

*Argentina defeats Ecuador in  
South American soccer qualifiers*

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Havana, September 8 (PL) -- Argentina defeated Ecuador (1-0) on Thursday in the first date of the South American qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup, to be held in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

In the capital's Monumental stadium, the team led by Lionel Messi was received with applause and chants by a crowd that waited hours to see the current champions of the world.

The first half of the match was uneventful and ended without any goals.

However, in the 77th minute, the Scaloneta captain scored a free kick to become the top scorer in qualifying matches at this level.

After the game, Messi assured that his team will continue to fight as it has since the beginning under coach Lionel Scaloni.

Our goal is to continue competing regardless of the opponent. We really enjoyed being world champions, but what we did is over and we have to move forward. We are not going to relax," he said in statements to the press.

Next Tuesday, the Albiceleste will face Bolivia in the city of La Paz.

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