Lionel Messi's World Cup Victory Validates His Status as the Greatest

By Blessing James

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The defining image of this World Cup's conclusion remains etched in memory: a heartfelt embrace with the coveted trophy. Lionel Messi, after years of anticipation, has finally embraced the World Cup glory. In a night brimming with drama and emotion, it was a perfect culmination for the player often hailed as the greatest of all time.

Even though his illustrious career had been marked by remarkable achievements, there was one accolade that had eluded Messi – the World Cup. This time, with nerves of steel, he converted two critical penalties, addressing what some deemed a minor weakness in his otherwise impeccable game. Notably, his additional goal came from his less-favored right foot. It was a match that silenced every doubt. The puzzle of football? He had indeed completed it.

In achieving this feat, Messi joins the ranks of Pele and Diego Maradona as a World Cup-winning legend. The final showcased not only the brilliance of Messi but also Kylian Mbappe's exceptional skills. Yet, in essence, this victory was a testament to Messi's unique accomplishment, setting him apart from his peers. At last, the missing piece was in his possession.

Leading Argentina to Triumph

The Messi narrative demanded its arch, and the World Cup fulfilled that role perfectly. Throughout history, the allure of a gifted individual's struggles has remained captivating – imperfections make them more relatable. Messi's journey to greatness, although less overt in its challenges, had been consistently successful.

This aspect of his life, however, had occasionally left observers somewhat detached. Even as his remarkable numbers spoke for themselves, there lingered a sentiment that Messi hadn't evoked the raw emotions comparable to those stirred by Maradona. Carlos Mac Allister, who shared the pitch with Maradona and now celebrates his son Alexis as a World Cup champion alongside Messi, echoed this sentiment.

"Undoubtedly, Messi stands as the greatest in all of history," he recently affirmed. "I'm rational and believe in what I see. Messi's statistics are compelling." Yet, a caveat remained – the emotional depth Maradona had provided eluded Messi.

From a teenage Champions League winner to pivotal roles in Barcelona's triumphs before the age of 24, Messi's resume was replete with accomplishments. He secured an Olympic gold medal at 21, earned seven Ballons d'Or, and scored over 800 goals. However, there was a notable void – the Copa America title was insufficient.

The World Cup marked his final trial, the tournament that had proven elusive despite his formidable will. This fifth and last opportunity arrived at a juncture when his prowess appeared to be diminishing. He was no longer the standout player at his club, let alone on a global scale.

Overcoming Challenges and Achieving Glory

Messi's journey to World Cup triumph wasn't bereft of setbacks. Enduring a setback against Saudi Arabia, he was compelled to reveal his struggle. Leads slipped away – once to the Netherlands and twice to France. Nevertheless, Messi persevered, overcoming these hurdles. This achievement was neither swift nor effortless, rendering it all the more exceptional.

This stage of Messi's career unveiled a version of him battling his 35-year-old physique, devoid of the blistering pace that once made him an unstoppable force. His genius, however, shone through as he skillfully navigated this challenge, demonstrating his ability to outwit opponents with a mere glance or subtle feint.

His talent transcended goal-scoring, encompassing his exceptional reception and delivery of passes.

It was a collaborative effort that propelled Messi to this triumph. Memories of 2010 reminded him of the significance of the right manager, while the misses of others, alongside his own in the 2014 final and the turbulent 2018 tournament, underscored the arduous path he traversed.

Throughout the World Cup, Messi's leadership was evident, forging strong bonds with his teammates. His influence extended beyond the pitch, inspiring camaraderie and unity within the team. As Lionel Scaloni aptly noted after the final, "He imparts an unparalleled sense of purpose to his teammates – a player, a person who contributes immensely to his teammates."

In return, his teammates mirrored this sentiment. Julian Alvarez, a childhood fan turned teammate, recognized Messi's influence. Rodrigo De Paul embraced the role of Messi's protector, while Emiliano Martinez shared his genuine joy for Messi's success.

A Transformed Messi: Adapting for Glory

This World Cup encapsulated a transformed Messi – not only in his playing style but also in his demeanor. Embracing his emotions, he channeled his passion for the national team, contributing to Argentina's triumph under Scaloni's guidance.

His popularity reached unprecedented heights, with even opponents seemingly rooting for his victory. Instances of admiration emerged – Mexico's captain introduced his son to Messi, Australia's players sought selfies after defeat, and Croatia's Andrej Kramaric openly supported Messi's quest. The sentiment even extended to England, where some preferred Messi's victory over their own national success.

The narrative around Messi shifted during this World Cup, revealing a more assertive and passionate side. This assertiveness, however, contrasted with his usual composed demeanor in Catalonia. Yet, it resonated with the cultural

expectations of Argentina, where a fiery spirit was embraced as a symbol of dedication to the nation.

Just as Messi adapted, so did Argentina to accommodate him. Scaloni's tactical acumen recognized that the team's best chance at victory lay in optimizing Messi's talents. Surrounding him with supporting players, such as Nahuel Molina, Alexis Mac Allister, and Julian Alvarez, created passing options that enhanced Messi's impact.

Positioned strategically in the half space, Messi unleashed a series of defining moments. From his match-altering contribution against Mexico to his gameshifting brilliance against Australia, his influence was undeniable. The pass that set up Nahuel Molina's goal, along with a mesmerizing dribble against Croatia, added to his repertoire of standout moments.

The Triumph in Numbers

Despite moments where he seemed to glide through matches, Messi consistently exhibited his decisive prowess. He became the first player to score in both the group stages and the subsequent four knockout rounds of a World Cup. His tally of seven goals would have secured the Golden Boot were it not for Mbappe's late penalty. He led in shots taken, ranked second in chances created, and was third in successful dribbles.

In achieving these milestones and more, Messi has transformed the World Cup from a point of criticism to a stage of glory. He surpassed Maradona's World Cup goal tally against Australia and eclipsed Pele's record against France. This victory, a pinnacle of the sport, wasn't just a personal triumph; it was a momentous achievement for the game itself.

The Ultimate Culmination

As Messi stood at the pinnacle of his career, he reflected on his remarkable journey. "I can't ask for anything more," he humbly acknowledged after his crowning achievement. "After this, what more is there? I've achieved the Copa America and the World Cup. It came to me almost at the end."

A night of enchantment, a month of indelible memories, and a legacy forever sealed in chronicles of history – Messi's triumph in the World Cup has etched his name as the unrivaled maestro of football.

For the enjoyment of his readers and followers, Blessing James, a content writer and editor who manages two fantasy football leagues and blogs, occasionally publishes blog posts about hot football topics.

He previously received a vote for best article writer in 2021. For his coverage of football, particularly the English Premier League and Fantasy Premier League, he has won numerous local awards. He is a devoted football fan who enjoys the sport and has gained a large following on various social media platforms. He has sponsored several notable publications on newspapers and magazines.