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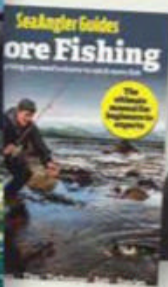
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In 2007, *World Soccer* called upon a panel of experts and correspondents to compile a list of the 20 greatest teams of all time. Glancing through it, one of the most striking things is how many of those sides fell short of their ultimate objective, stumbling at the final hurdle due to bad luck or bad mistakes.

Perhaps there is something particularly alluring about a talented side that misses out; the “what ifs” and “could’ve beens” that it provokes, not to mention the endless debates that it triggers.

But what is more likely is that a team’s legacy is not only defined by their triumphs, nor even by their defeats, but by the way that they played, the players who made them, and the impact that they had on the people who watched them play. After all, whether it be Hungary in 1954, Netherlands in the 1970s or the 1982 Brazil, some of the game’s greatest “losers” have had a far bigger and more lasting impact than many of those sides that were successful.

Not that this is a compilation of second places; it is a list packed with winners, honours and trophies.

But it takes more than just silverware to be considered truly “iconic”, and every team featured in the following 90+ pages has their own unique story that makes them so. Some are well-told staples of football folklore that simply could not be ignored; others are less well-known, featuring characters that have had a huge impact on the modern game.

As always, this is not an exhaustive or definitive list. But it is drawn from *World Soccer*’s wealth of archived material, and features the work of outstanding writers, from Brian Glanville and Keir Radnedge to Tim Vickery and Sid Lowe.

Nor is it ranked in order of greatness, but chronologically. We start all the way back in the 1930s and travel right through the history of football to 2020. While certain contemporary sides may well be on their way to iconic status – Pep Guardiola’s Manchester City, Jurgen Klopp’s Liverpool and the Bayern Munich side that won the 2020 Champions League to name but three examples – we concluded that it was still too early for them; their stories aren’t quite finished yet.

We invite you to read on, not with a promise of discovering who the most iconic team of all time is, but with a question: who do you think it is?

Jamie Evans, *World Soccer* Assistant Editor

“Some of the game’s greatest ‘losers’ have had a far greater and more lasting impact than many of those sides that were successful”

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Italy 1938

Victory in the 1938 World Cup was Italy's third title of the 1930s – and their most impressive



Italy won the World Cup in 1934 under a fascistic cloud. The tournament was staged in Italy, with dictator Benito Mussolini seeking to use it as an opportunity to promote his ideology. The hosts lifted the trophy after an extra-time victory over Czechoslovakia in the final, yet their success has been tarnished by accusations of match fixing.

Victory at the Berlin Olympics two years later – another tournament staged under the watchful eye of a fascist dictator, Adolf Hitler – did little to abate those doubts. Yet the victory in 1938, achieved in front of hostile crowds in France, put the team's excellence beyond doubt.

While Mussolini would claim it as a victory for his own fascist values, the true mastermind behind the success was coach Vittorio Pozzo. Having achieved success in 1934 with a side built around the dominant Juventus of the early 1930s, by 1938 he had almost completely rebuilt his team.

Remarkably, only two players from the 1934 final survived for the 1938 edition: namely the inside-forwards, Giuseppe Meazza and Giovanni Ferrari, who formed the creative engine room. In France, they were joined in the attack by a ruthless finisher in Silvio Piola, and the Lazio centre-forward proved crucial, scoring five goals in the tournament, including two in the final – a 4-2 victory over Hungary.

The other significant personnel change came at centre-half, with Luis Monti making way for Michele Andreolo. Monti, who had previously played for Argentina, was an old-fashioned centre-half that helped dictate the attacks, but his replacement was more defensive. Andreolo would play a key role in the final, marking Hungary's top scorer Gyorgy Sarosi.

It was a change indicative of a wider approach: Pozzo valued solidity and aggression, and was one of the early exponents of man-marking. The excellent Italian front-line meant that

Back-to-back titles... manager Vittorio Pozzo holds the 1938 World Cup trophy



Captains... Giuseppe Meazza greets Gyorgy Sarosi ahead of the 1938 World Cup Final

30

Magic number
From the end of 1935 to 1939, Italy went 30 games without defeat

the rest of the team was able to stay back, take no risks, and provide the platform for Meazza, Piola and Ferrari to weave their magic.

Italy's form continued after lifting their second World Cup, setting a record of nine consecutive wins that remained intact until 2019 (when Roberto Mancini's team overtook it en route to winning Euro 2020). The advent of World War Two meant that none of the winners from 1938 would play at another World Cup. Pozzo remained in his post until 1948, with his final match coming in a 5-3 defeat to Denmark at the London Olympics.

Honours



World Cup
1938

Iconic Match

Italy 4-2 Hungary, 1938 World Cup final



Strongest XI

Aldo Olivieri

Goalkeeper

Nicknamed *il Gatto Magico* ("the Magic Cat") for his impressive reflexes, he replaced the 1934 captain Gianpiero Combi.

Alfredo Foni

Defender

One of only four Italians to win both Olympic gold and the World Cup, he later had success as a manager with Inter.

Pietro Rava

Defender

Foni's defensive partner was named in the 1938 World Cup's Best XI.

Pietro Serantoni

Defender

Right-half that won Serie A titles with both Inter and Juventus.

Michele Andreolo

Defender

Born in Uruguay, he joined Bologna in 1935 and won his first Italy cap a year later.

Ugo Locatelli

Defender

Another star of the Olympic team, Locatelli was a diminutive left-half that started as a striker.

Amedeo Biavati

Winger

A skilful right-winger, he is credited with popularising the step-over in Italy.

Giuseppe Meazza

Forward

Captain for the 1938 success, where his performances earned him the Golden Ball award.

Silvio Piola

Forward

Serie A's all-time record goalscorer with 274, he also struck 30 goals in just 34 caps.

Giovanni Ferrari

Forward

Playmaker for the Juve side of the 1930s, he left in 1935 to join Inter and won the 1937-38 Serie A.

Gino Colaussi

Winger

Scored four goals at the World Cup, including two in the final versus Hungary.

Tactics

Pozzo is credited with devising the *Metodo* formation, or 2-3-2-3. An evolution from the popular W-M shape, the system positioned the inside-forwards deeper, taking the creative pressure off the half-backs – Serantoni, Andreolo and Locatelli – and allowing them to focus on their defensive responsibilities. "The big secret of the Italian squad is its capacity to attack with the fewest men possible, without ever distracting the half-backs from their defensive work," said journalist Mario Zappa in *La Gazzetta dello Sport*. The system has, arguably, come full circle, with Pep Guardiola's Bayern Munich and Manchester City often lining up in a similar pattern.

Coach

Vittorio Pozzo

Although he managed exclusively in Italy (Torino, Milan and four different spells with the national team), Pozzo spent his formative years abroad, particularly England where he became a fan of Manchester United. He remains the only manager in history to win two World Cups, yet his legacy has been complicated by a perceived association with Mussolini. In the 1950s he was accused of being a fascist, although he was never a member of the party. He died in December 1968, aged 82. In 2011, he was included among the first inductees into the Italian Football Hall of Fame.



Star man

Giuseppe Meazza

While Pozzo's Italy were built on pragmatism and combativeness, Meazza provided the artistry. Having first achieved fame as a prolific centre-forward, he developed into a creative inside-forward, using his thrilling dribbling ability and eye for a pass to lead attacks. The original celebrity footballer, he was noted for his drinking, smoking and womanising, yet still managed to deliver consistently across a 20-year career. Only one player has scored more times for Italy, and he remains Inter's most prolific player of all time with 284 goals – a record that earned him the honour of having the San Siro stadium renamed after him in 1980.



River Plate 1940s

While Europe was at war, the first great River Plate team were dominating Argentina, earning the nickname "La Maquina" – The Machine



In October 1941, while much of the world was overshadowed by the Second World War, a footballing dynasty was being forged in Argentina.

It was the end of the domestic campaign, and River Plate hosted their *Superclasico* rivals, Boca Juniors. The title had been decided a week earlier, with a defeat for Boca meaning that they could not catch the league leaders. Nevertheless, they were intent on disrupting the party at the Monumental Stadium.

The ground itself was still new, finished in 1938 as a symbol of River's burgeoning dominance, and the newly crowned league champions produced a performance worthy of their impressive, modern home. They outwitted, outclassed and outplayed their rivals, winning 5-1 having raced into a 3-0 lead before half-time.

It remains River's largest-ever victory over Boca. The Argentine sports magazine *El Grafico* were so impressed that they dedicated 14 pages of their next issue to the performance.

It set the tone for what was to follow, with River winning four more league championships in the next six years. In 1942, they were dubbed "La Maquina" in another issue of *El Grafico*, and the nickname stuck.

The key component of "The Machine" was its front line. Angel Labruna, Jose Manuel Moreno and Adolfo Pedernera are all still in the club's top six scorers of all time, but the adulation came for the way that they played. They moved perfectly in sync with each other, roaming freely beyond their positions, in an early example of Total Football.

In his book on the history of Argentine football, *Angels With Dirty Faces*, Jonathan Wilson writes: "La Maquina were not just a great team but served as a mirror in which Argentinians saw reflected an idealised self-image: skilful and clever, impudent and daring, elegant and brilliant, unconventional and unrestrained to the point of irresponsibility."

Moreno embodied this spirit more than any other player. Unburdened by modern concerns about health and

La Maquina...the River team of the 1940s



Stars...Moreno and Labruna pose for *El Grafico*

fitness, he was a regular in Buenos Aires' nightclubs and tango bars, believing that dancing was the best preparation for football. Yet with a ball at his feet he was peerless, dazzling fans, team-mates and opponents with his ability. According to Wilson, he was widely considered by many of his contemporaries to have been better than Pele or Maradona.

In Argentina, River's legacy remains very much in tact. But with the rest of the world at war, their brilliance was not seen beyond their own shores. After the war, many of the stars of *La Maquina* left to play abroad and, despite Alfredo Di Stefano's emergence, the team never quite recaptured the magic.

644

Magic number

Total goals scored by Labruna, Moreno and Pedernera for River

Honours



Primera Division
1941, 1942, 1945, 1947



Copa Iburguren
1941, 1942

Iconic Match

River Plate 5-1 Boca Juniors, 1941 Primera Division



Tactics

River's tactics were heavily influenced by Hungarian coaches. Emerico Hirschl guided them to league wins in 1936 and 1937, before Ferenc Platko briefly took charge in 1940. The latter's time in charge was disastrous, but many of his ideas took root in the mind of his successor, Renato Cesarini, and as a result there were similarities to the Hungary side of the 1950s. The centre-forward, Labruna, would drift out to the left, Pedernera would drive into the vacant space, while Moreno created behind them.

Coach

Renato Cesarini

Cesarini was born in Italy, emigrated to Argentina, then returned to his home country in 1929 to play for Juventus. He starred in the all-conquering team of the 1930s that won five league titles, and became known for his tendency to score late on; even today the expression "zona Cesarini" is used to describe a goal that occurs in the dying moments of games in Italy. In 1936 he joined River, starring in Hirschl's title-winning team, and as a coach he was strongly influenced by the Hungarian approach.



Strongest XI

Jose Soriano

Goalkeeper

Peru international. Died in 2011, the last surviving member of *La Maquina*.

Norberto Yacono

Defender

Having been moved into defence from right-half, he is the reason Argentina right-backs wear No.4.

Ricardo Vaghi

Defender

A one-club man and River's defensive rock throughout the 1940s.

Luis Ferreyra

Defender

Reliable defender, he later joined Deportivo Cali in the Colombian "rebel" league.

Bruno Rodolfi

Midfielder

Defensive midfielder tasked with winning the ball and giving it to Moreno.

Jose Ramos

Midfielder

Won 11 caps for Argentina, playing at the

victorious 1946 South American Championship.

Juan Carlos Munoz

Winger

His regular assists for Labruna led to the chant: "The sun rises, the moon rises, centre from Munoz, goal from Labruna."

Jose Manuel Moreno

Forward

The star of the team, considered the most naturally talented.

Adolfo Pedernera

Forward

Prolific inside-forward, left with Di Stefano to join Millonarios in Colombia.

Felix Loustau

Winger

Nicknamed "The Fan" for his ability to allow his team-mates to breath with his stamina.

Angel Labruna

Forward

Prolific goalscorer for both club and country, notching 17 in 37 caps for Argentina.

Star man

Angel Labruna

Labruna's legacy at River Plate is extraordinary. In 20 years at the club he scored 317 goals in 515 games, placing him top of the all-time scorers list and second for appearances, while he is also the most prolific player in the history of the *Superclasico*, with 16 goals. Although he won two South American Championships with Argentina, the fact that his peak came in the 1940s and '50s meant he did not get the chance to show his full talent at a World Cup; Argentina withdrew from the 1950 and 1954 tournaments, and although he did appear at Sweden in 1958, by then he was 40 years old. He retired a year later, enjoying two spells as River manager.



Hungary 1950-54

The “Mighty Magyars” are considered one of the best international teams in football history



The Magical Magyars – led by strikers Ferenc Puskas and Sandor Kocsis, attacking half-back Jozsef Bozsik and withdrawn striker Nandor Hidegkuti – should have won the 1954 World Cup final in Berne. But the Hungary team of a year earlier were an even better side.

“We should be alright here Stan, they haven’t got the proper kit,” was England captain Billy Wright’s ill-fated assessment of Hungary to his team-mate Stan Mortensen ahead of the “Match of the Century” at Wembley Stadium on November 25, 1953.

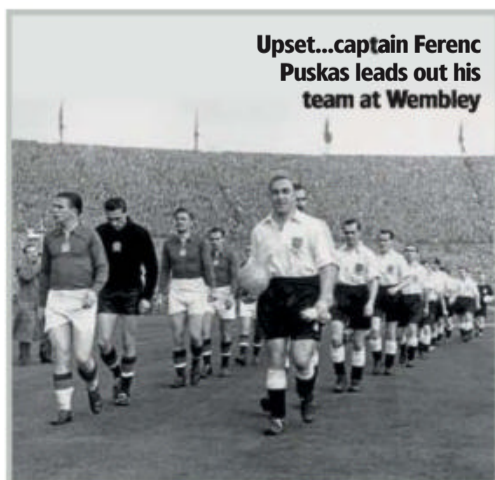
Hungary captain Ferenc Puskas and his team-mates wore lightweight boots in a game that would end in a humiliating 6-3 defeat for England, ending their unbeaten run at home against continental opposition.

While for England it signalled a crushing end to their self-appointed status as the world’s pre-eminent football nation, for Hungary it was simply another victory in a record-breaking streak.

Already known as the “Golden Team” after winning the 1952 Olympic title, Hungary exposed the insularity of

English football with a combination of superior technique and tactics. England were bamboozled by Hungary’s movement, with the forwards dragging their defenders out of position.

The rematch, a 7-1 victory in Budapest, was Hungary’s final game before the 1954 World Cup, which they went into as huge favourites. Coach Gusztav Sebes built a side that was tactically ahead of its time, mainly using players from Budapest clubs MTK and Honved, and led by their prolific attack. The Mighty Magyars went unbeaten for four years, but their run came to an end at the worst possible moment.



Upset...captain Ferenc Puskas leads out his team at Wembley

Mighty Magyars...the Hungary team line up for their first match of the 1954 World Cup

Having already beaten them 8-3 in the group stage, Hungary were well-fancied when they met West Germany in the World Cup final. Yet that group clash would prove to play a decisive role in their defeat in Berne: Puskas had had his ankle fractured by German centre-half Werner Liebrich and, although he managed to talk his way back into the team for the final, he was clearly far from his formidable self as Hungary threw away a two-goal lead to lose 3-2.

The team returned home to a muted response and would later break up amid the uncertainty of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising, when many players, led by Puskas, defected abroad. Thereafter, football in Hungary fell into a decline from which it has never recovered.

31

Magic number

Hungary’s 31-game unbeaten streak is one of the longest in international history, ending in the 1954 final

Honours



Olympic Gold Medal
1952



World Cup Runners-up
1954

Iconic Match

West Germany 3-2 Hungary, 1954 World Cup final



Strongest XI

Gyula Grosics

Goalkeeper

Nicknamed the “Black Panther” and famed his all-black kit and skills as a “sweeper-keeper”.

Jeno Buzanszky

Defender

Right-back who played for Dorogi – making him the only team member not from MTK or Honved.

Gyula Lorant

Defender

Centre-half who went on to enjoy a successful coaching career in Germany and Greece.

Mihaly Lantos

Defender

Left-back who spent the bulk of his career at MTK, where he would later work as assistant coach.

Jozsef Bozsik

Midfielder

Right-half or half-back from Honved who played from deep midfield.

Jozsef Zakarias

Midfielder

Left-half who dropped deep and often acted as a second central defender.

Nandor Hidegkuti

Midfielder

He was deployed as the “withdrawn striker” after starting out as a winger.

Laszlo Budai

Forward

Right-winger, was too exhausted to play in the 1954 World Cup final. Started both the famous thrashings of England.

Sandor Kocsis

Forward

Nicknamed “Golden Head” and scored 75 goals in 68 internationals.

Ferenc Puskas

Forward

Captain who was dubbed the “Galloping Major” due to his connections with army side Honved.

Zoltan Czibor

Forward

Left-winger or striker who later played with Kocsis at Barcelona.

Tactics

Inspired by the MTK side that won the Hungarian league title in 1951, Sebes devised an early version of the 4-2-4 formation that would help Brazil to win the 1958 World Cup. Although on paper they lined up with a back three on paper, midfielder Zakarias would drop back into defence to help out Lorant, while Bozsik commanded the midfield of the pitch alongside Hidegkuti, who dropped back from his nominal position as centre-forward. With defenders drawn out of position, inside-forwards Puskas and Kocsis were pushed further forward than in the WM formation employed by most other European sides in the 1950s. Sebes believed each player could play in any position if necessary.

Coach

Gusztav Sebes

Born in Budapest, he won three Hungarian league titles as a player with MTK in the 1930s before being appointed national coach by the government in 1949. His belief in his players interchanging their roles and supporting each other was seen by his communist masters as an interpretation of socialism in action on the pitch, and also an early forerunner of “Total Football” used by the Dutch national team of the 1970s. Relieved of his duties in 1956, he remained active in Hungarian club football for the rest of his life, working as an administrator and a coach.

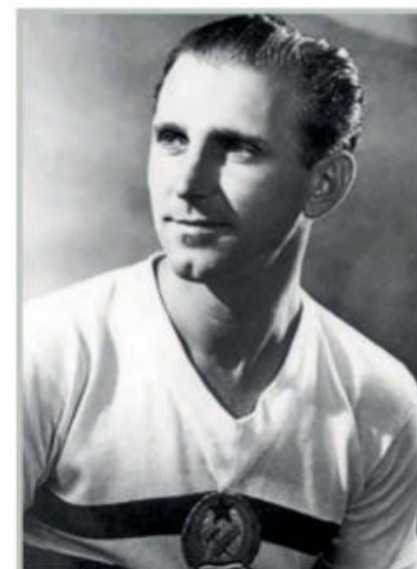


Star man

Nandor Hidegkuti

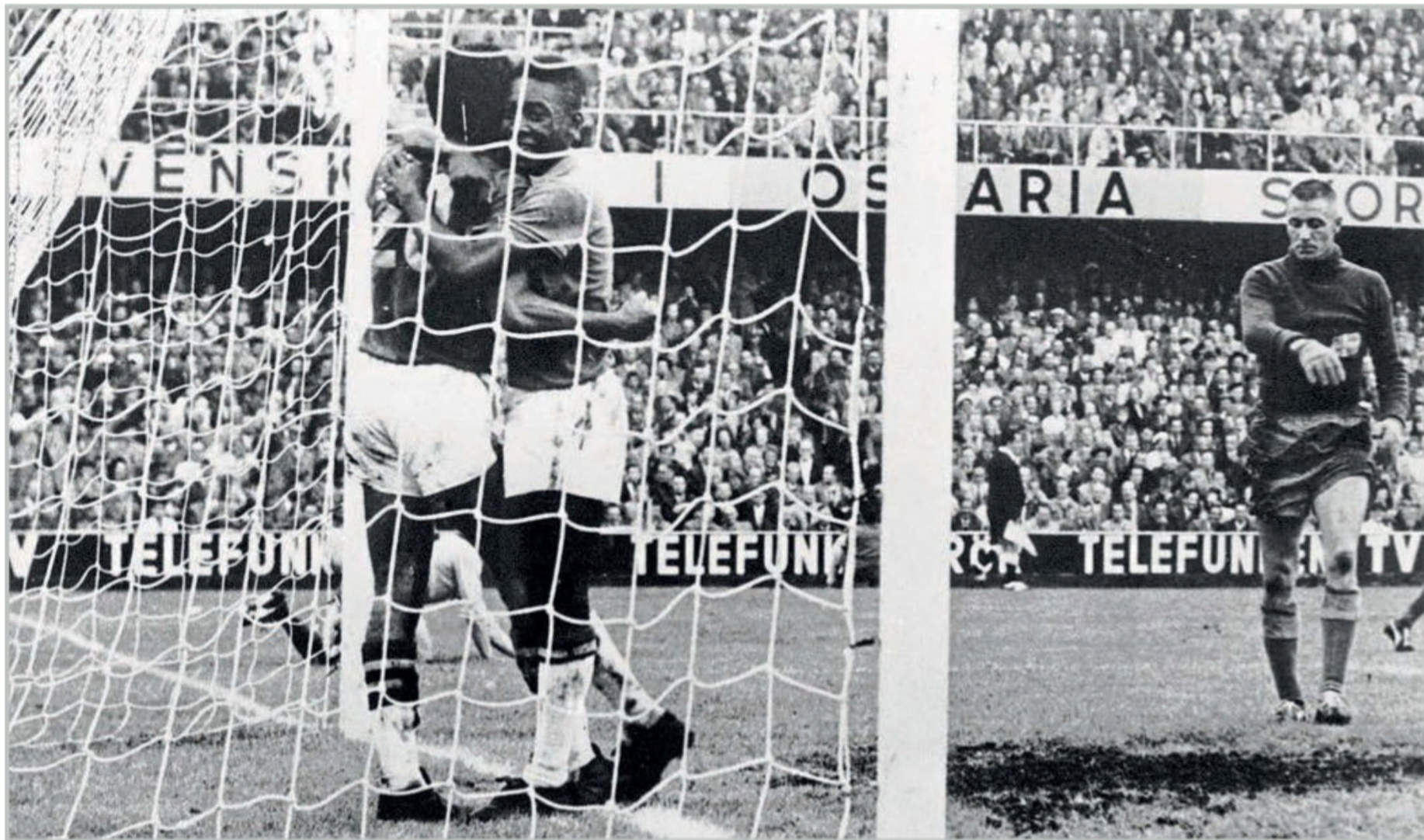
Both Puskas and Kocsis scored goals at an astonishing rate for Hungary (84 goals in 85 caps and 75 in 68, respectively), yet their system worked as well as it did thanks to Hidegkuti. The original “false nine”, he flummoxed defenders by dropping deep and roaming the midfield – a tactic that was particularly effective against England.

He scored a hat-trick at Wembley and notched in the return game in Budapest too, while dragging his markers all over the pitch to create space for Puskas and Kocsis to get on the scoresheet. MTK’s Hidegkuti Nandor Stadium is named in his honour.



Brazil 1958

Inspired by Garrincha, Didi and a 17-year-old Pele, they won their country's first World Cup and introduced 4-2-4 to the world



There are many people who still argue that, man for man, the 1958 World Cup-winning side were better than the team that triumphed 12 years later. Part of the reason the side that played in Sweden are not so renowned elsewhere is that, unlike the 1970 finals, the 1958 event was not seen by a global audience on colour television. But the sides did have one thing in common: Pele.

Having failed to win the World Cup on home soil in 1950, and then been shamed by the "Battle of Berne" in Switzerland four years later when they lost 4-2 to Hungary in an ill-tempered quarter-final, Brazil left nothing to chance ahead of the 1958 finals.

Their party in Sweden included a scout, a physical trainer, a dentist and even a psychologist, Joao Carvalhaes. However, coach Vicente Feola chose to ignore the advice of Carvalhaes, who had argued that Pele, the 17-year-old sensation from Santos, and anarchic

winger Garrincha – known as the "little bird" – should be excluded from the squad on the grounds that they were too "infantile" to cope with high-pressure matches.

Doubts also persisted about the inclusion of Didi, the star of the qualifiers, who commented drily: "It would be funny if they left me out after I had paid for their ticket."

In the end, there was space for all three in a 4-2-4 formation, with Garrincha included following pressure from his team-mates. He replaced the safer choice of Joel as one of the two wingers, while Zito emerged as the strongest partner in midfield for Didi.

Garrincha and Pele did miss Brazil's first two group games – a 3-0 win over Austria and a 0-0 draw with England – but both played in a 2-0 victory over the Soviet Union, when Garrincha tormented the Soviets.

Along with Didi – who would be judged the Player of the Tournament – and Pele, Garrincha was the star, as

Final...Brazil celebrate one of their goals against Sweden



Sensation...Pele

6

Magic number

Goals Pele scored in his debut World Cup tournament in 1958

Brazil beat a Wales team missing the injured John Charles in the quarter-finals and then overcame France in the semis.

In the final, in Stockholm, the hosts took an early lead before Brazil triumphed 5-2. Sweden were effectively killed off by Brazil's third goal, which was scored ten minutes after the break. Collecting a high ball on the edge of the area, the teenage Pele hooked the ball over his head, whirled around and volleyed home. At 17 years and 249 days old, Pele became – and remains – the World Cup's youngest scorer in a final.

Honours



World Cup
1958

Iconic Match

Brazil 5-2 Sweden, 1958 World Cup final



Strongest XI

Gilmar

Goalkeeper

Corinthians stopper who would go on to enjoy success with Santos and win 94 caps.

Djalma Santos

Defender

A regular at the 1954 finals. The final was his only game in Sweden.

Hilderaldo Bellini

Defender

Captain and said to be the first man to lift the trophy above his head after the presentation.

Orlando

Defender

Formed a strong partnership with Bellini for club Vasco da Gama and country.

Nilton Santos

Defender

Attacking left-back who scored Brazil's third goal in the defeat of Austria.

Didi

Midfielder

Famous for his "falling

leaf" banana free-kicks. He joined Real Madrid from Botafogo in 1959.

Zito

Midfielder

Midfield partner of Didi who spent his whole career with Santos.

Garrincha

Winger

"The Little Bird", an electric right-winger was a brilliant dribbler despite being born with bowed legs.

Pele

Forward

Teenager who became a global superstar in Sweden, having made his Brazil debut at 16.

Vava

Forward

Scored twice in the 1958 final and was also on target in the 1962 final.

Mario Zagallo

Winger

Nicknamed the "Little Ant" for his hard work, he coached Brazil at the 1970 World Cup.

Tactics

Brazil's 4-2-4 style had developed in the country's domestic game in the late 1940s and 1950s. The full-backs Djalma Santos and Nilton Santos (who were not related) attacked, while Zagallo was a winger who was happy to track back. Defender Bellini was also able to step up into midfield. Didi and Zito foraged in midfield, while Pele dropped back into the withdrawn position behind Vava. In the earlier stages Vava had been overlooked in favour of Jose Altafini – the young striker who was also known as Mazzola because of his likeness to the Italian – but Vava would eventually reward Feola with five goals, including two first-half strikes in the final against Sweden.

Coach

Vicente Feola

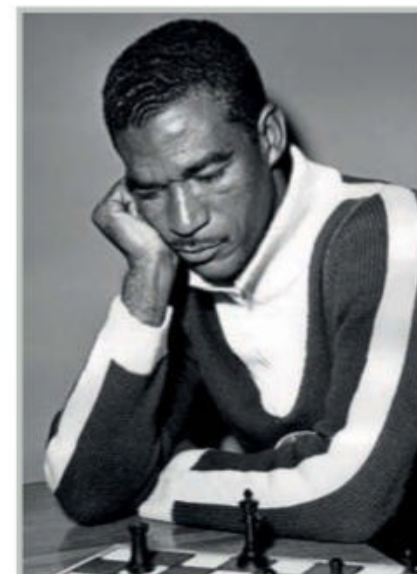
Born to Italian parents, Feola retired from playing at 28 and led his hometown side Sao Paulo to two Paulista titles, but was a surprise appointment as national coach in 1958. Seen as a safe pair of hands, his jovial appearance belied a serious mind. After making his nation the first and to date only non-European side to win a World Cup on European soil, he later enjoyed success with Boca Juniors in Argentina before taking charge of his country again at the 1966 World Cup. He died in 1975.



Star man

Didi

It's not easy picking a star man from Brazil's 1958 World Cup-winning side. Five of their players – Bellini, Nilton Santos, Didi, Garrincha and Pele – were included in the tournament's All-Star Team. While Pele was considered the greatest revelation of the tournament, becoming the youngest player to feature at a World Cup, it was midfielder Didi who won the Golden Ball. An elegant, technical player, Didi was renowned for his impressive range of passing, stamina and ball control, meanwhile 12 of his 20 goals for Brazil came from his *folha seca* free-kick technique.



Real Madrid 1960

They demolished Eintracht Frankfurt to win their fifth consecutive European Cup in Glasgow – and opened many people’s eyes to the wider European game



Legends...Real Madrid line up ahead of the 1960 European Cup final

The coverline on the launch edition of *World Soccer* in October 1960 said it all “Real Madrid – greatest ever.” Today, more than 60 years later, many would argue that that claim still runs true.

No team has done more to ensure the status of the European Cup as the world’s foremost club competition than the Real Madrid side that won the trophy five times in a row from the launch of the competition in 1955.

The sequence culminated in the Spanish giants’ 7-3 demolition of Eintracht Frankfurt at Glasgow’s Hampden Park on the evening of May 18, 1960. The crowd of almost 130,000 included a teenage Alex Ferguson, who would later recall how Madrid’s exhibition football that night opened up his eyes to the wider European game.

Alfredo Di Stefano had starred in each of the previous victories. But in the 1960 final he was partnered by

Ferenc Puskas, to create a devastatingly ruthless attack. The pair were at the peak of their powers and combined brilliantly, with Puskas scoring a then-record 12 goals in the season’s competition, including four in the final.

Writing in the September 1961 issue of *World Soccer*, Eric Batty wrote: “Real Madrid are a streamlined powerful combination, well drilled and tightly disciplined, led by the greatest all-round player of his time, Alfredo Di Stefano, aided and abetted by Ferenc Puskas, who runs him close in every respect and surpasses him in the matter of goalscoring.”

While their squad was packed with *Galacticos*, the real mastermind of Madrid’s success throughout the 1950s and early 1960s was club president Santiago Bernabeu.

A former centre-forward at the club, Bernabeu can rightly be called the founding father of the modern Real



Five in a row...Jose Maria Zarraga collects the European Cup

Madrid. He became president in 1943 and his ambition, exemplified by the building of the Chamartin stadium that now bears his name, created the club we know today.

It also led to the signing of the world’s best players, beginning with the controversial hiring of Di Stefano from underneath the noses of Barcelona in 1953. It was a decision that would set the tone for the future, as Bernabeu proved that he was willing to do whatever it takes to get the very best players at the club; an attitude that persists today.

10

Magic number

The 7-3 win over Frankfurt is the highest-scoring final in either the European Cup or Champions League

Honours



European Cup
1960



Intercontinental Cup
1960

Iconic Match

Real Madrid 7-3 Eintracht Frankfurt, 1960 European Cup final



Tactics

Madrid lined up in a W-M formation, but with several variations. Marquitos was an attacking right-back always looking to break forward, with Zarraga balancing him out as a defensive left-half by dropping in to form a back four. Vidal and Del Sol were the worker ants in the midfield spine, allowing Di Stefano to go wherever he liked from a nominal centre-forward position, not dissimilar from Nandor Hidegkuti's role for Hungary. Just as he did for the national team, Puskas attacked like a striker from his inside left role, while Gento and Canario provided the width.

Coach

Miguel Munoz

The tall, powerful captain of the 1956 and 1957 European Cup-winning sides, and the scorer of their first-ever goal in the competition, was appointed coach in 1959 and became the youngest manager to win the European Cup in 1960. He remained in charge until 1974, winning another European Cup in 1966, as well as nine La Ligas, two Copas del Rey and an Intercontinental Cup. His 15-year tenure contained 604 matches; two Real Madrid records that are unlikely to be beaten, given the club directors' trigger-happy tendencies.



Strongest XI

Rogelio Dominguez

Goalkeeper

Argentinian who had a lengthy coaching career back in his native country.

Marquitos

Defender

Right-back in Madrid's five successive European Cup wins. Grandfather to Chelsea left-back Marcos Alonso.

Jose Santamaria

Defender

Uruguayan centre-half nicknamed "The Wall". Coached Spain at the 1982 World Cup.

Pachin

Defender

Left-back who won eight caps for Spain.

Jose Maria Vidal

Midfielder

Hard worker who played four times for Spain. Later played in the Netherlands and the USA.

Luis Del Sol

Midfielder

Inside-right who went on to have a lengthy career

in Italy with Serie A sides Juventus and Roma.

Jose Maria Zarraga

Midfielder

Left-half who won five European Cups with Real Madrid from 1956 to 1960.

Canario

Winger

Brazilian winger, capped seven times by his country, who went on to play for Real Zaragoza.

Alfredo Di Stefano

Forward

Considered to be one of the greatest players of all time. Madrid's honorary president until his death in 2014.

Ferenc Puskas

Forward

Won three European Cups at Madrid, although the 1960 success was the only final he appeared in.

Francisco Gento

Winger

Left-winger who is the only man to have won six European Cups. Now an ambassador for Madrid.

Star man

Alfredo Di Stefano

Those that watched Di Stefano at his pomp insist that he was not just the greatest player of his generation, but of all time. He is undeniably among the best to have never played at a World Cup, but he more than made up for his absence on the world stage with his European Cup exploits. He was Madrid's top scorer through their first four victories, before Puskas overtook him in 1960. His arrival in Spain was highly controversial, with both Real Madrid and Barcelona competing for his signature. After much drama, he settled at Real, in one of the most contentious moments in *El Clasico* history.



Benfica 1962

With a young Eusebio as their attacking fulcrum, the Portuguese club ended Real Madrid's dominance of the European Cup



Real Madrid won the first five editions of the European Cup, but Barcelona had the joy of becoming the first side to eliminate *Los Blancos* from European competition, in the first round of the 1960-61 European Cup. Barca went on to reach the final that campaign, but they were beaten by Benfica, who were crowned champions of Europe after winning 3-2 in the final in Berne.

Charismatic Hungarian coach Bela Guttmann had built an ambitious, attacking side. "If we do not have the ball, we have to mark; if we have it, we must run into space," he remarked, as he defined the core of his gameplan. "This is the fundamental principle of football. I don't mind if our opponents score three or four goals as long as my team scores four or five."

He possessed talents like goalkeeper Costa Pereira, defender Germano, midfield leader Mario Coluna, wingers Antonio Simoes and Jose Augusto, and clinical forward Jose Aguas. However,

the addition of Eusebio after their 1961 victory helped them reach new heights.

The "Black Panther", who was born in Mozambique, was signed for £10,000 following a chance meeting between Guttmann and his former Sao Paulo player Carlos Bauer in a Lisbon barbershop. "He is gold, he is gold," is what Guttmann is reported to have said when he first clapped eyes on the Eagles' new teenage sensation.

At the end of the 1962 European Cup Final, a pulsating match in which Benfica came from 3-2 down to beat Real Madrid 5-3, Ferenc Puskas sought out Eusebio and handed him his shirt. It was a hugely symbolic gesture; Puskas had scored a hat-trick for Madrid but he had been eclipsed by the 20-year-old Eusebio, who came to symbolise the side that won eight Portuguese titles in the 1960s.

Although Benfica would dominate Portuguese football for the rest of the decade, with many of their players

Semis...Benfica play Tottenham in the European Cup semi-final



Crucial...Eusebio

29

Magic number
Eusebio finished his debut season at the club with 29 goals in all competitions

forming the core of the Portugal side that finished third at the 1966 World Cup, they failed to add to their European trophy collection.

In the aftermath of the 1962 victory, Guttmann quit after an argument with club directors over a bonus that he claimed he was owed. Guttmann told them they would never win another European title until he was paid his due. Benfica have since been the losing side in eight more European finals: the European Cup in 1963, 1965, 1968, 1988 and 1990, and the UEFA Cup/Europa League in 1983, 2013 and 2014. After almost 60 years, the "curse" is yet to be broken.

Honours



European Cup
1962



Portuguese Cup
1962

Iconic Match

Benfica 5-3 Real Madrid, 1962 European Cup final



Tactics

Guttman was the last of the great romantic coaches, happy to see his teams play open, attacking football before the cynicism of *catenaccio* took over in the 1960s. "I never minded if the opposition scored," he said, "because I always thought we could score another." Although Eusebio grabbed all the headlines for Benfica, the key figure in Guttman's side was Mario Coluna, a former centre-forward who moved back into midfield and effectively played as a withdrawn striker from his position at left-half.

Coach

Bela Guttman

The Hungarian led a peripatetic life as a coach, frequently moving on, often after disputes with club directors; "The third season is fatal," he allegedly said. After World War Two he worked in Hungary, Italy, Argentina, Cyprus and Brazil, before guiding Porto to the 1959 Portuguese title. That success promoted Benfica to hire him the following season. "I never found players who felt their shirt so strongly as the ones at Benfica. Even the less talented ones became astonishing and feared footballers." He died in 1981.



Strongest XI

Costa Pereira

Goalkeeper

Mozambique-born, he spent 12 seasons at Benfica, winning 22 caps for Portugal.

Mario Joao

Defender

Never a full professional, he won three caps for Portugal.

Angelo

Defender

Turned down his local club Porto to join his boyhood favourites and won 20 Portugal caps.

Germano

Defender

Signed from Lisbon side Atletico in 1960 and was absolutely outstanding in the 1961 final.

Domiciano Cavem

Midfielder

Versatile player who had a crucial role in marking Real's Alfredo Di Stefano in the 1962 final.

Fernando Cruz

Midfielder

Won eight league titles at

Benfica and capped 11 times by Portugal.

Mario Coluna

Midfielder

Mozambique-born Portugal international who was a key figure in attacking midfield and later joined Lyon.

Jose Augusto

Winger

Dubbed the "Portuguese Garrincha", he went on to become coach of Portugal's national side.

Eusebio

Forward

The first great African footballer. A forward of top pace and technique.

Jose Aguas

Forward

Angola-born captain, who was the Portuguese league's top scorer five times in 12 seasons.

Antonio Simoes

Winger

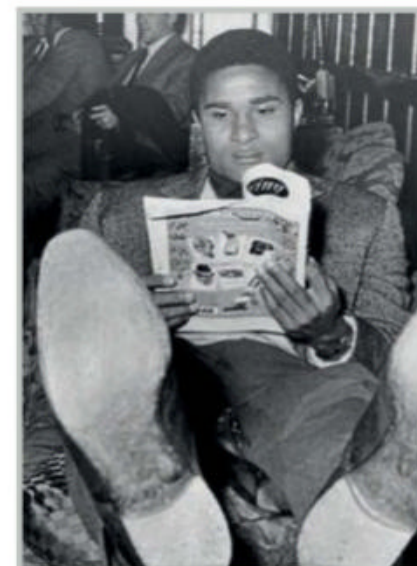
At 18 years and four months old, he was the youngest player to lift the European Cup in 1962.

Star man

Eusebio

Credit must be given to Mario Coluna, the "Sacred Monster" who captained Benfica from 1953 to 1970 and was known as "Mr Coluna" by team-mates as a mark of respect. However, he remains second on the podium of Eagles legends to Eusebio. "He was the best player of all time," said Alfredo Di Stefano after Eusebio's death in January 2014.

The 1962 success may have been his only triumph in Europe's elite competition, but his control, strength and finishing made him one of the best in the world. His legacy also includes 11 national titles and five Portuguese Cups, and the Golden Boot at the 1966 World Cup.



Santos 1962

With Pele as their figurehead, the Brazilian side were the first from South America to earn global recognition in the modern era



In 1956, a timid 15-year-old named Edson Arantes do Nascimento visited Santos for a trial. The professional clubs of his home city of Sao Paulo had rejected him, but Santos coach Lula spotted something and within months "Pele" had made his first-team debut.

With Pele and strike partner Coutinho leading the way, Santos were irresistible, winning five successive Brazilian titles (1961 to 1965), plus two Libertadores Cups and Intercontinental Cups, both in 1962 and 1963.

The club's most successful campaign came in 1962. In the Copa Libertadores, they defeated Universidad Catolica in the semi-finals and met defending champions Penarol in the final. Pele scored a brace to secure the first title for a Brazilian side.

That same year, they also defended the Sao Paulo Championship (with 37 goals from Pele), the Taça Brasil (Pele scoring four goals in the final series against Botafogo) and won the 1962 Intercontinental Cup (Pele scoring five across two legs).

Suited...the Santos players pose for a photo

In the December 1962 edition of *World Soccer*, Gordon Jeffery reported on the first leg of their World Club Cup tie against European champions Benfica in Lisbon: "Pele and Coutinho, as if telepathically, moved together into one of their short but untouchable spells of soccer sorcery, and in the space of three minutes, each scored to put Santos 3-1 in the lead."

Their performance in the second leg of the 1962 World Club Cup also saw Santos at their peak. Leading 3-2 from that first game, they confounded the predictions of European observers of a Benfica comeback in the second leg by blowing Benfica away, winning 5-2 on the night with Pele scoring a hat-trick.

Eric Batty wrote in *World Soccer's* February 1963 edition: "The Santos brand of soccer is an exhibition of craft and skill; a soccer circus with ringmaster Zito [the captain] cracking his whip now and again to insist they score goals."

Victory over Milan in 1963 saw Santos retain their world title but, after losing to Independiente in the semi-finals of the 1964 Libertadores Cup, they abandoned continental competition in favour of lucrative friendlies, using the extra income to surround Pele and their homegrown youngsters with new faces.

Had Santos continued to compete in the Libertadores Cup, they would surely have won many more trophies.

To this day, 1959 to 1974 is still considered a golden generation for *Os Santásticos*, with the club winning a total of 25 titles and averaging over 2.5 goals per game throughout that successful period.

Honours



Intercontinental Cup
1962



Copa Libertadores
1962



Brazilian Championship
1962

1

Magic number
Santos were the first Brazilian club to win their state championship, national title and Copa Libertadores in the same year



Icon...Pele

Iconic Match

Benfica 2-5 Santos, 1962 Intercontinental Cup final second leg



Tactics

Under Lula, Santos were quick to develop the 4-2-4 formation that had emerged in Brazil in the 1950s and with which the national side would win the World Cup in 1958. Pele and Coutinho were the two central front men and enjoyed a close partnership, with Pele often dropping deep before moving forward to exchange passes with his team-mates. Dorval and Pepe were mesmerising wingers, with the two central midfielders, Mengalvio and Zito, both having a licence to join the attack.

Coach

Lula

Luis Alonso Perez, better known as "Lula", was one of Brazil's most successful club coaches, winning several trophies in a 12-year spell at Santos. He gave Pele his debut aged 16 and oversaw the integration of numerous youngsters into the side. Although overshadowed by Pele, Lula was a key figure in Santos' golden era. When asked whether Pele was the greatest player he had coached, Lula replied: "Pele is the greatest anyone has ever coached." He died in June 1972.



Strongest XI

Gilmar

Goalkeeper

Brazil international who played in the 1958 and 1962 World Cups. Signed from Corinthians.

Lima

Defender

Could also play as a midfielder and went on to play 700 games for the club.

Mauro

Defender

Captain of Brazil's national side at the 1962 World Cup in Chile, who signed from Sao Paulo.

Calvet

Defender

Signed from Gremio, he was another Brazil international, although he only won two caps.

Dalmo

Defender

Left-back who scored the winning goal in the 1963 Intercontinental Cup against Milan.

Zito

Midfielder

Captain. Performed a defensive role but loved to attack.

Mengalvio

Midfielder

Schemer and understudy to Didi in Brazil's 1962 World Cup squad.

Dorval

Winger

Has been compared to Stanley Matthews for his dribbling technique.

Pele

Forward

Santos debut at 16, World Cup winner at 17 and a global superstar by his early 20s.

Coutinho

Forward

Enjoyed an almost telepathic relationship with striker partner Pele.

Pepe

Winger

Packed a fierce shot. Went on to coach Santos for a brief period.

Star man

Pele

Pele was attributed 643 "official" goals for Santos yet his career total is debated, with FIFA's calculation standing at 767. However, for many Santos fans, his haul is far greater. Some reports suggest he scored 1,091 goals in 1,282 games for the Brazilian side, but around 450 of those came in friendlies and international tournaments. Funnily enough, some of those "friendlies" came against high-profile opponents such as Internazionale, Benfica, Juventus and Anderlecht, who had tougher defences on paper than the ones he faced regularly in the Brazilian league, and were taken far more seriously than the modern-day friendlies.



Internazionale 1964-65

The Italian side won successive European Cups, but their achievements were clouded not only by their defensive tactics, but also allegations of drug-taking and match-fixing



La Grande Inter, a team masterminded by Helenio Herrera, won the Serie A title three times in four years, but it was their exploits in the European Cup that stood out; they became the first Italian side to win back-to-back European Cups.

They became known as ruthless exponents of the defensive *Catenaccio* system, in marked contrast to the more expansive football that Herrera had

promoted at his previous club, Barcelona. In the Serie A seasons from 1961-62 to 1966-67 they were phenomenally mean, conceding less than a goal a game throughout – and letting in only 20 in 1962-63, or 0.59 per match.

The Franco-Argentinian boss had arrived at Inter in 1960 and brought European Footballer of the Year Luis Suarez from Barca a year later. A switch to more defensive tactics brought the

Maiden...Inter celebrate their first Intercontinental Cup

league title in 1963 – their first trophy since 1954 – which was followed by European success.

Alfredo Di Stefano and Ferenc Puskas were still at large for five-time European champions Real Madrid when they met Inter in the 1964 final, making the Spanish side favourites to come out on top. However, Sandro Mazzola was the star as Inter won 3-1 in Vienna. Twelve months later, there was a 1-0 victory over Benfica, although the Portuguese champions were reduced to ten men after losing their goalkeeper to injury.

In the October 1965 edition of *World Soccer*, Eric Batty wrote: “For Real Madrid at their best, the drive and personality of the team was established on the field where Di Stefano coaxed his colleagues to greatness. With Inter the dominating influence rests on the touchline in the personage of Herrera, who has inspired his men to world superiority – handling them with kid gloves which hide iron fists.”

Herrera’s approach to fitness and mental preparation was certainly innovative. He introduced his side to the concept of the “*ritiro*” – a pre-match retreat, which removed the team from any outside distractions.

Success in the Club World Cup followed, but there were many who took delight in Celtic’s 1967 European Cup victory over Herrera’s side in Lisbon. Inter had divided opinion across Europe, amid rumours of drug-taking and match-fixing.

Match officials who had played a part in Inter’s European wins were later shown by *World Soccer’s* Brian Glanville to have been in the pay of notorious fixers Italo Allodi and Deszo Solti.

Honours



Serie A
1965



European Cup
1964, 1965

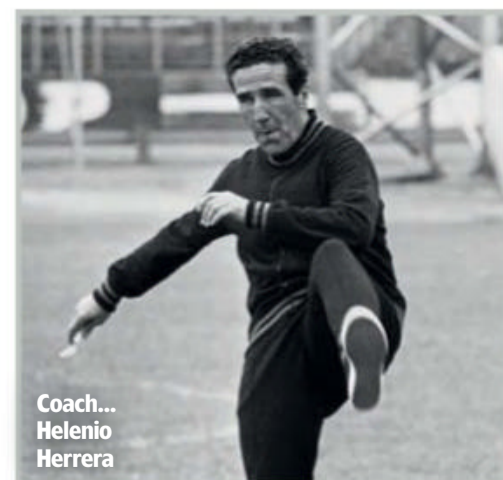


Intercontinental Cup
1964, 1965

43

Magic number

The minute in which Jair struck Inter’s winning goal in the 1965 European Cup final



Coach... Helenio Herrera

Iconic Match

Internazionale 1-0 Benfica, 1965 European Cup final



Tactics

Having tried – and failed – to introduce Barcelona's more fluid attacking style in his first seasons at the club, Herrera moved a midfielder back to act as sweeper, adopted a man-marking policy and allowed left-back Giacinto Facchetti to attack at will. Picchi was the sweeper playing behind the back four in a *Catenaccio* formation refined by Herrera from earlier systems devised by Karl Rappan and Nereo Rocco. Facchetti often joined Suarez and right-winger Jair in attack. The long ball from Suarez was often used to quickly turn defence into attack.

Coach

Helenio Herrera

Born in Argentina and known as "The Magician", Herrera was arguably the first manager to be recognised as a coach in his own right. He was a disciplinarian who took strict control of his players' diet and preparation and spoke of games "we won before we even got off the coach". His motivational dictums remain in Inter folklore: "Class + Preparation + Intelligence + Athleticism = *Scudetto*", and: "If you play for yourself, you play for your opponents; if you play for the team, you play for yourself". He left for Roma in 1968 although he did return for a brief spell back at Inter in 1973.



Strongest XI

Giuliano Sartì

Goalkeeper

Joined from Fiorentina and played in four European Cup finals.

Armando Picchi

Defender

Influential captain whose switch from midfield to sweeper was crucial.

Tarcisio Burgnich

Defender

Tough right-back who won the 1968 European Championship with Italy.

Gianfranco Bedin

Defender

Played over 300 games for Inter over the course of a decade before moving to Sampdoria.

Aristide Guarneri

Defender

Stopper who played for Italy at the 1966 World Cup and 1968 European Championship.

Giacinto Facchetti

Defender

One of the greatest-ever left-backs. Played 476

league games for Inter and won 94 Italy caps.

Sandro Mazzola

Midfielder

Son of Valentino, the Italy midfielder who died in the 1949 Superga disaster. Spent 17 years with Inter.

Luis Suarez

Midfielder

Suarez became the world's most expensive player when he was signed from Barcelona for £142,000.

Jair

Winger

Brazil international right-winger who played more than 200 games for Inter in two spells.

Mario Corso

Winger

Left-winger who played more than 400 games for Inter. Later coached Inter.

Joaquin Peiro

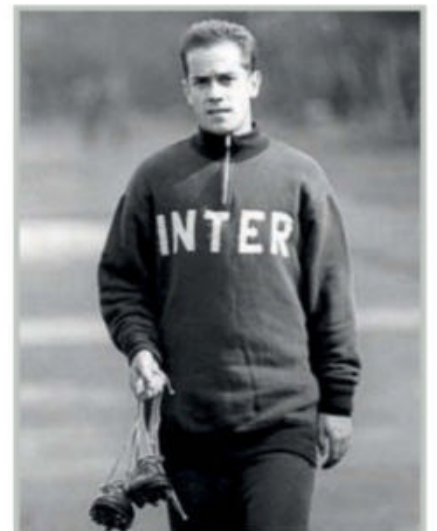
Forward

Spain international who was signed from Torino in 1974 and later played five seasons for Roma.

Star man

Luis Suarez

"To build a great Inter side, I needed a great midfielder and Suarez was the best of all," Herrera said. Having worked together successfully at Barcelona, Suarez rejoined his former coach at Inter in 1961, becoming the world's most expensive player and first £100,000 transfer. The "Architect of football", as he was known, operated as a deep-lying midfielder, with his passing and vision essential to the side's tactics. After their first taste of European Cup success, Suarez said: "I will never forget the light in the eyes of our president [Angelo Moratti] after our triumph in Vienna. If I was a painter and I had to paint happiness, I would try to reproduce those eyes."



Celtic 1967

The "Lisbon Lions" became not only the first British winners of the European Cup but also the first non-Latin winners, with all 11 members of the team born within 30 miles of Glasgow



In an age when multi-national club sides are the norm, it is remarkable to consider that Celtic became the first-ever British winners of the European Cup with a team made up not just of 11 Scotsmen, but with a starting line-up all born within 30 miles of their Parkhead ground in Glasgow.

The Celtic side was packed with Scotland internationals who had been brought together by Jock Stein.

He fashioned a title-winning team that, according to *World Soccer's* John Stone in July 1967, "outplayed, outmanoeuvred and outwitted" Internazionale in front of a crowd of 45,000 at Lisbon's Estadio Nacional.

"With their annihilation of Inter...they

proved themselves indisputably as a great side. Now, not only Scottish sides will be out to topple the Stein supremos. Every club in Europe, nay, the world, will be after their scalps."

Inter, masters of *Catenaccio* and coached by Helenio Herrera, had to play without schemer Luis Suarez, but were still favourites to win their third European Cup.

They took an early lead through a Sandro Mazzola penalty after Jim Craig had brought down Renato Cappellini and then retreated into their famous defensive style.

They didn't win a single corner and only forced two saves from Celtic goalkeeper Ronnie Simpson. Celtic,

Ready...the Celtic players pose for their team photo ahead of their game with Inter



Captain...Billy McNeil

meanwhile, had two shots off the bar and 39 other attempts on goal.

Their energy and resourcefulness ended up being too much for the Italian side, whose grip on the European game was fading.

Craig atoned for his earlier error by providing the assist for left-back Tommy Gemmill's equaliser midway through the second half, before Stevie Chalmers grabbed a late winner, deflecting in Bobby Murdoch's shot.

Celtic thus completed the quadruple of Scottish League, Scottish Cup, Scottish League Cup and European Cup, and they would be remembered forever as the "Lisbon Lions". They reached the final again in 1970, but lost to Feyenoord.

In 2017, Celtic celebrated the 50-year anniversary of their greatest achievement, with several events over a four-day period, including a legends match and a Rod Stewart concert, attended by former Celtic managers Martin O'Neill, Gordon Strachan and Neil Lennon, as well as Scottish football legends, Sir Alex Ferguson and Kenny Dalglish.

Honours



European Cup
1967



Scottish League
1967



Scottish Cup
1967



Scottish League Cup
1967

55

Magic number

2022 marks
55 years since
Celtic's sole
European
Cup victory

Iconic Match

Celtic 2-1 Internazionale, 1967 European Cup final



Tactics

Celtic's style was the opposite of the cynical, but highly effective, defensive style of Inter. They played a variation of the 4-2-4 formation that had been popular since Brazil's 1958 World Cup triumph in Sweden. Forwards Willie Wallace and Stevie Chalmers took it in turns to drop deep, while wingers Jimmy Johnstone and Bobby Lennox drifted infield to allow space for attacking full-backs, Jim Craig and Tommy Gemmell, to get forward and support the strikers. After the match, Stein said: "We did it by playing football. Pure, beautiful, inventive football."

Coach

Jock Stein

The former Celtic captain won the Scottish league and cup double in 1954 as a player, but was forced to retire in 1957 due to persistent ankle injuries. He returned to Celtic in 1965 as manager, leading the club to European Cup glory and nine consecutive Scottish league titles between 1966 and 1974. He took charge of the national side in 1978, with Aberdeen manager Alex Ferguson as his assistant, but collapsed in the dugout and died while watching them play Wales in a World Cup qualifier in 1985.



Strongest XI

Ronnie Simpson

Goalkeeper

Was approaching the end of his career, having spent ten years with Newcastle.

Jim Craig

Defender

Conceded the penalty against Inter. Signed as an amateur footballer while studying dentistry.

Billy McNeill

Defender

Captain and stalwart of the "Lisbon Lions" side. Later had two spells as manager of Celtic.

John Clark

Defender

Club stalwart who played a crucial role as sweeper alongside McNeill.

Tommy Gemmell

Defender

Attacking full-back who scored the equaliser in the Lisbon final.

Bobby Murdoch

Midfielder

Former sheet-metal worker and a dominant

figure who began his career in attack.

Bertie Auld

Midfielder

The lynchpin alongside Murdoch. Re-signed by Celtic in 1965 when Stein returned to the club.

Jimmy Johnstone

Winger

Slight-framed winger nicknamed "Jinky". Widely considered the greatest player in Celtic's history.

Bobby Lennox

Winger

Prolific scorer jokingly dubbed the "outsider" because he was born 30 miles from Parkhead.

Stevie Chalmers

Forward

A clever taker of chances, not least the winning goal against Inter in Lisbon.

Willie Wallace

Forward

Signed from Hearts in December 1966 for what was then a club-record fee of £300,000.

Star man

Jimmy Johnstone

The most naturally-gifted player in Celtic's European Cup-winning side, the tricky winger was voted the club's greatest-ever player by fans in a 2002 poll. "Jinky" showed his quality again just weeks after the triumph against Inter, mesmerising against Real Madrid in Alfredo Di Stefano's testimonial at the Santiago Bernabeu. He was capped 23 times by Scotland, but struggled after exiting Celtic in 1975 and battled problems with alcohol. He returned as a coach in the 1980s after finishing his playing career. He died of motor neurone disease in 2006 but remains immortalised in a statue outside Celtic Park.



Manchester Utd 1968

Ten years on from the tragedy of the Munich air disaster, Matt Busby's side became the first English team to win the European Cup



As Manchester United paraded the European Cup around Wembley, the crowd chanted one name above all others. United manager Matt Busby had reached the pinnacle of the European game a decade after surviving an air crash that had all but wiped out his "Busby Babes" side.

Seven players were among the 23 people killed at Munich airport on February 6, 1958, as United, the reigning English champions, flew back from a European Cup semi-final against Red Star Belgrade. The most talented player of all, Duncan Edwards, died from his injuries two weeks later.

Busby rebuilt his side around survivors Bobby Charlton and Bill Foulkes. Money was also spent on new players, with Denis Law signing for £115,000 from Torino. But Busby's commitment to youth shone through in the development of such players as John Aston, Brian Kidd and, above all, George Best.

Best, who finished the 1967-68 season with 28 goals in the First Division and 32 overall, as well as being voted FWA Footballer of the Year, had been the star when United pulverised Benfica in a 1966 European Cup quarter-final, winning 5-1 in Lisbon. And, two years later, the Portuguese side were again the opponents as United reached their first European final.

The Red Devils had a disappointing end to the domestic season, with a final-day loss to Sunderland consigning them to second place in the First Division – just behind their local rivals Manchester City. They'd also been knocked out in the third round of the FA Cup, but had shown courage by defeating Real Madrid 4-3 on aggregate in the European Cup semi-finals.

A team without regular captain Denis Law but still containing Charlton, Best, Paddy Crerand and Nobby Stiles, then defeated Benfica 4-1 at Wembley to become the first English club to win

Proud...the United squad pose with the club's first-ever European Cup trophy



Leader...Matt Busby

the famous silver trophy.

Both sides went close in a goalless first half, before Manchester United took the lead from Bobby Charlton's header eight minutes into the second half. Benfica fought and took the game into extra-time thanks to Jaime Graca's 79th-minute equaliser.

Roared on by a partisan Wembley crowd of 92,225, United scored three goals in eight minutes in extra-time; the first a solo goal from Best, followed by a header from Brian Kidd on his 19th birthday and a second from Charlton in the 99th minute to enable Busby to complete his European dream.

8

Magic number

The number of minutes it took United to score three times against Benfica

Honours



European Cup
1968

Iconic Match

Manchester United 4-1 Benfica, 1968 European Cup final



Tactics

Under Busby, United's formation was far from revolutionary, but they did establish a global reputation for playing very fast-paced, entertaining football. The acclaimed attacking triumvirate of Best, Charlton and Denis Law, or "The Holy Trinity" as they were affectionately known, was crucial to that reputation – although Law missed the 1968 European Cup semi-final and final because of a knee injury. In midfield, Stiles was the midfield battler whose hard-working endeavours provided a base to allow Charlton to attack, while Crerand played a key role as both destroyer and creator.

Coach

Matt Busby

The Scotsman built several outstanding teams during three decades at Old Trafford. In 1965, he told *World Soccer* that following the Munich disaster he "was lost and sorrowing and, for a short period, utterly defeated." He said: "A man's help at such a time is not his experience, but his faith and the love and encouragement of his friends." He stepped down as manager eight months after the Wembley triumph, later becoming a club director. He died in 1994 at the age of 84, but his statue stands on the exterior of the Old Trafford stadium, overlooking Sir Matt Busby Way.



Strongest XI

Alex Stepney

Goalkeeper

Applauded by Eusebio for a crucial save late in normal time at Wembley.

Shay Brennan

Defender

Republic of Ireland international who made his debut in 1958 in the aftermath of Munich.

Bill Foulkes

Defender

Long-serving defender and one of two survivors, along with Charlton, of the air disaster.

David Sadler

Defender

Spent 11 seasons at Old Trafford after joining from non-league.

Tony Dunne

Defender

Dublin-born, he was absolutely outstanding in the Wembley final. Spent 13 seasons with United.

Paddy Crerand

Midfielder

Tenacious fetcher, carrier

and distributor who signed from Celtic in 1963.

Bobby Charlton

Midfielder

Dynamic captain, goalscorer and 1966 World Cup winner who survived the 1958 crash.

Nobby Stiles

Midfielder

Tough-tackling, 1966 World Cup winner. Had to wear strong contact lenses on the pitch.

George Best

Winger

Belfast-born scorer of a brilliant goal in the final. Voted 1968 European Footballer of the Year.

Denis Law

Forward

The only man with two statues at Old Trafford. Missed the final.

John Aston

Forward

One of the star performers at Wembley. His father, John senior, also played for United.

Star man

George Best

Once dubbed by Pele as "the greatest player in the world", few could doubt Best's natural ability. After almost single-handedly destroying Benfica in the 1966 European Cup quarter-final, he was dubbed "El Beatle" across Europe. His brilliant goal in the 1968 European Cup final was one of many that season, but went some way to him being named European Footballer of the Year. He was United's top scorer over the next four campaigns after their initial success in Europe, but struggled with personal demons that would trouble him until his death in November 2005.



Brazil 1970

In Mexico, the South Americans won their third World Cup trophy in style, capped with a majestic performance in the final against Italy

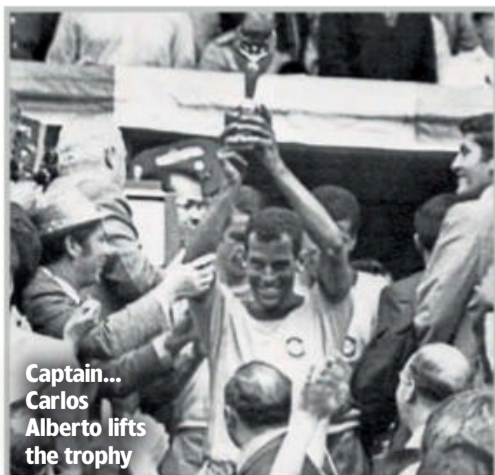


The Brazil side that won the World Cup in 1970 by beating Italy 4-1 in the final has long been seen as one of the greatest ever. Millions watched the tournament on colour television for the first time, and were entranced by Brazil, in their vibrant yellow shirts, playing wonderful football under the Mexican sun.

"It was not simply a magnificent and thoroughly deserved triumph for Brazil," the July 1970 edition of *World Soccer* recorded. "Here was proof that football played the way it was meant to be, with artistry and skill, can still succeed in the modern era."

But it could have been so very different. Pele, having been kicked out of the 1966 tournament, had quit the international game. Although he was persuaded to return, relations were

not good with Joao Saldanha. However, the outspoken coach, who had overseen a faultless qualifying campaign, was sacked three months before the 1970 World Cup finals, as his left-wing political views did not sit comfortably with Brazil's military dictatorship. Mario Zagallo took



Captain...
Carlos
Alberto lifts
the trophy

Legends...Brazil's first XI ahead of their victory in Mexico

over, but a cabal of senior players – Pele, Carlos Alberto and Gerson – played an influential role in team selection.

The team's zenith was the final against Italy, where goals from a number of different sources was the key attribute of a side who had been well prepared by physical trainer Carlos Alberto Parreira, the man who would go on to guide Brazil to their next World Cup trophy as national coach himself in 1994.

6

Magic number

The six assists provided by Pele during the tournament is an all-time record for a single World Cup

Honours



World Cup
1970

Iconic Match

Brazil 4-1 Italy, 1970 World Cup final



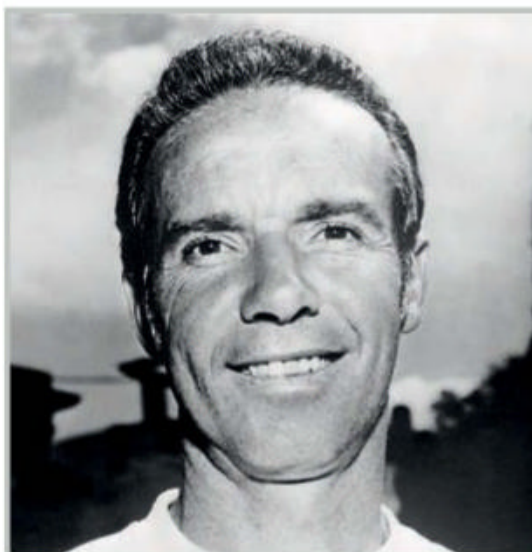
Tactics

On paper Brazil lined up as a 4-2-4, but Zagallo was happy for it to be described as 4-5-1, with Pele, Jairzinho and Rivelino dropping back into midfield, leaving Tostao as a lone striker. Gerson was the deep-lying playmaker, with Clodoaldo alongside to provide protection. Pele and Tostao were both capable of dropping deep, while Jairzinho played high on the right, allowing right-back Carlos Alberto to surge up behind him.

Coach

Mario Zagallo

A left-winger for Brazil's winning sides of 1958 and 1962, Zagallo was the first man to win the World Cup as both a player and a coach. His role as a hard-worker earned him the nickname "Formiguinha" (little ant), but he also carried an attacking threat, notably scoring in the 1958 final. He was seen as a safe pair of hands when succeeding Joao Saldanha as coach in March 1970 on the eve of the tournament in Mexico. After leading club sides in Brazil and the Middle East, he returned to the *Selecao* for the 1998 World Cup, guiding the team to the final.



Strongest XI

Felix

Goalkeeper

Criticised as the weak link but made a number of crucial saves. Nicknamed "Paper" for his slight frame.

Carlos Alberto

Defender

Captain and raiding full-back who scored the fourth goal against Italy in the 1970 final.

Brito

Defender

Tall, rangy player with a reputation for indiscipline but was well behaved at the 1970 finals.

Piazza

Defender

Converted midfielder who was moved back into central defence by Mario Zagallo.

Everaldo

Defender

Far more defensively minded than Carlos Alberto. He died in a car crash in 1974.

Clodoaldo

Midfielder

Enforcer who spent the bulk of his club career with Santos.

Gerson

Midfielder

Deep-lying playmaker who possessed a clever passing range. Key for Flamengo and Botafogo.

Jairzinho

Winger

Powerhouse who scored in every one of Brazil's games at the 1970 finals.

Tostao

Forward

Deployed as a striker after recovering from a major eye operation in time for the World Cup.

Pele

Forward

Operating behind Tostao, he scored the opening goal in the final against Italy with a header.

Rivelino

Winger

Called in by Zagallo after being overlooked by previous coach Joao Saldanha.

Star man

Jairzinho

An outstanding ten-goal performance from West Germany's Gerd Muller might have denied him the Golden Boot, but Jairzinho's seven goals fired Brazil to the trophy – one in all six of his country's matches, a record he shares with France's Just Fontaine (1958). Bobby Moore's perfectly executed tackle on the winger during the group-stage clash with England remains one of the tournament's most iconic images, but Jairzinho had the last laugh, scoring the winner in the 59th minute. Notionally a right-winger, he was given the freedom to roam the final third in a side that was ahead of its time.



TEAMS

Pele...the striker celebrates after Brazil's victory over Italy in the 1970 World Cup final

The beautiful **Plan**

In June 2020, 50 years on from Brazil's World Cup triumph, Tim Vickery explained the attention to detail that lay behind their third success in the competition...

In 1960, the first edition of *World Soccer* carried a two-page spread on what the magazine declared was the greatest game ever played: the 1954 World Cup semi-final between Hungary and Uruguay.

Yet it is a match that slipped quickly from the game's collective memory, rapidly eclipsed by the feats of Brazil, who won their first World Cup in 1958.

That inaugural *World Soccer* issue had remarkably little to say about the reigning world champions; a team that all these years later still have a claim to be considered the best ever and remain the only South American side to win the trophy in Europe. But that 1958 triumph, in Sweden, came before the age of television – which for much of the planet made its World Cup debut in 1970, the year Brazil won the Jules Rimet for a third time.

The images from Mexico, even in black and white, were so exotically striking that it is little wonder the tournament made a deep impression, especially as much of the football was exciting and there was a pleasing lack of some of the controversy that had dogged previous World Cups in the 1960s.

It seems fair to argue that Brazil 1970 were the outstanding champions of the *World Soccer* age. They were certainly the most glamorous. Maybe, too, they were one of the least understood, even by their own people.

In his generally perceptive book *How Soccer Explains the World*, US writer Franklin Foer argues: "Brazil became an international power because it played without the rigid strategic strictures of continental soccer. Positions, formations and defence weren't valued nearly so much as spontaneity, cleverness and the scoring of goals."

It is a common view – but one which makes not the slightest sense. After all, Brazil were the pioneers of the back four, withdrawing an extra player to the heart of the defence with the explicit aim of giving themselves more cover. When it was unleashed in 1958 the team did not concede a single goal until the quarter-finals. Positions, formations and defence were extremely important. Getting those bits right enabled the team to reap full value from all the attacking moments of spontaneity, cleverness and the scoring of goals.

But it is not surprising that foreigners fell for the myth of football as an extension of carnival, a procession of pleasure-seeking self-expression where conceding six was not a problem so long as you scored seven. It is a common view in Brazil. And the

explanation, along with the seductive beauty of the football, can be found in the work of Brazil's most influential football writer.

Nelson Rodrigues was not first and foremost a football man; rather he was one of Brazil's leading playwrights.

For many years he was in the shadow of his elder brother, the campaigning sports journalist Mario Filho, after whom Rio de Janeiro's Maracana stadium was officially named. Mario Filho worked tirelessly for the construction of the giant arena, where Brazil were beaten by Uruguay in the final game of the 1950 World Cup.

But the times of triumph belonged to brother Nelson. It is his voice that has set the tone for the way that Brazil's great sides have been appreciated. His columns on football were beautifully written, captivating the reader and enticing them into an eccentric world of myths.

"The journalist who makes a cult of the fact is a professional failure," he wrote in 1956. "The fact in itself has little or no worth. What gives it authority is the addition of imagination." He goes on to tell the story of a reporter who witnesses a small and insignificant fire, and goes on to cause a commotion with an article on the event that pays homage to an invented little canary, caught in the flames, who sung all the way to its death. "The entire city, from one end to the other, was crying about the irreparable loss of the animal...without the little bird, journalism is not possible."

That same year, when no one included Brazil among the favourites for Sweden 58, he was already proclaiming victory.

"We are the best in the world at football," he wrote in August 1956, and repeated it again and again until the facts came to the aid of his fertile imagination.

It is frequently said now that his vision was poor, and his view of what actually happened on the field was limited. Perhaps. But he saw enough to identify many of the players who went on to be world champions in Sweden.

He was a huge fan of midfield maestro Didi, who many had seen as a luxury, and he was quick to identify Garrincha as a genius. And he was the first to give royal status to the 17-year-old Pele.

In March 1958 he declared: "Pele feels like a king from his head to his toes. His greatest virtue is precisely his total lack of modesty...he puts himself above everyone and ends up even intimidating the ball, which comes to his feet with the docility of a little dog."

"With Pele and others like him in the team, no one will go to Sweden with the

soul of a mongrel. The others will tremble before us.”

This observation gets to the heart of Nelson’s worldview. The whole game could be reduced to a question of mental approach. Brazil had lost to Uruguay in 1950 and Hungary in 1954 not because they had been outwitted in tactical or technical terms; they lost because of a lack of faith.

“Only a Freud can explain the defeat of Brazil against Hungary, or of Brazil against Uruguay, and any Brazilian defeat in football or elsewhere,” wrote Rodrigues in 1956. “When the Brazil team really believes in itself it becomes unbeatable.” But this self-belief was so hard to obtain. As he added: “The Brazilian loves ignoring his own virtues and exalting his own defects. We are a Narcissus in reverse, who spits at his own reflection.”

It is a theme Rodrigues returned to time and time again, most famously on the eve of the 1958 World Cup, claiming: “The pure truth is this; any Brazilian player, when he sheds his inhibitions and puts himself in a state of grace, is unique, in terms of fantasy, improvisation and invention.”

The game, then, could be reduced

talent was indeed a huge part of their success. But it was very much underpinned by hard work and an impressively open mind.

The tactical developments, the back four and the shift to 4-2-4, had been worked out with the aid of coaches from Uruguay and Hungary. And then there was the attention to detail. As far back as 1958, Brazil had a whole battery of physical preparation specialists, doctors, dentists, even a premature experiment with a sports psychologist. England, meanwhile, went to Chile for the 1962 World Cup without so much as a doctor.

When Mario Zagallo heard about that over four decades later, he almost fell out of his chair. A player in the sides of 1958 and 1962, Zagallo symbolises the Brazilian quest to balance attack with defence – years ahead of his time, he was a left-winger who worked back when his team lost possession. He was also well aware of the importance of the back-up staff. And when he took over as coach of Brazil three months before Mexico 70, he brought all of this experience to bear.

The 50th anniversary of Mexico 70 would have been celebrated in normal circumstances, but coronavirus brought

and paid attention to the debate should be well placed to kill off the lazy view that the tournament was a collection of moments of individual genius, produced by players freshly plucked from the beach who have no interest in defence and no consideration for collective rules.

Under the guidance of physical preparation specialist Claudio Coutinho and his assistant Carlos Alberto Parreira – both future national-team coaches – the team were prepared for the rigours of both heat and altitude following a training programme that in part had been drawn up by the US space agency NASA. They were supremely fit and won most of the key games in the second half. Of the 19 goals they scored, 12 came after the interval.

Tactically, they were also ahead of the curve. Zagallo had inherited a team still playing 4-2-4 and was well aware that the game had developed and that the old system from 1958 would leave the team too open. So he used the build-up to conduct surgery on the side.

“Zagallo symbolises the Brazilian quest to balance attack with defence”

to a psychological drama that the Brazilians, with innate abilities, would win if they could get themselves in the correct frame of mind.

All very attractive, but not very illuminating. What was lost here was any sense of context, any notion of process. After all, for many years Brazil had been South America’s third force, trailing well behind Uruguay and Argentina. Natural

forward the process and ensured it of a wider audience.

Over six nights in April 2020, all of Brazil’s games in the campaign were shown on TV. The country has a young population and for many this was a first chance to watch the matches in their entirety. The coverage also featured chats with some of the players.

Those who have watched the games



Attack...Pele attempts to score after rounding the Uruguayan goalkeeper

Piazza was dropped to centre-back, opening space for Clodoaldo in midfield. In came Rivelino as a false left-winger. The key idea was that when possession was lost, only centre-forward Tostao would stay in front of the line of the ball. Everyone else would funnel back as part of a tight, compact unit. With Clodoaldo and Gerson operating behind a line of Jairzinho, Pele and Rivelino, Brazil 70 looked a lot like a pioneer of 4-2-3-1 – a label coach Zagallo is happy to accept.

Watching the matches half a century later is an excellent opportunity to spot such details. The clinching goal in the 4-2 quarter-final win over Peru begins, for example, when Pele as the extra man in midfield breaks up a promising move from the opposition.

And the goal everyone remembers, the fourth in the final, is an example of everything the team had worked on. Italy are shattered, while Brazil are still full of gas. The move starts when Tostao still has it in him to chase back into his



Star...Pele dribbles past Italian defender Tarcisio Burgnich

own half and make a tackle. No one can catch Clodoaldo while he dances his way through midfield.

The ball is played to the left, where right-winger Jairzinho has moved – a pre-planned ploy aimed at dragging Giacinto Facchetti, his marker, across the field and opening up a corridor for right-back Carlos Alberto. The space has been created intelligently and Pele rolls the ball sideways, into the path of Carlos Alberto, who crashes his shot

emphatically home. The move is a synthesis of individual talent, tactical application and physical preparation. It stands as a fitting symbol for the virtues of a magnificent team.

It also stands as a perfect learning opportunity for the nation. Watching all of these glory games and listening to the debate around them should be enough to remind some Brazilians of the way they fell into one of the obvious pitfalls of success.

Seduced by the likes of Nelson Rodrigues, they had become too accustomed to seeing success as something of a birthright, founded on innate qualities. The lesson of Mexico 70 is it is better seen as the outcome of a process in which hard work and collective planning are as important as individual ability. Even better – a process in which hard work and collective planning build the stage on which individual ability can shine in the spotlight, glittering like those yellow shirts in the Mexican sunshine.



Final goal...Carlos Alberto's famous strike nestles in the Italian net

Ajax 1970-73

The Dutch side famed for their "Total Football", became the first team since Real Madrid to win a hat-trick of European titles



In 1970, Ajax won their third league title in four years under Rinus Michels. Yet the Amsterdammers' claims to being the Netherlands' dominant side were undermined by the fact that Feyenoord had just become the first Dutch side to lift the European Cup, while they themselves had lost 4-1 to Milan in the final a year before.

The gauntlet had been laid down, and Ajax duly rose to the challenge.

Michels, the coach widely seen as the father of "Total Football" finally got his hands on the trophy in 1971, beating Panathinaikos at Wembley in the final, before leaving for Barcelona in the same summer. But the team he left

behind went on to bigger and better things. While Michels had been a hard taskmaster, his surprise replacement Stefan Kovacs was more placatory and willing to give the players greater freedom.

For two years, his approach worked to utter perfection. Not only did the Romanian coach retain the European Cup in 1972, he also regained the league title. In addition to the KNVB, he made Ajax the first Dutch team – and only second in Europe – to win a treble of the European Cup, league title and domestic cup.

The 1-0 scoreline by which Ajax beat Juventus in Belgrade in the 1973 final did not do justice to the manner in

Hat-trick...Ajax players posed with their third consecutive European Cup



Influential...Johan Cruyff dribbles past a defender

which they won their third consecutive European Cup. Such was Ajax's utter dominance, the result was never in doubt from the moment Johnny Rep scored in the third minute.

The Ajax team was essentially the same as the one that had beaten Panathinaikos in 1971 and Internazionale in 1972, with Rep coming in for veteran winger Sjaak Swart and Horst Blankenburg taking over from Velibor Vasovic as sweeper.

Kovacs had perfected Michels' beautifully effective approach, with talented players attacking safe in the knowledge that their team-mates would be there to cover them if they were to lose the ball.

Kovacs' freedom, however, also paved the way for the team's destruction. He failed to keep a lid on the indiscipline that started to creep in, and left after the Belgrade triumph, joining the French federation. Johan Cruyff re-joined Michels at Barcelona in August 1973 for a then-world record \$920,000 and the team disintegrated soon afterwards.

5

Magic number

In 1972, Ajax won all five competitions they entered, including an "unofficial" UEFA Super Cup

Honours



Eredivisie

1970, 1972, 1973



KNVB Cup

1970, 1971, 1972



European Cup

1971, 1972, 1973



UEFA Super Cup

1973



Intercon. Cup

1972

Iconic Match

Ajax 1-0 Juventus, 1973 European Cup final



Tactics

Under Kovacs, Ajax continued to adhere to Michels' "Total Football", with heavy pressing and lots of interchanging of positions. While in theory any player could swap places with any other, in practice the changes took place mostly down the flanks and through the middle. Ajax played in three lines of three, with Blankenburg sweeping. Rep, Haan and Suurbier swapped places on the right, as did Keizer, Muhren and Krol on the left and Cruyff, Neeskens and Hulshoff through the middle.

Coach

Stefan Kovacs

The Romanian took over from Rinus Michels in the summer of 1971, arriving from Steaua Bucharest. He was not a well-known figure in Netherlands and was criticised for being too conciliatory to the players, but his success was undeniable. His time in the Netherlands proved to be the peak of his career; he went on to manage the French and Romanian national teams to limited success, before returning to club spells with Panathinaikos and Monaco. In 2013 he ranked 36th in *World Soccer's* greatest managers of all time.



Strongest XI

Heinz Stuy

Goalkeeper

Won plenty of trophies with Ajax but never played for Netherlands.

Wim Suurbier

Defender

Right-back who loved to attack, changing places with team-mates Arie Haan and Johnny Rep.

Horst Blankenburg

Defender

Sweeper who never got to play for West Germany due to the dominance of Franz Beckenbauer.

Barry Hulshoff

Defender

Centre-back who spent nearly all of his career at Ajax. Won 14 caps for Netherlands.

Ruud Krol

Defender

Left-back who was also crucial for the national team. Missed the 1971 final with a broken leg.

Arie Haan

Midfielder

Played on the right,

linking well with Rep and Suurbier out wide and Neeskens in the centre.

Johan Neeskens

Midfielder

Former right-back turned midfielder with licence to support attacks and bleed the high press.

Gerrie Muhren

Midfielder

Left-sided midfielder, older brother of Arnold, who also played for Ajax and Netherlands.

Johnny Rep

Forward

Young right-winger who would go on to star for Netherlands at the 1974 and 1978 World Cups.

Johan Cruyff

Forward

The side's most forceful personality, a gifted attacker who excelled at the unpredictable.

Piet Keizer

Forward

Outside-left who could also play on the right and linked well with Cruyff.

Star man

Johan Cruyff

For all that Ajax's success was built upon the *totaalvoetbal* principles set in place by Michels and Kovacs, it would not have reached the same heights without Cruyff. He was not just Ajax's best player; he was their playmaker, their captain, their inspiration, their organiser and their goalscorer. He topped the club's scoring charts seven years in a row and remains the club's post-war record scorer with 270 – including two in the 1972 European Cup final. His later exploits as a Netherlands player (p.36-41) and Barcelona manager (p.68-69) mean that Cruyff must be regarded as the most influential figure in modern football history.



Bayern Munich 1974

The first German team to win the European Cup were the backbone of the West Germany side that were European and world champions



Ajax had been the leading club side of the early 1970s, winning three consecutive European Cups, but the departure of Johan Cruyff to Barcelona in 1973 marked a shift in power away from Amsterdam and towards southern Germany.

Bayern Munich's first season in the Bundesliga was in 1965-66, and within three years they were league champions. Three years later they finished top again, this time with the squad that was set to change the face of German football.

Six members of that 1971-72 Bundesliga-winning squad – Sepp Maier, Paul Breitner, Franz Beckenbauer, Georg Schwarzenbeck, Uli Hoeness and Gerd Muller – went on to help West Germany become European Champions. Just as Ajax had laid the foundations for the Netherlands team of that era, Bayern's players formed the spine of the West Germany side.

By 1974, Bayern had become the first team to win a hat-trick of successive Bundesliga titles. But having tasted

continental success for the national team, their players wanted more.

With Beckenbauer, in particular, at the peak of his powers, they won the first of three successive European Cups in May 1974, beating Atletico Madrid 4-0 in Brussels, in a replay that was played two days after a 1-1 draw in the same Heysel Stadium.

Bayern had moved into Munich's new Olympiastadion in 1972 – with attendances averaging 46,000 – and sought to entertain. They leaned heavily on the principles of "Total Football" and,



Success...Bayern players celebrate with the European Cup trophy

BELOW LEFT: Influential... Beckenbauer starred in West Germany's 1974 World Cup win

in an interview with *World Soccer* in December 1973, coach Udo Lattek explained: "During the 1966 World Cup, we realised that the kind of defensive game – which for some years had been stifling football – was on the way out. So we decided to adopt a policy based purely on attack."

The Olympiastadion hosted the 1974 World Cup final, where Bayern's West German stars got their hands on more silverware. But they weren't done, going on to the European Cup in 1975 and '76.

One by one, those Bayern legends retired or left the club. Although the club continued to routinely win domestically, they would have to wait until 2001 for their next Champions League.

Honours



Bundesliga
1974



European Cup
1974

1

Magic number
Bayern's clash with Atletico remains the only European Cup final in history to be replayed

Iconic Match

Atletico Madrid 0-4 Bayern Munich, 1974 European Cup final replay



Strongest XI

Sepp Maier

Goalkeeper

Renowned shot-stopper who spent his entire career at Bayern.

Johnny Hansen

Defender

Danish right-back who won three European Cups after joining from Nuremberg in 1970.

Franz Beckenbauer

Defender

Club captain, *Der Kaiser* was at the heart of everything Bayern achieved in this era.

Georg

Schwarzenbeck

Defender

Started as a left-back before moving inside.

Paul Breitner

Defender

Enigmatic, Afro-haired Marxist intellectual that spent three years at Real Madrid before returning.

Franz Roth

Midfielder

Tough, goalscoring

midfielder who spent his whole career at Bayern.

Rainer Zobel

Midfielder

Joined from Hannover in 1970. Now a coach with a peripatetic CV in Africa and the Middle East.

Jupp Kapellmann

Midfielder

Signed for a then-German record fee of £134,000. Later became a doctor in sports medicine.

Conny Torstensson

Midfielder

Sweden international who signed after impressing for Atvidaberg in the 1973-74 European Cup.

Uli Hoeness

Forward

Retired due to a bad knee injury at 27. Later became Bayern Munich president.

Gerd Muller

Forward

"*Der Bomber*" was one of the most prolific strikers in the history of European football. Died in 2021.

Tactics

Bayern, and the West Germany side that they so heavily influence, arguably practised the ideals of Total Football just as much as Ajax and the Dutch did. "I don't see why any players should specialise in a certain role," Lattek told *World Soccer* in 1973. "Defenders should know how to attack and vice-versa. Our tactics meant we had to not only employ orthodox wingers but also old-fashioned goal-poachers. Every player, excluding the goalkeeper, should possess ball-playing skills." Beckenbauer was the epitome of this, as the hugely influential *libero*, but Torstensson and Hoeness also had licence to roam.

Coach

Udo Lattek

Handed the coach's role at Bayern in 1970 on the recommendation of Beckenbauer, following a spell as the assistant coach of West Germany. He remains the Bundesliga's most successful coach, having won six titles in two spells with Bayern, as well as two with Borussia Monchengladbach, where he also won the UEFA Cup. In 1981 he replaced Helenio Herrera as the manager of Barcelona, guiding the Catalans to the Cup Winners' Cup in 1981-82, making him the only manager in history to win all three major European club trophies with three different teams.



Star man

Franz Beckenbauer

Probably the most influential German footballer of all time, Beckenbauer was the heartbeat of both the Bayern Munich and West Germany teams of the 1970s in the same way that Johan Cruyff was for Ajax and the Netherlands. "*Der Kaiser*", as he came to be known, reinvented the role of sweeper, or *libero*; he was the spare man in Bayern's 1-3-3-3 formation, free to bring the ball out from defence gracefully and set the tone for the attacks. Having started as a striker, then moved into midfield, it was a role that came naturally to him. Later became a manager, guiding Germany to the 1990 World Cup.



Netherlands 1974-78

Losing back-to-back World Cup finals playing their revolutionary style of football gave the Dutch side of the 1970s the unwanted tag of the greatest side to miss out on the trophy



The idea that nobody remembers second place, that only winners go down in history, is a popular one in football. Yet it is also a myth. After all, has any team proved more influential or more memorable in the history of the sport than the Netherlands team of the 1970s?

They were the nearly men of international football, the team of total footballers who reached successive World Cup finals. But, having done the hard part, fell to the hosts on both occasions.

Rinus Michels, the coach who had built Ajax into a European power, was the man who forged a team from rival factions of Ajax and Feyenoord players at the 1974 finals in West Germany.

With Johan Cruyff as the captain and attacking fulcrum, the Netherlands outplayed Brazil and Argentina on their way to the final

against West Germany. They went ahead after two minutes when Cruyff was fouled before the hosts had even touched the ball, with Johan Neeskens converting the penalty.

The Dutch seemed intent on not only beating their neighbours, but embarrassing them. They continued to exhibit their trademark style, passing, moving and rotating with typical



Dutch icon...
Johan Cruyff

Total footballers...the Dutch line up for the 1974 World Cup final

panache, but lacked a cutting edge. They failed to add a second goal and by half-time, West Germany had recovered, and won 2-1.

Four years later, Michels had been replaced by Ernst Happel, but the team remained largely intact for the 1978 World Cup finals in Argentina, with one glaring exception – no Johan Cruyff.

There were conflicting explanations as to why Cruyff chose not to return to the international stage: variously, he was thought to have fallen out with the Dutch FA and his sponsors; he was said to be opposed to the Argentinian Junta; and his wife was believed to be concerned about his safety after an attempted kidnapping. Whatever the reason, it proved decisive.

After an extra-time defeat to the hosts in Buenos Aires, Cruyff's absence left the world wondering: what would the outcome have been with the legendary No.14 in the team?

18

Magic number

The 1974 World Cup final ended Netherlands' 18-match unbeaten run, a streak lasting three years

Iconic Match

Netherlands 1-2 West Germany, 1974 World Cup final



Strongest XI

Jan Jongbloed

Goalkeeper

Surprise first-choice who went on to set the Dutch league appearance record.

Wim Suurbier

Defender

Attack-minded right-back from Ajax. Finished his playing career in the USA.

Arie Haan

Defender

Played in midfield for Ajax and Anderlecht, and in the 1978 final, but used in defence by Michels.

Wim Rijsbergen

Defender

Played right-back for Feyenoord but used in the centre for Netherlands.

Ruud Krol

Defender

Versatile left-back from Ajax, he started the 1978 final at sweeper. Later coached in Africa.

Wim Jansen

Midfielder

Strong tackler from Feyenoord who also

played for Ajax. Played right-back in 1978.

Johan Neeskens

Midfielder

Central figure and Netherlands' top scorer in 1974 with five goals.

Wim Van Hanegem

Midfielder

Clever passer of the ball who operated on the left and played for Feyenoord. Withdrew in 1978.

Johnny Rep

Forward

Right-winger and an ultra-sharp finisher who was a member of the Ajax side of the early 1970s.

Johan Cruyff

Forward

Captain, leader and chief creative force. Chose not to play at the 1978 World Cup in Argentina.

Rob Rensenbrink

Forward

Left-winger who played most of his club career in Belgium and was a star of the 1978 World Cup.

Tactics

The Netherlands followed the 4-3-3 system formation so beloved of Ajax. Cruyff was the central forward, but with licence to drop deep and roam wide, while Rep and Rensenbrink were forwards deployed as wingers. The tough-tackling Haan was used as a sweeper, often filling in for the full-backs as they attacked. Neeskens roamed midfield, supported by Jansen and the more creative Van Hanegem.

Coach

Rinus Michels

Arguably the greatest coach of all time and certainly one of the most influential as the "father" of Total Football. He masterminded the rise of Ajax, winning the European Cup before moving to Barcelona with Johan Cruyff. Nicknamed "The General", he returned to his home country to take charge of the national team for the 1974 World Cup, but left after the final for another spell at Ajax. Four years later, Ernst Happel was in the hot seat, the Austrian coach who had guided Feyenoord to European Cup glory in 1970.



Star man

Johan Neeskens

In August 1975, Neeskens told *World Soccer*: "To say that I'm a convinced and committed advocate of Total Football would be an understatement." The midfielder was an integral cog in the Dutch machine; when they didn't have the ball he led the pressing, and when they did he drove forward into the space left by Cruyff. He was the perfect foil for the No.14, following him from Ajax to Barca. Four of his goals at the 1974 World Cup were from the spot, including one in the final. Four years later, in Cruyff's absence, he had more responsibility, demonstrating his exceptional creativity, touch and passing.



TEAMS

Total Recall

In March 2006, Brian Glanville told the story of the Netherlands' World Cup campaigns of 1974 and 1978



You would have to describe the Netherlands as the nearly team of the 1970s; runners-up in both the 1974 and 1978 World Cups, and arguably unlucky in each one. They should surely have exploited the fact that they took an early lead against West Germany in Munich in the 1974 decider. They again faced the host nation in the 1978 final, when they came within a whisker of beating Argentina in ordinary time, only to be brushed aside by the energy and thrust of Mario Kempes and Co. in extra time. But the *Oranje* would surely have won had only Johan Cruyff been there.

Although coach Rinus Michels led Ajax to the first of their three consecutive European Cup triumphs in the early 1970s and came back from his spell at Barcelona to lick a mutinous Netherlands team into shape in the weeks before the 1974 finals, there is no doubt that neither Ajax nor Netherlands would have remotely been the same teams without the inspiration and the virtuosity of Cruyff. Total Football as such would have been impossible without him, just as it would have been impossible for West Germany and Bayern Munich without the inspiration of Franz Beckenbauer, who, as a teenager, had conceived the role of the attacking *libero* or sweeper.

The ethos of Total Football was essentially that anybody could do anything: defenders could attack, attackers could defend.

It took time for Cruyff and Ajax fully to get into gear. He had had a stormy start to his international career, sent off on his debut against Czechoslovakia in 1966 after retaliating following a foul, earning himself a one-year ban from the Dutch federation.

Then, in 1969, Ajax reached the European Cup final in Madrid but were swept aside by Milan, losing 4-1. Six of that Ajax team would play against Panathinaikos two years later as Ajax won their first European Cup.

Michels took off to manage Barcelona and would, in 1973, take Cruyff with him. It may have been the coach who brought order out of chaos for the 1974 international team, but, arguably, Ajax reached their peak after he had left and the more permissive, less authoritarian Stefan Kovacs had taken over. Under the Romanian's less constricting regime, Cruyff and company were able to practise their preferred adventurous, attacking, multi-purpose game.

But it was Michels who made progress in the World Cup finals possible. A benevolent dictator had become essential.

Given the brilliance of the Dutch team in the West Germany World Cup, it tends to be forgotten that they had anything but an easy passage to the finals. They were held to goalless draws at home and away by neighbours and rivals Belgium, and had the psychological disadvantage of having failed to qualify for a World Cup finals since 1938 or get beyond their qualifying group in the 1972 European Championship.

Having got to the finals, there was dissent in the ranks. One of the major causes was money. The team made increasing, even excessive, demands, up to the point when an exasperated Michels announced that any player who rejected what had finally been offered could pack his cases and go home. But having obtained hugely lucrative terms, the Dutch players, almost on the eve of the competition, were still threatening to go on strike.

The other *casus belli* was the tensions between players from rival big clubs Ajax and Feyenoord. Ajax had won the European Cup for the past three years – the most recent by beating Juventus 1-0 in the 1973 final in Belgrade – but in 1970 Feyenoord had become the first Dutch team to take the trophy when defeating Celtic 2-1 in Milan.

For all the dissension in the Dutch ranks, they had shown their huge capacities with a 4-1 win in a friendly against Argentina just before the finals. But by the time the tournament arrived, they had lost key players. First-choice goalkeeper Jan Van Beveren was injured and did not make the squad. His deputy, Piet Schrijvers, was then also injured, so Michels turned to 33-year-old veteran Jan Jongbloed, who had been so convinced that he would see no action that he had actually brought his fishing rods to Germany.

Jongbloed was known as an adventurous, even at times a reckless,

“Anybody could do anything: defenders could attack, attackers could defend”

keeper, with his forays beyond the penalty area, but in the event that proved exactly what the team would need. The absence of another key man, Ajax centre-back Barry Hulshoff, had substantially weakened the defence, which tended to rely on what was a fragile offside trap. In effect, Jongbloed became a goalkeeping sweeper.

The absence of Hulshoff meant Arie

Haan, almost as powerfully propulsive as Johan Neeskens in midfield, was obliged to function at least nominally as sweeper, always eager to go forward when he could, as were the full-backs, Ruud Krol and Wim Suurbier. Neeskens had been used at right-back in Ajax's 1971 European Cup final victory, but he was also a true all-round midfielder, equally effective in attacking or defensive mode.

Another important absentee through injury was left-sided midfielder Gerry Muhren, and while the regular outside-left, Piet Keizer, was in the squad, he lost his starting place – apart from in the group game against Sweden – to the fresher legs of Rob Rensenbrink.

So, without saying that this was a patchwork Netherlands side, it was well below its full strength and greatly dependent on the dazzling combinations of the magisterial Cruyff and his chief lieutenant, Neeskens.

Although the Dutch essentially relied on speed, skill and tactical flair, they could, in the vernacular, look after themselves. They needed to do so in their opening game, against the bruising Uruguayans in Hanover. Rensenbrink was punched in the stomach by the ruthless Julio Montero-Castillo, who was sent off. But a worse offender still was Pablo Forlan, the father of Diego Forlan, who kicked Neeskens in the head within the first few minutes and was booked for a bad foul on Krol in the second half. Indeed, Uruguay had little to offer but ill-tempered violence, and were easily beaten 2-0. All the South Americans' cynical ploys could not subdue Cruyff, who yet again showed how quickly he saw things, how fast he was off the mark.

Next came Sweden, who were much more difficult opponents. Netherlands had to be content with a 0-0 draw.

In contrast, the Dutch overran Bulgaria, their last group opponents. Cruyff was a whirlwind of pace, finesse and invention, and the Bulgarians could

do nothing about it. Two of Netherlands's goals in the 4-1 win were from penalties by Neeskens, who was forever breaking forcefully into attack.

Netherlands by now had the wind splendidly in their sails. The only real danger seemed to be Brazil, who, though a parody of the dazzling side that had won the 1970 tournament, could still give opponents a run for their



money – even if that entailed some bruising methods.

In their opening game of the second group stage, Netherlands outplayed Argentina, whose sheer frustration was shown by an appalling foul on Neeskens by defender Roberto Perfumo. It availed them nothing. They lost 4-0 and the defeat would probably have been worse had it not been for the heavy rain falling in the second half. Cruyff was once again irresistible. He scored twice and set up another for forward Johnny Rep.

East Germany, who seemed to have run out of steam since their surprising first group stage win against their West German neighbours, decided to mark Cruyff with Konrad Weise. But Netherlands had other shots in their locker. On nine minutes, Rensenbrink set up a goal for Neeskens, then scored one himself.

The victory left Netherlands to meet Brazil, who had also won their first two games, in what was effectively a semi-final. It took place in heavy rain, again, in Dortmund, and was notable for the violence of the baffled Brazilians, and the glorious combinations between Cruyff and Neeskens.

From the very beginning the Brazil defence kicked, chopped and hacked in their desperate attempts to contain their superior opponents. Neeskens was knocked out by Marinho Peres in the first half, but lax German referee Kurt Tschenschner saw no evil. However, he sent off dominating centre-back Luis Pereira in the second half for a scything

tackle, with Neeskens again the victim.

The Dutch were hardly passive, eventually retaliating in kind. As for the football, their vulnerable offside trap could well have betrayed them on at least two occasions, but Brazil wingers Paulo Cesar Carpegiani and Jairzinho failed when they should have scored.

An unpleasant match was redeemed by the two Dutch second-half goals. The first, just after half-time, was a small miracle of speed and economy. Dashing through the centre, Neeskens found Cruyff on the right, then lobbed the swift, precise return cleverly over keeper Leao. Then, in the 65th minute, Cruyff

“The ideal final between the practitioners of Total Football

Netherlands and West Germany; Beckenbauer against Cruyff”

converted a left-wing cross from Krol with a spectacular volley.

So there would be what might be seen as the ideal final between the practitioners of Total Football, Netherlands and West Germany; Beckenbauer against Cruyff.

Many observers felt that to win the final, the Dutch would have to score at least three goals, such were the deficiencies of their defence and the abilities of the prolific German striker Gerd Muller. Though Muller was slightly beyond his best, he was still a

Penalty...Neeskens puts Netherlands in front in Munich

formidable finisher in and around the box, and he would, in the event, exploit the weakness of the Dutch defence.

No World Cup final has had such a sensational beginning. The Dutch kicked off and almost casually, to the whistling of an offended crowd, played the ball about. Then suddenly Cruyff, who had dropped behind the front line, was away on a mesmerising solo run. He swept past his marker, Berti Vogts, with absolute ease and carried on into the penalty area, where he was brought down by a desperate Uli Hoeness. Neeskens drove the resulting penalty-kick past Sepp Maier.

And that should have been that. For the next 25 minutes, the Dutch tormented a plainly demoralised German team rather like picadors with a bull. There were those who suggested the Dutch not only wanted to defeat the Germans but to humiliate them because of the bitter memories of the Nazi occupation of Netherlands. You might have thought that the best way to do that was surely to score more goals rather than to toy with the opposition. In the event, no more Dutch goals came.

The tide turned midway through the

first half when West Germany scored, also from the penalty spot. The kick, awarded after left-winger Bernd Holzenbein had been tripped in the box by Wim Jansen, was converted by left-back Paul Breitner.

On 43 minutes, the Germans scored what proved to be the winner. Right-winger Jurgen Grabowski launched Rainer Bonhof down the right, where he surged past Haan and put in a low cross. The lethal Muller pulled the ball back with one foot and swept it past Jongbloed with the other. The World Cup was the hosts'.

Had Netherlands paid for their early hubris? All the skills, strategy and virtuosity of Cruyff were not enough to save them.

During the tournament, the Dutch had been based at Hiltrup, just over the border in northern Germany. It could be claimed that an incident in the swimming pool at the squad's hotel ultimately decided the outcome of the 1978 World Cup. One night, Cruyff and some of the other players went "skinny-dipping" with a few young German girls, unaware that swimming with them was a German reporter, who promptly betrayed them in his newspaper. "Are you mad?" Cruyff was reported furiously to have demanded of him. The rumour was that Danny, Cruyff's wife, consequently put her foot down; he must not compete in the next World Cup finals. Nor, alas, did he.

Netherlands' manager for the Argentina World Cup was another "part-time" choice and a much more surprising one – Austrian Ernst Happel, once a star defender for his country, a former manager of Feyenoord and at the time of the finals in charge of Club Brugge. In Argentina, Happel was at odds with his predecessor and now assistant coach, Jan Zwartkruis. Zwartkruis accused the somewhat dour Austrian of "treating his men as footballers, rather than human beings". Certainly, there was restlessness in the Dutch camp, not least in the case of Jongbloed, now 37. The keeper was casually told he would be dropped after Netherlands had lost to Scotland in their final first group stage game and had to restrain his wife from bearding Happel in his den.

The coach's lack of tact was arguably responsible for the absence of the magisterial Van Hanegem. Now 34 but still plainly functional, Van Hanegem had played as the central figure in a five-man "X" formation in midfield in a friendly against Austria in Vienna just before the finals; after which Happel gratuitously told him he could not be promised a starting place in Argentina.

So Van Hanegem withdrew.

Other absentees would be keeper Van Beveren, again, Hugo Hovenkamp, a lively overlapping left-back who made the squad but was injured before the finals kicked off, and incisive Ajax centre-forward Ruud Geels. By way of compensation, Willy Van de Kerkhof had established himself in the side, alongside twin Rene.

In the first game at the finals, a Rensenbrink hat-trick brought Netherlands a comfortable 3-0 win against feeble Iran in Mendoza, the venue for all their first group stage matches. But after that, Netherlands had a far from easy passage into the next round. Peru held them to a goalless draw in the second match, after which they faced Scotland.

Netherlands could afford to lose against the Scots and still go through as long as they limited the margin of defeat to two goals. Asked whether he thought Scotland could score the three goals they needed, Jongbloed whimsically replied: "Yes, but not in 90 minutes!"

He was wrong. Scotland did indeed score three times, the third of them from little Archie Gemmill's superlative solo run. But the Dutch hit two in reply to qualify for the second group stage on goal difference.

Netherlands now came glitteringly to life, thrashing Austria 5-1 in their opening second pool match on the superior pitch at Cordoba. Rensenbrink was outstanding, making two of the goals and scoring from a penalty.

The next game, a 2-2 draw against West Germany, was one of the finest of the tournament. Little German right-winger Rudi Abramczik opened the scoring after just three minutes, with a brave, diving header. Haan equalised shortly afterwards with a 35-yard shot. Big centre-forward Dieter Muller put

Germany ahead again on 70 minutes, but Rene Van de Kerkhof equalised on 83.

Next came a waning Italian team in Buenos Aires, where the versatile Neeskens returned to play at centre-back in front of Krol, the majestic sweeper and skipper. Brandts put through his own goal on 19 minutes, but equalised with a swing of his right foot on 50, before Haan's 30-yard drive beat Dino Zoff to win the game.

So once again, the final would be between Netherlands and the hosts.

The Dutch marked man to man, the Argentinians zonally; neither defence had looked watertight. An angry Dutch team committed the first of 50 fouls in the opening minute. The scene was set.

In the first half, Argentina captain Daniel Passarella had four good attempts on goal, three of them saved by Jongbloed, back in the side because his replacement, Schrijvers, had injured a knee against Italy. At the other end, Argentina keeper Ubaldo Fillol thwarted Rep and Rensenbrink. The one goal of the half was scored by Mario Kempes' formidable left foot, on 38 minutes.

On 59 minutes, Happel put on tall Dirk Nanninga for Rep, and when Rene Van de Kerkhof eluded Alberto Tarantini to cross, Nanninga soared to equalise. In the last minute, the mighty Krol sent Rensenbrink through, but his shot hit a post; and there was extra-time.

Who knows from where a seemingly flagging Argentina found new energy? After 14 minutes, Kempes forced his way through again and made it 2-1. In the final 15 minutes the Dutch desperately threw players into attack, inevitably leaving gaps at the back. Another superb burst by Kempes, abetted by right-winger Daniel Bertoni, ended with Bertoni beating Jongbloed. 3-1. All credit to Kempes. But if only Cruyff had played.

Dejected....Dutch players console each other after defeat in Argentina



Nott'm Forest 1978-80

Nottingham Forest were second division also-rans before they were transformed into double European Cup winners by Brian Clough



Founder members of the Football League, Nottingham Forest were floundering in the second tier of English football when Brian Clough arrived in 1975.

With his long-time confidante, Peter Taylor, Clough repeated the feat he had achieved with Derby County by gaining promotion from the Second Division and then winning the First Division title in successive seasons.

Between November 1977 and December 1978, Forest set a new record – since beaten by Arsenal – by going 42 league games unbeaten. They then went on to win the European Cup at the first attempt, a feat only previously achieved by Real Madrid and Internazionale.

They beat reigning champions

Liverpool on the way to a 1-0 final victory over Malmö in May 1979. Even more remarkably – and testament to Clough and Taylor's management – the team that triumphed in Munich was almost exactly the same as the one that won promotion two years earlier, with only two additions: Trevor Francis and Peter Shilton.

Following their first European success, Keir Radnedge wrote in the June 1979 edition of *World Soccer*: "Just over two years ago Forest were scrapping their way out of the Second Division. A year later they had become surprise champions of England and now they are champions of Europe. No team in the 23-year history of European club football, has made that sort of triumphant progression."

Captain...John McGovern lifts the European Cup trophy in 1979



Back-to-back...Peter Shilton clutches the trophy in 1980

Malmö were, admittedly, poor opponents, but the following year Forest retained the trophy by beating Hamburg. The German champions were far from pushovers, then led by two-time Ballon d'Or winner Kevin Keegan, but once again Clough's side triumphed with a 1-0 victory.

Soon afterwards, however, the side was broken up, and by 1982 nine of the starters from the 1979 final had left the club. Clough and Forest remained a force in English football throughout the 1980s, finishing third three times and winning two League Cups, but they were never able to replicate the magic of their early years, particularly after Taylor stepped down in 1982.

Nevertheless, their achievements continue to stand the test of time. No English team since has won the league straight after promotion, none have won the European Cup at the first time of asking, and none have managed to retain it either. The roller-coaster ride that Clough took Forest on, from the second tier to back-to-back European Cups, remains the single greatest achievement by an English manager.

2

Magic number

Forest remain the only team in history to win more European Cups than league titles

Honours



First Division
1978



European Cup
1979, 1980



UEFA Super Cup
1979

Iconic Match

Nottingham Forest 1-0 Malmö, 1979 European Cup final



Strongest XI

Peter Shilton

Goalkeeper

Signed for a record £250,000 from Stoke City in 1977 and won a record 125 England caps.

Viv Anderson

Defender

Nottingham-born and nicknamed "Spider". First black player for England.

Larry Lloyd

Defender

Ex-Liverpool defender snapped up for £60,000 from Coventry City during the promotion season.

Kenny Burns

Defender

Scotland international who played as a striker before being redeployed.

Frank Clark

Defender

Joined from Newcastle United and later managed Forest in the 1990s.

Trevor Francis

Winger

English football's first £1m player when signed from

Birmingham City in 1979.

John McGovern

Midfielder

Captain who previously played for Clough at Hartlepool United, Leeds United and Derby County.

Ian Bowyer

Midfielder

Goalscoring midfielder nicknamed "Bomber". Father of ex-Blackburn Rovers manager Gary.

John Robertson

Winger

Scotland international who joined Forest from school. Scored the winner in the 1980 final.

Tony Woodcock

Forward

Born locally, he became an England regular and played for Cologne in Germany and Arsenal.

Garry Birtles

Forward

Signed from non-league, he went on to play for Manchester United before a return to the City Ground.

Tactics

Clough claimed to care little for tactics and formations, but had a clear game plan in European competition. Forest defended deep and would attack on the counter, with creativity coming from the wings and full-backs, particularly John Robertson, who played a crucial role on the left. It was the Scotland international who supplied the cross for Francis – initially signed as a striker but used as a deep-lying right-winger in Munich – to score the only goal against Malmö.

Coach

Brian Clough

Clough remains one of the most fascinating individuals in the history of English football, yet much of his success was owed to the partnership with his assistant Peter Taylor. The pair perfectly complemented each other, with Clough the charismatic and brilliant motivator, and Taylor working away from the spotlight, particularly noted for his eye for a talent. The souring of their relationship, combined with alcoholism, blighted Clough's later years, as he proved unable to repeat his earlier success without his assistant.



Star man

John Robertson

Forest were a team of few stars, with the spotlight more often directed at the dugout. But in Robertson they had a supremely talented creative outlet. "He was a scruffy, unfit, uninterested waste of time...but something told me he was worth persevering with," said Clough in his autobiography when describing his first impression of Robertson. The winger was on the transfer list when the new manager arrived, but within a few years, he had established himself as one of the finest players in the country. He left for Derby County in 1983, then managed by Taylor, further souring the relationship between Clough and his old assistant.



Flamengo 1981

A Zico-inspired team rose quickly to become champions of Brazil, then South America, and then the world



In 1980, Flamengo were crowned Brazilian champions for the first time in their history. Although they had long been established as one of Rio's dominant clubs, winning the state championship five times in the 1970s, and never been relegated from the top flight – a record they still hold to this day – it took the arrival of a remarkable individual talent for their success to go beyond local borders.

Zico's rise to prominence coincided with the greatest period in Flamengo's history. With him in the side, they went into the 1981 Copa Libertadores – their first-ever appearance in the continental competition – full of confidence. They cruised into the final where they met Cobreloa of Chile, overcoming them 2-0 in a play-off, after each team had won one game of the two-legged final. Unsurprisingly, Zico was the star of the show, scoring all four of their goals across the three matches, giving him a tally of 11 for the tournament.

It was an outstanding achievement, but Flamengo weren't done there. In December, they headed to Japan to

face European champions Liverpool in the Intercontinental Cup final. Bob Paisley's team of Dalglish, Souness and Hansen et al. were favourites, but were simply outplayed 3-0, with Zico having a hand in all three goals.

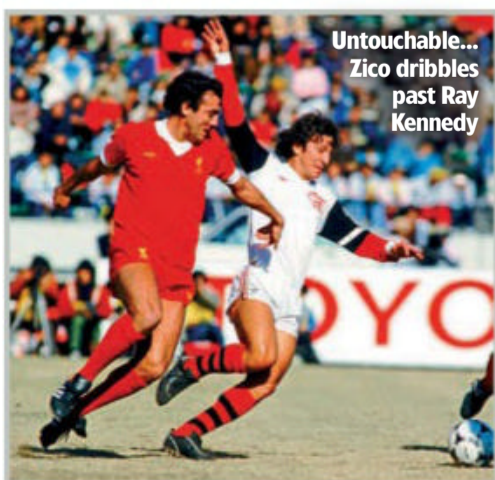
Writing of Flamengo in the January 1982 edition of *World Soccer*, Keir Radnedge said: "Their one-touch control was always a weapon which gave them that much more time to think out their moves, enjoy their skills. Up front they had electricity. Nunes ran into all the right gaps, Tita tricked and checked and dummied, and Zico was

Emphatic...Nunes scores Flamengo's third goal v Liverpool

always a lurking danger. When the chance arose he was in possession, at the right place, at the right time, to weight his shots and passes to perfection."

The victory made Flamengo the first Brazilian side to win the trophy in almost 20 years, and many of their players went on to star for the national team at the World Cup the following summer.

More league titles came in the next two years, but Zico's departure to Udinese in 1983 led to a decline in the rest of the 1980s. They did not win another Brazilian Championship until 1992, while the wait for a Copa Libertadores was even longer, winning the trophy in 2019.



Untouchable... Zico dribbles past Ray Kennedy

1963

Magic number

The year of the previous Intercontinental Cup winners from Brazil; Pele's Santos

Honours



Iconic Match

Liverpool 0-3 Flamengo, 1981 Intercontinental Cup final



Tactics

Flamengo's formation resembled a modern 4-2-3-1 or 4-3-3, with Zico granted a free role as the No.10, linking the midfield and attack. As they did for the national team, the two wing-backs Leandro and Junior flew forward to support and provide width, allowing the forwards to drift infield. In midfield, Andrade protected the back four, while Adilio had more of a box-to-box role. Zico was the go-to attacker, both Tita and Nunes carried a threat too, with both in the club's all-time top ten Brazilian league scorers.

Coach

Paulo Cesar Carpegiani

Carpegiani took charge of Flamengo shortly after retiring from his playing days. As a player, he had starred in the 1980 title-winning side under Claudio Coutinho, and was well-placed to continue where the former Brazil manager had left off. He departed in 1983, and went on to manage well over 20 teams in a 27-year coaching career, without hitting the same heights again. He coached Paraguay in the 1990s, guiding them to the 1998 World Cup, where they were knocked out by eventual winners France.



Strongest XI

Raul Plassmann

Goalkeeper

Played over 550 games for Cruzeiro before joining Flamengo. Retired after winning the Brazilian league title in 1983.

Leandro

Defender

Deployed in midfield for the Copa Libertadores final and later played centre-back.

Marinho

Defender

Formed a solid partnership with Mozer from 1980 to 1984.

Carlos Mozer

Defender

Only 21 in 1981. Later played for Benfica and Marseille, and at the 1990 World Cup.

Junior

Defender

Played a club-record 857 games for the club; despite five years in Serie A.

Andrade

Midfielder

Defensive midfielder that

won 11 Brazil caps and spent a season at Roma.

Adilio

Midfielder

Started in attack for the Copa Libertadores final and scored against Liverpool in Tokyo.

Zico

Midfielder

Flamengo and Brazil legend, the captain and heartbeat of this team.

Tita

Forward

Spent two spells with Flamengo and played for clubs in Brazil, Germany, Italy and Mexico.

Nunes

Forward

Four years at Flamengo were the best of his career. Scored twice against Liverpool.

Lico

Forward

Initially signed as Zico's understudy but became a regular alongside him. Retired in 1984 at 33 due to a knee injury.

Star man

Zico

In the all-time list of Brazilian No.10s, Zico is probably second only to Pele. Indeed, during his career he was nicknamed the "White Pele" due to his flair as a deep-lying forward, and he remains fifth on the country's list of all-time top scorers with 48 goals. His exploits for the national team are well-documented, starring at the 1982 World Cup, but at Flamengo he is even more revered, and with good reason: in total he scored 508 goals for the club where he began his career, more than double the tally of his nearest challenger. In 1983, he was named *World Soccer's* World Player of the Year.



Brazil 1982

A side featuring the talents of Zico, Socrates and Falcao played some of the most exhilarating football ever seen at the World Cup



Quite possibly the greatest team to never win the World Cup, the Brazil side that dazzled and delighted at the 1982 finals in Spain contained some of the finest footballing talent the world has ever seen.

After the disappointments of 1974 and 1978, when an over-emphasis on physical preparation backfired, Brazil turned to Tele Santana, a coach who was committed to attacking football.

Santana's squad was blessed with incredible midfield talent, but was weak in both penalty areas, lacking both a great centre-forward or a great goalkeeper. As a result, Santana took a decision that most coaches would not have dreamed of, and played four creative midfielders – Zico, Socrates, Falcao and Cerezo – in the same side.

His side travelled to Spain as favourites. They had enjoyed a 100 per cent record in qualifying, as well as friendly wins over West Germany, Spain and the Republic of Ireland (a 7-0 rout).

In the heat of Spain, Brazil cut loose, playing the most exhilarating football seen since 1970. They swept past the Soviet Union, Scotland and New Zealand in the group stages, and beat defending champions Argentina in the first game of their second-round group.

They needed only a point against Italy in Seville to reach the semi-final, but Santana refused to resort to more cautious tactics – even after Falcao

**Samba stars...
Brazilian players and fans celebrate scoring against Italy**

had levelled the scores at 2-2 in the second half. As they continued to attack, Italy found a way through, with a Paolo Rossi hat-trick sealing a 3-2 victory.

It was a symbolic defeat, with Brazil's flair and idealism beaten by Italy's pragmatism and solidity, prompting Zico to describe the game as "the day that football died".

Four years later they dazzled again, with Careca returning from injury to lead the line, scoring five times as Brazil swept aside their group once again, before beating Poland 4-0 in the last 16. However, a penalty-shootout defeat to France in the quarters brought an end to their campaign, and with it the romantic ideals of the Brazilian midfield.

Although they have won two more World Cups since then, those victories have been achieved with midfields based on athleticism and toughness, rather than the flair that defined the 1982 *fantasistas*.



**Captain...
Socrates**

15

Magic number

Number of goals scored by Brazil at the 1982 finals, averaging three-per-game

Iconic Match

Italy 3-2 **Brazil**, 1982 World Cup second group stage



Tactics

"Brazil will have to suffer goals against them, but a team which goes out to attack must accept this," Santana told *World Soccer* in June 1982. "And we'll score more goals than the opposition." Under Santana, Brazil played a 4-2-2-2 formation, though in reality it was simply two defenders, seven midfielders and a centre-forward. The full-backs Leandro and Junior flew forward to provide the width, midfielders Cerezo and Falcao served as deep-lying playmakers while Zico, Socrates and Eder - usually a winger - roamed free behind target man Serginho.

Coach

Tele Santana

Romantic who claimed "players should have the freedom to play", he coached Fluminense, Atletico Mineiro, Gremio and Palmeiras before taking the national side to the 1982 and 1986 World Cups. Although he did not win the trophy, he remains one of the most popular coaches in Brazilian football history, and the legacy of his team is arguably more enduring than the victorious sides of 1994 or 2002. After stepping down, he won back-to-back Copa Libertadores with Sao Paulo in 1992 and 1993.



Strongest XI

Waldir Peres

Goalkeeper

Seen as a weak link, but never really tested. Squad member at the 1974 and 1978 finals.

Leandro

Defender

Rampaging right-back whose crosses were a vital weapon. Spent his entire career with Flamengo.

Oscar

Defender

Sao Paulo stalwart who was a reserve at the 1986 finals in Mexico.

Luizinho

Defender

Spent most of his career with Atletico Mineiro.

Junior

Defender

Like Leandro, loved to attack and was always happiest when galloping forward to join attacks.

Falcao

Midfielder

At the peak of his powers in Spain, having just

enjoyed a terrific season in Italy with Roma.

Toninho Cerezo

Midfielder

Suspended for Brazil's opening game against the USSR but returned to play a crucial role.

Zico

Midfielder

Brilliant attacker who scored 48 goals in 71 internationals for Brazil, including four in Spain.

Socrates

Midfielder

Lanky, bearded schemer and inspirational captain. Replaced as skipper for the 1986 World Cup.

Eder

Forward

Wide man and free-kick wizard who was deployed as an auxiliary forward.

Serginho

Forward

Powerful target man who was only in the team because Reinaldo and Careca were unfit.

Star man

Socrates

While Zico was in many ways the star of the team, topping the scoring charts and wearing the famous No.10 shirt, nobody embodied the spirit of this Brazil side quite like their captain. In addition to being a qualified doctor and outspoken critic of the country's military dictatorship, Socrates was a gloriously cool footballer, that patrolled the midfield elegantly. He was also the brains of the team, knitting together attacks to ensure that the wealth of other creative talents around him did not get in each other's way. A unique figure in Brazil's footballing history that has arguably never been replaced.



Italy 1982

With the domestic game in disgrace, Enzo Bearzot's side travelled to Spain and restored a country's pride in its national game



Italy went into the 1982 World Cup in Spain on the back of a match-fixing scandal that led to several arrests, and Milan and Lazio being relegated to Serie B. Paolo Rossi, the most high-profile of those arrested, was given a three-year ban, which was reduced by 12 months to allow him to play in the finals.

The tournament was the first to feature 24 teams and was played in two group stages before the winners of the second phase contested the semi-finals.

With three draws in their first-round group – against Poland, Peru and Cameroon – there was little indication of what was to come from Enzo Bearzot's team.

But in the second phase the sterile Italians began to play. The midfield pairing of Giancarlo Antognoni and Bruno Conti became more expressive and, having beaten Argentina 2-1, a Rossi hat-trick saw off Brazil 3-2 in one of the World Cup's greatest-ever games.

Keir Radnage reported in the August 1982 edition of *World Soccer*: "Brazil had been everybody's favourites. Yet on this marvellous afternoon they were matched

and eventually outmanoeuvred by an Italian side who discovered they could meet the ultimate challenge".

Two more Rossi goals beat Poland in the semi-finals, to set up a final against West Germany. Having overcome the tournament favourites, the Italians had belief, but their confidence took a dent by two injuries. Antognoni, their most creative player with three assists, was forced to sit out the final after picking up an injury against Poland. Then, within ten minutes of the final itself, centre-forward Francesco Graziani was forced off with a shoulder injury.



Iconic...Marco Tardelli's famous celebration

The first half ended goalless, but after half-time Italy rallied. Inspired by the outstanding Conti, Italy scored three times after the break – through Rossi, Marco Tardelli and substitute Alessandro Altobelli – to win 3-1 and secure their first world title since 1938.

"To win the World Cup is football's greatest achievement. To achieve that triumph with your midfield general in the stands and your centre-forward taken out in the seventh minute is to succeed on the grand scale," Radnage added.

"No one can say Italy did not deserve to win the cup. To beat the holders [Argentina], then the favourites [Brazil], then the champions of Europe [West Germany] says it all; that is the achievement of world champions."

44

Magic number

Years between Italy's 1938 and 1982 World Cup victories; a record gap

Honours

World Cup
1982

Iconic Match

Italy 3-2 Brazil, 1982 World Cup second group stage



Strongest XI

Dino Zoff

Goalkeeper

Italy's captain and, at the age of 40, the oldest goalkeeper to ever win the World Cup.

Claudio Gentile

Defender

Kept a 21-year-old Diego Maradona at bay in the second group stage, telling him: "Football's not for ballerinas."

Gaetano Scirea

Defender

One of the great sweepers, he kept a young Franco Baresi on the bench. Tragically killed in a car crash at the age of 36.

Fulvio Collovati

Defender

Played for both Milan clubs and scored three times in 50 caps for Italy. Later worked as a television analyst.

Antonio Cabrini

Defender

Energetic wing-back whose penalty miss in the final did not detract from his performance.

Bruno Conti

Winger

Italy's attacking threat from the right, he assisted two goals in the final.

Marco Tardelli

Midfielder

Midfielder famous for his passionate celebration after scoring in the final.

Gabriele Oriali

Midfielder

Exceptional man-marker, tasked with protecting the defence, who was capped 28 times by his country.

Giancarlo Antognoni

Midfielder

A regular at the 1978 finals, he was at the peak of his powers in 1982.

Francesco Graziani

Forward

Scored 23 goals in 64 games for Italy, but was injured after just seven minutes in the final.

Paolo Rossi

Forward

Went to the tournament amid huge controversy but returned a hero.

Tactics

During the tournament, Italy's formation was lopsided: on the left, Cabrini was tasked with getting up and down the pitch, but Conti was far more advanced on the right flank, with Gentile covering to create a back four at times. That changed in the final, with 18-year-old Giuseppe Bergomi drafted in to play as a conventional right-back, leaving Gentile to track Pierre Littbarski's every move, while Conti became the main playmaker in Antognoni's absence. Oriali and Tardelli patrolled the midfield, with Graziani granted the freedom to drift between the left flank and the centre to support the prolific Rossi.

Coach

Enzo Bearzot

A centre-back who won just one cap, he coached Serie C club Prato before taking charge of Italy's Under-23 side in 1969. An assistant to Ferruccio Valcareggi at the 1974 World Cup, he was appointed national coach in 1975. He led the team to fourth place at the 1978 World Cup, a home European Championship in 1980 and the 1982 triumph, then stood down after the 1986 World Cup. He died in 2010, and in 2011 was among the first inductees into the Italian Football Hall of Fame.



Star man

Paolo Rossi

Rossi's journey from suspension to victorious Golden Boot winner remains one of the World Cup's greatest stories. In that sense, he personified this Italy team, still reeling from the fallout of the Totonero scandal as they prepared for a World Cup in which they were not expected to do well. After a slow start – understandable, given that he had only played three games in the previous two years – Rossi burst into life in the latter stages of the tournament, scoring six goals to seal both the top scorer and best player awards. Maintained his innocence in the scandal until his death in 2020.



Twelve teams that shocked the world

A look at the trailblazers, the record-breakers and the unlikely victors that have stunned the football world since the first issue of *World Soccer* in October 1960...



TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

1960s



Led by captain Danny Blanchflower and manager Bill Nicholson, Spurs became the first English team in the 20th century to win the coveted league and FA Cup double in 1961. They won their first 11 games of the season and went on to amass a total of 115 goals in 42 league matches.

Jack Rollin reported Tottenham's success in the June 1961 edition of *World Soccer*: "Spurs' achievement over the whole season earned them the justified title of 'finest team in England'."

But they were not content with simply being the best in the country, and took on Europe, too. In 1962-63, they became the first English team to win a major European trophy, defeating Spaniards Atletico Madrid 3-1 in the European Cup Winners' Cup final in Rotterdam, with two goals from the late, great Jimmy Greaves.



PORTUGAL

1966

Portugal had never qualified for a World Cup before arriving in England in 1966, but under the guidance of Sporting coach Otto Gloria and Benfica director of sport Manuel da Luz Afonso – and, of course, inspired by the great Eusebio – *A Selecao* almost tasted greatness.

The nucleus of their side was made up

of the Benfica team that won back-to-back European Cups in 1961 and 1962, and was led by two Mozambique-born superstars: captain Mario Coluna and the tournament's Golden Boot winner, Eusebio.

With the pair at the fulcrum of every attacking move, Portugal weaved their way to the semi-finals where they faced hosts England. Two Bobby Charlton goals gave the Three Lions a narrow 2-1 victory and, although the tournament should have been a springboard for future Portuguese success, the team split up soon after. It would be another 20 years before they qualified for another World Cup.





INDEPENDIENTE

1970s

From 1972 to 1975, the Avellaneda club made the history books by becoming the first and only team to win the Copa Libertadores four years running.

They were a remarkably resilient team, well-versed in winning crunch games. In their 1975 triumph, they went into their last semi-final group match needing to win by three goals against Cruzeiro of Brazil in order to advance, yet they found a way through, winning 3-0.

Yet possibly more significant than their success was the style that they did it with; or rather, one of them did it with. The team was built around their iconic No.10 Ricardo Bochini, an Independiente legend with a club-record 638 appearances.

He was the type of player that Argentinian football prizes above all others: a playmaker that dictates the team's attack. More than that, he was a street footballer, relying on technical ability rather than physical attributes to outsmart his opponents. Through his performances with Independiente he attracted plenty of admirers – among them Diego Maradona. Bochini was Diego's hero and inspiration, and can therefore be considered one of the most influential players in Argentine football history.



CZECHOSLOVAKIA

1976

The image of Antonin Panenka dinking his decisive penalty kick down the middle of the goal against West Germany's Sepp Maier is a memory that never fades when recalling the Czech side that surprised everyone to win the 1976 European Championship in Belgrade.

The Czechs, to their credit, were unbeaten in 20 games preceding the final, which included an inspiring 3-1 semi-final win against Johan Cruyff and the Netherlands. Not content with beating the previous World Cup runners-up, they took on the world champions in the final.

The likes of Marian Masny, Zdenek Nehoda and captain Anton Ondrus led West Germany 2-0 in the final after just 25 minutes, and almost held on for a remarkable victory until an 89th-minute equaliser. Undeterred, they took the holders to penalties and sealed the victory there, thanks to Panenka's glorious chip.



DYNAMO KIEV

1986

Eleven years after Valeriy Lobanovskiy had guided Dynamo Kiev to their first European Cup Winners' Cup success in 1975, with a victory over Ferencvaros, the club repeated the feat with a 3-0 annihilation of Luis Aragonés' Atletico Madrid at the Stade de Gerland in Lyon.

In fact, Dynamo were so impressive throughout the 1985-86 campaign that they won every home leg in the

competition – plus the final – by at least three goals.

Lobanovskiy proved to be a coach ahead of his time. He liked his team to play a hard-pressing style, defending as a unit and adopting a precise passing game when in possession. He called his style of play "universality" and coached his team to attack and defend as one. When in possession, Dynamo would keep the playing area as large as possible, and when defending they would press and reduce the space.

The influential coach guided the Soviet Union to the final of the European Championship two years later, but Dynamo have failed to taste success in Europe since his departure.





RED STAR BELGRADE

1991



Red Star became the only club from Yugoslavia to win the European Cup when they defeated Marseille on penalties in 1991.

They reached the final by taking the game to the opposition, playing dynamic attacking football to thrash Grasshoppers, Rangers and Dynamo Dresden before beating Bayern Munich in the semi-finals.

Robert Prosinecki, a classy midfielder who had caught the eye in Yugoslavia's World Youth Cup victory in 1987 in Chile, emerged to dovetail sublimely with his fellow mercurial talent, Dejan Savicevic.

They adopted a far more defensive approach for the final in Bari, but it was enough to see them home. Prosinecki would go on to play a vital role in another team that stunned the world a few years later, as Croatia finished third at their first World Cup as an independent nation in 1998.

No club from Eastern Europe has been able to win the continent's top club prize since.



DENMARK

1992

The Danes had already caused a stir by being handed a last-minute place at Euro '92, called up to the tournament to replace Yugoslavia, who were forced to withdraw due to the brewing civil war.

And they did more than just take part. Though the 1992 side had little of the style that was on display in the mid-1980s, they were more clinical and, ultimately victorious, walking away with the trophy after beating Germany 2-0 in the final.

It was the last tournament before the introduction of the backpass rule, and the Danes mercilessly exploited that fact, regularly kicking the ball back to Peter Schmeichel, especially in the final.

But that did not detract from the fairy-tale nature of their victory. In the August 1992 edition of *World Soccer*, Jim Holden wrote: "Denmark celebrated their triumph with an open-top bus ride down Hans Christian Andersen Boulevard in Copenhagen. That was appropriate, for football's ugly ducklings, dismissed by every expert, had given the tournament grace and greatness as they matured into soccer swans."



SENEGAL

2002

Twelve years and three World Cups after Cameroon had stunned the world with an opening-day defeat of holders Argentina at Italia '90, Senegal repeated the feat in their first-ever finals against a France side who began the 2002 tournament as favourites to retain their crown.

Under the guidance of French coach Bruno Metsu, the "Lions of Teranga" were to provide further evidence of African football's growing stature in the game.

Earlier in the year, Metsu's side had reached the Africa Cup of Nations final where they lost on penalties to Cameroon. Then, in Japan and South Korea, they followed up their 1-0 win over France with two draws – against Denmark and Uruguay – to secure a place in the last 16, where they beat Sweden 2-1 with a "golden goal" from Henri Camara.

Senegal had matched Cameroon's record as the only African country to reach the quarter-finals of a World Cup, but their adventure finally came to an end with a 1-0 defeat to Turkey. Tired and nervous, Metsu's team were themselves beaten by a "golden goal" four minutes into extra-time.



REAL MADRID

2003-04

The Spanish giants deserve a mention here less for their exploits on the pitch as those off it. In 2003, Florentino Perez's team reached peak *Galactico*, signing David Beckham from Manchester United for €35 million. Claude Makelele, meanwhile, the team's primary defensive midfielder, departed for Chelsea, prompting Zinedine Zidane to ask: "Why do you need to add a gold layer on a Bentley, when you have already lost the engine?"

Beckham and Zidane lined up together in the 2003 Spanish Super Cup against Mallorca alongside Roberto Carlos, Luis Figo, Raul and Ronaldo, in a team that was



more celebrity than sporting.

In spite of their investment, it proved an unsuccessful campaign, finishing fourth in La Liga and crashing out of the Champions League at the quarter-final stage.

Nevertheless, their policy of big-money spending on big names set in motion a trend that continues today, with ever-spiralling transfer fees.



GREECE

2004

Greece shocked the entire footballing world when they won Euro 2004 in Portugal. A team built on work-rate and defensive stability rather than skill – emphasised by three 1-0 wins in each of their knockout-round games – twice beat the host nation and also eliminated holders France in the quarter-finals.

In the August 2004 edition of *World Soccer*, Keir Radnedge wrote: “Take any tournament shy on technique or talent or class and football history records how organisation, discipline and hard work can win the day.

“The surprise of Euro 2004 was that Greece made those qualities count rather than any one of the usual quota of northern European pretenders.”



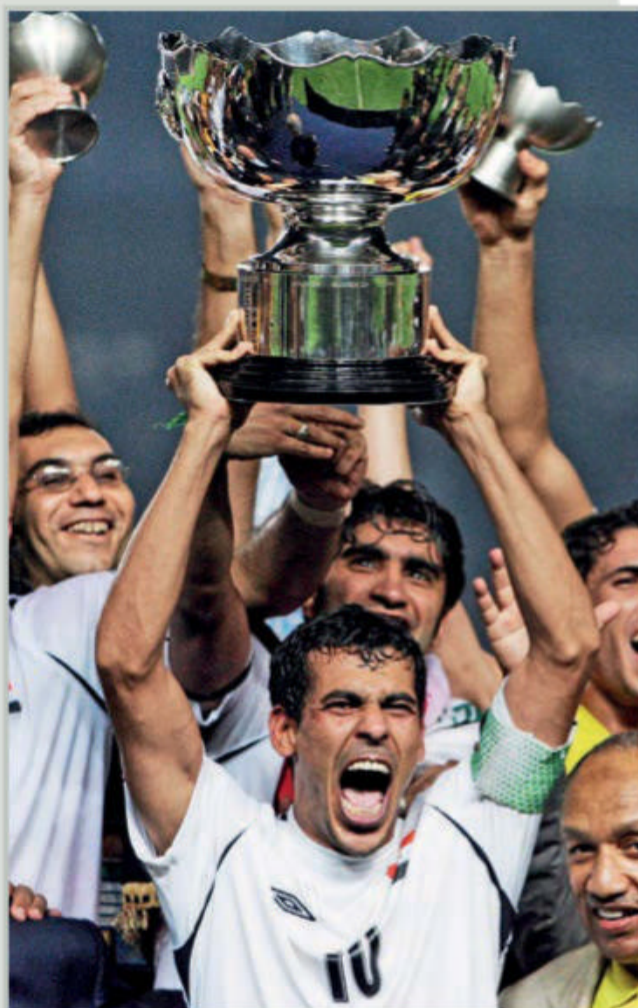
IRAQ

2007

An unlikely contender, but worthy of their place after this war-torn nation achieved the unthinkable by winning the Asian Cup final. Four days earlier, over 50 Iraqi fans had been killed by a bomb in the Mansour area of Baghdad.

Iraq’s players themselves overcame personal terror, including the car bombing of the team physio, the death of goalkeeper Noor Sabri’s brother-in-law and the killing of midfielder Hawar Mulla Mohammed’s stepmother, to defeat Saudi Arabia 1-0 in the final in Jakarta, Indonesia.

In the September 2007 edition of *World Soccer*, Michael Church wrote: “Saudi Arabia were seeking a record fourth continental title, and few pundits gave the Iraqis much hope against a side that had impressed in knocking out defending champions Japan in the semi-finals. After the game [captain] Younis Mahmoud said: ‘A mother of one of the victims [of the Mansour bombs] said she had not wept over her child’s



dead body but had declared: ‘I present my son as a sacrifice to the Iraqi national team’. So we had to win.” And the Lions of Mesopotamia duly obliged.



LEICESTER CITY

2015-16

In 2016, Leicester City became the first English champions to win *World Soccer’s* World Team of the Year award since Manchester United in 1999 and only the third to win the accolade, along with Everton in 1985.

“A perfect storm of factors combined to deliver the title to Leicester. Claudio Ranieri’s tactics – ‘Italian defence, England attack’ as he called them – made perfect use of the players at his disposal,” read Gavin Hamilton’s verdict.

“While their closest rivals struggled to combine European campaigns with consistent domestic form, Leicester had no European distractions and few injuries to derail their challenge.”

A squad that had been tipped for relegation contained players with much to prove after rejection at previous clubs – the likes of Danny Drinkwater, Kasper Schmeichel, Danny Simpson, Wes Morgan, Marc Albrighton and Robert Huth – as well as relative unknowns picked up by clever scouting, such as Riyad Mahrez, Christian Fuchs, Shinji Okazaki, N’Golo Kante and Jamie Vardy.

Liverpool 1984

The side that won Liverpool's fourth European Cup in seven years was arguably the finest



Listening to the verdicts of the Liverpool players involved in their 1984 European Cup triumph, it would be reasonable to assume that they had won the game comfortably rather than in a tense penalty shootout.

"We were all just so calm, ready to go. This was a team of winners and nothing affected us," defender Mark Lawrenson told *World Soccer*.

"One of the lads started singing the Chris Rea song, *I Don't Know What It Is But I Love It*, in the tunnel...it probably gave [the Roma players] a hint that we weren't worried about what was to come.

"We were the better side."

This was the aura that the Reds had built around themselves since their first

taste of European success in 1977. Although Phil Neal was the only survivor from that side, the winning mentality, grown out of the famous "Boot Room" where Bill Shankly, Bob Paisley and Joe Fagan discussed their team, was very much in tact.

Paisley was manager in 1977 as Liverpool won the final 3-1 against Borussia Monchengladbach, then oversaw 1-0 victories over Club Brugge the following year and against Real Madrid in 1981.

But in 1983 he retired, handing the reigns over to his assistant, Fagan, and in his first season the new manager oversaw one of the most successful campaigns in Liverpool's history, winning the First Division and League Cup as well as the European Cup.

European champions... Liverpool players parade the trophy



Spaghetti legs...Bruce Grobbelaar watches a penalty fly over the bar

For a team that had come to dominate English football, winning three league titles in a row and eight in 11 years, this was the pinnacle. Glancing through the team it is clear to see why: Lawrenson was partnered in defence by Alan Hansen, one of the club's greatest-ever centre-backs; Graeme Souness was captain and at that time one of Europe's finest midfielders, while in attack, the club's greatest-ever goalscorer, Ian Rush, was paired with arguably its greatest ever player, Kenny Dalglish.

It would prove to be Liverpool's last European Cup for 21 years. The following season they lost in the final to Juventus, in a match overshadowed by pre-match violence inside the Heysel Stadium. After Liverpool fans charged at the Juve fans, a perimeter wall collapsed, causing 39 fans to lose their lives. As a result of the disaster, English clubs were banned from European competitions until 1991-92.

The Reds remained a dominant force domestically, but the tragedy brought an end to English supremacy in the European Cup.

3

Magic number
1983-84 was the third season in a row that Liverpool won both the First Division and League Cup trophies

Honours



European Cup
1984



First Division
1984



League Cup
1984

Iconic Match

Liverpool (P) 1-1 Roma, 1984 European Cup final



Strongest XI

Bruce Grobbelaar

Goalkeeper

His famous “spaghetti legs” proved crucial in the shootout, with two Roma players blasting over.

Phil Neal

Defender

A regular scorer in 11 years at Anfield, and the only Liverpool player to win four European Cups.

Mark Lawrenson

Defender

Joined for a club-record fee of £900,000 in 1981.

Alan Hansen

Defender

Classy centre-back that won three European Cups.

Alan Kennedy

Defender

Scored the winner against Real Madrid in 1981 and the decisive penalty against Roma.

Craig Johnston

Midfielder

Born in South Africa but brought up in Australia, he won two England U21

caps and turned down a call-up for Scotland.

Sammy Lee

Midfielder

Diminutive, aggressive local lad, that played every single game of the European Cup campaign.

Graeme Souness

Midfielder

Titanic club captain. The European Cup final was his last game for Liverpool before joining Sampdoria.

Ronnie Whelan

Midfielder

Republic of Ireland international that spent 15 years at Liverpool.

Kenny Dalglish

Forward

Iconic figure in Liverpool’s history, managing the club twice after a stellar playing career.

Ian Rush

Forward

Scored a club-record 346 goals across two spells at Liverpool, spending two years at Juventus.

Tactics

When Bill Shankly was still manager of Liverpool in the early 1970s, the coaching staff were troubled by how they couldn’t translate their domestic success onto the European stage. The result was a style that was still evident a decade later: the Reds played a patient, passing game, understanding the need to retain possession from both an attacking and defensive point of view. Hansen was key to that, with his ability to play out from defence. In attack, Dalglish linked the midfield to his speedy partner Rush.

Coach

Joe Fagan

Although Fagan only took charge of Liverpool at the start of the 1983–84 season, he had been an influential figure at the club throughout their success. He was a regular in the “Boot Room”, a small room inside Anfield where he would sit with his predecessors Shankly and Paisley, to discuss the team. It was said to be the source of much of the Reds’ success, allowing them to promote from within as managers stepped down. Fagan was therefore able to continue with the previously successful approach, commanding the respect of all the players. He retired shortly after the Heysel disaster in 1985, replaced by Kenny Dalglish.



Star man

Ian Rush

This was a star-studded Liverpool line-up, boasting over a thousand club appearances and countless major honours, yet the standout performer was the man that simply could not stop scoring. Rush was named 1984 Player of the Year by both the PFA and the Football Writers’ Association, having scored 47 goals in all competitions – a record for a Liverpool player that still stands. On top of his goals, he was renowned for his work-rate and “defending from the front” leading Liverpool’s press when they lost the ball. With Dalglish next to him, Liverpool had a front two of skill, speed, intelligence and goals.



France 1984

The magical *Les Bleus* who, inspired by Michel Platini, proved that style and technique could be a winning combination



By the early 1980s, a trend had set in at major international tournaments with teams of substance beating those of style. Some of the best footballing teams lost out: Netherlands in the 1974 and 1978 World Cups, and Brazil at Spain '82.

West Germany's functional game had dominated the European Championship in 1980, but four years later France broke the mould. By Beating Spain to become champions, they proved that a team with flair could overcome pragmatism.

Coach Michel Hidalgo built his side around a generation of talented youngsters, containing the midfield alliance of Alain Giresse, Jean Tigana, Bernard Genghini and their mesmerising captain and attacking genius Michel Platini, who established himself as one of France's greatest-ever players.

France had gone close to winning the 1982 World Cup, when some observers had even dubbed them "the European Brazil", but they were beaten by West Germany in a thrilling semi-final. But

they reached their peak on home soil two years later.

The tournament's curtain raiser in Paris featured the hosts' game with Denmark. It was a close encounter until Platini's goal on 78 minutes gave them a 1-0 victory. He then scored hat-tricks against Belgium and Yugoslavia as *Les Bleus* recorded maximum points in Group 1.

Their semi-final clash against Portugal in Marseille is regarded as one of the best matches in European Championship history. Jean-Francois Domergue scored the opener, but Portugal equalised through Rui Jordao. The game went to extra-time, with Jordao scoring again in the 98th minute to hand Portugal the lead, but France rallied with late goals from Domergue and Platini to give France a memorable 3-2 victory.

The final was played to a capacity crowd at the Parc des Princes, in Paris. Just before the hour mark, Platini scored from a free-kick to put France ahead. *Les Bleus* were reduced to ten players when Yvon Le Roux was sent

Glory...the France players pose around the iconic European Championship trophy



Standout player... Michel Platini

9

Magic number

Goals scored by Platini to win the 1984 Euros' Golden Boot

off, but Bruno Bellone's injury-time goal won Hidalgo's side their first major championship in world football.

In the July 1984 edition of *World Soccer*, Keir Radnedge heralded France's victory. He wrote: "That France should emerge as winners was a climax for which all football fans should rejoice... a deserving prize for the stimulation, entertainment and sheer fresh air which the French have breathed into the game.

"France have now re-established a sense of football justice. Teams can win at the highest level while concentrating on the virtues of skill, technique and vivacity. Teams can win at the highest level with superior class."

Honours



**European Championship
1984**

Iconic Match

France 2-0 Spain, 1984 European Championship final



Tactics

Hidalgo's side switched between 4-4-2 and 3-5-2 during the 1984 finals, but the one constant was the *Carre Magique* (magic square) in midfield – Fernandez, Tigana, Giresse and Platini – the perfect mixture of silk and steel. During the group stage, the suspension of attacking full-back Manuel Amoros and an injury to Le Roux forced Hidalgo to play a back three of Battiston, Bossis and Domergue, although he reverted to a more conservative 4-4-2 for both the semi-final and final.

Coach

Michel Hidalgo

A midfielder who won one cap for France and scored for Reims in the 1956 European Cup final, he performed a series of coaching roles within the French federation before becoming national coach in 1976. After his victory, he passed the reins over to his assistant Henri Michel and got a job as the federation's technical director, where he remained until 1986 before a spell in charge of Marseille in the late 1980s. He died in March 2020 in Marseille, at the age of 87.



Strongest XI

Joel Bats

Goalkeeper

Auxerre keeper who became France's first choice in 1984.

Patrick Battiston

Defender

Famed as the victim of West Germany keeper Toni Schumacher's foul at the 1982 World Cup.

Maxime Bossis

Defender

Experienced organiser and sweeper who was once France's most capped player.

Yvon Le Roux

Defender

Powerful and combative Monaco stopper who was sent off in the 1984 final.

Jean-Francois Domergue

Defender

Scored two crucial goals in the semi-final clash against Portugal.

Luis Fernandez

Midfielder

Blessed with exemplary

tackling and distribution and, at 24, the youngest member of the midfield.

Alain Giresse

Midfielder

Slight in stature but technically gifted and buzzing with energy.

Jean Tigana

Midfielder

Mali-born member of the famed midfield quartet. Dynamic, athletic and skilful in equal moments.

Michel Platini

Midfielder

Inspirational leader with wonderful passing and playmaking skills. The brains of the team.

Bernard Lacombe

Forward

Prolific in the French league. The Euro '84 final was his last game for France.

Bruno Bellone

Forward

Retired at 28, but wrote his name in the history books with his final goal.

Star man

Michel Platini

Not many players had more of an impact on a single European Championship than the 1984 edition's top scorer. His nine goals remain a record for the most in a single Euros, while his leadership as captain and all-round play easily made him the tournament's best player. He was later dubbed, "the European footballer of the 1980s" by Pele: "He didn't run a lot, like Cruyff, and didn't depend on his physique, but I liked how he was the brain organising things on the pitch. He was a player who used his head in the broader sense." Replaced as France's record scorer by Thierry Henry in 2007.



Denmark 1984-86

The “Danish Dynamite” side thrilled the international stage in the 1980s, setting the foundations for future success



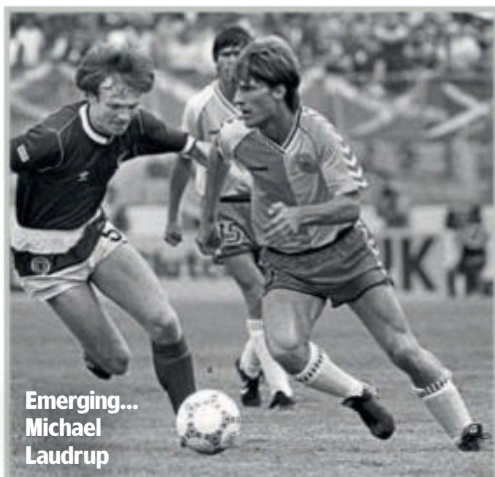
Denmark enjoyed little international success before Sepp Piontek's appointment in 1979. In fact, they had never qualified for the World Cup and had participated in just one European Championship; a fourth-placed finish back in 1964.

But the pipe-smoking German, who had played 278 league games for Werder Bremen and won six caps for his nation, built a team that stepped up to the world stage with thrilling effect. After their efforts at the 1984 European Championship, qualifying ahead of England, and their impressive group stage performance at the 1986 World Cup finals, they earned the nickname “Danish Dynamite”.

Piontek brought discipline to the relaxed Danish way of life, guiding a group of talented individuals who were widely perceived as chain-smoking, beer-drinking everymen, but who also played their club football for some of Europe's leading teams. “You can call us the European Brazilians if you like,” boasted Piontek.

With prolific goal-grabber Allan Simonsen, the 1977 Ballon d'Or winner, approaching the end of his career and injured in the opening game of Euro '84, 19-year-old Michael Laudrup emerged as a worthy successor. Spain eventually ended their challenge, winning on penalties in the semi-finals, but Denmark – and their fun-loving “Roligan” fans – had made their mark in France.

Comparisons were drawn with the Dutch team of the 1970s, particularly with key players such as Frank Arnesen,



Emerging...
Michael
Laudrup

Success...the Danes celebrate beating England at Wembley

Soren Lerby, Jesper Olsen and Jan Molby all playing in the Netherlands.

Their defining performance came in 1985: a 4-2 World Cup qualifying victory over USSR in Copenhagen, a game that is considered the greatest in the country's history. “For me this will always be the game,” said Laudrup later, having scored twice against the Soviets. “Six goals, which could easily have been ten.”

It was this approach that made the Danes everybody's second-favourite team in Mexico. Drawn alongside West Germany, Scotland and Uruguay in the so-called “group of death”, they swept aside their opponents, including a 6-1 thrashing of the South Americans. In the second round, they took a 1-0 lead over the Spaniards, but their open style would ultimately be their undoing, going on to lose 5-1.

In April 1990, Piontek quit after failing to qualify for the 1990 World Cup. But his 11 years at the helm laid the foundations for a shock victory at Euro '92 – even if very little of the attacking flair remained.

9

Magic number

No team scored more group stage goals than Denmark at World Cup 1986

Iconic Match

Denmark 4-2 Soviet Union, 1986 World Cup qualifier



Strongest XI

Ole Qvist

Goalkeeper

Shared duties with Troels Rasmussen and Lars Høgh in the 1980s, until Peter Schmeichel's emergence.

Soren Busk

Defender

Centre-back who formed a strong partnership with Morten Olsen.

Morten Olsen

Defender

Captain whose positional awareness and defensive intelligence was key.

Ivan Nielsen

Defender

Centre-back who could also play at left-back. Played for Feyenoord in the Netherlands.

Jens Bertelsen

Midfielder

Known as the "Grey Man" for his quiet but exceptional work-rate in front of the defence.

Frank Arnesen

Midfielder

All-rounder who joined

Ajax as a teenager and had spells at Valencia, Anderlecht and PSV.

Klaus Berggreen

Midfielder

Able at wing-back or midfield. Spent his club career in Italy with Pisa, Roma and Torino.

Soren Lerby

Midfielder

Dynamic, tough tackler who enjoyed success with Bayern Munich.

Jesper Olsen

Winger

Ajax and Manchester United winger. Was pushed high up the pitch to support the front two.

Michael Laudrup

Forward

Denmark's greatest player, played for Juventus, Real Madrid and Barcelona.

Preben Elkjaer

Forward

Powerful, determined goalscorer whose regular smoking did not diminish his effectiveness.

Tactics

Although they were inspired by Total Football, Denmark's approach was not a direct copy of the Netherlands. Their chosen formation was 3-5-2 rather than 4-3-3, while the individual dribbling ability of Laudrup, Arnesen and Jesper Olsen allowed them to be less reliant on passing moves. The emphasis was very much on attack, with the wingers pushed high up the pitch while the deep-lying midfielders covered the gaps. As Piontek admitted: "Entertaining, attacking football is the thing for us".

Coach

Josef "Sepp" Piontek

Born in Poland and raised in Germany, he played full-back for Werder Bremen and West Germany. He won six caps before embarking on a coaching career that included spells at Haiti and Fortuna Dusseldorf. He finally won acclaim in charge of Denmark and was voted *World Soccer's* Manager of the Year in 1983. He created the *bodekassen* (the penalty box) during his Denmark spell, in which players' fines were kept. He then used the money to buy presents for his players on special occasions.



Star man

Preben Elkjaer

Michael Laudrup is widely regarded as the greatest Danish footballer of all time, but he was still in the early stages of his career during Sepp Piontek's spell in charge. Elkjaer, however, was in his prime. The clinical striker scored two goals at Euro 1984, but missed the decisive penalty in the semi-final with Spain. He still finished third in the 1984 Ballon d'Or vote, second in 1985 and fourth in 1986; the same year he scored four goals at the 1986 World Cup to win the Bronze Ball. Retired with 38 goals in 69 caps.



Argentina 1986

With Diego Maradona at the heart of everything they did, *La Albiceleste* won their second World Cup in the heat and altitude of Mexico



Never in World Cup history – or perhaps any competition – has a team so famously and so spectacularly been built to serve the talents of one individual.

Right from the start of the 1986 finals in Mexico, when he created all three of his country's goals in their opening game against South Korea, through to the final when, as Argentina's captain, he lifted the trophy after a 3–2 victory over West Germany in Mexico City's Azteca stadium, Diego Armando Maradona was the star of the show.

In the quarter-final against England, Maradona scored two of the most famous World Cup goals of all time: one for its controversy, and the other for its sheer brilliance. The notorious "Hand of God" and the "Goal of the Century" (as it was voted on FIFA's website in 2002) ensured that the spotlight was entirely focused on the 25-year-old.

Yet while the praise was rightly poured on Maradona for his outstanding performances, it also owed a lot to his

manager. Carlos Bilardo had used the game to unveil his secret tactical plan, a 3–5–2 formation.

Argentina had perfected the system on a tour of Europe in 1984, but Bilardo chose to hide it away until crunch time, in order to prevent opponents from working them out. The group stage and last 16 matches were negotiated with a 4–4–2, before the new plan was revealed.

It proved an absolute masterstroke. Maradona was unleashed, with four of



Hand of God...
the first
goal of the
quarter-final

**Goal of the Century...
Maradona's second
goal against England**

his five tournament goals coming in the knockout stages. In the final against West Germany he was quieter, but set up the winner for Jorge Burruchaga in the 3–2 victory.

Far from a one-man team, the Argentina side of 1986 was a perfect example of a coach getting the best out of his players, in a system that made them more than the sum of their parts. As Maradona himself told *World Soccer* later that year: "We understood each other and the way we all wanted to play the game...It was Carlos Bilardo who put all our schemes into our heads so that we got to know what each player would do without even having to call!"

10

Magic number

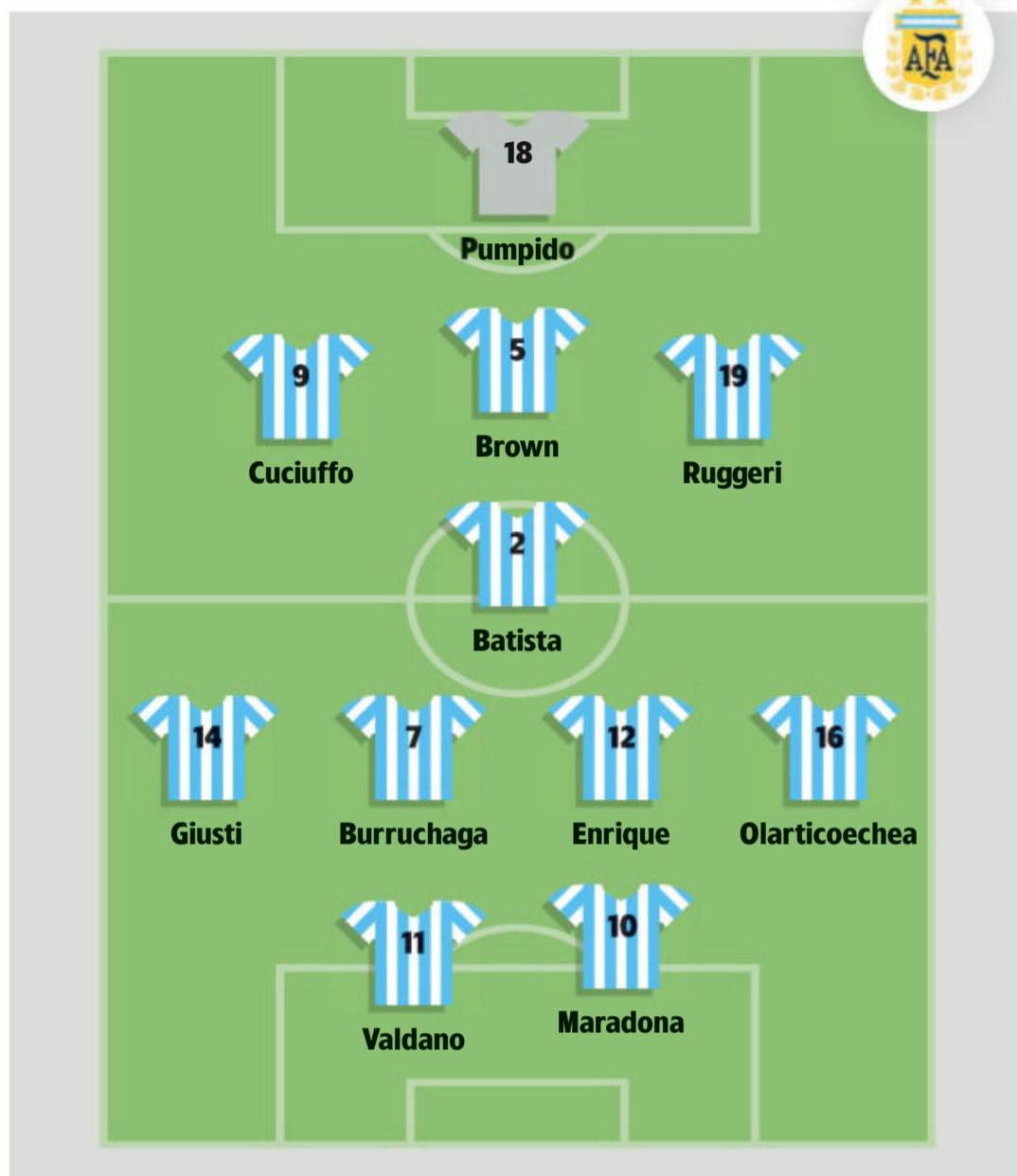
Number
of goals
Maradona
contributed,
with five
goals and
five assists

Honours


World Cup
1986

Iconic Match

Argentina 2-1 England, 1986 World Cup quarter-final



Strongest XI

Nery Pumpido

Goalkeeper

Looked unsteady at times, but a solid shot-stopper.

Jose Luis Cuciuffo

Defender

Excelled after being called in for the second group game against Italy.

Jose Luis Brown

Defender

Sweeper who scored Argentina's first goal in the final and played on despite a shoulder injury.

Oscar Ruggeri

Defender

Commanding stopper and ever-present at the finals. Played for Boca and River.

Ricardo Giusti

Midfielder

Industrious grafter, who occupied the right-hand flank. Won 53 caps.

Jorge Burruchaga

Midfielder

France-based, he was outstanding as the link-man between midfield and attack.

Sergio Batista

Midfielder

Ball-winning defensive midfielder who sat in front of the back three. Argentina coach from July 2010 to July 2011.

Hector Enrique

Midfielder

Hard worker who came in for the clash v England and kept his place. Injured for the 1990 World Cup.

Julio Olarticoechea

Midfielder

Left-sided player who replaced suspended left-back Oscar Garre against England.

Diego Maradona

Forward

The undisputed star of the tournament who confirmed his status as the world's best player.

Jorge Valdano

Forward

Brilliant foil for Maradona who scored four goals in total at the tournament, including the second in the final v West Germany.

Tactics

Bilardo had first used the 3-5-2 system when he was in charge of Estudiantes, using wide midfielders rather than full-backs. The three defenders and five midfielders provided a platform for Maradona to weave his magic, while also ensuring there was enough muscle in the team to prevent him from being kicked out of the tournament, as he was at Spain '82. It was not a completely foolproof strategy – England almost equalised after bringing on attacking wingers John Barnes and Chris Waddle – yet neither they, Belgium nor West Germany managed to outfox Bilardo's system.

Coach

Carlos Bilardo

A qualified doctor who had been an influential midfielder for Estudiantes when they beat Manchester United in the 1968 World Club Cup final, he replaced Cesar Luis Menotti as Argentina coach in 1983 and would clash repeatedly with his predecessor on tactical matters. He remained in charge until the 1990 World Cup final. Later reunited with Maradona at Sevilla (1992-93), Boca Juniors (in 1996) and with the national team at the 2010 World Cup in a "general manager" role.



Star man

Diego Maradona

There may never be another tournament that is so defined by one player. Maradona's performances in Mexico '86 elevated him to the status of Pele as arguably the greatest footballer of all time, and continue to give him the edge over Lionel Messi as the greatest-ever Argentine in the eyes of many of his countrymen. In the review of the 1986 World Cup, Keir Radnedge wrote in *World Soccer*: "Maradona was not only the winning captain, he was the star of the tournament and he provided moments of magic and inspiration which left every other player – yes, even Frenchman Michel Platini – looking pedestrian by contrast."



Netherlands 1988

They harnessed the talents of Koeman, Rijkaard, Gullit and Van Basten to become the first – and so far only – Dutch side to win an international title



After the exhilarating events of the 1970s, Dutch football took a turn for the worse in the early and mid-1980s. The national team missed out on the 1982 and 1986 World Cups, while France emerged as the dominant nation in Europe, winning Euro '84.

But, in the second half of the decade, a group of players emerged who would push Dutch football back to the centre of the European game, playing a slightly less adventurous version of Total Football. In May 1988, PSV, featuring young sweeper Ronald Koeman, won the European Cup, while Ruud Gullit and Marco van Basten were spearheading Milan's revival in Italy's Serie A.

At international level, Netherlands, with coach Rinus Michels back at the helm, went to the 1988 European Championship in neighbouring West Germany – the scene of their 1974 World Cup final defeat – with a new generation of ambitious young players.

It was not, however, all plain sailing.

In fact, there was a point in which it looked like they wouldn't even make it to the 1988 tournament. During their home match against Cyprus in qualification, all they needed was a win to book their ticket to Germany. They eased to an 8-0 victory, but the game was marred after a supporter threw a missile at the Cypriot keeper, forcing him to withdraw through injury.

After the game, UEFA decided to award Cyprus a 3-0 "paper" victory. The Dutch appealed and managed to book a replay in an empty stadium, which they won 4-0. They finished with 14 points from eight games, having scored 15 goals and conceded just one. As Koeman said before the tournament started: "Our time has come."

After losing their opening group game to the Soviet Union, Michels' side beat England 3-1 and then needed a last-gasp win over the Republic of Ireland to set up an

Final...Ruud Gullit and Gerald Vanenburg celebrate after their win against the Soviets



Statesman... Arnold Muhren

54

Magic number

The minute Marco van Basten scored one of the most iconic goals in football history

epic semi-final, in which they beat the hosts in Hamburg with another late goal, this time from Van Basten.

Oranje supporters pored over the border for the final in Munich's Olympic Stadium. The Soviets, without suspended defender Oleg Kuznetsov, were overrun by the brilliance of Gullit and Van Basten. Both scored in a 2-0 victory, with Van Basten's volley for the second goal remembered as one of the greatest ever.

"We have no reason to talk any more about 1974," Michels told *World Soccer* after the wait for a trophy had been ended. "We beat West Germany in Hamburg, so now 1974 is history."

Honours



European Championship
1988

Iconic Match

Netherlands 2-0 Soviet Union, 1988 European Championship final



Strongest XI

Hans van Breukelen
Goalkeeper

A European Cup winner with PSV. Conceded and then saved a penalty in the Euro '88 final.

Berry van Aerle
Defender

PSV captain who became a postman after retiring. Rotated with Sonny Silooy.

Frank Rijkaard
Defender

Began the season by walking out on Ajax after arguing with Johan Cruyff.

Ronald Koeman
Defender

Sweeper with a powerful shot and great passing ability. Was the reigning Dutch Player of the Year.

Adri van Tiggelen
Defender

Played his club football in Belgium with Anderlecht and was an ever-present at Euro '88 for *Oranje*.

Gerald Vanenburg
Winger

Skilful winger who was

raised at Ajax then joined PSV, where he won the European Cup.

Jan Wouters
Midfielder

Combative figure labelled a "thug" by British media after breaking Paul Gascoigne's cheekbone.

Arnold Muhren
Midfielder

Elder statesman who returned to the Dutch set-up after spells with Ipswich and Manchester United.

Erwin Koeman
Winger

Elder brother of Ronald, he played his club football for Mechelen in Belgium.

Ruud Gullit
Forward

The reigning European and World Player of the Year, Netherlands' captain and key player.

Marco van Basten
Forward

Brilliant goalscorer who recovered from injury to play a crucial role.

Tactics

Under Michels, Netherlands played an attacking game based on width and close control, but it was a less adventurous version of the Total Football practised in the 1970s. The 1988 team were more direct, with Muhren and Erwin Koeman often playing long, aerial balls to Gullit and Van Basten – most famously in the Euro '88 final, when Muhren set up Van Basten's acute volley with a typical looped pass. "We emphasised to Van Basten he should not come deep to look for the ball," said Michels, "so we always had someone to aim for when under pressure."

Coach

Rinus Michels

Nicknamed "The General" for his tough demeanour and named Coach of the Century by FIFA in 1999. He earned his reputation as the father of Total Football after introducing his ideas at Ajax and Barcelona in the 1970s, and as coach of the Netherlands at the 1974 World Cup. After suffering a heart attack in 1984, he returned as a consultant to the Dutch FA and then took charge of the national team for the 1988 Euro finals. He coached Bayer Leverkusen after the tournament and died, aged 77, in 2005.



Star man

Ruud Gullit

In 1987, the "Black Tulip" moved from PSV to Milan for a world-record fee as a replacement for Ray Wilkins, forming part of a Dutch trio at Milan that included Marco van Basten and Frank Rijkaard. He also won the 1987 Ballon d'Or and was named *World Soccer's* Player of the Year. Gullit's first season at Milan saw the club win the *Scudetto* for the first time in nine years, but his summer got even better after he led his nation to glory at Euro '88. He went on to play at the 1990 World Cup and Euro '92, but subsequently fell out with coach Dick Advocaat, playing his final international game in 1994.



Milan 1988-90

The Italian club were at the vanguard of a tactical revolution and became the last side to win back-to-back European Cups before the competition was renamed and rebranded



Star-studded... Carlo Ancelotti, Frank Rijkaard, Marco van Basten and Ruud Gullit

In May 1989, in Barcelona's Nou Camp, a footballing revolution reached its zenith. Milan, coached by Arrigo Sacchi and backed by media mogul Silvio Berlusconi, swept aside Steaua Bucharest 4-0 to win their first European Cup for 20 years.

It was a performance described in *World Soccer's* June 1989 issue as "the best footballing exhibition in a European Champions Cup final since Ajax beat Juventus in Belgrade in 1973".

Milan had ridden their luck in the competition's early rounds, before a 5-0 thrashing of Real Madrid in their semi-final second leg sent shockwaves across Europe.

Sacchi's Milan played like no

previous Italian side. His role models were Brazil's 1970 World Cup winners and the Ajax of Rinus Michels. By abandoning man-marking and introducing an intensive, attack-minded pressing game, he revolutionised Italian football.

Having made his name at Parma, Sacchi took charge of Milan in the mid-1980s. At the time, Serie A rules allowed three foreigners in each team: Englishmen Ray Wilkins and Mark Hateley were shown the door and in their place Milan hired Dutchmen Ruud Gullit and Marco van Basten. They were joined a year later by compatriot Frank Rijkaard.

The Dutch trio provided the flair



Intercontinental Cup champions... Franco Baresi lifts another trophy

and attacking verve, an all-Italian defence marshalled by Franco Baresi and featuring a young Paolo Maldini provided the steel, while Sacchi provided the tactical discipline.

It took a dismantling of European royalty for the rest of the continent to sit up and take notice. Ancelotti, Rijkaard, Gullit, Van Basten and Donadoni were all on target in the thrashing of Madrid at the San Siro, with the Spanish giants dispatched within an hour. It was a huge statement that proved beyond doubt that this was no typical Italian side.

In the final they made light work of Steaua, with Gullit and Van Basten each getting a brace.

A year later, they retained the title by beating Benfica – the last club to do so before the competition was rebranded as the Champions League in 1992.

Sacchi stepped down in 1991 to take the Italy job, and was succeeded by his assistant, Fabio Capello.

Although his successor won four league titles and reached three more Champions League finals, he did so with a far more defensive approach.

15

Magic number

Fifteen of Milan's 20 European Cup goals in 1988-89 were scored by the Dutch triumvirate

Honours



European Cup
1989, 1990



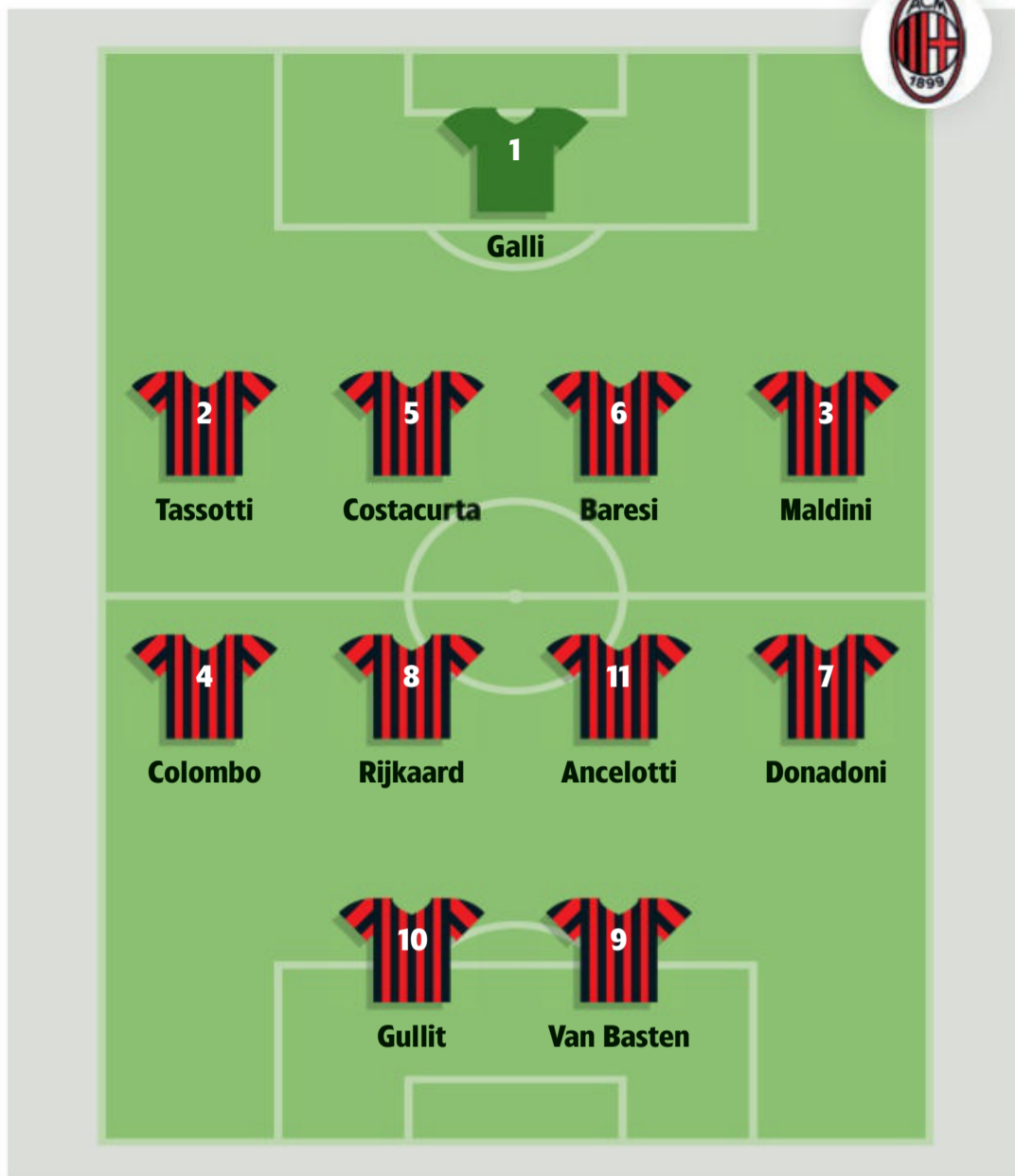
Intercontinental Cup
1989, 1990



UEFA Super Cup
1989, 1990

Iconic Match

Milan 5-0 Real Madrid, 1989 European Cup semi-final



Strongest XI

Giovanni Galli

Goalkeeper

Italy international signed from Fiorentina, who played in back-to-back European Cup finals.

Mauro Tassotti

Defender

Won three European Cups in 17 years at Milan, later serving as a coach, scout, assistant and caretaker.

Alessandro Costacurta

Defender

Nicknamed "Billy", he spent his entire career with Milan, retiring at 41.

Franco Baresi

Defender

Rejected by Inter as a boy, the influential captain played more than 20 seasons at Milan.

Paolo Maldini

Defender

Only 20 when he played in the 1989 final, his first of five victories.

Angelo Colombo

Winger

Played for three seasons

under Sacchi before moving to Bari.

Frank Rijkaard

Midfielder

Arrived after a loan at Real Zaragoza in 1988, bringing poise and physical presence.

Carlo Ancelotti

Midfielder

Was by now approaching the end of his career, which had been spent mostly with Roma.

Roberto Donadoni

Winger

Joined from Atalanta in 1986 and won three European Cups.

Ruud Gullit

Forward

Dutch international signed from PSV. 1987 and 1989 *World Soccer* Player of the Year.

Marco van Basten

Forward

One of the game's greatest strikers, he was forced to retire in 1995 following an ankle injury.

Tactics

In a radical departure for Italian football, Sacchi's Milan played with a back four and no sweeper. Baresi acted as a *libero*, marshalling a tight offside trap that enabled the midfield to squeeze the play. Meanwhile, when the likes of Rijkaard, Ancelotti and Colombo won the ball, the onus was on the quick counter-attack, often through Donadoni on the wing, or Gullit, who had far more licence to roam than central attacking fulcrum Van Basten.

Coach

Arrigo Sacchi

A former shoe salesman who came to Milan's attention when his Parma side, then in Serie B, knocked them out of the Italian Cup. Sacchi had not played professionally but, as he put it: "You don't have to have been a horse to be a jockey." Left Milan to take charge of Italy and, although he reached the 1994 World Cup final, he struggled without the day-to-day interaction with his players. He returned to Milan in 1996, but failed to recreate the magic, and lasted just one season.



Star man

Marco van Basten

Just how many goals Marco van Basten would have scored if he hadn't been forced to retire at the age of 28 remains one of football's great what ifs. He joined Milan in 1987 after scoring a breath-taking 154 goals in 174 games for Ajax, and continued in much the same vein in Italy. The 1988-89 season was his best. Still flying high from Euro '88, when he topped the scoring charts with five goals, including his famous volley in the final, he was in unstoppable form. In total he struck 33 goals in all competitions, including ten in the European Cup en route to the trophy.



The **Berlusconi** *revolution*

In the November 2007 issue of
World Soccer, Keir Radnedge
examined the man behind
Milan's success:
Silvio Berlusconi



In 1986, Milan were scandal-ridden and bankruptcy-bound. Silvio Berlusconi, a lifelong fan of the club that had built his initial millionaire's empire through a media conglomeration based on regional commercial television channels, decided to step in. His father Luigi did not approve, warning: "The only return on your money will be the bad publicity that comes to every president of that club."

Berlusconi, however, was not so much on an ego trip as a commercial voyage. He was the personification of the aggressive commercialism that swiftly revolutionised European club football and led directly to the creation of the Champions League.

Berlusconi went out to win friends through football. So successfully did his business expand – and his ego along with it – that he employed his corporate pre-eminence in Italy as a springboard into politics, becoming prime minister. With a chillingly effective populism he even named his political party Forza

Italia, the traditional encouragement for the national team.

Milan were in a sorry state when Berlusconi swept in. The club, one of the European Cup's original giants, had been relegated twice in quick succession (once as punishment for a match-fixing scandal) and were £20 million in debt.

Berlusconi, setting a pattern that Roman Abramovich would emulate at Chelsea, paid off the debts and provided the cash to buy Ajax's Marco van Basten, the finest centre-forward of his era, plus his compatriot Ruud Gullit from PSV for a then-world record £6m.

After Milan duly carried off the Serie A championship for the first time in nine years, Berlusconi also financed the acquisition of a third key Dutchman, Frank Rijkaard.

Turning stars into winners takes a top-class coach. Berlusconi found him in Arrigo Sacchi. The shoe-maker from Fusignano had never played at professional level, but as he said: "You don't have to have been a horse to be a successful jockey."

Sacchi's horse sense produced a winning thoroughbred by mixing Dutch fluidity with Italian backbone, such players as stopper Alessandro Costacurta, playmaker Carlo Ancelotti (later Milan coach), sweeper and skipper Franco Baresi, and magnificent young left-back Paolo Maldini.

Sacchi, Fabio Capello, Alberto Zaccheroni and Ancelotti all enjoyed long tenures as coach. Here, perhaps, is a key factor in Berlusconi's success. First he appoints top-class coaches, then he leaves them alone to get on with the job, though, as he says: "It's only right and proper that the man who steers the ship should make his views known at the right time and place."

Any coach could disagree with him but only as long as his results stood up. As Berlusconi has said: "Milan would always like to be the best, of course. But at the highest level winning or losing is often a matter of luck.

In the early years, when Berlusconi was still a businessman and had not yet transmogrified onwards and upwards into a political animal, he remained a fascinating individual study in power.

He would hold court at his villa at Arcore, outside Milan, talking and acting with an impatience that was as much physical as it was verbal. Berlusconi would talk in Italian and then switch into English to finish the sentence before the translator had got there; he would constantly jump out of his chair to pour some more water or adjust the window blinds or move a chair. He was a man on the move, and his club have imitated his personality.

In Berlusconi's 21 years in power Milan won 24 trophies, including five Champions Leagues. The personal cost is unknown but Berlusconi concedes the glory and the profile have come at a heavy financial price.

"Milan is a passion I inherited from my father. It's been one of the greatest delights of my life. From the financial point of view, yes, of course it's cost me money. But you must always be prepared to make a sacrifice for something you love."

The first European Cup win, against Steaua Bucharest in Barcelona in 1989, demonstrated Berlusconi's drive not only to be successful but also to be seen to be successful.

On the eve of the final, Spanish TV engineers went on strike. Berlusconi pulled strings. He commandeered an Italian military plane to fly his own technicians and extra cameras into Barcelona on the morning of the game. Thus 300 million viewers around the world saw Milan win the trophy for the third time by a walkover 4-0. They also saw Berlusconi join his players and virtually take over the presentation ceremony.

He was, indeed, the new face of European football, in which the clubs are eroding the power of the national associations. In the early 1990s he forecast: "The concept of the national team will become less and less

"Milan were in a sorry state when Berlusconi swept in...relegated twice in quick succession"

"What is important is that we are always among the main actors in this theatre. As long as we are always competing to win then we will win more often than not – and a winning coach gives me no excuse to replace him."

important. It is the clubs with which fans associate...I can even envisage that one day we will let in fans free to the stadium because we need the thousands to create the atmosphere that television transmits to the millions."

Kings of Europe...
Berlusconi lifts the
1990 European
Cup with the
Milan players

Barcelona 1992

The stylish "Dream Team" won Barca's first European Cup and claimed four consecutive Spanish league titles under Johan Cruyff



By winning the first European Cup in the club's history in their own classy style, Johan Cruyff's masterful side of the early 1990s provided the benchmark for future Barcelona teams.

It was at England's national stadium, in May 1992, that *La Blaugrana* lifted the trophy, albeit in their distinctive alternative orange strip. It was their third attempt – having lost in the 1961 and 1986 finals – beating Sampdoria in extra-time with a spectacular Ronald Koeman free-kick and making them the second Spanish side to lift the trophy.

Much credit for the triumph was due to Cruyff, who had returned to the club in 1988 and was to enjoy more success

as a coach with Barcelona than he had done as a player in the 1970s. Before his arrival, Barca had won just one of the previous 14 La Liga titles, with rivals Real Madrid dominating the Spanish league.

The Dutchman combined local talent – epitomised by young midfielder Pep Guardiola – with imported foreign stars such as Hristo Stoichkov, Michael Laudrup and Koeman, alongside his trademark possession-based football. They would later be joined by the likes of Romario and Gheorghe Hagi.

Early success in Europe was followed by dominance at home. Barca won the 1989 Cup Winners' Cup, while the first of four consecutive Spanish league titles

Glory...Barcelona with the 1992 European Cup



Winner... Ronald Koeman

was claimed in 1991, providing a route back to the top of the European game. Cruyff went on to become Barcelona's most successful coach, amassing 11 trophies, before he was overtaken by Guardiola two decades later.

The 1991-92 season was one of the most dramatic in La Liga history. Barcelona had a poor start, losing three of their first eight games, but then went on an impressive run and lost just three of their next 30. Going into the final gameweek, they trailed Real Madrid by a point. Their rivals suffered a surprise loss to Tenerife, while Cruyff's side won their final game, securing a second consecutive title for the Catalans.

Perhaps the best footballing moments of the Dream Team came in the 1993-94 campaign, however, when Barcelona scored 91 goals – including the historic 5-0 thrashing of Real Madrid. But a 4-0 humiliation by Milan in the 1994 European Cup final in Athens marked the beginning of the end. Cruyff quit in 1996 and vowed never to coach a club side again.

Honours



Spanish Supercup
1992



European Cup
1992



La Liga
1992

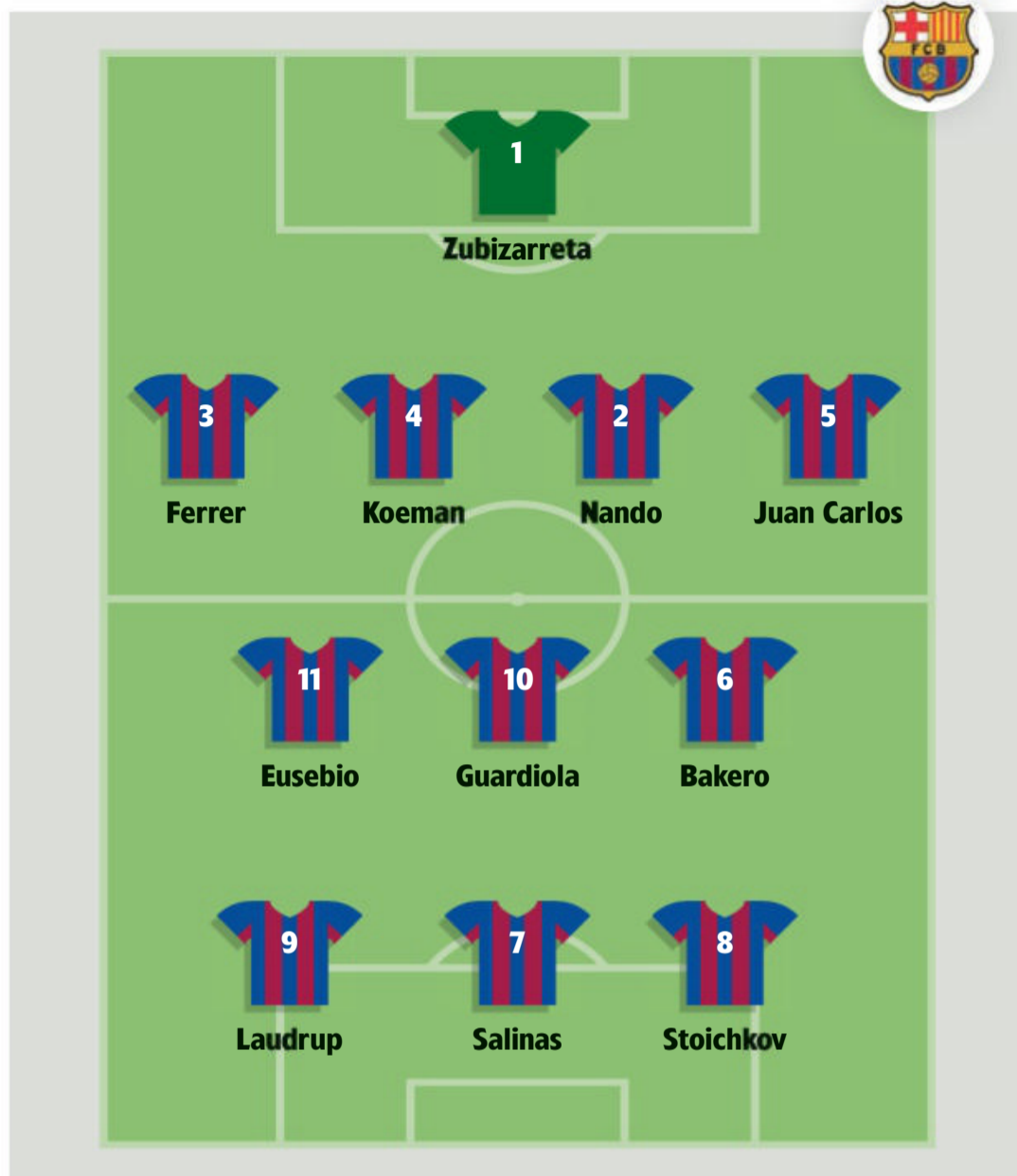
112

Magic number

The minute in which Koeman scored his iconic free-kick against Sampdoria

Iconic Match

Barcelona 1-0 Sampdoria, 1992 European Cup final



Strongest XI

Andoni Zubizarreta

Goalkeeper

Spain international signed from Athletic Bilbao in 1988 for £1.2m – then a world-record fee for a goalkeeper.

Albert Ferrer

Defender

Barcelona-born defender, broke into the side during the 1990–91 season.

Ronald Koeman

Defender

Dutch sweeper renowned for his expert free-kicks. Appointed manager in August 2020.

Nando

Defender

Tough centre-back who joined from hometown club Sevilla in 1990.

Juan Carlos

Defender

Experienced defender who joined from Atletico Madrid.

Pep Guardiola

Midfielder

Local youngster, born in

Barcelona suburbs of Manresa, who cemented a first-team place under Cruyff in 1991.

Eusebio

Midfielder

Diminutive regular throughout the Cruyff era. No relation of the famous Portuguese player.

Jose Maria Bakero

Midfielder

Spain international who was a prolific goalscorer from midfield.

Michael Laudrup

Forward

Brilliant Danish attacker who would make a controversial switch to Real Madrid in 1994.

Julio Salinas

Forward

Tall, orthodox striker who formed the centre point of a three-man attack.

Hristo Stoichkov

Forward

Fiery Bulgarian who repaid Cruyff's faith in him with regular goals.

Tactics

The Dream Team tended to play in the 4-3-3 style developed by Cruyff's mentor Rinus Michels, with attack being the best form of defence. Wingers and attacking full-backs enabled Barca to play a possession game as far up the pitch as possible. "Some people have tried but without success," said Cruyff. "At first, what we do looks simple, our style is based on possession and control but you need players with very high technical proficiency. Milan and Ajax can do it but not many others."

Coach

Johan Cruyff

The Netherlands' most famous footballer played at Barcelona from 1973 to 1978 and returned as coach in 1988. He told *World Soccer* in November 1992: "I love this city. My children go to school here and as far as the football is concerned, I have total authority." He quit in 1996 but was an unofficial advisor during Joan Laporta's first reign as president. His statue was unveiled at the stadium in 2019, while their new training facility and youth academy is named after him.



Star man

Hristo Stoichkov

The Bulgarian forward signed for Barcelona in 1990 off the back of scoring 38 goals in 30 league games for CSKA Sofia and winning the European Golden Shoe. His committed character and fighting spirit instantly made him a fans' favourite. He finished as Barcelona's top goalscorer in his first three seasons at the club, often playing off the left wing, and was awarded with the Ballon d'Or in 1994; the same year he won the World Cup Golden Boot with Bulgaria. He left in 1995, but returned for a second stint in 1996 to 1998.



Ajax 1995

A team dominated by homegrown youngsters overcame Milan to claim the Champions League



Ajax's 1995 Champions League final triumph, featuring a team of mostly local talent, would seem impossible today.

A side containing academy graduates such as the De Boer twins, Clarence Seedorf, Edgar Davids, Michael Reiziger and Edwin van der Sar beat Milan 1-0 in the final in Vienna, with the winning goal scored by 18-year-old substitute Patrick Kluivert. The successful project was overseen by Louis van Gaal, a coach with the confidence – his critics would say arrogance – to promote youth ahead of experience.

There were old heads in the side too, notably Frank Rijkaard, who had returned to Amsterdam after success

in Italy with Milan. But Van Gaal's Ajax played with youthful exuberance.

Van Gaal's approach was both a continuation of Rinus Michels and Johan Cruyff's Total Football approach that had made Ajax the European champions in the 1970s, plus his own distinct style. Where Cruyff placed trust in his players, valuing their creativity, Van Gaal was authoritarian and insisted on players following his instructions.

Infamously, Cruyff and Van Gaal did not see eye to eye, but that did not stop the younger man from delivering success. He won the UEFA Cup in 1992, the KNVB Cup the season afterwards, followed by three league titles in a row, in addition to the Champions

Line-up...Ajax in the Champions League



Leader... Frank Rijkaard

League crown. In total, he lifted 11 trophies in six years in Amsterdam.

Yet within a year of that Viennese success, things had begun to fall apart. Ajax lost the 1996 Champions League final on penalties to Juventus and their brightest stars drifted away. Reiziger and Davids joined Milan on free transfers – made possible by the Bosman ruling – Kluivert followed a year later, and in 1997 Van Gaal left for Barcelona, where he was joined by the De Boer twins.

In the summer of 1996, Ajax quit the homely De Meer stadium for the futuristic Amsterdam Arena – now renamed after Cruyff, their greatest-ever player. For many years, it seemed that the move had cost the club its identity.

Yet the conveyor belt of talent that the success of 1995 was built on has kicked into life again. By reaching the 2017 Europa League final, as well as the Champions League semi-finals in 2019, Ajax have shown that their academy can still create the talent to achieve great things on a European stage. Repeating the success of 1995 may not be so impossible after all.

1

Magic number

In the 1994-95 season, Ajax only lost one game all campaign: a 2-1 extra-time defeat to Feyenoord in the KNVB Cup

Honours



European Cup
1995



Eredivisie
1995



UEFA Super Cup
1995



Intercontinental Cup
1995

Iconic Match

Ajax 1-0 Milan, 1995 European Cup final



Strongest XI

Edwin van der Sar

Goalkeeper

Youth product who spent nine seasons in Amsterdam before joining Juventus in 1990.

Michael Reiziger

Defender

Right-back who made his Ajax debut as a 17-year-old. Joined Milan in 1996.

Danny Blind

Defender

Captain, centre-back and experienced hand who played 13 seasons for Ajax. Father of Daley.

Frank de Boer

Defender

Ajax trainee who became left-back before switching to the centre.

Frank Rijkaard

Midfielder

Versatile European Cup winner with Milan who returned to end his career in Amsterdam.

Clarence Seedorf

Midfielder

Made his Ajax debut aged

16 in 1992 before leaving in 1995 for Sampdoria.

Edgar Davids

Midfielder

Distinctive dreadlocks and nicknamed "The Pitbull" for his tenacious style. Moved to Milan in 1996.

Finidi George

Winger

Nigeria international who would go on to play in Spain for Real Betis and Mallorca.

Ronald de Boer

Forward

Versatile attacker that followed coach Van Gaal to Barcelona. Twin brother of defender Frank.

Jari Litmanen

Forward

Finland international who succeeded Dennis Bergkamp in the No.10 shirt and role at Ajax.

Marc Overmars

Winger

Speedy with a powerful shot, he joined Ajax from Willem II in 1992.

Tactics

Ajax played a traditional 3-4-3 or 4-3-3 system under Van Gaal, with Rijkaard oscillating between central midfield and the defence. George and Overmars offered pace and penetration on the wings, while Litmanen was the elusive, deep-lying forward. In the final against Milan, teenager Kluivert replaced Litmanen in the second half, with Ronald de Boer switching to the right wing. Nigerian attacker Nwankwo Kanu also made a late appearance, replacing Seedorf as Ajax went in search of their late winner.

Coach

Louis van Gaal

Former youth-team coach who was promoted to the top job at Ajax when Leo Beenhakker left for Real Madrid in 1991. A clever tactician but also a strict disciplinarian, he left for Barcelona in 1997, winning La Liga in his first season. His first spell in charge of the Netherlands' national side ended with a poor showing at the 2002 World Cup, but his reputation was revived with more league success at Ajax, before leading Bayern Munich to the 2010 Champions League final.



Star man

Patrick Kluivert

Ajax's success was a real triumph for systems over individuals, yet their teenage striker was arguably their most exciting talent – and not just for his goalscoring heroics in the Champions League final. His first-team debut came less than a year earlier, scoring against rivals Feyenoord in the Dutch Super Cup shortly after turning 18, and he topped the Eredivisie scoring charts with 18 goals.

"Everything that happened in my career started with that night in the Champions League final," he told *World Soccer* of his dramatic goal against Milan. That year he finished fifth in the Ballon d'Or vote, and was named the Dutch Football Talent of the Year.



Manchester Utd 1999

Sir Alex Ferguson's side became the first English team in history to win the "Treble", with a team built around a remarkable generation of academy talent



In the 20th century, only four teams managed to win a treble of the league, domestic cup and European Cup: Celtic in 1967, Ajax in 1972, PSV in 1988 and, on the eve of the millennium, Alex Ferguson's Manchester United.

It was a crowning achievement for Ferguson, who by this stage had established United as England's dominant team, following the creation of the Premier League in 1992. In that time, the Red Devils had won five league titles and two FA Cups, but had yet to conquer the recently rebranded Champions League.

A number of factors played their

part in helping United graduate from domestic dominance to European glory. Jaap Stam's arrival from PSV for a fee of £10.6 million – then a world record for a defender – shored up the back-line, while Dwight Yorke also joined from Aston Villa to form a prolific partnership with Andy Cole.

But, more significant, was the growth from within the squad. That year, the group of players known as the "Class of '92" – Ryan Giggs, Paul Scholes, David Beckham, Nicky Butt, and Gary and Phil Neville matured to become key figures in an historic season.

In addition to their outstanding performances, there was a symbolic

History...the Manchester United players line up



Unstoppable...Giggs scores his FA Cup winner v Arsenal

significance to the prominence of "Fergie's Fledglings", as they were also nicknamed, in tribute to the "Busby Babes" of the late 1950s – the United side torn apart by the Munich air crash.

United boast a proud record of having at least one academy product in every matchday squad since October 1937, but rarely have they had a generation so packed with talent. The echoes of Busby's team created a sense of destiny about their success.

As did their regular ability to score late on. Throughout the campaign they were relentless and determined, never knowing when they were beaten – most notably in the Champions League final.

Domestically, their defining moment came in the FA Cup semi-final replay against Arsenal, their main rivals for the league. With the game in extra-time, Giggs finished a magnificent, mazy run with an explosive shot into the roof of the net. From then on, they seemed set for glory and, just over a month later, they had their hands on all three major trophies.

Honours



Champions League
1999



Premier League
1999



FA Cup
1999



Intercontinental Cup
1999

5

Magic number
No team has lifted the Champions League with fewer victories than United did in 1998-99

Iconic Match

Manchester United 2-1 Bayern Munich, 1999 Champions League final



Strongest XI

Peter Schmeichel

Goalkeeper

Arguably the Premier League's best goalkeeper. Left United in 1999.

Gary Neville

Defender

Lifelong United fan. Played 54 games in the 1998-99 campaign – more than any other outfielder.

Jaap Stam

Defender

Fell out with Ferguson and left United in 2001, which the Scot regretted.

Ronny Johnsen

Defender

Occasionally deployed in midfield, but at his best in defence alongside Stam.

Denis Irwin

Defender

Comfortable on either side, and precise taker of free-kicks and penalties.

David Beckham

Winger

FIFA and Ballon d'Or award runner-up in 1999. Played central midfield in the final.

Roy Keane

Midfielder

United's driving force in midfield and inspirational captain, the hardman was suspended for the Champions League final.

Paul Scholes

Midfielder

Heralded as the most talented member of the "Class of '92", his poor tackling meant he was also suspended for the final against Bayern.

Ryan Giggs

Winger

Devastatingly quick, his solo goal against Arsenal is one of the FA Cup's most iconic moments.

Andy Cole

Striker

The Premier League's third highest goalscorer of all time, his club form never translated to England.

Dwight Yorke

Striker

Top scorer for United's historic season, with 29 goals in all competitions.

Tactics

The unifying characteristic of the four midfielders in United's conventional 4-4-2 was their stamina, with each required to perform box-to-box roles, supporting the defence and attack. Beckham and Giggs played on their natural sides, tasked with whipping crosses in for the front two – usually Yorke and Cole – whose lethal partnership was a vital component of United's attack. However, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Teddy Sheringham, as they proved in the final, were more than capable back-ups.

Coach

Alex Ferguson

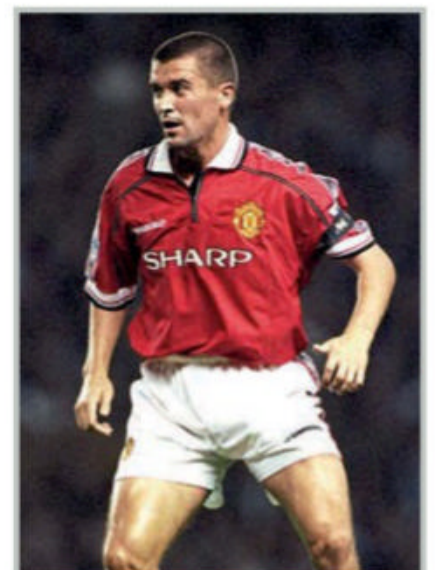
In 27 years at Old Trafford, Ferguson created a footballing dynasty, turning United into English football's dominant side and winning 13 Premier League titles. Given that level of domestic superiority, his return of two Champions League trophies felt below par. But in 1998-99, he created unquestionably the finest team in Europe, with their sheer will to win a reflection of the manager. He ended his career in 2013 with 38 trophies to his name, the most successful British manager of all time.



Star man

Roy Keane

Best known for his defensive attributes and fearsome leadership, Keane was an underrated passer that carried an attacking threat too, most notably in the Champions League semi-final against Juventus. Keane score United's first as they came from two goals down to win 3-2 in Turin, producing a performance that has gone down as one of the most selfless and inspiring in the club's history. Having been booked in the first half, Keane knew he would miss the final, yet dragged his team to Barcelona. Alex Ferguson later said of his captain's performance: "I felt it was an honour to be associated with such a player."



Down the years, the European Cup – under whatever name – has produced some great finals, some thrilling finals, some engrossing finals...but never anything as dramatic as this.

Manchester United's achievement of the treble, matching the feats of Celtic, Ajax and PSV, was eclipsed by the incredible climax to 94 unforgettable minutes at the Camp Nou.

Just as United and their fans could barely believe it, neither could Bayern. In the chaos that followed Pierluigi Collina's final whistle, United manager Alex Ferguson looked as shell-shocked as his opposite number, Ottmar Hitzfeld.

The difference was that Hitzfeld continued to look shell-shocked as the preliminaries to the presentation were undertaken, while Ferguson quickly emerged from his stupor to celebrate.

So the United legend goes on, accruing more and more lustre just as the shares accrue in value, the television price goes on soaring and the merchandising profits go through the roof. But, so what? Time enough in the

weeks and months ahead for the voices of pragmatism. Whatever cynics may say, this was all about one thing – the greater glory of football, the people's game.

All hail, then, to Ferguson, the most successful British manager of all time. The late Jock Stein may have won more trophies but all were gained in charge of Celtic, which, with due respect to the Scottish game in the 1960s and 1970s, does not compare with the competitive here-and-now of the 1980s and 1990s in both Scotland and England. And, of course, Europe.

Oddly, the greatest threat to United maintaining their primacy stems from their own success. They will be under a different sort of pressure next season – to go one better and retain the cup. Not only that, but to win the World Club Cup in Tokyo in December and then maybe go on to the inaugural FIFA World Club Championship in January. The cautious may suggest that United could pull out, but Ferguson's hunger for success is such that one cannot imagine him rejecting the chance to go where no British manager has gone before.

Equaliser...Teddy Sheringham heads goalwards

Whether, after all that, even United, with all their depth of talent, are up to holding on to the European crown (never mind the Premiership and the FA Cup) may be open to doubt. But after the Barcelona fairy tale, who would bet against them?

Football at high level is a cousin of show business, but no novelist or playwright would have dared conjure up so dramatic an ending. No one would believe it – even though the final unrolled amid all the usual theatricals such as a tickets scam, the dancing girls and the local vocal personality (Montserrat Caballe). Then there was the serious stuff, such as Ferguson's decision to cover skipper Roy Keane's absence by switching David Beckham in from the right rather than moving Ronny Johnsen out of central defence.

No doubting the winners in terms of fan power. That was United, who outnumbered Bayern ten to one on the streets of the Catalan capital and, it appeared, by an even greater ratio in the stadium itself.

If that should have helped United

Late, late United steal *the show*

Keir Radnedge's match report from a remarkable night in Barcelona...



feel at ease, it appeared to have quite the reverse effect. Nerves jangled, with captain Peter Schmeichel marking the opening minutes of his last competitive game for the club with a couple of confused clearances which gave Bayern encouragement. Thus, in the sixth minute, they went ahead from "Super Mario" Basler's low, curling free-kick after Johnsen had brought down fast-breaking Carsten Jancker just outside the box.

The gamble of switching Beckham inside left United short of defensive responsibility in midfield. That could have proved costly in the 13th minute when nobody picked up sweeper Lothar Matthaus as he ambled forward on to a short free-kick in midfield from Stefan Effenberg. However, Matthaus' angled chip for Jancker carried slightly too much pace.

The rest of the first half was predictable with United forcing the game – not particularly well either. Andy Cole could not capitalise when the ball bounced around the Bayern box, then a back-flip header from

Dwight Yorke forced a clumsy safety flap from Oliver Kahn.

At the other end Schmeichel and Co. continued to struggle, more with their own nerves than with Bayern's rare incursions. Once, on the break, Matthaus was again left all alone to dash forward but Alexander Zickler dragged his shot wide.

Half-time arrived with United a puzzle. They had wiped away the best of the rest of Europe and the Premiership by using their wide men in just that manner – wide. Now Ryan Giggs, on the right, was continually cutting inside, as was Jesper Blomqvist (on the few occasions he saw the ball) on the other flank. They were playing into Bayern's hands – and feet.

United stuck with their game plan in the second half while Bayern reverted to a more traditional look, Markus Babbel edging back on the right and veteran

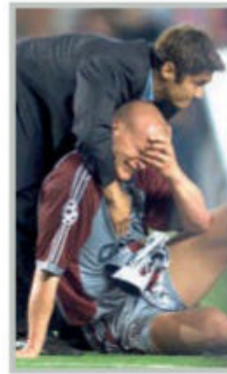
*"No novelist or playwright would have dared conjure up **so dramatic an ending**"*

Matthaus pushing up into midfield. The Germans might also have scored almost immediately: Jancker strode through and rounded Schmeichel, only for the keeper to recover and concede a corner. At the other end, Blomqvist popped the ball over the bar as he dived to reach a cross from Giggs.

But Bayern were far from finished. Mehmet Scholl marked his arrival as substitute for Zickler by setting up Effenberg to fire narrowly wide and then force a fine fingertip save from Schmeichel. At that stage Scholl threatened to win it on his own. In the 79th minute he chipped against the post and Bayern appeared so secure that the decision to replace tiring Matthaus with Thorsten Fink a minute later appeared of minimal consequence.

Perversely, however, it was Ferguson's own introductions of Teddy Sheringham and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer that decided the game. "They are goalscorers, that's what they do best," said Ferguson later. But even he could hardly have expected they would prove his point in such startling fashion. Both took time to adjust. In the period, Schmeichel – now restored to his most defiant – saved well from Scholl, and Jancker's overhead effort hit the bar with six minutes left.

Time was running out for United. Assistant referee Fiorenzo Treossi held up the numbers board with three minutes of overtime signalled in red. It was the danger colour but Bayern did not heed the warning. In the last minute of the 90 United forced a corner.



Inconsolable...Bixente Lizarazu attempts to comfort his teammate Carsten Jancker

Schmeichel charged forward, adding to the penalty-box chaos. Effenberg hooked out the loose ball, Giggs drilled it back in and Sheringham turned it inside Kahn's right-hand post.

Bayern's defenders were distraught. But worse was to come. Within two minutes United forced Sammy Kuffour to concede another corner. Beckham curled it in, Sheringham headed it on and Solskjaer jabbed the ball into the roof of the net.

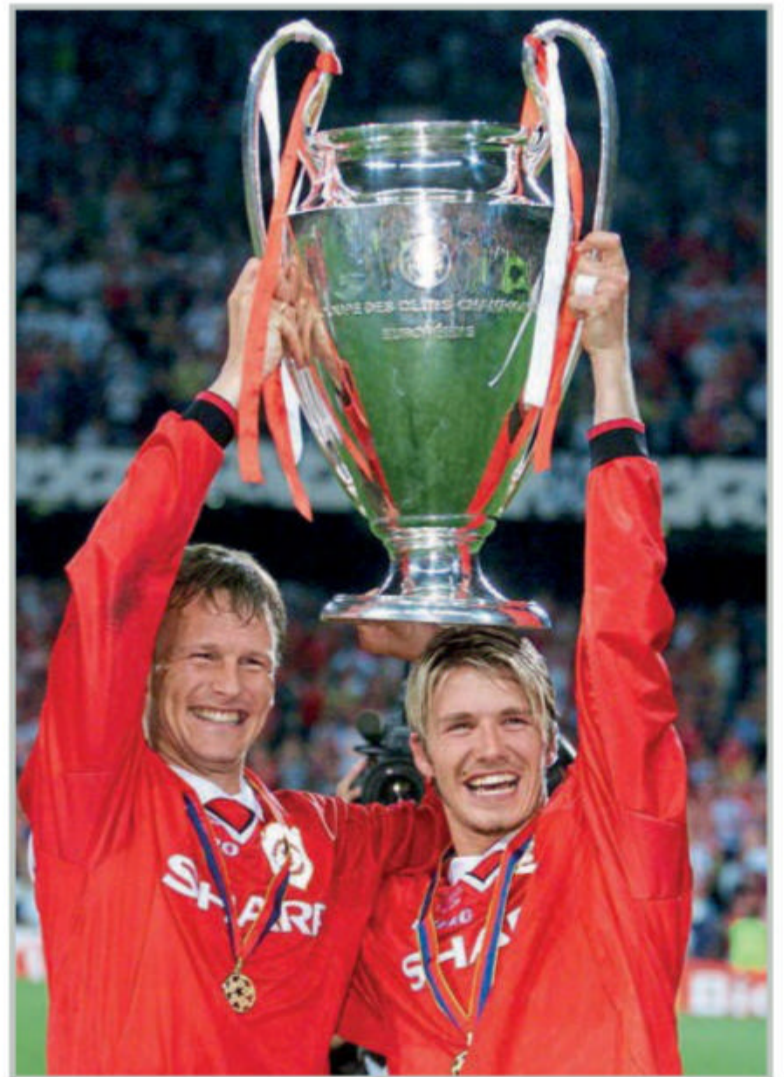
It was all over. Kuffour and Jancker broke down in tears. Matthaus, when he collected his loser's medal, removed it from around his neck as he stepped down from the podium. Hitzfeld said that his players could be proud of their performance, but none of them will ever remember it that way.

In 1974, Bayern snatched an equaliser in the final against Atletico Madrid with the last kick in extra-time

to earn a replay. But football has moved on. A golden goal would have been in demand had Bayern and United finished 90 minutes at 1-1.

But then, no goals will ever be as golden as the two Sheringham and Solskjaer snatched in those dramatic final minutes in Camp Nou.

Winners...Teddy Sheringham and David Beckham lift the trophy



France 2000

Two years on from their first-ever World Cup triumph, a Zinedine Zidane-inspired France were even better at the European Championship in 2000



France, who had won the World Cup two years earlier on home soil, crossed the border into Belgium and Netherlands and became the first team to win the European Championship as reigning world champions. West Germany had done it the other way round, winning the 1972 Euros and then the 1974 world title.

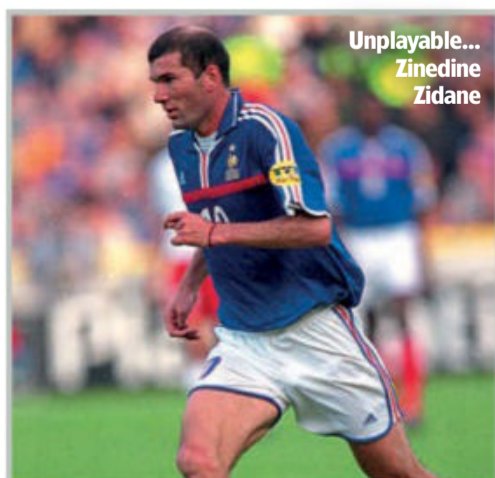
France did it in style at Euro 2000, with entertaining football and sparkling individual displays. The 1998 World Cup team was reinforced by Patrick Vieira in midfield, and had a potent strike force in Thierry Henry and emerging talents David Trezeguet and Nicolas Anelka. Zinedine Zidane at his peak once again proved the key to success.

It was not just the best display of the playmaker's career, but arguably the most dominant display of any player at a single tournament since Diego Maradona in 1986. His stats of one assist and two goals fail to reflect the series of virtuoso performances that he produced. At the time he was simply unplayable, central to every French

attack and tormenting defences with his fine array of skill, dribbling and passing ability.

France cruised through their group, beating Denmark and Czech Republic so easily they could afford to field a second-string XI in their final game, a 3-2 defeat by the Netherlands.

Spain proved a tougher test in the quarter-finals, but Raul missed a last-minute penalty and goals from Zidane and Youri Djorkaeff saw France through. Portugal were seen off in the



Unplayable...
Zinedine
Zidane

Farewell...Euro 2000 was Didier Deschamps' final major tournament

semi-final, despite violent protests at the award of a late extra-time penalty, converted by Zidane.

Italy took the lead in the final and held on until the final minute when Sylvain Wiltord struck, setting up extra time and Trezeguet's "golden goal".

Zidane was named Player of the Tournament, and came second to future team-mate Luis Figo in the Ballon d'Or vote. He was absent a year later for *Les Bleus'* Confederations Cup success, and a thigh injury in 2002 meant that he was unable to prevent France from suffering a shock group-stage exit – without scoring a goal – at the World Cup in Japan and South Korea.

5

Magic number

France won five matches at Euro 2000, matching their own record from 1984

Honours



**European Championship
2000**

Iconic Match

France 2-1 Italy, Euro 2000 final



Tactics

Under Roger Lemerre, France continued with the 4-2-3-1 favoured by Aime Jacquet in 1998. The main difference was that Henry gave them far greater mobility in attack. The back four remained the same as two years earlier, while Vieira was a more dynamic option in central midfield in place of Emmanuel Petit. Zidane was still the playmaker, with Djorkaeff, Dugarry and Wiltord providing attacking width. Lemerre also had the luxury of extra attackers in Trezeguet and Anelka, giving the option to switch to 4-4-2. In the final against Italy, Lemerre chose Djorkaeff over Petit in his favoured 4-2-3-1.

Coach

Roger Lemerre

Assistant to World Cup-winning boss Aime Jacquet, Roger Lemerre took over as national coach in 1998 shortly after the victory on home soil. He oversaw victory at Euro 2000 and the Confederations Cup a year later, but was then sacked after a disastrous showing at the 2002 World Cup in Japan and South Korea, departing with an identical win rate as his predecessor: 34 wins in 53 matches. In 2004 he became the first coach to win both the European Championship and Africa Cup of Nations by guiding Tunisia to the African title, but crashed out at the group stage with Morocco four years later.



Strongest XI

Fabien Barthez

Goalkeeper

Charismatic goalkeeper known for short-sleeved shirts and his athleticism.

Lilian Thuram

Defender

Athletic full-back or centre-back who won a record 142 caps.

Marcel Desailly

Defender

Ghana-born defender or defensive midfielder who won more than 100 caps. Was sent off in the 1998 World Cup final.

Laurent Blanc

Defender

Overcame doubts over his age at Euro 2000. Retired from duty after the final.

Bixente Lizarazu

Defender

Basque-born attacking left-back who spent nine years at Bayern Munich.

Patrick Vieira

Midfielder

Long-legged, dominant player adept at both

ball-winning and creative distribution.

Didier Deschamps

Midfielder

Captain and midfield anchor, famously once dismissed by Eric Cantona as a "water carrier".

Youri Djorkaeff

Forward

Attacking star whose father, Jean, also played for France in the '60 and '70s

Zinedine Zidane

Midfielder

Playmaker of Algerian descent whose influence for France was colossal for more than a decade.

Thierry Henry

Forward

Former winger who was converted into a striker – albeit often coming in off the left wing – at Arsenal.

Christophe Dugarry

Forward

Deployed in a variety of attacking roles. Played for Milan, Barcelona and Birmingham City.

Star man

David Trezeguet

Trezeguet was not France's best performer at Euro 2000 – that accolade belonged to Zinedine Zidane. Nor was he their top scorer, with Thierry Henry topping the charts with three. In fact, Trezeguet played just 149 minutes and started just once, yet in the final, when it really mattered, he delivered. After replacing Youri Djorkaeff in the 76th minute, it was his header that found Sylvain Wiltord to equalise in stoppage time. Then, when the ball dropped to him in the penalty area in extra-time, he swivelled and slammed the ball into the roof of the net to seal the trophy for his nation.



Boca Juniors 2000

South American club champions who beat the best that Europe had to offer



Europe's best conquered...Boca celebrate winning the Intercontinental Cup v Real Madrid

One of the finest teams to come out of Argentina, Boca Juniors won three Copa Libertadores in four years, plus the Argentinian Apertura and World Club Cup in both 2000 and 2003.

Two early Martin Palermo goals against Real Madrid in November 2000 gave Boca their second World Club Cup and Carlos Bianchi – who won it with Velez Sarsfield in 1994 – the distinction of becoming the first coach to win the trophy with two different clubs.

Bianchi joined Boca in 1998 and the side were unbeaten as they won the Apertura that year. The Clausura title followed six months later, but in 2000 he took the team to another level.

The spine was built on the Colombian trio of Oscar Cordoba in goal, Jorge Bermudez at centre-back and holding midfielder Mauricio Serna, while their attack was led by two players of totally different styles.

Juan Roman Riquelme was the classic Argentinian No.10, with a game based purely on technique and street smarts, while centre-forward Martin Palermo was an uncompromising goalscorer. Across two spells at the club he broke the all-time goal record, but from 1998 to 2001 he was particularly devastating, scoring 70 goals in 88 games. With Riquelme feeding him chance after chance, he was simply unstoppable.

With that combination of toughness,



Record scorer...Martin Palermo celebrates the Copa Libertadores victory over Palmeiras

creativity and ruthless finishing, Boca won the Copa Libertadores in June 2000 with a penalty shootout victory against holders Palmeiras of Brazil after a 2-2 aggregate draw. Both Boca goals were scored by left-back Rodolfo Arruabarrena, who would miss November's game against European Cup winners Real Madrid, as would Walter Samuel, who had joined Roma.

Bianchi called the victory against Real Madrid one that was "not only for Boca, but for the people of Argentina".

A year later, Boca retained the Copa Libertadores with another penalty success, this time against Cruz Azul of Mexico, but came unstuck back in the World Club Cup as Bayern Munich beat them 1-0 in extra-time.

Bianchi and Boca went their separate ways at the end of 2001 after the head coach fell out with the club chairman, Mauricio Macri. However, Bianchi would return in 2003 to build another team – this time around the talents of young Argentinian Carlos Tevez – and Boca once again would win the Copa Libertadores and World Club Cup.

22

Magic number

Winning the 2000 Copa Libertadores ended a 22-year wait for the trophy for Boca Juniors

Honours



Primera Division
2000



Copa Libertadores
2000



Intercontinental Cup
2000

Iconic Match

Real Madrid 1-2 **Boca Juniors**, 2000 Intercontinental Cup final



Strongest XI

Oscar Cordoba

Goalkeeper

Hero of two penalty shootouts en route to the 2000 Libertadores.

Hugo Ibarra

Defender

Had three spells at Boca and played for Porto, Monaco and Espanyol.

Jorge Bermudez

Defender

Captain who was a danger when joining the attack. Played for Colombia at the 1998 World Cup.

Walter Samuel

Defender

Started both legs of the 2000 Copa Libertadores final, earning a move to Roma for €20 million.

Anibal Matellan

Defender

Pacy left-back. Began his career at Boca and returned in 2004 after a spell at Schalke.

Sebastian Battaglia

Midfielder

A Boca legend, winning 17

trophies as a player before retiring in 2013.

Mauricio Serna

Midfielder

Colombian, capped 51 times, who retired in 2005 before running a museum, restaurant and marketing company.

Jose Basualdo

Midfielder

Won the Intercontinental Cup, Copa Libertadores and Argentinian title with Boca and Velez Sarsfield.

Juan Roman Riquelme

Midfielder

An all-time Boca great. Moved to Spain in 2002 but returned in 2007.

Marcelo Delgado

Forward

Played in three successful Libertadores teams under Bianchi before re-joining Cruz Azul in 2003.

Martin Palermo

Forward

Boca's all-time leading scorer and fourth on the list of appearances.

Tactics

For the most part, Bianchi's Boca were hard and cautious. It was the team in which Walter Samuel made his name, lying at the heart of a tough defence. Although both of the full-backs liked to attack, only one went forward at a time, while the midfield trio in front of the back four was tough and hard-working. The purpose of this was to provide a platform for their playmaker, Riquelme, who operated behind the bustling Palermo and his strike partner, providing an enormous source of creativity.

Coach

Carlos Bianchi

As a player, Bianchi was a prolific goalscorer in Argentina and France, where he starred for Reims, PSG and Strasbourg, and scored eight goals in just 14 international caps. As a coach, he made his name at Velez Sarsfield, winning two Argentinian titles, the Copa Libertadores and the Intercontinental Cup, before joining Boca in 1998. In two spells at the Buenos Aires club he won four league titles, three Libertadores and the two Intercontinental Cups. Returned for a third spell in 2013-14 without success.



Star man

Juan Roman Riquelme

As a footballer, Riquelme did not really belong in the 21st century. He had no pace and didn't train well, often struggling to keep up with fast and frenetic games. But when conditions were right – as they were at Boca in the early 2000s – he was quite simply a joy to behold. When he got on the ball, time seemed to stand still. Indeed, he was a known exponent of "la pausa", the pause just before a No.10 plays his pass, as he waits for the other players to fall exactly into the correct position, like pieces on a chessboard. At Boca, he was given the freedom to do just that, and the fans loved to watch him. In 2019, he returned as club vice-president.



Arsenal 2004

The Gunners' extraordinary "Invincibles" side, led by legendary manager Arsene Wenger, remains the only team in Premier League history to go an entire season undefeated



The notion of Arsenal going a whole season unbeaten was actually suggested by Arsene Wenger in September 2002.

His side had begun the campaign in style, breaking the domestic record for scoring in consecutive games and notching up the most away league games without defeat.

"It's not impossible to go through the season unbeaten and I can't see why it's shocking to say that," he said, ahead of a Premier League clash with Bolton Wanderers. "Every manager thinks that but they don't say it because they're scared it would be ridiculous."

After going on to reach a Premier League record of 30 games unbeaten, Wenger's side eventually lost to Everton in October 2002 to Wayne Rooney's first goal as a professional. Wenger's fairy tale was mocked by some, but the seed had been planted.

The Gunners' historic unbeaten run actually began at the end of 2002-03. They lost the title to Manchester United after a home defeat to Leeds United,

but ended the season with two big wins, beating Southampton and Sunderland 6-1 and 4-0 respectively.

They started the 2003-04 campaign with four straight wins, but had perhaps their closest shave at Old Trafford in game number eight; Ruud van Nistelrooy's late penalty struck the crossbar to allow Arsenal to escape with a 0-0 draw.

With Sol Campbell and Kolo Toure at the heart of their defence, Ashley Cole providing pace from the left flank, Patrick Vieira marshalling the midfield, and the attacking quartet of Robert Pires, Freddie Ljungberg, Dennis Bergkamp and Thierry Henry causing havoc, the North London side were on a par with the best in Europe.

Nevertheless, as the campaign progressed, some nerves clearly started to kick in: in April, they had to recover from a 2-1 half-time deficit at Highbury to beat Liverpool 4-2 and stay on course for both the Premier League trophy and their unbeaten season.

Later that month, they secured their first objective: a 2-2 draw with

Invincibles...Arsenal's heroes celebrate after beating Leicester on the final gameweek



Captain fantastic... Patrick Vieira

36

Magic number
Number of wins Arsenal recorded in their 49-game unbeaten stretch

Tottenham Hotspur at White Hart Lane won them the sweetest of titles at the home of their biggest rivals. They then avoided defeat against Birmingham City, Portsmouth, Fulham and Leicester City to complete the first unbeaten English top-flight league campaign since Preston North End in the 19th century.

Wenger was palpably proud: "Someone threw me a T-shirt after the trophy was presented which read 'Comical Wenger says we can go the whole season unbeaten'. I was just a season too early!"

A further nine games unbeaten at the start of 2004-05 extended their record to 49 games without defeat, a figure that may never be broken.

Honours



Premier League
2004

Iconic Match

Arsenal 2-1 Leicester City, 2003-04 Premier League



Strongest XI

Jens Lehmann

Goalkeeper

Signed from Borussia Dortmund, Lehmann played every game of the unbeaten league season.

Lauren

Defender

Powerful and versatile Cameroonian who joined in 2000. A penalty expert.

Kolo Toure

Defender

Played over 300 games for Arsenal in all comps before spells at Liverpool and Manchester City.

Sol Campbell

Defender

The ex-Tottenham captain left on a free transfer to join Arsenal in 2001. Imperious in defence.

Ashley Cole

Defender

One of the club's most successful academy graduates. Lost popularity after joining Chelsea.

Patrick Vieira

Midfielder

Captain from 2002 until leaving in 2005. Highly competitive and aggressive.

Gilberto Silva

Midfielder

Brazilian anchorman who scored Arsenal's first-ever goal at the Emirates.

Freddie Ljungberg

Winger

Had an uncanny eye for goal, and also turned heads as an underwear model for Calvin Klein.

Robert Pires

Winger

The classy winger became a real cult hero. Voted the club's sixth greatest player of all time in 2008.

Dennis Bergkamp

Forward

Nicknamed the "Non-Flying Dutchman" for his fear of flying, a player of touch, class and vision.

Thierry Henry

Forward

Combined pace with clinical finishing to become the club's all-time top scorer.

Tactics

Although Arsenal were usually described as lining up in a 4-4-2 formation, in modern parlance it would probably be a 4-2-3-1, with Bergkamp in the No.10 position, Vieira and Gilberto Silva holding, and Pires and Ljungberg supporting Henry. The Frenchman himself was not a typical centre-forward, but drifted out to the left wing to link up with his international team-mate Pires while Cole overlapped, tormenting opposition right-backs. Although they're remembered for their beautiful football, Arsenal were also an extremely disciplined unit, capable of absorbing attacks and countering at pace.

Coach

Arsene Wenger

While his appointment was greeted with little enthusiasm from the English media, the Frenchman revolutionised Arsenal, becoming the first foreign manager to win a league and FA Cup double and introducing new training, fitness and diet regimes that demanded greater levels of professionalism and discipline from his squad. He famously banned tea, coffee and ketchup – albeit the latter only temporarily – and gave the players sugar lumps at half-time for a quick boost. "Le Professeur", as he was known, has still managed more Premier League games than anyone else and won seven FA Cups – more than any other manager.



Star man

Thierry Henry

A 21-year-old Henry signed for Arsenal for £11 million from Juventus in 1999, once again teaming up with his mentor from Monaco, Arsene Wenger. The French coach soon moulded him into a striker, a move that would reap its rewards. Under Wenger, Henry scored 175 Premier League goals – a league record for a player under one manager. After hanging up his boots, the France forward admitted that his relationship with Wenger wasn't always perfect:

"He was like a father figure for me. So, as you can imagine, with your dad, you argue, you scream, he punishes you. It's complicated at times, sometimes it's the best, sometimes we're best friends, sometimes we're worst enemies and we argue."



Internazionale 2010

The first and only treble in the history of Italian football was Jose Mourinho's masterpiece



Treble winners... Inter line up for the Champions League final

After a 45-year gap since they were last crowned club champions of Europe, Jose Mourinho's Inter – whose starting line-up didn't contain a single Italian player – beat Bayern Munich 2-0 in the Champions League final to claim their third trophy of the season.

While it was an historic achievement for the club, featuring outstanding performances from Diego Milito, Wesley Sneijder and Lucio, Mourinho was the star of the show, building a team entirely in his own image: organised, ruthless and prepared to do whatever it took to win.

It was a team that was, in many ways,

the antithesis of the Barcelona and Spain teams that were winning trophies and plaudits at that time. Mourinho, a former coach at the Nou Camp, had missed out on the Barca job to Pep Guardiola, and as a result seemed determined not just to win, but to do so in a style that was diametrically opposed to the "tiki-taka" approach that had become so popular.

That clash of styles was evident in the teams' Champions League semi-final clash in April 2010. Inter went into the second leg with a 3-1 advantage, having won at the San Siro a week earlier.

Even before the first whistle, Inter set



Upset...Mourinho celebrates on the Nou Camp pitch

out to get under Barcelona's skin, with winger Goran Pandev replaced by defender Cristian Chivu in the starting line-up just minutes before kick-off.

They surrendered possession for much of the game, seeing just 24 per cent of the ball and failing to take a shot. Yet they remained resolute, even after going down to ten men, and a late Gerard Pique goal proved to be just a consolation.

In the final they showed more ambition, overcoming Bayern with a brace from Milito, while Pandev returned to the line-up. "Mourinho continues to write not only all his own scripts but other people's as well," said Keir Radnedge in the June 2010 edition of *World Soccer*.

After completing the treble, Mourinho left Inter to join Real Madrid, and was replaced by Rafael Benitez. He failed to maintain the momentum, however, and was sacked in December 2010, while Inter had to wait until 2021 for their next league title.

Honours



Champions League
2010



Serie A
2010



Coppa Italia
2010



Club World Cup
2010



Italian Super Cup
2010

1

Magic number

Inter only lost one home game in all competitions in 2009-10

Iconic Match

Barcelona 1-0 Inter, 2010 Champions League semi-final second leg



Tactics

While Mourinho's Inter were resolute and defensive when they needed to be, they were also more than capable of scoring goals. They were Serie A's top scorers, demolished Milan 4-0 in the derby, and produced an outstanding display at the San Siro to beat Barcelona 3-1. Sneijder was given freedom as a No.10, while strikers Eto'o and Pandev were deployed on the wings as both an attacking and defensive play: their offensive threat meant that opposition full-backs were reluctant to advance too far forward.

Coach

Jose Mourinho

Mourinho made his name by winning the Champions League with Porto, won three Premier League titles in two spells at Chelsea, and guided Real Madrid to La Liga with a record-breaking points total, but the 2009-10 campaign remains the most successful of his career. In the likes of Lucio, Samuel, Marco Materazzi and others, he found kindred spirits, players who were willing to follow his instructions to the letter and bend the rules where necessary. Since leaving the San Siro, he has struggled to find quite the same bond with a group of players.



Strongest XI

Julio Cesar

Goalkeeper

Brazil's No.1 goalkeeper for a decade. Inducted into Inter's Hall of Fame.

Maicon

Defender

Brazilian who famously had his reputation tarnished by Gareth Bale in 2010.

Lucio

Defender

A World Cup winner with Brazil in 2002. Arrived from Bayern Munich at the start of the season.

Walter Samuel

Defender

A hero in nine years at Internazionale after failing to make an impression at Real Madrid.

Javier Zanetti

Defender

Inter legend with a club record 858 appearances. Used in midfield for the Champions League final.

Esteban Cambiasso

Midfielder

One of Mourinho's trusted

lieutenants in midfield.

Thiago Motta

Midfielder

On the bench for Barca's 2006 Champions League win, then suspended for the 2010 final.

Wesley Sneijder

Midfielder

The team's main creative outlet, with seven assists in the Champions League.

Samuel Eto'o

Forward

First player in history to win back-to-back trebles, having starred in Barca's triumph of 2008-09.

Goran Pandev

Forward

Signed in January to bolster the attack and became key. A North Macedonian legend.

Diego Milito

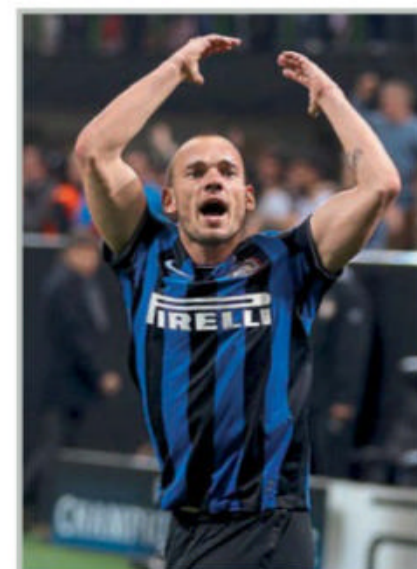
Forward

Scored 30 times in all competitions including two in the Champions League final after joining from Genoa.

Star man

Wesley Sneijder

2010 was the best year of Sneijder's career. It began in August 2009, when he was snapped up from Real Madrid for €15 million – a bargain, considering the impact he would go on to have. Like Deco at Porto and Mesut Ozil at Real Madrid, he would serve as the main creative force in Mourinho's side, provided a platform to pull the strings by the holding midfielders behind him and fleet of attackers in front of him. He was the Champions League's most creative player, and his form remained with him during the 2010 World Cup, helping Netherlands to the final. At the end of the year, he came fourth in the Ballon d'Or vote.



Barcelona 2011

Pep Guardiola's second Champions League-winning Barcelona side was more than a team



In 2008-09, Pep Guardiola completed the remarkable feat of winning the treble in his first-ever season as manager. Two years later he was forced to settle for just two out of three, as Barcelona lost to Real Madrid in the Copa del Rey final.

Yet while it may have been less successful, the 2010-11 season felt more pure.

For a start, many of the first XI had the swagger of becoming world champions with Spain in 2010. The midfield duo of Xavi and Andres Iniesta were the heartbeat of both teams, with *La Masia* graduate Sergio Busquets now very much established as their defensive anchor.

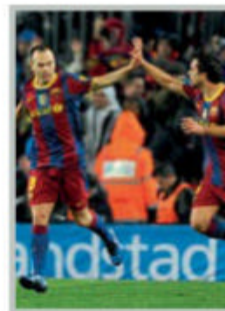
David Villa, Spain's top goalscorer

in South Africa, arrived in the summer of 2010 to replace Thierry Henry, while Samuel Eto'o, Barca's other attacker in 2008-09, had already left, with another academy product, Pedro, taking his place.

The star, of course, was Leo Messi. Having been switched to the false-nine role at the end of 2008-09, he was now a master of the position, with the team set up perfectly around him to make the most of his absurd ability with a football; his creativity, his dribbling, his goalscoring.

Yet perhaps his most important characteristic, in this season at least, was his *La Masia* upbringing. He, along with many of his team-mates, understood perfectly the club's philosophy, having

Wembley...Barca players celebrate with the Champions League trophy



Midfield magic... Iniesta and Xavi

been schooled in it since childhood, while their manager had been through the same system, and coached by Johan Cruyff.

The result was a team that played football from out of this world, winning trophy after trophy while conforming to the club's high ideals.

"They get you on that carousel and they can leave you dizzy," as Alex Ferguson said of the team that beat him in two Champions League finals, including 2011.

On the road to that scintillating 3-1 victory over Manchester United at Wembley, there were plenty of highlights. But the season's finest moments came against their greatest rivals, Real Madrid. In November, Barca handed out a 5-0 thrashing at the Nou Camp, and five months later the teams were drawn against each other in the Champions League semi-finals. Messi was on fire at the Bernabeu, all but sealing their place in the final with two outstanding solo goals.

Guardiola stepped down at the end of the following season, and though Barca have won honours since, no team has hit the same heights in terms of style.

Honours



La Liga
2011



Champions League
2011



Spanish Super Cup
2011



UEFA Super Cup
2011



Club World Cup
2011

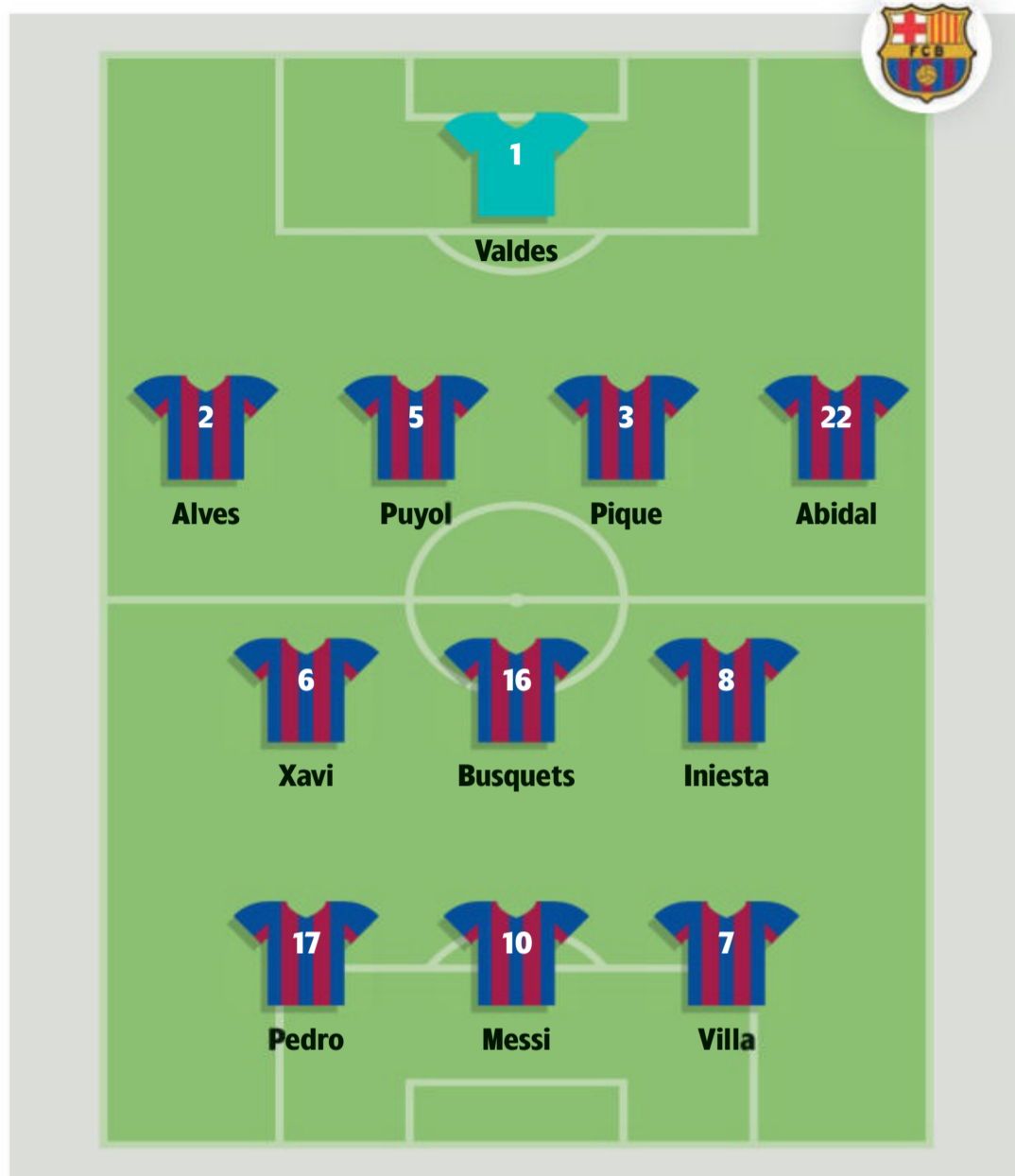
53

Magic number

Number of goals scored by Messi in 2010-11, the first player in Spanish football to pass the 50-goal milestone

Iconic Match

Barcelona 5-0 Real Madrid, 2010-11 La Liga



Tactics

While Barca's style has often been described as "Tiki-taka", Guardiola rejected that label, describing it as "passing the ball for the sake of it". Clearly though, retaining possession was one of the pillars of the team's approach, with the other being a quick, high press as soon as the ball was lost. In terms of the shape, Messi was free to roam the pitch, linking up with the midfield trio, while the movement of wide forwards Pedro and Villa ensured that he always had a target for his through balls.

Coach

Pep Guardiola

Arguably the most influential coach of the 21st century, and certainly the most successful that the Nou Camp has ever seen. Guardiola was Barca through and through, coming through *La Masia* himself and starring in Cruyff's "Dream Team" as a player, before surpassing his old mentor as a manager. Handed the reins to his assistant Tito Vilanova in 2012, though presidential hopefuls regularly tout the idea of bringing him back to the club one day.



Strongest XI

Victor Valdes

Goalkeeper

La Masia graduate, whose ability with the ball at his feet made him a key man.

Dani Alves

Defender

Outstanding attacking right-back who provided countless assists for Messi. The most decorated footballer in history.

Carles Puyol

Defender

Club captain and legend. Only played the final few minutes at Wembley after an injury-plagued season.

Gerard Pique

Defender

One of Pep's first signings, having left *La Masia* to join Manchester United.

Eric Abidal

Defender

Started the Champions League final despite just having a tumour removed from his liver, and was handed the captain's armband by Puyol for the trophy presentation.

Xavi

Midfielder

The team's heartbeat and second in the list of all-time Barcelona appearances.

Sergio Busquets

Midfielder

The most defensive of the famed midfield trio. Named club captain in 2021.

Andres Iniesta

Midfielder

Received standing ovations across the country after Spain's World Cup victory.

Pedro

Forward

Provided the width, pace and energy to help his team-mates thrive, but also a regular scorer.

Lionel Messi

Forward

Scored 53 goals in all competitions and was La Liga's joint-most creative player with 18 assists.

David Villa

Forward

Spain's record scorer, who spent three years at Barca.

Star man

Lionel Messi

In the same way that the Ajax side of the early 1970s would not have been the same team without Cruyff, Barcelona needed Messi to take them to the heights that they reached. True, Xavi, Iniesta and Co. did perfectly well in a Spain shirt, but with Messi joining their endlessly rotating *rondos*, they were unstoppable. His ability to dance through tackles meant that any defence could be breached, including Real Madrid's. In the Champions League semi-final he ghosted through *Los Blancos'* entire defence before sliding the ball past Iker Casillas; one of 12 goals he scored in the competition to collect the Golden Boot.



It was billed as the biggest club match in history: Barcelona versus Real Madrid – two teams boasting 13 world champions between them and the last two winners of the World Player of the Year award, as well as the three favourites to win the prize this year. Two teams boasting the world's best players, Cristiano Ronaldo and Leo Messi, plus Pep Guardiola and Jose Mourinho, the men who have won trebles in the last two years. Never before had a club match brought together so much talent.

And, for once, it lived up to its billing. On one side, at least.

While Barcelona were sublime, Real Madrid, as one columnist complained, were “ridiculous”.

Barcelona tore Real apart. Mourinho had insisted before the match that the *Clasico* would not decide the league title, announcing that “Tuesday would still be Tuesday”.

After three months unbeaten, the best start a debutant coach had ever enjoyed in La Liga, he also insisted that his side would lose at some point. He might even have suspected that point might be against Barcelona, but he wouldn't have expected to lose quite like his team did. The word he used after the game was “historic”.

Mourinho admitted that he had felt “impotent” as Barcelona beat his team. Goals from Xavi and Pedro – the latter after a 58-second, 20-pass move – gave Barcelona a 2-0 lead by half-time.

Two more early goals in the second half from David Villa made it 4-0. And then, with Barcelona content to maintain possession amid the gloating and the “oles”, Jeffren added the fifth late on.

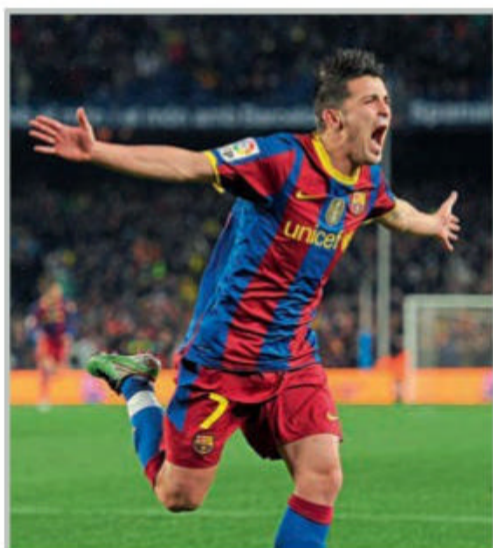
Five gave the score a special symbolism: Barcelona had, for the fifth time, beaten Madrid 5-0. By winning 5-0 they completed what is known in Spain as a *manita* – a little hand, i.e. a goal for every finger. The last two were epoch-defining results led by Johan Cruyff: once as a player in 1974 and once as coach of the legendary “Dream Team” in 1994.

Madrid had barely got near the ball, still less touched it. In the end, the frustration boiled over when Sergio Ramos hacked wildly at Messi's legs and was duly sent off. It was the only way to stop him. For the first time in ten games the Argentinian had not scored, but he had run the game. Alongside him Sergio Busquets, Andres Iniesta and Xavi left Madrid forever arriving a fraction too late, like a man sprinting into the station only to see his train pull away, dashing up to Barcelona's players just as the ball was moved on. Xavi completed an astonishing 114 of 119 passes. Barcelona accounted for almost 70 per cent of possession.

Five-star Barcelona

World Soccer's Sid Lowe reported on Barcelona's 5-0 thrashing of Real Madrid, then the heaviest defeat of Jose Mourinho's career





When Guardiola arrived in the dressing room, he sat his players down and quietly said: "Be humble." But, he added, with a proud smile on his face: "What you have just done was ***** spectacular."

No one could find a flaw in his argument. Or in his team's play. So complete was the victory that even the partisan Madrid press could not complain. Not at first, anyway. Having recovered their composure they began to whinge about referee Iturralde Gonzalez and a possible penalty for Ronaldo. The official had allowed Villa's goal to make it 3-0 to stand even though their picture "proved" it was offside. It was typical, they said, the last three *Clasicos* Iturralde has taken charge of have ended with an aggregate score of Barcelona 11 Real Madrid 0.

That very argument showed the paucity of their complaints – and their picture, not taken as the pass was delivered, proved nothing of the sort. As so often, they saw coincidence as causation.

After all, in the last five *Clasicos* since Guardiola has been Barcelona coach – only one of which Iturralde refereed – Barca have won all five with an aggregate score of 16-2. In his last three *Clasicos* Iturralde had simply been the man with the whistle, watching as Barcelona shone.

This time they shone more than ever.

Clasico clash...iconic moments from the iconic head-to-head

Eighteen months ago Barcelona's 6-2 win over Real Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu was heralded as one of the greatest victories of all time.

Such was the control, precision and pace in the passing, the sheer technical brilliance, that this 5-0 win has been widely hailed as even better. Many were declaring Guardiola's Barcelona the best side in the club's history – and it is not a wild claim, either.

Charly Rexach – the former player, coach and technical director, a Cruyff-ist ideologue at the club and the man to whom Guardiola dedicated his victory – called this the finest performance ever. Given the way that Barcelona had deflowered their opponents, picking them apart artfully rather than blowing them away, given the mind-blowing

control they exercised, it was hard to disagree. Given that their opponents were no mugs but the most expensive team ever assembled, it was harder yet. The week before, Barca had destroyed Almeria 8-0. Afterwards, Cristiano Ronaldo scoffed: "Yeah, I'd like to see

them get eight against us." Had they not taken their foot off the pedal, they might have done so. Midway through the second half, the Almeria player Henok Goitom tweeted: "Madrid, I know how you feel, believe me. You just want it to end." Real were being treated like Almeria; they were being toyed with. Meanwhile, a giant leap was being taken towards the title. Before the match Iker Casillas had declared: "This game could be decisive." In relevant games against the rest of La Liga's clubs, Madrid and Barcelona had lost only six of their last 132 matches. As Guardiola put it last year, the amount of points that Madrid and Barcelona racked up was "barbaric". This season, he said, the total would once again have to be "indecent". No wonder the *Clasico* looked so vital.

"Many were declaring Guardiola's Barca the best side in the club's history"

control they exercised, it was hard to disagree.

Given that their opponents were no mugs but the most expensive team ever assembled, it was harder yet.

The week before, Barca had destroyed Almeria 8-0. Afterwards, Cristiano Ronaldo scoffed: "Yeah, I'd like to see

Afterwards, the narrative changed. Mourinho's insistence that the *Clasico* would decide nothing held sway. Madrid's players left Camp Nou without a word to the media. Mourinho, though, did talk and was humble, quiet and accepting, saying. "This isn't hard to swallow because we deserved it."



The *Barca* blueprint

Jonathan Wilson explains the tactics behind Barcelona's 5-0 victory over Real Madrid

Many clubs and oligarchical owners have a desire to see their team play with the fluency and technical mastery of Pep Guardiola's side. The problem is that Barcelona's sort of integrated, coherent football sits uneasily with the oligarchical model. Football, as countless sugar daddies have discovered, is not just about going out and buying a dozen great players.

Arrigo Sacchi quit as sporting director of Real Madrid in the first *Galacticos* era because there was "no project". He objected to the use of defensive midfielder Claude Makelele to plug the gaps left by the great names who drifted around in front of him, performing their creative duties with little sense of defensive responsibility.



This, said Sacchi, was “reactive” football, a comment which seemed particularly relevant during this season’s first *Clasico* as the second generation of *Galacticos*, with their galactic coach, were humbled by a side featuring eight players who had come through its youth academy – Lionel Messi included.

Jose Mourinho switched Cristiano Ronaldo and Angel Di Maria, so that rather than playing on the left, where he has been so devastating this season, Ronaldo was on the right. It was there, of course, that he enjoyed the bulk of his success for Manchester United, but the switch in itself was an admission of the player’s failings, a recognition by Mourinho that he could not be trusted to track the forward surges of Dani Alves. As a result, Ronaldo was anonymous and ended up being totally overshadowed by the masterful Messi.

That Ronaldo was up against Eric Abidal, a more defensive option brought in for Maxwell, indicated Pep Guardiola had been anticipating this and was a sign that Mourinho, for once, did not have the tactical edge.

The switch also disrupted Madrid’s pattern. Mesut Ozil’s link-up play with Ronaldo has been one of the highlights of their play this season, but it was non-existent against Barcelona. That, of course, was partly because Madrid saw so little of the ball, which meant Ozil had to track Xavi, something he failed to do. Often without a direct opponent, and confident in Barcelona’s ability to keep the ball, Xavi advanced far more than he usually does, with the result that he emerged unexpectedly in the box to score the opening goal.

Ozil’s replacement by Lassana Diarra at half-time was as close to an admission of a mistake as Mourinho is ever likely to come, but by then it was too late, partly because Barca were already 2-0 ahead, and partly because Madrid mentally looked shot; something that was evident both in their shambolic offside line and the lack of coherent pressing in midfield that further exposed that back line.

Mourinho has proved himself spectacularly good at stopping the opposition from playing, but for Sacchi, a fundamentalist in such matters, greatness could only come from those who were “proactive”, who wanted and used the ball, who controlled the pitch. There remains a lingering thought that Mourinho, tail tweaked, may return to thwart Barcelona, but even if he does, Guardiola’s side has attained greatness; the 5-0 win in the *Clasico* was merely another chapter in two-and-a-bit seasons of brilliance.

Lionel Messi, Xavi and David Villa were all exceptional, but the victory wasn’t just to do with them, or just to do with Guardiola. Rather, this was a victory for a style that has existed at Barcelona since Rinus Michels succeeded Vic Buckingham in 1971.

Both had played key roles in establishing “total football” at Ajax, both took those principles to Barcelona and, as Johan Cruyff pointed out during the World Cup, it is now in Spain – and specifically at Camp Nou – that the old Dutch philosophy is pursued most avidly. It is remarkable how closely Barcelona’s model follows that of Ajax, despite the changes football has undergone in the last four decades.

The basic shape is 4-3-3, although with modifications. Messi, as he often

deep, mainly from Messi. Secondly, aware that forwards could be coming from the centre into their zones, the two Madrid full-backs dared not advance too far, which only made it easier for Barca, whose own full-backs could go forward, to dominate midfield.

As in the Dutch tradition, Barca’s back four plays with a high offside line, looking to squeeze space when not in possession. Technical ability, the capacity to receive and lay off a pass in the blink of an eye even under intense pressure is taken for granted. Players interchange positions. Full-backs overlap. The ball is kept on the ground. Possession is cherished. That sort of football, rooted as it is in mutual understanding, can only come from players who have grown up with a shared philosophy. It is only

“Leo Messi played more as a false nine and caused constant mayhem”

does in the biggest games, played less on the right and more as a false nine against Madrid, and he caused constant mayhem drifting behind Pedro and David Villa, who then pulled far wider than an orthodox front two usually would. That stretched Madrid’s back four – which had two major effects. Firstly, space was left between the two centre-backs, something Barcelona repeatedly tried to exploit with low, through balls from

possible with years of planning.

The lesson, though, is clear: proactive football of the highest level can only be developed organically. Having a constant production-line of talented academy products all coming through at the same time helps – as does having a once-in-a-lifetime talent like Messi at your disposal. But no matter how wealthy the owner, it cannot simply be bought off the shelf.

False nine...Messi ran the show v Madrid



Spain 2012

The team that won Spain's third consecutive international tournament was arguably the greatest



Spain's Euro 2012 success in Poland/Ukraine saw them become the only national team to win three major trophies in a row and the only side to retain the European title.

World Soccer's Gavin Hamilton wrote in the July 2012 issue: "Spain's breath-taking display in the final was a fitting finale to a wonderful tournament. Inevitably, Spain have earned plaudits as one of the great, possibly the greatest, teams of all time."

Four years after Luis Aragonés won the 2008 Euros, Vicente Del Bosque continued the success with a World Cup triumph in 2010 and the 2012 Euro title.

Yet the final instalment in the trilogy, their Euro 2012 glory, was the most Spanish and the most dominant. Spain went into the tournament as overwhelming favourites with history beckoning, and swept aside the competition emphatically, conceding just one goal throughout.

David Villa, Spain's top scorer at the two previous tournaments, missed out with a foot injury, while Fernando Torres' form had begun to decline. As a result, Del Bosque effectively played six midfielders, with Cesc Fabregas deployed in a "false nine" role as the fulcrum of the attack. As Hamilton explained: "Their movement frightened France boss Laurent Blanc into tactical and selection suicide [in the quarter-finals]; their movement so consumed Portugal into confrontation that Joao Moutinho and company did not have the time to prepare enough bullets for Cristiano Ronaldo to fire [in the semis]; and, in the final, that natural mixture of pace and technique ripped the legs off an Italy side that appeared worn to a semi-standstill merely from the effort of singing their national anthem."

They saved their finest performance for the final: it was one-way traffic from as early as the 14th minute, when a scintillating goal from David Silva set Spain on their way. The rampaging

Hat-trick...Iker Casillas raises the Euro 2012 trophy



False nine... Cesc Fabregas

509

Magic number
After Italy scored against them in the first match, Spain went 509 minutes without conceding

full-back Jordi Alba added a second before half-time, late goals from subs Fernando Torres (who became the first man to score in two Euro finals) and Juan Mata secured the win.

World Soccer's final report concluded: "Spain's champions of 2008 had evolved into world champions in 2010 and have now been transformed, temporarily, into football immortals courtesy of those goals from David Silva and Jordi Alba in the first half, then from substitutes Torres and Mata in the second."

Spain's reign may have ended in Brazil in 2014, but in 2012 they were perhaps the best ever.

Honours



European Championship
2012

Iconic Match

Spain 4-0 Italy, Euro 2012 final



Tactics

Fabregas played as a midfielder in a centre-forward's role, with balls played into his feet rather than in the air. As Silva, Iniesta, Xabi Alonso and Alba broke beyond him, he was ideally equipped to slide passes through to them. Busquets played the holding role, with Xavi and Xabi Alonso just in front of him. The reliable Casillas in goal, and Pique and Ramos in central defence, were formidable. A noticeable stat from the final against Italy was Xavi's 95 passes to his counterpart Andrea Pirlo's 57. Spain dominated the ball.

Coach

Vicente Del Bosque

Capped 18 times by Spain, including once as a sub at the 1980 Euros, he played over 300 games for Real Madrid before becoming their coach. Despite winning two European Cups, two La Liga titles, one European Super Cup and the Intercontinental Cup in the space of four years, he left Real in 2003. Succeeded Luis Aragonés after Spain's successful Euro 2008 campaign and led the side to a first-ever World Cup triumph. The only coach to have won the World Cup, European Championship, Champions League and Intercontinental Cup.



Strongest XI

Iker Casillas

Goalkeeper

Conceded just one goal at Euro 2012, he captained Spain to two Euro titles and one World Cup Win.

Alvaro Arbeloa

Defender

Intelligent and reliable, he played every minute of every match at the Euro 2012 finals.

Gerard Pique

Defender

Another ever-present, his partnership with Ramos was all-important in Spain's triumph.

Sergio Ramos

Defender

Scored with a Panenka penalty in the semi-final shootout v Portugal.

Jordi Alba

Defender

Made his name with his runs down the flank, one of which led to Spain's second goal in the final.

Xavi

Midfielder

Struggled in the early part

of the tournament but came good in the knockout stage.

Sergio Busquets

Midfielder

The midfield anchor provided a defensive platform for the players in front of him to flourish.

Xabi Alonso

Midfielder

Starred in the quarter-final win against France, scoring both goals on his 100th appearance.

Cesc Fabregas

Forward

Performed brilliantly as a "false nine", having been on the bench in 2008 and 2010.

David Silva

Forward

Started every game but was substituted in five of the six. Scored in the final.

Andres Iniesta

Forward

Two years after scoring the winner in the World Cup final, he was Spain's best player at Euro 2012.

Star man

Andres Iniesta

Four years after his partner in crime Xavi had been declared Euro 2008's best player, this time it was Iniesta's turn. On paper, his contribution of no goals and two assists fell below many of his team-mates, yet he was at the heart of almost everything Spain did, often playing the pass before the pass for a goal. His deft dribbling ability drew opposition defenders to him, creating space for the rest of the attack, while his delicate touches and appreciation of space made him the poster boy for this final great Spanish side.



Real Madrid 2016-18

The Spanish giants made history by becoming the first team in the Champions League era to successfully defend the trophy, going on to win it three times in a row



Real Madrid's quest for "La Decima" had become such an "obsession", in the words of president Florentino Perez, that it had almost become unhealthy. Thus, when they finally ended their 12-year wait for their tenth European Cup trophy, under Carlo Ancelotti in 2014, it was as if the shackles had been removed, leading to even greater achievements.

Their three-year period of European dominance begun in January 2016, when Rafael Benitez – who'd taken over from Ancelotti at the start of the season – was sacked and replaced by club legend Zinedine Zidane. The Frenchman's task was initially to simply steady the ship:

Los Blancos were two points behind Barcelona having played an extra game, and the title had all but been conceded.

Yet Zidane's arrival did far more than settle the ship. He sparked an upturn in form that culminated in Madrid taking the title race right down to the wire, before defeating city rivals Atletico Madrid 5-3 on penalties in Milan to seal the Champions League.

Zidane was a perfect fit for Real Madrid. His experience at the club allowed him to manage the politics in the boardroom, as well as the egos in the dressing room. He did not attempt to implement a particular tactical identity on the team, but trusted in his players, and with good reason: Sergio

History makers...
Real Madrid celebrate their 2018 Champions League victory



Impact... Gareth Bale

Ramos, Marcelo, Casemiro, Toni Kroos, Luka Modric, Karim Benzema and Cristiano Ronaldo boasted a wealth of Champions League experience, and know-how to manage any situation.

The following season was one of the most successful campaigns in the history of the club. Zidane's side secured four titles, including their first La Liga and Champions League double (since the latter's re-format). Their convincing 4-1 win over Juventus in the final also saw them become the first team to successfully defend the title in the Champions League era.

In the following campaign, they came up short domestically but, once again, that Champions League know-how proved decisive. They disposed of PSG, Juventus and Bayern Munich en route to a final with Liverpool, where two second-half goals from Gareth Bale – and two disastrous errors from Loris Karius – gave them a 3-1 win.

Five days later Zidane handed in his resignation, and later that summer Cristiano Ronaldo left for Juventus, thus ending Madrid's reign over Europe.

Honours



Champions League
2016, 2017, 2018



La Liga
2017



Spanish Super Cup
2017



UEFA Super Cup
2016, 2017



Club World Cup
2016, 2017, 2018

3

Magic number
Zidane is the only manager in history to win the European Cup three years in a row

Iconic Match

Real Madrid 3-1 Liverpool, 2018 Champions League final



Tactics

Zidane preferred to set his team up in a 4-3-3 formation, with Ronaldo and Bale playing either side of centre-forward Benzema. However, there were times when he reverted to a 4-3-1-2, like in the 2018 Champions League final, with Ronaldo pushed up alongside Benzema and Isco chosen to link the play as the attacking midfielder. The rest of his side was more than settled, with Casemiro the holding midfielder, allowing Kroos and Modric freedom to play slightly more advanced. As of the 2016-17 season, Varane replaced Pepe as Ramos' regular centre-back partner.

Coach

Zinedine Zidane

Undoubtedly one of the greatest midfielders of all time, "Zizou" retired as a player after his infamous head-butt on Marco Materazzi in the 2006 World Cup final. He began his coaching career by taking charge of Real Madrid Castilla in 2014-15, before being promoted to first-team coach in January 2016 – replacing the sacked Rafa Benitez. Within four months, he was lifting his first Champions League trophy. The Best FIFA Men's Coach of 2017 resigned five days after winning the 2018 Champions League trophy, only to return to the club in 2019 to win another La Liga and Spanish Super Cup.



Strongest XI

Keylor Navas

Goalkeeper

The Costa Rican started all three Champions League finals.

World Soccer Player of the Year awards in 2018.

Casemiro

Midfielder

Promoted from back-up to first-choice holding midfielder under Zidane and has stayed ever since.

Dani Carvajal

Defender

Joined Real Madrid's youth system when he was ten years old.

Toni Kroos

Midfielder

An incredible passer nicknamed "The Waiter" for his ability to feed his team-mates.

Raphael Varane

Defender

Spent ten years at Real Madrid from 2011 to 2021, before moving to Manchester United.

Gareth Bale

Forward

Turned the 2018 final on its head with a brace, including a stunning bicycle kick. He was, however, often at odds with Zidane.

Sergio Ramos

Defender

Club captain who always gave 100 per cent for his team, and despises losing.

Cristiano Ronaldo

Forward

Club legend who scored the winning penalty in 2016 and got a brace in 2017.

Marcelo

Defender

Brazil left-back full of flair, who became Real Madrid captain in 2021.

Luka Modric

Midfielder

Classy Croatian took a season to settle in Spain. Won the Ballon d'Or and

Karim Benzema

Striker

Criminally underrated centre-forward who works incredibly hard for his side.

Star man

Cristiano Ronaldo

2016 to 2018 was a golden period for Ronaldo at Real Madrid. In the 2015-16 campaign, he wrote his name into the club's history books by overtaking Raul as their all-time top scorer, both in the league and in all competitions, before scoring the winning penalty to seal the Champions League victory over local rivals Atletico. He won the Ballon d'Or, Best FIFA Men's Player and World Soccer Player of the Year awards in both 2016 and 2017 and became the first player in history to reach 100 goals in UEFA club competition. He left the club in the summer of 2018 to join Juventus on a four-year-deal.



USA Women 2019

By winning their second World Cup in a row, and first in Europe, the US Women's National Team cemented their status as the world's dominant female team



Four years on from 2015, when they became the first team to win the Women's World Cup three times, USA went to France in 2019 as huge favourites.

But history was not entirely on their side: nobody, in the men's or women's game, had won back-to-back World Cups with the same coach since Vittorio Pozzo did so for Italy in 1938. Furthermore, they had not won the trophy outside North America since 1991, and never in Europe. Would this team be able to live up to the hype?

The answer was a resounding yes.

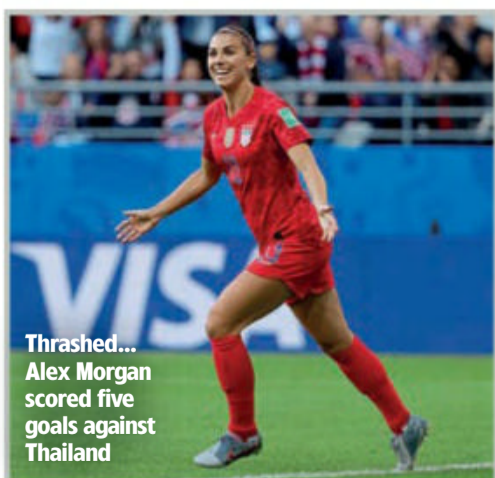
They cruised through the group stage frighteningly easily – showing no mercy in a 13-0 victory over Thailand, before comfortably overcoming Chile (3-0) and Sweden (2-0), their supposed rivals for top spot – then progressed to the final with three 2-1 knockout-round victories.

Two Megan Rapinoe penalties were enough to see off Spain, and the winger added another brace against France, who had impressed by topping their group on home soil, but still came up short against the US.

Next came Phil Neville's England, in their second World Cup semi-final in a row. The Lionesses were spirited, but could not match the experience and know-how of Rapinoe and Co. Millie Bright was sent off late on, as the US saw the game out.

The final pitted them against European champions Netherlands. By this stage, victory for the US felt inevitable, so it was a surprise when they took over an hour to strike, through another Rapinoe penalty.

The Dutch put up a good fight, but



Thrashed... Alex Morgan scored five goals against Thailand

Back-to-back... Megan Rapinoe lifts the 2019 World Cup

there was no doubt as to who the better side were. Less than ten minutes after the first goal, Rose Lavelle added a second.

"That settled the game and confirmed American primacy," wrote Glenn Moore in the July 2019 issue of *World Soccer*. "They had been pushed hard by Spain, France and England, and needed some fortune along the way, but no one could argue they were not worthy winners. European teams are closing the gap, but there is still a significant bridge to cross."

That gap has indeed been narrowed, with the US disappointing at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. But they will still go to Australia and New Zealand in 2023 with big dreams of making it three in a row.

Honours

7

Magic number

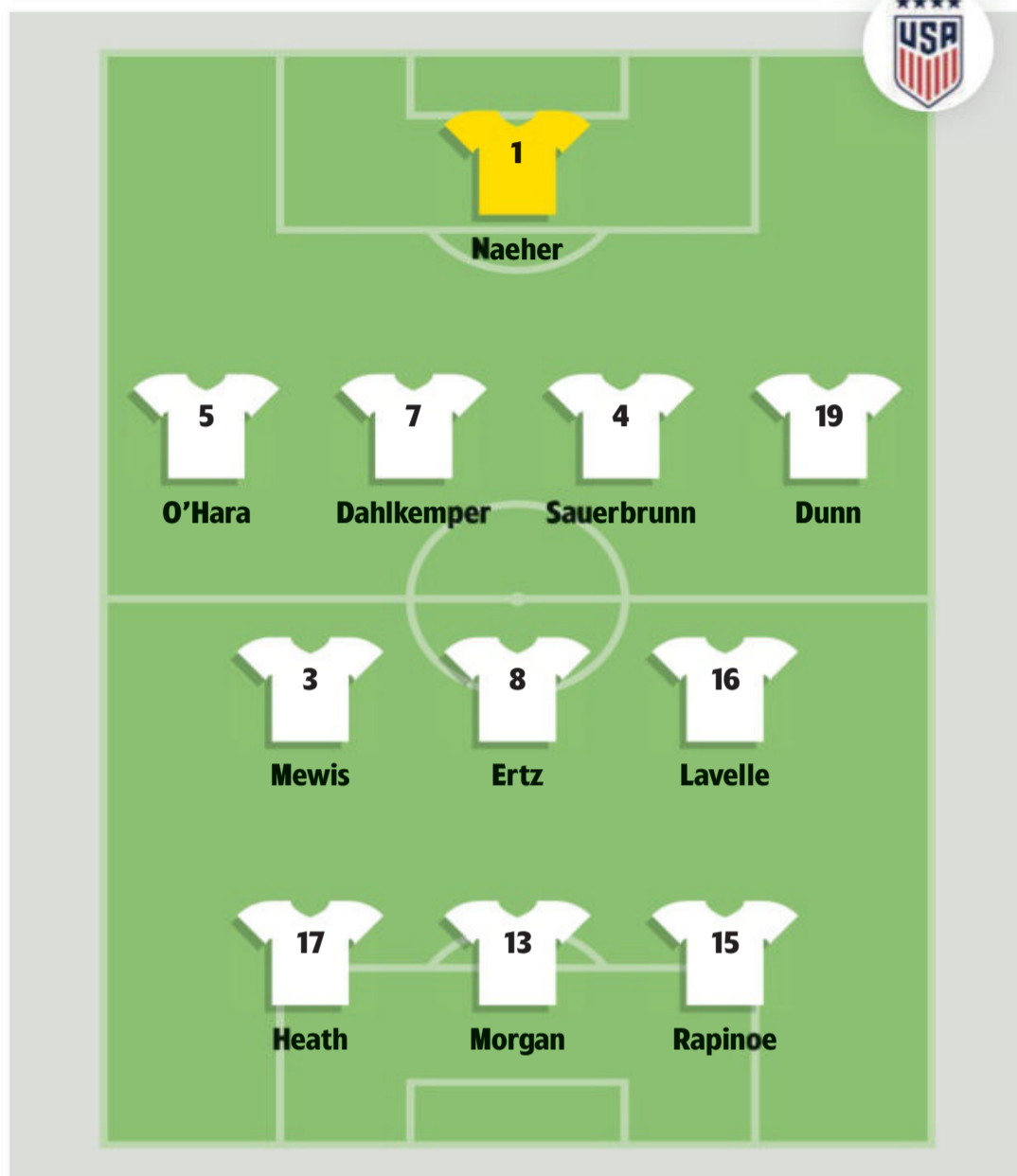
The United States became the first women's team to win seven matches at a single World Cup



Women's World Cup
2019

Iconic Match

USA 2-0 Netherlands, 2019 Women's World Cup final



Strongest XI

Alyssa Naeher

Goalkeeper

Part of the squad in 2015, she replaced Hope Solo as No.1 four years later.

Kelley O'Hara

Defender

Veteran of over 140 caps, three World Cups, and a 2012 Olympic gold medallist.

Abby Dahlkemper

Defender

Started every game at her first World Cup. Short spell at Man. City in 2021.

Becky Sauerbrunn

Defender

Former co-captain of the team. Oldest member of the starting XI in the final.

Crystal Dunn

Defender

Equally comfortable on the wing, but deployed as an attacking left-back.

Sam Mewis

Midfielder

USA's most creative player at the tournament, with four assists in total.

Julie Ertz

Midfielder

Converted from defence into a holding midfielder. Spent her whole career at Chicago Red Stars.

Rose Lavelle

Midfielder

Scored three times in France, including in the final. Spent 2020-21 at Manchester City with her compatriot Mewis.

Tobin Heath

Winger

A skilful winger and one of the scorers in the 2015 final against Japan. Moved to Arsenal in 2021.

Alex Morgan

Forward

One of the most prolific strikers in the women's game, but beaten to the World Cup Golden Boot by Rapinoe on assists.

Megan Rapinoe

Winger

Co-captain of the team alongside Morgan and Carli Lloyd. Led by example throughout.

Tactics

The United States' approach was to attack aggressively, directly and relentlessly throughout every game. They looked to get the ball up to their front three early, with Mewis and Lavelle frequently rushing forward to support the forwards. Against Thailand it worked almost too well (some suggested they should have gone easier on their lowly opponents in the group stage), but in the latter stages against tougher teams they were clinical without always dominating. Still, their advantages in quality, depth, experience and fitness ensured that they always overcame opponents eventually.

Coach

Jill Ellis

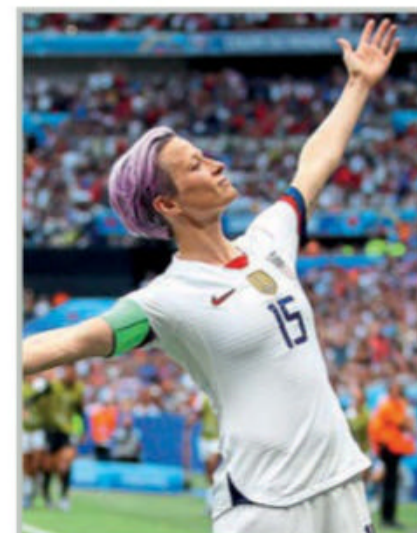
Ellis was involved in the national team for almost 20 years, serving as a youth coach, assistant and interim manager, before getting the top job in 2014. A year later she was a world champion, guiding the USA to a 5-2 victory over Japan in the final, and stuck around to become the first coach to win the trophy twice in 2019. She stepped down shortly afterwards, boasting a win rate of 87.5 per cent from 132 games in charge, and having been named FIFA Women's Coach of the Year twice.



Star woman

Megan Rapinoe

The 2019 Women's World Cup was truly groundbreaking, attracting more viewers than ever before, and Rapinoe was very much the face of the tournament. On the pitch she was outstanding, ruthlessly efficient from the left wing and collecting both the Golden Ball and the Golden Boot with six goals and three assists. But her impact transcended football; outspoken in her criticisms of FIFA, the US federation and Donald Trump, and vocal in her support of LGBT rights and Black Lives Matter. Glenn Moore said in *World Soccer*: "[Rose] Lavelle was the best player of the tournament, but no one had more presence than Rapinoe."



Lyon Feminin 2020

The French side matched the achievements of the great Real Madrid team of 1960 by winning their fifth consecutive Champions League crown



On May 18, 1960, Real Madrid defeated Eintracht Frankfurt 7-3 at Hampden Park to lift their fifth European Cup in a row. It took 60 years, but finally their achievement was matched: by Olympique Lyonnais Feminin.

Just as Madrid became synonymous with the European Cup in the late 1950s, so did Lyon with the Women's Champions League in the 2010s.

Under the leadership of president Jean-Michel Aulas, they achieved a level of dominance that is incomparable across football. Even that great Madrid side only picked up two league titles alongside their European successes – Lyon won 14 leagues in a row between 2007 and 2020, with two additional Champions Leagues in 2011 and 2012, giving them a total of seven.

Like Madrid, their success was built with a combination of club stalwarts and expensive foreign recruits. French internationals Sarah Bouhaddi, Eugenie Le Sommer and Wendie Renard played in all seven of those victories, the latter as captain for the last five, while France captain Amandine Henry has won six.

Alongside them have appeared a plethora of stars from around the world, including Norway striker Ada Hegerberg, the Champions League's record scorer and winner of the first-ever women's Ballon d'Or in 2018, Dzsennifer Marozsan of Germany, who came third in that vote, and England defender Lucy Bronze, runner-up in 2019.

In a period where women's football as a sport made huge strides forward, Lyon were right at the forefront, dragging other teams with them. They elevated the tournament with their performances, while in doing so making it more

History...Wendie Renard lifts the Champions League trophy for the seventh time

competitive. As other teams strove to match them, the gap between them and the rest got smaller.

On the road to 2020 success they were tested like never before, narrowly edging out Bayern Munich and Paris Saint-Germain to reach the final, where they needed an 88th minute goal to see off Wolfsburg in a 3-1 win.

It would prove to be the final triumph in their winning streak, with Barcelona taking the 2021 crown, while PSG overcame them in the league, too.

But their long list of achievements has ensured that they will remain in the history books as the greatest women's club team of all time. It may take another 60 years for their trailblazing achievements to be matched.



English star...Lucy Bronze

5

Magic number

In 2020 Lyon Feminin won their fifth treble in eight years

Honours



Champions League
2020



Division 1 Feminine
2020

Iconic Match

Wolfsburg 1-3 Lyon, 2020 Women's Champions League final



Tactics

Lyon played a variety of systems over their five years as queens of Europe, but in 2020 they settled on the 4-2-3-1 system that had been very much in vogue for several years in both the men's and women's game. The two defensive midfielders were able to drop in between the centre-backs, allowing the full-backs – especially Bronze – to push on and attack, which thereby freed the wingers to drift inside to join the striker. In Hegerberg's absence, Le Sommer or Parris – both usually deployed on the wing – were used as makeshift strikers.

Coach

Jean-Luc Vasseur

The 2019-20 campaign was Vasseur's first season at the club, taking the reins from Reynald Pedros, who had overseen the previous two years of success. Vasseur, a former Ligue 1 midfielder, continued where his predecessors left off by delivering trophies, but by the end of his first season was forced to contend with a number of high-profile departures, including Marozsan, Bouhaddi, Le Sommer, Parris and Bronze, while Hegerberg failed to recover from her knee injury. After surrendering the league and European titles, he was sacked in April 2021.



Strongest XI

Sarah Bouhaddi

Goalkeeper

Named by UEFA as the best goalkeeper in the competition in 2019-20.

Lucy Bronze

Defender

World-class attacking right-back. Moved to Manchester City in 2020.

Kadeisha Buchanan

Defender

Signed in 2017 after graduating from West Virginia University. A gold medal winner with Canada at the 2020 Olympics.

Wendie Renard

Defender

Martinique-born France international with over 120 caps for *Les Bleues*.

Sakina Karchaoui

Defender

Signed in June 2020, making a late impact on the season. Now at PSG.

Amandine Henry

Midfielder

France captain who was left on the bench in the

Champions League final.

Saki Kumagai

Midfielder

Versatile defensive midfielder, she scored the second goal in the final.

Dzsenifer Marozsan

Midfielder

Over 100 Germany caps. Joined in 2016 having won the Champions League with Frankfurt a year earlier.

Nikita Parris

Forward

Was the WSL's all-time top scorer before joining Lyon. Missed the final due to a red card in the semi-final.

Ada Hegerberg

Forward

Scored nine Champions League goals, despite playing just four matches due to a serious anterior cruciate ligament injury.

Eugenie Le Sommer

Forward

France's record goalscorer opened the scoring in the final v Wolfsburg. Can play as a winger or a striker.

Star woman

Wendie Renard

While Lyon had plenty of world-class attacking talents throughout their period of dominance, the player at the heart of their defence throughout remained the most important. Renard joined Lyon in 2006 and has spent her entire career at the club, establishing herself as a commanding centre-back and inspirational leader. On top of her defensive work, she regularly chips in with goals, bagging five in the 2019-20 Champions League campaign, including the semi-final winner against PSG. She was named UEFA's Defender of the Season for her performances.



Join the debate


Now that you've read through *World Soccer's* list of the most iconic teams in history, it's time to have your say – who do you think is the finest team of all time?

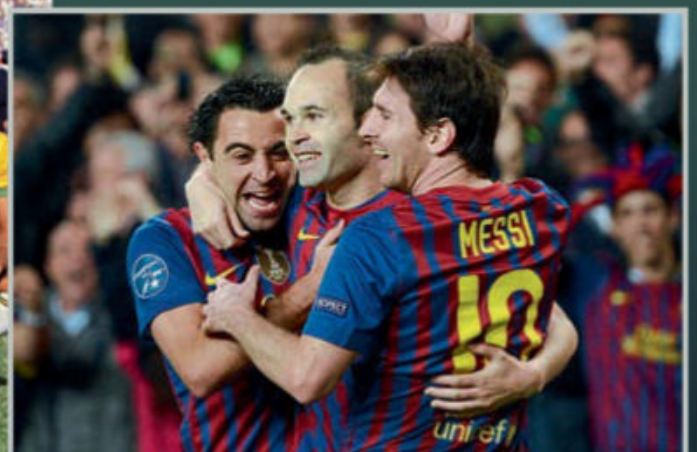
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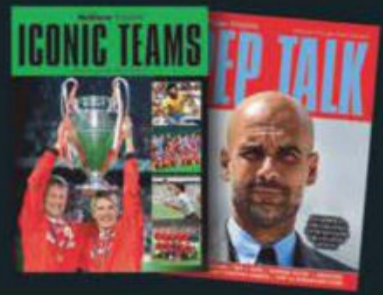
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