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The god & his city: Life of Diego Maradona at Napoli and in Naples

Synopsis

Diego Maradona, a new documentary on the Argentinian football legend, was premiered at the 72nd Cannes film festival on Sunday.



When Napoli became Serie A champions for the first time, the city went crazy with people celebrating throughout the night.

When Diego Maradona arrived in Naples from Barcelona thirty-five years ago on a world-record fee, the question on everyone's lips was: What is a huge player like him doing in an underachieving club like Napoli?

Maradona wanted peace and the respect that he didn't get at Barcelona. Napoli needed the success it never had.

In the next seven years, Napoli won the Italian and European titles for the first time and Maradona capped his club success with a World Cup for Argentina. Also, he went from being the most loved man in Naples to the most hated in Italy while becoming buried in controversies over drug abuse, mafia and women.

Diego Maradona, a new documentary on the Argentinian football legend, was premiered at the 72nd Cannes film festival on Sunday.

It focuses on one of the most compelling chapters in the history of sports. Directed by English filmmaker Asif Kapadia, known for his film Senna, on the

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life of iconic Brazilian Formula One world champion Ayrton Senna, Diego Maradona celebrates football while exploring human frailty.

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Maradona didn't walk the famous red carpet in Cannes like he did a decade ago for Maradona by Kusturica by the Serbian filmmaker Emir Kusturica. But Maradona by Kapadia made up for it by beginning with the walk of the new signing to the San Paolo stadium in Naples. After he was unveiled, Maradona was greeted to the Neapolitan reality with the first question at the press conference: Does he know what Camorra (the mob) is?

Assembled from over 500 hours of footage from Maradona's personal archive, the film travels the whole of his time in Naples, called the "Africa of Italy" for

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as he begins his journey in Naples that would instead give him the status of God.

When Maradona arrived on July 5, 1984 "penniless" from Barcelona, Napoli was facing relegation. Born in a slum in Buenos Aires that didn't have drinking water and sewers, he soon found himself home in a city, called the "sewer of Italy". Goals arrived as Maradona began working with his new Italian trainer Fernando Signorini, who will leave a huge mark on the diminutive Argentinian's professional life. "Diego was a kid with insecurities. Maradona was a character he had to invent," says Signorini.

"When Maradona came the whole idea was avoiding relegation. Then it became a different idea," says Italian football journalist Daniel Arcucci, one of the many important personalities interviewed by Kapadia and his team of archive hunters and translators, who scoured continents and wrestled with languages for material on their man. When Napoli beat Juventus 1-0 for the first time with a Maradona goal, a TV anchor announced the collapse of five people and heart attacks of two more in the stadium. "That goal was for the people of Naples," the anchor continued.

Soon, Maradona's photo was hung next to Jesus in half of the homes of Naples.

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When Napoli became Serie A champions for the first time, the city went crazy with people celebrating throughout the night. And a banner on the wall of a cemetery said, "They don't know what they missed."

Napoli's first scudetto in the 1986-87 season preceded another major sporting landmark for Maradona, the 1986 World Cup victory. After narrowly qualifying for the tournament in Mexico, Argentina won the World Cup while beating England 2-1 in the quarterfinals. It was a symbolic retribution against England, whose forces defeated Argentina four years earlier in the Falklands war. "England won the war 20-0," says Maradona in the film that shows the whole journey of his country to World Cup victory. Arcussi says Maradona's two goals against England, the 'Hand of God' and the long run and dribble, sums up why he is loved and detested in the football world.

Along with success came controversy.

Maradona was photographed with the mafia and a young woman claimed on television he was the father of her new-born son. Stories also came out on his cocaine addiction. "It was a mad, epic, operatic story condensed in Naples," says Kapadia, who won an Oscar for the breakout movie, *Amy*, also premiered at Cannes in 2015. "There were drug problems, women, mafia," says Kapadia, who was given a standing ovation by the Cannes crowd after the two-hour, ten-minute film at a packed Grand Theatre Lumiere.

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