

soldiers played on a rectangular pitch, with lines marking the two halves. Only the player with the ball could be tackled. The fans shouted out advice as they do today: 'Too far! Too short! Pass it back!'



A Roman ball game in Rome, Italy, in the second century BC

When the Romans invaded Britain in the first century AD, they played the game there too. We do not know how the players scored goals, but a record¹² of one game tells us that the Roman soldiers won:

England 1– Italy 3 perhaps

How Football Began in England

The Romans left England at the beginning of the fifth century AD, but the game of football stayed.

As time went on, the game was played with very few rules and a great number of people. Football was often just an excuse for the young men of one town or village to fight those of another. The players were more likely to kick each other than the ball. This often led to trouble and football became very noisy and dangerous.

In 1314, the mayor of London banned football in his city. The kings of England did not like the game either. They wanted young men to practise archery¹³ in their free time. Their bows and arrows were needed in the Hundred Years' War, to kill French soldiers. Football was not useful at all.

By 1555, football was banned in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge too. Then, in 1581, the headmaster of a big English school thought that he could see some good in football. He believed that with smaller teams, a strict referee and a few rules, the game could become a healthy way of passing the time. And it could teach boys to play together and learn to obey orders.

Nearly one hundred years later, a man called Francis Willoughby wrote the *Book of Sports*. He described the game of football in a way we can recognize today. He wrote about the pitch and the goals – or 'gates' – defended¹⁴ by the best players. The main aim was to get the first goal, and high tackles were not allowed.

Young men went on playing football, but there were not many places where they could play because football had been banned

from the streets. But rich boys in some big English schools played the game. One of these schools was called Rugby. The school had big fields where lots of boys could play football at the same time.

Then, in 1823, a football player at Rugby School took the ball in his hands and ran with it. And so the game of rugby football – or *rugger* – began. In this game, hard tackles were allowed and several players would fight for the ball. ‘Hacking’ – kicking the shins of players in the other team – was allowed too.

Other schools, like Charterhouse School, had no fields where they could play rugger. So Charterhouse decided that the ball could not be carried. Kicking people, rather than the ball, was not allowed either.

A few years later, working men, mostly in the north of England, started playing this original form of football. Men who worked in the big factories there wanted to play football with their friends in their free time.

The first football club in the world was started in the northern English city of Sheffield. The club made its own rules – the ‘Sheffield Rules’. When other clubs were formed, their rules were different. Soon all the clubs agreed that their teams had to play using the same rules.

In 1863, people from schools and clubs all over England met in a pub in London. They wanted to agree on the rules of football. There were many issues to talk about: should the ball be carried or not? Was hacking allowed? After a lot of talking, the men who wanted to say yes to these questions walked out. They wanted to play rugby football or rugger. The men who stayed decided to work together and so the Football Association¹⁵ was founded.

Over the next few months, the Football Association agreed on fourteen rules. They also agreed on the weight and size of the ball and the size of the pitch.

How Football Began in England

Only the goalkeeper could touch the ball with his hands. Kicking someone's legs, rather than the ball, was not allowed and players could not trip each other up¹⁶. They could not use their hands to push or hold their opponents¹⁷ either. Some modern players should remember these last three rules!

Football soon began to be called *soccer* from the word 'association'. The important thing was that the game could now be played in the same way anywhere in the country.



A football game using FA rules, England, in the 1800s

The first game to be played using the Football Association's rules was in 1865. Sheffield FC had a match with Nottingham FC, a club in the English Midlands. During this time, more and more clubs were being formed all over England and Scotland. By 1873, fifty clubs had joined the FA.

These clubs did not have much money. The young men who joined them worked hard at their jobs in factories, offices and shops all week. They played football in their free time and they were not paid for it. They were amateurs – they played for fun and because they enjoyed the game. They played anywhere they could. Their friends came to watch them and everyone had a great time.

So the game of football – or soccer – now had rules. The game was beginning to look more and more like modern football, but some things were different.

The goals had no crossbar and no net, just two upright posts. There were corner flags though and corner kicks and goal kicks were already part of the game.

There had been referees since 1840, but the referees shouted at the players because they did not have a whistle. Referees were not given whistles until 1878. They did not have any red or yellow cards in their pocket either. These cards were not used until nearly one hundred years later.

There were other differences too. The ball was made of leather and it was very heavy. All the players in the team wore shirts of the same colour, so that the spectators could recognize them. The players' shirts had no numbers, no names and no sponsors'¹⁸ logos! Their dark leather boots were heavy too. But the teams played a game that we can recognize – it was football!



The football pitch and kit of the late 1800s

Football in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century

In 1888, the world's first football league was founded in England.

This league, known as the First Division, was made up of twelve clubs. These clubs, the best in England, played each other twice every season. Lower leagues were formed in the same way.

Before the end of the nineteenth century, some important changes were made to the game. Goal nets were used for the first time in 1890 and in 1891, penalty kicks were allowed. But it was not until 1905 that the goalkeeper had to stand on his line for them.

By 1894, only one referee was needed for every game, though he had two linesmen – now called assistant referees – to help him.

In 1898, the number of official rules of the game became seventeen. Although some of the rules have changed since then – they were modernized in 1938 and are revised¹⁹ every season – the number is still the same.

Before the First World War (1914–18) all the teams in the First Division played for clubs in the north of England and the Midlands. After the war, some teams from London – Arsenal, Chelsea, Fulham and Tottenham – joined the division.

Soon football was being played in many countries. The game was becoming more and more popular with fans in England and Scotland too. They took it very seriously and they supported their teams every week.

At first, fans could not afford to travel to away matches, but they still watched a game every week. They watched their club's first team one week and its reserves' team the next. As more and more fans went to matches, the big clubs began to build special places – stadiums – where the fans could watch the games being played.

The first stadiums were built where the fans lived, so they were near houses and shops. The fans had to pay to see the games, so walls and gates were built too. At first, other games were sometimes played there, but most stadiums were used just for football.

The clubs wanted as many fans as possible to see their home matches. So wooden terraces were built where people could stand in rows.

At half time, the fans wanted something to eat and drink. So the clubs began to sell food and drink too.

Scotland was slightly ahead of England in building stadiums. Rangers built theirs at Ibrox, Glasgow, in 1887 and Celtic, their close rivals²⁰, built one in 1892.

1892 was also the year in which the first purpose-built stadium – a stadium built only for playing football – opened in England. It was at Goodison Park, the home of Everton Football Club, in Liverpool. This stadium had high terraces on all four sides of the pitch.

In time, every important club had its own stadium, filled with its own fans. But the 'away fans' – fans who had come to see their team play in a different city – were there too.

Today, only a limited number of fans are allowed to buy tickets when their club is playing away. For Premier League games, this is five per cent of the total number of seats in the stadium and it is fifteen per cent for cup matches.

The away fans must all sit in one part of the stadium. Then they can all cheer and chant²¹ together. This arrangement also stops arguments between the two groups of fans.