

# Argentina produced epic World Cup fightback to beat Egypt

Argentina staged a stunning comeback from 2-0 down to avoid a shocking exit at the hands of Egypt, prolonging Lionel Messi's World Cup career with a 3-2 win to reach the quarter-finals.

The holders looked down and out when goals from Yasser Ibrahim and Mostafa Ziko, either side of Messi having a penalty saved, put the Pharaohs in sight of a historic victory in Atlanta.

However, Cristian Romero's header sparked the comeback as Argentina struck three times in the final 11 minutes plus stoppage time.

Messi smashed home the equaliser to score for a ninth consecutive World Cup game and retake the lead for the Golden Boot with eight this tournament.

Enzo Fernandez completed the turnaround with a superb header two minutes into stoppage time.

At the end, Messi shed tears of joy as he embraced his teammates.

Egypt were left furious after several controversial calls went against them, including a disallowed goal early in the second half, and a member of their coaching staff was red-carded in the aftermath of the winning goal.

But despite a second almighty



Argentina's forward #10 Lionel Messi is lifted by teammates as they celebrate after winning the match

scare against African opposition, Argentina will face either Colombia or Switzerland in the last eight on Saturday.

Lionel Scaloni attempted to refresh a side that looked exhausted in the closing stages of a 3-2 win over Cape Verde in the last 32 on Friday.

Nicolas Tagliafico, Leandro Paredes and Julian Alvarez came in from the team that started in Miami, but Argentina got off to another slow start.

Marwan Attia's deep cross to the back post was powered home by Yasser.

Argentina had the chance to

level five minutes later when Tagliafico was fouled by Haissem Hassan inside the box.

However, there was another chapter to Messi's penalty spot misery at World Cups.

The eight-time Ballon d'Or's strike was tentative and Mostafa Shobeir flew to his left to save, meaning Messi has now missed four of his eight non-shootout penalties at World Cups. He also became the first player to miss two in a single tournament, having also failed to hit the target against Austria in the group stages.

The penalty save was just the

start of Shobeir's inspired afternoon.

Alexis Mac Allister's powerful header from point-blank range was next to be parried by the Al Ahly stopper.

Shobeir then produced one of the saves of the tournament to prevent Alvarez's shot from finding the bottom corner.

Egypt thought they had doubled their lead on the hour mark after a brilliant counter-attack.

Mohamed Salah played in Mostafa Ziko, who dinked the ball perfectly over the onrushing Emi Martinez.

However, Egyptian celebra-

tions were cut short by a hugely controversial VAR intervention for a foul on Lisandro Martinez, just outside the Egypt box, at the start of the build-up to the goal.

The decision finally fired up the majority Argentine crowd, but they were silenced once more moments later by another blistering Egyptian break.

Salah again led the charge before feeding Hassan and his cross was swept in by Zico.

Argentina looked like a beaten side with Messi among those whose head was bowed during the second-half drinks break.

Yet Romero's header -- that Shoubir just failed to keep out -- sparked a remarkable revival as the defending champions hauled themselves off the canvas.

Moments later a dazzling run by Messi teed up Lautaro Martinez, who headed just wide and Messi was to have his moment of redemption seven minutes from time.

Gonzalo Montiel fed the ball back for his captain to strike sweetly on the half volley.

Shoubir again got a touch but couldn't get it out as the ball cannoned in off the bar for Messi's 21st World Cup goal.

Then Fernandez's bullet header from Lautaro Martinez's cross completed the fightback and Argentina's relief was on full display after the final whistle.

## Serena wants to play again before US Open, says coach



Serena Williams

AFP | London

Serena Williams wants to play singles tournaments before the US Open, unlike her preparation for Wimbledon, the American legend's coach Rennae Stubbs said yesterday.

Williams, 44, played two doubles matches in preparation for her comeback to singles tennis at the All England Club, but lost in the first round last week.

The 23-time Grand Slam champion then had to withdraw from the doubles with sister Venus due to a knee injury suffered in the defeat by Australian Maya Joint.

"I'll leave it to her to discuss her medical stuff and how she's feeling but I know that for her trying to play, certainly something before the US Open will be something she would like to do," Stubbs told reporters at Wimbledon.

"She doesn't want to go and do what she did here, which was just play singles, at the US Open, but at the same time it's going to depend on physically how she's doing."

## Sinner eyes Djokovic showdown after moving into Wimbledon semis

AFP | London

Jannik Sinner is on course for a blockbuster Wimbledon showdown with Novak Djokovic after the defending champion ended German veteran Jan-Lennard Struff's fairytale run in the quarter-finals.

Sinner won 7-5, 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 on Court One and will face Djokovic in the last four if the seven-time Wimbledon champion beats Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime later on Tuesday.

In the women's tournament, Coco Gauff and Karolina Muchova reached their first Wimbledon semi-finals.

With Wimbledon basking in sweltering temperatures this week, world number one Sinner had to answer some uncomfortable questions about his ability to withstand the heat.

The 24-year-old Italian wilted in the recent French Open when the mercury reached boiling point, sparking a stunning second-round defeat against Juan Manuel Cerundolo, who battled back from two sets and 5-1 down to beat Sinner.

Bidding to win Wimbledon for the second successive year, Sinner lived up to his claim that he would cope with the London heatwave against Struff -- at 36 the oldest man to become a first-time quarter-finalist at the majors in the Open era.

The four-time Grand Slam champion wasn't at his best, but



Italy's Jannik Sinner returns the ball to Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff

his booming serve kept world number 74 Struff at bay as he reached his 10th Grand Slam semi-final and third at Wimbledon.

"It was a huge test today. I felt comfortable on the physical side, a good step forwards," Sinner said.

"We worked a lot after Paris trying to understand what went wrong and prepared in the best possible way."

Djokovic hopes to equal Roger Federer's record of eight Wim-

bledon singles titles by winning a record 25th major.

That would make him the oldest man to win a Grand Slam in the Open era.

Victory for the 39-year-old Serb against third seeded Auger-Aliassime would take Djokovic into a record-extending 15th Wimbledon semi-final and 55th at the Grand Slams.

He would also reach the Wimbledon last four for an eighth consecutive time, setting a new record for the longest streak of

men's singles semi-final appearances at the All England Club.

**Gauff in uncharted territory**

The all-American encounter on Centre Court went Gauff's way as the seventh seed beat fellow American Jessica Pegula 4-6, 6-3, 6-3.

Gauff -- a two-time major champion -- was appearing in the last eight at the All England Club for the first time.

The 22-year-old made a sluggish start as fourth seeded Peg-



US player Coco Gauff returns against US player Jessica Pegula

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**Gauff, who debuted at Wimbledon aged 15 stunning Venus Williams, is the youngest player to reach all four Grand Slam semis since Sharapova in 2007**

the youngest player to reach the Wimbledon main draw aged 15 and then stunned Venus Williams on her debut, Gauff is two wins away from an even more impressive feat at the All England Club.

She is into the semi-finals of a Grand Slam for the first time since winning her most recent major at the French Open last year.

She is the youngest player to appear in all four Grand Slam semi-finals since Maria Sharapova in 2007.

"Considering I hadn't won a match in two years on grass before this tournament, I'm really happy with how I played today," Gauff said.

In the last four, Gauff faces Czech 10th seed Muchova, who beat Japanese star Naomi Osaka 7-6 (7/4), 6-4.