

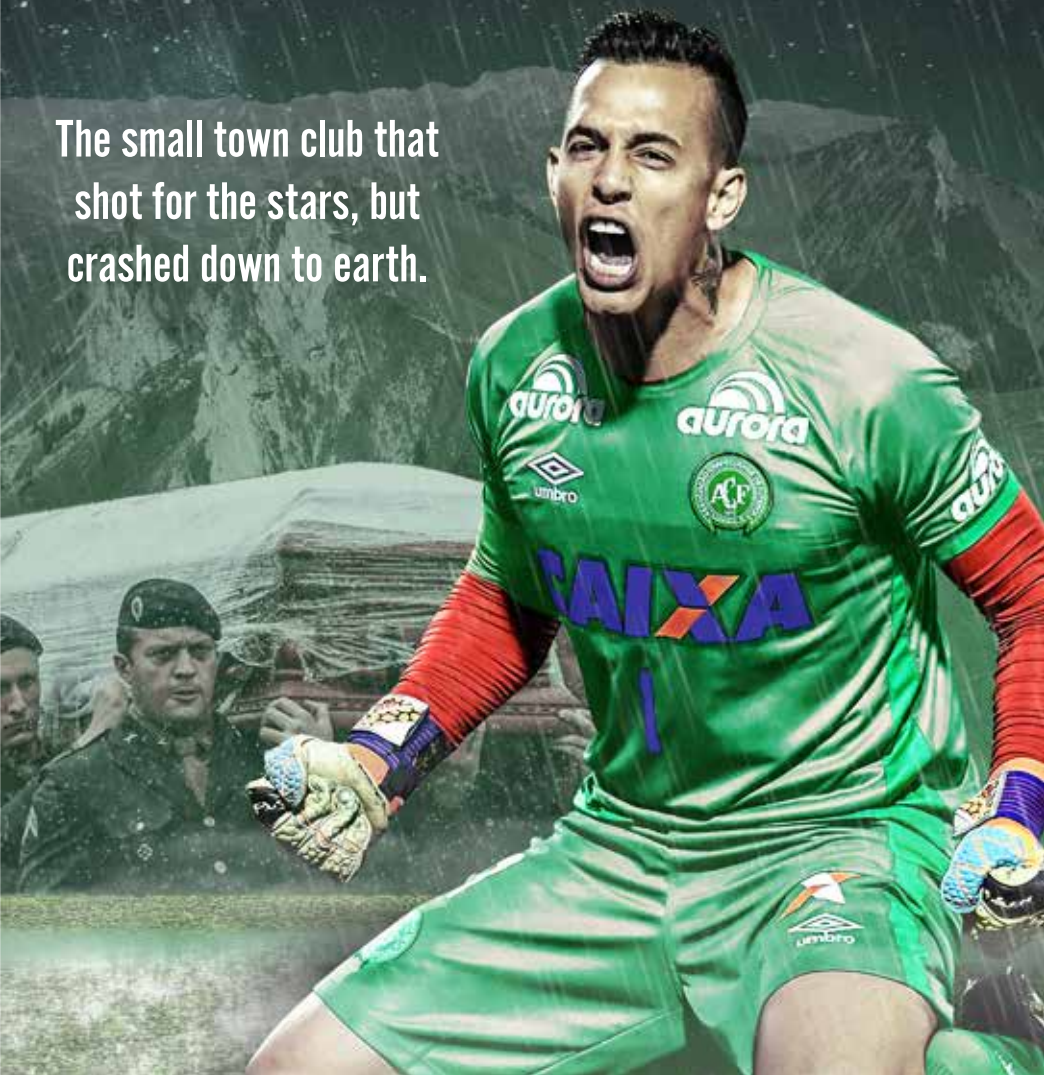


STEVEN BELL

# FROM TRIUMPH TO TRAGEDY

*THE CHAPECOENSENSE STORY*

The small town club that  
shot for the stars, but  
crashed down to earth.



# FROM TRIUMPH TO TRAGEDY

*THE CHAPECOENSE STORY*

S T E V E N   B E L L

Assisted by Sergio MF Valeriano



# Contents

Map of Brazil . . . . .	1
Introdução. . . . .	13
Prólogo. . . . .	15
1. 17th July 1994 . . . . .	19
2. Campeões Eternos. . . . .	25
3. Pentacampeonato . . . . .	29
4. Chapecó. . . . .	35
5. Flecha Verde . . . . .	47
6. O Eterno . . . . .	60
7. Bruno . . . . .	68
8. Danilo. . . . .	78
9. Obrigado e Tchau . . . . .	86
10. Copa do Mundo: Fase de Grupos . . . . .	97
11. Copa do Mundo: Fase Eliminatória . . . . .	110
12. O Retorno. . . . .	121
13. Histórico . . . . .	134
14. Pentacampeonato II . . . . .	145
15. Corinthians Paulista . . . . .	150
16. Amado. . . . .	155
17. LaMia . . . . .	163
18. Vôo 2933 . . . . .	173
19. 28 November 2016 . . . . .	178
20. Campeões Eternos II . . . . .	188
21. Obituarío . . . . .	197
22. 2017 . . . . .	205
23. Perder, Ganhar, Viver . . . . .	213
Epílogo. . . . .	217
Acknowledgements. . . . .	220
Selected Bibliography . . . . .	222
Map of Flight Path . . . . .	224

# *Prólogo*

## *Perder, Ganhar, Viver*

Written by Carlos Drummond de Andrade, who is considered one of the greatest ever Brazilian poets, following the elimination of the national football team from the 1982 World Cup at the hands of Italy.

Translated from Portuguese to English by Eric M. B. Becker.

### *Lose, Win, Live*

I saw people crying in the streets when the referee blew the final whistle that sealed our defeat;

I saw men and women full of hate trampling yellow and green pieces of plastic that only minutes earlier they'd considered sacred;

I saw inconsolable drunks who couldn't understand why their drinks brought no consolation;

I saw boys and girls celebrating the defeat so as not to fail to celebrate something, their hearts wired for joy;

I saw the team's tireless, stubborn coach called a lowlife and then burned in effigy, while the player whose many shots missed wide of the goal was declared the ultimate traitor to his country;

I saw the news about the man who killed himself in the state of Ceará and the death of hope in many others on account of this sporting failure;

I saw the distress of the upper middle class dissolved in Scotch whisky and, for the same reason, heard deafening cries from children mired in despair;

*From Triumph to Tragedy*

I saw a young man change his tone, accusing his girl of being a jinx;

I saw the stifled disappointment of the president, who, as the country's number one fan, had been preparing for a moment of great personal and national euphoria, after the many disillusionments of his government; I saw candidates from the incumbent party stunned at the bad luck that robbed them of a powerful triumph for the campaign trail;

I saw the divided opposition parties united by perplexity in the face of a catastrophe that could bring voters to lose enthusiasm for everything, including the elections;

I saw the anguish of the makers and sellers of tiny Brazilian flags, pennants, and various symbols of the highly coveted and widely demanded title of four-time world champions now headed, ironically, for the wastebasket;

I saw the sadness of street sweepers and maids in apartment buildings as they wiped clean the remains of a hope now extinguished;

I saw so many things, I felt so much in every soul...

I'm arriving at the conclusion that defeat, which always catches us unawares in our desire to avoid it and inability to accept it, is, in the end, a means toward renewal. Like victory, it establishes the dialectic game of life. If a series of defeats is crushing, a series of wins plants the seed of our determination's decay, a post-conquest languor that paralyzes once vital individuals and communities. Losing implies the shedding of dead weight: a new beginning.

Certainly, we did everything we could to win this fickle World Cup. But is it enough to give one's all and then demand fortune deliver an ironclad result? Wouldn't it make more sense to attribute the ability to transform things and invalidate the most scientific of conclusions to chance, to the imponderable, even to the absurd?

If our team only went to Spain, the land of mythic castles, to bring a cup back in a suitcase as the exclusive and inalienable property of Brazil, what merit is there in this? In reality, we went to Spain due to a love of the uncertain, of the difficult, of imagination, and of risk—not to nab a stolen prize.

The truth is we haven't come home empty-handed simply because we didn't bring back the trophy. We returned with a tangible good, a mastery of the spirit of competition. We vanquished four equally ambitious squads and lost to the fifth. Italy had no obligation to roll over in the face of our genius on the pitch. In a battle of equals, fate's gaze passed us over. Patience—let's not transform a single experience, amid many, of life's volatility into a national crisis.

In losing, after the tear-soaked emotionalism has passed, we reacquire (or acquire, in the case of most) a sense of moderation, of a reality full of contradictions but also rich in possibilities, life as it truly is. We're not invincible. But we're also not a bunch of poor wretches destined never to reach greatness, that most relative of values with its tendency to go up in smoke.

I'd like to pat the heads of Telê Santana and his players, his second- and third-stringers, like the unplayed journeyman Roberto Dinamite and to tell them with this gesture what with words alone would be a bit silly and overblown. But this gesture is worth a thousand words, we can feel its tenderness. Oh, Telê! Oh, athletes! Oh, fate! The '82 Cup has come to an end, but the world has not. Neither has Brazil, with all of its ills and its blessings. And there's a brilliant sun outside, a sun that belongs to all of us.

And so, dear fans, what do you think about getting to work now that the year's half over?

1  
*17th July 1994*

*The Rose Bowl  
Pasadena  
Los Angeles*

It is the biggest and most important football match in the history of the sport.

A crowd of 94,194 screaming supporters are crammed into the huge, iconic stadium. It's almost 30 degrees Celsius in California as the players of Italy and Brazil are led out onto the pitch. The two superpowers of international soccer, joint record holders with three World Cup titles each already, will battle it out for glory and a history-making fourth championship.

It is Europe versus South America. It is the *Azzurri* (Blues) against the *Canarinhos* (Little Canaries). It is the infamous Italian defensive rock taking on the legendary Brazilian attacking flair. Or at least that *should* be the case. But this Brazil team is different. To the displeasure of the obsessive supporters and the media in his home country, coach, or *técnico*, Carlos Alberto Parreira has somewhat abandoned the long-held principles of 'O Jogo Bonito' – 'the Beautiful Game' – in favour of a pragmatic approach more akin to the Italian way.



Following a long, glory-filled spell where ‘The Samba-Boys’ had taken the sport to new heights in terms of flair and entertainment on the pitch whilst dominating the World Cup, picking up the Jules Rimet Trophy three times between 1958 and 1970, a barren spell had been suffered.

Parreira had watched closely as manager of lowly Kuwait in the 1982 tournament, held in Spain, when a golden generation of Brazilian talent was left heartbroken as they crashed out of the *Copa do Mundo* the world expected them to win, with a squad of brilliantly flamboyant attacking players such as Serginho, Socrates and Zico.

But in the second round they had met a team willing to sit back and frustrate them: to foul them, to counter-attack, to hope their star striker would punish them with a clinical finish. That player was Paolo Rossi. That team was Italy. Rossi scored all three goals for the *Azzurri* as they eliminated the tournament favourites by three goals to two.

The loss was nothing short of traumatic for the whole nation, and to exacerbate the pain Italy went on to their third tournament victory, tying the Brazilian record that had stood for 12 years. They did so by scoring just 12 goals in their seven tournament matches, whereas the Brazilian swashbuckling style had plundered 15 goals in only five games before their premature elimination. Yet it was Italy that held the trophy aloft.

The legendary Pelé, widely regarded as the greatest footballer of all time and star player in each of the three *Canarinhos* tournament victories to date, had coined the phrase ‘*O Jogo Bonito*’, which became the informal term translated worldwide for football played with flair and skill; ‘the Beautiful Game’.

Now, in 1994, with a less skilled pool of talent to choose from, Parreira has developed a more pragmatic style similar to that of the European nations, especially Italy. They rely heavily on star *atacante* Romario to score the vital goals whilst the defensive unit remain militant and organised, and he is not disappointing. He has scored five goals en route to this centrepiece finale.

The newly installed style of play has worked thus far, as Brazil’s presence in the final confirms. But the supporters and media are still critical and using this tactic against the masters of it is surely

suicidal. Franco Baresi and Paolo Maldini have a combined total of 138 international appearances and are an almost impenetrable central defensive partnership for Italy; they will surely limit the goalscoring chances of Romario even more.

At the opposite end of their team, they have Roberto Baggio. Known as '*Il Divin Cordino*' (the Divine Ponytail) due to his trademark hairstyle, graceful style of play and Buddhist beliefs, Baggio is officially the greatest, having been voted the 1993 World Player of the Year. Italy have scraped through all three of their knockout matches so far, winning by two goals to one in each of them. Baggio has scored five of those six goals, two of them in the final moments of their respective matches with his nation on the verge of elimination. Their reliance on his attacking prowess is immeasurable.

The diminutive pair of superstars, Romario and Baggio, are also going head to head for the lucrative individual tournament awards of top goalscorer and best player. Brazil have only ever known one way to play the game their nation is besotted with, to attack with pace and skill and to entertain their loyal supporters. Far removed from the Italian style of refining and glorifying the 'dark arts' of the game, defenders in Brazil are mostly failed attackers, and the goalkeepers failed defenders. Luckily for this generation though, a rarity historically for them, the *Canarinhos* have a specialist *goleiro*, in the shape of the balding and pale-skinned 28-year-old, Claudio Taffarel. He is not only of Italian descent but plays his domestic football in the famous Italian league for Reggiana. The São Paulo press had launched a campaign to get their goalkeeper, Zetti, to replace Taffarel, but Parreira has stood firm with his favoured number one.

With the sport ingrained in their respective cultures, the two nations have come to a total standstill for this most epic and historic of encounters.

Approximately ten per cent of the whole world's population is tuning in on TV screens around the globe.

The match gets underway and, predictably, wave after wave of Brazilian attacks are dealt with by the solid Italian defence. Whenever Italy do manage a counter-attack, the incomparable Taffarel is equal to any danger. Half-time comes and goes. Minute piles upon minute as the pressure builds.

Italian goalkeeper Gianluca Pagliuca shows signs of the palpable tension as he clumsily deals with a comfortable-looking long-range shot from Mauro Silva, the world gasping as he spills the ball around the post. Silva is partnering his captain Dunga in the middle of midfield. They are of little footballing skill, but are strong, brave and energetic. Polar opposite to their 1982 counterparts Zico and Falcao.

Hungarian referee Sándor Puhl blows his whistle, bringing an end to the scheduled 90 minutes, signifying an extra 30 to be played in the baking heat, which is sapping the physical and mental energy of the glory-seeking players.

At the age of 34, Franco Baresi has been inspired in defence for his nation. He has covered every blade of grass in the Rose Bowl in his quest to become the first non-Brazilian to win two World Cup medals (14 individuals of the legendary Brazil generation won back-to-back titles in 1958 and 1962), having tasted glory in the 1982 tournament in Spain. But his body is beginning to let him down after almost two hours of arduous perfection.

Both Bebeto and Romario finally manage to find themselves with glorious opportunities, but fail to convert.

Baresi's body screeches to a halt as he becomes paralysed with cramp and is forced off the pitch on a stretcher. Italy, having already made the maximum two substitutes, will be forced to see out the final moments with one player less on the field.

With mere seconds remaining, it looks as though the script has been written by the footballing gods as Baggio makes an attempt from distance with a typically sublime shot, but yet again Taffarel makes an impressive stop.

Another blow of the whistle from the referee signifies the players' and fans' worst nightmare: a penalty shoot-out will decide the most important moment in the history of this, if not any, sport.

The two teams will take five 'spot-kicks' each. Whoever converts the most takes home the ultimate prize. Every heartbeat can be heard and felt in Brazil as their fate is close to being decided. Will it be a repeat of the nationwide depression of 1982, or redemption over the Italians and glory once again? Repeat, or redemption?

It is Italy to shoot first and to everyone's shock, team captain Baresi returns to the field of play to assume the responsibility. He

17th July 1994

is facing Taffarel, who is known as a penalty-saving specialist and has the added advantage of knowing his opponents' penalty-taking styles all too well from his weekly appearances in their domestic league.

As Baresi strikes the ball, his failing body collapses backwards, propelling the ball into the air, way over the goal structure and into the stands behind. He falls to his knees with emotion. He is distraught.

Brazilian defender Marcio Santos approaches in expectation of consolidating the advantage for his desperate nation. But Pagliuca reads the kick and dives to his right, blocking the shot. It is now three hours since the match started, and still the teams are locked in a goalless stalemate.

But that swiftly changes as the *Azzurri* midfielders Demetrio Albertini and Alberigo Evani and the *Canarinhos* stars Romario and Branco convert successfully.

Next up for Italy is Daniele Massaro. A dropped pin could be heard amongst the almost 100,000-strong crowd. Taffarel knowingly predicts where the ball is going, dives to his left and parries it away from goal. Legendary commentator Galvão Bueno screams with delight: '*Vai que é sua, Taffarel!*' over the Brazilian airwaves. He repeats this phrase over and over, which translates to mean 'Go for it, Taffarel, make it yours!'

Once again glory is within their grasp, and inspirational captain Dunga steps up to confirm the advantage, and he converts the kick with typical authority.

With the score at three goals to two in favour of Brazil, the pressure mounts firmly on the shoulders of the world's greatest football player. *Il Divin Cordino* Roberto Baggio has to score or the tournament is over.

He faces the inspired and heroic Taffarel. He knows he has to strike firmly and accurately to beat this man. In his graceful, almost lazy-looking style, he jogs towards the target, strikes the ball on its underside and the shot follows an almost identical flight path to that of his captain, Baresi, as it continues to rise and carries over the goal into the stands.

Redemption.

A whole nation cheers as 200 million people cry tears of joy.

*From Triumph to Tragedy*

The men in yellow celebrate the historic victory and find enough energy in their sapped bodies to race towards their hero Taffarel.

It is the elusive and fabled '*Tetracampeonato*' they had prayed would eventually come. The fourth championship.

But for the first time their hero, alongside *atacante* Romario, is their *goleiro*.

A Triumph.