopeful, tweeted: "Russia tooting its own horn by putting Sputnik in the World Cup logo is about as sad as a town with a big '1956 State Champions' sign."

Russia is set to host the World Cup in 2018 from June 8 to July 8, in 11 cities including Moscow, St. Petersburg and Sochi.

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