



## THE OTHER FINAL – FOOTBALL FILM REVIEW

For those looking to see a side of the game, that despite lacking the media coverage, has all the passion of any world fixture, Bhutan v Montserrat featured in this 2002 documentary is a great insight to this corner of the game. (See video below)

In 2001, filmmaker Johan Kramer experienced the extremely rare and surprising occurrence of his Netherlands national team failing to qualify for the upcoming World Cup. Without his team to support during the finals tournament, thoughts turned to football away from this global sporting and commercial phenomenon, inspired to see the opposite side of the game at international level.

In a moment of optimistic inspiration, Kramer looked for the two lowest ranked international sides, and devised a plan to stage "The Other Final" where away from the glamour of the greatest teams playing in the World Cup final in Japan, bottom ranked Montserrat and Bhutan would stage their own 'final' on the same day, not for much prestige or financial reward, but simply for the passion and love for the game.

The linchpin of this documentary is the dynamic of the contrasting cultures of the relatively tranquil, Buddhist, isolated Himalayan nation of Bhutan and their rather more exuberant Caribbean guests. Though at the outset, we are shown that the populations of both countries know not much to very little about each other's country as both teams share their own culture and perspectives with each-other. Though the Montserrat teams most notable contribution in this regard is being able to deliver a rendition of calypso classic and their soccer anthem "Hot, Hot, Hot" at a moments notice!

However despite the good intentions of both sides, we are shown the difficulties of game organisation at this level. Referee's can become unavailable at a moments notice, though potentially more disastrously, Montserrat coach Paul Morris resigned midway through the project, being frustrated by interference from the Montserrat FA, particularly around the issue of player selection.

From the players perspective, there is a focus on Bhutan star player Wangay Dorji at that time was plying his trade in India. He shows that his ambition is not limited by Bhutan's place in the football world, dreaming of playing for the likes of Manchester United. However whilst keeping himself grounded he remains determined to take his career as far as he possibly can.

We also here stories of more disastrous non-footballing events that had to be overcome. Between 1995 to 1999 Montserrat suffered a series of catastrophic volcanic eruption, destroying the existing capital city, including the national stadium, leaving much of the country as a no-go area. We see how the Montserrat population deals with the changes in the aftermath of

this disaster. We also see how Bhutan adjusts to its own changing country. Traditionally a very insulated country, the introduction of television in 1999 allowed people to see a wider world, including the wider football world. Here we see Bhutan Coach Arie Schans watching World Cup fixtures to spot some tactical learning for his own team, a situation that could not have existed a mere few years earlier.

Despite the challenges to overcome, the fixture goes ahead as planned on the same day as the World Cup final. On a somewhat blemished pitch, a high intensity game ensues, with Bhutan running out 4-0 winners, though as the cliché goes "Football was the winner on the day". Despite taking a short time to savor this special occasion, thoughts quickly turn to watching the 'real' World Cup final between Brazil and Germany almost 5000 kilometers away.

The documentary closes with a montage of the ups and down set to "Heros" by David Bowie, apt as the chorus line of "We can be heros, just for one day" fits the narrative of this story perfectly, showing that football is a sport that has a wide enough scope that passion, commitment and success can be seen from the biggest giants of the game, to the lowest ranked sides in the world, all of which was on display in this wonderful documentary.

As a football related film, this is a must watch for any football fan. It is perfect for those who want to look into the football landscape away from the top names in the world, whilst also adding perspective to those who enjoy the top tier of the game, helping to appreciate its qualities even more. If you have not seen this documentary, do so as soon as you can!

**The Other Final – Documentary**