

## **The History of Football from FIFA.com**

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### **The Origins**

The contemporary history of the world's favorite game spans more than 100 years. It all began in 1863 in England, when rugby football and association football branched off on their different courses and the Football Association in England was formed - becoming the sport's first governing body.

Both codes stemmed from a common root and both have a long and intricately branched ancestral tree. A search down the centuries reveals at least half a dozen different games, varying to different degrees, and to which the historical development of football has been traced back. Whether this can be justified in some instances is disputable. Nevertheless, the fact remains that people have enjoyed kicking a ball about for thousands of years and there is absolutely no reason to consider it an aberration of the more 'natural' form of playing a ball with the hands.

On the contrary, apart from the need to employ the legs and feet in tough tussles for the ball, often without any laws for protection, it was recognized right at the outset that the art of controlling the ball with the feet was not easy and, as such, required no small measure of skill. The very earliest form of the game for which there is scientific evidence was an exercise from a military manual dating back to the second and third centuries BC in China.

This Han Dynasty forebear of football was called Tsu' Chu and it consisted of kicking a leather ball filled with feathers and hair through an opening, measuring only 30-40cm in width, into a small net fixed onto long bamboo canes. According to one variation of this exercise, the player was not permitted to aim at his target unimpeded, but had to use his feet, chest, back and shoulders while trying to withstand the attacks of his opponents. Use of the hands was not permitted.

Another form of the game, also originating from the Far East, was the Japanese Kemari, which began some 500-600 years later and is still played today. This is a sport lacking the competitive element of Tsu' Chu with no struggle for possession involved. Standing in a circle, the players had to pass the ball to each other, in a relatively small space, trying not to let it touch the ground.

The Greek 'Episkyros' - of which few concrete details survive - was much livelier, as was the Roman 'Harpastum'. The latter was played out with a smaller ball by two teams on a rectangular field marked by boundary lines and a center line. The objective was to get the ball over the opposition's boundary lines and as players passed it between themselves, trickery was the order of the day. The game remained popular for 700-800 years, but, although the Romans took it to Britain with them, the use of feet was so small as to scarcely be of consequence.

### **Britain, the home of Football**

For all the evidence of early ball sports played elsewhere in the world, the evolution of football as we know it today took place in Britain. The game that flourished in the British Isles from the eighth to the 19th centuries featured a considerable variety of local and regional versions - which were subsequently smoothed down and smartened up to create the modern-day sports of association football, rugby football and, in Ireland, Gaelic football.

Primitive football was more disorganized, more violent, more spontaneous and usually played by an indefinite number of players. Frequently, games took the form of a heated contest between whole villages - through streets and squares, across fields, hedges, fences and streams. Kicking was allowed, as in fact was almost everything else. Sometimes kicking the ball was out of the question due to the size and weight of the sphere being used - in such cases, kicking was instead limited to taking out opponents.

Curiously, it was not until nine years after the rules of football had been first established in 1863 that the size and weight of the ball were finally standardized. Up to then, agreement on this point was usually reached by the parties concerned when they were arranging the match, as was the case for a game between London and Sheffield in 1866. This encounter was also the first where the duration was prearranged for 90 minutes.

Shrovetide football, as it was called, belonged in the 'mob football' category, where the number of players was unlimited and the rules were fairly vague. For instance, according to an ancient handbook from Workington in England, any means could be employed to get the ball to its target with the exception of murder and manslaughter.

One theory is that the game is Anglo-Saxon in origin. In both Kingston-on-Thames and Chester, local legend has it the game was played there for the first time with the severed head of a vanquished Danish prince. In Derby, it is said to have originated in the third century during the victory celebrations that followed a battle against the Romans. Yet there is scant evidence of the sport having been played at this time, either in Saxon areas or on the continent. Indeed prior to the Norman conquest, the only trace found of any such ball game comes from a Celtic source.

Another theory regarding its origin is that when 'mob football' was being played in the British Isles in the early centuries AD, a similar game was thriving in France, particularly in the northern regions of Normandy and Brittany. So it is possible that the Normans brought this form of the game to England with them.

Scholars have also suggested that besides the natural impulse to demonstrate strength and skill, in many cases pagan customs, especially fertility rites, provided a source of motivation for these early 'footballers'. The ball symbolized the sun, which had to be conquered in order to secure a bountiful harvest. The ball had to be propelled around, or across, a field so that the crops would flourish and the attacks of the opponents had to be warded off.

A similar significance was attached to contests between married men and bachelors that prevailed for centuries in some parts of England, and, likewise, to the game between married and unmarried women in the Scottish town of Inveresk at the end of the 17th century which, perhaps by design, was regularly won by the married women. Women's football is obviously not as new as some people think.

For all the conflicting views on the origins of the game, one thing is incontestable: football has flourished for over a thousand years in diverse rudimentary forms, in the very region which we describe as its home, Britain.

### **Opposition to the Game**

If early football generated tremendous enthusiasm among common folk in Britain, it also withstood repeated - and unsuccessful - interventions from the authorities who frowned on this often violent recreation.

As long ago as 1314 the Lord Mayor of London saw fit to issue a proclamation forbidding football within the city due to the chaos it usually caused. Infringement of this law meant imprisonment.

During the 100 Years' War between England and France from 1337 to 1453 the royal court was unfavorably disposed towards football. Kings Edward III, Richard II, Henry IV and Henry V all made the game punishable by law because it prevented their subjects from practising more useful military disciplines, particularly archery.

All the Scottish kings of the 15th century deemed it necessary to censure and even prohibit football. Particularly famous was the decree proclaimed by the parliament convened by James I in 1424, which read: "That na man play at the Fute-ball". None of these efforts had much effect. The popularity of the game among the people and their obvious delight in the rough and tumble for the ball went far too deep to be uprooted.

The passion for football was particularly exuberant in Elizabethan times. An influence that may have played a part in intensifying the native popularity for the game came from Renaissance Italy, notably from Florence although Venice and other cities also produced their own brand of the sport known as Calcio. This was more organized than the English equivalent and was played by teams dressed in colored livery at important gala events held on certain holidays in Florence.

In England the game was still as rough and lacking in refinement as ever, but it did at this time find a prominent supporter who commended it for other reasons. This supporter was Richard Mulcaster, the great pedagogue and head of the famous London schools of Merchant Taylors and St. Paul's. He pointed out that the game, if requiring a little refinement, had a positive educational value as it promoted health and strength. His belief was that it would benefit from introducing a limited number of participants per team and, more importantly, a stricter referee.

Resentment of football up to this time had been focused on its capacity for public disturbance. For example, in Manchester in 1608, the game was banned because so many windows had been smashed. In the course of the 16th century a new type of attack was launched. With the spread of Puritanism, the cry went up against 'frivolous' amusements, and sport happened to be classified as such, football in particular.

The main objection was that it supposedly constituted a violation of peace on the Sabbath. Similar attacks were made against the theatre, which strait-laced Puritans regarded as a source of idleness and iniquity. This laid the foundations for the entertainment ban on Sundays - and from then on football on that day was taboo.

This remained the case for some 300 years, until the ban was lifted once again, at first unofficially and ultimately with the formal consent of The Football Association, albeit on a rather small scale.

All told there was scarcely any progress at all in the development of football for hundreds of years. But, although the game was persistently forbidden for 500 years, it was never completely suppressed.

### **The Global Growth**

A change did not come about until the beginning of the 19th century when school football became the custom, particularly in the famous public schools. This was the turning point. In this new environment, it was possible to make innovations and refinements to the game.

The rules were still relatively free and easy, with no standard form of the game. Each school in fact developed its own adaptation and, at times, these varied considerably. The traditional aspects of the game remained but innovations depended for the most part on the playing ground available. If use had to be made of a paved school playground, surrounded by a brick wall, then there was simply not enough space for the old hurly-burly 'mob football'.

Circumstances such as these prompted schools like Charterhouse, Westminster, Eton and Harrow to favor a game more dependent on the players' dribbling virtuosity than the robust energy required in a scrum. On the other hand, schools such as Cheltenham and Rugby were more inclined towards the more rugged game in which the ball could be touched with the hands or even carried.

As the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed, a new attitude developed towards football. The education authorities observed how well the sport served to encourage such fine qualities as loyalty, selflessness, cooperation, subordination and deference to the team spirit. Games became an integral part of the school curriculum and participation in football compulsory. Dr Thomas Arnold, the head of Rugby School, made further advances in this direction, when in 1846 in Rugby the first truly standardized rules for an organized game were laid down.

These were in any event quite rough enough: for example, they permitted kicking an opponent's legs below the knees, with the reserve that he should not be held still while his shins were being worked on. Handling the ball was also allowed - and had been ever since the historic occasion in 1823 when William Webb Ellis, to the amazement of his own team and his opponents, made a run with the ball tucked under his arm. Many schools followed suit and adopted the rules laid down in Rugby; others, such as Eton, Harrow and Winchester, rejected this form of football, and gave preference to kicking the ball. Charterhouse and Westminster were also against handling the ball. However, they did not isolate their style as some schools did - instead they formed a nucleus from which this style of game began to spread.

Finally, in 1863, developments reached a climax. At Cambridge University, where in 1848 attempts had already been made by former pupils from the various schools to find a common denominator for all the different adaptations of the game, a fresh initiative began to establish some uniform standards and rules that would be accepted by everyone.

It was at this point that the majority spoke out against such rough customs as tripping, shin-kicking and so on. As it happened, the majority also expressed disapproval at carrying the ball. It was this that caused the Rugby group to withdraw. They would probably have agreed to refrain from shin-kicking,

which was in fact later banned in the Rugby regulations, but they were reluctant to relinquish carrying the ball.

This Cambridge action was an endeavor to sort out the utter confusion surrounding the rules. The decisive meeting, however, came on 26 October 1863, when 11 eleven London clubs and schools sent their representatives to the Freemason's Tavern. These representatives were intent on clarifying the muddle by establishing a set of fundamental rules, acceptable to all parties, to govern the matches played among them. This meeting marked the birth of The Football Association. The eternal dispute concerning shin-kicking, tripping and carrying the ball was discussed thoroughly at this and consecutive meetings until eventually on 8 December the die-hard exponents of the Rugby style - led by Blackheath - took their final leave. A stage had been reached where the ideals were no longer compatible. On 8 December 1863, football and rugby finally split. Their separation became totally irreconcilable six years hence when a provision was included in the football rules forbidding any handling of the ball (not only carrying it).

From there progress was lightning-quick. Only eight years after its foundation, The Football Association already had 50 member clubs. The first football competition in the world, the FA Cup, was established in 1872. By 1888 the first league championship was under way.

International matches were being staged in Great Britain before football had hardly been heard of in Europe. The first was played in 1872 and was contested by England and Scotland. This sudden boom of organized football accompanied by staggering crowds of spectators brought with it certain problems with which other countries did not face until much later on.

Professionalism was one of them. The first moves in this direction came in 1879, when Darwin, a small Lancashire club, twice managed to draw against the supposedly invincible Old Etonians in the FA Cup, before the famous team of London amateurs finally scraped through to win at the third attempt. Two Darwin players, the Scots John Love and Fergus Suter, are reported as being the first players ever to receive remuneration for their football talent. This practice grew rapidly and the FA found itself obliged to legalize professionalism as early as 1885. This development predated the formation of any national association outside of Great Britain (namely, in the Netherlands and Denmark) by exactly four years.

After the English FA, the next oldest are the Scottish FA (1873), the FA of Wales (1875) and the Irish FA (1880). Strictly speaking, at the time of the first international match, England had no other partner association against which to play. When Scotland played England in Glasgow on 30 November 1872, the Scottish FA did not even exist - it was not founded for another three months. The team England played that day was actually the oldest Scottish club team, Queen's Park, but as today the Scottish side wore blue shirts and England white (albeit with shorts and socks in the colors of their public schools). Both teams employed what might today be considered rather attacking formations - Scotland (2-2-6), England (1-1-8) - but back then the game still retained many of the mob-football characteristics of kicking and rushing and, in tactics at least, probably more closely resembled modern-day rugby than football.

The spread of football outside of Great Britain, mainly due to the British influence abroad, started slowly, but it soon gathered momentum and rapidly reached all parts of the world.

The next countries to form football associations after the Netherlands and Denmark in 1889 were New Zealand (1891), Argentina (1893), Chile (1895), Switzerland, Belgium (1895), Italy (1898), Germany, Uruguay (both in 1900), Hungary (1901) and Finland (1907).

When FIFA was founded in Paris in May 1904 it had seven founder members: France, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain (represented by Madrid FC), Sweden and Switzerland. The German Football Federation cabled its intention to join on the same day.

This international football community grew steadily, although it sometimes met with obstacles and setbacks. In 1912, 21 national associations were already affiliated to the *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA). By 1925, the number had increased to 36, while in 1930 - the year of the first World Cup - it was 41.

Between 1937 and 1938, the modern-day Laws of the Game were set out by future FIFA President Stanley Rous. He took the original Laws, written in 1886 and subject subsequently to piecemeal alterations, and drafted them in a rational order. (They would be revised a second time in 1997.)

By the late 1930s there were 51 FIFA members; in 1950, after the interval caused by the Second World War, that number had reached 73. Over the next half-century, football's popularity continued to attract new devotees and at the end of the 2007 FIFA Congress, FIFA had 208 members in every part of the world.

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