

Argentina World Cup 2026 Squad: Messi Leads Defending Champions to North America

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The **Argentina World Cup 2026 squad** is confirmed, and Lionel Messi leads the defending champions for a record sixth World Cup. Head coach Lionel Scaloni named his 26-man list on Thursday, 28 May 2026, squashing fears over Messiâ??s hamstring scare to hand the 38-year-old captain his place on footballâ??s biggest stage once more. The Albiceleste head to North America as the team everyone wants to beat.

## Messi Defies the Injury Scare to Lead Argentinaâ??s World Cup 2026 Campaign

The anxiety was palpable. When Messi limped off during an MLS match for Inter Miami in the lead-up to the squad announcement, Argentine supporters braced themselves for the unthinkable. Scaloni moved swiftly to calm the storm, insisting the injury was â??not that badâ?• and that his talisman would recover in time for the tournament, even if he might not be fully fit for the opening fixtures.

That assurance proved enough. Messi â?? eight-time Ballon dâ??Or winner, World Cup champion, Copa AmÃ©rica champion twice over â?? has been named in the squad, and he will captain Argentina into their first defence of a World Cup title since Brazil in 1970. At 38, it will almost certainly be his final tournament at this level. The anticipation is extraordinary.

Scaloniâ??s logic is sound: even a Messi operating at 80 per cent is still a generational talent capable of winning any game on his own. The greater risk would have been leaving him at home.




Source: AsociaciÃ³n del FÃºtbol Argentino official website (afa.com.ar)

# Argentina World Cup 2026 Squad in Full â?? Scaloniâ??s 26 Men

Scaloni has kept the architecture of the side that won the World Cup in Qatar 2022, retaining 17 players from that squad. The core of Emiliano MartÃnez in goal, Lisandro MartÃnez and Cristian Romero in

defence, Rodrigo De Paul and Enzo FernÃ¡ndez in midfield, and JuliÃ¡n Ã•lvarez and Lautaro MartÃnez up front remains gloriously intact. The new faces bring energy and unpredictability.

**Goalkeepers:** Emiliano MartÃnez (Aston Villa), GerÃ³nimo Rulli (Marseille), Juan Musso (AtlÃ©tico de Madrid)

**Defenders:** Gonzalo Montiel, Nahuel Molina, Lisandro MartÃnez, NicolÃ¡s Otamendi, Leonardo Balerdi, Cristian Romero, NicolÃ¡s Tagliafico, Facundo Medina

**Midfielders:** Giovani Lo Celso, Leandro Paredes, Rodrigo De Paul, Exequiel Palacios, Enzo FernÃ¡ndez, Alexis Mac Allister, ValentÃn Barco

**Forwards:** Lionel Messi, NicolÃ¡s GonzÃ¡lez, Giuliano Simeone, Lautaro MartÃnez, JosÃ© Manuel LÃ³pez, JuliÃ¡n Ã•lvarez, Thiago Almada, Nico Paz

The biggest surprise is the omission of teenage prodigy Franco Mastantuono, who many expected to be fast-tracked into the fold. Veteran defender Marcos AcuÃ±a also misses out after struggling with form. Their places go to younger legs with Scaloni prioritising freshness alongside experience.

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One of the most intriguing inclusions is Giuliano Simeone, son of AtlÃ©tico de Madrid manager Diego Simeone. He has earned his place on merit â?? the forward has been one of AtlÃ©ticoâ??s most dynamic attackers this season â?? and adds a spark off the bench that could prove invaluable in knockout games.




Source: AsociaciÃ³n del FÃºtbol Argentino official website (afa.com.ar)

## Argentinaâ??s Route Through the World Cup 2026

The tournament kicks off on 11 June 2026, hosted across the United States, Canada, and Mexico â?? three nations collectively offering a scale and atmosphere unlike anything the World Cup has seen. For Scaloniâ??s side, every match comes with the weight of defending champions. There is nowhere to hide, and no underestimating anyone.

Argentinaâ??s rivals are acutely aware of what they face. England, Brazil, France, and Portugal have all assembled strong squads â?? all desperate to end what could be the final chapter of the Messi era. The group stage will demand Argentina hit their stride quickly, particularly if Messiâ??s fitness requires careful management in the opening rounds.

## Can Argentina Retain the World Cup?

There is every reason to believe they can. Scaloni has built something rare: a team with genuine tactical flexibility, unshakeable team spirit, and the best player in history leading the line. The midfield engine of Enzo FernÃ¡ndez, Alexis Mac Allister, and Rodrigo De Paul is one of the most balanced in world football. JuliÃ¡n Ã•lvarez â?? who lit up Qatar 2022 with four goals â?? will be at the peak of his powers, and Lautaro MartÃnez is one of the most lethal strikers on the planet.

The defence is experienced and battle-hardened. Emi MartÃnez, one of the best goalkeepers in the world, is a match-winner in his own right as France discovered in 2022. The togetherness Scaloni has fostered over 94 matches in charge is not something that can be replicated overnight by rival coaches.

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The World Cup 2026 will be full of brilliant sides, but Argentina arrive as the team to beat. With Messi making his final bow on the sportâ??s grandest stage, the whole world will be watching â?? and the Albiceleste are determined to make it one last golden chapter. Explore more sports news on LBRD here .

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