

## Sports

# Messi 'bitter' as Colombia stun Argentina in Copa America match

## Argentina can still make knock-out stages with games against Paraguay, Qatar

**SALVADOR:** Lionel Messi said his team was feeling bitter after Argentina lost their opening Copa America match 2-0 to Colombia despite dominating the second half. Goals from Roger Martínez and Duvan Zapata in the final 20 minutes gave Colombia their first tournament victory over Argentina in 20 years as Messi's hopes of finally landing a major international tournament after losing in four finals suffered a serious blow.

"We leave here feeling bitter," said Messi following the Group B clash in Salvador. "In the second half we had our chances." One of the best of those fell to the 31-year-old Barcelona icon but he headed wide after Colombia's goalkeeper David Ospina got down quickly to push out a header from center-back Nicolas Otamendi.

But although Argentina dominated possession and created more chances in the second period, they rarely caused Ospina any serious concerns. "We didn't want to start this way, obviously, but now we have to lift our heads and keep going," said the five-time Ballon d'Or winner, who lined up in an enviable forward trio with Manchester City's Sergio Agüero and Angel Di María of Paris Saint-Germain.

"In the first half we retreated a little and were holding on, but in the second we really opened up," said Messi, the Argentina captain. "Whenever you lose it's hard for us, we usually take it badly. Now we have to think about Paraguay."

Argentina can still make the knock-out stages with games against Paraguay and guests Qatar, the Asian champions, to come. Midfielder Leandro Paredes, who forced a diving save out of Ospina with one long range

strike and sent a second whistling past the post, was pleased with the second half performance.

"We created a lot but unfortunately they scored in our best period," he said.

Colombia were the better side in a goalless first half but scored twice against the run of play in the second period, with both goals coming from substitutes.

"I came on and helped my team. We did the best we could and we managed to turn the game around at the end of the second half. We played really well," said Zapata, who this season helped Italians Atalanta qualify for the Champions League for the first time in their history. Portuguese coach Carlos Queiroz, who only took over Colombia after leaving his job with Iran at the end of the January-February Asian Cup, paid tribute to the side's collective effort.

"Colombia as a team was the best player on the pitch. We played with a lot of discipline, concentration, with responsibility, and players with the quality of James (Rodríguez) and (Radamel) Falcao helped us a lot in this organization," said Queiroz.

And he praised his team for "controlling Messi a bit," noting that "we're always talking about him and you cannot neutralize him."

Both he and Argentina counterpart Lionel Scaloni agreed that each side had their moments during the game. "In some moments we were on top, then they were superior to us—that's how football goes, there are different stages in matches," said Scaloni. Colombia, though, are well placed to win the group now. "We're still a long way from where we want to go," warned Colombia's playmaker James Rodríguez. —AFP



**SALVADOR:** Argentina's Lionel Messi (L) and Colombia's Davinson Sanchez vie for the ball during their Copa America football tournament group match at the Fonte Nova Arena in Salvador, Brazil. —AFP

## Antuna hat-trick helps Mexico to rout Cuba in Gold Cup opener

**PASADENA:** Uriel Antuna scored a hat-trick as Mexico got their Gold Cup campaign off to a dominant start with a 7-0 rout of Cuba in their opener at the

Rose Bowl on Saturday. The 21-year-old was a last-minute replacement for injured defender Jorge Sanchez in the Mexico squad for the tournament and the addition paid big dividends.

The LA Galaxy midfielder gave Mexico the perfect start in their quest for a seventh Gold Cup title when he scored in the second minute of the match, moments after Raul Jimenez had hit the post from close-range.

Antuna, who just made his international debut 10 days ago off the bench against Venezuela, gave his team a 4-0 advantage in the 44th minute, then capped his night with a final goal in the 80th minute.

Jimenez scored twice, while Diego Reyes and Ernesto Vega also tallied for El Tri. Cheered on by a

supportive crowd, Mexico showed no sign of letting down their fans despite missing key figures like Hector Herrera, Javier "Chicharito" Hernandez, Carlos Vela and Hirving Lozano from their squad.

It was a first competitive win for new manager Gerardo "Tata" Martino, who was hired back in January and had overseen three friendly wins against South American opposition. Cuba, making their first Gold Cup appearance since 2015, have now lost to Mexico four times in as many meetings in the biennial championship of the North, Central American and Caribbean region. Canada earlier thrashed Martinique 4-0 at the same stadium in Saturday's other Group A match. — Reuters

## Froome confident of full recovery after horror crash

**LONDON:** Chris Froome said Saturday "he is lucky to be here" after suffering multiple fractures in a high-speed crash that ruled him out of the Tour de France.

Froome, 34, was airlifted to hospital in Saint-Etienne for emergency surgery after slamming into a wall at high speed during practice on Wednesday ahead of the fourth stage of the Criterium du Dauphine race in central France.

The force of the impact fractured his pelvis, right femur, hip, right elbow and left him with broken ribs. "I know how lucky I am to be here today and how much I owe to all the paramedics and medical staff on the race," said Froome.

Froome will miss out on a chance to win a record-equalling fifth Tour de France title next month, but after successful surgery there is hope he could return to cycling in six months.

"Whilst this is a setback and a major one at that, I am focusing on looking forward. There is a long road to recovery ahead, but that recovery starts now and I am fully focused on returning back to my best," Froome said in a statement given by Team Ineos.

He was pictured in a hospital bed, smiling and giving a thumbs-up to the camera. "This is obviously a tough time but I have taken a lot of strength from the support over the last three days. The outpouring of support has been really humbling and something I would never have expected." Froome was travelling at around 50 kilometres per hour when a gust of wind hurtled him towards a wall after he momentarily took his hand off the handlebars to blow his nose. In thanking the medical care he has received, the British rider also acknowledged his gratitude to the medical services.

"I'd like to extend my gratitude to the Team, especially Doctor Richard Usher and his medical staff, who have been exemplary since the crash. "In addition, I am so thankful to the emergency services and everyone at Roanne Hospital who assisted and stabilised me, as well as the surgeons, doctors and nurses at the University Hospital of St Etienne, who have really gone above and beyond the call of duty, for which I am ever so grateful."

Froome may be gone from the Criterium du Dauphine but he is not forgotten with Dutch climbing specialist Wout Poels of his Team Ineos dedicating his win in the mountainous penultimate stage on Saturday to the stricken Briton.

"It's great news for the team and this is a present for Chris," Poels said after the win. "It was nice to have the freedom to go for the win, but it's sad for Chris." On the Tour de Suisse, meanwhile, where reigning Tour de France champion and teammate Geraint Thomas is taking part, Ineos team director Gabriel Rasch said it was business as usual.

"There's no extra pressure on the guys this week given what has happened to Froomey," he said. Meanwhile, Thomas said all of Team Ineos was behind Froome in his recovery. "It's scary. It's never nice to hear, especially when it's a close friend," Thomas told BBC Wales.

"It sounds horrific really. It was one of those where he would have had time to actually think; he knew he was about to crash. "It wasn't 'boom' and you're on the floor before you know it. It was one of those where you try to save it. That's the worst."

"It sounds like he was lucky to come away with the damage he's done really. It could have been a hell of a lot worse." —AFP

## Fury batters Schwarz, eyes Wilder rematch

**LAS VEGAS:** Unbeaten British heavyweight Tyson Fury outclassed Germany's Tom Schwarz to score a victory by second-round technical knockout Saturday. Fury, determined to put on a show on his Las Vegas debut, overwhelmed Schwarz with a dazzling display of ringcraft before unloading in the second round at the MGM Grand Garden Arena.

The flamboyant 30-year-old had established his dominance early, rocking Schwarz repeatedly with a series of stiff left jabs in the opening round that rapidly reddened the previously unbeaten German fighter's face. In the second round Fury bamboozled Schwarz by switching to southpaw, once again landing blows on his less experienced opponent with ease.

Fury had Schwarz on the canvas after uncorking a crisp right-left combination, blood pouring from the German fighter's nose. He then cornered Schwarz and unfurled a series of unopposed punches that left referee Kenny Bayless no option but to wave an end to the fight. "The key tonight was to enjoy myself," Fury said afterwards. "I used the jab, I was slipping and sliding."

"I came here to have fun and put on a show for Las Vegas and I hope everyone enjoyed it as much as I did," added Fury, who had entered the ring wearing a Stars and Stripes-themed costume to the strains of James Brown's "Living in America."

"I felt like it was my coming out party," Fury added. "I wanted to show a few things to the American public to introduce myself properly. And tonight I showed a little bit of speed, boxing skill, an ability to slip and slide and most importantly, to finish."

The win saw Fury improve to 28-0-1 with 20 knock-outs and will heighten demand for a rematch against undefeated WBC heavyweight champion Deontay Wilder. Fury and Wilder fought an epic battle in their first meeting in Los Angeles last December, when Fury famously got up from a 12th round knockdown to earn a draw. Fury said after his win on Saturday that his camp is planning one more fight, either in late September or early October, before a rematch with Wilder early in 2020.

"What's next? Next year we're going to hunt down Deontay Wilder for that green belt," Fury said. Fury's US promoter, legendary boxing impresario Bob Arum, suggested a rematch with Wilder could surpass the earnings records set by Manny Pacquiao and Floyd Mayweather's 2015 bout.

"I've been around a long time," Arum said. "And this guy (Fury) is right now easily the best heavyweight in the world, maybe one of the all-time best heavyweights."

"I mean how do you deal with a guy who is 6ft 9in and moves the way he does? He's something else and something special." Arum said that next year's likely rematch with Wilder would take place in Las Vegas.

"The fight will be in the first quarter of next year," he said. "Right now, I can't see why that fight won't surpass Mayweather-Pacquiao." Fury's win came a fortnight after Britain's WBA, WBO and IBF heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua was stunned by Andy Ruiz Jr. in a massive upset in New York. —AFP



**NICE:** Sweden's midfielder Elin Rubensson (C) celebrates after scoring a goal during the France 2019 Women's World Cup Group F football match between Sweden and Thailand, yesterday at the Nice Stadium in Nice, southeastern France. — AFP

## Sweden cruise past Thailand to make Women's WCup last 16

**NICE:** Sweden cruised into the knockout stages of the Women's World Cup yesterday after comfortably seeing off Thailand 5-1 to move top of Group F. Peter Gerhardsson's side are three points ahead of tournament favourites the USA, who take on Chile later on Sunday in Paris, after a routine win that however saw emotional scenes when Kanjana Sung-Ngoen scored a late consolation goal for the Thais.

Linda Sembrant and Kosovare Asllani put the Swedes two up after 19 minutes with Fridolina Rolfö rifling a long-range finish three minutes before the break. Lina Hurtig headed home at the end of a flowing move with nine minutes left before the Thais, reeling from a humiliating record 13-0 defeat to the Americans in their opening match, restored pride through captain Sung-Ngoen's drilled near post finish.

The goal sparked wild celebrations and even tears from the Thai players and coaching staff, but VAR stepped in to dampen their mood when Natthakarn Chinwong was judged to have handled in the area deep into stoppage time.

Elin Rubensson made no mistake from the spot to complete an easy win and her side's qualification from the group. Should the USA beat Chile as expected the Swedes will have to defeat them in their final match on Thursday if they want to win the group, due to the Americans' whopping goal difference advantage.

Meanwhile, Canada beat New Zealand 2-0 in a

women's World Cup Group E game in Grenoble on Saturday to cement a place in the second round and leave the Kiwis on the brink of elimination.

Earlier in Valenciennes, the Netherlands saw off a spirited Cameroon 3-1 to also move to six points in the group and secure their place in the last 16. Canada had beaten Cameroon 1-0 in their opening game while New Zealand had battled hard before losing to an injury-time Dutch goal.

On Saturday, Canada again dominated and bombarded the New Zealand goal with 22 total strikes, 11 of them on target. The Canadians took the lead after 48 minutes. Nichelle Prince raced down the left wing, where the New Zealand defence had struggled even before right back C.J. Bott went off injured in the 17th minute.

Prince cut in along the goal line and then pulled a precise pass back to Jessie Fleming who side-footed the ball inside the far post. Prince added a second after 78 minutes, poking home a rebound from close range after Christine Sinclair's powerful downward header hit the inside of the post.

Despite the assist, it was another frustrating evening for 36-year-old Sinclair who is chasing retired American Abby Wambach's record of 184 international goals. Sinclair remained on 181 goals for Canada after nodding the ball against the bar in the first half, skying a shot from a precise low cross by the outstanding Janine Beckie early in the second and hitting the post before Prince's goal. Canada and the Netherlands meet in Reims on June 20 to decide who will top the group. At the same time, New Zealand will play Cameroon in Montpellier. As things stand, a win could be enough to take either team through to the second round as one of the four best third-place teams, although that could change by kick off. — Agencies