

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP MEXICO 1970 - First Round

Guadalajara, Estadio Jalisco, 7 June 1970

BRAZIL - ENGLAND

1-0

GORDON BANKS' SAVE OF THE CENTURY

The draw for the 1970 World Cup in Mexico incredibly placed reigning World Champions England and the heavily favoured Brazil in the same group (so much for the heads-up).

Both debuted with a victory, Brazil beat Czechoslovakia 4-1 while England struggled in a 1-0 win over Romania, and in the second round they found themselves facing each other in Guadalajara, in front of more than 66,000 spectators. The heat (they played at midday) and the altitude (1,600 metres above sea level) did not allow for the pressing and physical play so fashionable in the late 1960s and instead exalted slow rhythms, technique and individual play, the main reason why this World Cup will be remembered as the most spectacular in the history of football. Alf Ramsey brought back to the World Cup six eleventhths of the World Cup-winning line-up of four years earlier, but unchanged in its pivots: Gordon Banks in goal, Bobby Moore at libero, Bobby Charlton in the box and Geoff Hurst at centre forward. Brazil, on the other hand, could finally field Pelé in perfect form, after having had him limp in both Chile in '62 and England in '66; and around him coach Mario Zagalo built a formidable show machine. In the 11th minute of Brazil-England, the spectators witnessed one of the most beautiful sporting sequences of all time: Jairzinho aimed at and overtook Cooper on the right flank with a dazzling acceleration and, having reached the back, crossed into the middle of the area where Pelé arrived on time with a header that had something supernatural about it, such was the force he managed to impart to the ball, directing it into the corner to Banks' right. But the English goalkeeper has a formidable reflex and with a prodigious and spectacular flight manages to deflect it into the corner with his right hand. Three unparalleled athletic gestures, but above all Banks' will remain etched in the memory as 'The Parry of the Century'. Episode aside, England mastered the field in the first half, while Brazil struggled to find space in the attentive English defence. The English had a couple of good chances with Peters in the 25th minute (off target), and with Lee in the 33rd minute (great save by Felix) and Brazil were unable to make themselves dangerous, almost bewitched by Banks' miracle. Only in the 40th minute did the Brazilians protest (rightly) for the landing of Pelé in the area by Mullery, but the referee let it go on. Despite the few goal occasions, the two teams played great football, with classy touches and sublime plays, and above all with mutual respect and fair play (the referee whistled no more than 10 times in 45 minutes). In the second half, Brazil shifted gears: in the 51st minute Paulo Cesar (on the pitch in place of starter Gerson to exploit the left flank with his speed) tried a shot with an outside neck from the edge of the area, Banks was alert and put in a corner kick. Then it was Rivelino's turn, who showed fantastic double dribbling before exploding his famous dynamite left-footer, but Banks seemed unbeatable and deflected it with his fists. A minute later, however, he had to capitulate on a sweeping Carioca action: centre-forward Tostao on the left dribbled past three Englishmen one after the other, then crossed into the middle for Pelé, who deftly stoppered and elegantly unleashed Jairzinho, who unleashed an impregnable volley to give Brazil the lead. Ramsey removed Lee and a less than incisive Bobby Charlton and threw Bell and Astle into the fray. The English reaction was furious: taking advantage of the bulk of Hurst and Astle up front, all the long throws were easy prey for them to pick out the insertions of the midfielders, so chances for an equaliser followed. In the 64th minute Ball clumsily fumbled the ball on Mullery's assist; in the 66th minute it was the new arrival Astle who, alone in front of Felix, unintentionally knocked the ball wide on an assist from Brazilian centre-back Piazza; in the 77th minute Hurst headed Ball Ball Ballst's header into the net.

In the 77th minute Hurst's header from Ball hit the crossbar, and in the 82nd minute Ball's lob went over Felix's head as he came out of the air. Four incredible chances that England threw away for a deserved equaliser. But Brazil never closed in defensively and interspersed England's actions with counter-attacks and spectacular plays, like that of new-entry Roberto in the 84th minute, which Banks neutralised in his own way. A great game that will not affect England's progress (they will pass the round by beating Czechoslovakia in the last game), but as second in the group they will have to meet West Germany in the quarter-finals... still with a bitter taste in their mouth from the last Wembley final.

BRAZIL: Felix 6.5, Brito 6.5, Piazza 6.5, Carlos Alberto 7, Clodoaldo 7, Everaldo 6.5, Jairzinho 7.5, Paulo Cesar 7, Tostao 6.5 (*from 68' Roberto 6.5*), Pelé 7.5, Rivelino 7. Coach Mario Zagalo.

ENGLAND: Banks 8.5, Wright 6.5, Cooper 6.5, Mullery 6.5, Labone 6, Moore 7, Lee 6. (*from 63' Bell 6.5*), Ball 6, Bobby Charlton 6 (*from 63' Astle 5*), Hurst 6, Peters 6. Allen Alf Ramsey.

Referee: Klein (ISR) 6

In the 59th minute Jairzinho 1-0.



Gordon Banks' save of the century on Pelé's header