

WORLD CUP 2014 - Final  
Rio de Janeiro, Estadio du Maracana, 13 July 2014

# GERMANY-ARGENTINA

## 1-0 d.t.s.

### AND GOETZE COMES THROUGH IN THE END

Germany are clear favourites after their historic goleada against Brazil in the semi-finals, but Argentina are sneaky and have Lionel Messi. If the Barcelona star is to hold a candle to Maradona, he has to prove that he is also decisive for his national team, as Diego did in 1986, and this is the big chance of a lifetime. He dragged, practically alone, a dull Argentina in the first round scoring four goals in three games, always decisive. Then he slowly eclipsed and Argentina struggled against Switzerland (victory in extra time thanks to the explosive Di Maria), against Belgium (Higuain's goal for the 1-0 final) and in the semi-final against Holland (victory on penalties in the most boring match of the World Cup). Coach Sabella knows he is inferior and, unlike Brazil, fields a shrewd team, covered and ready to strike on the counter-attack, the only way to try and break down the German squadron. Di Maria, one of the best, is also missing, replaced by Ezequiel Lavezzi, while in Germany Khedira gets injured in the warm-up, and Kramer plays in his place. Germany are in no hurry, they know they are stronger and keep the ball moving forward with choral actions, but Argentina are more dangerous playing on the throw-in with Lavezzi and Messi. In the 16th minute there was a nasty clash between Kramer and Garay, the German, who was hit on the head, was knocked unconscious, returned to the field but did not make it and was out in the 31st minute. He will remember nothing of the final afterwards. Kroos, the best man against Brazil, played a header back and set up Higuain alone in front of Neuer, but El Pipita clumsily kicked a moving penalty, missing the most important ball of his life!

Alarm bells for Germany, who tried to shake it off: Lahm's great acceleration on the right, he went down the middle and put in a beautiful cross from the outside for Mueller, who touched it in on goal but Romero overcame in a dive; but the linesman's flag made it all go in vain, Mueller was offside. Shortly afterwards Messi worked some magic in midfield and fired right for Lavezzi, a running cross for Higuain who this time made no mistake and put into the net! But once again the linesman signals offside, again a clear-cut by the Italian trio led by referee Rizzoli. Argentina again, again Messi gives the change of pace, receives from Lavezzi and puts in the middle for Higuain but Schweinsteiger saves it all! Germany suffers the speed of the South Americans, but they respond with the same weapon: Mueller gets away from Zabaleta on the left, ball in the middle back for Schuerrle, who has taken Kramer's place, first-time shot and Romero puts it in for a corner, but Oezil was offside and instead of the corner the ball goes to the Argentinians. Garay's release and Messi takes off, burns Hummels on the sprint and on Neuer's exit touches the middle but Boateng saves everything by anticipating Lavezzi on the line! It looked as if Messi might break the game wide open at any moment, but it was Germany who came very close to scoring at the end of the half: Kroos' corner was headed imperiously by Hoewedes, who beat everyone in the break but the ball crashed against the post! In the second half Sabella took courage, fielding Aguero by removing the excellent Lavezzi (bad idea) to move the team's centre of gravity forward, who immediately had a great chance: Mascherano splendidly launches Messi on the offside line, he burns Hummels again on the sprint, enters the area and strikes a left-footed diagonal shot, it seems the moment of the World Cup consecration, but Neuer has like a magic power over his goal and without intervening he watches the ball cross the entire goal and grazing the post it goes off the bottom. In the 11th minute of the second half, the German goalkeeper avalanches Higuain, hits the ball with his fist but

runs over the Argentine: moments of panic, is it a penalty? No, Rizzoli whistles an incredible foul on Higuain! The penalty wasn't there, but El Pipita certainly didn't do any foul! But he must be happy to still be alive given the 100 kg that fell on his head! After a furious start, Argentina returned to their first-half game, entrenching themselves in defence and playing on the counter-attack, so Germany found no space and time passed without any new emotions.

Klose, commendable for his work in pressing throughout the match, left the World Cup in the 88th minute and was replaced by Mario Goetze, Bayern's 22-year-old young star, who has so far disappointed in this World Cup. The match crowns two dragoons: on one side Mascherano, on the other Schweinsteiger, they are the faces of a final fought on the edge of balance. It went into extra time and Germany got off to a strong start, with Goetze himself making a good play at the back, freeing Schuerrle to shoot just a few yards from Romero, who punched it away. But the chance par excellence happened to Argentina in the 7th minute of the first overtime: Rojo caught Palacio alone in the area, chest control and lob over Neuer's exit, but it was wrong and the ball went out! Sabella changes the forwards but none of them finds the goal... how many missed chances for Argentina, and the match remains locked, the teams tired, the defences careful, penalties seem inevitable. In the second overtime Aguero, already cautioned, jumps up, spreading his arms and punching Schweinsteiger, who loses blood from his cheekbone. A second yellow would have been appropriate, but Rizzoli pretended nothing had happened, conjuring up the ghost of Gonella. Then, eight minutes from time, Schuerrle took off on the left with the ball on his feet, lost two opponents and put a fantastic ball into the centre for Goetze, who controlled it with his chest and volleyed an acrobatic left-footed shot into the far post behind Romero! It was a wonderful goal that rewarded the strongest and punished the wasteful Argentinians, who did not have the strength to attack, also because Neuer shut the door in the final and all the balls that arrived in the area were his. As time expired, there is one last free kick from 30 metres, Messi goes for it, but he shoots it out. Critics will slaughter him for not deciding the match, but he was undoubtedly among the best on the pitch. Germany is World Champion for the fourth time, and perhaps never so strong, not even in 1974. That time he played at home. This time it taught football in Brazil.

GERMANY: Neuer 7, Lahm 7, Hoewedes 7, Boateng 7, Hummels 6.5, Kramer sv (*from 31' Schuerrle 7.5*), Kroos 6, Schweinsteiger 7.5, Klose 6.5 (*from 88' Goetze 7.5*), Oezil 5.5 (*from 120' Mertesacker sv*), T.Mueller 7. Coach Joachim Low.

ARGENTINA: Romero 7, Zabaleta 6, Rojo 6.5, Garay 6.5, De Michelis 6, Mascherano 7, Biglia 6, Perez 5.5 (*from 86' Gago 6*), Higuain 4.5 (*from 77' Palacio 5*), Messi 7, Lavezzi 7 (*from 46'*

*Aguero 5.5*). Coach: Felipe Scolari.

Referee: Rizzoli (ITA) 7

On 112' Goetze 1-0.