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I am not sure if I can say that I had a hero in my life, probably not. Actually I had probably just one and just for a short period of time. However, I'm sure I had an enemy. Yes, I had one. His name was Paolo Rossi, and he did the worst thing an enemy can do, he won my probable only hero, and his victory was final and decisive. My candidate to hero could not try to win another battle; my enemy had won the war.

I remember my enemy's armor in detail. He wore white shorts and blue t-shirt. The number 20 in white was printed in his back. In his chest, there was the tricolor badge of the Italian national soccer team.

I also remember perfectly my candidate to hero. It was not one person; it was actually a team, the brightest soccer team I have ever seen playing in all my life, the Brazilian national soccer team of the world cup of 1982. The canary selection, as people call them, in that world cup was playing the most magical and enchanting soccer ever. Until nowadays that team is known as the legend of 1982, the most artful soccer team of history of the soccer. I have seen many really great soccer teams playing during my life and I could easily list a dozen of them here, but none of them are even comparable to that selection of 1982.

However, in July 5th, 1982, in Barcelona, Spain, at the Sarria Stadium, this wonderful team met its archrival. Until that date, the Brazilian team had played four matches and won all of them, the only team with one hundred percent of the points. They had scored thirteen goals, and enchanted the entire world. On the other hand, the Italian team had just tied the four games they had played and scored only twice. The number 20 one, my enemy I have told you

about, had not scored any goal until that day. He and his team were playing a mediocre soccer, unworthy of any attention, just for criticism. They were not honoring the jersey they wore. Nobody had any doubt that Brazil would win easily that other game, with other soccer show, probably a new soccer's class for the lovers of the Briton sport.

In that day I was in my house with my siblings waiting for the beginning of the game. My mom, who is an Italian's granddaughter, began to joke with us saying that that day we would lose to the Squadra Azzurra (the blue team), as the Italian national soccer team is known. Yes, she said that we would lose. The Brazilian soccer national team during the world cup is "we" in Brazil. As a famous journalist says, during the world cup, the national team is the "motherland in soccer boots." For sure we did not care about what my mom was saying; she did not know anything about soccer.

The game started and my mom served Italian pasta to us. You know, she did it just to try provoking us, but we just laugh, moreover, even if the game finished tied, Brazil would be classified and Italy would go back home, we had more points than them. Nobody could believe in a different end for that match, Brazil going to the semi-finals and Italy going back home shamefully. On the TV, there were already ads talking about the next game, which would be in the next Thursday, against Poland, for the semi-finals, and then, the final, on Sunday, against France or Germany.

But, as I was saying, the game started and we had not even tried my mom's pasta yet when Paolo Rossi scored the first goal. That was not so bad; after all, the game was just in the beginning and we had the entire game to reverse the score. As we were expecting, after ten minutes, Brazil tied the match. Everything was just fine again. However that day, despite

playing very well as usual, the Brazilian team was not scoring as habitual. In an incautious pass of ball between the Brazilian players, Paolo Rossi took the ball, and scored for the second time. Yes, Paolo Rossi again, who had not scored any goal until that day, had scored twice just in the first half of the game. It was unbelievable. However, again, we knew we had enough time to tie and even win that game. However, during all rest of the first half Brazil tried and tried, Italy was just defense, but we could not score again, and the first half of the match finished with Italy winning by 2 x 1, with two goals of him, Paolo Rossi.

The second time started and the tension in my home just grew. My mother sometimes passed to the room, looked the TV set, and said, "come on, I'm just seeing blue t-shirt in this field. Where are the yellow ones?" In the first times she said this we just laughed, but as the time was passing we were becoming more and more nervous and we stopped to answer her provocations.

At twenty-two minutes of the second half the relief came to us. In a beautiful shot by Falcão, Brazil tied again. It was not perfect, but it was enough to classify. Italy would not be able to score again. Never one team had score three times against Brazil. However, you should not forget what I said in the beginning, my enemy was terrible and merciless. Six minutes later he did the most unbelievable act we could imagine, he scored for the third time. For the first and for the only time in the soccer history, one only player scored thrice in just one game against the Brazilian national team.

We knew there were more twenty-three minutes, but they were the fastest twenty-three minutes I have ever lived in my life. Our players did everything they could, but the ball could not go inside of the Italian goal. Their goalkeeper, Dino Zoff, played the role of the best

Paolo Rossi's accomplice ever. In the very last minute, there was a corner kick. Junior crossed the ball to the area and Sócrates headed the ball beautifully and strongly to the very corner of the goal, but Zoff made a miracle and avoided he scored. The worst feeling I remember I was feeling was that sensation that, if Zoff failed and Brazil tied again, Paolo Rossi would score again.

The match finished, Brazil lost, and Paolo Rossi made history as the cruelest villain Brazil has ever faced. He was as strong as David against Goliath. As the young future king of Israel, he used three stones to kill his strongest enemy, our national team. Together with his adversary, that would be maybe my only hero, he killed our dream, he killed our magic soccer, he killed what was the best team ever.

I do not remember any word between my siblings and me when the match finished. Usually, when our team loses a match, we complain against the referee or we look for some justification or explanation, but in that day it was different. We were really defeated. There was only silence and acceptance of the enemy's victory in our hearts. If I close my eyes, I can remember perfectly the smile in the face of the "bambino d'oro", the golden boy, as the Italians started to call Paolo Rossi.

Today I can see in his joy and in his unpleasant smile some disbelief in front of what he had just done. I see in his eyes the pleasure for being able to do it and for seeing his adversary falling definitively. However, in that day, I just had one understanding of that smile; Rossi was looking at me through the TV screen and laughing of my pain.

In that day I learned that sometimes the force and objectivity can win the art and the beauty. For the soccer's lover, our team is unforgettable; for the history, Paolo Rossi is a hero

and Italy the champion of the world cup of 1982; for me, my enemy killed my hero arguably and taught me that sometimes the only thing we can do is to accept our defeat silently.