



Argentina wins record 16th Copa America title, beats Colombia 1-0 after Messi gets hurt



Copa América 2024

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. (AP) — Argentina won its second straight Copa America championship, overcoming Lionel Messi's second-half leg injury to beat Colombia 1-0 Sunday night on Lautaro Martínez's 112th-minute goal.

Messi appeared to sustain a non-contact injury while running and falling in the 64th minute and covered his face with his hands as he sat on the bench and sobbed.

Martínez later ran to that bench to hug his captain after the goal that propelled Argentina to its record 16th Copa title.

In a match that started 1 hour, 22 minutes late because of crowd trouble at Hard Rock Stadium, Argentina won its third straight major title following the 2021 Copa America and 2022 World Cup and matched Spain, which won the 2008 and 2012 European Championships around the 2010 World Cup.

Argentina also stopped Colombia's 28-game unbeaten streak dating to a February 2022 loss to the Albiceleste.

Martínez entered in the 97th minute and scored from Giovani Lo Celso's perfect through pass after Leandro Paredes stripped the ball from a Colombian just short of the center stripe.

Just inside the penalty area, Martínez sent a right-foot shot through the upraised arms of sliding goalkeeper Camilo Vargas for his 29th international goal, his tournament-high fifth.

Appearing to be limping after the final whistle sounded well past midnight, Messi beckoned for his senior teammates to lift the trophy with him: 36-year-old Nicolás Ottamendi and Ángel Di María, who is retiring from the national team.

As white confetti cascaded, the trio hugged.

"The truth is, it's hard to describe," Di Maria said. "It was written like that. I told the guys last night at dinner that I dreamt it. That's why I said it was my last Copa America. I dreamt we made it to the final and we won it so I could go out this way.

"I'll be always grateful to this generation who gave me everything, helped me win what I always wanted and today, I am leaving like this," Di Maria said. "It could not be better."

Making his 39th and possibly last Copa America appearance at age 37, Messi had one goal in the tournament. He went down after an ankle was stepped on in the first half but remained in the game.

The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner looked to the bench as soon as he fell to the field in the second half, appearing to know his tournament was over. He took off his right boot as he walked off and slammed it in frustration, and his ankle appeared to swell. With his right foot bare, he stood by the bench and raised his arms while teammates ran onto the field when Martínez scored.

The start was delayed from 8 p.m. EDT to 9:22 p.m. because of crowd control issues outside the stadium, including troves of fans breaching security gates at a venue to be used for the 2026 World Cup.

Days after Uruguay players were involved in a brawl with Colombia fans following their semifinal match in Charlotte, North Carolina, video showed fans climbing fences and railings to get inside the championship match, with officials unable to keep track of who had purchased tickets and who didn't.

Colombia was more aggressive and forced goalkeeper Emiliano Martínez to make four saves in the first half, but Argentina began to threaten more in the second.

Nicolás Tagliafico thought he scored in the 75th minute but was ruled offside. Nicolás González, who replaced Messi, was stopped by Vargas in the 95th minute.

Numerous players lost their footing during the second half of Sunday's match. The grass was heavily watered with sprinklers following

the halftime performance by Colombian pop star Shakira, which caused an extended halftime break. Colombia's James Rodríguez was selected best player of the tournament

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