Vintage Messi nets hat trick as Argentina hit Bolivia for six

AFP- Lionel Messi struck a vintage hat trick as world champions Argentina romped to a 6-0 win over Bolivia in CONMEBOL World Cup qualifying on Tuesday.The 37-year-old provided an emphatic reminder of his enduring quality with three clinical finishes, two assists and some of his trademark creativity throughout the game as Lionel Scaloni's side dominated.
The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner opened the scoring in the 19th minute when Bolivian defender Marcelo Suarez was robbed by Lautaro Martinez, who sent Messi clear and he cleverly slotted into the bottom corner.

The home crowd at Buenos Aires' Monumental Stadium were on their feet again in the 43rd minute when Julian Alvarez threaded a brilliant pass through to Messi, who unselfishly squared the ball to Martinez to finish.

Three minutes later, Alvarez was on target himself when Bolivia were caught sleeping at a free-kick, Messi chipping the ball over the top and the Atletico Madrid forward slotted home.

After the break, Nicolas Otamendi had a header ruled out for offside but the home fans didn't have long to wait for the fourth when Thiago Almada side-footed home after a superb pull-back from Nahuel Molina

A classic Messi goal made it 5-0 in the 84th – the Inter Miami forward dribbling centrally before switching from his left foot to his right and burying the ball into the bottom corner.

Two minutes later and some fans were in tears after Messi cut in from the right, played a smart wall pass off substitute

Nico Paz and again put the ball beyond the reach of goalkeeper Guillermo Viscarra.

Argentina are top of the 10-team table with 22 points from ten games – three points clear of second-place Colombia, who crushed Chile 4-0 in Barranquilla.

– Colombians crush Chile –

There was a different look to the team, wearing a special retro white kit, marking the Colombian Football Federation's centenary, featuring the national flag's colours in a hoop.

It was a dashing design and the performance of Nestor Lorenzo's team was equally stylish taking apart a woeful Chile side that remain rooted last in the ten-team qualifying group.

Defender Davinson Sanchez opened the scoring in the 34th minute, nodding home after Jhon Lucumi had headed a James Rodriguez corner goalwards.

Jhon Cordoba slotted home a Diaz cross in the 45th minute but the effort was ruled out for offside against Diaz.

Chile gifted the Colombians a second, seven minutes after the interval, when Benjamin Kusevic gave the ball away to Rodriguez, who squared to Liverpool winger Luis Diaz to convert.

Substitute Jhon Duran made it 3-0 in the 82nd minute after another giveaway, this time in midfield, allowed Sinisterra to break and then feed the Aston Villa forward, who made no mistake and Sinisterra then wrapped up the win in stoppage time.

Brazil continued to ease any concerns about their qualification chances with a comfortable 4-0 win over Peru in Brasilia.

A pair of penalties converted by Barcelona winger Raphinha put

the record five-time World Cup winners on their way – the first coming in the 38th minute when Carlos Zambrano handled in the box and the second in the 54th minute after the same defender brought down Savinho.

But there was more to appreciate in the third goal, in the 71st minute, with Andreas Pereira producing a superb scissor-kick volley from a Luiz Henrique cross from the right.

Luiz Henrique completed the rout in spectacular style with a brilliant left-foot drive from outside the box to make it 4-0 and leave Brazil in fourth.

Paraguay boosted their chances of grabbing one of the six automatic qualification spots after substitute Antonio Sanabria scored twice in a 2-1 win over Venezuela.

Full-back Jon Aramburu put Venezuela ahead in the 25th minute, bursting down the right and collecting a pass from Yeferson Soteldo that he buried in the bottom corner.

Torino striker Sanabria was introduced at the interval and he brought sixth-placed Paraguay level when he slid in to meet a low cross from Junior Alonso.

Sanabria then grabbed the winner in the 74th minute, leading a counter-attack before getting into the box to finish off the move with a header from close range.

Uruguay and Ecuador played out a goalless draw.

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