

Saudi Arabia stun Messi's Argentina

Saudi Arabia rocks Argentina with two second-half goals to come back from 1-0 down and seal a famous World Cup victory

● **Messi had scored opening goal on last bid for World Cup glory**

● **Al-Shehri and Al-Dawsari the matchwinners for Saudi Arabia**

AFP

Saudi Arabia stunned Lionel Messi's Argentina yesterday, beating the two-time winners 2-1 in one of the biggest upsets in World Cup history.

Salem Al-Dawsari hit a stunning winner to sink the red-hot favourites, bringing the South American side's 36-match unbeaten run to a shuddering halt.

The win was fully deserved after Saudi Arabia came from behind after Saleh Al-Shehri cancelled out an early Lionel Messi penalty.

Playing a risky high defensive line, the athletic Saudis rode their luck in the first half when three times Argentina had the ball in the net only to be denied by an offside call.

But in a chaotic start to the second half, the Saudis swarmed all over Lionel Scaloni's team and scored twice as the Arab nation beat the South Americans

for the first time in five attempts.

In a first half dominated by Argentina, it seemed only a matter of time before Saudi Arabia's risky defensive tactics would cost them.

That condensed the game into a sliver of green turf around the halfway line as the Asian side happily allowed Argentina's back four to pass the ball among themselves.

It seemed Saudi Arabia were

YOU KNOW WHAT

The unlikely victory by a team made up entirely of Saudi-based players was sealed by a somersault by Aldawsari, who brought down a high ball just inside the penalty area, spun his way past Nahuel Molina with the help of a ricochet, dribbled past Leandro Paredes and drove a powerful shot to the far corner in the 53rd

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All the stars aligned for us. We made history for Saudi football

SAUDI ARABIA COACH HERVE RENARD

facing a long afternoon after VAR intervened to award a penalty when Saud Abdulhamid wrestled Leandro Paredes to the ground in the box at a corner.

Messi waited for goalkeeper Mohammed Al-Owais to dive to his left before coolly rolling the ball into the opposite corner.

But if the Saudis felt aggrieved at the technology, it would later help keep them in the game.

Three times Argentina had the ball in the net only to be denied by razor-tight offside calls, the first given by VAR.



There was no controversy about the equaliser three minutes

Saudi Arabia's Salem Al-Dawsari celebrates after scoring his side's second goal

FIFA World Cup results

Argentina	1-2	Saudi Arabia
Denmark	0-0	Tunisia
Mexico	0-0	Poland
France	4-1	Australia

Today's matches

Morocco v Croatia - 1PM
Germany vs Japan - 4PM
Spain vs Costa Rica - 7PM
Belgium vs Canada - 10PM



Saudi Arabia's Saleh Al-Shehri fights for the ball with Argentina's Cristian Romero

Saudi Arabia declares public holiday

Saudi Arabia declared a public holiday today immediately following their nation's shock win over Argentina at the

World Cup.

The holiday applies to all employees in public and private sectors, as well as students.

Messi a clear shot at goal.

Every Al-Owais save, including a point-blank block from Nicolas Tagliafico's close-range prod, was greeted with rapturous cheers.

There was late drama after Al-Owais collided with Yasser Al-Shahrani and seemed to knock him out as his knee struck the defender's head.

Feisty Tunisia hold Eriksen's Denmark at World Cup



Denmark's Christian Eriksen controls the ball during the match

AFP

Tunisia held Denmark to a goalless draw in their World Cup opener yesterday, kicking off their Group D campaign with a strong performance against one of the pre-tournament dark horses.

Tunisia have never reached the World Cup knockouts in five previous attempts but Jalel Kadri's side will be encouraged both with a point at Education City Stadium and with how they performed against the fancied Danes.

Since Kadri took charge of the team in January Tunisia have only lost to Brazil and they frustrated Denmark in front of thousands of noisy North Africans.

Christian Eriksen was largely anonymous on his return to major tournament football after nearly dying on the pitch at the European Championship last year, wilting in the face of

ferocious defending.

Denmark had come into the match as favourites but Tunisia tore into their more illustrious opponents from kick-off, flying into tackles.

Messi says World Cup defeat to Saudi Arabia a 'very heavy blow'

AFP

Lionel Messi said Argentina's shock loss to Saudi Arabia was a "very heavy blow" but vowed the South American champions would bounce back from the defeat.

"It's a very heavy blow, a defeat that hurts, but we must continue to have confidence in ourselves," Messi said after Argentina crashed to a stunning 2-1 loss in Group C.

"This group is not going to give up. We will try to beat Mexico," he added.

In the second half, coach Lionel Scaloni's men failed to ex-



Argentina's Lionel Messi stand beside Saudi Arabia's players after their match

loit the Saudis' high defensive line in the way they had managed before the break.

"We know that Saudi Arabia is a team with good players, who move the ball around well and play a high line," said Messi.

"We worked on that but we rushed it a bit. There are no excuses, we're going to be more united than ever before.

"This group is strong and has

shown it before. We had not been in this situation for a long time. Now we must show that this is a true group."

The Albiceleste have two Group C games remaining -- against Mexico on Saturday and then Poland the following Wednesday -- to try to salvage their hopes of claiming a third world title.

Playing in his fifth and prob-

ably final World Cup, Messi has the weight of an entire nation's expectations on his shoulders.

One of the greatest players of all time, this may be his last chance to lift football's greatest prize, which his predecessor as Argentina's idol Diego Maradona did in 1986.

"We have to go back to the basics of who we are. We have to think about what's coming next," said the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner.

Argentina fan turns to Saudi Arabia's jersey, swaps kit mid match with Saudi fan

TDT | Manama

A video of an Argentine fan from the World Cup venue has gone viral on social media.

As Argentina was sure to

end the match with a loss, a video of a fan exchanging his Argentine jersey with a Saudi one went viral. The latter part of the video shows celebration by Saudis in the stadium.



Left, an Argentine fan removes his jersey, right, he celebrates wearing a Saudi jersey



Argentina's last defeat was by Brazil in the semi-finals of the Copa America in July 2019. They are ranked third, 48 places above Saudi Arabia, by world football's governing body FIFA