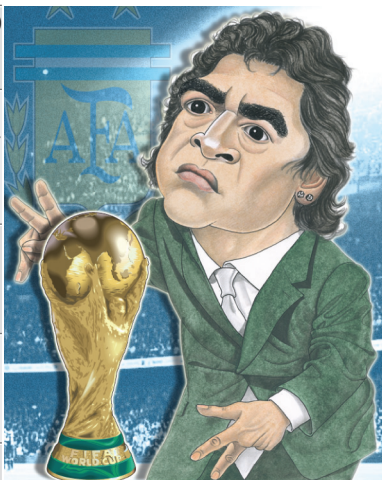


Diego Maradona marks 50th birthday

Arguably the greatest football player ever to grace the game, the diminutive Argentinian's skill on the field has been matched only by the controversies that have surrounded him, both on and off the pitch



■ **1960:** Born Oct 30 in Lanús, Buenos Aires province

■ **1970:** Joins **Los Cebollitas** under-14 team, leading them on 136-match unbeaten run

■ **1976:** League debut with parent club **Argentinos Juniors**, aged 15

■ **1977:** Wins first international call-up for 5-1 win over Hungary

■ **1978:** Wins World Youth Championship, scoring in 3-1 final victory over USSR

■ **1981:** Signs for **Boca Juniors**, wins First Division Championship

■ **1982:** Appears at **FIFA World Cup** in Spain. Sent off against Brazil

■ **1982:** Joins **Barcelona** for world record £5 million, going on to win King's Cup and Spanish Super Cup

■ **1983:** Moves to **Napoli** for £6.9m world record transfer, leading team in its most successful era, with victories in Serie A (1987, 90), Coppa Italia 1987, UEFA Cup 1989 and Italian Super Cup 1990

■ **1986:** Captains **Argentina** to victory at **World Cup** in Mexico. Scores two most famous goals – **Hand of God** and **Goal of Century** – in quarter-final against England

■ **1990:** Argentina knock host nation Italy out of **World Cup** but lose final against Germany

■ **1991:** Amid rumours of links to organised crime, given 15-month ban after testing positive for cocaine

■ **1992:** Joins **Sevilla** in Spain

■ **1993:** Returns to Argentina to play for **Newell's Old Boys**

■ **1994:** Expelled from **World Cup** in U.S. after failing drug test for ephedrine

■ **1995:** Second spell at Boca Juniors

■ **1997:** Retires before 37th birthday

■ **2000:** Hospitalised for cocaine use, travels to Cuba for rehabilitation. Voted "Player of the Century" in internet poll, but FIFA committee awards title to Brazil's **Pele**

■ **2004:** Suffers heart attack after cocaine overdose

■ **2005:** Briefly returns to Boca Juniors in managerial role

■ **2007:** Hospitalised for hepatitis and alcohol abuse

■ **2008:** Appointed coach of Argentina. Scrapes through World Cup qualifiers

■ **2010:** Argentina knocked out of World Cup in 4-0 thrashing by Germany. Maradona sacked