

**FOOTBALL**



**FOOTBALL**  
**A GRAPHIC NOVEL**

Santiago García Pablo Ríos

**ASTIBERRI**

**Santiago García:**

Dedicated to my father, the footballer.

**Pablo Ríos:**

For Rosana, again, always.

# **FÚTBOL**

LA NOVELA GRÁFICA

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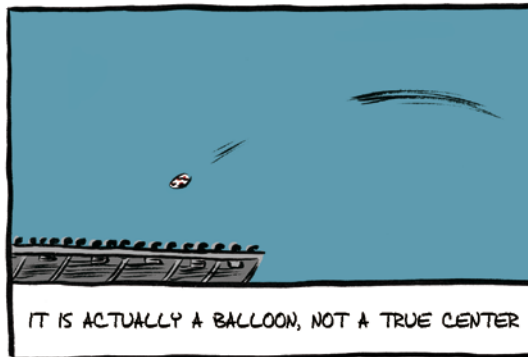
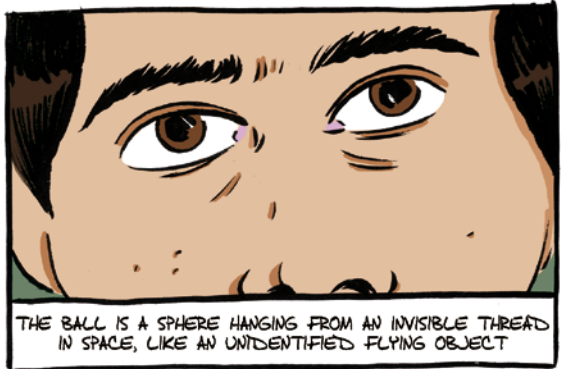
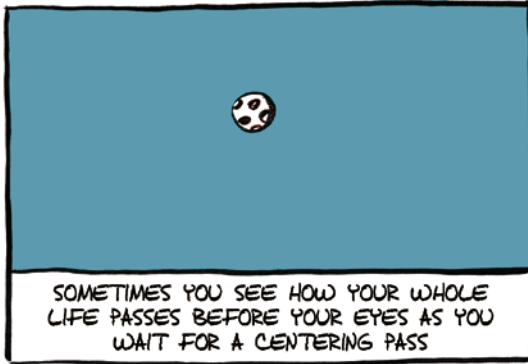
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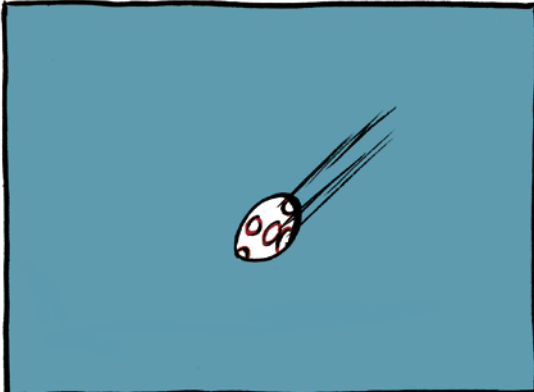
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WAITING FOR IT TO FALL







BUT IT TAKES SO LONG TO DROP THAT IT SEEMS AS THOUGH IT'LL NEVER FALL



AND THE WAIT BECOMES ETERNAL. SO MUCH SO THAT IT GIVES YOU TIME TO THINK

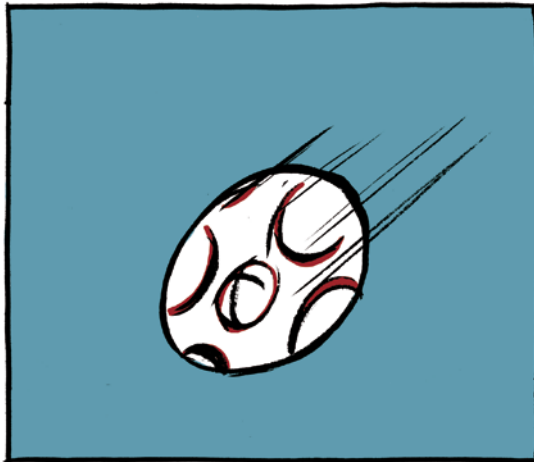


IT GIVES YOU TIME TO THINK ABOUT THAT NEW CAR WITH THE LEATHER HEATED SEATS THAT'S GOING TO GET DELIVERED NEXT WEEK. AT LAST!

IT GIVES YOU TIME TO THINK ABOUT THE MONEY THAT YOU LOANED YOUR BROTHER IN LAW, CUQUI, TO OPEN UP A SEAFOOD RESTAURANT.



IT GIVES YOU TIME TO THINK ABOUT THE GERMAN SCHOOL WHERE MARTA WANTS TO ENROLL JULITA

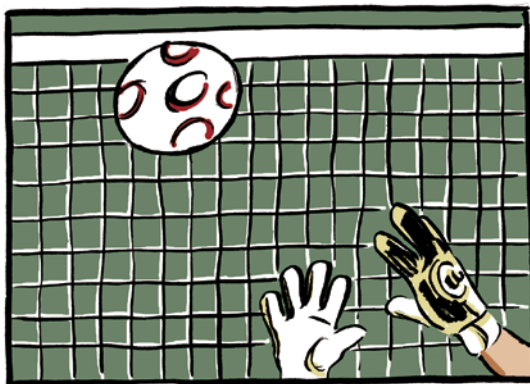


AND THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT WHILE YOU WAIT FOR THE PLAY'S RESULT. THAT YOU HAVE ALREADY WON THE GAME OF LIFE.

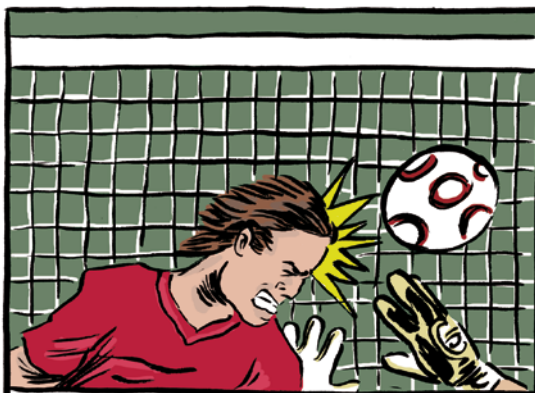




BECAUSE THAT'S LIFE AT THE END OF THE DAY, ISN'T IT? ONE BIG FOOTBALL GAME



AND WHAT HAPPENS IN FOOTBALL IS THAT WITH SOME PLAYS YOU SEE COMING



AND NOT OTHERS



ALTHOUGH THE BALL WAS SLOW...



EVEN IF IT WAS ONLY A BALLOON LAUNCHED BY A LEFT-BACK DESPERATE FOR THE BALL TO NOT GO OVER THE END LINE...



ALTHOUGH ALL YOUR DEFENSES HAD CONTROLLED ALL THE STRIKERS...



THOUGH YOU WASTED AN ETERNITY HOPING THAT THE BALL WOULD FINALLY FALL BUT IT NEVER DID...



IN THE END, YOU JUST HAVE TO ACCEPT THE TRUTH.



YOU HAD FORESEEN AS MUCH.



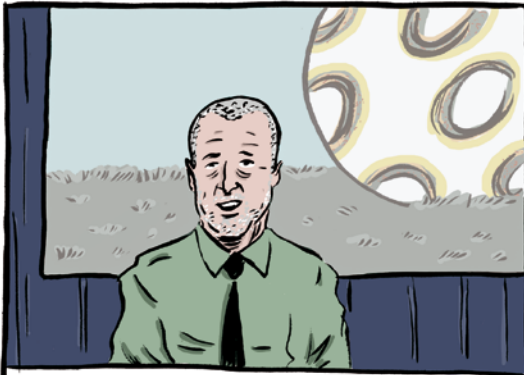
AND YET YOU HAVEN'T SEEN IT COMING.



AND IT WAS THIS ULTIMATE TRUTH THAT MADE ME GIVE UP PLAYING FOOTBALL TO DEVOTE MY WHOLE LIFE TO UNDERSTANDING FOOTBALL.



GERARDO MUÑOZ HAD BEEN ONE OF THE VERY BEST MANAGERS YEARS AGO. THEN HE DISAPPEARED FROM THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD'S WITHOUT A TRACE.



I REMEMBERED HIM FROM THE TIME I WAS AN AMATEUR. THAT'S WHY I WAS SURPRISED TO FIND HIM IN THAT REMOTE PLACE.



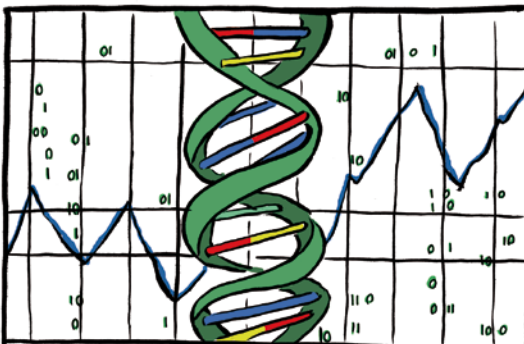
A MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM, HERMENEUTICS, ETHEREAL GOLDEN LIGHT. THAT SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING FOUNDED BY ALISTER CROWLEY, BUT IT'S NOT.



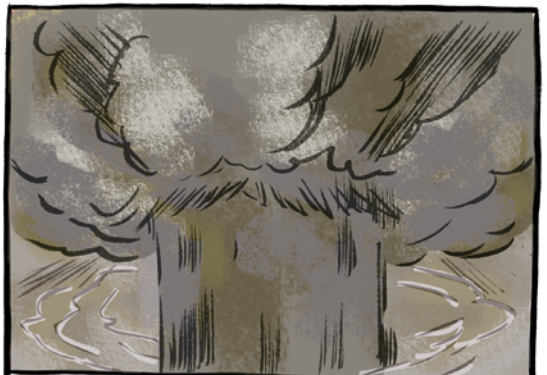
THE SYMPOSIUM WAS NOT A SECT OR A LODGE. NOT EVEN A FORMAL ORGANIZATION. JUST A CASUAL GATHERING OF PEOPLE IN SEARCH OF WISDOM.



ALTHOUGH ITS ORIGINS HAD BECOME MORE SPIRITUAL IN RECENT YEARS THE MAIN FOCUS WAS TO EXPLORE THE THEORY OF THE GAMES.



I KNEW VERY LITTLE ABOUT THE GAMES THEORY. ONLY THAT IT HAD JUST DEVELOPED RECENTLY IN ECONOMY, BIOLOGY AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, AMONG OTHER FIELDS...



THAT ONE OF ITS FOUNDERS HAD BEEN JOHN VON NEUMANN, ONE OF THE CREATORS OF THE ATOMIC BOMB.



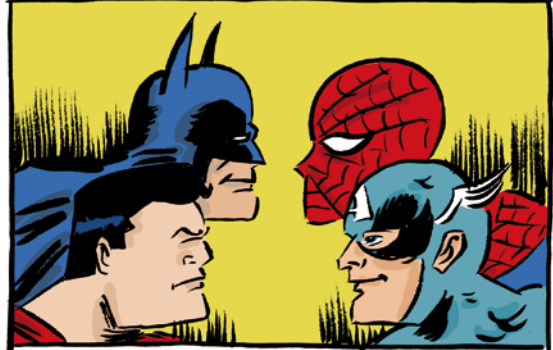
AND ONE OF ITS LEADING FIGURES WAS JOHN NASH, WHO HAD BEEN PORTRAYED BY RUSSEL CROWE IN "A BEAUTIFUL MIND"



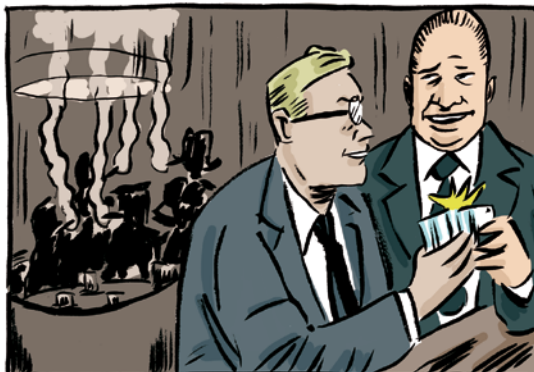
ALL VERY DRY AND COMPLEX FOR SOMEONE WHO, LIKE ME, WAS A SIMPLE JOURNALIST SPECIALIZING IN MYSTERY... OH, AND A COMIC FAN TOO.



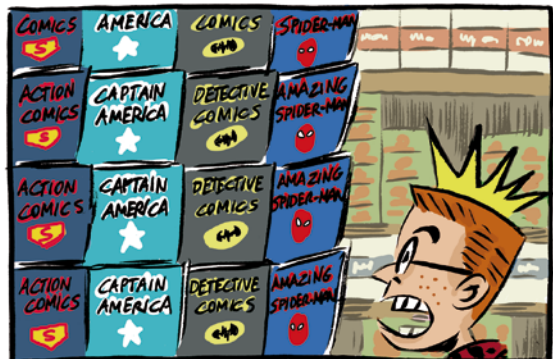
BUT IT WAS PRECISELY THIS INTEREST IN COMICS THAT HAD LED ME TO THE THEORY OF THE GAMES AFTER READING A CHAPTER ABOUT THE AMERICAN INDUSTRY AND IT'S COMMERCIAL WAR



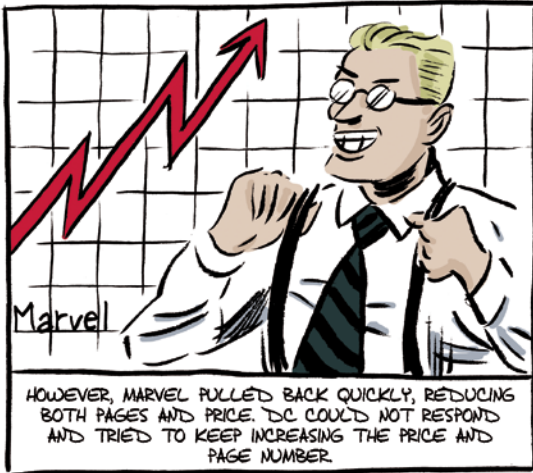
IN THE LATE 60S, THE COMIC BOOK MARKET IN THE USA WAS DOMINATED BY TWO PUBLISHERS. THE DC, SUPERMAN AND BATMAN WAS N°1. WHILE MARVEL'S SPIDERMAN AND CAPTAIN AMERICA WAS N°2.



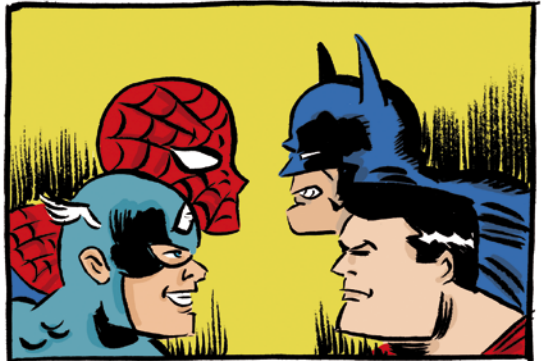
BOTH PUBLISHERS MADE A DEAL TO RAISE THE PRICE FROM 16 CENTS TO 25, EXPANDING THE NUMBER OF PAGES FROM 36 TO 52 ...



IT WAS A HUGE STEP THAT NO PUBLISHER WOULD DARE TO TRY AND COMPETE WITH, BUT THEY COULD, IF THEY HAD THE GUARANTEE THAT COMPETITORS WOULD FOLLOW SUIT.



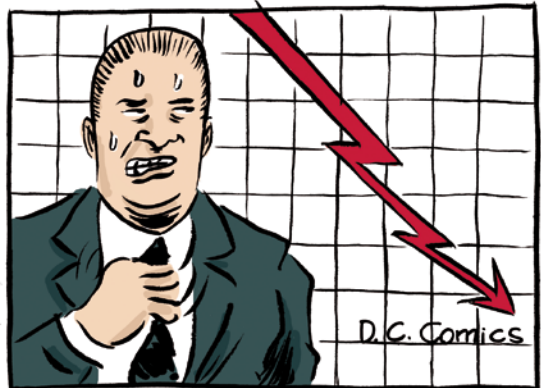
HOWEVER, MARVEL PULLED BACK QUICKLY, REDUCING BOTH PAGES AND PRICE. DC COULD NOT RESPOND AND TRIED TO KEEP INCREASING THE PRICE AND PAGE NUMBER.



THE RESULT WAS THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY, MARVEL WOULD MATCH DC IN SALES, WHICH HAS NOT CHANGED IN THE LAST FORTY YEARS SINCE.



I REALIZED THAT WHAT MARVEL HAD DONE WAS TO TRICK DC WITH A CLASSIC GAME OF PRISONER.



OF COURSE, IT WAS GREED THAT HAD ATTRACTED A COLLABORATION FOR DC BUT ACTUALLY IT WAS A DEATH TRAP.



FASCINATED BY THIS BUSINESS MANEUVER, I HAD BECOME INCREASINGLY INTERESTED IN THE THEORY OF THE GAME UP UNTIL THIS SYMPOSIUM MEETING.

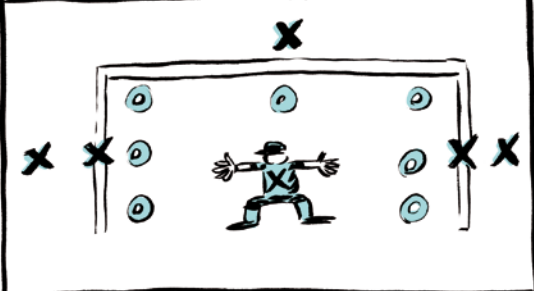


WHERE THE LAST THING I EXPECTED WAS TO FIND A FORMER BARÇA MANAGER, WHO HAD GONE OFF THE PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL MAP YEARS AGO.



THE SIMPLEST EXAMPLE OF FOOTBALL THAT CAN BE APPLIED TO GAME THEORY IS LAUNCHING A PENALTY

A PRIORI, ALL THE POSSIBILITIES OF A PENALTY ARE EASILY PREDICTABLE, AREN'T THEY?



EXCLUDING THE PITCHER SHOOTING FOR THE CENTRE OF THE GOAL, WHERE THE GOALIE HAS AN ADVANTAGE...



THE PITCHER KICKS TO THE RIGHT OF THE GOALKEEPER



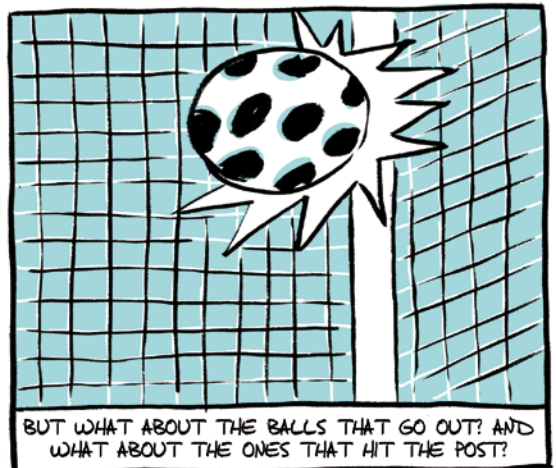
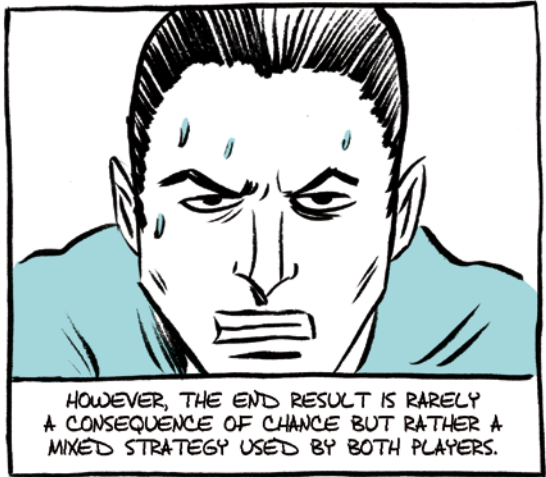
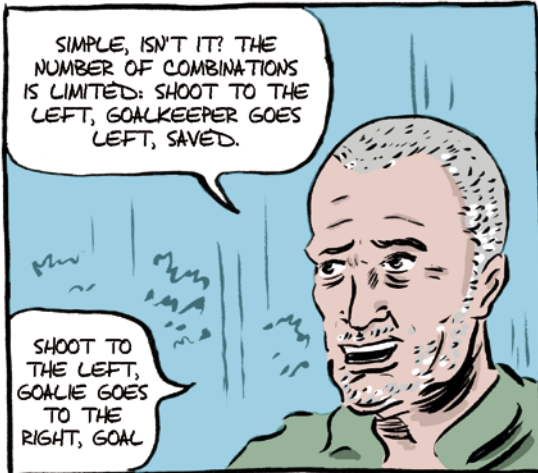
OR KICKS TO THE LEFT OF THE GOALKEEPER

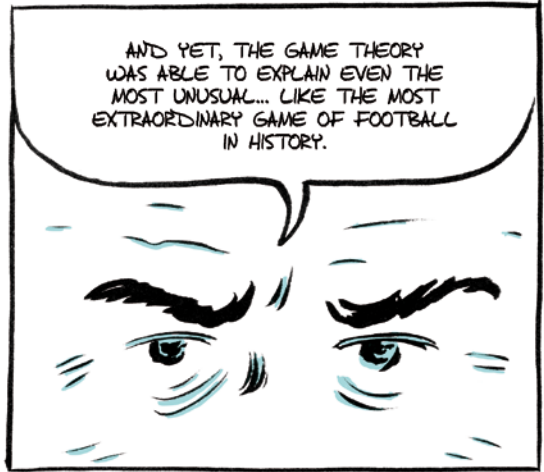


AND THE GOALKEEPER WILL GO TO THE LEFT OF THE GOAL



OR THE RIGHT OF THE GOAL.

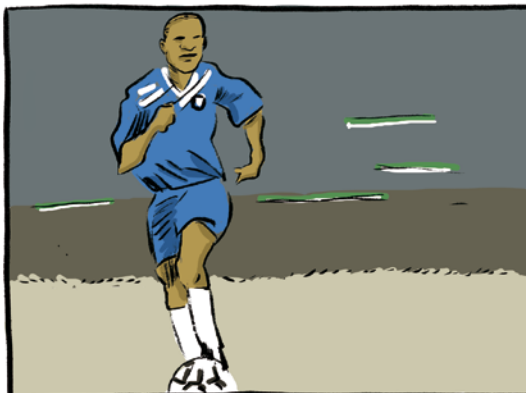




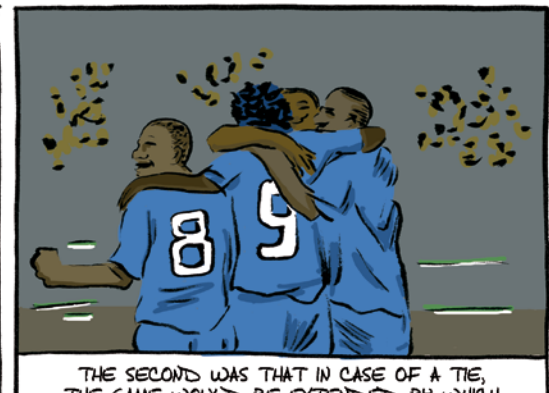
IT WAS JANUARY 27TH, 1994, IN SAINT MICHAEL. A QUALIFYING GAME IN THE CARIBBEAN CUP, BETWEEN BARBADOS AND GRANADA.



TO QUALIFY, BARBADOS HAD TO WIN BY TWO GOALS, BUT THE RULES OF THIS TOURNAMENT WERE SOMEWHAT PECULIAR.



THE FIRST PECULIARITY WAS THAT NO TIE WAS AGREED UPON BY ALL PARTIES IN THE COMPETITION. THERE HAD TO BE A WINNER AND A LOSER.



THE SECOND WAS THAT IN CASE OF A TIE, THE GAME WOULD BE EXTENDED BY WHICH THE GOLDEN GOAL WOULD APPLY, BUT ITS VALUE WOULD BE DOUBLED. THAT IS, THE FIRST GOAL SCORED IN EXTRA TIME WOULD END THE GAME.





BARBADOS ACHIEVED THEIR OBJECTIVE AND GOT A 2-0 LEAD WHICH CLASSIFIED THEM FOR THE FINALS



HOWEVER, 83 MINUTES LATER GRANADA SCORED A GOAL BRINGING IT TO 2-1, WHICH CLASSIFIED THEM AND NOT BARBADOS.



WITH A FEW MINUTES REMAINING, BARBADOS REALIZED THEY WOULDN'T GET THE THIRD GOAL THEY NEEDED IN SUCH A SHORT TIME. THEN THEY HAD A STROKE OF INSPIRATION.



BARBADOS SCORED AN OWN GOAL BRINGING THE SCORE TO 2-2, LEADING THE GAME TO BE EXTENDED AND GIVING THEM AN EXTRA 30 MINUTES TO TRY FOR A GOLDEN GOAL QUALIFIER.



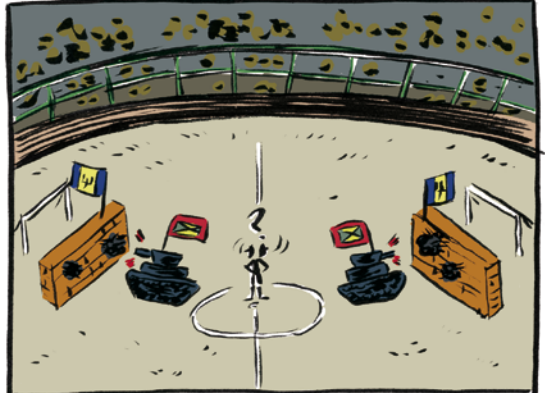
WITH JUST FIVE MINUTES LEFT, GRANADA REALIZED WHAT WOULD HAPPEN, AND KNEW THAT THE BEST WAY AROUND IT WAS TO COPY THEIR OPPONENTS STRATEGY AND SCORE AN OWN GOAL CAUSING THEM TO LOSE 3-2, A RESULT WHICH WOULD CLASSIFY THEM.



BUT BARBADOS WERE NOT ABOUT TO LET THIS HAPPEN, SO THEIR PLAYERS STARTED TO DEFEND GRANADA'S GOAL WHICH WAS BEING ATTACKED BY ITS OWN PLAYERS.



OF COURSE THE OTHER POSSIBILITY FOR GRANADA TO QUALIFY WAS TO SCORE A GOAL IN BARBADOS' GOAL MAKING IT 2-3. THEREFORE, IT WASN'T IMPORTANT WHICH GOAL THEY SCORED IN, THEY COULD SCORE IN EITHER ONE.



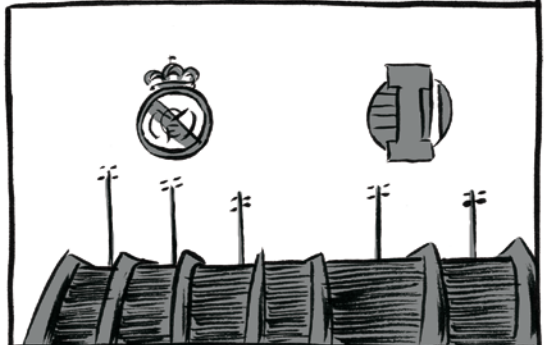
THUS, THE MATCH ENDED WITH BARBADOS DEFENDING BOTH GOALS BEING ATTACKED BY GRANADA.



THE GAME ENDED WITH A 2-2 DRAW, AND IN EXTRA TIME, BARBADOS SCORED THE GOLDEN GOAL THAT FOLLOWED A DOUBLE WIN 4-2 AND CLASSIFIED.



ACTUALLY, SELF-INJURY TO VICTORY THROUGH DEFEAT WAS INVENTED IN 1962 BY PEDRO FERRANDIZ, LEGENDARY MANAGER OF REAL MADRID BASKETBALL TEAM.



MADRID WAS PLAYING A EUROPEAN CUP QUALIFYING GAME AGAINST IGNIS VARESE. THE FIRST LEG WAS BEING PLAYED IN ITALY. THE TEAM THAT SCORED MORE POINTS WOULD CLASSIFY.



MADRID DOMINATED THE WHOLE MATCH, BUT THE ITALIANS TIED WITHIN JUST TWO SECONDS, TAKING THEM TO THE INEVITABLE EXTENSION



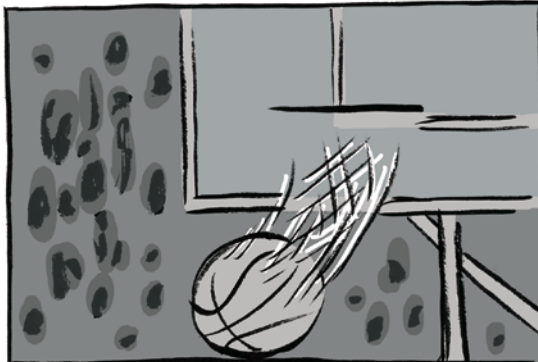
MADRID HAD LOST THEIR BEST PLAYERS BY FOULS AND INJURIES, SO FERRANDIZ WANTED TO AVOID THE 5 MINUTES EXTRA TIME SO THAT THE ITALIANS COULDN'T ACHIEVE A SIGNIFICANT ADVANTAGE



LORENZO ALOCAN, FRESH OFF THE PITCH, TOOK THE BALL AND SCORED IN HIS OWN BASKET HANDING OVER THE VICTORY TO VARESE, 82-80



WHEN THE ITALIAN FANS MOCKED ALOCAN, THE HUNGARIAN TOTH, IGNIS VARESE'S PLAYER, HE REALIZED WHAT HAD HAPPENED.



MADRID HAD BEEN DEFEATED BY TWO POINTS, A BASKET. IN THE SECOND LEG, REAL RECOVERED AND WON BY 83-62 AND QUALIFIED FOR THE NEXT ROUND.



THEN WHAT DID YOU HAVE TO DO? WHO WAS WINNING AND WHO WAS LOSING?

WHAT ARE THE RULES FOR?