

LIONEL

at last



The 2022 World Cup

A Journey Through Quiz Questions

Kamalendu Mishra

Foreword by Siddhartha Basu

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A Fantastic and Fitting Finale

**To the Incredible Journey of
La Pulga Atómica**

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*Dedicated to Maa, Late Shanta Mishra and my cousin,
Late Prabhakar Mishra, who represented the Indian
National Football team. Both of them inspired me to
get obsessed with sports.*



Foreword

After four decades of setting questions, hosting shows, and watching quizzing evolve from dusty halls to television lights and digital feeds, I've learnt to recognise a certain kind of obsession. The good kind. The kind that doesn't just collect facts—it curates them, plays with them, and occasionally springs a delightful surprise.

This book is born of exactly that impulse.

At one level, *Lionel at Last* is about a football tournament we will not forget in a hurry—the World Cup of 2022. At another, it is a love letter. Not just to the game, but to one man whose journey gave that tournament its emotional spine – Lionel Messi.

Kamalendu Mishra is clearly a quiz buff. But more importantly, he is a fan—of football in all its drama, and of Messi in particular. And that distinction matters. Because while a quizzier may seek answers, a fan seeks moments. This book manages to do both.

What I particularly enjoyed is the range. The questions move with ease from the obvious to the obscure, from headline moments to those delicious little details that make you pause and say, “Now that's interesting—I didn't know that.” That, to me, is the essence of good quizzing: not just testing what you know, but expanding what you *want* to know.

The 2022 World Cup had everything—upsets, underdogs,

narratives that twisted and turned—and, at its heart, a story that seemed almost too cinematic to be real. Messi's long, winding quest for the one prize that had eluded him finally found its ending. Or, if you prefer, its beginning—because stories like these don't really end; they get retold, re-remembered, and yes, re-quizified.

This book invites you to do exactly that.

Dip into it as a quizzer looking for a challenge. Or as a fan looking to relive a remarkable month. Or simply as a curious reader who enjoys the pleasure of a well-turned question and an even better answer.

Either way, take your time. Savour it. Argue with it. Share it.

And every now and then, allow yourself a small smile when a question takes you back to that winter when football, quite simply, felt magical.

Siddhartha Basu



Introduction

In the hot and humid atmosphere of Qatar, the 2022 World Cup arrived not as a mere tournament, but as a collision – a collision of seasons, of cultures, and of a sport trying to find its soul in a place where grass was sown for this very spectacle, and stadiums rose like glass mirages from the dust.

To witness this extravaganza in person was a grand experience, one that my family and I will never forget. It felt like we were part of history as for the first time in ninety-two years, the footballing world didn't gather in the sweltering heat of a June afternoon; instead, it paused the global clock in November, demanding that the planet's greatest athletes perform mid-stride, mid-breath, in the middle of their domestic football seasons.

It was compact, yet intense. Once the whistle blew on the opening game, the politics of the pitch took over with a ferocity that silenced the noise outside. We saw the dismantling of hierarchies. We watched Morocco become the first African nation to breach the semifinal fortress, proving that the old guard no longer held a monopoly on belief. We saw the shock of Saudi Arabia's uprising, the clinical efficiency of a young France, and the heartbreak of icons departing the stage in tears.

It was a tournament of many firsts and lasts, played out in arenas that felt more like cathedrals of the future than

sports grounds. From the 172 goals, a record-breaking haul, to the first female referees gracing a men's finals, to arguably the greatest footballer of recent times, Lionel Messi, winning the most coveted prize in the beautiful game, the 2022 edition was special.

This book is for those who find beauty in details. It is a ledger of all the moments that made us gasp, statistics that defied logic, and trivia that preserves a month where the world stood still in the sands. It is a map of a journey that began with skepticism and ended in perhaps the greatest final the sport has ever seen.

The facts are all here. The magic is for you to recall. Happy reading.



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Chapter 1

La Pulga Atómica, the G.O.A.T.



1. During the Qatar World Cup, this place in Argentina became an altar to Messi with murals and graffiti that praised the soccer star. “From another galaxy and from my neighbourhood” read the graffiti that seemed ubiquitous in the area popularly known as ‘La Bajada’. Which place are we talking about?
2. Pele won the coveted World Cup at the age of 17. Diego Maradona did it at 25, while Kylian Mbappe achieved this honour when he was only 19. How old was Lionel Messi when he fulfilled his long cherished dream in 2022?
3. How many international trophies had Messi won for Argentina prior to the 2022 World Cup?
4. At 23, Kylian Mbappé played a total of 597 minutes in the Qatar World Cup. How many minutes did the 35-year-old Lionel Messi play in the entire tournament?
5. Messi reached 11 World Cup goals in his career when he scored a penalty against Croatia in their semifinal win. Whose record did he overtake in the process?
6. “Everyone wants Messi to win, and that generates a community, a very pleasant feeling that is very

infrequent in Argentina, which is always fighting, divided, angry, frustrated,” said Diego Schwarzstein, an endocrinologist who has played a very important role in young Messi’s life. How?

7. Along with laying his hand on his holy grail – a World Cup title, Lionel Messi also won his second Golden Ball Award as the best player of the tournament. When did he get his first Golden Ball Award?
8. Lionel Messi scored 13 goals in the World Cup football tournament. How many assists did he provide?
9. Amongst the number of records that Lionel Messi created in this edition, one was for the most World Cup appearances. After the final, Messi had played 26 matches in his dream run since 2006. Whose record did he surpass?
10. It was another memorable night for football superstar Lionel Messi as Argentina stormed into the FIFA World Cup final with a clinical demolition of Croatia. This match will also be remembered for two of Messi’s record achievements. What are those?
11. In this match during the Qatar World Cup, the stars seemed to align for Messi as he scored in his 1000th match to move past Maradona’s tally of goals in World Cup. How many goals has Maradona scored in World Cup?
12. After the Qatar Final, Messi had made 20 appearances as the captain of his team, the highest in the history of the World Cup. How many appearances did Diego Maradona make in the World Cup as the captain of his nation?

13. Before this tournament, Paolo Maldini of Italy held the record of playing 2217 minutes in the World Cup, the maximum by a player. 'La Pulga Atómica' broke this record, too. How many minutes did Messi play in the World Cup when the World Cup 2022 ended?
14. 16 years and 185 days; it's a remarkable period in the football career of Lionel Messi. Why?
15. Which landmark did Lionel Messi achieve by playing the round of 16 match against Australia?
16. Like so many records, this one, too, fell by the wayside when Lionel Messi scored a goal against Australia. Which personal landmark did he achieve during the process?
17. In the match against Poland, Lionel Messi surpassed the erstwhile record of Diego Maradona as the most capped Argentine player in the World Cup. How many matches did Messi play?
18. In the pre-quarterfinal match against Australia, Lionel Messi did something which he had been unable to do in all his previous World Cup appearances. What was that?
19. The only penalty that Messi missed in the Qatar World Cup was against Poland. It was awarded after Messi was hit in the face by the flailing hand of the Polish goalkeeper, who made amends by diving to his left to block the shot taken by the Argentina great. Can you name the goalkeeper?
20. After the victory against Poland, Messi was given the Man of the Match award by FIFA. However, Messi

presented it to one of his teammates who had scored the first goal for his team in the 47th minute and paved the way for them to qualify for the knock-out stage. Identify the player.

21. Lionel Messi was fouled 65 times in the World Cup. He is second in this list. Which footballer has been fouled the maximum number of times in the history of the World Cup?
22. At the age of 35 years and 159 days, Messi created another record in the history of the World Cup. What was that?
23. Lionel Messi's left leg had the highest insurance value. In the history of sports, no part of the body of any sportsperson had been insured for such a huge amount. What was its actual value?
24. Pelé missed out on this unique achievement by four months, but Messi did it. Which accomplishment are we talking about?
25. By scoring a brace at the age of 35 years, 177 days, Messi added one more feather to his illustrious cap. What was that?
26. It is no exaggeration to say that Qatar was a Messi show. What unique record did Messi achieve regarding knockout matches?
27. You may call it a coincidence, but some superstitious fans exulted after Messi missed the penalty in Argentina's match against Poland in Qatar. What was the superstition that was ultimately proved right after the team's victory in the final?

28. '39' is a number that Messi wouldn't like to remember for long, as far as the Qatar tournament is concerned. Why?
29. Lionel Messi became the first player to score goals in all the knockout matches of a World Cup. From the Round of 16 to the Finals, Messi consistently found the net. Against which teams did he score?
30. Just ahead of the quarterfinal, the Netherlands Goalkeeper Andries Noppert made the big mistake of inciting Messi by saying, "He is also human, and he can also miss." Which moment was Noppert referring to?

END OF SAMPLE

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