

THIS WEEK IN  
HISTORY

## THE HISTORY OF FOOTBALL &amp; THE FIFA WORLD CUP™



With the FIFA World Cup™ currently in full swing, we decided to take a closer look at the origins of football, or 'soccer' as it is often called in this part of the world. Football is considered to be the world's most popular sport. It is also one of the oldest sports in the world.

No one is sure exactly where or how football first began but some suggest it dates back to 2500BC, during which time the Greeks, Egyptians and Chinese all played feet-based games involving a ball. These games also included the use of hands and even sticks to control the ball.

China was the first country to actually write about a game that involved kicking a round object into a goal. The game was called Tsu Chu and it was first played for the emperor's birthday.

From the introduction of Tsu Chu onwards, football-like games spread throughout the world, with many countries having games based on the use of their feet. The Roman game of 'Harpastum' was a game where each team would attempt to gain possession of a small ball for as long as possible. The Ancient Greeks had a similar game called 'Episkyros'. However, both of these games had rules that were closer to rugby than modern day football.

Football as we recognise it today can be traced back to medieval England. The ball could be anything that rolled and the goals could be close if only a few people were playing, or up to 16 kilometres apart if hundreds of people played! Some people claim that the first ball used was the head of a Danish robber. However, it is generally accepted that the first footballs were usually made from pigs' bladders that were blown up like a balloon, tied at the ends and placed inside a leather case, giving it an egg shape.

The original form of football allowed kicking, punching, biting and gouging! The main aim was to carry the ball to a target spot. Sometimes the competition grew fierce and players got so wild that the game turned violent. This was

referred to as 'Mob football'. Even murder was acceptable in such games if it meant securing a win! It is also said that soldiers admired the game so much they missed archery practice to watch it. Interestingly, many of football's terms and expressions originate from the military, such as; defence, offside, attack etc. King Edward III banned soccer in 1365 due to its violence and also the distractions it brought to the military. In 1424 King James I of Scotland also proclaimed that "No man shall play football!"

Modern 'association football' began in the public schools of Britain at the beginning of the 16th century. The rules were written by students and in 1815, The English School and Eton College presented a set of rules known as the Cambridge Rules. Football was divided into two groups; Rugby rules that allowed tripping, shin kicking and also carrying the ball, and another set of rules that did not. The rules kept evolving and clubs began to emerge, playing matches against one another.

In 1863, the Football Association was formed. They wanted to bring together the different codes and systems to form one set of rules. The first meeting in London on 26 October 1863 did not end in agreement of the rules. However, the Football Association (FA) rules were eventually agreed upon when Rugby Football and Association Football codes split and the supporters of the Rugby rules walked out.

In the FA rules of 1863, there was no crossbar and a goal could be scored at any height as long as the ball went between the posts. There were no penalties or referees in the original rules because it was thought that gentlemen would never intentionally foul. In fact, debating skills were almost as important as ball skills as players could appeal against decisions to captains of the teams. When referees were eventually introduced, they wore long trousers, a blazer and a bow tie. During the very first international football



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match between Scotland and England in 1872, players wore “knickerbockers” or long pants. They also wore bobble caps and continued to do this for many years.

Football’s popularity spread as British sailors, traders and soldiers introduced the sport to different parts of the world. Football clubs began to spread throughout Europe and by 1880, Denmark, Belgium and Switzerland all had association football clubs. Britain founded its football league in 1888 and also introduced the Football Association Cup. By the turn of the 20th century many European countries had formed their own football leagues and competed in international games.

FIFA (The Fédération Internationale de Football Association) was established in 1904. In the 1920’s, a group of FIFA administrators from France wanted to bring the world’s strongest national football teams together to compete for the title of ‘World Champions’. The FIFA World Cup™ was born in 1930 with the first tournament taking place in Uruguay. It was held three times before World War II prevented it from going ahead for 12 years. When it resumed, it quickly became the greatest single sporting event of the modern world. From 1958 the FIFA World Cup™ was held alternately in Europe and the Americas until 1996 when South Korea and Japan were selected as co-hosts for the 2002 Cup.

From 1930 to 2012 there have been 19 FIFA World Cup™ tournaments with only eight different winners. However, there have also been some dramatic upsets that have created football history: USA beat England in 1950 and North Korea beat Italy in 1966.

Football today is the most popular game on earth. There are around 265 million football players and 5 million referees worldwide. Football stars these days are international celebrities, earning eye-watering salaries... such as Cristiano Ronaldo’s 5 year contract with Real Madrid worth \$206 million! In 2010, the FIFA World Cup™ took place in South Africa and was shown around the world with 3.2 billion people tuning in for the final.

This year the FIFA World Cup™ is being held in Brazil. The estimated cost to the Brazilian government is \$14 billion, making it the most expensive World Cup ever. So whether you are a football fan or not, pick a team to support and get in behind this year’s FIFA World Cup™ tournament...it should be a good one!



### Discussion Questions

#### Factual

1. What was the game called that was similar to football and originated in China thousands of years ago?
2. What were the first footballs in England usually made from?
3. Why did King Edward III ban football in 1365?
4. When and where did the first FIFA World Cup™ take place?
5. How many people play football around the world today?

#### Challenge

Find out which of these countries have been FIFA World Cup™ winners in the past...

Spain	Germany
New Zealand	Austria
Brazil	Uruguay
France	Australia
Mexico	Switzerland
South Korea	Argentina
England	USA
Chile	Italy