

WORLD CUP 2002 / Round of 16 Daejeon,
World Cup Stadium, 18 June 2002

SOUTH KOREA - ITALY

2-1 d.t.s.

THE SCANDALOUS REFEREE MORENO

The 2002 World Cup was hosted jointly by two countries for the first time: South Korea and Japan. It is also the first World Cup to be held on the Asian continent, but it will remain in the collective memory as one of the least interesting. The participation of 32 teams, after the novelty effect created in France, creates a lot of matches in the first phase, many of which are unwatchable, and the usual golden-goal rule takes away the teams' courage in the second phase. Three of the main favourites are resoundingly eliminated in the first round (World Champion France, Argentina, Portugal) and even in the knockout phase there are no spectacular matches, so much so that the most representative match of this edition of the World Cup will remain so more due to the demerit of the referee, the Ecuadorian Byron Moreno, than to the merits of the protagonists.

Italy are the favourites for the last round of 16 clash against hosts South Korea, despite having survived by the skin of their teeth, thanks to Del Piero's late equalizer against Mexico and Croatia's thud against Ecuador. But South Korea's hosts are a steamroller that knocked out Luis Figo and Rui Costa's Portugal, and they are trying to make the most of the home factor by chanting with banners to the Azzurri's historic elimination in England, 'Again 1966', leaving out the small detail that the heroes in that case had been the hated cousins from North Korea. Another banner read Korea-Italy 5-0, and the crowd was all coloured red: a true hell for the team led by Giovanni Trapattoni. Who, in the face of the renowned defensiveism, fielded Totti, Del Piero and Vieri simultaneously for a stellar attack. The problems are in the defence, where central players Cannavaro (disqualified) and Nesta (injured) are missing. But Italy's worst enemy was revealed after just a few minutes: it was the funny and chubby Ecuadorian referee Moreno, sent by who knows who (Blatter? Havelange? football betting?) to annoy the Azzurri with sensational decisions that would condition the match. After only three minutes, Moreno cautioned Coco for a very normal foul on the first intervention, then in the following action he conceded a penalty to the Koreans that was scandalous, for a very common hold by Panucci on Seol Ki Hyeon, as one sees hundreds of in every match. But young Buffon was prodigious in deflecting Ahn Jung Hwan's penalty and Italy regained their breath. Korea had a very high rhythm but Italy was in the game and after the shock start they took the measures of both the opponents and the referee and the match became pleasant and balanced. On 18', Itaila took the lead: Totti's corner and at the first post, Vieri's header went ahead of the pile and into the net, exulting under the Korean curve with his index finger to his mouth asking them to be quiet. Korea were a little dazed and struggled to build, also thanks to a perfect Italy that pressed and left no space. Hiddink was ranting on the bench, but the old Trap's cage ensnared the game of the red devils, who only found the goal in the 35th minute after a beautiful choral action, with Ahn (ex-Perugia player with a bad tooth for his unsuccessful experience in Italy) who received in the area, cleared the ball with his heel and then shot just wide with his right. However, the Azzurri's best chance came at the feet of Tommasi: the Roma midfielder recovered a ball early in the box and served Totti, who closed the triangle with a masterful assist to put Tommasi in front of goal, but Lee Won Jae avalanched out and blocked it, the ball rolled onto Tommasi and rolled towards goal, with Yoo Sang Chul saving on the line. Late in the half Coco collides fortuitously with Tommasi

in the Azzurri area and suffered a deep wound to his cheekbone, but he remained on the pitch with a conspicuous bandage. In the second half the Azzurri played the Italian way, well covered in defence and ready to close the game on the counter-attack: in the 51st minute there was a hand in the box by Seol, who kept his arm off his body, but obviously Moreno pretended not to see. In the 55th minute Zambrotta lunged down the right, crossing for Del Piero, who volleyed wide but hit an opponent placed in front of goal. Trap fielded Gattuso in place of Del Piero to reinforce the midfield in view of the final forcing of the Koreans, while the pressure of the public increased and the influence on the match of referee Moreno, who whistled and admonished one-way. But Italy deserved the 2-0 and had the fault of failing in three other important occasions: in the 73rd minute, Vieri is launched by Zanetti and starts off on a solitary gallop, but once in the area, instead of serving the unleashed Totti, he badly hits the ball out; in the 75th minute, another Italian counterattack, Vieri seems unstoppable but then his shot is miraculously deflected by Choi Jun Cheul over the crossbar; In the 78th minute Totti tried from midfield, dribbling past three, then at the edge of the area he lost the moment to shoot and was brought down, with the referee letting it pass and the infuriated Trap railing at the fourth man. And mockery lurked, arriving in the cruellest of ways. The new-entry Cha Do Ri, son of the great past glory Cha Bum Kun, put in a cross from the right, Maldini slipped and left the ball to Seol who pierced Buffon with his left: it was 87 minutes and it was 1-1. But the most atrocious mistake came after the Korean equaliser, as a fantastic Tommasi put a ball into the middle from the left for Vieri, only to touch it into the net a metre from the goal, but clumsily Bobo arrives uncoordinated and tired and touches it out! There is still time for a thrill in added time, Gattuso loses the ball and Cha Do Ri's reverse kick is parried by Buffon. It goes into extra time, the two teams are tired and long minutes pass with a waiting game. Korea are unbalanced going forward with four role strikers and Trap knows that his side can strike on the counter-attack at any moment, but Hiddink keeps the team balanced with cloying ball possession in midfield. In the 11th minute of the first period of extra time Hwang Sun Hong tried a free kick, the ball passed under the barrier but the young Juve goalkeeper reached out to clear. At the other end Vieri acts as a tower for Totti's insertion in the box, dribbles, goes down: penalty? NO! Moreno whistles for simulation and draws a yellow card on the Roma star, who had already been cautioned and then sent off. The Azzurri's bench explodes, their protests are vib that the Ecuadorean man is adamant: Italy down to ten men. The fortitude of the Azzurri multiplied, mixed with rage and adrenaline, and in the second half Italy had the chance to win the match twice: on 5' with Tommasi, splendidly launched by Vieri in front of the goal, but once again the referee stopped him for a non-existent offside; on 7', Gattuso tried instead, jumping over a man and then winning a rebound on Seol and finding himself in front of the goalkeeper, right footer and a miracle by Lee in the corner. There were four minutes to go, Montella had been ready to go in for a couple of minutes, but Iuliano, instead of putting the ball out as the Trap called for, sent the ball long and gave the ball to the Koreans, who took off again, Lee's cross from the three-quarter line and Ahn's winning header beat Buffon. A resounding mockery! South Korea made it historically to the quarter-finals, where with another scandalous victory, thanks to two regular goals cancelled against Spain, they will question the regularity of this World Cup, as it had not happened since Argentina'78, and will reach the historic semifinals. Italy on its part, however, has many regrets because despite Moreno's thousands of inventions it could have won if it had scored at least one of the many wasted chances. For the record, years later, Byron Moreno would end up in jail after being found at New York's JFK airport with 6 kilograms (!!) of heroin. In short, a saintly Moreno was not. The FBI investigations that blew up the entire Fifa management in 2015 then confirmed the theories of a World Cup largely manipulated by political corruption and betting.

SOUTH KOREA: Lee Woon Jae 7, Hong Myung Bo 5.5 (*from 82' Cha Doo Ri 7*), Song Chong Gug 6.5, Choi Jin Cheul 7, Kim Nan Il 6 (*from 67' Lee Chun Soo 6.5*), Yoo Sang Chul 7, Kim Taeng Yong 6 (*from 62' Hwang Sun Hong 6.5*), Park Ji Sung 6.5, Seol Ki Hyeon 7, Lee Young Pyo 7, Ahn Jung Hwan 7. All. Guus Hiddink.

ITALY: Buffon 7, Panucci 5.5, Maldini 5.5, Coco 6, Juliano 5.5, C. Zanetti 6.5, Del Piero 6. (*from 61' Gattuso 6*), Tommasi 7, Vieri 6, Totti 6.5, Zambrotta 6 (*from 71' Di Livio 6*). Manager: Giovanni Trapattoni.

Referee: Moreno (EQU) 4

On 18' Vieri 0-1.

In the 87th minute Seol Ki Hyong 1-1. In the 116th minute Ahn Jung Hwan 2-1.

Sent off in the 102nd minute Totti.



The impassive referee Moreno's grin despite protests from Di Livio and Vieri