

In Buenos Aires, Applause and Cheers Despite Argentina's Loss

14/07/2014



Before the World Cup final, many Argentines had confidently predicted victory. They trusted in Coach Alejandro Sabella's switch from an offensive style to a more cautious approach to overcome Germany. After the match, they cut forlorn figures, but their sadness was eclipsed by a feeling of pride in the players' efforts.

"We will welcome them home like heroes," said Juan Guzmán, 30, a baker celebrating with thousands of people at the Obelisk, a downtown landmark here.

"This bucket of cold water doesn't matter," Guzmán said, referring to Mario Götze's winning goal. "We're proud of the players."

Exuberant fans poured into downtown Buenos Aires. Some arrived in cars, honking horns and waving Argentina flags. Others let off fireworks, or climbed jubilantly onto the top of traffic signals and bus shelters. Hordes of fans chanted at the base of the Obelisk. Later the scene turned violent. On the metro, people sang the national anthem.

"I feel a mix of sadness, because I wanted to celebrate victory, and pride, because the players gave everything," said Mario Pérez, 44, a security guard. "I couldn't have demanded anything more of them. Sometimes, heroes lose, too." Even his 5-year-old daughter, Janice, was able to isolate herself from the disappointment of loss. "I'm sad," she said. "But there will be more Cups to win. Champions never give in."

In one cafe here, people watching the game applauded the team when the final whistle was blown. They also applauded Sabella when he was interviewed on the field. People were far from tears. When Martín Souto, a prominent soccer journalist here, began his televised interview with Javier Mascherano, he started by saying, "Congratulations."

In the interview, Mascherano summed up the feelings of fans here. "We lost with dignity," he said. "Failure is hiding away, not facing up to the challenge. This team did the opposite."

Mascherano's tireless performances and leadership in midfield during the World Cup have elevated him above [Lionel Messi](#) as the figure some Argentines most admire on the national team. There's a sense that Argentina would have been disoriented without him. For Messi, an aloof personality who has never been fully

accepted by Argentines, losing the final also means he will remain in the shadows of [Diego Maradona](#), the illustrious player who guided Argentina to victory in the 1986 World Cup.

"Messi is O.K., but Mascherano is the soul of the team; he is everything," said Romina Juárez, 35, an administrative worker for the federal government who was celebrating here.

Argentines also celebrated finishing two places above Brazil, their fiercest soccer rival. At the Obelisk, fans chanted a song ridiculing their neighbors that became Argentina's unofficial anthem at the World Cup. "I'm happy because we finished ahead of Brazil," Juárez said.