

world into mourning

'Hand of God'

Maradona, born in Lanus, just south of Buenos Aires, on October 30, 1960, also played for Boca Juniors, Barcelona and Napoli in a career marked by wild highs and lows. In probably his most famous moment, he leapt and used his fist to score past England's Peter Shilton in the 1986 World Cup quarter-finals, memorably describing the goal as "a little with the head of Maradona and a little with the hand of God".

Minutes later he weaved through six English defenders from the halfway line to score an unforgettable solo second which was later honored as FIFA's "Goal of the century". The two contrasting goals perfectly encapsulated the mixture of brilliant skill and often outlandish behavior that ran through Maradona's life. Maradona's career was crowned by his performances at that World Cup, when he captained Argentina to glory. After dismissing England he scored twice in the semi-final against Belgium, slaloming past four defenders for his second, and set up the 86th-minute winner in the final against West Germany.

It was to prove the highlight for Maradona, who inspired Argentina to the 1990 final only for West Germany to take their revenge. In 1994 - after an infamous, eye-bulging goal celebration against Greece-he failed a drugs test and was sent home in disgrace. Gary Lineker, who was in the beaten England team in 1986, said Maradona was "arguably the greatest of all time", adding: "After a blessed but troubled life, hopefully he'll finally find some comfort in the hands of God. #RipDiego." Excesses with drugs and alcohol had long taken their toll on Maradona's health. He was admitted to hospital three times in the last 20 years for serious health issues due to his addictions.

'Ciao Diego'

Maradona grew up in poverty, but his extraordinary talent was clear from a young age at Argentinos Juniors and Boca. He moved to Barcelona but was singled out for rough treatment by opposing defenders and soon fell out of love with the Spanish club. It was in Naples where Maradona would enchant an entire city by leading the then unfashionable Napoli to their only two Italian league titles in 1987 and 1990, befriending a mafia family along the way. "Always in our hearts. Ciao Diego," Napoli tweeted, while the club's president and Naples' mayor both called for Napoli's Stadio San Paolo to be renamed after Maradona.

In recent years, Maradona, reduced to hobbling by the ravages of his career and lifestyle, had coached in the UAE, Mexico and Argentina without ever hitting the heights of his playing days. Maradona married his long-time girlfriend Claudia Villafane in 1984. They had two daughters, Dalma and Gianinna, but the relationship was punctuated by Maradona's extra-marital affairs and they divorced in 2004. He also had a son, Diego Junior, born in Naples in 1986, although he only acknowledged paternity in 2004. In 2000, FIFA ran an online Player of the Century poll. Maradona gained 54 percent of the vote and Pele was second with 18 percent. FIFA declared them joint winners. —AFP



DUBAI: File photo shows Argentina's football legend Diego Maradona during the ATP Dubai Open tennis tournament in the Gulf emirate.



BEIJING: A fan pays his respects to the late Argentinean football legend Diego Maradona at the Argentine embassy in Beijing yesterday. AFP



FUJAIRAH: In this file photo, former Argentinean footballer and manager Diego Armando Maradona (right) holds a jersey of the football club Fujairah FC, bearing his name on the reverse, during a press conference where he was announced as the upcoming manager for the team.