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LATE MESSI PENALTY EARNS ARGENTINA DESERVED DRAW WITH URUGUAY

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It may have taken an injury time penalty for Argentina to avoid defeat to Uruguay in Tel Aviv but it was another promising performance by Lionel Scaloni's side ahead of an important 2020.

The next time this Argentina squad are together will be in March, the beginning of the long and arduous process of World Cup qualification in South America. There is another Copa América to contend with too and after one year in charge, Scaloni looks to have finally found the right group and something that resembles a team.

Question marks remain in certain areas but there is a rekindled spirit and it saw Argentina twice come from behind in Israel to salvage a draw with a strong Uruguay side.

Now unbeaten in six since last summer's Copa América, Argentina continued where they had left off in last Friday's victory over Brazil, and looked the better side in the opening exchanges until Uruguay broke the deadlock just after the half hour mark. Lucas Torreira clipped the ball over Nicolás Tagliafico and Luis Suárez cushioned the ball back across for Edinson Cavani to stab in.

Unperturbed from going behind Argentina remained on the front-foot and momentarily thought they were level when Paulo Dybala fired in only for a handball to deny the Juventus forward the chance to mark his return with a goal.

Independiente goalkeeper Martín Campaña had been equal to a couple of Lionel Messi free-

kicks to preserve the Uruguayan lead but shortly after the hour, Argentina's captain swung in another set-piece and on this occasion Sergio Agüero rose to head in the equaliser.

The lead didn't last long. Messi, the dead-ball specialist at Barcelona, was shown up by his teammate Luis Suárez, who may have been fortunate to win the free-kick on the edge of the box but who made no mistake in firing over the wall and past Esteban Andrada.

Chasing the game again Scaloni threw on Lautaro Martínez and moments after Agüero drew a superb stop from Campaña, the substitute would play a key role. Martínez's little flick in the penalty box caught the arm of Martín Cáceres and referee Roi Reinschreiber pointed to the spot. Messi had seen his effort from the spot saved against Brazil but made no mistake in slotting the ball past Campaña in injury time.

Despite not chalking up a win, Scaloni will have been pleased with Argentina's performance and now has just a few last decisions to make on his squad for 2020.

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