



Argentine soccer star Diego Maradona (C) in action against Israel during a World Cup prep match in Tel Aviv on Tuesday. Argentina won 3-0. — AFP photo

## Saga of a jack-easy genius

NOORDWIJK, Netherlands, June 1: A dazzling talent tainted by a 'take-me-or-leave-me' attitude towards his profession has made Dutch soccer star Ruud Gullit an exasperating charge for a succession of club and national coaches, reports Reuter.

Gullit, 31, walked out of the Dutch national squad on Monday with no explanation as to why he was quitting.

It was the former Dutch captain and European footballer-of-the-year's third, and likely final, exit from the international stage.

Always compelling to watch on the field, Gullit has the ability to single-handedly turn a match, but he has confessed to sleeping easily at night even after his team's defeats, leading to accusations that he has not always taken the game seriously.

He made his professional debut aged 16 at local club Haarlem and caught the eye of Feyenoord trainer Hans Kraay. Moving to the Rotterdam club in 1982, Gullit joined a successful side — including Johan Cruyff — which won the Dutch Championship in 1984.

Kraay moved to PSV Eindhoven and took Gullit with him in 1985, but the two fell out over how the side should play.

A furious Kraay demanded the Eindhoven Club back him and sack Gullit, but PSV sided with the player, who was by now a regular in the Dutch national side, and Kraay departed.



player power was erupting within the Dutch squad preparing for the 1990 World Cup in Italy.

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Gullit then criticised PSV for the way the club had treated him and joined AC Milan in the star-studded Italian league.

While Gullit settled easily into the role of super-idol

hakker stepped in to take charge for what was a disappointing series for the below-par Dutch, beaten by West Germany in the quarter-finals.

Gullit's six-year spell at AC Milan, peppered with top honours, was also riddled with injury and he was no longer able to command a regular first-team place.

Hurt, he took his wounded pride into the Dutch team and after defeat by Italy in a friendly match, he quit.

Three years later he was back to help the Dutch qualify for the 1994 World Cup, but the humiliation of being substituted against England prompted another walkout.

A year later, and after an inspired season at Italian league club Sampdoria, Gullit seemed to have made his peace with Advocaat and rejoined the national squad to prepare for the World Cup, after which, he said, he would bow out.

But after just 45 minutes — the first half of a friendly against Scotland last Friday which the Dutch won 3-1 — Gullit appears to have decided he cannot play in the current team.

The bare statistics reveal Gullit won 65 caps for the Netherlands, scoring 16 goals, between 1981-94.

They give no insight into the enigmatic star, who enthralled crowds worldwide with his athleticism and enthusiasm, but who now risks losing the love and respect of his fellow Dutchmen.

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Maradona, though he appeared subdued, set up the first goal by slicing through Israel's defense for Batistuta to hit home a first-time shot.

Israeli coach Shlomo Scharf made four substitutions in the second half in an attempt to give his players some experience. But the move proved costly as the Argentine capitalised on the holes in Israel's defense.

Batistuta struck his second goal after an Israeli blunder when he picked up a pass from Jose Chamot and powered the ball past substitute keeper Rafi Cohen.

Caniggia got on the score-sheet four minutes later, making the most of another hole in the defense.

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