

Iniesta announces his retirement from soccer



Andrés Iniesta

Havana, Oct. 8 (AP) - Andres Iniesta, who scored the goal that won Spain the 2010 World Cup and was one of the key players in Barcelona's tiki-taka success, announced his retirement from soccer.

The 40-year-old midfielder brings to an end a successful 22-year career that includes two European Championships and four Champions Leagues.

"I never thought this day would come, I never imagined it," an emotional Iniesta said at the Barcelona event. "All these tears that we have shed during all these days, they are tears of emotion of pride, they are not tears of sadness."

"They are (the) tears of that boy who had the dream of being a footballer and I got it, we got it, after a lot of hard work, a lot of sacrifice, a lot of effort and never giving up," he added.

Following his departure from Barcelona in 2018, he left for Vissel Kobe in Japan. He spent last season at Emirates in the UAE Pro League.

Since his debut in 2002, Iniesta wore the Barça shirt in 674 matches.

Known for his exceptional ball control and above-average ability to generate play, the Iberian helped anchor the Barça midfield, in which he shared the leading role with Xavi Hernandez and Sergio Busquets, with Lionel Messi in attack. That team shone for years with a fascinating and effective style based on possession, known as tiki-taka.

Iniesta's list of honors also includes nine Spanish league titles and six Copa del Rey trophies with the Catalan club.

“One of the teammates with the most magic and the ones I most enjoyed playing together,” Messi said in a message about Iniesta on his Instagram account. “The ball is going to miss you and all of us too. I wish you the best always, you are a phenomenon.”

Iniesta also helped Spain dominate world soccer with his coronation at the 2008 and 2012 European Championships and the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, where he scored the winning goal in the 116th minute of extra time in the final against the Netherlands with a right-footed strike from inside the box.

At the event in Barcelona, Iniesta was surrounded by his family, as well as Barcelona officials and current members of the team, such as coach Hansi Flick, who was also in attendance.

Tales Azzoni/ AP

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