

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP MEXICO 1986 / Quarter-finals

Guadalajara, Estadio Jalisco, 21 June 1986

FRANCE - BRAZIL*5-4 d.c.r.***SAMBA AND CHAMPAGNE SPECTACLE**

The first quarter-final of the World Cup in Mexico 86 is referred to by many as 'the anticipated final': in fact, France and Brazil, among the teams qualified for the quarter-finals, were the most credited for the final victory due to the play and confidence expressed in the previous matches. Argentina and West Germany struggled, while Spain, Belgium, England and Mexico were by most considered mere outsiders. Tele Santana's Brazil combined the spectacle of Brazil '82 with the dynamism and physicality brought by Alemão and Branco, and Careca's concreteness under goal. France, the reigning European and Olympic champions, had now become a perfect football machine thanks to the conductor Platini (albeit in a waning phase and in less than optimal physical condition) and the inclusion (at last) of a prolific forward like Stopyra. The match proved to be spectacular from the very first minutes, with repeated frontal reversals and teams confronting each other openly with some excellent dribbling. After a good start from the French side, Brazil took the upper hand: on 14 minutes, Careca unleashed Socrates, who kicked left-footed from the edge of the box and forced Bats to use his fists; the Doctor recovered the ball, getting rid of Amorós and handed the ball centrally to Careca, but Bats, coming out of the box, promptly closed the door on him. It was just the wake-up call: two minutes later Brazil took the lead with a fantastic move.

A double triangle at supersonic speed between Müller and Júnior, who took out the entire French defence in samba step, a touch for Careca who beat Bats on the volley. The transalpins showed themselves in the 25th minute with a foray by Amorós on the right, a ball into the middle with a low cross and Rocheteau's winning touch was blocked by goalkeeper Carlos, then Julio César swept in for a corner. France pushed on and Brazil unleashed a dazzling counter-attack: Socrates launched a long ball for Careca, who sprinted past Bossis and passed into the middle for Müller, who hit the post. Brazil seemed to have everything to close the game out immediately, but instead came the French equaliser five minutes from the end of the first half. Rocheteau crossed from the right, there was a slight deflection by Branco, who displaced the defence and set up Stopyra in front of Carlos, but the French striker did not reach the ball and collided with the goalkeeper as it came out: Platini took advantage of this and came up at the second post and easily put the ball into the net, amid protests from Brazil, who asked for a foul on the extreme defender. The second half began with Brazil determined to take the game into their own hands: in the first minutes Bats overcame firstly Júnior's volley from the distance and, shortly afterwards, Socrates' venomous return parabola. The rhythms were slower and the two teams were more careful not to take chances, conceding less space to attacking actions. Tigana's personal action in the 64th minute shook the game: he recovered the ball in the middle of the pitch and moved forward, triangulated with Rocheteau and found himself face-to-face with Carlos, who managed to block out the rebound; on the other side Socrates passed to Júnior, who shot from outside the area and Bats again blocked with his fists. In the 70th minute Josimar from the right made a perfect cross, Careca's header was timed perfectly and hit the crossbar. It was the decisive moment: Santana set up Zico for Müller and the Brazilian star transformed the first ball he touched into a masterpiece with a right-footed through ball that should have been displayed in the Louvre, Branco thus found himself alone in front of Bats who could do nothing but knock him down, seeing himself outsprinted. It is an unquestionable penalty for Brazil. Zico himself wanted to be the national hero and went for the penalty spot, but his shot was rather central and Bats was not to be spurned, and it was blocked to the amazement of all. It was still a draw. The

In the 76th minute Bossis took off from a distance with a fantastic progression, skipped past Elzo with a great play and advanced to the edge of the area where he fired a right-footed shot that was brilliantly repelled by Carlos. In the 81st minute a perfect triangle between Careca-Zico-Careca but the striker, alone in front of Bats, clumsily shot at him. Shortly afterwards Josimar broke through again on the right and put in a brilliantly-tipped cross for Zico's head, but Bats again responded magnificently. A minute later it was France who came close to scoring but first Bossis and then Rocheteau failed to put the ball into the net. In the first period of extra time Rocheteau wedged his way through the Brazilian defence, won a couple of rebounds and found himself in front of Carlos, but a providential slip by the excellent Julio Cesar stopped him, the ball came to Stopyra who shot, but Branco deflected it into the corner. The teams were tired and lived off the plays of individuals, with many players walking around the pitch. The match started at midday under a blazing sun and gradually the strength failed. The minutes passed and the result remained in the balance, but the last five minutes of the second overtime reserved incredible emotions: Brazil, pushed by an inspired Zico, crushed France forward, Alemao shot violently from the limit and Bats deflected it into a corner. On the Brazilian corner, Ferreri recovered and passed the ball to Platini who, with the first intention, masterfully prolonged the ball for the run of Bellone, who flew alone into the opponent's half of the field, Carlos tackled him coming out of the area and shoved him conspicuously, Bellone jumped him but, unbalanced by the opponent's goalkeeper, he lost time to hit the net and Elzo stopped him. Furious protests from the French for the Brazilian goalkeeper's intervention: given the importance of the action there would have been grounds for a penalty and the expulsion of the goalkeeper, but for the referee it was all regular. But there was no time for recriminations, on the other side Silas took off down the right and centred for Careca, who failed to find the easy winning deflection on an empty goal. This superfight was to be decided on penalties. Socrates had his first shot parried by Bats, then Stopyra, Alemao, Amoros and Zico scored in succession. Bellone could put France back in the lead but he shot at the post, the ball slammed into the back of goalkeeper Carlos and into the net. Moments of astonishment, is it a goal or not? The referee validates amid Brazilian protests, and FIFA will agree with Romanian Igna's interpretation. Branco also scored, and it was Michel Platini's turn, who is one of the greatest penalty takers in the history of football: instead, the heat and fatigue clouded his vision and the ball went into the stands, well above the crossbar of the posts he had been looking for. We were still tied before the last penalty: Julio Cesar hit the post to Bats' right and Fernandez scored the goal that sent the Brazilians home and gave France their second consecutive World Cup semi-final. One of the most spectacular matches in World Cup history, always in the balance from the first to the last minute in a festival of emotions and great football.

FRANCE: Bats 8.5, Amoros 7, Battiston 6.5, Bossis 7, Tusseau 6.5, Fernandez 7, Giresse 6 (*from 83' Ferreri 6.5*), Tigana 7, Rocheteau 6.5 (*from 99' Bellone 5.5*), Platini 7, Stopyra 6.5. Manager Henri Michel.

BRAZIL: Carlos 7, Elzo 6, Branco 7, Julio Cesar 6.5, Edinho 6, Junior 7 (*from 91' Silas 6*), Josimar 7, Alemao 6.5, Careca 7, Socrates 7, Muller 6.5 (*from 71' Zico 6.5*). Manager: Tele Santana. Referee: Igna (ROM) 5.5

On 17' Careca 0-1; on 40' Platini 1-1.

On penalties: Stopyra 2-1; Alemao 2-2; Amoros 3-2; Zico 3-3; Bellone 4-3; Branco 4-4; Fernandez 5-4.