

D10S

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Last game of the Qualifiers for the World Cup, a win needed to make it to Russia, and all eyes on Messi himself.

What happens next?

A masterclass.

A hat-trick from La Pulga to secure a place for next year's tournament. An efficient clutch performance, an outrageous chip, and persistence was needed to book a ticket for next summer. The Ecuadorians were left flat on their backs by the end of the match – they simply had no way to stop the monster they were facing.

Argentina's hopes didn't even last a minute as Ecuador scored first. But the little man wasn't having any of it. Not tonight. Within the next 20 minutes he scored twice to give his nation the lead in one of their most important matches in history at a stadium where not even Maradona could get 3 points.

Messi's been carrying this team for far too long and as long as Sampaoli doesn't get his team selection right it will continue to happen. It's been about 11 months since someone not named "Messi" scored for Argentina this campaign. 3 managerial changes, dismal form without Leo, and overall inefficiencies almost cost the greatest ever a spot in another World Cup.

I have no idea where this team would be without him and what they would do without him. Maybe Messi does have some regrets over the day in 2004 when he chose to play for Argentina instead of Spain. But one thing is for certain: he plays his heart out. Always. He bleeds for a nation in which some still disrespect him through comparisons to a drug-addict and jealous old man.

His calmness, his coolness, and apparent ability to keep all frustration inside will always be something used to define him. And it's certainly something I'll remember him for. This is a team that doesn't deserve him especially after all these years as they've let him down final after final. There's one more chance now for everything to be fixed. With Messi in his usual form, a manager who knows what he's doing, and some nation-carrying as per requirement, things look a bit

hopeful for La Albiceleste. A Messi with a smile on his face like last night is a Messi we all love and we all hope to see. This man deserves gold in his hand next summer and deserves everything he has his eyes set on. A sight like that would certainly bring tears to the eyes of millions.

This was an appreciation post for Leo Messi, the greatest of all time and all that's he done, especially for his nation. And for those who don't know, "Dios" means God in Spanish. Leo Messi is the God of Football. Now and always.