

Football is widely considered the most popular sport in the world. From 11 June to 11 July 2010, people of different nations and cultures will be watching the FIFA World Cup – the most prestigious and anticipated football event in the world. The last World Cup tournament held in 2006 drew an amazing viewership of 26.3 billion.

In fact, the appeal of football goes back thousands of years. Archaeologists have unearthed evidence of earlier versions of football played by ancient civilisations across the globe, including Ancient Rome, Greece and China. However, modern football was first played in England in the 19th century. It is believed to have originated in public schools for boys as an extra-curricular activity to bring about discipline and foster team spirit.



FOOTBALL FEVER!

**Kick-off @
Singapore Philatelic
Museum**

museings

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IMAGES:
SINGAPORE PHILATELIC MUSEUM





Cuju was played by Chinese soldiers as part of their fitness training more than 2,000 years ago. It later became a favourite game of both men and women from the upper class of Chinese society.



Ancient Greeks and Romans of both genders played ball games to keep fit.



The ancient Mayans of Central America enjoyed a ball game which required players to hit the ball with their shoulders, arms, shins and hips. Sometimes, the ball was substituted with the head of an unlucky enemy.

THE MASS APPEAL OF MOB FOOTBALL

In medieval Britain and France, large-scale and often riotous ball games were popular with the masses. They were played by many players, sometimes numbering in the hundreds, with few restrictions. Divided into teams, the participants had to get the ball to its destination with their hands and feet. The unruliness of the games caused King Edward II (1284 to 1327) of England to officially ban them in 1314.

In 1477, King Edward IV (1442 to 1483) explicitly forbade the playing of football and other games as they were distracting the people from practising archery which was deemed a necessity in wars. Despite royal disapproval, mob football continued to be enjoyed by the people until the 19th century when a new version of the game emerged.

THE BIRTH OF MODERN FOOTBALL

British public schools in the 19th century catered to the aristocrats and the nouveau rich. The students harboured a sense of social superiority over the staff which sometimes made controlling them a nightmare. Compulsory games were introduced to bring about some discipline and divert the excess energy of the hormonally charged teenagers. Unsurprisingly, traditional football with its chaotic and boisterous nature became popular. Games were held to improve staff-student relations, forge school unity and promote the notion of putting the institution before oneself.

Each school had their own football rules that were at first passed down orally. The sport became more organised with the formation of houses, colours and contests. The first set of rules was written in 1846 at Rugby School in Warwickshire.

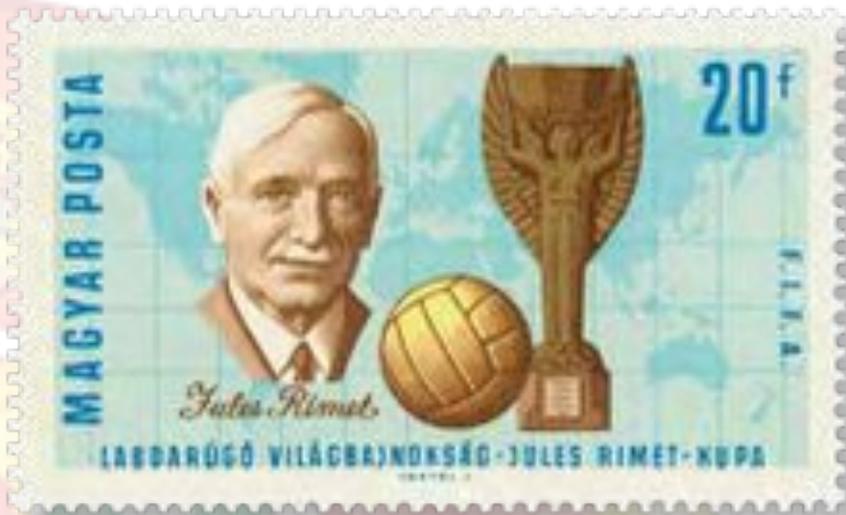
Former public school boys spread the game to Oxford and Cambridge when they entered university and promoted the sport in the army. Some even went on to set up their own football clubs, with each having their own rules. Some favoured a rugby style of playing while others forbade touching the ball with the hands. During matches, the first half of the game could be played under the rules favoured by one club while the second half would adhere to the rules of the other club.

Researchers have found that organised football matches were held outside the world of public schools as well. These games, which often involved betting, took place all over Britain.

In 1862, representatives of leading football clubs met to standardise the football rules. Those who preferred a dribbling version of the game set up the Football Association (FA) on 26 October 1863. Those who favoured a rugby-like version withdrew from the meeting and went on to form the Rugby Football Union in 1871. Football, as we know it today, became referred to as *association football*. The FA Cup, launched in 1871, is the oldest national football competition. Today, the rules of the game are determined by the International Football Association Board.

KICKING OFF EVERYWHERE

Football quickly found its place in rapidly industrialising Britain. Men from all social classes enjoyed it and played against one another. The football pitch became a legitimate venue for the working class to take a shot at the elite. Football had even begun to surpass the popularity of rugby. One of the reasons was that it was just as masculine but less rough than rugby. Young men simply could not afford to be absent from work due to injuries! Britons



Jules Rimet (1873–1956): The longest serving President of FIFA, having headed the organisation from 1921 to 1954. The French lawyer is credited as the man who made the World Cup a reality.



This 2008 stamp from Austria shows Andreas Herzog scoring the winning goal against Sweden during a World Cup qualifier on 6 September 1997. The entire goal scene, which lasts about 3 seconds, is captured on a single stamp using lenticular technology. With 103 international appearances, Herzog is Austria's most-capped footballer.

who travelled overseas, especially to parts of the British Empire, brought the game with them. As the popularity of football grew, particularly in Europe and South America, other countries began to set up their own football associations.

BIRTH OF THE WORLD CUP

In the early 1900s, some national football associations wanted to create an international body to discuss the future of football. They were interested in organising an international football competition. As a result, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association, or FIFA, was formed in 1904. Its founding members were France, Belgium, Denmark, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

FIFA held the first World Cup in Uruguay in 1930. Since then, FIFA has organised a World Cup tournament every four years, with the exceptions of 1942 and 1946 due to World War II. This year's World Cup attracted a record 205 national teams in the preliminary rounds, with 32 countries vying for the crown in the finals in South Africa.



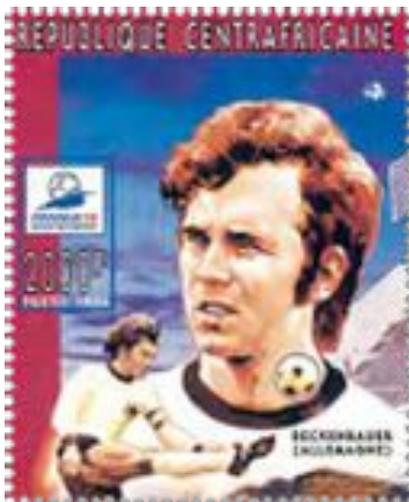
This set of special velvet stamps was issued by Singapore in 2004 to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of FIFA.



Maradona played in the World Cup four times and scored the 'Goal of the Century' against England in the 1986 championship. The former Argentine captain shares the honour of being FIFA's *Player of the Century* with Pele. He is the coach of the Argentina team for World Cup 2010.



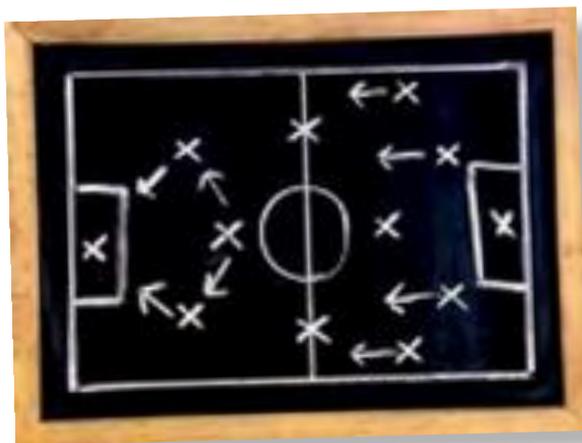
The king of 'total football', Johan Cruyff can play any position on the field depending on who has the ball. He brought the Netherlands to the World Cup Final in 1974 and was named the best player of the tournament.



Franz Beckenbauer, also known as the *Kaiser*, is regarded as the best German footballer of all-time. He played in three World Cup tournaments and led West Germany to victory in 1974. Beckenbauer was also the coach of the World Cup winning German team in 1990.



1966 World Cup print originally signed by Geoff Hurst. He is the first and only player in Cup history to score a hat-trick in the Final. Courtesy of Sporting Memorabilia in Singapore.



(Right) Shirt and boots with Pele's original signatures (Courtesy of Sporting Memorabilia in Singapore). Rated as the best footballer ever, Pele has played in four World Cup tournaments and won a record three times for Brazil. He is the youngest scorer in World Cup history – at 17 years and 239 days. Pele was named *Athlete of the Century* by the International Olympic Committee and *Player of the Century* by FIFA.





At the National Stadium in Kallang, the Lions' victory and the cheer of the fans gave rise to the term 'the Kallang Roar'. (Collection of Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

FOOTBALL IN SINGAPORE

In the late 19th century, the British in Singapore formed sporting clubs and regularly competed against one another. The first football match recorded on the island was played in 1889 by British engineers at a pitch in Tank Road. The game was subsequently introduced to British subjects and students in British schools, before it became a favourite sport among the locals.

A predecessor of the Football Association of Singapore, the Singapore Amateur Football Association (SAFA) was registered in 1892. Formed 29 years after the Football Association in England, it is possibly the oldest football association in Asia. The SAFA held the first Singapore Football League in 1904. The early football scene in Singapore was dominated by Europeans. But by the 1920s, local teams such as the Singapore Chinese Football Association and the Singapore Malays Football Association began to make their mark. They often competed with overseas teams to packed stadiums. Once, the best players from both associations literally brought the house down when they beat Australia 4-2 at Anson Road Stadium.

"Singapore's passion for football never waned, even when the threat of war loomed. In 1941, the island's team beat Penang to clinch the Malaysia Cup for the fourteenth time. The Malaysia Cup was one of the most anticipated football competitions in Singapore. It was started in 1921 as the Malaya Cup by officers of the British battleship, HMS Malaya. Many Singaporeans still remember the days when the whole nation would put aside whatever it was doing to cheer for the national team, fondly called 'the Lions'."

However, 1994 was the last year Singapore won the Malaysia Cup. In 1995, Singapore's football administrators withdrew from the tournament to focus on developing its own league. This did not sit well with local fans. Nevertheless, the S.League was born in 1996. Today, 12 teams, featuring a mix of local and foreign talents, vie for the S.League title.



S.League Shirt of Fandi Ahmad (courtesy of Sports Museum, Singapore Sports Council). Fandi Ahmad won the Malaysia Cup for Singapore in 1980 and 1994, and led the country to win the silver medal at the Southeast Asian Games thrice. The football superstar has ventured where no Singaporean has gone – in 1982, he was offered a place at Ajax Amsterdam, the club of the legendary winger Johan Cruyff. He signed on with Dutch club FC Groningen from 1983-1985 and has also played with Indonesia's Niac Mitra and the Kuala Lumpur Football Association, helping the team win the Malaysian Cup three years in a row from 1987-1989.



A visiting football team known as the 'Colombo Barefooters' played against the Singapore Chinese team in 1928. (Collection of Singapore Sports Council, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore)

***The special exhibition Football Fever!
is held at the Singapore Philatelic Museum
from 8 June till 29 August 2010.***