

Dale Story

Argentina vs. England Soccer Rivalry

The British expatriate community is often credited with introducing football to Argentina. To this day, many Argentine football clubs are still named in English: River Plate, Boca Juniors, Racing Club, Newell's Old Boys, and All Boys (who play in the Islas Malvinas Stadium). However, the rivalry between the two countries on the pitch has often been heated.

July 23, 1966, Argentina vs. England, quarter-finals, World Cup in Wembley Stadium, London. Argentines have frequently labeled the game as *el robo del siglo* (the theft of the century) which England won 1-0. However, the winning goal was disputed by due to a claimed offside. Even more controversial was the send-off of the Argentine captain Antonio Rattín, which Argentines considered to be unfair, including Rattín himself who had to be escorted from the pitch by police before he would leave. After the match, the English manager refused to allow his players to swap shirts with the Argentines—as is traditional after the conclusion of a football match—and—later described the South Americans as "animals" in the press. The Argentine press and public were outraged, and one Argentine newspaper published a picture of the official World Cup mascot, *World Cup Willie*, dressed in pirate regalia to demonstrate their opinion of the England team.

June 26, 1986, Argentina vs. England, quarter-finals, World Cup in Estadio Azteca in Mexico City. The match occurred some four years after the Falklands/Malvinas War and included two famous goals by Argentine Diego Maradona. First was his infamous "Hand of God" goal in which he clearly used his hand to score the first goal (though the referee did not see the hand-ball and allowed the goal). Three minutes later he scored his second goal by dribbling past six English players—this goal has been labeled the "Goal of the Century" by some. Argentina won the game by a score of 2-1 and proceeded to win the 1986 World Cup with a victory over West Germany. Many in England felt cheated by the no-call in the "Hand of God" goal; while many in Argentina felt a sense of pay-back for their loss in the Falklands/Malvinas War. Maradona is quoted as having said: "Although we had said before the game that football had nothing to do with the Malvinas War, we knew they had killed a lot of Argentine boys there, killed them like little birds. And this was revenge."