

1982 WORLD CUP IN SPAIN / Second Round

Barcelona, Estadio Sarria, 5 July 1982

# ITALY - BRAZIL

## 3-2

### ROSSI-ROSSI-ROSSI: IT'S LEGENDARY

After their extraordinary victory over Argentina, Italy had six days' rest before facing the formidable Brazil, the number one favourites to win the World Cup. The Brazilians feared no one, boasting one of the strongest midfields and attacks in football history (except for centre forward Serginho, who was two feet shorter than the others but whom Santana deployed at the centre of the attack to act as a target man with his powerful physique for the midfielders and wingers to feed). After winning all their first-round matches, playing some stellar football at times, Brazil had crushed a demoralised Argentina 3-1. This result gave the Brazilians the chance to reach the semi-finals even with a draw, but the fact was that this time the task for the Azzurri looked almost impossible. Italy surprised Brazil by starting the match on the attack

on the attack. In the 4th minute, Tardelli broke down the left and crossed for Rossi, who sensationally missed the shot on goal from a good position. It still seemed to be a bad day for Pablito, but a minute later he broke the deadlock: Conti skilfully held the ball in midfield, proving himself to be a Brazilian in an Azzurri shirt, then beautifully launched Cabrini on the left with the outside of his foot. The full-back's cross found Paolo Rossi unmarked, and his perfect header beat Valdir Peres to give Italy the lead. Buoyed by enthusiasm, Italy produced another five minutes of great football, with exceptional ball possession that allowed the Brazilians no chance to react, but when they woke up, it was painful. In the 10th minute, Serginho won a rebound with Scirea at the edge of the area, Zico got involved but Serginho anticipated him and, alone in front of Zoff, he missed the most promising of chances. But it was only a matter of seconds before Zico, with a splendid backheel, freed himself from Gentile's marking and provided a brilliant assist to Socrates, who strode into the area, beating Scirea for pace and beating Zoff with a shot at the near post. Brazil slowed the game down with their immense class, passing the ball around with first-time touches and backheels that sent the neutral crowd into raptures. Italy were in trouble, with Gentile immediately booked for a foul on Zico and forced to tone down his aggressive marking. But it was Brazil's arrogance that played a nasty trick on them: while exchanging the ball in defence, Cerezo served a complacent ball halfway between Junior and Falcao, and a very active and transformed Paolo Rossi stepped in, won the ball and headed straight for the goal, firing a straight shot into the net from the edge of the area before anyone could intervene to stop him. Italy was still in the lead. This time, the Azzurri gave up on playing beautifully and concentrated on tightening up their defence

marking, and Brazil struggled to find space. Only Socrates tested Zoff with a header in the 32nd minute. Collovati, who had been controlling Serginho well, was injured and replaced by 19-year-old Giuseppe Bergomi. Tardelli and Oriali played as additional defenders, and even Conti was more of a full-back than a winger.

Italy suffered but Brazil could not break through. In the 41st minute, Socrates found Zico in the box, the referee stopped play for offside and Gentile stopped him for safety's sake, tearing his shirt. Zico complained loudly to the referee (in fact, there was no offside) and the image of Zico with his shirt torn will remain the emblem of Brazil's disaster. At the end of the half, a furious scramble broke out in the Italian penalty area following a corner by Eder, but the pachydermic Serginho failed to put it in, and Conti clears it as the referee blows the whistle to send everyone to the dressing rooms. In the second half, Brazil moves forward and Bearzot realises that it is time to launch a

counterattack, unleashing Conti and Cabrini on the wings. This led to a fantastic match, with the teams attacking and counterattacking blow for blow with nothing left to lose. Falcao exchanges passes with Junior, then enters the area and beats Zoff with a diagonal shot, but the ball grazes the post. Italy responds in the 51st minute with Antognoni launching Conti with a superb pass, who stops Leandro in his tracks but then misses the shot in front of Valdir Perez. A minute later, Paolo Rossi was on fire and took on the Brazilian defence single-handedly. They were unable to take the ball off him, and in the end, Luisinho brought him down with a shoulder charge and a half-tackle, which the referee pretended not to see. It could have been a penalty, and Pablito shouted his anger. In the 55th minute, Zico had a great idea to bring on Cerezo, but Zoff came out spectacularly at the edge of the area and made a great save to deny the Brazilian's shot. Three minutes later, everything happens: Junior passes to Cerezo, who heads the ball to Serginho, who attempts a backheel, but Zoff is ready to parry with a cat-like leap. Italy launches an exceptional counterattack, Graziani goes down the left and finds Rossi with a perfect assist, but Pablito, in front of Valdir Perez, misses spectacularly. With these chances, Italy justified their lead, but they knew that not taking advantage of them could cost them dearly. Brazil failed to make an impact, but Italy were no longer as precise on the counterattack, with the heat (34°C) and fatigue taking their toll. In the 68th minute, Junior advanced from the left and then passed to Falcao at the edge of the area. With a single feint, the Roma player disoriented Tardelli and Scirea and fired a left-footed rocket past Zoff to make it 2-2, exploding with joy in a liberating scream. Reinvigorated by the goal, the Brazilians played with ease and gave the impression that they could crush the discouraged Azzurri. But Cerezo misplaced a back pass to Valdir Peres and gave the Azzurri their first corner of the match: Conti took it, the ball fell in the centre of the area where two Brazilians jumped for a header and got in each other's way, the ball fell to Tardelli who shot on the volley with his left foot, Paolo Rossi was in the way and cleverly touched the ball, sending it into the other corner and wrong-footing Valdir Peres. Incredibly, Italy was still ahead! Brazil unleashed their fury, Leandro launched Socrates on the edge of the offside line and the Brazilian star immediately scored to make it 3-3, but the linesman had raised his flag and play had already been stopped. The whole of Brazil was in the Italian half, but Gentile, Bergomi, Scirea and Oriali were always one step ahead of their opponents. In the 87th minute, the Azzurri launch a fantastic counterattack. Antognoni passes to Rossi, who enters the area and passes back to Oriali, who has supported the move. It is a perfect assist for the unmarked Antognoni, who beats Valdir Peres again with his right foot to make it 4-2 and seal the match. But no, the referee inexplicably disallows the goal for a non-existent offside. A minute later, Italy could have suffered the most cruel of blows if it hadn't been for the greatest goalkeeper in history: Eder took a free kick from the left, Leandro popped up out of nowhere and headed the ball towards goal, but Zoff made the most incredible save of his career, diving prodigiously to block the ball on the line. Italy remained pinned in their own area, and Eder took a corner that Zoff cleared, rising above the Brazilian players. The Israeli referee Klein blew the final whistle, but his terrible refereeing had allowed what was perhaps the most spectacular match in football history to unfold. The Italians rejoiced, now they were the clear favourites to win the World Cup. The Brazilians wept, after the Maracanazo this was the worst sporting tragedy ever to happen. And Paolo Rossi would remain their worst nightmare forever.

ITALY: Zoff 8, Gentile 7, Cabrini 7.5, Oriali 7.5, Collovati 6.5 (*from 34' Bergomi 7*), Scirea 6.5, Conti 7, Tardelli 7 (*from 76' Marini sv*), Rossi 8, Antognoni 7.5, Graziani 7. Coach: Enzo Bearzot.

BRAZIL: Valdir Perez 5, Leandro 6.5, Oscar 5.5, Luizinho 5.5, Junior 6.5, Cerezo 5, Zico 6.5, Falcao 7, Serginho 4 (*from 69' Paulo Isidoro 5.5*), Socrates 7.5, Eder 6. Coach: Tele Santana. Referee: Klein (ISR) 5

8' Rossi 1-0; 12' Socrates 1-1; 25' Rossi 2-1.

68' Falcao 2-2; 74' Rossi 3-2.



*The legendary battle between Zico and Claudio Gentile in Italy-Brazil '82*



*Paolo Rossi scores 1-0 for Italy under the watchful eye of Leo Junior*