

'What Killed Maradona?' A life of glory that came with pain



CHENNAI: It can be lonely at the top, full of stress and pushed by the demand to reach ever-greater heights.

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Diego Armando Maradona is the subject of a new documentary about one such superstar, a game-changing football player from Argentina. He grew up in Villa Fiorito, an impoverished little town on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. But the gift of a football from his uncle drove him to a lifelong passion that emerged from the alleys of his childhood.

The documentary — “What Killed Maradona?” — now streaming on Discovery +, pieces together his extraordinary life in just under 45 minutes, with interesting observations from those who knew him best. Maradona's personal trainer Fernando Signorini, his agent Jon Smith and his former Napoli teammate and captain Giuseppe Bruscolotti all feature, as well as a panel of sports journalists.

While the makers do touch on Maradona's career highlights, the focus is squarely on his personal life, including his eventful journey from the streets, where he would play football with his friends for hours, to starry heights. To begin with, his poverty-stricken childhood prevented a strong and healthy upbringing, and it took many years of medical intervention to build his physique. And when he finally approached the promised land of sporting glory, his dreams became almost unreal. He kept pushing himself, egged on by his ever-demanding fans and familial responsibilities.

According to interviews with those closest to him, Maradona was addicted to substances that seriously harmed his health and a good 30 minutes or so of the documentary is dedicated to discussing the legend's addictions during his career, with his post-retirement relapse and health issues rushed through toward the end.

We see how opponents on the field kicked and shoved him, causing innumerable injuries, some of which were excruciatingly painful - this all led to an unhealthy dependence on a cocktail of painkillers.

Even the medical fraternity seems to have done disservice to him. “I suspect he was given cortisone systemically through the vein, where the cortisone is not just affecting the joint, it’s having its effects all over the body, and this can be terrible for things like the heart,” said Sanjay Sharma, a professor of sports cardiology.

He was only 60 when died on Nov. 25, 2020 due to heart failure and the documentary explores the many tragedies that led to his untimely passing. Although the footage can get repetitive toward the end, it is eye-opening enough to keep you hooked.

His death came too soon, preventing him from enjoying the fruits of his unimaginable success. He was the best, but fame gave him agonizing pain and this documentary is a sobering look at the reality of a much-loved superstar.

