

# GOD takes

## Diego Maradona, a divine tal

Argentine soccer legend Diego Maradona, widely regarded as one of the game's greatest ever players, died of a heart attack yesterday

AFP | Buenos Aires

**D**iego Maradona was football's archetypal troubled genius, a world-beating player whose life and career scaled the most dazzling heights but also plumbed the darkest depths. Maradona, who died Wednesday at the age of 60, became a global icon after leading Argentina to the 1986 World Cup but he was not a squeaky clean idol like Pele, and made little attempt to hide his fiery personality and many vices.

"I am black or white, I'll never be grey in my life," he once said.

Maradona was short, powerful and quick. He was also a ferocious and astute competitor who refused to be intimidated even though many opponents tried. Above all, he was sublimely and imaginatively skilful.

"No ball ever had a better experience than when it was at his left foot," said his Argentina teammate Jorge Valdano.

However, while Maradona is remembered for his masterly composure on the ball, he was also famous for his frequent lack of control both on the field and off. He struggled with addiction, notably to cocaine, and with his weight.

Diego Armando Maradona was born on October 30, 1960, in Lanus, just outside Buenos Aires, and grew up in one of the poorest areas of the Argentine capital.



Maradona's Hand of God was responsible for England's elimination from the 1986 World Cup

He made his debut for Argentinos Juniors just before his 16th birthday and his debut for Argentina at age 16 in February, 1977.

His career is defined by the World Cup, the four he played in and the one he missed.

"I have two dreams," Maradona told Argentine television at the age of 17. "My first dream is to play in the World Cup. And the second dream is to win it."

Manager Cesar Luis Menotti omitted "El Pibe de Oro" (the golden kid) from his squad in 1978. Argentina, the hosts, went on to win the competition for the first time.

The following year, under Menotti, Maradona led Argentina to victory in the under-20 World Cup in Japan, winning the Golden Ball for the tournament's best player.

His senior World Cup debut in 1982 in Spain went badly. Maradona was treated brutally by defenders and ended his tournament with a red card for retaliation as Argentina, already eliminated, lost to Brazil.

### Hand of God

He atoned four years later, propelling his country to victory in Mexico and making the tournament his own.

In the final, Maradona set up the 86th-minute winner against West Germany. He scored twice in the semi-final against Belgium, beating four defenders for the second.

But the match that defined his tournament, possibly his international career, was the 2-1 quarter-final win over England, in which he scored goals that will be remembered forever -- for different reasons.

In the 51st minute, as Peter Shilton reacted to catch the ball, Maradona, some seven inches shorter, jumped alongside him and with a deft that fooled the eye, flicked the ball through England goalkeeper's arms and into the net.

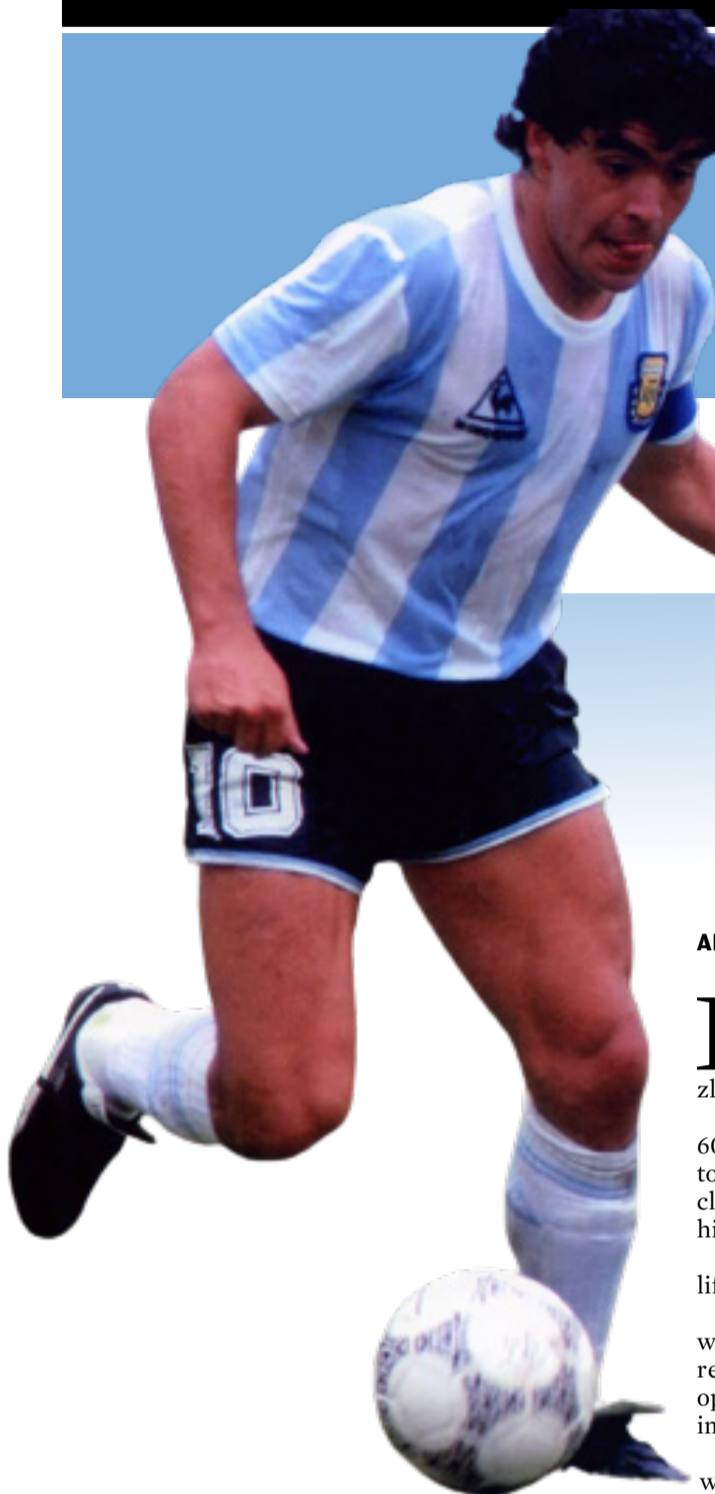
After the game, Maradona said he scored little with the head of Maradona and a little with the hand of God."

Four minutes later, Maradona picked up the ball in his own half, beat six England players, including Shilton, before squeezing home. FIFA later named it the "Goal of the Century".

In 1990 in Italy, almost immobile because of injury to his much-kicked left ankle, Maradona steered a defensive and limited Argentine t



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Maradona's goal against England is widely considered one of the best, if not the best, goal of all time



# Adios Diego Maradona