

Beat: Sports

Argentina, without Messi, beat El Salvador in Copa tune-up

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USPA NEWS - Argentina began preparations for their Copa America defence with a convincing 3-0 win against El Salvador on Friday.

The 2021 champions were without captain Lionel Messi due to injury but prevailed at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia thanks to goals from Cristian Romero, Enzo Fernández and Giovanni Lo Celso.

Messi will also miss the international friendly against Costa Rica in Los Angeles next week after hurting his hamstring during Inter Miami CF's Concacaf Champions Cup win against Nashville earlier this month.

But the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner was not a big miss for world champions Argentina against an El Salvador side that has now gone 21 games without a win.

Tottenham Hotspur defender Romero put the Albiceleste ahead on 16 minutes with a header from an Ángel Di María corner kick. A second goal came before half-time when Chelsea midfielder Fernandez scored from close range in the 42nd minute.

Lo Celso completed the scoring seven minutes into the second half after good work by Di Maria and Lautaro Martínez to set him up.

Youngsters Alejandro Garnacho and Valentín Barco were both given minutes off the bench by Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni after impressing for Manchester United and the Under-23 team in Olympic qualifying respectively.

Lionel Messi missed the match due to a hamstring injury that ruled him out of this March international window. La Albiceleste return to action Tuesday, when they play Costa Rica in Los Angeles.

The Argentine national team plays an international friendly against El Salvador in Philadelphia tonight. This will be the first game of the year for the reigning world champions.

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