

# Sports

Lydia Ko wins  
LPGA Tour's NW  
Arkansas  
Championship



Marsh powers  
Aussies to  
Tri-Nation victory



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EAST RUTHERFORD: Chile's players pose with the trophy after winning the Copa America Centenario final by defeating Argentina in the penalty shoot-out in East Rutherford, New Jersey, United States, on Sunday. —AFP

## CHILE STUN ARGENTINA TO WIN COPA

MESSI EXIT LEAVES ARGENTINIAN FOOTBALL IN TURMOIL

**EAST RUTHERFORD:** Lionel Messi put his penalty kick over the crossbar, grabbed his shirt, clenched his teeth and covered his face with both hands. A few minutes later he walked off the field, a dazed, pained look on his bearded face. The greatest player of his generation, perhaps soccer's best ever, he was still without a title on Argentina's national team — one he says may never come. "The national team is over for me," he told the Argentine network TyC Sports after Chile beat Argentina on Sunday night for the Copa America title. "It's been four finals, it's not meant for me. I tried. It was the thing I wanted the most, but I couldn't get it, so I think it's over."

Chile beat Argentina in the final for the second straight year, 4-2 in the shootout following a 0-0 tie that ended an expanded 16-nation edition in the United States to mark the championship's 100th anniversary.

Messi, five-time FIFA Player of the Year, winner of four Champions League titles and eight Spanish La Liga crowns with Barcelona, was crushed. Much of his nation had counted on him and the top-ranked Albiceleste to bring home the nation's first major championship since 1993. Playing two days after his 29th birthday, Messi lost

a final for the third year in a row and the fourth time overall with Argentina. There was also the 2007 Copa final against Brazil, when he was still a wunderkind, and then an extra-time loss to Germany in the 2014 World Cup.

Considered alongside Brazil's Pele and Argentina's Diego Maradona as the sport's greatest ever, Messi won the titles at the under-20 and Olympic (under-23) levels for Argentina. But in the minds of many he needs a championship with the senior national team to solidify his place in history.

"Messi's numbers are unparalleled and I think they'll remain that way forever, because it's impossible for a football player to do what Messi has done," said Chile coach Juan Antonio Pizzi, who is from Argentina. "My generation can't compare him to Maradona — that's for my generation, because of what Maradona did for Argentine soccer. But I think the best player ever played today here in the United States."

A crowd of 82,076 filled MetLife Stadium — the largest to see a soccer game in New Jersey — and many wore Messi's No. 10 jersey in Argentina's blue and white and Barcelona's navy and maroon.

Francisco Silva converted the shootout finale for the fifth-ranked La Roja after goalkeeper Claudio Bravo — Messi's Barcelona teammate — made a diving stop on Lucas Biglia's attempt. On an ill-tempered evening that included a first-half ejection on each side and eight yellow cards, the game was scoreless through regulation and 30 minutes of extra time, with Argentina's Gonzalo Higuain missing a clear goal-scoring opportunity for the third straight final. Argentina outshot Chile 16-4 and La Roja collapsed three, four and even five defenders around Messi, then chopped down the diminutive attacker when he tried to accelerate toward the goal.

Messi, who scored five goals in the tournament, sent a free kick that Sergio Aguero nearly headed in 10 minutes into extra time, only to have Bravo jump and extend his right hand to tip the ball over the crossbar. Messi's free kick in extra time went off the wall.

Argentina goalkeeper Sergio Romero saved the opening kick by Arturo Vidal, and up stepped Messi, Argentina's captain and career scoring leader with 55 goals, he sent his shot into the stands, stunning himself, both teams and the crowd.

Nicolas Castillo and Charles Aranguiz converted their kicks for Chile, and Javier Mascherano and Sergio Aguero made theirs, leaving the teams tied 2-2 after three rounds. Jean Beausejour put Chile ahead, and Bravo dived to his right, saving Biglia's shot and bringing up Silva, a 30-year-old midfielder. Messi briefly pulled his jersey off his face, as if not wanting to watch. Romero dived to his left and the shot went in to his right, giving Chile another title.

Messi crouched over, as if in pain, then got up, took off his captain's armband and walked to the bench, where he was consoled by Angel Di Maria. After Messi came back on the field, Aguero put a hand on one of Messi's shoulders. And new FIFA President Gianni Infantino gave Messi a pat on the back when Messi came onto the podium with his teammates for his second-place medal. Messi almost immediately took it off.

The tournament's average crowd of 46,119 was nearly double the 25,223 in Chile last year, and attendance will be used by the US Soccer Federation as justification it deserves to host a World Cup again, likely as part of a bid for the 2026 tournament.

Brazilian referee Heber Lopes became the focus in the first half, ejecting a pair of defenders: Chile's Marcelo Diaz in the 28th minute and Argentina's Marcos Rojo in the 43rd. After issuing six yellow cards during a World Cup qualifier between the nations in March, Lopes handed out eight yellows, including one to Messi for diving in the 40th minute, and the two reds. Diaz got his first yellow for hacking down Messi about 28 yards out in the 16th minute, then got his second for obstructing a charging Messi about 30 yards out. Rojo received a straight red when he slid into Arturo Vidal from behind and poked away the ball, but Vidal's leg bent awkwardly under his body as he fell.

Higuain had the best first-half chance in the 21st minute when he picked up a giveaway from Gary Medel, dribbled in and chipped the ball over Bravo only to have it roll wide of the far post. It was almost the exact time he broke in alone during the World Cup final against Germany and also shot wide. Higuain also missed a tap-in of Ezequiel Lavezzi's cross during the final minute of regulation in last year's final, then sent his penalty kick during the shootout over the crossbar. —AP

## ITALY DUMP SPAIN OUT OF EURO 2016

**PARIS:** Giorgio Chiellini and Graziano Pelle scored the goals as Italy exacted revenge for their Euro 2012 final hammering by dumping Spain out of Euro 2016 with a deserved 2-0 last 16 win in Paris yesterday.

Chiellini forced home the winner from close range after goalkeeper David de Gea could only parry Eder's fiercely struck free-kick. Pelle volleyed in a deflected cross in injury time to complete Spain's heartbreak.

After crashing out of the World Cup in the first round, Vicente del Bosque's team have now failed to get to the Euro quarter finals.

A series of De Gea saves kept Spain in the game, but their quest for an unprecedented third consecutive Euro title peetered out as Gianluigi Buffon saved from Andres Iniesta and Gerard Pique late on to set up a mouthwatering quarter-final clash with Germany on Saturday in Bordeaux.

Spain had lost just one of their previous 11 meetings with Italy, including a 4-0 win in the Euro 2012 final. But the Azzurri were by far the better side in the opening 45 minutes and could have been more than one goal up at the break.

De Gea had been much-criticised for his performance as Spain's 15-game unbeaten in the Euros came to an end on Tuesday

with a 2-1 defeat to Croatia which cost them top spot in Group D.

However, the Manchester United stopper more than made amends when he turned Pelle's bullet header wide on eight minutes.

Emanuele Giaccherini's acrobatic effort was then turned onto the post by De Gea, albeit referee Cuneyt Cakir had already blown for a foul as Italy continued to dominate the early exchanges. It took Spain 28 minutes to even have an effort on goal as Iniesta's weak shot was straight at Buffon.

Antonio Conte's side finally made the breakthrough 12 minutes before half-time when Spain captain Sergio Ramos unnecessarily dived in on Pelle to concede a free-kick on the edge of the box.

Eder's powerful effort was parried by De Gea only as far as Giaccherini and he nudged the ball into Chiellini's path to bundle home.

**SAVING GRACE**

Only a De Gea wonder save to tip a fiercely dipping drive from Giaccherini over kept Spain in the game before half-time.

Spain coach Vicente del Bosque introduced the more physical presence of 35-year-old striker Aritz

Aduriz for Nolito at the break.

And it nearly paid dividends straight away as Alvaro Morata-kept quiet in the first 45 minutes by former Juventus teammates Chiellini, Andrea Barzagli and Leonardo Bonucci-headed a golden chance straight at Buffon.

De Gea was called upon once more to block from Eder when the Brazilian-born Inter Milan forward burst clear on goal with the chance to double Italy's advantage.

Another Italy counter-attack then caused chaos in the Spanish defence as Mattia de Sciglio's low cross ricocheted around the box before being cleared.

Aduriz swept the ball wide and Ramos headed over from a corner as Italy began to settle on their one-goal lead in the final quarter.

Iniesta's rasping volley was tipped over by Buffon, before Pique's long-range effort stung the palms of the 38-year-old.

However, with Aduriz having to be replaced by Pedro Rodriguez due to a head knock, Spain didn't have a recognised striker in their search for an equaliser in the final 10 minutes.

Italy comfortably held on and Pelle doubled the lead with his poacher's strike in the first minute of injury time. —AFP



SAINT-DENIS: Italy's defender Giorgio Chiellini (R) shoots to score the team's first goal during Euro 2016 round of 16 football match between Italy and Spain at the Stade de France stadium in Saint-Denis, near Paris, yesterday. — AFP