

Lionel Messi: A Biography

Lionel Messi is a professional footballer who plays for the Spanish football team, FC Barcelona. He wears the number 10 shirt for his club and for his national team, Argentina. Also, he is widely regarded as the best player of all time, along with Cristiano Ronaldo, and the now-retired footballers, Pele and Diego Maradona. Read on to find out more about this spectacular footballer.

Childhood

Lionel Messi was born on 24 June 1987 in the small town of Rosario, Argentina. His mother is called Celia Cuccitini, and his father is called Jorge Messi. Celia was a magnet manufacturer and Jorge was a steel factory worker. Lionel is the 3rd oldest of 4 children in his family. His two older brothers are called Rodrigo and Matias (both of whom are also professional footballers) and a younger sister called Maria Sol. He played for a children's football club and became the star of the team very quickly, becoming part of their best season's team, and joined the Machine of '87 (the club's best team). Unfortunately, at the age of 11, he was diagnosed with GHD (growth hormone deficiency). Not even River Plate, the country's richest team at the time, would (or could) pay for the treatment due to Argentina's economic collapse. This deficiency severely affected his football life and could have eventually ended it.

One day, Charly Rexach, the manager of FC Barcelona at the time, said to Messi and his family that the team could pay for his growth hormone treatment. Additionally, with no other paper at hand, he offered Lionel a youth team contract on a paper napkin! His only condition was that Messi's family should move to Spain. Delighted, they agreed almost instantly.

A few weeks later, Messi and his family relocated to Spain. Right from Lionel Messi's first game for the youth team, he had already established himself as a young prodigy and was recognized by many fans. He was always one of the best players for the youth squad. Unfortunately, Messi suffered from homesickness often because his mum and his siblings moved back to Argentina a year after they moved in the first place. Only Messi and his father stayed in Spain. Did you know that Messi was so quiet, his teammates initially believed he was mute (can't speak)?

Early Career

Near the start of the 2003-04 season, Messi started his first senior squad game. Unfortunately, he didn't score any goals in that match. He quickly became Barcelona's first choice winger, forming an astounding attacking trio with Ronaldinho and Samuel Eto'o. In the return leg against Chelsea in the Round of 16 in the Champions League, Messi suffered a hamstring injury. He worked hard to recover, but on the day of the Champions League Final, he was told that he couldn't play. He was so disappointed that he didn't celebrate Barcelona's win against Arsenal in Paris, something he later came to regret.

Pro Career

Messi, who was still quite young at the time, was always compared to fellow Argentine, Diego Maradona. On 18 April 2007, Messi scored a goal remarkably similar to Maradona. On 9 June of the same year, Messi scored his own Hand of God goal, again similar to Maradona. Soon after, Lionel became Barca's new star at the young age of 20. His efforts in 2007 led him to be voted 3rd place for the Ballon d'Or behind Kaka, and runner-up Cristiano Ronaldo. Barcelona finished the season without any trophies.

Ahead of the new season, one concern was about Messi's frequent muscular injuries. To combat this, the club implemented new regimens, and assigned Messi a personal physiotherapist. As a result, Messi stayed uninjured for 4 years. His performances in 2008 led him to be runner-up for the Ballon d'Or, behind Cristiano Ronaldo again. Eventually, at 22 years old, Messi won his first Ballon d'Or. He has won 4 FIFA Ballon d'Or's (these are the new ones) in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2015.

A few years later, in 2016, Messi scored Barcelona's 10,000th goal overall in a 2-0 win against Arsenal in the Champions League.

Overall, Messi has won these trophies: 7 La Liga's, 3 Copa del Rey's, 6 Supercopa de Espanas, 4 UEFA Champions Leagues, 3 UEFA Super Cups and 3 FIFA Club World Cups.

Legacy

Messi plans to gain much more trophies, with Barcelona and individual, and also to win the FIFA World Cup with his country, Argentina, like Diego Maradona, his fellow compatriot.