

Frank Borghi dies; St. Louisan was goalie on famous 1950 U.S. soccer team



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Frank Borghi, the St. Louis goalie who was instrumental in pulling off one of the biggest upsets in soccer history, died Monday night. He was 89.

Borghi was in goal for the United States in the 1950 World Cup in Brazil where the United States defeated England, at the time considered the best team in the world, 1-0. "I was hoping to hold them down to a few goals," Borghi told the

Post-Dispatch in 2009. "Maybe four or five goals."

Instead, Borghi — also an accomplished baseball player who played in the Cardinals organization and was known for his large hands — recorded a shutout. He made a big save on a header in the second half that was already behind him, extending his arm and deflecting the ball wide.

When the game ended, the Brazilian fans in Belo Horizonte, who saw England as their main competition for the championship, ran on the field and carried Borghi off on their shoulders. "I didn't know what they were doing at first," he said later. "I was kind of nervous. They picked me up and carried me 110 yards to the dugout. It was kind of exciting."

A 2005 movie titled "The Game Of Their Lives" is based on the 1950 U.S.-England game. Actor Gerard Butler played Borghi in the film.

Borghi served as a medic in World War II and won the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart. After the war, Borghi was a funeral director on The Hill.

"He was a gentleman, quiet and softspoken," soccer commentator Bill McDermott said. "He was the absolute personification of a gentleman. He didn't say a whole lot, but he couldn't have been more genuine."

Borghi's death leaves only one surviving member of the 1950 team, Walter Bahr.

Borghi is survived by his wife, Rose Marie, and seven children.

Visitation is Thursday from 2-8 p.m. at Calcaterra Funeral Home, 5140 Daggett Ave., and the funeral will be at 9 a.m. Friday at St. Ambrose Catholic Church, 5130 Wilson Ave. Burial will follow at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery.

