



Argentina sink 10-man Swiss to set up blockbuster England semi-final

Lionel Messi inspires victory as Switzerland's resistance ends after Breel Embolo's red card

- **Argentina win after extra time**
- **Alvarez scores stunning winner**
- **Messi provides early assist**
- **Martinez adds late goal**

AFP | Kansas City

Julian Alvarez scored a breathtaking goal as Argentina battled past 10-man Switzerland 3-1 after extra-time, setting up a mouth-watering World Cup semi-final against bitter rivals England.

Fans of the South American team dominated the stands in Kansas City and were celebrating as early as the 10th minute when their hero Lionel Messi set up Alexis Mac Allister's opener.

Switzerland levelled midway through the second half through Dan Ndoye but minutes later disaster struck when Breel Embolo was sent off after picking up a second yellow card for simulation.

The match went to extra-time and Switzerland snuffed out wave after wave of attacks until Alvarez curled a breathtaking strike into the top corner in the 112th minute.

Lautaro Martinez added gloss with a last-gasp third.

"We had to suffer a lot but we knew they were a physical team," said Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni.

"We had many difficulties. Sometimes we couldn't find the solutions, but today

we had luck on our side because one of their players was sent off."

The hard-fought victory at the Arrowhead Stadium means the top four teams in the FIFA rankings will contest the semi-finals of the 2026 tournament.

Argentina are now unbeaten in their past 12 World Cup matches as they attempt to become the first team since Brazil in 1962 to retain their World Cup crown.

The South Americans swept through the group phase but struggled past minnows Cape Verde and needed a spectacular comeback against Egypt.

The game was another attritional affair against a Swiss team seeking to reach the World Cup semi-finals for the first time.

Messi assist

Argentina took the lead with their first effort on target when Liverpool midfielder Mac Allister rose between Djibril Sow and Embolo to glance a header into the far corner.

10

assists have been recorded by Lionel Messi across his six World Cup tournaments

Messi was the provider from a corner, taking his tally of assists across six World Cups to 10.

He is also joint top of the Golden Boot standings with eight goals, level with French forward Kylian Mbappe, but he did not find the net yesterday.

The Swiss struggled to counter-punch but had a good chance on the half hour when goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez was quickly off his line to deny Embolo.

Argentina failed to muster another effort on target before the break, with Switzerland outpassing the world champions.

The game s t r u g -

gled to catch fire early in the second half but Murat Yakin's men warmed to their task and got their deserved reward in the 67th minute, when Ndoye swept home following a clever ball from Ricardo Rodriguez.

Five minutes later Switzerland shot themselves in the foot when Embolo, who had been booked in the first half, threw himself to the ground and was dismissed following a VAR check.

Mac Allister headed wide with the goal at his mercy as the clock ticked down and Messi sent a curling shot narrowly wide but Switzerland held on to force extra-time.

Argentina finally broke Switzerland's brave resistance with Alvarez's moment of magic, which was celebrated by the whole squad, who were on the pitch again minutes later following Martinez's strike.

Now the winners will turn their attention to the challenge of facing England in Atlanta on Wednesday.

The history of matches between England and Argentina is peppered with flashpoints on the pitch, set against a l i n -

gering sovereignty dispute over the Falkland Islands, known in Spanish as the Malvinas, in the South Atlantic Ocean.

Britain sent a military task-force in 1982 to reclaim the islands after Argentine troops invaded.

Four years later Argentina secured a 2-1 victory over England at the Estadio Azteca with goals

from Diego Maradona -- one the infamous "Hand of God" goal and the other a dazzling solo effort considered one of the best ever.

The teams have faced each other twice in World Cups since 1986 -- Argentina won on penalties in 1998 while England gained revenge four years later.

Scaloni says England semi 'just a football game'

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni insisted Wednesday's heavyweight World Cup semi-final against England was "just a football game".

The history of matches between England and Argentina is peppered with flashpoints on the pitch, set against a lingering sovereignty dispute over the Falkland Islands, known in Spanish as the Malvinas, in the South Atlantic Ocean.

Britain sent a military task-force in 1982 to reclaim the islands after Argentine troops invaded.

But Scaloni sought to put politics aside after Argentina's victory at the Arrowhead Stadium.

"Look, this is a football game," he said. "OK, so the message is this is a football game. That's what I can say. "It is a football game and we will be playing against a very tough opponent. They have an excellent coach and this is a football game and that's all."

The game against England comes 40 years after a seismic encounter in the quarter-finals of the 1986 World Cup in Mexico.

Argentina secured a 2-1 victory at the Estadio Azteca with two goals from Diego Maradona -- one the infamous "Hand of God" goal and the other a dazzling solo effort considered one of the



Argentina's coach Lionel Scaloni gives instructions to Lionel Messi best ever.

The teams have faced each other twice in World Cups since -- Argentina won on penalties in 1998 while England gained revenge four years later.

Scaloni admitted the defending champions would have to improve after another tough test following gruelling 3-2 wins over Cape Verde and Egypt.

"We won because of our ambition -- we didn't want it to go to penalties," he said. "It was more about the desire to win than the quality of play."

He added: "We are in the semi-finals, a privileged position in football that we might take for granted, but it's not that easy.

"We have every reason to be happy, satisfied, and excited.

"Now we're going for everything we can, right to the end, with every last ounce of strength and every last drop of sweat.

"If we pull it off, great. If not, we're going to give it our all. Let there be no doubt about that."



Julian Alvarez #9 of Argentina celebrates with teammates after scoring

Van der Poel stays calm in the heat to win Tour de France stage nine

AFP | Ussel

Cobbled classics specialist Mathieu van der Poel claimed his third Tour de France win yesterday with victory in the ninth stage, which was shortened due to intense heat.

The 31-year-old Dutchman, a former world champion, won a sprint amongst his three break-away companions with Tobias Johannessen taking second and Tom Pidcock third.

"It was a super hard day. The start of the Tour was not great for our team, but I think, like always, we stayed calm," he said.

"We have a really nice group here and we kept believing that



Mathieu van der Poel cycles to the finish line

it will turn around...but it's really nice to go to the first rest day with a win."

Having worked as a sprint

lead-out man for his Alpecin Premier Tech team-mate Jasper Philipsen -- who had finished fourth and fifth in the sprint stages -- in the previous two days, Van der Poel finally had a chance to go for a stage win for himself.

Reigning champion Tadej Pogacar came home in the chasing peloton six seconds behind the winner to maintain his lead in the overall standings ahead of Monday's first rest day.

The four-time champion leads two-time winner Jonas Vingegaard by 2min 42sec with Mexican Isaac del Toro a further 45sec back.

Van der Poel, a three-time winner of both the Tour of Flan-

ders and Paris-Roubaix -- the two most important one-day cobbled classics -- had previously won Tour stages in 2021 and 2025.

'Horrible' roads

This stage was shortened by around 30km due to a "red alert" weather warning in the central Correze region.

Temperatures once again reached close to 40C, although in parts on the stage it was nearer 30C.

There was a furious battle from the beginning of the 154.6km run from Malemort to Ussel to make it into the day's breakaway.

It was not until about halfway

through the stage that an eight-man breakaway finally went clear on the steep 3.8km-long Suc au May climb.

The group never eked out a lead of more than a minute and a half but they worked well together.

Van der Poel then attacked out of that group with 25km left on the final categorised climb of the day, the 900m-long, and equally steep, Mont Bessou.

Only Norwegian Johannessen, Frenchman Alex Baudin and Briton Pidcock were able to follow and then it was a full-throttle charge to the finish line with a 50-second lead over the significantly-reduced peloton.