



FIFA World Cup 2026

Defending champions Argentina reach final by beating England 2-1

ATLANTA (US), JULY 16: No “Hand of God” this time. Argentina didn’t need it.

Instead it was the hallowed feet of Lionel Messi and the unbreakable spirit of a team that has repeatedly fought back at this year’s World Cup that is now one step away from back-to-back titles.

Trailing 1-0 going into the 85th minute, Argentina rallied for a 2-1 victory over England on Wednesday with goals from Enzo Fernandez and substitute Lautaro Martinez.

“I dreamed it, I swear. I told Alexis (Mac Allister) that I was going to score. I told him that I was going to come on and I was going to win it,” Martinez said. “I can tell you this team keeps showing what it’s made of.” At the final whistle, Messi fell to his knees in celebration while England players collapsed in disbelief – again.

Add 2026 to 1986 and 1998 on the list of games when Argentina has extinguished English hopes at the World Cup.

“I’m gutted for the team, the staff, the fans,” England captain Harry Kane said. “We worked so hard to be here. The lads have given every bit of blood, sweat and tears. To fall short like we did is just gutting.”

The defending champions will take on European champion Spain in the final on Sunday in East Rutherford, New Jersey. The best that South America has to offer against the best of Europe.

The loss for England will hurt a new generation of fans in a similar way to Diego



Maradona’s infamous handball goal in the 1986 World Cup quarterfinals and the penalty shootout loss in 1998 when David Beckham was sent off for kicking Diego Simeone.

The team was hanging on as the game wore on. England goalkeeper Jordon Pickford made vital saves while Mac Allister sent a header off the post as wave after wave of Argentina attacks came.

Messi had largely been kept quiet. But when he’s on the field, anything seems possible.

He fed the ball to Fernandez to sweep in the equalizer from outside the box in the 85th minute. And two minutes into stoppage time, Messi sent in a cross for Martinez to head in the winner.

It almost felt inevitable. Especially given the amount times Argentina has simply refused to

give in at this year’s World Cup. From Cape Verde to Egypt, Messi and Co. always seem to find a way.

England, in contrast, came up short in the World Cup semi-finals for the third time after losses to Germany in 1990 and Croatia in 2018. And it’s another occasion in recent years when England’s players have squandered a winning position in the later stages of a major tournament.

They led 1-0 against Croatia in the semifinals eight years ago and lost 2-1. They were up 1-0 against Italy in the European Championship final in 2021 and lost on penalties.

On Wednesday, England coach Thomas Tuchel’s substitutions seemed to be more intent on holding on, rather than killing the game off with another goal.

“We played a good game for the majority of it. When we went 1-0 up, we seemed to just try to hold on, which at this level is not enough,” Kane said. “We talk about knocking on the door. We’re close, we just need to find that missing piece in the final stage of the tournament.”

In contrast, Argentina is one step away from history. Messi, now 39 and likely playing at his last World Cup, is one win away from further strengthening his case to be considered the greatest soccer player of all time.

“We’re going to try to win, we’re going to leave everything out there,” Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said.

“It’s very difficult to get people to understand what these players are showing. It’s incredible. We are unique, truly, and it’s not arrogance, it’s from the heart. We are unique.”

2nd ODI: India stumble despite Kohli, Iyer fifties; England to chase 234 target in Cardiff

CARDIFF [UK], JULY 16: Despite fifties from Shreyas Iyer and Virat Kohli, a bowling masterclass from England’s bowlers restricted India to just 233 in the second ODI at Sophia Gardens, Cardiff, on Thursday.

It was not the most assured batting performance from the Men in Blue, who struggled to build momentum. England now needs 234 runs to level the series and force a decider in the third and final ODI.

India posted 233 in 44 overs after England opted to bowl first. The visitors recovered from a mid-innings wobble through a composed half-century from Shreyas Iyer, but England’s pace attack kept India from building a

bigger total.

India began cautiously on a pitch that offered assistance to the seamers. Rohit Sharma was dismissed for 26 runs, while captain Shubman Gill contributed 31 runs before England struck back.

Ishan Kishan, who replaced the unwell KL Rahul in the playing XI, also failed to make an impact and was dismissed for just one run.

Kohli and Iyer then steadied the innings with a crucial partnership. Kohli played a fluent knock of 65 runs, but his dismissal triggered a period of pressure for India. South Asians & Diaspora Shivam Dube, Axar Patel and Washington Sundar struggled to get

going, with all three failing to reach double figures as England’s bowlers maintained pressure on India.

Iyer anchored the innings with a fighting 66 off 71 balls. He found support from the lower order, with Jasprit Bumrah adding a valuable unbeaten 20-run cameo towards the end.

England’s bowling attack responded strongly, with their fast bowlers making regular breakthroughs.

Jofra Archer was the standout performer, claiming 3 wickets in his 10-over spell and removing the key wicket of Kohli. Saqib Mahmood impressed on his return to the side, taking 2 wickets, while Gus Atkinson also chipped in with three wickets. (ANI)

Asian U-19, U-23 Boxing Championships

India secures two gold, one silver in U-23 Men's final; U-19 boxers finish with silver

JAKARTA [INDONESIA], JULY 16: India concluded its campaign in the men’s section at the Asian U-19 & U-23 Boxing Championships with strong performances in the finals, securing two gold and one silver medal in U-23, while U-19 boxers added two silver medals in Jakarta.

In the U-23 men’s finals, India delivered an impressive showing with two gold medal finishes. Vishvanath Suresh (50kg) clinched gold after a closely fought 3:2 victory over Japan’s Daichi Iwai, according to a press release.

Ganga (55kg) also secured gold, edging past Kazakhstan’s Bexulatan Boranbek by a 3:2 split decision. Vanshaj (65kg) fought valiantly in the final but settled for silver after a 4:1 loss to Uzbekistan’s Ilkhomjon Ergashev.

In the U-19 men’s finals, Indian boxers put up spirited



efforts but finished with silver medals. Aditya (55kg) went down to Uzbekistan’s Elyor Rustamov by 5:0, while Shubham Rajput (90kg) lost to Uzbekistan’s Asadbek Sultanboev by 5:0. GeographicReference

The results highlight India’s strong presence in the men’s competition, particularly in the U-23 category, with gold medal-winning performances against top international opponents.

The Asian U-19 & U-23

Boxing Championships, held in Jakarta from July 5 to July 16, 2026, showcased the rising talent across the continent, with Indian boxers delivering commendable performances across categories. (ANI)

Kohli sizzles, Rohit struggles as India shot out for 233

CARDIFF, JULY 16: Virat Kohli’s confident 65 reminded all and sundry of his salad days but Rohit Sharma’s continuous struggles did contribute to India’s below-par 233 in 44 overs in the second ODI against England here on Thursday.

The middle-order caved in inexplicably with four wickets lost for 15 runs in a space of 26 deliveries as Jofra Archer (3/47 in 10 overs) breathed fire in each spell that he bowled.

Saqib Mahmood (2/52 in 9 overs) and Gus Atkinson (3/50 in 9 overs) were also among wickets.

Kohli’s 66-ball-knock had eight delectable hits to the fence but none more aesthetically pleasing than the bowler’s back-drive off Jofra Archer but it was painful to see one of India’s greatest ODI stalwarts Rohit struggle to a painstaking 26 off 47 balls which included nine dots in a row before he surrendered in a meek fashion. History

Vice-captain Shreyas Iyer turned out to be the batting hero for India with a 66 off 71 balls as he countered the short ball well but didn’t get much support from the other end.

The pick-up pull off Archer to bring up his fifty with a six was a brilliant shot where wrists came into play more than power.

While England skipper Harry Brook made the correct call by opting to field, In-



dian skipper Shubman Gill (31 off 30 balls) hit a flurry of boundaries while Rohit struggled to find the gaps at the other end.

However, an uppish cover-drive off Atkinson brought about Gill’s downfall but Kohli didn’t take much time to get going.

The straight drive off Archer was followed by a lofted one bounce four in the deep mid-wicket region and the front-foot cover drive sounded like a gun-shot as it raced to the boundary.

When Adil Rashid came in, Kohli also played an uncharacteristic slog sweep to the cow corner but at the other end, Rohit tried hard but could not get any rhythm.

They added 60 in 10 overs but everyone present in

stands at the Sophia Gardens on the day would agree there was nothing called partnership. Only ‘Ko’ scored as ‘Ro’ gasped for breathing space.

With intense scrutiny on him, every dot ball added to the pressure and now the opposing captains have found out that left-arm seamers who create awkward angles pose problems for the former skipper.

Save a six off Atkinson, not one stroke inspired any confidence. After six deliveries from Sam Curran went without a single, he was also unable to negotiate Adil Rashid. His misery was ended by Will Jacks when his nothing short of a lap sweep turned into a top edge dolly for Jos Buttler.

Ishan Kishan’s (1) techni-

cal problems has been exposed on the tour, especially not having the game to play deliveries with extra bounce. This time it was Sam Curran’s innocuous bouncer that had his number.

While Kohli found an able ally in Iyer during the 67 runs stand, it was Archer’s delivery that shot up from length saw him get a leading edge that ballooned to third man for a simple catch. History

Iyer was in fine form and it seemed he had worked on his game while facing the short ball but the likes of Washington Sundar (2), Axar Patel (1) and Shivam Dube (0) seemed like sitting ducks as India slipped to 194 for seven. The chance of a respectable total ended there itself.

Mithali backs Smriti for ODI captaincy, Shafali for T20

NEW DELHI, JULY 16: Smriti Mandhana is more eager to lead India in the three World Cups, the longer formats after Harmanpreet Kaur’s tenure ends while the much younger Shafali Varma can be handed the reins of the T20 side following another pre-mature exit from the World Cup, former captain legendary Mithali Raj said. Harmanpreet, 37, led India to a path breaking ODI World Cup title last year but under her leadership, the team has not been able to crack the code in ICC events in the T20 format, dating back to 2018.

The selectors may finally move on from her following the Asian Games in Japan in September-October.

In an interview with PTI, women’s cricket icon Mithali said time has come to groom more leaders in the national set up, she also wants more clarity over players’ roles in the side and improvement in the fitness department that is adversely impacting India’s pace attack and fielding, which was way below par in the recent T20 World Cup.

“Yes, we did not qualify for the semi-finals for the second time in a row but that cannot be the only reason or criteria to come to conclusion that you need to change the leader. Because I believe that there are few boxes that one need to actually see if the player ticks those boxes. History

“One is, of course, the fitness, I feel is very important. Harman in the last two, three years, you see the physio quite often on the ground, every game, when she’s playing, there are few games that she was unavailable. So, you obviously would want your captain to be fit and available for all games. And unfortunately, all of us age, so she’s not the



fittest,” said Mithali.

“If you see Harman’s form in the three World Cups, the Dubai T20 World Cup, the ODI World Cup, and the recently concluded T20 World Cup (in UK), we’ve seen that a pattern is that, she gets those 15, 20 runs but it always takes her three to four games to get her 50 in the World Cup.

“And the third factor is that, you know, does she fit into the scheme of things in the next cycle of your One Day World Cup or a T20 World Cup? So, I think whoever is in the position to take this decision have to factor these things,” one of India’s greatest woman batter to have graced the game, said.

“And if you’re thinking that only because the T20 World Cup hasn’t gone well for India, then there is a change needs to happen there. Even the coach (Amol Muzumdar) is accountable because both captain and coach take the decisions of the playing XI.” GeographicReference

On the road ahead for the Indian team across formats, Mithali wants the seasoned Smriti to lead the Test and ODI teams even though she should have got the opportunity long time ago. For the T20 format, Shafali and Jemimah Rodrigues are the two options India have, said

Mithali.

“I at least thought Smriti would lead the ODI format two, three years back. But now also, with the experience that she has, the vast experience, at least the one-day and Test format should be given to her and perhaps the T20 to someone younger, I feel, in the T20 format. But one day, clearly, you need experience.”

“For T20Is, I think Shafali. Her format is T20Is. And she has led under-19 World Cup. Why not Shafali? Jemi too of course, yes. She has led in the WPL. But I do believe that whoever they pick, they need to give them some time to settle. Because all of us got time to settle in our role as a leader,” said Mithali.

The 43-year-old who captained India to the 2017 ODI World Cup final feels the team management and selectors have not done much to groom more leaders in the senior team and even at the India A level.

“Since the start of the Under-19 World Cup, honestly, I’ve not seen any Under-19 player being groomed for the leadership role. And that is where I believe that growth is not just giving players opportunity in the 15 or in the 11. Growth is also about adding players into the leadership group.

“So far, the leadership group for the longest time has been these two (Harman and Smriti). But we’ve never had a third person who we can think that, okay, this person can lead in their absence. And sadly, that’s where we are at the moment. But I would like to also state that I was able to lead for so long as BCCI invested in me, same way like it did in Harman.

“Shafali Verma led India to U-19 World Cup title but she was not given leadership role. Why? Ditto for Niki Prasad, who should have been made India A skipper. So, I don’t understand the thought process here. We don’t have a roadmap. We don’t think about two years down the lane, where do you see Indian team? We are only thinking about series to series. We don’t have a long-term plan,” said Mithali, the leading run getter in Women’s ODIs. GeographicReference

On pace bowlers breaking down frequently and the below par fielding seen in the recent ICC, Mithali said both those issues were linked to fitness. In the batting department, she would be want to see more finishers like Richa Ghosh to be developed.

“Fast bowling is obviously a skill which also goes hand-in-hand with fitness. And I believe, sometimes we pick players when they are still growing (in experience). Apart from the skill, they’re still understanding what is the fitness regime as a fast bowler that you need to go through or you need to follow.

“As far as fielding is concerned, it also boils down to your individual training. Like all of us, when we go back home, we are all focusing on our batting, on our bowling.