



AS IT IS

## Argentine Football Star Maradona Dies at 60

November 25, 2020

Soccer star Diego Armando Maradona died on Wednesday.

Maradona is said to have suffered a heart attack at his home in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He died less than one month after his 60th birthday.

Maradona grew up in a poor area of Buenos Aires and led Argentina's national team to victory in the 1986 World Cup. However, he was kicked out of the 1994 World Cup for a drug violation. His career was cut short after years of drug use, overeating and alcoholism.

In 2000, Maradona nearly died of heart failure caused by use of the drug cocaine. But he came back in 2008 to coach the Argentina national team.

He was one of the most gifted players in the history of the sport. And, he was honored like a god for his skills with the football, as it is called in much of the world. In Argentina, he was called 'El Dios', or The God in English. It is a play on words on his number 10 shirt, 'El Diez,' in the Spanish language.

Some Argentinians consider Maradona the greatest football player ever, **edging out** Brazilian footballer, Pelé. Both were named FIFA Player of the Century in 2000.

Maradona was largely responsible for Argentina's World Cup victory in 1986 in Mexico. He scored two famous goals in one game against England for a 2-1 victory.

The first goal was scored with his fist but officials on the field did not see it. He later said, "It was partly by the hand of God and partly with the head of Maradona."

Maradona then **dribbled** past half of England's team for his second goal of the game. It is often called the goal of the **century**.

### **Born with a football**

Born on October 30, 1960, in Buenos Aires, Maradona was the fifth of eight children of a factory worker. As a child, he slept with a football under his arm while his mother thought he would grow up to be an **accountant**.

Maradona played for the Argentinos Juniors at the age of 15. Two years later, he just missed being a part of Argentina's 1978 World Cup team.

In 1984, he joined the Italian team Napoli for a then world-record \$7.5 million contract. He led the team to two Italian football championships.

After the 1986 World Cup victory in Mexico, he also brought Argentina's national team to a World Cup final in Rome in 1990.

But by 1991, drugs and alcohol began taking over his life.

That year Maradona received a 15-month suspension from the sport for a drug violation. He was banned again for 15 months after a drug test at the 1994 World Cup in the United States.

Of his troubles, Maradona once said, "Football is the most beautiful and healthy sport in the world. It shouldn't have to pay for my mistakes. It's not the ball's fault."

Maradona retired from professional football in 1997. After his near-death experience in 2000, he received treatment and spent some time with Cuban leader Fidel Castro.

From China to Europe, Argentinians found they could make friends just by mentioning Maradona's name. Some even created the Maradoniana Church with a saying "Make Diego your middle name and name your first son Diego."

After hearing the news of Maradona's death, the football great Pelé told Reuters in a statement, "One day we'll kick a ball together in the sky above."

I'm Jonathan Evans.

*Hai Do adapted this Reuters report for VOA Learning English. Mario Ritter Jr. was the editor.*

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## Words in This Story

**dribble** -*v.* to move a ball by bouncing or kicking it in a skillful way

**century** -*n.* one hundred years

**edge out** -*v. (phrasal)* to be more successful than a competitor by a very small amount

**accountant** -*n.* someone whose job is to keep financial records

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