Sotheby’s to Offer Diego Maradona’s Historic 1986 World Cup Match-Worn Shirt

Worn During Both “The Hand of God” & “Goal of the Century” Goals
–Two of the Most Iconic Moments in Football History –

To be Offered on the Market for the First Time, Estimated in Excess of £4 Million

Dedicated Online Auction Open for Bidding from 20 April – 4 May
Alongside a Public Exhibition at Sotheby’s London

“The Hand of God is truly a singular moment not only in the history of sports, but in the history of the 20th century. The moment resonated far beyond the world of football, coming soon after the Falklands conflict, and has in turn inspired books, films, and documentaries. Maradona is now remembered as one of the greatest to ever play the game of football – and this particular game is an instrumental part of his legacy. Of course, not only was “The Hand of God” goal scored in this game, but also, the “Goal of the Century” which is widely considered to be one of the greatest individual goals of all time. It is the first time the shirt has ever been brought to market, and Sotheby’s is honoured to be a part of the item’s history now.”

Brahm Wachter, Sotheby’s Head of Streetwear and Modern Collectables

LONDON, 6 APRIL 2022 – On 22 June 1986, a 25-year-old Diego Maradona made history in what is now one of the world’s most famous football matches – the Argentina v England quarter finals of the FIFA World Cup. Maradona scored two of the most extraordinary, and notorious, goals in the sport. Argentina would go on to win the cup,
and this day cemented Maradona’s name permanently in the chronicle of the sport – with many to this day considering him the greatest to ever play the beautiful game.

The first, known as “The Hand of God” occurred when Maradona scored a cunning goal with his hand. As the referees did not have a clear view of the play, the goal stood, giving Argentina a 1-0 lead in the contest. Following the game, Maradona was quoted saying the now-iconic goal was made “a little with the head of Maradona, and a little with the hand of God.” The second goal, the “Goal of the Century” – which many consider to be the greatest individual goal of all time – occurred when Maradona dribbled past a host of English players, dancing around them in angelic style, driving the ball up-field and eventually scoring against English goalkeeper Peter Shilton. To coincide with the 2002 World Cup, FIFA held a vote over the course of six weeks, with 340,000 participants from over 150 countries, and it was then that this second goal received its accolade.

Following the match, English midfielder Steve Hodge – who had unintentionally flicked the ball to Maradona on the “The Hand of God” play – approached Maradona and asked to swap shirts, a gesture that the player reciprocated. The shirt will now be offered on the market for the first time, with a dedicated online sale open for bidding from 20 April. For the duration of the auction, the shirt will be placed on public view in Sotheby’s New Bond Street gallery.

Hodge says: “I have been the proud owner of this item for over 35 years, since Diego and I swapped shirts in the tunnel after the famed match. It was an absolute privilege to have played against one of the greatest and most magnificent football players of all time. It has also been a pleasure to share it with the public over the last 20 years at the National Football Museum, where it has been on display. The Hand of God shirt has deep cultural meaning to the football world, the people of Argentina, and the people of England and I’m certain that the new owner will have immense pride in owning the world’s most iconic football shirt.”

Beyond the story of football, the match was also a symbolic one for many, given the historical context of the rivalry between Argentina and England, in particular the Falklands War, which took place just four years prior. This conflict and its grave outcome imbued the outcome with deep context for both nations, as stated in Maradona’s own autobiography.

The shirt itself has its own backstory, as after beating Uruguay in the Round of 16, the coach Carlos Bilardo was concerned that their usual cotton jerseys might be too heavy in the scorching heat of Mexico City and thus went looking for a last-minute replacement. The choice came down to two options and Maradona took one look at this very style of jersey and said “That one. We’ll beat England in that one.”

At the training camp, just before the match, makeshift Argentinian Football Association patches were sewn on, and the numbers were ironed to the back. In Maradona’s words: “When we went out onto the field, some of the guys had sparkles on their face because the numbers were silver and sparkly... And after genius kit man Tito Benros had ironed those numbers onto thirty-eight jerseys, he looked like he should have been at a carnival, not at Azteca Stadium!”

“The Hand of God” is now so entrenched in culture that it has become a popular phrase, still referred to around the world. This historic shirt is a tangible reminder of that important moment, and as such, is arguably the most coveted football shirt to ever come to auction.
Sotheby’s & Sports Memorabilia

In lockstep with a new generation of collectors entering the market, bringing with them an entirely new approach to collecting, Sotheby’s has expanded into the sneaker and sports memorabilia spaces in recent years. Today, Sotheby’s hold the record for the most valuable game worn sneakers Michael Jordan's Earliest Known Regular Season Game-Worn Nike Air Ships, which sold for $1.5 million, and the most valuable sports memorabilia item, the Olympic manifesto, which made $8.8 million.

*The current record for any game worn shirt is held by Babe Ruth’s Yankees road Jersey, sold for $5.64 million in an auction in 2019.

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