



Messi equals World Cup goals record as Argentina win

Veteran captain scores hat-trick as Argentina beat Algeria 3-0

● **Argentina controls throughout**

● **Opposing goalkeeper Luca Zidane beaten thrice**

AFP | Los Angeles

Lionel Messi scored a dazzling hat-trick for Argentina on Tuesday to equal Miroslav Klose's all-time record of 16 goals at World Cups as the defending champions swept Algeria aside 3-0.

On a night for the ages in Kansas City, the records kept tumbling for Argentina's miracle man, considered by many to be the greatest footballer of all time.

When the match kicked off at the home of the NFL's Kansas City Chiefs, Messi became the first player to feature in six World Cup tournaments, in his 200th international match.

And the 38-year-old lit up the occasion with three goals in a clinical display by the reigning world champions.

Messi produced a majestic finish from distance in the 17th minute, sparking a frenzy among his adoring fans, who had turned the match into a virtual home game.

Algeria goalkeeper Luca Zidane, the son of France great Zinedine Zidane, got his hands to the ball, but could not keep it out.

Messi netted again in the sec-

ond half from close range, gobbling up a rebound to take him just one goal behind the all-time record held by Germany's Klose.

And he completed his first hat-trick at a World Cup with an unstoppable finish in the 76th minute.

The diminutive genius was substituted shortly afterwards, forcing Argentine fans to wait to see their hero have a shot at the outright record.

Messi magic

The Group J match in the open-air stadium started at a frantic pace and both sides had early goals ruled out for offside, including one from Messi.

But Argentina took the lead when Rodrigo De Paul played a



Lionel Messi scores Argentina's opener

beautifully measured through ball which Messi picked up before driving at goal and unleashing a fierce drive from outside the penalty area that curled away from Zidane.

The South American team were largely in control of the match, fluid in attack with their Number 10 pulling the strings.

But as the clock ticked towards half-time Algeria enjoyed a better spell, with Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez forced to parry a shot from Fares Chaibi from a tight angle.

Messi curled another effort over the bar in the early minutes of the second half and Zidane kept out a shot from Lautaro Martinez.

But the crowd did not have to wait long to celebrate another goal from the veteran forward, who plays for MLS side Inter Miami.

Zidane could not handle a sizzling Alexis Mac Allister strike from distance and Messi was there to sweep home in the 60th minute.

Time stood still six minutes later as Messi was through again but this time Zidane pushed the ball over the bar.

But he was not to be denied, completing his hat-trick after being set up by substitute Nico Gonzalez.

Lionel Scaloni's Argentina are seeking to become the first back-to-back winners since Brazil managed the feat in 1962.

Algeria are hoping to reach the knockout round for only the second time, in a group that also includes Austria and Jordan.

Earlier, the roads around the Kansas City Stadium were clogged as tens of thousands of Argentine fans streamed towards ground dressed in blue and white, many with Messi's name on the back of their shirts.

Argentina's all-time top-scorer is just the third man to reach 200 caps after Cristiano Ronaldo and Kuwait's Bader Al-Mutawa.

Winless Start for Arab Nations at 2026 FIFA World Cup

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

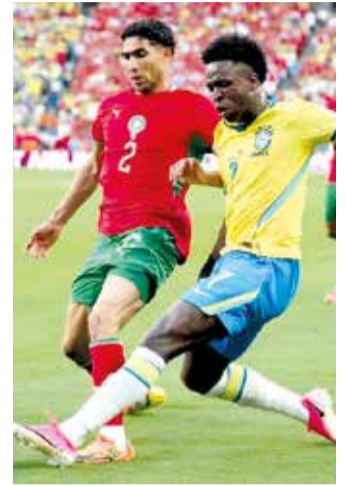
Arab teams have endured a mixed start to their 2026 FIFA World Cup campaigns, with four nations collecting valuable points from their opening matches while four others began the tournament with defeats.

The 2026 edition has already marked a historic milestone for Arab football, with a record eight Arab nations competing on the world stage: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

Among the standout results was Morocco's impressive 1-1 draw against five-time world champions Brazil in Group C. The Atlas Lions started bravely and repeatedly pinned Brazil back with aggressive attacking play. Their positive approach was rewarded in the 21st minute when Ismael Saibari delicately lobbed goalkeeper Alison Becker to give Morocco the lead. Brazil responded 11 minutes later through a moment of brilliance from Vinicius Junior, whose powerful right-footed strike beat Yassine Bounou to level the scores, but the African side held firm to secure a valuable point.

Egypt also made a positive start, earning a 1-1 draw against Belgium in Group G. Saudi Arabia matched that result in Group H after holding Uruguay to a draw, while Qatar claimed the first World Cup point in their history with a dramatic 1-1 draw against Switzerland in Group B. The Swiss looked set for victory and missed several chances to put the game beyond reach before captain Boualem Khokhi headed home a late equaliser in the dying minutes.

Elsewhere, Algeria endured a difficult opening match, suffering a 3-0 defeat to Argentina in Group J. Lionel Messi scored all three goals for the



Morocco's Achraf Hakimi challenges Brazil's Vinicius Jr.

South Americans, drawing level with the World Cup's all-time scoring record of 16 goals.

Iraq also fell to defeat, losing 4-1 to Norway in Group I. Erling Haaland stole the headlines on his World Cup debut, scoring twice as Norway secured all three points despite a spirited performance from the Lions of Mesopotamia.

Jordan's first-ever World Cup appearance ended in a 3-1 defeat to Austria. Although Ali Olwan found the net for the Jordanians, they were unable to mark their historic debut with a positive result.

Tunisia suffered the heaviest defeat among the Arab representatives, falling 5-1 to Sweden in Group F. The result prompted swift action from the Tunisian Football Federation, which appointed Hervé Renard as head coach ahead of the team's next fixture. The Frenchman arrives with an impressive pedigree, having guided Zambia to the 2012 Africa Cup of Nations title and Ivory Coast to continental glory in 2015. He is also widely remembered for masterminding Saudi Arabia's stunning 2-1 victory over eventual world champions Argentina at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, one of the greatest upsets in tournament history.

Czechia and South Africa face early exit threat

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Defeats in their opening Group A matches leave the Czech Republic and South Africa playing catch-up when they meet in Atlanta tonight (7pm Bahrain time). Both sides will need a significantly improved performance to keep their World Cup Round of 32 hopes alive.

South Africa had the privilege of featuring in the World Cup opener, but in a match where they had two players sent off, they fell to a 2-0 defeat against co-hosts Mexico. It was a damaging start for a side appearing at the World Cup for the first time since hosting in 2010, and their fourth overall appearance, with their record of never progressing beyond the group stage still intact. Against Mexico, there was little to suggest that trend is about to change.

The Czech Republic, meanwhile, stuck to their pragmatic, route-one approach in their opener against South Korea, relying heavily on set pieces to create chances. They did briefly take control when Ladislav Krejci headed home from a throw-in to give them the lead, but they were eventually overpowered in a 2-1 defeat. Their final group game comes against



Czech Republic's Tomáš Souček and Tomáš Chory cut dejected figures after their opening match defeat

World Cup Schedule

Today

Time	Match	Group	Venue
7:00 PM	Czechia vs South Africa	A	Atlanta Stadium
10:00 PM	Switzerland vs Bosnia & Herzegovina	B	Los Angeles Stadium

Tomorrow

1:00 AM	Canada vs Qatar	B	Vancouver Stadium
4:00 AM	Mexico vs South Korea	A	Guadalajara Stadium
10:00 PM	USA vs Australia	D	Seattle Stadium

(All games in Bahrain time)

Mexico at the Azteca Stadium, South Africa is widely viewed as their best opportunity to take

points and stay in contention.

South Africa will be without the suspended Sphephelo Sithole and Themba Zwane, forcing manager Hugo Broos into changes, with a switch back to a traditional back four a possibility after he used a back five against Mexico.

The team will be hoping lessons were learned from that opening defeat as they attempt to reset their campaign.

Captain and goalkeeper Ronwen Williams struck a determined tone after the loss, insisting the group still has time to respond. "Now that we've seen the level of this competition, we'll come back stronger," he said. "We'll prepare with even greater intensity and continue working hard. There are still two massive games left for us."

The Czech Republic have waited even longer for a World Cup return than South Africa, with their last appearance coming 20 years ago.

That long absence adds further weight to this fixture, especially with defender Jaroslav Zeleny stressing its importance. "Against South Africa, we have to get it right," he said. "Mexico will probably be a tougher challenge afterwards, so we have to give everything in the match against South Africa and absolutely make sure we win it."

Austria earn World Cup win against debutants Jordan



Marko Arnautovic #7 of Austria scores the team's third goal from penalty

AFP | East Rutherford

Austria were given a scare by World Cup debutants Jordan on Tuesday before securing a 3-1 win rounded off by a penalty in added time from veteran forward Marko Arnautovic.

The Austrians went ahead at Levi's Stadium near San Francisco when Romano Schmid produced a brilliant opening goal, smashing in a shot from distance.

Jordan never stopped chasing the game and Ali Ol-

wan's glancing header nearly put them level before he scored the first World Cup goal in his country's history -- and it was worth the wait.

He cut in and directed a superb right-footed shot Austria 'keeper past Alexander Schlager and off the post.

But Austria regained the lead in the 76th minute thanks to an own goal from Yazan al-Arab before 37-year-old former West Ham man Arnautovic added a stoppage-time penalty to make the game safe.