

WORLD CUP ITALY 1990 / Semi-finals

Naples, Stadio San Paolo, 3 July 1990

ITALY - ARGENTINA*4-5 d.c.r.***CANIGGIA FLIES AND ELIMINATES ITALY**

"Argentina is in the final, these are images we never wanted to comment on..." I remember like a nightmare these words of the late Bruno Pizzul in the late evening of 3 July 1990. A 14-year-old boy in love with football, I was living a dream of magical nights with the Italia'90 World Cup. The Azzurri team was playing spectacularly and Totò Schillaci and Roberto Baggio were the icing on the cake of a seemingly faultless formation. Incidentally, Argentina had made it to the semi-finals in an amazing way, having lost in the opening game to Cameroon, beaten Brazil with one shot on goal against a thousand, and undeservedly defeated a formidable Yugoslavia on penalty kicks. 'When the going gets tough, the tough get going' declared Gianluca Vialli on the eve of the match, paraphrasing John Belushi, Vicini gave him confidence and put him back on the field, sending Roby Baggio to the bench. It was expected that Argentina would be entrenched in defence, but after a few minutes Italy faltered and Maradona's team, who had asked the San Paolo in Naples to cheer for him, receiving an avalanche of whistles at the national anthem, took courage with a great shot by Burruchaga that was blocked in the corner by Zenga. In the 12th minute, Vialli took advantage of a rebound and found himself face to face with Goycoechea, who blocked his way by landing him blatantly, but referee Vautrot allowed the ball to continue. In the 17th minute, Italy took the lead with a masterful choral action: Schillaci stubbornly kept the ball between five opponents and touched it to De Napoli, a touch on the volley for Giannini, a sombrero to Ruggeri, the ball to Vialli who made a volley on the volley, Goycoechea repelled it to the feet of Totò who awkwardly scored by kicking with his back foot. The San Paolo explodes, with this Schillaci who turns everything he touches into gold, Italy cannot lose. The Azzurri lowered the pace, well aware of the South Americans' chronic inability to play, but Argentina took courage, dragged by Maradona, and took possession of the midfield without, however, troubling Zenga. The first half slipped away with few emotions, a lot of tension and several Argentine kicks on the ankles of the Azzurri. With a Giannini off and a Vialli completely out of the game, Argentina took control of the match in the second half: on 55' Olarticoechea tried with a shot from the left at the first post that Zenga promptly repelled. Italy were unrecognisable compared to their previous outings and instead of exploiting their greater technical ability, they limited themselves to containing Argentina on an agonistic level, but the Biancocelesti had more. There was a great chance in the 63rd minute for Caniggia in the box, but Kaiser Franz Baresi deflected his shot into the corner. Italy were on their heels and in the 67th minute Argentina found the equalizer: on Troglia's cross from the left Caniggia's effort, Atalanta's 23-year-old striker flew a header, anticipating Ferri and Zenga's late exit, and mockingly touched into the net. Italy tried to react but did not have the strength and Argentina closed in well defensively. In came Baggio and Serena for Vialli and Giannini, but the music did not change. The only big chance for Italy came at the feet of De Agostini, on a through ball from the inexhaustible Donadoni, but Goycoechea said no. There was extra time and at the San Paolo there was already an air of mockery about what should have been a foregone victory and a stepping stone to the final. Roberto Baggio tried to break the curse, his free-kick from the edge of the area was fantastic and sailed into the crossbar: 9 times out of 10 such a gem swelled the net, but Goycoechea performed a real miracle and with his fingertips deflected it into the corner. At the end of the first overtime Vautrot expelled Giusti for a second caution, but

Not even in 11 against 10 did Italy manage to prevail, showing serious gaps in their athleticism. There was a big thrill in the 4th minute of the second half, with Maradona starting in slalom and taking the whole Italian defence for a ride, then offering Olarticoechea a great ball but his volley finished just wide. At the other end Schillaci was stopped in front of Goycoechea for a non-existent offside on a Serena throw. Vautrot conceded an exaggerated recovery in extra time, almost as if to ward off the inevitable penalty shoot-out: Baresi scored, Zenga touched Serrizuela's central conclusion but did not hold back. Baggio took a chance with Goycoechea, who grazed the rebound, then Burruchaga, De Agostini and Olarticoechea scored impeccably. It was 4-4 and Roberto Donadoni went to the penalty spot. His shot is strong and angled, but predictable, Goycoechea flies like a cat and blocks it. Maradona goes to the penalty spot amid a horde of booing, and mocks Zenga with a disorientating touch that brings Argentina within a step of the final. The last hope lies in the feet of Aldo Serena, but his shot is not great and Goycoechea is kissed by fate in this World Cup: the ball escapes him. this World Cup: the ball escapes him but gets caught between the ground and his... backside!!! "Argentina are in the final. These are images we never wanted to comment on....".

ITALY: Zenga 5, Baresi 6.5, Bergomi 6, Ferri 5.5, Maldini 6, De Agostini 6, De Napoli 6.5, Giannini 5.5 (from 75' Roberto Baggio 6), Vialli 5.5 (from 71' Serena 5.5), Donadoni 6, Schillaci 7. All. Azeglio Vicini.

ARGENTINA: Goycoechea 8, Serrizuela 6.5, Ruggeri 6.5, Simon 6.5, Basualdo 6 (from 99' Batista sv), Burruchaga 7, Maradona 7, Giusti 6, Olarticoechea 7, Caniggia 7, Calderon 5 (from 46' Troglio 6). Manager: Carlos Bilardo.

Referee: Vautrot (FRA) 5.5

At 17' Schillaci 1-0.

On 67' Caniggia 1-1.

On penalties: Baresi 2-1; Serrizuela 2-2; Roberto Baggio 3-2; Burruchaga 3-3; De Agostini 4-3; Olarticoechea 4-4; Maradona 4-5.



Caniggia's header beat Zenga to take Argentina to penalties.