

1954 WORLD CUP IN SWITZERLAND: Quarter-
finals Bern, Wankdorf Stadium, 27 June 1954

HUNGARY – BRAZIL

4-2

THE BATTLE OF BERNE

At the time, Hungary and Brazil were the national teams that played the most spectacular football in the world and, in the opinion of many, this quarter-final match at the World Cup could be seen as an early final: whoever won this match would easily become World Champion, such was the recognised quality gap between them and the other likely finalists. Brazil, after their incredible defeat four years earlier in the World Cup on home soil, were absolutely convinced they could redeem themselves and win; Hungary were the reigning Olympic champions and had thrashed England twice in the last seven months, arriving at the World Cup as favourites. In the previous match, in the qualifying round against West Germany, Ferenc Puskas, the star of the World Cup, had injured his ankle and would not be able to take the field, but the Aranycsapat remained very strong nonetheless. Yet this match went down in history not for the quality of the play and the spectacle, but for the bloody battle that ensued on the pitch, with fierce fighting, kicks and punches, tension and nervousness. The teams arrived at the match with too much responsibility on their shoulders and the obligation to win, and the course of the match and the poor refereeing did the rest. But let's get to the match. At the kick-off, Julinho immediately took the ball and dribbled past five opponents, as if to make it clear that they were the most technical players in the world. Perhaps so, but the Aranycsapat were more clinical: after a Brazilian defender cleared off the line following a shot by Kocsis in the 2nd minute, Hungary took the lead in the 4th minute with a determined effort by Hidegkuti, who saw his left-footed shots blocked twice before finding the right angle with his right foot, all in the same move. Three minutes later, Bozsik made a perfect assist for Czibor's header, on the edge of offside, and it was already 2-0! Did you see who was stronger?

In less than ten minutes, Hungary seemed to have already decided the match, but their excessive simplicity led to arrogance, and the Hungarians' affected touches got on the nerves of the fiery South Americans. The match took a turn for the worse. In the 18th minute, the referee awards Brazil a clear penalty and full-back Djalma Santos coolly beats Grosics. Brazil then dominates the rest of the first half, but their dominance is sterile: apart from Didi and Julinho, stars of the first order, the rest of the Brazilian attack is ineffective. In fact, it was the Aranycsapat who came close to scoring a third goal with a cross shot from Jozsef Toth that Castilho missed and Djalma Santos cleared off the line at the last moment. In the second half, the tension is sky-high and degenerates after 15 minutes of Brazilian attacks that crash against the rock-solid Hungarian defence (goalkeeper Grosics excels himself with prodigious saves): on a counterattack, English referee Ellis awards a non-existent penalty to Hungary (foul on Kocsis? Handball by the defender? What did he see?). Lantos takes the penalty and puts the ball in the top corner, 3-1. A brawl breaks out on the pitch, Brazil is not happy and the Hungarians are perfect in their role as provocateurs, with a few slaps flying that the referee does not see. In the 65th minute, the spectacle returns to the pitch thanks to a splendid and deserved goal by Julinho, who finally manages to beat Grosics with a right-footed shot from the edge of the area to the far post: 3-2. The match is wide open but it is difficult to play, the Hungarian players begin to feel a little fear and tackle the Brazilians hard. Brazilian goalkeeper Castilho saved a shot from Kocsis and kept the game open, then on the counterattack there was a foul in midfield and another brawl broke out: this time the referee reached for his cards and sent off Bozsik (the best player on the pitch) and Nilton Santos. In the 78th minute, Didi hit the post with a proverbial shot from outside the area

(for the Brazilians, Didi was so skilled that he 'knew how to make the ball talk') and the Brazilians' anger increases: shortly afterwards, Humberto kicks Hidegkuti and the referee sends him off too, leaving Brazil with nine men against ten. The Brazilians felt persecuted, having suffered similar fouls from their opponents throughout the second half, which were not penalised by the referee. But Brazil did not give up and claimed a penalty five minutes from the end for contact between Lantos and Julinho, which could have been given. Instead, they collapsed definitively in the 88th minute on yet another Hungarian counterattack: the tireless Czibor flew down the right and crossed into the middle for Kocsis to head home for the final 4-2. Under the pouring rain at the end, the torrid Swiss summer cooled down and new fights broke out before and after the end of the match, but the Battle of Bern had already delivered its verdict: Hungary (for once less of a 'golden team' and more cynical) in the semi-finals, Brazil home amid a thousand recriminations.

HUNGARY: Grosics 7, Buzansky 6, Lorant 5.5, Lantos 6, Bozsik 6.5, Zakarias 5.5, Jozsef Toth 6, Kocsis 6.5, Hidegkuti 7, Mihaly Toth 6, Czibor 7.5. Coach: Gusztav Sebes.

BRAZIL: Castilho 5.5, Djalma Santos 6.5, Nilton Santos 5, Brandaozinho 5.5, Pinheiro 5, Bauer 4.5, Julinho 7, Didi 7, Baltazar 5, Maurinho 5.5, Humberto 4.5. Coach: Zezé Moreira. Referee: Ellis (ENG) 4

Sent off: Bozsik and Nilton Santos in the 71st minute. Humberto in the 79th minute.

In the 4th minute, Hidegkuti scored to make it 1-0; in the 7th minute, Kocsis scored to make it 2-0, and in the 18th minute, Djalma Santos (penalty) scored to make it 2-1.

In the 60th minute, Lantos (penalty) made it 3-1; in the 65th minute, Julinho scored to make it 3-2; and in the 88th minute, Kocsis scored to make it 4-2.



Nilton Santos and Bozsik were sent off and left the battlefield.