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FREE TVS FOR FREE SCORING BELGIUM

A Belgian electrical chain's offer of reimbursing people buying a TV for the World Cup if the team scores more than 15 has got Dries Mertens excited. "My friends bought the television. So I want to score a lot of goals to give a free television to my friends," he said.



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SPORT

FIFA WORLD CUP RUSSIA 2018



FRANCE 4-3 ARGENTINA

Lionel Messi, Argentina captain and one of the best players of modern times, cuts a forlorn figure during his side's 4-3 defeat against France in the second round fixture at the Kazan Arena yesterday, which might very well have been the last time the world has seen the magician on world football's biggest stage.

PHOTO: REUTERS

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TODAY'S MATCHES

ROUND OF 16

SPAIN

V

RUSSIA

Time: 8.00pm

CROATIA

V

DENMARK

Time: 12.00am [Monday]

ALL TIMES BST

Mascherano calls time on Argentina

AFP, Kazan

Argentina's most-capped player Javier Mascherano called time on his international career Saturday after the painful World Cup defeat to France.

"It's time to say goodbye," the 34-year-old ex-Barcelona, Liverpool and West Ham midfielder said after Argentina were dumped out in a 4-3 last-16 defeat by France.

"I hope that all the lads who follow in my footsteps can achieve what they are aiming for," he told Argentina's TyC sports channel.

"There are no more illusions for me," Mascherano added.

Mascherano made his international debut in 2003 and went on to appear 147 times for his country.

He played 334 times for Barcelona before leaving at the end of last season for China to join Herbei China Fortune.

'Mbappe made the difference' I'm no Pele'

AL-AMIN from Kazan

Before the start of the game or even a few hours earlier, it were the Argentina fans who were making all the noise, on the streets, in the bus, in the train and on their way to the Kazan Arena. They sang a popular song which means – Argentina is the best team in the world, its supporters are the best in the world and they have got the best players in Messi and Maradona.

They sang it loudly when their team were 1-0 down and it worked. Argentina equalised through a spectacular left-footer from Angel di Maria. It turned even louder when they took a 2-1 lead just after the restart. However, after France made it 4-2, thanks to Kylian Mbappe's double strike in the space of four minutes, the Argentina fans tried to reignite their players with that popular song. But that was not as forceful as it was before. The otherwise festive Albiceleste fans left the ground silently, and the venue and its surroundings turned into a graveyard within an hour after the game.

It was a game in which Argentina tried everything in their power to stay alive. But they lost the plot against speed, and more precisely the speed of Mbappe, who was born in 1998, when the Les Bleus won their first-ever World Cup.

"This was a good year to be born even if he did not see much of the 1998 World Cup. I'm very happy Mbappe is a French citizen and what he did in such an important match was

very good. He showed all his talent," France coach Didier Deschamps told reporters after the game.

Deschamps observed that his young striker was even quicker and created more space and also played at the central part of the field.

"He has a lot of abilities and qualities and he is only 19-20 years old; he made a lot of progress," said the 1998 World Cup winner.

He said that it was a deliberate ploy which forced Argentina to defend.

"It was best for us because Argentines are much better in attack rather than defending," said the French coach adding that they were successful most of the time to break the Messi, Banega and Mascherano trio.

Both France and Argentina came into the game with a lot of criticism for failing to show their full repertoire of potential. But yesterday's

seven-goal thriller was really entertaining.

"The team has showed what it could do -- though they don't have a lot of experience in the World Cup. It was very rewarding because of what was at stake in this particular match.

On the other hand, there were a lot of highly experienced players who were able to manage those situations well. Even though we conceded the third goal, not everybody is perfect," said Deschamps, adding that he wanted to enjoy the victory rather than taking about his quarterfinal opponent.

His Argentina counterpart Jorge Sampaoli also admitted that Mbappe made the difference between the two sides.

"We played against a team that is very very fast. We were able to turn the match around but after a very short time during a very strange play we lost our advantage. We have had a situation that we could not control like the very good pace of Mbappe who played really well," said the under-fire Argentina coach.

He also said that there was not much of a difference between the two sides.

"I don't think there is any difference between Argentina and France in terms of developing the game. France went for counter-attacks while we went for ball possession and even though we know we have very fast opponents during counter-attacks, I think we really fought. They scored three goals in the second half but we fought and we got the opportunities and we nearly managed to equalise," added Sampaoli.

AFP, Kazan

France's teenage forward Kylian Mbappe, who scored two goals as Les Bleus beat Argentina in the round of 16 yesterday, brushed off comparisons with Brazil great Pele.

"I'm very happy, and it's flattering to be compared to a great player like Pele," he said.

"But he's in another category. Still, it's great to join the list of players that have achieved such feats."

Mbappe was born in 1998, the year Les Bleus secured their first World Cup title under captain Didier Deschamps.

Deschamps, now national manager, praised his team's character to fight back from 2-1 down.

"If I am a coach it is because I want to live this: a full stadium, highly experienced teams. Our team is much younger, but it's there," Deschamps said.

"We answered the call, we have a lot of character and it was not easy as we were leading, then there was an equaliser, then we were 2-1 behind, but we kept fighting."

দমে নিভ্বতায়...

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