



Messi scores in his farewell as Argentina beat Benin 3-0 at the Monumental on 6 October

Description

Lionel Messi scored in his farewell match as Argentina beat Benin 3-0 at the Estadio Monumental in Buenos Aires on Tuesday night, 6 October (Wednesday morning in Singapore), closing an international career of 207 matches and 126 goals. It was his last game for Argentina in front of a home crowd, the [Argentine Football Association](#) (AFA) said.



Photo: Argentine Football Association (AFA)

The friendly closed the October international window for Lionel Scaloni's side. Benin made Argentina wait until after half-time.

Tears before kick-off

The night turned emotional before a ball was kicked. Messi broke down during the national anthem, sung by Fabio Santana, a veteran of the Falklands War, and at times could not sing along. Scaloni stood beside him in tears. Messi's three sons, Thiago, Mateo and Ciro, were with him for the pre-match ceremony.

The football took a while to match the occasion, and the first half finished goalless.

Otamendi, Paz, then Messi

It came after the break. Nicolás Otamendi broke the deadlock, and the pass came from Messi. Otamendi said afterwards that it was his last goal for Argentina too, and that he had thought the World Cup would be their final game together. "Scoring my last goal, and with a pass from him, I'll take that with me for the rest of my life," he said.

Nico Paz made it 2-0, and from then on the Monumental was waiting for one more goal. Late on, Messi got it, scoring the third to give his last appearance on home soil a goal and a win in front of a full Monumental.

The result was Argentina's 22nd straight win in friendlies, a run that began with a 5-0 win over Estonia in June 2022 in which Messi scored all five. Across those 22 games Argentina have scored 75 goals and conceded three. They have not lost a friendly since 2019, a 28-match unbeaten run.



Photo: Argentine Football Association (AFA)

“Now it is my turn to be on the other side”

After the final whistle, the Monumental stayed full for a drone and fireworks show, with sets from Soledad Pastorutti and Ulises Bueno. Then Messi took the microphone.

“Playing for Argentina was the best thing that ever happened to me,” he said. His first thought, he said, was of his father. He spoke too about the years when results did not come. “Even in the worst moments I never stopped fighting, I never stopped giving everything.”

He also talked about the 2026 World Cup, where Argentina reached the final and finished runners-up. “We were very close,” he said, adding that the tie against England had taken a heavy toll on the squad. Then came the goodbye. “I am saying goodbye to the national team. I will miss you, I will miss it, but now it is my turn to be on the other side.”

Scaloni was just as emotional. “It has been a dream that I was able to make come true. I never thought I would coach the best footballer in history,” he said. “I have never seen that aura in anyone else in my life.”

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Photo: Argentine Football Association (AFA)

The numbers behind the farewell

Messi leaves as Argentina's most-capped player and record goalscorer. His 126 goals break down into 55 in friendlies, 36 in South American World Cup qualifiers, 21 at World Cups and 14 at the Copa Am rica. He also has 66 assists. The 36 qualifying goals are a CONMEBOL record.

His career began with a debut against Hungary in Budapest on 17 August 2005, when he came off the bench and was sent off within seconds. It ends with four senior titles: the Copa Am rica in 2021, the Finalissima in 2022, the 2022 World Cup in Qatar and the Copa Am rica in 2024. He also won the Under-20 World Cup in 2005 and Olympic gold in Beijing in 2008.

He played at six World Cups, from Germany 2006 to the 2026 tournament in the United States, Mexico and Canada, making 34 appearances and scoring 21 goals. At the 2026 finals he scored eight times and set up four, and at 39 became the oldest Argentine to score at a World Cup.

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