

Messi's first World Cup hat-trick sinks Algeria

June 17, 2026

Online Desk : Lionel Messi opened his record-breaking sixth World Cup with a hat-trick to become the tournament's joint all-time top scorer on Tuesday as holders Argentina launched their bid for back-to-back titles with a dazzling 3-0 rout of Algeria. On a magical night at Kansas City's 69,045-capacity Arrowhead Stadium, Messi delivered an electrifying individual display to join Miroslav Klose at the top of the World Cup scorers charts with 16 goals.

The 38-year-old had started an unforgettable occasion — his 200th international appearance — by claiming a piece of history, becoming the first man to play in six World Cups as he led Argentina onto the field for what would become a one-sided Group J clash. Messi, who first played in the World Cup as a teenager during the 2006 finals in Germany, then emphatically stamped his class over proceedings with a memorable hat-trick — the first of his World Cup career.

A 17th minute curling strike took his World Cup goals tally to 14, putting him alongside German legend Gerd Muller and France superstar Kylian Mbappe in the all-time rankings. He then moved one clear of Muller and Mbappe to join Brazilian great Ronaldo on 15 goals in the 60th minute after pouncing on a rebound from an Alexis Mac Allister shot to make it 2-0.

He joined Germany's Klose on 16 goals in the 76th minute, sweeping in a low finish from the edge of the area before departing to deafening applause and a standing ovation from an adoring crowd four minutes later. Argentina defeated France in an epic 2022 World Cup final in Doha, winning on penalties after a 3-3 draw that saw Les Bleus striker Mbappe score a hat-trick.

Mbappe off the mark

France — who could meet Argentina in the final again this year if seedings follow the form book — launched their tournament on Tuesday with a 3-1 defeat of Senegal, with Mbappe scoring twice to suggest he is more than ready to deliver another big World Cup.

“There are still people out there who will criticise him but he is an extraordinary player,” France coach Didier Deschamps said of Mbappe. “Not everything came off for him, but he can win games in one moment.”

Mbappe's double against the Senegalese also saw him overtake Olivier Giroud as France's leading goalscorer with 58 goals from 99 games.

“I am really pleased for him. He didn't score in the warm-up friendly games but to break the record at the World Cup gives it more impact,” Deschamps added.

Another potent scorer, Erling Haaland, marked his first World Cup finals appearance with two goals in a 4-1 romp against Iraq in France's Group I.

The Manchester City striker pounced from close range on 29 minutes in Foxborough, but Aymen Hussein's header brought Iraq level before Haaland capitalised on an Iraqi defensive error to put Norway ahead again before half-time. He took his international goals tally to 57 in just 51 matches.

Substitute Leo Ostigard headed in a third for Norway and they got a fourth deep in stoppage time through a Hussein own goal to secure three points in their first appearance at a World Cup since 1998.

Haaland's goalscoring World Cup debut left Norway coach Stale Solbakken purring with satisfaction.

“You could see that he adapted to the occasion, the occasion wasn’t too big for him,” said Solbakken.

“I had a good feeling before the game. I had quite a comfortable feeling that he would do it for us today.”

In the late game on Tuesday, World Cup debutants Jordan face Austria in Santa Clara, California in Group J.

Source: AFP