

# FOOTBALL

*Made Simple*



Ann Waterhouse

An Entertaining Introduction  
to the Game for Mums & Dads

MEYER  
& MEYER  
SPORT

# Dedication

This book is dedicated to that hardy band of supporters who stand by the sides of pitches across the country in pouring rain, howling wind and whatever else the British weather can throw at them, watching groups of kids kicking a large, round and very muddy ball up and down a field, occasionally interrupted by someone with a whistle who stops the game, only to start it again shortly afterwards.



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I've been so lucky to have Amanda working with me on this series of books. If you're interested, her wonderful illustrations are available for sale in colour direct from Amanda. See her website for more information about her work:

» [stibyharris.com](http://stibyharris.com)

## Introduction

This is the second book in our series of guides for supporters who are coming along to watch team games being played by their children, partners or grandchildren.

If you've picked up or been given this guide, we hope it's because you're interested in the game of football and want to learn more about it. We can't *guarantee* you'll enjoy watching the game more after reading our guide, but we're certain you'll be able to understand much more about what's going on, why the game's been halted by the *officials* and what may happen next, and who knows, maybe you will enjoy going along to matches more, too.

As with all sports, the more you understand the game, the more fun it is to watch. Knowing all the rules would be a step too far, but learning a little about the names of the playing positions, their roles on the pitch and some of the most important Laws of the game, will certainly help you enjoy those cold days sitting or standing by the sidelines.

In common with our other books in this series, we have highlighted familiar or well-used terms in *italics*, and quick explanations of these terms can be found in the glossary at the back of the book.

Whatever the reason for you reading this introduction, we hope you'll want to read on. We can guarantee some interesting facts, some useful guidance and definitely some humour about this highly popular game that inspires more passion from its followers than almost any other sport on the planet.

# What is football?

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'Football's football, if it weren't it wouldn't be the game that it is.'

(Garth Crooks)

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Football is just simply the most popular *ball* sport in the world. Because all that is needed to play is an area of open space and a ball, much of the world's soccer is played informally on patches of ground without any marking or real *goals*, and in many places it is played barefoot, using rolled-up rags or newspapers as the ball. A major reason for football's vast popularity is its accessibility and adaptability.

The statistics are truly staggering: *FIFA* (Fédération Internationale de Football Association), the governing body of the game since 1904, estimates, through a 'Big Count' exercise, all those involved in football on a regular basis. The most recent took place in 2006, so even these figures are probably below current levels. Back in 2006, approximately 270 million people were involved in the game, 265 million players and 5 million officials. Just to put this into context, if footballers were a nation state, it would be the fourth most populous in the world. There are currently 29 million women and girls playing the game worldwide, and that number is increasing even more rapidly than the men's game.

The worldwide television audience for the 2014 World Cup final game was estimated by FIFA at 2.6 billion for those watching just a few minutes. The cumulative audience of all matches was estimated to be 26.29 billion with an estimated 715.1 million people watching the final in full. This means a ninth of the planet was watching.

This makes the World Cup Final game the most-watched single televised event, and it's a pretty good bet that at least one member of your close family watched this game. We know the total global audience for the Olympics is bigger, but that is spread over multiple sports and many days. The detailed review of the 2014 competition



has not yet been published, but a single game (Brazil vs Croatia – the opening match) broke all records with just the Brazil-based audience totalling 42.9 million.

FIFA maintains an informative website, [www.fifa.com](http://www.fifa.com), that provides so much detail it would take several weeks to read everything on the site, but if there are any statistics you'd like to check, that's the place to look first. Every nation has its own local organisation, the Football Association (FA) in England being the longest standing of these. They also have their own websites; for example, the FA one is [www.thefa.com](http://www.thefa.com). You will find a list of the major websites in our web links pages at the back of this book and on our website:

» [www.sueportersguide.com](http://www.sueportersguide.com).



It is estimated that over 3.5 billion people in the world take an interest in the game, either playing or watching on a regular basis, but this figure is difficult to prove.

The hierarchy of football from grassroots to top flight teams is an extremely wide range. Here's our diagrammatic explanation:

In the next chapter, we'll explain a little about the game's formation and its development from ancient roots.

## A brief football history

### Football or soccer ... what's the difference?

Confusing, isn't it? There are many games around the world based on the same basic premise of kicking or heading a ball into a zone to score a goal, but the most popular of these sports worldwide is association football, more commonly known simply as football, or *soccer* – which is a slang term based on the contraction of the full name. Unqualified, the word, football, applies to whichever form of football is the most popular in that particular part of the world, and that includes American football, Aussie rules and Gaelic football.

There are also the variations which you may know as rugby (the rugby code is subdivided into Union and League), and you can find out more about Rugby Union in our companion book, *Rugby Made Simple*.

All these variations are known as *codes*, but that's nothing to do with how difficult they are to decipher, we promise. In terms of playing rules, rugby and football only split codes in 1863. Since it's the term that's accepted across the world, we will mainly refer to soccer as football throughout this book.

### Media coverage

The game has been covered in the media for well over a century now, initially in newspapers, but with the advent of radio and television the descriptions of the game have been revolutionised. Legions of clichés have developed over the years as a result. Indeed it would be impossible for us to describe the game without using at least some of them. So we've included a few in our text which might be familiar – even to those of you who haven't already caught the football bug. We've also included some rich pickings culled from the commentators' bottomless pit of mixed metaphors, without which we would all be much the poorer.

The following diagram reflects some of the more imaginative commentary descriptions rather well; all the terms used in the diagram are also included in our glossary.

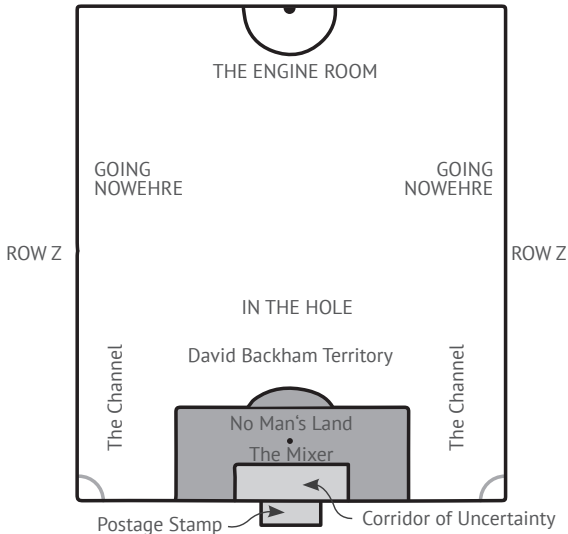


Fig. 1 Radio and TV commentary field positions

Row Z is, of course, right at the back of the stand, but to save space we've just indicated the seating area at the side of the pitch in our diagram.

You will hear commentators talking about balls 'coming from the *engine room*', attackers '*going nowhere* with the ball,' defenders '*slotting balls in the hole*' or '*into David Beckham territory*,' and wings '*taking the ball down the channel*'. They will talk about *midfielders* moving into *no man's land* before getting into *the mixer*, and passing the ball to the striker for him to land the ball *on a postage stamp* in the top or bottom corner of the net. Good *midfielders* also pass the ball and land it on a postage stamp if they are very accurate.

Also, balls are hit by defenders into row Z with massive clearance kicks, and players taking corner kicks launch the ball into the *corridor of*

*uncertainty*. Football commentary can be good fun to listen to, if only to pick out the stock phrases the commentators use for every game. A great commentator, like the BBC's legendary John Motson, or our current favourite Jonathan Pearce, will bring a game to life for you on radio or TV.

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'When you're down ... the fickle finger of fate rarely smiles on you.'

(Jonathan Pearce)

'Not the first half you might have expected, even though the score might suggest that it was.'

(John Motson)

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## Women's football

Women's football has been around since the inception of the professional game in the late 19th century, and there is evidence of female involvement in all the forerunners of the game, as well as medieval football games. Although not as popular with spectators yet, women's industry teams were actually extremely popular during World War I in Europe, including the famous Dick Kerr's Ladies from Preston, who also played the first international game against a team from Paris. With the young men at the front, the ladies' teams provided entertainment for the masses through difficult times.

In the UK, the sport was almost halted in its tracks when the Football Association decided to ban women's football in 1921, as it was then deemed to be in bad taste. Victorian attitudes to women's roles still prevailed despite the Suffragette movement. Women's football was finally revived following the formation of the English Women's FA as late as 1969 and the eventual lifting of the ban on women players in 1971. On a global level the game also expanded, and, by 1992, Japan had become the home of the first semi-professional women's league (the L. League).

Today, there are major international competitions, most notably the FIFA Women's World Cup and the UEFA European Women's Championship. In the UK, there are currently over 251,000 women footballers regularly playing (at least once a month). This is a significant increase from the 11,200 registered in 1993, confirming both the popularity of women's football and the cross-gender appeal of the sport generally. This figure is, however, slightly lower than the peak achieved in 2007-08.

If during our explanations in this book we refer to he or him, please don't think the information precludes the girls and women in our readership. It is just that it is simpler to stick to a single sex for our explanations. Indeed we could use the current Laws of cricket as our guide. These now state: *The use, throughout the text, of pronouns indicating the male gender is purely for brevity. Except where specifically stated otherwise ... this book ... is to be read as applying to women and girls equally as to men and boys.* In other words, just because we don't say she or her doesn't mean that everything we say won't apply to the fairer sex, too.

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'She was a born footballer, even when she was young.'

(Eurosport)

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