KEY STATS

Argentina forward Lionel Messi has been man of the match in all four of his nation's outings at the finals, netting four goals and setting up Angel Di Maria to score the winner against Switzerland in the last 16.

Saturday's match will be Messi's 91st international, equalling Argentina great Diego Maradona in joint sixth on the nation's all-time list.

Argentina have survived six of the seven times they have had to play extra time or a shootout at the World was on penalties to Germany in the 2006 quarterfinals.

Belgium's victory against the United States in the last 16 meant they equalled their record of seven straight wins in all competitions from 1979-80.

Argentina v Belgium

Argentina will once again turn to Lionel Messi for

inspiration when they tackle star-studded

Belgium in Brasilia on Saturday in a World Cup

Victory would take Argentina into the last four

- where either Holland or Costa Rica will await -

for only the second time since they last won the

tournament in 1986, beating Belgium in the

But despite results living up to expectations -

Argentina have won all four of their games to date

performances have not, and the team's depend-

With four goals in three matches, the

Barcelona megastar was his side's saviour in

the group phase, while in the 1-0 extra-time

victory over Switzerland in the last 16 he

seemed the only player capable of making a

Diego Maradona was scathing of the team's

Sergio Aguero is a serious doubt for the

ment's success will teach a "lesson" to those

"We are very proud that the things that we

proposed to do have taken place the right way,"

Lula told a group of foreign journalists in Sao

performance, warning coach Alejandro Sabella

that he is destined for "catastrophe" if he cannot

lived up to his billing so far.

AFP, Sao Paulo

who predicted failure.

lesson to the pessimist.'

DONOVAN SLAMS

TACTICS

ence on Messi has been cited as the key factor.

quarterfinal haunted by ghosts of yesteryear.



At the centre ... once again Argentina will be looking to superstar Lionel Messi (blue shirt) to inspire the side when they take on Belgium in the World Cup quarterfinal in Brasilia today.

মানসম্পন্ন বাংলাদেশী পণ্যের ব্যবহার শিল্প বিকাশে সহায়ক



Misfiring Pipita a concern

Gonzalo Higuain's failure to score at the World Cup has become a source of concern for Argentina ahead of their quarterfinal showdown with Belgium in Brasilia on

Up to now, Argentina have advanced without convincing thanks to Lionel Messi, who has contributed four goals and two assists, but even the Barcelona superstar will struggle to overcome Belgium singlehanded.

With Argentina's other star forward, Sergio Aguero, struggling with an injury and likely to miss the Belgium game, coach Alejandro Sabella needs Higuain to rediscover his form

His relative height (6'0", 1.84m) and physical bulk (82kg) would appear to make him the ideal foil for an Argentine attack where feet and inches are in short supply,

Thus far, the Argentine supporters who have travelled to Brazil in their thousands have seen Higuain perform well

but the reality has proven quite different.

Although his entrance as a substitute in Argentina's opening 2-1 win over Bosnia-Hercegovina changed the game and earned him a starting place, his displays against Iran, Nigeria and Switzerland were disappointing

The legacy, perhaps, of the weeks he spent on the sidelines after injuring his ankle in early May, Higuain was slow in his movements and inaccurate in his passes.

Not only he did not score, but he contributed precious little to his side's attacking play, particularly in the last-16 tie against the Swiss.

Criticised during his time at Real Madrid, but adored at Napoli, the man known as 'Pipita' is not, however, deterred by the big events. At the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, he scored three

goals in the group phase against South Korea and another against Mexico in the last 16. "Every striker needs to score goals," he said before the

game against Switzerland in Sao Paulo. "But he also has to help the team. I hope it [the goal] will come soon, but I'm pretty relaxed about it."

For all his current travails, Higuain's record of 21 goals for Argentina in only 40 international matches suggests that he

Who will be the David?

Manchester United-bound van Gaal. But the coach has shown cool tactical nous and oppor- Having lifted Costa Rica to their first Since then there have been seven games tunism, first by redeploying Kuyt and also using the World ever World Cup quarterfinal with a in the Champions League, La Liga and the Cup's first cooling break to switch tactics against Mexico. Spanish Super Cup where Courtois and fate Costa Rica have problems in defence with centre-back country overcome Greece, keeper

to stop there," said Ruiz.

Oscar Duarte -- who scored a brilliant header against Uruguay -- suspended and the left-sided Roy Miller an injury concern. sharpshooters in his sights. Up front, expect another starring role from Campbell, 22, whose eye-catching tournament could prompt Arsenal to to turn away Theofanis Gekas's wellrecall him after loan spells at Lorient, Real Betis and struck penalty rounded off a fine

NETHERLANDS V COST RICA

The irresistible fairytale of Costa Rica faces a day of reckon-

ing against Louis van Gaal's hard, calculating Dutch side on

Saturday in the Brazil World Cup's most unlikely

Few believed that Costa Rica, a small Central American

country with an undistinguished footballing record, would

still be standing, especially after a group including Italy,

Yet "Los Ticos" shocked Uruguay and Italy to top a group

Despite the talents of Joel Campbell and Bryan Ruiz in

attack, it has been more a case of grit and organisation than

Latin flair with Jorge Luis Pinto's side conceding only two

Costa Rica have already outdone their best World Cup

performance, reaching the last 16 in 1990, much to the

jubilation of fans back home whose celebrations have

Whether the parties continue depends on the

The 2010 finalists began the World Cup with a heady 5-1

Objections surfaced over their counter-attacking style after

And much sympathy for the Oranje evaporated when

After a furore over those comments Robben will not expect

But the Bayern Munich flyer's duel against Keylor Navas,

Navas, who is expected to recover from a shoulder injury, can

also expect a work-out from Robin van Persie with emerging

In a blow to the Dutch, midfield enforcer Nigel de Jong is

PSV Eindhoven star Memphis Depay likely to figure later on.

any favours from Uzbek referee Ravshan Irmatov, who is yet to

one of the World Cup's goalkeeping heroes whose onehanded penalty stop denied Greece, will be closely watched.

Arjen Robben, after earning the injury-time penalty that

the 2-0 win against Chile, which was achieved with two late

goals and with veteran forward Dirk Kuyt playing left-back.

sank Mexico 2-1, admitted diving during the last-16 tie.

give a penalty in his eight-game World Cup career.

Netherlands, whose hard-nosed approach and late come-

backs have already dashed the dreams of millions of fans in

rout of reigning champions Spain, and then came from

bracketing three World Cup winners, before battling past

Greece on penalties after playing an hour with only 10 men.

England and Uruguay

goals so far and scoring five.

stretched long into the night.

behind to beat Australia 3-2.

Chile and Mexico.

Ticos' trial

by Dutch

Playing behind Campbell will be the assured Ruiz, 28, Los Ticos teammates withstood a completing an attacking duo which has yielded three of Greek avalanche after Oscar Duarte's Costa Rica's goals so far.

The Fulham forward said Costa Rica were capable of normal time. shocking the Dutch -- a seismic upset for the World Cup, but one which would find favour with neutrals and romantics. "Saturday's game is like a final for us, but we don't want to me in my whole life," he said.

Navas inspires Costa Rica out with a groin injury, meaning a reshuffle for the AFP, Salvador

Netherlands' Arjen Robben, embroiled in the diving controversy, will have to keep

his composure when his side meet Costa Rica in the World Cup quarterfinal in

lot. We played with the heart, we gave of the likes of Thibaut Courtois and our lives out on the pitch. man-the-match display to help his "With one man less what we tried to Keylor Navas now has the Netherlands'

was how it went." Navas's huge outstretched left hand out wasn't by chance, but just another part of his meticulous preparation. individual performance as he and his

this is down to hard work.

red card with 25 minutes to go in of it going to penalties and so we had in the group stages. "This is something marvellous, one The 27-year-old Levante goal- to Colombian manager Jorge Luis

of the nicest things that has happened keeper's form comes as no shock to Pinto's influence, the central those who have seen him become Americans have now just conceded "When I saw that my teammates had arguably the best shot-stopper in all of once from open play in 400 minutes of

confidence in me before the shootout La Liga last season, with the highest started, it lifted me. We had suffered a saves-to-shots ratio in the league ahead

Victor Valdes. His 10 million euro buyout clause do was get to penalties. I asked God if looks certain to be met by a host of he would help me save one and that suitors this summer, including La Liga champions Atletico Madrid as Courtois

PHOTO: REUTERS

However, his success in the shoot- heads back to his parent club Chelsea. Indeed the surprise of Costa Rica's "We had studied their penalties, all a group involving former world cham-

glorious run, which also saw them top pions Uruguay, Italy and England, is "We always knew there was a chance that Navas wasn't needed to be a hero

A superbly organised outfit, thanks



African champions Nigeria risk an international ban due to government interference after a court sacked the football federation's executive committee

Nigerian Sports Minister Tammy Danagogo on Thursday appointed Lawrence Katiken as sole administrator of the NFF. The move comes in the wake of Nigeria's World Cup campaign which came to an end on Monday with defeat to France in the last 16.

Danagogo acted after a high court in Plateau State granted an injunction stopping elected NFF president Aminu Maigari, his executive committee and the NFF congress from office. This represents direct interference by government in football, which has in the past incurred worldwide bans handed down by FIFA.

Nigeria were threatened with a FIFA ban in 2010 just after the Super Eagles crashed out of the 2010 World Cup hosted



The Netherlands have come from behind to win three times at the 2014 World Cup, equal to West Germany in 1970. No

Arjen Robben and Wesley Sneijder have scored six World Cup goals. They both need one more goal to equal Dutch record holder Johnny Rep.

CONCACAF team to

reach the World Cup

semifinals since the

United States did so in

the first ever tourna-

ment in 1930.

team has achieved th

four times at a World

Cup.



LAST MEETING: ARGENTINA 2-0 BELGIUM (25 JUNE 1986, FIFA WORLD CUP)

KEY PLAYERS



CAPS GOALS SCORED

TEAM FORMATION

5-4-1 Courtois : Alderweireld, Vertonghen, Witsel, van Buyten, Kompany, 4: Mirallas, Fellaini, Lukaku,

Romero 4: Zabaleta, Rojo Fernandez, Garay 3: Mascherano Gago, Di Maria 3: Lavezzi, Higuain, Messi,

HEAD-TO-HEAD

HEAD TO HEAD: THEY HAVE NEVER FACED EACH OTHER

KEY PLAYERS

JOEL CAMPBELL





4: Vlaar, Martins Indi De Vrij, Verhaegh 3: Blind, Wijnaldum, Depay,

Diaz Campbell, Umana 4: Gonzalez, Ruiz, Tejeda Valverde, Borges 2: Bolanos, Campbel



Belgium have a Hazard of their own

REUTERS, Salvador

Jan Vertonghen.

Belgium pointed to Eden Hazard as a potential match winner as they laid out a strategy to combat Lionel Messi and Argentina when they meet in their World Cup quarterfinal in Brasilia on Saturday. "Hey, we've got Eden," teammate Kevin

the Pele Museum in Sao Paulo on Wednesday.

Mirallas said on Thursday as reporters have a lot of good players on the bench. It is sought answers to the question of dealing exceptional to have so many different with the threat of Argentina's multiple qualities in a squad. We are certainly not World Footballer of the Year award winner. "You can't compare him with Messi or [Cristiano] Ronaldo, but he is still some- the Brazilian capital might even prove easier

Seeing off Argentina's talismanic threat "It is understandable that in the group will be a communal effort, added defender phase we played against cagey teams and found it difficult against them. "We have to stand together as team. If "Against the Americans [in the last 16]

scared about Saturday."

Costa Rica goalkeeper Keylor Navas (R), along with defender Junior Diaz, took time off to have a look around the

wins under their belt in Brazil already.

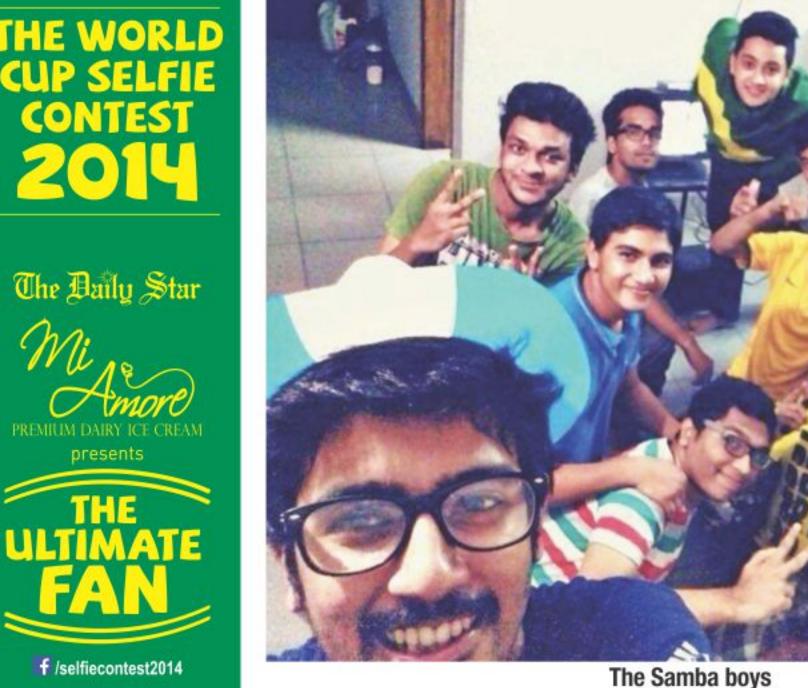
against." Vertonghen insisted.

than their previous matches at tournament. Messi gets past one of us, then there must a there was much more room and I expect

Midfielder Axel Witsel said the game in

second and third player ready to stop him." Argentina to look to dictate the play."

But he added it was Argentina who had more to fret over as they prepared a game plan against the Belgians, who have four "We are a team that is difficult for an opponent to prepare against and to play "We can play different systems and we presents FAN f /selfiecontest2014







MY LOVE MY LOVE
MY FOOTBALL

WC GOALS

4-3-3

De Bruyne, 1: Hazard

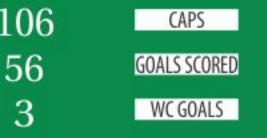
COSTA RICA

ARJEN ROBBEN









TEAM FORMATION 4-4-2

Cillessen 4: Gamboa, Acosta, 3: Sneijder, Robben, Van Persie

MI AMORE TASTE OF TOGETHERNESS

Landon Donovan, the United States' record scorer who was left out of the World Cup squad, has criticised

Paulo. "This cup will serve as a

coach Juergen Klinsmann's tactics during their campaign which ended with a 2-1 second round extra-time defeat by Belgium. Klinsmann's decision not to include 32-year-old

Donovan in his 23-man squad surprised and unfortunately in the Netherlands game, many fans and pundits and increased the third goal, I was pretty disappointed with speculation that the pair did not see eye-to- my effort," Ryan, said in comments

critique of the German coach's approach.

"I think the most disappointing is we didn't seem like we gave it a real effort, from a A LESSON TO NAYSAYERS tactical standpoint," he was quoted as saying Brazil's former president Luiz Inacio Lula da on the Major League Soccer official website. Silva, who secured the World Cup during his administration, said Thursday the tourna-

alleviate some of the burden on the team's him at bay for seven games in succession.

BRAZILIAN BAURU

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By SINGER

Argentina's assault on the World Cup was subplots in a game that carries strong echoes of supposed to be spearheaded by their 'Fantastic the last World Cup encounter between the teams

Four' attackers, but Messi is the only one who has in Mexico City, which Argentina won 2-0 thanks

Belgium game due to a muscle injury, Gonzalo the brilliance of one prodigiously gifted player,

Higuain is still waiting for his first goal, and whereas Belgium's success was built upon the

despite scoring the winner against the Swiss, emergence of an exceptionally talented genera-

'I LET THE COUNTRY DOWN' Australia goalkeeper Mat Ryan was on the verge of tears after letting through the goal that dumped the Socceroos out of the World Cup and is no less hard on himself after a few weeks to reflect.

to a glorious Maradona brace.

inexperienced Socceroos' defence, the 22-year-old conceded nine goals from three matches and is still tormented by the Memphis Depay strike that gave Netherlands a 3-2 win.

On the last line of an

Ryan was slow to pick up midfielder Depay's speculative shot from well outside the box and the lunging keeper managed only to get a "It's never easy for a

goalkeeper to make a mistake

published by News Ltd. While Donovan has been careful with his "It was probably the hardest five days of words in his television appearances during the my life yet. It's never good making a tournament, the team's exit prompted a pointed mistake, let alone on the world stage in Brazil and at the World Cup, and I felt like I Will Thibaut Courtois's height work as an advantage against Lionel Messi's Argentina?

It is likely to be no different against Belgium assists in the group-phase wins over Algeria and

by the fact that the opposition goalkeeper,

and Messi's task will be rendered doubly difficult Russia, the Chelsea winger is yet to score. Thibaut Courtois of Atletico Madrid, has kept Belgium do not have dependency issues of their

The Messi-Courtois duel is one of many

Then, as now, Argentina were dependent on

[Kevin] De Bruvne," he said. "Eden might be picked out by the international press as the star of the squad, but what I see is that Belgium are a block who don't depend on with style.

balance" in Argentina's team and he has been aided by the news that captain Vincent Kompany should be fit to start despite an ongoing groin campaign this season, which is why his parent study him to know what he's going to do.

Marcos Rojo's suspension, meanwhile, means

on Argentina's left flank.

Basanta too, " said Sabella.

Angel Di Maria has delighted and exasperated in tion of players While the Belgian side of 1986 boasted the Facing accusations that his side are overly razor-sharp creative instincts of Enzo Scifo, the Messi will have the latest of their epic battles reliant on their number 10, Sabella said that current team can call upon Eden Hazard, but "Argentina have always had a dependence on the 23-year-old is yet to fully catch fire in Brazil.

However, coach Marc Wilmots is adamant that

"When the opponent lets him, he's dangerous, but it's the same thing with [Dries] Mertens and

the performances of a single player." Wilmots has vowed to exploit a "lack of

With Aguero unlikely to recover in time, 15 Ezequiel Lavezzi is expected to continue in attack for Argentina at the Mane Garrincha National Barcelona and Courtois's Atletico that added

Contender v Dark Horse AFP, Salvador If Argentina's Lionel Messi has anything to work about at this World Cup it should be a worry about at this World Cup it should be a goalkeeper known as "the Tarantula" he has failed to score against in their last seven clashes. Belgium goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois and

> when their countries meet in the World Cup final at Barca's expense. quarterfinals in Brasilia on Saturday. Although he came up with crucial and timely It is almost a David and Goliath tale. The question is which is which? The 1.99 metres (6 feet 6 inches) tall

past Courtois but was ruled offside. Courtois towers over his 1.69m (5ft 7 inch) Courtois, who inspired the word The Argentine winner of four Ballon d'Or awards is a giant among attackers though, scoring four times already at this World Cup. Courtois is known as "The Tarantula" because foes believe he has eight arms to

Still only 22, Courtois racked up his 100th Atletico Madrid's Spanish title-winning he's so unpredictable that it's impossible to

club Chelsea say they want him back for 2014- "As soon as he finds a way to shoot, he will It is the matches between Messi's goalkeeper is concentrate at all times," he

secure victory in the return Spanish championship game. In December 2012, there was another Messi brace in a 4-1 win.

have denied the Argentine, leading Atletico to the Spanish title and Champions League In two games, Messi went off injured. He slammed a penalty against the crossbar in another and in May this year got the ball

'Thibauting' when a wave of social media photos were posted of fans re-enacting his saves at home or work, remains confident of keeping up his spider's web protection. "I know him well from Atletico's games

against Barcelona, so it'll be nice to play keep all angles covered. And he has done it against him for our countries," Courtois told ESPN television in an interview this week. "The good thing is that I don't have to career clean sheet against Russia in their Group watch videos of him because I know him so H match last week. He played a key role in well. But even if you watch videos of him,

shoot, so the only thing you can do as a

makes their rivalry so special. "Hopefully we can win, but we'll see." In their first meeting in September, 2011, Bookmakers seem to favour Messi in the that unheralded left-back Jose Maria Basanta will Messi humiliated Courtois with a stunning match and the tournament. He is still be tasked with shackling the dangerous Mertens hat-trick in a 5-0 win at Barcelona's Camp number one contender to win the Golden Nou stadium. The following February, a Boot for the top scorer at this year's World "Rojo is very good, but we have faith in quick free-kick flummoxed the Belgian to Cup. Another part of history also favours Argentina. Belgium lost to Argentina 2-0 in

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES