

WORLD CUP ARGENTINA 1978 / Final Buenos
Aires, Estadio Monumental, 25 June 1978

ARGENTINA - HOLLAND

3-1 *d.t.s.*

RENSENBRINK'S GOALPOST IN THE 90TH MINUTE

Final in Buenos Aires in front of 80,000 jubilant spectators, sure to celebrate a historic evening for Argentina. Thousands of white confetti were thrown from the stands before the match in a surreal 'snowfall' that covered the pitch in white. On the bench, coach Menotti, known as 'el Flaco', watches the stands nervously: come this far, he cannot fail. He who has left the top scorer of the last Argentine championship, the 17-year-old Diego Armando Maradona, at home, considering him too young for the pressure of an event like the World Cup, betting everything on 'Matador' Kempes: if he fails, everyone will be ready to hold it against him.

Italy's Gonella referees, he who made it to the finals as opposed to the Azzurri, but more like a condemnation than an award: how can a referee calmly direct with the pressure of 80,000 invaders, including the entire ruling military junta in the stands? Argentina and Holland took the field ready for a fight rather than a football match: in the first minutes the game was continually interrupted by more or less ferocious fouls on both sides, with Gonella whistling a lot, even too much and often in favour of the Argentinians. The first to get into the game were the Dutch, perfectly at ease in the climate of battle that had been created: in the 5th minute Haan kicked a free kick from the left and Rep stood higher than anyone else and hit the ball well over the post. It wasn't until the 19th minute when, on Olguin's cross, Kempes had a giant header but his assist for Luque was too long, Jongbloed nodded it out but then had second thoughts and Bertoni promptly put the ball back in the middle with the goal empty, Luque volleyed it wide but Brandts had to save in front of him and repelled. Argentina went up and with Bertoni and Olguin dominated the right flank, the latter making a fine cross which Passarella ventured on in one of his frequent offensive forays but his shot flew just over the crossbar. The Netherlands responded again with 'Johnny the Handsome' Rep, who controlled and volleyed a beautiful invitation from René Van de Kerkhof but Filliol responded with a miraculous leap. The match was balanced, the Dutch were well fielded by Happel and closed every space making an excellent filter on the three-quarter of the field and stinging on the counter-attack. In the 35th minute Passarella again showed himself in the opponent's area, this time with a header, Jongbloed had the reflexes of a sloth but managed to put it in for a corner. Shortly afterwards, Ardiles made his way through two opponents and then passed to Ortiz, who freed himself from Poortvliet's marker and set up Kempes: the Matador penetrated the area with force between two defenders and, with a glancing touch, anticipated Jongbloed's exit and slotted home the 1-0. The Netherlands were now forced to play the game and struggled to find space in the Argentine defence. In the second half, Happel brought on Nanninga for Rep to add weight.

on the attack, but the chances created were easy prey for Filliol. The Argentinians beat like blacksmiths and sometimes made themselves visible in front with the plays of an inspired Bertoni. In the final minutes, the Netherlands went all out and applied a frantic pressing that cancelled out any attempt at Argentine ball possession. Until eight minutes from the end, the Netherlands found a deserved equaliser: Haan opened on the right for René Van de Kerkhof to slot in, evading Argentina's ill-advised offside trap, and a perfect cross into the middle where Poortvliet and Nanninga were both on hand, the latter framing Filliol. The River stadium fell silent, the party had already been going on for an hour. And the Netherlands were now serious, throwing themselves forward to take advantage of the hosts' moment of disbandment and close out the game. Neeskens

Neeskens advanced on the three-quarter line and asked for a triangle from Rensenbrink but could not close him down because Passarella punched him in the face to stop him, knocking out two teeth. Gonella made no bones about the bloody mouth of the Dutch number 13: in fear of being crucified in the Plaza de Mayo he convinced himself that Neeskens had punched himself and took no action against the Argentine captain. Argentina wobbled until the 90th minute, with Holland mastering the field. Krol made a very long throw towards the opponent's area, the ball bounced without anyone intervening and from the outside lane came Rensenbrink behind all the Argentine defenders, alone in front of Filliol: his touch was perfect and he beat the goalkeeper but fate was against him, the ball hit the post in full and Gonella hastened to whistle the end (forgetting the three-minute break to recover Neeskens' teeth) to let the Argentinians rest. So it went into extra time, with Argentina, buoyed by the fantastic cheering of their public, gradually regaining confidence and the match remained in the balance, although neither team seemed to have the strength to change the result. In the 95th minute Larrosa, cautioned a minute earlier for protests, made a murderous entry in midfield on Poortvliet. It would be a sacrosanct sending-off, at least for a double caution, but Gonella says it's OK, we're playing. A minute later a less bad foul from behind by the same Poortvliet on Kempes was obviously sanctioned with a yellow card. In the 101st minute Galvan's great anticipation in midfield and an immediate throw-in to Houseman, who entered the area at full speed pursued by three Dutchmen and kicked at goal, finding the prompt deflection of Jongbloed. At the end of the first period of extra time Kempes was unleashed, receiving the ball from Bertoni on the edge of the area, he jumped over two opponents with a dazzling double dribble and found Jongbloed coming out at his feet: the ball slammed into the goalkeeper and flew wildly towards the goal, Kempes was quicker than the Dutch defenders to understand where the ball was going and touched it into the net to a jubilation of shouts and waving flags. 2-1. The Netherlands' morale was at rock bottom and very little was played in the second period of extra time, with many fouls on both sides and the Argentinians wasting time at every opportunity with scenes bordering on the ridiculous. Argentina came close to scoring the third goal with Luque in the 113th minute and then found it with Bertoni three minutes later: a fantastic one-two between Bertoni and Kempes, who exchanged the ball five times as they penetrated the Dutch area, then Bertoni put Jongbloed out of action with a touch of his sole and slotted home the final 3-1. For the record again Larrosa in the 118th minute blocked a Dutch throw-in with two hands in midfield, and not even on 3-1 Gonella thought of sending him off. Better a bad mark but to have his life saved. Go and explain that to Neeskens. Thus ended the most talked about World Cup in history, Argentina had made it, one way or another.

ARGENTINA: Filliol 6.5, Olguin 7, Tarantini 6.5, Gallego 6.5, Galvan 7, Passarella 7, Kempes 8, Ardiles 6.5 (*from 66' Larrosa 5.5*), Luque 6.5, Bertoni 8, Ortiz 6.5 (*from 75' Houseman 7*).

Manager: Cesar Luis Menotti.

HOLLAND: Jongbloed 6, Brandts 6.5, Poortvliet 6, Jansen 6 (*from 75' Suurbier 6*), Krol 6.5, Haan 7, Willy Van de Kerkhof 6, Neeskens 6, Rep 6 (*from 58' Nanninga 6*), René Van de Kerkhof 7, Rensenbrink 7. Manager: Ernst Happel.

Referee: Gonella (ITA) 5

At 38' Kempes 1-0.

At 82' Nanninga 1-1.

At 105' Kempes 2-1; at 116' Bertoni 3-1.



Mario Kempes had just scored the decisive goal of the World Cup.



General Videla hands Passarella a hotly contested World Cup.