

Beat: Sports

Mbappe double sees France past Argentina in 4-3 thriller

SPORTS NEWS

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USPA NEWS - Teenager Kylian Mbappe scored two goals in four minutes to send France charging into the World Cup quarter-finals and Lionel Messi home with a thrilling 4-3 win over Argentina on Saturday.

The 19-year-old forward's electric pace caused Argentina problems all afternoon and his twin strikes helped France overturn a 2-1 deficit and set up a quarter-final date with Portugal or Uruguay, who play later on Saturday.

While Mbappe was the most influential player on the pitch, Argentina's Angel Di Maria and France full back Benjamin Pavard fought out a private contest for the best goal of the contest with two magnificent long-range strikes.

Di Maria's goal cancelled out Antoine Griezmann's early penalty to put Argentina on equal terms just before the break, while Pavard's in the 57th minute levelled up the scores at 2-2 after Argentina had gone ahead through Gabriel Mercado.

Mbappe, the first teenager since Brazilian great Pele in the 1958 final to score two goals in one World Cup match, then took over to send Argentina slumping out of the finals before the quarter-final round for the first time since 2002.

Twice champions Argentina got a consolation through substitute striker Sergio Aguero in added time but they simply could not cope with Mbappe's pace from his first surge towards the box after nine minutes.

Javier Mascherano brought him down and Griezmann crashed the subsequent free kick off the bar from 25 metres but France only had to wait a couple of minutes to break the deadlock.

Mbappe set off on another driving run from well inside his own half and Marcos Rojo, well beaten for pace, bundled him to the floor inside the area.

Griezmann's strike from the spot was not as clean as his free kick but goalkeeper Franco Armani went the wrong way.

EARLY ONSLAUGHT

France looked like doubling their lead after 19 minutes when Mbappe set off to chase a Paul Pogba ball and Nicolas Tagliafico hauled him down.

The referee decided it was a free kick on the edge of the box, however, and even if Pogba blasted high over the bar, Argentina looked shell-shocked at Mbappe's early onslaught.

Four minutes before the break, though, they were level, Di Maria received a pass from the left, took one touch to tee up the ball and hit the sweetest shot into the top-left corner of the net from 40 metres.

Three minutes into the second half and they were ahead, Messi curling a shot hopefully towards Hugo Lloris in the France goal and right back Mercado reacting instinctively to deflect the ball into the net.

The Argentina fans were now in full voice but their joy did not last long before France restored parity after 57 minutes, Pavard pouncing on an over-cooked cross some 20 metres out and lashing it on the half-volley into the net.

Mbappe's first goal came seven minutes later when he snared a loose ball, taking one touch to race past his marker and lashing it home with his left foot through Armani's dive.

His second came after 68 minutes at the end of a beautifully flowing French move with Olivier Giroud providing the subtlest of touches

to lay the ball into Mbappe's path and the teenager finishing right-footed with some elan.

Argentina continued to fight over the last 20 minutes but Aguero's header from Messi's cross in stoppage time was too little, too late.

Editing by Ken Ferris

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