

FOOTBALL

The History of Football

From folk football and codification through professionalization, the game's global spread, the World Cup's birth, two world wars, tactical evolution, television and money, and the Premier League era — closing with a capstone tracing one real, recurring pattern the course kept finding along the way.

10 Chapters

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Generated with Claude

CHAPTER 1: ORIGINS & FOLK FOOTBALL: WHY CODIFICATION MATTERED

The History of Football

Chapter 1 · Origins & Folk Football: Why Codification Mattered

Association football didn't spring from a single invention. Multiple, genuinely independent ball-game traditions existed across different cultures and centuries — and even within England itself, "football" meant wildly different things from one town to the next, right up until a real, practical problem forced the game to agree on one shared rulebook.

Ball Games Before Football: Independent Origins

FIFA has officially recognised cuju, played in China, as "the very earliest form of the game for which there is scientific evidence." But cuju wasn't the only early ball game, and it isn't a direct, unbroken ancestor of the modern sport — several cultures developed their own kicking or ball-handling games independently, with no contact between them.

Cuju (China)

Documented from the Han Dynasty (206 BC–AD 220), with a Chinese military text from the 3rd-2nd century BC describing it as a training exercise. Players kicked a leather ball, stuffed with feathers or fur, through small openings in silk netting stretched between bamboo poles.

Kemari (Japan)

A ball game with real, long-documented ceremonial and courtly roots, in which players cooperated to keep a ball aloft using their feet, rather than competing to score against an opponent.

Episkyros & Harpastum (Greece & Rome)

Ball games played in ancient Greece and Rome, involving a real mix of kicking, throwing, and handling — closer to a rough team contest than a codified sport in the modern sense.

Parallel origins, not one family tree — these games arose independently of one another, and independently of the medieval English traditions covered next. Football's real history isn't one continuous lineage traced back to a single ancient source; it's several genuinely separate traditions that happened to share the basic idea of kicking or advancing a ball.

Mob Football & Shrovetide Traditions in England

The tradition that eventually led toward association football took shape in medieval England as "mob football" — chaotic, large-scale village contests with few fixed rules, often played between whole neighbourhoods or parishes. Shrovetide ball games are documented in England from at least the 12th century, during the reign of Henry II.

A REAL, SURVIVING EXAMPLE: ROYAL SHROVETIDE FOOTBALL, ASHBOURNE

Ashbourne, in Derbyshire, has held its own Royal Shrovetide Football game since at least 1667, though it's likely older still. The town is divided by the Henmore Brook into two teams — the Up'ards and the Down'ards, depending on which side of the brook a player was born — competing to advance a ball toward goals a genuine three miles apart. The game survives, essentially unchanged in spirit, to this day.

Real Attempts to Ban the Game

Mob football's own real chaos and violence made it a repeated target for royal and civic authorities — in both England and Scotland.

EDWARD II'S PROCLAMATION, 13 APRIL 1314

Issued by the Lord Mayor of London, Nicholas de Farndone, on the king's behalf:
 "there is great noise in the city caused by hustling over large balls from which many evils may arise which God forbid; we command and forbid, on behalf of the King, on

pain of imprisonment, such game to be used in the city in the future." This is thought to be the first recorded use of the word "foot-ball" in English.

The ban had several real, practical motivations at once: genuine concern over the violence and disorder the games caused, King Edward's own ongoing conflict with Robert the Bruce making public order in London a real priority, and a fear that football was distracting men from archery practice — a skill considered militarily essential at the time.

SCOTLAND'S OWN BAN: THE FOOTBALL ACT 1424

Under King James I of Scotland, Parliament passed a statute banning the game outright: "it is statut and the king forbiddis that na man play at the fut ball under the payne of iiij d." Golf was banned in the same real legislation, for the same real reason — both were seen as distractions from archery. The Act stayed nominally on the books for nearly five centuries, until it was formally repealed by the Statute Law Revision (Scotland) Act 1906.

Bans that were never really enforced — despite real, repeated legislation in both England and Scotland, mob football simply persisted. Authorities had neither the will nor the practical means to stop a tradition this deeply embedded in local life, and versions of it survived for centuries after these laws were passed — Ashbourne's own Shrovetide game among them.

Why "No Shared Rules" Was a Real, Practical Problem

By the 19th century, football was being played widely — but every town, and especially every English public school, had its own real, genuinely different version of the rules. Some allowed carrying and handling the ball; others didn't. Some allowed "hacking" — deliberately kicking an opponent's shins; others considered it unacceptable. Pitch size, team size, and even what counted as a goal varied from place to place.

None of this mattered much as long as games stayed local. But as railways made travel between towns and schools genuinely practical, a real, concrete problem emerged: two teams that had each grown up playing "football" often couldn't actually agree on what game they were about to play. That practical need for one shared rulebook is exactly what Chapter 2 picks up — and what led, in 1863, to a real, formal split between the sport that kept the name "football" and the one that became rugby.

Questions to Sit With

REFLECTION 1

Several cultures independently developed ball-kicking games with no contact between them. Does that independence suggest something universal about the appeal of the sport itself, or is it simply a coincidence of what a ball and a pair of feet make possible?

REFLECTION 2

Both the 1314 London ban and the 1424 Scottish Act were motivated partly by a fear that football distracted from archery practice. What does that tell you about how directly medieval governments linked ordinary recreation to military readiness?

REFLECTION 3

Mob football survived centuries of real, repeated attempts to ban it, but was eventually reshaped not by a law, but by a practical need for a shared rulebook. What does that suggest about which kinds of pressure actually change a deeply rooted tradition?

QUICK REFERENCE — ORIGINS & FOLK FOOTBALL

- Cuju (China, Han Dynasty) is FIFA's own officially recognised earliest scientifically-evidenced form of the game — but not football's single ancestor
- Kemari (Japan) and Episkyros/Harpastum (Greece/Rome) arose independently of cuju and of each other

- Medieval English mob football and Shrovetide traditions are the real, direct antecedent of association football — Ashbourne's own game survives to this day
- Edward II's 1314 London ban and Scotland's 1424 Football Act both targeted football partly to protect archery practice
- Bans went largely unenforced — mob football persisted for centuries regardless
- The real, practical problem that eventually forced change wasn't a law — it was the total lack of one shared rulebook once teams from different towns and schools started meeting

What's Next

Next chapter: **The Football Association & the 1863 Split** — the real formation of a single, shared rulebook, and the formal divide between the sport that kept the name "football" and the one that became rugby.

CHAPTER 2: THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION & THE 1863 SPLIT

The History of Football

Chapter 2 · The Football Association & the 1863 Split

Chapter 1 closed on a real, practical problem: no two towns or schools agreed on what "football" actually meant. This chapter covers the real meeting, the real dispute, and the real single rule change that settled it — by splitting the sport in two.

Ebenezer Cobb Morley's Push for a Shared Rulebook

In 1862, Ebenezer Cobb Morley — captain and founder of Barnes Football Club — wrote to the newspaper *Bell's Life*, proposing that football needed a governing body of its own, modelled on the real role the Marylebone Cricket Club already played for cricket: one recognised authority, setting one shared set of rules everyone could actually agree to play by.

Borrowing a working model, not inventing one from scratch — the MCC had already proven, in cricket, that a single governing body issuing one authoritative rulebook could genuinely hold a sport together across many different clubs. Morley's real proposal wasn't a new idea; it was applying an already-working solution to football's own version of the same problem.

The Freemasons' Tavern Meeting, 26 October 1863

WHO WAS THERE

Representatives from Barnes, Blackheath, Perceval House, Kensington School, the War Office, Crystal Palace, Forest (soon renamed the Wanderers), the Crusaders, and No Names of Kilburn met at the Freemasons' Tavern on Great Queen Street, London, to form the Football Association. Morley himself went on to draft the original thirteen laws of the game at his own home in Barnes, published that December.

The Hacking Controversy: One Rule Splits Two Sports

Not every club at the table played the same way. Some allowed carrying the ball in the hands, with "hacking" — deliberately kicking an opponent's shins — permitted as a real, legitimate way to stop a player running with it. Others rejected both practices outright. The dispute between these "hacking" and "non-hacking" clubs became genuinely acrimonious during the meetings that followed.

The decisive rule, once settled: no more handling the ball. With that single change, the sport split.

BLACKHEATH'S OWN STRIKING DOUBLE ROLE

Blackheath Football Club — one of the most vocal defenders of running with the ball and hacking — withdrew from the Football Association in 1863, in direct protest at the new rule. Eight years later, in 1871, Blackheath became a founding member of the Rugby Football Union, the very body formed to govern the handling-and-hacking version of the game they'd walked away to keep playing. The same club genuinely helped found both sports.

The split wasn't instant or total — the Football Association was founded in 1863, but the Rugby Football Union that formally gave the rival code its own governing structure wasn't founded until 1871. For those eight years, "football" without a shared handling rule and "football" that permitted it coexisted without either side having a complete, separate institutional identity of its own.

Where "Soccer" Actually Comes From

Once the sport had a name for its own governing body — the Football *Association* — a real, documented slang habit at Oxford and Cambridge did the rest. Students there were already in the habit of clipping a word and adding a jocular "-er" ending.

ORIGINAL WORD	SLANG FORM
Football	Footer (1863)
Association	Assoc. → Soccer (1880s)
Breakfast	Brekker (1889)
Bonfire	Bonner (1898)

"Association" didn't take the "-er" suffix easily on its own, so students shortened it to "Assoc." first, then applied the same jocular pattern — producing "soccer," a real, deliberate way to distinguish the Football Association's own code from rugby football, not a casual American invention as it's sometimes assumed to be.

Questions to Sit With

REFLECTION 1

Blackheath helped found both the Football Association and, eight years later, the Rugby Football Union. Does that make Blackheath a founder of modern football, modern rugby, both, or neither in any meaningful sense?

REFLECTION 2

Morley's own proposal borrowed the Marylebone Cricket Club's governing model rather than inventing something new. What real advantages come from copying a structure that's already proven to work, versus designing one from scratch?

REFLECTION 3

"Soccer" began as British university slang, specifically to distinguish the Football Association's own code from rugby. Does knowing that origin change how you feel about the modern rivalry between the words "football" and "soccer"?

QUICK REFERENCE — THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION & THE 1863 SPLIT

- Ebenezer Cobb Morley proposed a football governing body in 1862, modelled directly on the MCC's own role for cricket
- The Football Association was formed 26 October 1863 at the Freemasons' Tavern, London
- Morley drafted the original thirteen laws himself, published December 1863
- The real, decisive rule — no more handling the ball — split "hacking" clubs from "non-hacking" ones
- Blackheath withdrew from the FA in 1863, then helped found the Rugby Football Union in 1871 — the same club shaping both sports
- "Soccer" is real, documented 1880s Oxford/Cambridge slang — "Assoc." plus the jocular "-er" suffix already used for words like "footer" and "brekker"

What's Next

Next chapter: **Professionalization & the Birth of the Football League** — the real, contested shift from amateur play to paid professionals, and the founding of organised league competition.

CHAPTER 3: PROFESSIONALIZATION & THE BIRTH OF THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE

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Chapter 3 · Professionalization & the Birth of the Football League

Chapter 2 settled what game was being played. This chapter covers two real, connected questions that came right after: could a player actually get paid to play it, and once they could, who organised a season regular enough to make a professional career possible at all?

The Amateur Ideal and Its Real Limits

The Football Association's own founders were largely well-off amateurs, for whom playing football without pay was simply assumed. That assumption broke down hardest in the industrial North, where working-class players genuinely couldn't afford to give up a day's wages to play or train. Clubs there began quietly compensating players for that real lost income — "broken-time" payments.

A REAL CRISIS: ACCRINGTON AND PRESTON NORTH END, 1882-84

In 1882 the FA reaffirmed strict amateurism, limiting payments to genuine out-of-pocket expenses only. Accrington was expelled from the Association, and Preston North End was disqualified from the FA Cup, both for paying players in real, documented breach of that rule.

The 1885 Vote: The FA Legalises Professionalism

By October 1884, a real number of northern clubs had banded together, actively considering forming a rival professional league of their own. Faced with a genuine threat of losing its own biggest, most competitive clubs entirely, the FA reversed course — on 20 July 1885, professionalism was formally legalised.

Rugby chose the opposite path — watching the FA's own experience with professionalism, the Rugby Football Union went the other way, banning all payments to players outright. The two codes that had split apart over handling the ball in 1863 (Chapter 2) diverged again over money, and in the same direction the hacking dispute had already pointed them.

William McGregor's Real 1888 Letter

Legal professionalism solved one problem and immediately created another: a professional player needs regular income, and regular income needs a regular, guaranteed set of matches — not the ad hoc mix of friendlies and cup ties clubs had relied on before.

A SCOTTISH SOLUTION TO AN ENGLISH PROBLEM

William McGregor, a Scottish-born director of Aston Villa, wrote to the committees of four other clubs — Blackburn Rovers, Bolton Wanderers, Preston North End, and West Bromwich Albion — on 2 March 1888, proposing a league competition that would guarantee every member club a real, fixed number of matches each season.

A meeting followed in Manchester on 17 April 1888, and the Football League — the first organised football league anywhere in the world — was born, with twelve founding clubs, all from the North and Midlands, no more than one per town or city. The first season kicked off on 15 September 1888.

Preston North End's Invincibles

The Football League's own first season, 1888-89, was won by Preston North End without losing a single league match — the real "Invincibles" season — with Aston Villa, McGregor's own club, finishing runner-up. Preston completed the same season by also winning the FA Cup, a genuine double, delivered in the very first year of organised league football.

Questions to Sit With

REFLECTION 1

The FA legalised professionalism only once it faced a genuine threat of losing its own strongest clubs to a breakaway league. Does a rule change made under that kind of pressure carry less real legitimacy than one made by conviction alone?

REFLECTION 2

Football and rugby diverged twice — over handling the ball in 1863, and over paying players in the 1880s. Do you think these were two separate decisions, or two expressions of the same underlying disagreement about what the sport was supposed to be for?

REFLECTION 3

McGregor's real innovation wasn't a new way of playing the game — it was a new way of scheduling it. Why might a purely organisational change like a guaranteed fixture list have mattered as much to football's own real development as any rule about the game itself?

QUICK REFERENCE — PROFESSIONALIZATION & THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE

- "Broken-time" payments compensated working-class northern players for real lost wages, in breach of the FA's own strict amateur rule
- Accrington's expulsion and Preston North End's 1884 FA Cup disqualification were real, concrete consequences of that rule
- The FA legalised professionalism on 20 July 1885, under real threat of a breakaway professional league
- William McGregor, Aston Villa's Scottish-born director, proposed the Football League by letter on 2 March 1888
- The Football League was founded 17 April 1888 in Manchester — 12 clubs, all from the North and Midlands

- Preston North End won the League's own first season, 1888-89, unbeaten, and completed a genuine League-and-FA-Cup double the same year

What's Next

Next chapter: **Football Goes Global** — how British sailors, workers, and expatriates carried the game abroad, and how it took root in South America and continental Europe.

CHAPTER 4: FOOTBALL GOES GLOBAL: BRITISH INFLUENCE SPREADS THE GAME

The History of Football

Chapter 4 · Football Goes Global: British Influence Spreads the Game

Football didn't spread abroad through any single, deliberate campaign — it travelled in the luggage of ordinary British people working, studying, and living overseas, and took root wherever they happened to settle.

How the Game Actually Travelled

Sailors, railway engineers, businessmen, and students carried football with them as a genuine, ordinary part of expatriate social life — not as a planned export. Wherever a real community of British workers or students settled abroad, informal matches followed, and in several real, documented cases, those informal matches grew directly into the first football clubs and leagues on entire continents.

Brazil: Charles Miller

BORN IN SÃO PAULO, EDUCATED IN ENGLAND

Charles William Miller was born in 1874 in São Paulo, to a Scottish railway-engineer father and a Brazilian mother of English descent. Sent to Banister Court School in Southampton at age ten, he learned football there — then returned to Brazil in 1894 carrying a Football Association rulebook and two footballs. He helped establish the São Paulo Athletic Club's own football team and Brazil's first league, the Liga Paulista, and is widely regarded as the father of Brazilian football.

Argentina: Alexander Watson Hutton, and a Real Correction

Alexander Watson Hutton, a Scottish teacher, founded the Buenos Aires English High School in 1884 and used it to promote the game, later founding the Argentine Association Football League in 1893 — and he's widely credited as the father of Argentine football.

The real first league outside the British Isles predates him — a genuinely earlier league was founded in 1891 by Alex Lamont, of St. Andrew's Scots School, with five competing clubs. It lasted only a single season and never became a lasting institution, which is very likely why Watson Hutton's own more permanent 1893 league gets the popular credit instead. Both are real; only one of them endured.

Continental Europe: A Genuinely Contested "Oldest Club"

A group of English Protestants living in Le Havre, France — former Oxford and Cambridge students among them — are commonly credited with setting up a football club there in 1872. That date is genuinely disputed: Le Havre Athletic Club's own more solid founding as a formal multi-sport organisation dates to 1884. Rival claims to the "oldest football club in continental Europe" title include KB, in Denmark (founded 1876), and a club of British students active in Lausanne, Switzerland, as early as the 1860s.

An honest, unresolved question — like several other "earliest" claims in this course, the real historical record here is genuinely contested rather than settled. No single, universally agreed answer exists, and presenting one as fact would misrepresent real, ongoing disagreement among historians.

Genoa: A Club That Began by Excluding the Locals

GENOA CRICKET AND FOOTBALL CLUB, FOUNDED 7 SEPTEMBER 1893

Founded by British expatriates as a private cricket club, Genoa initially barred Italians from membership entirely. Football wasn't even the club's own original focus — cricket was. It took until 1897, when English doctor James Richardson Spensley persuaded the club to open a football section and pushed to change its own rules to let Italians join, for the club to become what's now recognised as Italy's oldest existing football team.

Questions to Sit With

REFLECTION 1

Watson Hutton is remembered as Argentine football's own founder, while Alex Lamont's genuinely earlier league is largely forgotten. Is popular memory rewarding permanence over priority here, and is that a fair way for history to work?

REFLECTION 2

Genoa began as a private club that excluded the very country it was founded in. What does that early exclusivity suggest about how football's own global spread wasn't always as open or democratic as its later popularity might imply?

REFLECTION 3

None of the figures in this chapter set out to "spread football globally" as a deliberate mission — they were teachers, engineers, and businessmen living ordinary expatriate lives. Does that make their real historical impact more or less significant?

QUICK REFERENCE — FOOTBALL GOES GLOBAL

- Football spread abroad through ordinary British expatriate life — sailors, engineers, businessmen, students — not a deliberate campaign
- Charles Miller, educated at Banister Court School, returned to Brazil in 1894 with a rulebook and two footballs, helping found São Paulo Athletic Club and the Liga Paulista
- Alexander Watson Hutton founded Argentina's own lasting football league in 1893 — but a genuinely earlier, shorter-lived league existed under Alex Lamont in 1891
- The "oldest football club in continental Europe" is a real, genuinely contested question — Le Havre, KB Copenhagen, and a Lausanne British-student club all have real claims
- Genoa CFC, founded 1893, began as a British-only cricket club, adding football and opening Italian membership only in 1897

What's Next

Next chapter: **The World Cup Is Born** — the real story of the first World Cup, held in Uruguay in 1930.

CHAPTER 5: THE WORLD CUP IS BORN

The History of Football

Chapter 5 · The World Cup Is Born

The country that invented the modern game wasn't even in the room when football's own global governing body was founded — and the man usually credited as its founder wasn't actually its first president. The real story of the World Cup's own birth is stranger, and more contested, than the popular version.

FIFA's Real 1904 Founding — Without England

FIFA was founded in Paris on 21 May 1904 by seven national associations: Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. England — home of the Football Association that had governed the game since 1863 (Chapter 2) — wasn't among them, joining only in 1906.

Jules Rimet wasn't FIFA's first president — a genuinely common assumption, given the World Cup trophy was later named after him. FIFA's real first president, from 1904 to 1906, was Robert Guérin, a French journalist and football administrator. Rimet didn't become president until 1921 — 17 years after FIFA's own founding.

Jules Rimet's Real Push for a World Tournament

Once he became FIFA president in 1921, Rimet championed a genuinely different idea from the Olympics' own football tournament, which restricted participation to amateurs: a truly global competition, open to professionals as well, under FIFA's own real authority rather than the Olympic movement's.

Why Uruguay, 1930

Uruguay was chosen as host for several real, converging reasons: the country had won Olympic football titles in both 1924 and 1928, and 1930 marked the centenary of its own 1830 constitution. The Uruguayan government committed to building a brand-new stadium, the Estadio Centenario, in time for the tournament, and offered to cover travel and accommodation costs for every participating team.

A REAL CRISIS: NEARLY NO EUROPEAN TEAMS SHOWED UP

Despite Uruguay's own funding offer, no European nation had accepted the invitation by the February 1930 deadline — the Great Depression, the real cost and length of a transatlantic voyage, and amateur players' genuine fear of losing their jobs over months away from home all worked against it. Rimet personally intervened, persuading France, Belgium, Romania, and Yugoslavia to make the trip. Only four European teams competed, alongside seven South American sides and two others, for a total of thirteen.

The Final: Uruguay 4-2 Argentina

Uruguay met Argentina in the final at the newly built Estadio Centenario, in front of a real crowd of roughly 93,000. Uruguay trailed at half-time before mounting a genuine second-half comeback to win 4-2, becoming the first ever World Cup champions on home soil. The Uruguayan government declared the following day a national holiday.

Questions to Sit With

REFLECTION 1

England helped invent the modern game (Chapter 2) but wasn't a founding member of FIFA. What does that gap suggest about the real difference between inventing a sport and governing its global future?

REFLECTION 2

Robert Guérin, FIFA's real first president, is far less remembered today than Jules Rimet, whose name is permanently attached to the World Cup trophy. What does that tell you about how a name on an object can outlast the memory of an actual historical role?

REFLECTION 3

The very first World Cup nearly happened without most of Europe. If Rimet hadn't personally intervened, and the tournament had gone ahead as an almost entirely South American event, how do you think that might have shaped the World Cup's own later global reputation?

QUICK REFERENCE — THE WORLD CUP IS BORN

- FIFA was founded 21 May 1904 in Paris by seven countries — England joined only in 1906
- Robert Guérin, not Jules Rimet, was FIFA's real first president (1904-06); Rimet became president only in 1921
- Rimet pushed for a global tournament open to professionals, unlike the amateur-only Olympic football tournament
- Uruguay hosted the first World Cup in 1930 — reigning Olympic champions, marking their own constitutional centenary, and funding every team's travel
- Only four European teams made the trip, after Rimet personally persuaded them, out of a real fear of cost, distance, and lost wages
- Uruguay beat Argentina 4-2 in the final at the newly built Estadio Centenario, in front of roughly 93,000 fans

What's Next

Next chapter: **Football Through Two World Wars & Postwar Recovery** — how the game survived, and was reshaped by, the two conflicts that reordered the 20th century around it.

CHAPTER 6: FOOTBALL THROUGH TWO WORLD WARS & POSTWAR RECOVERY

The History of Football

Chapter 6 · Football Through Two World Wars & Postwar Recovery

This chapter covers real football history at its most human and most political at once — a wartime legend that's been genuinely overstated, two footballers' battalions on opposite sides of the border who paid a real, devastating price, a dictator who turned a tournament into propaganda, and two real postwar shocks that reshaped how the world saw the game.

World War I: A Real Truce, and an Overstated Legend

The Christmas Truce of 1914 genuinely happened — real, documented firsthand testimony describes British and German soldiers meeting between the trenches, shaking hands, and sharing photographs. The famous football match, though, is a real, honest case of popular memory outrunning the evidence.

The organised match is likely a myth — real evidence points to informal, chaotic kickabouts breaking out in a handful of places, with dozens of participants and no fixed rules, not a single famous match with a final score. One soldier recorded that the Germans "wanted to play us at football, but unfortunately we hadn't got one." The photograph most often used as proof of the match was actually taken roughly 1,600 miles away, in Salonika, Greece — a full year later.

The Footballers' Battalions: England and Scotland Both

Real professional footballers enlisted together in genuinely large numbers on both sides of the border. In England, the 17th (Service) Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment — the real "Footballers' Battalion" — formed at Fulham Town Hall in December 1914. Clapton Orient became the first entire Football League club to enlist together; by March 1915, 122 professional

footballers had signed up, and roughly 200 in total joined with connections to over sixty clubs. By the war's end, more than 1,500 men who had served with the Footballers' Battalions had died.

MCCRAE'S BATTALION — HEART OF MIDLOTHIAN'S OWN REAL, DEVASTATING LOSS

Scotland's own parallel is McCrae's Battalion, the 16th (Service) Battalion of the Royal Scots, raised in November 1914 and named after Colonel Sir George McCrae, a former Liberal MP for Edinburgh East — the first of the real "footballers' Pals battalions" of the war. Sixteen Heart of Midlothian players enlisted together, along with 500 supporters and ticket-holders, while Hearts were genuinely leading the Scottish League at the time. Players from Hibernian, Raith Rovers, Falkirk, Dunfermline Athletic, East Fife, and St Bernard's joined too. On 1 July 1916, the first day of the Battle of the Somme, Hearts lost several players in a single day — Duncan Currie, Ernest Ellis, Jimmy Hawthorn, Jimmy Morton, James Scott, and Harry Wattie among them. Others died later — Tom Gracie, Jimmy Todd, and George McLay, killed at Passchendaele in 1917. The battalion was inducted into the Scottish Football Hall of Fame in 2014, and a memorial cairn stands at Contalmaison, on the Somme, to this day.

Between the Wars: 1934 as Fascist Propaganda

Italy hosted and won the 1934 World Cup, defeating Czechoslovakia in the final at the Stadio Nazionale del PNF — the National Stadium of the National Fascist Party — in Rome. Benito Mussolini treated the tournament as a genuine propaganda opportunity, pledging over 3 million lira to help secure the hosting rights, backing more than 300,000 promotional posters, and presenting the winning Italian team with a custom-built trophy of his own creation, the Coppa del Duce — physically larger than the official FIFA prize itself.

World War II: The Tournament That Didn't Happen

The scheduled 1942 and 1946 World Cups were both cancelled outright because of the war, leaving a real twelve-year gap between the 1938 tournament in France and the next one, in

1950.

1950: Two Real Postwar Shocks

THE "MIRACLE" OF BELO HORIZONTE: USA 1-0 ENGLAND, 29 JUNE 1950

England arrived as heavy favourites — professional players from England's own domestic leagues, with a real post-war record of 23 wins, four losses, and three draws. The United States fielded a hastily assembled amateur side that included a dishwasher, two mailmen, a teacher, and a mill worker. Haitian-born forward Joe Gaetjens scored the only goal, and the USA won 1-0 — still remembered as one of the greatest upsets in the sport's own history.

THE MARACANAZO: URUGUAY 2-1 BRAZIL, 16 JULY 1950

Brazil, the host nation, needed only a draw in the tournament's real deciding match to win the World Cup for the first time. Uruguay won 2-1 at the Maracanã, in front of an official crowd of 173,850 — still a real World Cup attendance record. The result devastated Brazil: the stadium's own medical officer treated 169 fans, six were hospitalised, and reports at the time described at least one death from shock among listeners following the match on the radio. The defeat is still known in Brazil today as the Maracanazo.

Questions to Sit With

REFLECTION 1

The Christmas Truce football match has become far more famous than the historical evidence actually supports. Why do you think this particular story, out of everything real that happened during the war, became the one people wanted to remember?

REFLECTION 2

McCrae's Battalion took an entire winning football team out of competition and into the trenches within months. What does the real, willing scale of that sacrifice suggest about how central football already was to civic identity by 1914 — in Edinburgh and beyond?

REFLECTION 3

Mussolini used the 1934 World Cup for real, deliberate political purposes. Is a sporting achievement won under those circumstances diminished by the propaganda surrounding it, or does the result on the pitch stand on its own regardless of who exploited it?

QUICK REFERENCE — FOOTBALL THROUGH TWO WORLD WARS

- The 1914 Christmas Truce was real; the famous organised football match is likely an overstated legend, and its "proof" photo is actually from Greece, a year later
- England's Footballers' Battalion (17th Middlesex) and Scotland's McCrae's Battalion (16th Royal Scots) both saw real, mass footballer enlistment and devastating losses
- Hearts lost multiple players on the first day of the Somme, 1 July 1916, after 16 players and 500 supporters enlisted together in 1914
- Mussolini used the 1934 World Cup as real, deliberate fascist propaganda, complete with his own oversized Coppa del Duce trophy
- No World Cup was held between 1938 and 1950 — a real, twelve-year gap caused by the Second World War
- 1950 delivered two genuine shocks: the USA's amateur side beating England, and Uruguay's Maracanazo defeat of host Brazil in front of a record crowd

What's Next

Next chapter: **Tactical Evolution: South American & European Styles Diverge** — how the game's own real, distinct regional playing styles took shape after the war.

CHAPTER 7: TACTICAL EVOLUTION: SOUTH AMERICAN & EUROPEAN STYLES DIVERGE

The History of Football

Chapter 7 · Tactical Evolution: South American & European Styles Diverge

This chapter's own real pattern keeps repeating: a tactical system gets its popular name and credit from the person who made it famous, not always the person who actually invented it. That's true of two of the four systems covered here.

The 1925 Offside Law Change and Chapman's WM

In 1925, the offside law changed — attackers now needed only two opposition players (rather than three) between themselves and the goal-line to stay onside. The real, immediate effect was dramatic: goals scored in the Football League jumped from 4,700 the previous season to 6,373 the next.

BORN FROM A 7-0 DEFEAT

After Arsenal lost 7-0 to Newcastle on 23 October 1925, manager Herbert Chapman and captain Charlie Buchan sat down to rethink the team's own shape. Their solution dropped one midfielder back into a central defensive role, reshaping the team into what became known as the WM formation — the "W" formed by the three defenders and two holding midfielders, the "M" by the attacking midfielders, wingers, and centre-forward above them. By the late 1930s, most English clubs had adopted it.

Argentina's La Nuestra

As football took root in Argentina (Chapter 4), it was reshaped into something real, distinct clubs called their own — La Nuestra, "ours." River Plate became closely associated with this style: short passing, close dribbling, and real individual creativity, contrasted directly against Boca Juniors' own more physical approach. By around 1913, football in Argentina had

genuinely been reshaped into a style locals considered unmistakably their own, distinct from its British origins.

Brazil's 4-2-4: Credited to the Wrong Man?

Vicente Feola led Brazil to their first World Cup title in 1958, deploying a 4-2-4 formation that gave Pelé, Garrincha, and Vavá real attacking freedom while Didi and Zito controlled the midfield — Brazil beat Sweden 5-2 in the final.

Feola didn't actually invent the 4-2-4 — the formation had already been instilled in the Brazilian national side by an earlier manager, Flávio Costa, before Feola ever took charge. Feola's real achievement was implementing it successfully on the world's biggest stage — but the tactical innovation itself belongs to Costa.

Total Football: The Dutch Revolution

As Ajax's manager from 1965 to 1971, Rinus Michels developed what became known as Total Football — any outfield player could move into and fill any other position on the pitch, with the team's own overall shape held together through constant, fluid interchange rather than fixed roles. Michels brought the same real philosophy to the Netherlands national team, reaching the 1974 World Cup final — where they lost to West Germany, but won real, lasting admiration for the style itself.

Catenaccio: A Second Case of Credit vs. Origin

Catenaccio — Italian for "door bolt" — describes a defensive system built around an extra defender, the sweeper (or libero), operating behind the main back line. Helenio Herrera is most closely associated with it, having built a genuinely dominant Inter Milan side around it in the 1960s — three Serie A titles, two European Cups (1964 and 1965), and two Intercontinental Cups, with Armando Picchi as one of the finest liberos the position ever produced.

Herrera perfected it — he didn't invent it — the sweeper role actually originated in Switzerland in the 1930s, introduced by coach Karl Rappan, who placed an extra defender behind his two centre-backs. Herrera's real contribution was moving a midfielder into that role and building an entire Inter Milan side, and a real trophy haul, around it.

Questions to Sit With

REFLECTION 1

This chapter found two real cases — Brazil's 4-2-4 and catenaccio — where popular credit went to whoever made a tactic famous, not whoever actually invented it. Chapter 2's Blackheath and Chapter 5's Robert Guérin followed a similar pattern. Why might football history repeat this particular kind of misattribution so often?

REFLECTION 2

The WM formation was a direct, reactive response to a single rule change. La Nuestra and Total Football both grew more from a real cultural or footballing philosophy. Does a tactic born from necessity carry the same kind of legacy as one born from a deliberate philosophy?

REFLECTION 3

The Netherlands lost the 1974 World Cup final but are remembered more fondly today than many tournament winners. What does that suggest about how football history judges style versus results?

QUICK REFERENCE — TACTICAL EVOLUTION

- The 1925 offside law change (three defenders reduced to two) caused a real, dramatic rise in goals scored, and directly prompted Herbert Chapman's WM formation
- Argentina's La Nuestra style — technical, dribbling, associated with River Plate — reshaped a British-imported game into something locally distinct

- Brazil's real 1958 World Cup-winning 4-2-4 formation was actually introduced by Flávio Costa, not Vicente Feola, who gets the popular credit for winning with it
- Rinus Michels' Total Football, built at Ajax and carried to the 1974 World Cup final with the Netherlands, replaced fixed positions with fluid interchange
- Catenaccio's real sweeper role originated with Swiss coach Karl Rappan in the 1930s — Helenio Herrera perfected and popularised it at Inter Milan decades later

What's Next

Next chapter: **Television, Sponsorship & the Commercial Era** — how broadcasting and money reshaped football's own real economics.

CHAPTER 8: TELEVISION, SPONSORSHIP & THE COMMERCIAL ERA

The History of Football

Chapter 8 · Television, Sponsorship & the Commercial Era

Football's own real relationship with money and broadcasting didn't arrive all at once — it built slowly, through a genuinely awkward first attempt at televising the game, a low-key non-league sponsorship standoff, and one more real case of popular credit landing on the wrong club.

Football's First Real Broadcasts

The 1937 FA Cup Final, between Sunderland and Preston North End, was partially televised by the BBC on 1 May 1937. The first football match televised in full was a specially arranged friendly between Arsenal and Arsenal Reserves at Highbury, on 16 September 1937. The first FA Cup Final broadcast in full came the following year — Preston North End against Huddersfield Town, on 30 April 1938.

1966 and the Real Limits of Early Broadcasting

England's own 1966 World Cup Final victory at Wembley was watched by a huge television audience — but entirely in black and white. Colour television didn't reach British screens until BBC2 launched Europe's first scheduled colour broadcasts on 1 July 1967 — with championship tennis from Wimbledon, not football. The first colour football coverage came over two years later still: Match of the Day's first colour broadcast, presented by David Coleman, covered Liverpool against West Ham United on 15 November 1969.

The Real First Shirt Sponsor — and the FA's Awkward Response

KETTERING TOWN, 24 JANUARY 1976

Non-league Kettering Town became the first British club to wear a sponsor's name on their shirts, taking the field against Bath City with "Kettering Tyres" branding, under a real deal with a local tyre company. The FA immediately objected, ordering the wording removed. Kettering's own real workaround was to shorten it to "Kettering T" — with the club claiming, not entirely convincingly, that the T simply stood for "Town." Backed by lobbying from Bolton Wanderers and Derby County, the FA's own ban on shirt sponsorship was formally lifted in June 1977.

Liverpool and Hitachi, 1979: A Real, Honest Correction

Liverpool signed English football's first top-flight shirt sponsorship deal in the summer of 1979, with Japanese electronics company Hitachi — a partnership that lasted three seasons and coincided with two league championships, a European Cup, and two League Cups.

Liverpool weren't actually first to wear it in a league match — their own first outing in the new Hitachi shirt was an away friendly against a League of Ireland side. Their real neighbours, Everton, ended up being the first club to wear a sponsored shirt in an official league match — the same pattern this course has already found in Chapters 2, 5, and 7: the club or figure remembered as "first" isn't always the one the real record actually supports.

Questions to Sit With

REFLECTION 1

Colour football coverage arrived over three years after colour television itself launched in Britain. What does that gap suggest about how new broadcast technology actually reaches a specific sport, rather than becoming available everywhere at once?

REFLECTION 2

Kettering Town's real "Kettering T" workaround was a fairly transparent attempt to dodge a rule without breaking it outright. Do you think that kind of creative compliance helped or hurt their real case for getting the ban lifted the following year?

REFLECTION 3

This chapter is the fourth in this course to find a real gap between who gets popular credit and who the historical record actually supports. Does noticing that pattern change how you'd want to verify any new "first" claim about football history you come across in future?

QUICK REFERENCE — TELEVISION, SPONSORSHIP & THE COMMERCIAL ERA

- The first fully televised football match was Arsenal v Arsenal Reserves, 16 September 1937; the first fully televised FA Cup Final followed in 1938
- The 1966 World Cup Final was broadcast in black and white — colour football coverage in Britain didn't arrive until 15 November 1969
- Kettering Town's real 1976 "Kettering Tyres" shirt deal was banned by the FA, forcing the "Kettering T" workaround, before the ban was formally lifted in June 1977
- Liverpool signed English football's first top-flight shirt sponsorship (Hitachi, 1979), but Everton were actually first to wear a sponsored shirt in an official league match

What's Next

Next chapter: **The Premier League Era & Modern Football's Globalization** — the real 1992 breakaway that reshaped English football's own economics for good.

CHAPTER 9: THE PREMIER LEAGUE ERA & MODERN FOOTBALL'S GLOBALIZATION

The History of Football

Chapter 9 · The Premier League Era & Modern Football's Globalization

Three real, connected changes reshaped English football's own economics within a little over a decade — a breakaway league built around one television deal, a legal ruling that rewired how players moved between clubs, and the arrival of foreign ownership on a scale nobody had seen before.

The Real 1992 Breakaway

On 20 February 1992, all 22 First Division clubs resigned from the Football League together. On 27 May, the Premier League was formally established as its own limited company, and the new competition kicked off on 15 August 1992. The real motivation was financial: under the old Football League structure, TV revenue was shared across all four divisions; breaking away let the top clubs keep it among themselves.

THE £304 MILLION DEAL

BSkyB won the new league's own first broadcasting rights with a five-year deal worth £304 million — a genuinely radical move at the time, since it meant live coverage moving to pay television rather than staying free-to-air. That single deal became the real financial foundation the entire Premier League era was built on.

The First Ever Premier League Goal

At 3:05pm on 15 August 1992, Sheffield United's Brian Deane scored the Premier League's own first ever goal against Manchester United — heading in after a long throw-in from Carl Bradshaw was flicked on by Denis Irwin, beating goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel. Deane added a second before Mark Hughes' consolation for United, and Sheffield United won 2-1.

The Bosman Ruling, 1995: Reshaping the Player Market

On 15 December 1995, the European Court of Justice ruled on the real case of Belgian player Jean-Marc Bosman, delivering two genuinely transformative changes: players could now move to a new club for free once their contract expired, and EU clubs could field any number of players from other EU member states — nationality quotas could only still apply to non-EU players. Both changes reshaped transfer economics and squad-building across European football for good.

Foreign Ownership Arrives: Abramovich and Chelsea, 2003

A REAL, WATERSHED TAKEOVER

In July 2003, Russian businessman Roman Abramovich — largely unknown in football circles beforehand — bought Chelsea from long-time chairman Ken Bates for £140 million, covering the club's own £60 million valuation and £80 million of existing debt. It was the first purchase of a Premier League club by a major foreign investor. Abramovich went on to inject over £100 million into transfers almost immediately, and Chelsea became genuine title contenders within years — a real, direct preview of the foreign-investment wave that reshaped ownership across the league in the decades that followed.

Questions to Sit With

REFLECTION 1

The Premier League's own founding motivation was explicitly financial — keeping TV money among fewer clubs. Does knowing that real motivation change how you think about the

competition's own later global success?

REFLECTION 2

The Bosman ruling handed real, new power to players by letting them leave for free at contract's end. Who do you think that power genuinely benefited most in the years that followed — players, clubs, or neither in the way it was originally intended?

REFLECTION 3

Abramovich's 2003 purchase of Chelsea is remembered as a watershed moment specifically because it was the first of its kind. Do you think the real changes it set in motion across English football were inevitable eventually, or genuinely dependent on one specific person making that first move?

QUICK REFERENCE — THE PREMIER LEAGUE ERA

- All 22 First Division clubs resigned from the Football League on 20 February 1992, forming the Premier League as a limited company on 27 May
- BSkyB's real £304 million, five-year deal funded the new league's own breakaway from its very first season
- Brian Deane scored the Premier League's real first goal, 15 August 1992, in Sheffield United's 2-1 win over Manchester United
- The Bosman ruling (15 December 1995) allowed free transfers at contract's end and ended EU player quotas
- Roman Abramovich's July 2003 purchase of Chelsea was the real first major foreign takeover of a Premier League club

What's Next

Next chapter: **Capstone — Tracing One Rule or Tradition Across the Full History of the Game** — bringing every chapter's own real thread together in one closing synthesis.

CHAPTER 10: CAPSTONE — TRACING ONE RULE OR TRADITION ACROSS THE FULL HISTORY OF THE GAME

The History of Football

Chapter 10 · Capstone: Tracing One Rule or Tradition Across the Full History of the Game

No new research in this closing chapter — instead, a real pattern this course kept finding without ever setting out to look for it, traced across all nine prior chapters, and one honest reflection on why football history seems to produce it so often.

A Pattern That Kept Recurring

Chapter after chapter, this course ran into the same real shape of correction: the person, club, or moment that popular memory credits with "being first" often isn't the one the historical record actually supports. It happened often enough, across genuinely unrelated eras and topics, that it's worth treating as a real finding in its own right — not a coincidence.

CHAPTER	POPULAR CREDIT	WHAT THE REAL RECORD SHOWS
2	Blackheath as a founder of football	Blackheath helped found the FA in 1863, then withdrew and helped found the Rugby Football Union in 1871 — shaping both codes, not just one
4	Alexander Watson Hutton, "father of Argentine football," founded the first league outside Britain (1893)	Alex Lamont's genuinely earlier 1891 league came first — it simply didn't last
5	Jules Rimet, remembered as FIFA's founding figure (the World Cup trophy bears his name)	Robert Guérin was FIFA's real first president, 1904-06 — 17 years before Rimet took the role
7	Vicente Feola credited for Brazil's title-winning 4-2-4 (1958)	Flávio Costa had already introduced the formation to the national side before Feola arrived

CHAPTER	POPULAR CREDIT	WHAT THE REAL RECORD SHOWS
7	Helenio Herrera credited for catenaccio's sweeper system	Karl Rappan originated the sweeper role in 1930s Switzerland, decades earlier
8	Liverpool remembered as the first English top-flight club with a shirt sponsor	Everton actually wore the first sponsored shirt in an official league match — Liverpool's own first outing in theirs was a friendly

A Genuine Counter-Example: Preston's Real, Undisputed First

The pattern above isn't universal, and it's worth naming a real counter-example directly rather than implying every "first" in football history is secretly wrong. Preston North End's own 1888-89 season — winning the inaugural Football League completely unbeaten, and completing the double with the FA Cup the same year (Chapter 3) — is a genuine, undisputed first with no rival claimant anywhere in the real record. Some real firsts really are exactly what they're remembered as.

Why the pattern shows up so often anyway — the through-line connecting nearly every misattribution this course found isn't inaccuracy for its own sake; it's that fame, success, and permanence tend to attach credit after the fact to whoever did something most visibly or most lastingly — not necessarily whoever did it first. Robert Guérin's own presidency didn't produce a trophy with his name on it. Alex Lamont's league didn't survive a second season. Karl Rappan's sweeper never won Herrera's own real trophies. Being first, on its own, rarely outcompetes being remembered.

Where Every Chapter Fits

CHAPTER	REAL THEME
1	Independent origins, mob football, and the real problem no shared rulebook could solve

CHAPTER	REAL THEME
2	The 1863 split and football's own first real misattribution
3	Professionalization, the Football League, and Preston's real, undisputed first
4	Global spread, and a second misattribution in Argentina
5	FIFA's real founding and a third misattribution over its own presidency
6	Real wartime sacrifice and an overstated wartime legend
7	Tactical evolution and two more misattributions in a single chapter
8	Broadcasting, sponsorship, and a fourth misattribution
9	The Premier League's own real, well-documented, undisputed founding

What This Course Doesn't Cover

A real, honest scope note: this course leaves out several genuinely significant threads. Women's football has a real, substantial history of its own that this course never touched — including the English FA's own documented 1921 ban on women's football being played at its member grounds, not lifted until 1971. African and Asian football history beyond FIFA's own founding membership gets no real depth here. The World Cup's own history after 1950 — decades of tournaments, upsets, and controversies — was deliberately left for a listener to explore elsewhere. Modern issues like the agent-driven transfer market, doping and integrity scandals, and VAR's own real, ongoing impact on the game are all genuine candidates for a future companion course.

Questions to Sit With

REFLECTION 1

Now that you've seen this pattern named explicitly, do you expect to notice it in other kinds of history too — or is football's own culture of nicknames, trophies, and popular retellings especially

prone to it?

REFLECTION 2

Preston North End's real, undisputed 1888-89 season stood out precisely because nothing else in this course matched it. What do you think it actually takes for a "first" to survive in popular memory completely uncontested?

REFLECTION 3

This course's own honest scope note leaves out women's football, the post-1950 World Cup, and several other real threads. Of everything named there, which would you most want a future course to pick up first?

QUICK REFERENCE — THE FULL COURSE, TRACED

- Six real cases across this course found popular credit diverging from the actual historical record
- Preston North End's 1888-89 season stands as a genuine, undisputed counter-example
- The real pattern: fame and permanence, not priority alone, tend to decide who gets remembered as "first"
- This course's own honest scope leaves women's football, post-1950 World Cup history, and modern integrity issues for a future course

Course Complete

This closes The History of Football's own 10 chapters — origins, codification, professionalization, the game's global spread, the World Cup's birth, two world wars, tactical evolution, television and money, and the Premier League era — traced through one real, recurring pattern the course kept finding along the way.