

WORLD CUP FRANCE 1998 / Quarter-finals
Marseille, Velodrome, 4 July 1998

HOLLAND - ARGENTINA

2-1

THE MAGIC OF DENNIS BERGKAMP

After defeating England, Argentina were pointed out as the main adversary of Ronaldo's super Brazil, especially after Italy's elimination on penalties against hosts France, but they were still not convincing. The Netherlands managed to get the better of Yugoslavia in the round of 16 only in the dying minutes with a goal from Edgar Davids, the driving force behind a young team skilfully led by Guus Hiddink. Milan striker Patrick Kluivert returned to the pitch after being disqualified for his expulsion in the match against Belgium, and he immediately made his mark in the 5th minute for a raid in the box, stopped, Cocu took over, rebounded, Jonk arrived with his right and hit the post. The Netherlands seemed to be having a great day, in the 12th minute Ronald De Boer's central percussion, who then opened on the left for Bergkamp, who with a header touched splendidly for Kluivert on the penalty spot: with elegance he beat Roa and put the Orange ahead. Only five minutes passed and Argentina found the equalizer: Ortega passed to Veron, who cut a masterful assist to Lopez, El Piojo eluded the Dutch defense on the offside line, aimed at Van der Saar, hypnotized him with a couple of feints and slipped it under his legs. A spectacular start to a match full of emotion. The teams attacked each other throughout the first half with no holds barred: in the 28th minute Davids tried with a left-footed volley from outside the area and Roa awkwardly repelled it with his knee. In the 35th minute R. De Boer slalomed again, then it was Jonk's turn to blast a left-footer from outside the box that Roa flew in for a corner. At the other end Ortega evened up the woodwork count with a right-footer that beat Van der Saar but hit the base of the post to the goalkeeper's right. At the end of the half El Cholo Simeone tried his luck with a right-footed shot from the edge of the box that grazed the post. Even in the second half the Netherlands got off to a better start and pushed on the accelerator, moving Numan from full-back to left wing and forcing Ortega and Almeyda to act as covering midfielders, the ball was always Dutch but they rarely found the goal. The domination became more and more overwhelming as the minutes passed, thanks to a truly inhuman Davids in chasing and recovering every ball: truly a player transformed by Juve after being lost to Milan. But the Argentine counter-attack was deadly: in the 61st minute Veron started in progression and then served Batistuta, who got free of Frank De Boer and fired a deadly left-footed torpedo that split the post and then went out. A devastating shot, luck helps the Orange! Hiddink risked it all: in came the ailing Overmars in place of R. De Boer and immediately the

Arsenal's ferret outmanoeuvred Almeyda on the right and put in a perfect cross for Kluivert's header, but Roa overcame and put it in for a corner. Netherlands were constantly pressing forward, Argentina looking tired and on the ropes, locked in their own three-quarter to defend the result. In the 76th minute, there was a quick Argentine restart and Numan, already cautioned, brought down Simeone in midfield. Mexican referee Brizio Carter, already a nefarious protagonist at the last World Cup and incredibly exhumed by Fifa to referee in France as well, has the easy card and we know it well, so he throws him out leaving the Netherlands in ten. It was a signal for Argentina who regained courage with the extra man and threw themselves forward in search of victory in regulation time. The Netherlands were now defending and in the 88th minute Ortega entered the box, aimed at Stam, dribbled past him and then went to the ground, touched by the Dutchman, but the referee whistled for Ortega's simulation and cautioned him... in the meantime Van der Saar had a go at the Argentine number 10, who, getting up, head-butted him in front of the referee and was sent off.

he is sent off. Ortega's big foolishness, but the replay shows that the penalty on him was all there and so for the umpteenth time our Mexican friend Brizio Carter put in a big effort. Yes, because the game changed hands again and a kilometre-long throw from Frank De Boer caught Bergkamp in the box, the Dutchman's sumptuous control, dribbling that sent Ayala over the bar and a right-footed outside touch into the crossbar that beat Roa. Stunning and lethal! A magic that made us forget the referee's gift and deservedly awarded the semi-final to Holland, just 20 years after the Buenos Aires final that had shown so much injustice towards the Dutch. Justice is done?

HOLLAND: Van der Saar 5.5, Reiziger 6.5, Stam 6, F.De Boer 7, Numan 5.5, Jonk 7, R.De Boer 7 (*from 62' Overmars 7*), Bergkamp 7.5, Kluivert 7, Davids 7.5, Cocu 7. All. Guus Hiddink.

ARGENTINA: Roa 7, Ayala 5.5, Chamot 5.5 (*from 91 Balbo sv*), Zanetti 6, Almeyda 5.5 (*from 67' Pineda 6*), Sensini 6, Lopez 6.5, Simeone 6.5, Batistuta 6.5, Ortega 5, Veron 7.

Referee: Brizio Carter (MEX) 5

Sent off 76' Numan and 88' Ortega.

On 12' Kluivert 1-0; on 17' Lopez 1-1.

On 90' Bergkamp 2-1.