

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP MEXICO 1986 /
Quarter-finals Mexico City, Estadio Atzeza, 22 June
1986

ARGENTINA - ENGLAND

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LA MANO DE DIOS AND MARADONA'S GOAL OF THE CENTURY

Diego Armando Maradona has been lighting up the Italian football championship for two years now, wearing the number 10 jersey of Napoli, after having played for two seasons in the ranks of Barcelona. He is unanimously recognised as a great talent, but only on 22 June 1986 does he become Maradona, el Pibe de Oro. To become a legend, Diego chose one of the most enchanting theatres of world football, the Atzeza Stadium in Mexico City, the one of Italy-Germany 4-3, in front of 80,000 spectators, and he also chose a match that attracted the attention of the entire world, Argentina-England, less than four years after the absurd Falklands war between the two contenders. At stake was access to the World Cup semi-finals, with Argentina remaining the only non-European in the running for the title after the elimination of Brazil and Mexico (on penalties against West Germany). After a nervous and poorly played first half, in the 5th minute of the second half Diego took off in a sweeping solo action, jumping over 4 with a speed that showed his form was overwhelming, then he touched Valdano on whom Fenwick clumsily created a lob towards his own goalkeeper Shilton: Maradona jumped and with his left fist touched the ball into the net, anticipating the goalkeeper's exit. The referee did not notice the irregularity and resoundingly validated the goal. Diego's shrewdness and speed of execution were exceptional, and the Argentine number 10 did not even think of reporting the matter to the referee, instead he ran rejoicing with his left fist raised: 'it was la mano de Dios', he would later declare. A cleverness that would never be possible today with VAR and a thousand cameras pointed at the players. The English protests are in vain, play resumes but Maradona feels a little guilty. And so he decides to put it all to bed, when he receives the ball from Giusti in the Argentine half he already knows that the ball will only come off his foot and into the net: with a magic move he gets rid of Reid and Beardsley and takes off with the ball at the foot into the opponent's half, skips past Butcher like a bowling pin, skips past Fenwick and into the box, dribbles past Shilton and touches the net. An irresistible solo action, 60 metres in 10 seconds with the ball at his feet and 5 opponents dribbled, a goal that immediately became the most beautiful in the history of the World Cup. Diego has matured, he plays for the team but solves matches on his own, he is an uncontrollable variable for anyone. The poor stopper Fenwick, with the ungrateful task of marking him, had already received a yellow card for a butcher's entrance in the first half, and in the second half he knocked him down repeatedly, then twice he elbowed him in the face with the ball far away, the referee pardoned him but Maradona continued to put on a show.

England, who had been watching Diego Armando and Burruchaga for almost 70 minutes, woke up from their torpor only at the end: a fantastic free-kick by Hoddle was blocked by Nery Pumpido (according to many the weak point of Argentina) and with the entry of the lively Barnes they managed to get back into the game ten minutes from the end: it was he, with an overwhelming action on the left, who put in a brilliantly-tipped cross for Lineker's header who, from two steps, scored.

It was he, with a sweeping left-footed effort, who put in a brilliantly-tipped cross for the head of Lineker, who, from two paces, slotted into the net. It was the sixth goal at the World Cup for the Everton bomber, who is on the verge of a move to Barcelona, and it made him the tournament's top scorer. Not even time to refresh the scoreboard and Maradona combined another one of his own: with a body feint and a backheel he took out four opponents and then made a nice triangle with the newly-entered Tapia and the

returns the ball to the edge of the area, the young striker goes to the centre, wins a contrast and shoots the ball against the post with Shilton beaten. But it was England who closed forward and were able to recriminate about the result, which was the result of a goal that was blatantly irregular: two minutes from the end Barnes went off again on the left with a photocopy of the goal, he put in an excellent cross but this time Lineker, obstructed by two opponents, was unable to touch the ball into the net with the goalkeeper now overrun by the trajectory of the cross. Argentina found themselves in the semi-finals, where they would face Scifo's surprising Belgium, who beat Spain on penalties. With a Maradona like that, there are no more limits to the South Americans' ambitions.

ARGENTINA: Pumpido 6.5, Ruggeri 6.5, Cuciuffo 6.5, Batista 6.5, Brown 6.5, Enrique 6.5, Giusti 7, Olarticoechea 6.5, Burruchaga 7 (*from 75' Tapia 6.5*), Maradona 9, Valdano 6.5. Coach Carlos Bilardo.

ENGLAND: Shilton 6, Stevens 6, Sansom 6, Hoddle 6.5, Steven 5.5 (*from 74' Barnes 7*), Butcher 6, Fenwick 5, Reid 5.5 (*from 64' Waddle 6*), Lineker 6.5, Hodge 6, Beardsley 5.5. Manager: Bobby Robson.

Referee: Bennaceur (TUN) 4

On 50' Maradona 1-0; on 54' Maradona 2-0; on 80' Lineker 2-1.



La Mano de Dios anticipates Peter Shilton's exit for Argentina's lead.