

# SOCCER

# 'PELE IS PELE, I

*He doesn't want to be compared with Pele. He doesn't want to be described as the new Pele. He is Diego Maradona, a man who has his own identity. And he will show all at the World Cup in Spain.*

By R. VELU

THE BOCA Juniors players and officials came trickling into the VIP lounge at Subang Airport. One, two, three . . . twenty, twenty-one. That seemed to be the end of it. But where is the Wonder Boy? Where is the guy who is worth his weight in gold; the wizard who is said to weave such magic with the football?

For a moment the horde of reporters and few fans and officials seemed headed for disappointment and the doubts formed. He isn't coming maybe. Such last minute disappearances have happened before. Fearing the worst, all waited with bated breath for the announcement.

Just then a short, muscular guy wafts through the door. A shock of curly hair, a week's stubble on his chin and cheeks. He gives a quizzical look at the crowd, crouches low as though to hide from everyone (You can imagine the effect when a guy who is 5ft 5in pulls a trick like that). He makes a quick turn, grabs a glass of water from the counter



and hops tiredly onto the sofa . . . and starts sipping the water.

"That's him," whispers an official. You look and see a face that has stared at you from magazine and newspaper pages. He seemed such an ordinary man. A man you might have passed in the streets without giving a second glance.

## POOL OF EXPERTS

Yet it was Diego Maradona who sat there so casually. The Maradona who was plucked out of the streets of Buenos Aires at a very young age to be groomed into a soccer player par excellence.

The Maradona whose early years were said to have been programmed by a pool of experts to develop and exploit the latent talents that were found in him when he was spotted playing in the streets.



LEFT: Seasoned travellers . . . Boca Juniors relax outside K.L. International Airport.  
BELOW: Need it be said? Maradona and admirers.



[mysportsflame.com](http://mysportsflame.com)