

Scaloni says Argentina showed self-belief in late win over Chile

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Online Desk :

World champions Argentina showed their steel and killer instinct as they beat Chile 1-0 on Tuesday to book their place in the Copa America quarter-finals.

Lautaro Martinez's 88th-minute winner delighted the 82,000, overwhelmingly pro-Argentina crowd at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey.

It leaves Chile, Copa America winners in 2015 and 2016, needing to beat Canada on Saturday to have hope of staying in the tournament.

Argentina are chasing their third straight major title after their Copa win in 2021 and World Cup triumph the following year, and the confidence that comes with success was evident.

Despite valiant resistance from Chile, Lionel Scaloni's team never lost belief as they delivered another performance full of grit, allied with the flair and imagination that delights their fans.

"It was a well-deserved win," said Scaloni.

"The truth is that the match was not easy and we won in the least expected moment, I would say," he added.

"But as always the team kept believing and kept attacking even though they started to stretch a bit more in the last 10 or 12 minutes."

Scaloni praised the work of Chile's Argentine coach Ricardo Gareca, who took over in January, calling them "a very, very tough opponent".

Argentina's midfield, with Enzo Fernandez and Alexis Mac Allister in the middle and Rodrigo de Paul and Nicolas Gonzalez out wide, had the upper hand for most of the game.

Liverpool's Mac Allister said they had to earn that dominance.

"It was very hard, we knew it was going to be like this. Generally these games are like a war, there is like a fight between the two teams. It was a nice show, we all gave 100 percent and in the end we ended up winning," he said.

Chile's draw against Peru leaves them with just a solitary point and needing to beat Canada, who upset the Peruvians earlier on Tuesday.

Gareca said he was sure his team could get the result they need.

"I think we have a chance, our chances are still intact in the last game, we're going to give everything to have a chance of qualifying," he said.

"It was a tough, complicated match, as you would expect. I think the guys played a great game in terms of, more than anything, trying to control Argentina," said the much-travelled 66-year-old.

“In the second half we loosened up more. And the goal... was something that has to do with luck because, you see, it’s a deflection off the back of an Argentina player,” he added.

“On balance Argentina had more chances than us in the end.”