



ROSSI'S EXTRAORDINARY EXPLOITS

» Italy's World Cup glory at Spain 1982, owed everything to Paolo Rossi, who won the Golden Boot for top-scoring with six goals, the Golden Ball as the tournament's best player, and that year's Ballon d'Or.

» Though Rossi was out-of-shape and hadn't scored for Italy in almost 15 hours of action and over three years, coach Enzo Bearzot ignored the

media's hullabaloo and 'Pablito', as he became that day in Barcelona, bewildered Brazil.

» After failing to score in the first four matches, Rossi hit a hatrick as Italy downed the star-studded Selecao 3-2 to reach the semifinals. There, he was again Italy's sole scorer in the 2-0 win over Poland, and in the final, he hit the opener as the Azzurri swamped West Germany 3-1.

ONE OF THE BEST FORWARDS OF ALL TIME

and "Paolo Rossi" was Italy's number one trending search item.

"Football and Italy mourns Paolo Rossi," headlined the Gazzetta dello Sport. Rossi was "the one who beat Zico's Brazil, Maradona's Argentina, Boniek's Poland and in the final, the Germany of Rummenigge," the newspaper wrote.

Rossi was caught up in a bribery scandal and banned for three years in 1980 but won the hearts of Italian fans during the summer of 1982, when his goals dragged Enzo Bearzot's Azzurri to a third world title.

He hadn't scored for Italy in almost 15 hours of action and over three years but yet heading into their fifth outing at the 12th FIFA World Cup, coach Bearzot ignored the media's hullabaloo for his dropping and 'Pablito', as he became that day in Barcelona, bewildered Brazil. Rossi finished the tournament with the Golden Boot and the Golden Ball as Italy finished it as champions.

"On one hand I felt fulfilled. I said to myself, 'you've made it'. On the other hand, I was disappointed that all of this just ended. The World Cup was over," he said in a FIFA documentary in 2018.

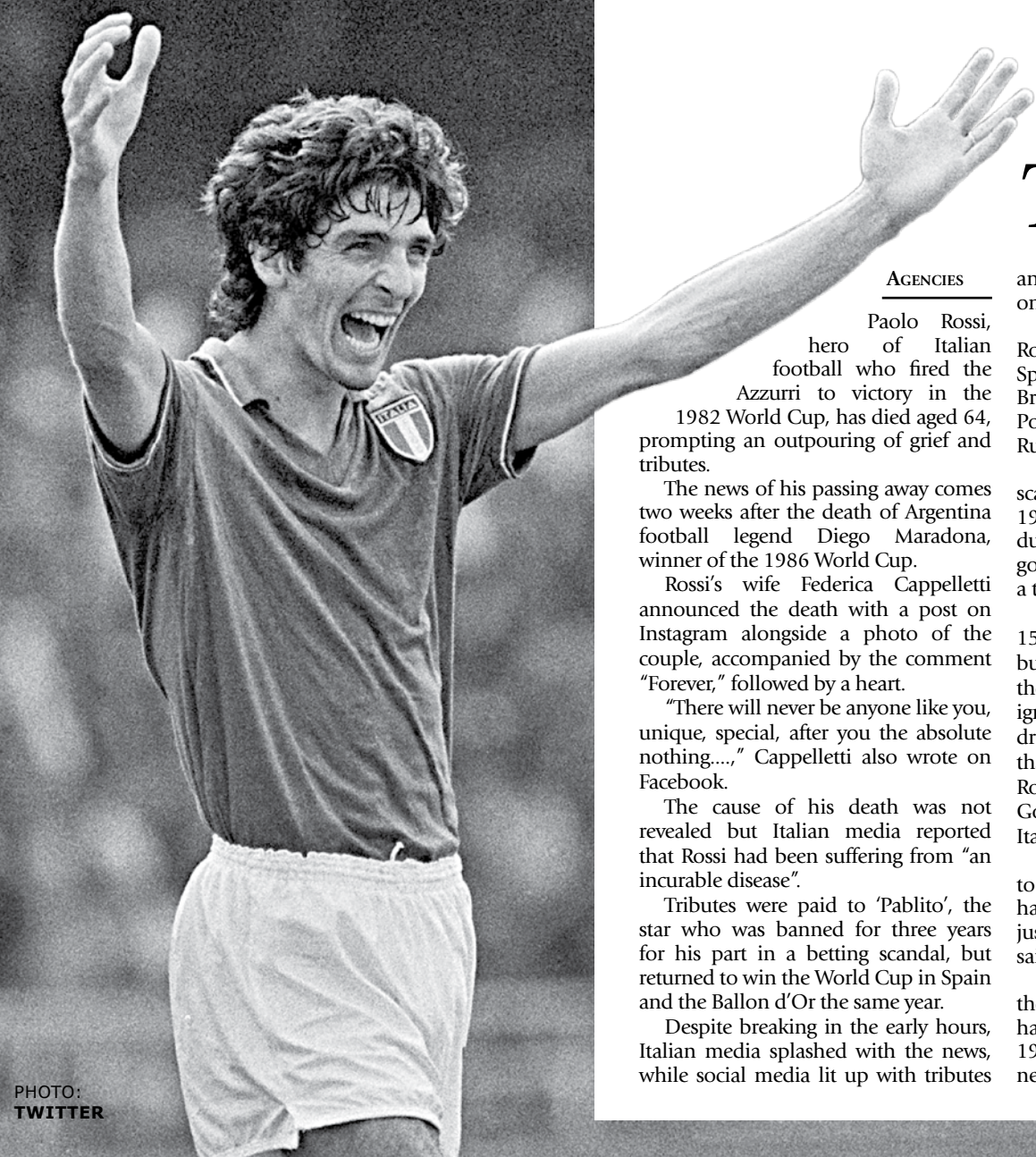
Fulvio Collovati, a centre-back in the 1982 World Cup team, said: "We have a chat, where only the team from 1982 can access. This morning, this news came from his wife and I'm upset.

"How can anyone explain football?

When I meet people from other sports they often say, 'Football is everywhere, it's the king of all sports'. But I'm not the one who makes it so.

People just love football. God bless whoever invented football. It was the English, I think. And what a fantastic idea it was. A game where the team at the bottom of the table can beat the team at the top. You can score four goals in four minutes and upset all the odds. What other sport engenders as much excitement? Very few. I like other sports but what football stands for is just extraordinary."

PAOLO ROSSI



AGENCIES

Paolo Rossi, hero of Italian football who fired the Azzurri to victory in the 1982 World Cup, has died aged 64, prompting an outpouring of grief and tributes.

The news of his passing away comes two weeks after the death of Argentina football legend Diego Maradona, winner of the 1986 World Cup.

Rossi's wife Federica Cappelletti announced the death with a post on Instagram alongside a photo of the couple, accompanied by the comment "Forever," followed by a heart.

"There will never be anyone like you, unique, special, after you the absolute nothing....," Cappelletti also wrote on Facebook.

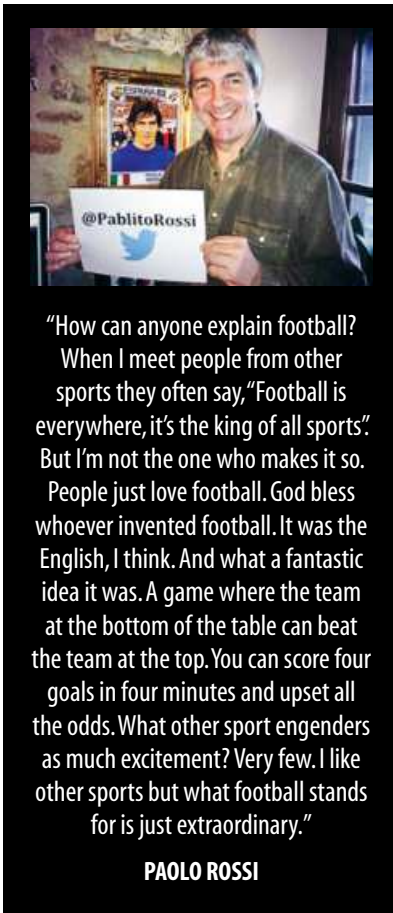
The cause of his death was not revealed but Italian media reported that Rossi had been suffering from "an incurable disease".

Tributes were paid to 'Pablito', the star who was banned for three years for his part in a betting scandal, but returned to win the World Cup in Spain and the Ballon d'Or the same year.

Despite breaking in the early hours, Italian media splashed with the news, while social media lit up with tributes

CIAO PABLITO

The hero of Spain '82



I can hardly speak. If I'm a World Cup winner, I owe it to him and his goals. That World Cup was fantastic. Then I shared 15 years of my life with him, from the national youth team. This is a terrible year, I never expected this news would come."

Italy's former prime minister Matteo Renzi added on Twitter: "In our hearts, forever. Farewell Pablito."

Dino Zoff, the goalkeeper and captain of that Azzurri team, said he had no inkling that Rossi was seriously ill. "I'm so sorry. I don't know what to say, it was a bolt from the blue. We've always had a great relationship with Paolo, a nice guy, intelligent, we haven't heard from each other for a while, they told us something but I didn't think it was so serious. The relationship with him was wonderful, he was very nice. It's something that is difficult to understand."

Fans flooded Twitter in order to pay their respects to Rossi. "Just heard the tragic news, RIP #PaoloRossi. Still have this poster on my wall," said one fan in his tweet.

Franco Baresi wrote: "Great sadness!! you realized the dream of all Italians and you will always be in our hearts, legends never die. Goodbye Paolo RIP."

Germany's former World Cup winner Jurgen Klinsmann tweeted: "Dear Pablito, we always remember you!"

Chattogram make it six from seven

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite resting four of their top performers, Gazi Group Chattogram continued their brilliant run in the Bangabandhu T20 Cup, beating Fortune Barishal comprehensively by seven wickets at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Chattogram rode on openers Shykat Ali and Soumya Sarkar's blistering start. The pair added 79 to lay the foundation in chase of 150.

Somuya got his first 50 of the tournament before being dismissed on a 37-ball 62 while Shykat added 39 as Chattogram registered a sixth win from seven games.

Earlier, Barishal lost way in the middle after an 87-run opening partnership between Saif Hasan and Tamim Iqbal. They only managed to post 149 for six in 20 overs. Saif top-scored with 46 and Tamim added 43.

Akbar joins other young stalwarts in the limelight

SPORTS REPORTER



With all the big guns of Bangladesh cricket taking part in the ongoing Bangabandhu T20 Cup, it was anticipated that they would take centre stage and grab all the limelight.

However, in the face of relatively underwhelming performances of the likes of Shakib Al Hasan and Mahmudullah Riyad, the youngsters have put their hands up and are using the tournament to give notice of their talent.

Two other big guns, Tamim Iqbal and Mushfiqur Rahim, have kept their standards high while leading their respective sides. But refreshingly, the stars of the ICC Under-19 World Cup-winning side have lifted themselves above competition from the best in the country.

Barishal's Parvez Hossain made the biggest splash with a magnificent, record-breaking 42-ball century against Rajshahi on Tuesday to chase down a mammoth 221.

Apart from Parvez, there are quite a few of his under-19 teammates like batsman Shamim Hossain, Mahmudul Hasan Joy, left-arm seamer Shoriful Islam and left-arm spinner Rakibul

Hasan who have all served notice of their talent.

But expectations were probably the highest for Akbar Ali, the skipper of the under-19 World Cup-winning side who displayed immense maturity and a cool head when guiding the young Tigers to the historic result with a match-winning knock in the final against India in a pressure situation.

The youngster has since been under



the magnifying glass, and his young shoulders have had to bear the pressure of expectations. Murmurs grew louder that Akbar has not been able to match the deeds of his under-19 teammates, especially as he did not set the world alight in the BCB President's Cup in October.

Unfortunately for the young wicketkeeper-batsman, the situation is the same in the Bangabandhu T20 Cup. The right-hander has been unable to come out of his shell in the first few matches for Beximco Dhaka.

Although he did manage to score 34 off 29 balls in the very first game against Rajshahi, it was his unbeaten, match-winning 23-ball 45 against the same opposition on December 4 that hinted at his class. Yesterday, against Khulna, despite a flying start courtesy of Naim Sheikh and Sabbir Rahman, Dhaka was struggling on 116 for four in the 13th over after being 105 for one in 11 overs.

It was then that Akbar walked in and had to contend with the dual pressures of holding the innings together and also maintaining the tempo. The cool-headed youngster achieved that with some style.

After taking some time to play himself in, Akbar went on to strike four sixes in the 15th over bowled by left-arm spinner Nazmul Islam, wresting the initiative in dramatic style for Dhaka.

The 19-year-old did get dismissed in the next over after scoring 31 off just 13 balls, but it was his positive intent that helped Dhaka eventually post a winning total of 179 for seven to register their fourth consecutive win and seal a top-four spot.



Women's league empowers trailblazers

ANISUR RAHMAN



Women's Championship, and brilliant performances have continued silently as the Tricortex Women's Football League has failed to attract spectators in the new normal.

They may be dissatisfied playing in front of empty stadia, but another group of women have made history for the country's women's football league by officiating 39 of the 42 matches played till yesterday.

That other group is none other than the match officials, including referees, assistant referees and fourth officials, who have impressed after the Bangladesh Football Federation decided for the first time to appoint only females for all roles barring match commissioner.

"We haven't evaluated their overall performances yet but we are really satisfied. We are thinking of picking some of them for refresher courses early next year and engage them in the lower men's division leagues," BFF Referees' Committee Deputy Chairman Ibrahim Nesar told The Daily Star.

"You know we already have two female FIFA referees -- Joya Chakma and

Salma Akter -- and I believe there are some potential referees who also can earn FIFA badges. But they have to need the opportunity to conduct matches regularly either in the women's or men's competition," added the former FIFA referee.

Mahmuda Sharifa Odithi, who coached the champion Bashundhara Kings side this season, saw the decision as a positive but said that referees were of different standards.

"Some of referees are really good but the rest are [too] inexperienced to conduct matches," said Odithi. "I think they lack confidence, preparedness and self-study on this art of taking the right decision at the right moment."

Referee Khadiza Khatun Sima was pleased with the opportunity.

"The women's competition is not held regularly, so we can't gather knowledge. However, we are very happy that women are conducting the women's league on the back of inspiration from the match commissioners, who give us confidence to conduct the match," said Sima, who represented the national women's team in 2014 and senior team in the SAFF Women's Championship in 2016.

Although some girls from physical colleges completed fundamental refereeing courses before 2004, they did not continue. Then some completed referees' course in 2005 under BFF and started officiating matches. Now the number of women's referee is nearly 30.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE ROUND OF 16

Teams (Seeded): Bayern, Chelsea, Dortmund, Juventus, Liverpool, Manchester City, PSG and Real Madrid.

Teams (Unseeded): Atalanta, Atletico Madrid, Barcelona, Lazio, Leipzig, Monchengladbach, Porto and Sevilla.

The round of 16 first legs are scheduled for 16/17/23/24 February, with the second legs on 9/10/16/17 March.

The draw is set to take place on Monday, December 14 and Nyon in Switzerland is the venue for the event. The draw features the eight group winners (seeded) and eight runners-up (unseeded).

The draw for the quarter-finals, semi-finals and final is on March 19.



Karim Benzema ensured Real Madrid's qualification to the round of 16 with a clinical first-half brace in their crucial Champions League encounter with Borussia Monchengladbach on Wednesday night. The Frenchman also became the third player, after Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, to net at least 50 goals in the tournament's group stages. There were unusual scenes after the final whistle as Monchengladbach celebrated on the pitch as news arrived that they had qualified as well.

PHOTO: TWITTER