

MESSI'S
45TH CAPS

Argentina's
triple crown



MOST COPA AMERICA TITLES WON

- 16 - ARGENTINA
- 15 - URUGUAY
- 9 - BRAZIL
- 2 - CHILE, PARAGUAY, PERU
- 1 - BOLIVIA, COLOMBIA

STAR SPORTS DESK

Lionel Messi has shattered yet another record in his storied career as the Argentine maestro is now the most decorated footballer in the game's history with a record of 45 title wins.

Argentina defeated Colombia 1-0 in the final to win their second successive Copa America title in Miami and with it, Messi edged past his former Barcelona teammate and Brazilian rival Dani Alves to become the most decorated footballer ever.

This was Messi's fourth straight international title, having won the Copa America in 2021, the Finalissima in 2022 and the FIFA World Cup in 2022 before defending the Copa title this year in the USA.

Messi has enjoyed a total of 39 titles in his club career, 35 of which came with Barcelona.

He has won a total of 12 league titles (10 with Barcelona, two with PSG), four UEFA Champions Leagues trophies (all with

Golden Boot: Lautaro Martinez (Argentina)

Best Player: James Rodriguez (Colombia)

Golden Glove: Emiliano Martinez (Argentina)

Fair Play Award: Colombia

Barcelona), and 17 domestic cups (a total of 15 with Barcelona, one with PSG and one with Inter Miami).

He has also won three UEFA Super Cups and three FIFA Club World Cups with the Catalan giants.

Messi has also won the Under-20 World Cup trophy and an Olympic gold for Argentina. The 37-year-old is also holder of eight Balon d'Or trophies, most by any footballer. So far, he has netted 838 goals and 374 assists in his career.

The tournament almost ended on a sorry note for Messi who had to be replaced in the second half due to an ankle injury.



I dreamt it, that's why I said it was the last Copa America and it ended here. I dreamt that I would reach the final, I dreamt that I would win it, that I would retire like this.....I have so many beautiful feelings. I am eternally grateful to this generation, they gave me everything, they made me achieve what I wanted so much, and today I am leaving in this way, how better than this?

Argentina's retiring forward
ANGEL DI MARIA



Start of a new
SPANISH ERA?

AFP, Berlin

Spain conquered Europe for a record fourth time on Sunday as they beat England to win Euro 2024 and want this historic night to be the beginning of a new period of dominance.

Led by young stars Lamine Yamal and Nico Williams, 17 and 22 respectively, many in Luis de la Fuente's superb side will hit their prime in the years ahead.

Between 2008 and 2012 Spain dominated international football, winning the Euros in those years and the 2010 World Cup in the middle.

A fallow period followed with Spain falling badly short in most competitions until reaching the semifinals of Euro 2020.

It was a positive sign but a last 16 defeat by Morocco at the 2022 World Cup spelled the end of Luis Enrique's reign and the start of what was to come.

No longer dependent on dominating possession, Luis de la Fuente's Spain play to a wide variety of strengths.

Sometimes they do keep the ball, as in the second half of their semi-final win over pre-tournament favourites France, but are not afraid to go direct, with the speedy and skilful Williams and Yamal duo leaving full-backs for dead on the counter.

Spain's football has changed but they are hoping their domination of the international stage will be repeated.



Player of the Tournament: Rodri (Spain)

Player of the Final: Nico Williams (Spain)

Young Player of the Tournament: Lamine

Yamal (Spain)

Golden Boot: Dani Olmo (Spain), Harry Kane (England), Cody Gakpo (Netherlands), Jamal Musiala (Germany), Georges Mikautadze

(Georgia), Ivan Schranz (Slovakia).

Most Assists: Lamine Yamal (Spain) - 4

Most Clean Sheets: Mike Maignan (France) - 4

Most Euro titles won

- 4 - Spain
- 3 - Germany
- 2 - France, Italy
- 1 - Netherlands, Czech Republic, Slovakia Russia, Greece, Denmark, Portugal

"The European champions have been deservedly crowned, today I am even prouder and I hope this impulse will serve to be even better," said De la Fuente.

"You can always improve and that's our objective... we will do it because these players are an example for everyone, they are so good."

Three of the stars from their golden generation, Xavi Hernandez, Andres Iniesta and David Villa, watched on in the Olympiastadion as La Roja lifted a major trophy for the first time in 12 years.



Coach Luis de la Fuente came under heavy scrutiny after a shock defeat by Scotland in Euros qualifying in March 2023, but steadied the ship by winning the Nations League three months later, confirming Spain were on the right track, at least on the field.

With the team no longer dependent on stars from Real Madrid and Barcelona, but instead a real mix including a strong Basque contingent from Athletic Bilbao

and Real Sociedad, Spain believed in themselves and their plan, even if others viewed them as lacking players to compete with the likes of France and England for the trophy.

They beat both, as well as hosts Germany and Euro 2020 winners Italy -- the other four of Europe's 'big five'.

"This is a dream, we are the best national team in Europe," Rodri told ITV.

"Imagine what we have next -- we are so happy. We made history but it doesn't stop here, we have talent and we'll keep going."

They won Euro 2024 without Barcelona midfielder Gavi, who suffered a bad knee injury in November, and the Catalan club's young centre-back Pau Cubarsi, whom De la Fuente left behind this time, but will likely be a key component in the future.

Spain were also without Pedri for the semis and final after he was hurt early in the quarterfinal win over Germany.

It is clear why De la Fuente believes Spain's present is bright but their future can be even brighter.

Alcaraz plotting golden
path to greatness

REUTERS, London

There was a moment of euphoria after Carlos Alcaraz finished off Novak Djokovic to retain his Wimbledon title on Sunday, the usual pumped fists and group hugs with his entourage in the players' box.

But an hour or so later the Spaniard was already back down on planet earth, insisting his journey is only just beginning.

"I've seen and I've heard all the statistics that I am the youngest to win at Roland Garros and Wimbledon the same year," the 21-year-old told reporters after his 6-2, 6-2, 7-6(4) demolition of 24-time Grand Slam champion Djokovic.

"I honestly try not to think about it too much. Obviously it's a really great start of my career but I have to keep going, I have to keep building my path.

"At the end of my career, I want to sit at the same table as the big guys. That's my main goal. That's my dream. It doesn't matter if I already won four Grand Slams at the age of 21."

Alcaraz is indeed the youngest player to

complete the French Open-Wimbledon double in the same year during the professional era and emulated Roger Federer in winning his first four Grand Slam finals, although the Swiss triumphed in his first seven.

Alcaraz's four Grand Slam titles, the 2022 U.S Open, last year's Wimbledon when he also beat Djokovic, and this year's French Open-Wimbledon double, required just 69 matches at the slams.

Federer needed 79 matches, Nadal 81 and Djokovic 134 before notching their fourth Grand Slam titles.

With Italy's world number one Jannik Sinner, winner of this year's Australian Open, vying with Alcaraz for top dog status, the figureheads of a new generation are now established.

Whether or not either can go on to challenge the numbers of the "Big Three" is another question entirely.

"I think being there with Jannik, in the top of the ranking, winning the Grand Slams, I think it is good for tennis to have new faces winning the big things and fighting for the big tournaments," Alcaraz said.



Bangladesh women's cricket team are set to depart for Sri Lanka today to play the eight-nation 2024 Women's T20 Asia Cup, slated to be played from July 19 to 28. The Tigresses yesterday had a photo session in Mirpur before embarking on their Asia Cup mission.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED