

WORLD CUP ITALY 1990 / First Round

Rome, Olympic Stadium, 19 June 1990

ITALY – CZECHOSLOVAKIA

2-0

THE SLALOM OF ROBERTO BAGGIO

With two victories in the first two matches, Azeglio Vicini's Italy ignited the enthusiasm of the Italian people, who dreamed of becoming World Champions again. Italy debuted by attacking Austria in the first match of group A, without managing to score: 15 minutes from the end Vicini substituted Carnevale with Salvatore "Totò" Schillaci, revelation of the season in the ranks of Juventus after years of militancy in Serie B, and after 4 minutes Vialli escaped on the right, the ball was precisely on the head of the new player, who turned it behind Lindemberger: 1-0, the Magic Nights began. A few days later, Italy returned to the field against the United States and immediately scored with Giannini: it all seemed easy but Vialli, who was carrying the after-effects of an injury, kicked a penalty at the post and Italy disappeared. It ended 1-0 with some disappointment. For this reason, Vicini changed everything in attack for the decisive challenge for the first place in the group against Czechoslovakia: out went Vialli and Carnevale and in came Totò Schillaci and Roberto Baggio, the new 23-year-old emerging star of Italian football, protagonist in these days of a sensational transfer to Juve, unleashing protests in the squares of the Florentine fans. Italy immediately started with the foot on the accelerator, despite Czechoslovakia, with full points and a better goal difference, lined up well covered to bring home a draw. On 9' Donadoni's corner from the right that drew Giannini on the edge of the area, the Roma player's left-footed volley became a perfect assist for Schillaci, able to put into the net with a header like a great opportunist. Having taken the lead, Italy played splendidly, resting on a granitic defence and with Donadoni and Baggio who seemed impregnable to the Czechs. On 11', a stupendous Berti-Baggio-Berti triangle that penetrated into the area and passed to Schillaci who missed by a whisker at an empty goal. There is only Italy and on 31' De Napoli triangulates with Donadoni, then touches on the right for Bergomi's timely incursion: cross in the middle for Baggio who caresses with his right and strikes with his left: Stejskal parries on the ground. In the 39th minute Giannini's fantastic outside-right assist for Baggio to close a wide triangle, Baggio entered the area but had his conclusion rejected by the excellent Stejskal. Shortly afterwards Berti also tried with a percussion in the area on the suggestion of an irrepressible Baggio, but once again Stejskal saved his shot. In the second half, the sly Czechoslovakia woke up, with the omnipresent Chovanek who tasted Zenga's gloves with a great left-footed shot from 35 metres. The Azzurri replied with a remote-controlled ball from Baggio for Donadoni who found himself in front of Stejskal but failed to anticipate him and there was a nasty clash: the Milan player had the worst of it and had to leave the field in favour of De Agostini. In the 55th minute Totò Schillaci sprinted into the area, dribbled past Skuhravy on a defensive rebound and was flagrantly mown down by the Czech behemoth. The referee clamorously saw a simulation by Schillaci (the penalty was sacrosanct) and Totò looked at him stunned with his eyes out of their sockets, in an image that will remain indelible in everyone's memory as the icon of this World Cup. The Azzurri's push continued unceasingly: Berti took off on a counter-attack and launched Schillaci who flew away like an arrow into the opponent's half of the field, tunneled back to Kinler but then Stejskal, coming out, somehow stopped him. Roby Baggio dribbled past three in a slalom, Schillaci with the outside of the box sent Giannini on a diagonal right-footer to beat Stejskal, but Hasek clumsily cleared off the line. But woe betide them for not concretising: at the first incursion Czechoslovakia found the equalizer, very regular, but the referee Quiniou gave Italy a hand by annulling for non-existent offside the header of the new entry Griga on a perfect bank

Skuhravy. There was some concern in the Azzurri ranks, and Vicini brought on Vierchowod for De Napoli to mark Griga. Schillaci broke away on the left in the 70th minute, crossed for Baggio, who hit a spectacular cross and, in front of Stejskal Berti, put it into the net with his hand. Caution and goal cancelled out. In the 78th minute, Baggio exchanged passes with Giannini in midfield and took off on a legendary slalom move: he skipped past Hasek, aimed at Kadlec and then killed him off with a masterful feint, before also dispatching Stejskal with a right-footed shot at the first post. A fantastic play that launched Baggio into the Olympus of champions before the eyes of the whole world. It was the definitive blow for Czechoslovakia, who were content to pass the round as second: beating Costa Rica 4-1 in the round of 16, they then ran into Germany in the quarter-finals, exiting honourably with a narrow defeat. Winning the round, Italy went on to face the disappointing Uruguay, beating them 2-0 (Schillaci and Aldo Serena the scorers) and then meeting Ireland in the quarter-finals.

ITALY: Zenga 6.5, Bergomi 7, Maldini 7, Baresi 7, Ferri 7, Berti 7, Donadoni 7 (*from 51' De Agostini 6.5*), De Napoli 6.5 (*from 66' Vierchowod 6.5*), Schillaci 7.5, Giannini 7.5, Roberto Baggio 9. All. Azeglio Vicini.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA: Stejskal 7.5, Nemecek 5.5 (*from 46' Bielík 5.5*), Bilek 6, Kadlec 5.5, Kinier 5.5, Hasek 6.5, Moravcik 6, Chovanec 6.5, Skuhravy 6, Weiss 5.5 (*from 59' Griga 6.5*), Knoflíček 6. Manager: Josef Venglos.

Referee: Quiniou (FRA) 5

On 9' Schillaci 1-0.

In the 78th minute Roberto Baggio 2-0.



After a legendary slalom, Roby Baggio disorients Kadlec and beats Stejskal.