

1958



A legend is born

Edson Arantes do Nascimento wasn't a complete unknown when he arrived in Sweden for the 1958 World Cup.

In 1957, his first full season with Santos, Pele scored 65 goals for Santos. He had five goals in five matches for the Brazilian national team.

But the 17-year-old striker was an unknown to many of his teammates, those from clubs outside the Sao Paulo area. Brazilian soccer was limited to regional championships in those days, and clubs from the state of Sao Paulo, such as Santos, rarely traveled to Rio de Janeiro, where many of the best Brazilians played.

Left winger Mario Zagallo, who spent the majority of his career with Rio clubs Flamengo and Botafogo, remembers Pele's seriousness, unusual for a player so young, but most of all his incredible touch with the ball.

"In training camp," recalls Zagallo, "this precocious baby would show us veterans *all kinds* of moves."

The '58 Brazil team was very much a work in progress. Coach Vicente Feola added 24-year-old striker Vava for the second game of group play, a 0-0 tie with England. He waited until the third game, a 2-0 win over the Soviet Union thanks to a pair of Vava goals, to start Pele and two other youngsters, midfielder Zito and the brilliant right winger, Garrincha.

In the quarterfinals, Pele had the winning goal in a 1-0 win over Wales, and it only got better.

Pele's hat trick led Brazil to a 5-2 victory over France in the semifinals. Pele and Vava had two goals apiece in a 5-2 win over the host Swedes in the final.

Pele's first goal against the Swedes remains a World Cup classic. He controlled the ball with his right thigh, lobbed the ball over Swedish defender Bengt Gustavsson with his right foot and volleyed the ball past keeper Karl Svensson with his left foot.

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(Next issue: Brazil repeats in Chile)

— Paul Kennedy

SWEDEN



Brazilian fans mob their young hero, Pele, after the '58 final.

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