

ENGLAND WORLD CUP 1966: Final
London, Wembley Stadium, 30 July 1966

ENGLAND - WEST GERMANY

4-2 *d.t.s.*

HURST'S PHANTOM GOAL

The 1966 World Cup final has gone down in history for the episode that decided the match, in the 8th minute of the first extra time, at the score of 2-2. England's right winger, the acrobatic Alan Ball, escaped down the wing and placed a cross for centre-forward Hurst, who controlled it beautifully and then fired at goal with his right: the ball hit the crossbar and bounced into the goal right behind goalkeeper Tilkowsky, before returning to the pitch and being sent in for a corner by Weber. The English exulted, while the Germans were sure it was only a corner kick: the Swiss referee Dienst, impeccable up to that moment, could not have seen it because it was covered by the goalkeeper and went to consult with the linesman. These are moments of great tension. According to the assistant it was goal: the Germans' protests were in vain, England became World Champions for the first (and to date only) time. Thousands of debates ensued over this 'ghost goal' and it was only some thirty years later, with the sophisticated help of digital technology, that it was ruled that the ball had not crossed the goal line at all. No blame can therefore be attached to the referee, as he had to decide in a matter of seconds on an issue that had been settled over thirty years. But let's go in order: little has been said about this 1966 Germany, one of the strongest German national teams in history, with a young Franz Beckenbauer in midfield, a grim defence and men of great class and athletic strength such as Haller, Held, Seeler and Overath. For England it was the litmus test: to finally become champions they would have to beat the strongest team in the tournament, capable of winning all their matches (except a zero-zero against Argentina in the first round), scoring 13 goals and conceding only two. The match opened with a back-and-forth affair: in the 12th minute a clumsy mistake by Wilson gave the Germans the lead, his header rejecting a cross from the three-quarter by Held right into the feet of Haller on the penalty spot: control and a shot that beat Banks. Frost fell over Wembley but six minutes later there was an immediate equaliser, thanks to another defensive error. On the free-kick brushed by Moore, Geoff Hurst burst into the net with his header, sensationally forgotten by the German defenders. On the pitch there was an excellent Germany that did not concede points of reference in attack, constantly shifting the roles of Held, Seeler and Haller who took turns as centre forward, right wing and playmaker, and closed the spaces behind well, blocking Bobby Charlton with Beckenbauer's marking. In the 32nd minute Tilkowsky's miracle on Hurst's inspired through ball, Ball arrived like a hawk to put another shot towards the centre but Overath swept away the danger. Germany responded with a left-footer from Overath himself from a corner kick but Banks had a great reflex and managed to clear and then said no to Emmerich's subsequent shot. In the 40th minute a bell flashes in the German area, Hurst is the first to touch for the insertion of Hunt who explodes his left footer, Tilkowsky is there and clears. Germany replied: Seeler advanced on the ball, then shot from 30 yards and Banks flew over to deflect prodigiously. The great balance continued in the second half, with Beckenbauer and Charlton cancelling each other out with marking and the spectacle suffered as the match lost their flashes of genius that had lit up this World Cup. In the 78th minute England took the lead: on a corner kick Hurst controlled at the edge of the area, with a feint disoriented

2 opponents and then shot, Hoettges awkwardly rejected with his shin, favouring the shot of Peters who volleyed and scored from a few metres out: 2-1 with 10 minutes to play. In the 87th minute, with Germany all forwards in search of an equaliser, the English counter-attack was triggered: Ball launched Hunt, who sprinted forward and then touched down Bobby Charlton, but the Manchester international clumsily missed his left-footed shot, alone in front of Tilkowsky. Wrong goal, right goal. The unbelievable mockery lay in wait: it was the last minute and Germany earned a free kick a few metres outside the English area. Emmerich took it, his left-footed shot filtering into the area and fortunately unleashing Held, who took a sure shot but hit his team-mate Schnellinger (probably even on the arm) in a disturbing action on the goalkeeper: the ball flew wildly to the right where Weber was the first to arrive and he put it into the net at the first post in the silence of a stunned stadium that already had the cup in their hands. But England's strength emerged in extra time, as Germany, exhausted from their effort in search of a draw, tried to reach the 120th minute to get a replay of the match. After a fine personal action by Ball with a save by Tilkowsky, England again came close to taking the lead with a clamorous post by Bobby Charlton with a left-footed shot from the edge of the box: it looked like a bewitched afternoon for the English number 9. Until Hurst's phantom goal put England ahead and cut the legs out from under the tired Germans. In the final minute of the second period of extra time, the referee picked up his whistle and brought it to his lips, the Germans were momentarily bewildered, but the referee still didn't blow the whistle and Hurst flew undisturbed towards the opponent's goal and, once in the box, fired an unstoppable left-footed shot that sealed the game and crowned him as the only player to have scored a hat-trick in a World Cup final (a record only equalled in 2022 by Frenchman Mbappe). But although he scored a hat-trick and played a fantastic game, he will remain famous mainly for his phantom goal.

ENGLAND: Banks 7, Cohen 7, Wilson 6.5, Moore 7, Jacky Charlton 6.5, Stiles 6.5, Ball 7.5, Peters 7, Hunt 7, Bobby Charlton 6.5, Hurst 8. All. Alf Ramsey.

WEST GERMANY: Tilkowsky 7, Schnellinger 6.5, Hoettges 5.5, Schutz 6, Weber 7, Haller 7, Emmerich 6.5, Beckenbauer 6.5, Seeler 6.5, Overath 7, Held 7. All. Helmut Schoen. Referee: Dienst (SVI) 5

At 12' Haller 0-1; at 18' Hurst 1-1.

At 78' Peters 2-1; at 90' Weber 2-2.

On 98' Hurst 3-2; on 120' Hurst 4-2.



The historic 'ghost goal' conceded to England: that ball had not gone in.



Captain Bobby Moore raises the Rimet Cup after the disputed final.