

Football and media

Sport & Tourism, Football



Football, also referred to as soccer or association football, is a team sport played between two teams of 11 players each, using a spherical ball. The sport has existed since medieval times, although it started gaining popularity at the onset of the 19th century. The roots of the modern game can be traced in England, where the Football Association outlined the 1863 Laws of the Game, setting a platform on the way the game is played today. This epoch sparked a revolution that has seen the game gain an eminent status. It is now the most popular and widely-viewed sporting event in the world, with over 715.

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1 billion people watching the finals of the 2006 World Cup in Germany. In the past 50 years, the sport has recorded phenomenal transformation, a situation largely credited to the extreme involvement of media in the sport. What used to be a village game is now a major factor in most media globally. The media has influenced the game in barely all its aspects, ranging from the setting and application of rules, administration, popularity, participation as well as dictating public profiles of most soccer stakeholders. As far as rules are concerned, the media has been instrumental in their changing and in shaping their application.

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There are currently 17 laws in football, which have constantly been altered over the years to suit the modern needs of the game, including offering a better spectacle for supporters and to ensure fair play. Notably, most changes have been based on the media's long-term opinion and view of the

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game. One of the main rule changes influenced by the media is on fouls. In the 1960s, 70s and 80s, red cards and yellow cards were rare in matches due to the rules applied then. Albeit the game being generally physical, professional fouls were mostly committed by defenders, who considered it better than letting opposition players though on goal.

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So loathed were red cards that in some countries, they were penalized by suspension of the player and a deduction of points for his team. An accumulation of several yellow cards also attracted equal punishment. But the situation has changed and rarely will a weekend end without a succession of red cards in any league across the world. Unlike in the past, most of the straight red cards are shown for professional fouls, which were not harshly punished before. The change is largely thanks to relentless media campaigns in the 1990s, especially in England.

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From newspapers to soccer magazines, radio and television stations, the media campaigned against the status quo. They deemed the traditional rough game a downside and felt the situation was unfair to teams with talented but physically-challenged players, who were often targeted for on-and off-the ballbullyingby their huge but often less talented opposition counterparts. This partially prompted FIFA to amend rules to punish all seemingly intentional fouls that have the potential to hurt other player, prevent a goal-scoring opportunity, or put the game into disrepute.

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Though considered harsh, players are even sent off for attempting to hit an opponent. Courtesy of the media, a player is today sent off for softly retaliating after subjection to career-ending tackles. Eye-hawked media scanning of incidents on the pitch has also made soccer authorities to advise referees to be alert on activities on and off the ball. As a result, there are more free kicks in soccer matches than in the 1960s. (Maynor R, 1). To ensure all offences are punished, referees can unlike in the past, now have the liberty to consult linesmen if they miss an incident, and punish it as advised by the assistant.

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The media has chiefly influenced rule change by openly highlighting dangerous incidents, including those off the ball that the referee failed to spot and punish. There has also been applied a rule on soccer fights, which mostly went almost automatically unpunished before. The media started to widely highlight them in the early 1980s. Soccer authorities deemed the situation negative to the progress of the game and introduced heavy fines and bans for the culprits. A law was recently introduced to yellow card players who remove shirts while celebrating goals.

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The media is almost the sole body behind this move. Players had developed a habit of writing sensitive (including political) messages on their vests and exposing them by removing shirts while celebrating. Rules have also been modified to punish players making obscene or political gestures. Some players used gestures to even support political parties, sometimes against

fans aligned to rival parties. For instance, FA fined West Ham striker Paulo di Canio after he made a fascist salute associated after scoring a goal in England in 2002.

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The English and Italian media deeply analyzed the incident and its political implications. By interpreting the meaning of the gestures, the media played has helped in the resolution of the problem courtesy of rule changes. Another milestone in soccer rule changes greatly provoked by the media is racial abuse. Since the 1960s, black players have particularly endured racialdiscrimination, including monkey chants, abroad. But the media has made relentless efforts to highlight the threats such scenes pose to global development, and soccer authorities thus introduced tough new laws that see culprits heavily banned.

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When it comes to the popularity of the game, the media has deeply contributed to elevating the sport as the world's favorite in a modern world dominated by hundreds of distinct sports. Though football has traditionally been popular, it took more than just traditions to elevate it to the current level that has seen it gradually overcome racial and gender hurdles. Unlike any other game, the media has highly publicized football and all its diverse aspects to audiences across the world and made more and more fans open their hearts to this game.

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First, most soccer fans now know much about the history of the respective teams they support. This has been made possible through television, movie, documentaries and newspapers among other media outlets. This has made fans understand the history of their teams, including aspects such as in what circumstances the team was founded, the best players and managers as well as trophies won. The internet is today one of the leading media in giving history details, particularly through Youtube, which documents many soccer videos from as early as the 1930s (Richard H, and Boyle R, 72).

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Unlike in most other sports, potential soccer fans can watch videos of legends such as Pele and all this has made fans, including potential ones, understand football much easily and, thus identify with the game more quickly, thus enhance its popularity. Today, football activities are in most countries highlighted in much more detail than the other sports. Games in the world's top leagues, as well other key soccer tournaments such as the World Cup, are usually beamed live by televisions across the world, reaching a larger population than in other sports. Indeed, soccer games are now beamed live on mobile phones.

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This new mediatechnologyhas seen more and more people access live football, and like the game in the process (Alex F, 1). Media advertisements have also played a vital role. Many top players in the world are often featured in adverts for major brands that many people highly associate with. This has particularly played a major role in gradually alluring females, who

hitherto extensively viewed soccer as a man's sport, to the game. The media also widely highlights women soccer leagues and it is no coincidence that there even leading women soccer commentators.

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Social interaction sites such as FaceBook and Tweeter a core media role. Today, a fan in far regions like Africa and Australia can make close friends and regularly interact with soccer celebrities, making the game more appealing even among part time fans. Another area where the media has been crucial is in defining soccer players across the globe. In the past, soccer was hugely a national affair and international media players an outside role. But today, the media highlights players in all corners of the world, a situation that has crucially changed the game.

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Today, the media knows who is who in which soccer academy and publicity of upcoming talent has seen big clubs go for the players in far flung corners of the world and mould them into superstars. This has to some extent enhanced the quality of the game by exposing gifted and exciting young talent, unlike in the past when teams apparently fielded several below-average players within the club's locality since there was insignificant publicity on better players in far-flung regions of the world. (Raymond B, 180) The clubs world class players appear for are also being increasingly swayed by the media.

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The regular highlighting to world audiences, including scout talents and soccer managers anywhere in the world, of how talented as certain player is has resulted in raised interest fro the player, who also most automatically ends in a better club. Some media outlets have even taken it as a personal obligation to help some teams pull particular players. A case in point is the La Masa newspaper in Spain, which has of late been incessantly carrying articles on how Arsenal midfielder Cesc Fabreags will end up in his boyhood club Barcelona. The newspaper has sensationally taken it upon itself to do what club authorities seem to have failed in.

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Overall, the media has totally revolutionarised the nature of players in terms of quality and the respective clubs they appear for, moulding a totally different scenario as compared to the 1950s, 60s, 70s and 80s. In terms of administration, the media has also not been left out. Soccer administration is today the exact opposite of the scenario in 1960. Then, football teams used to be mostly owned and managed by locals who were simply loyal to the club, and with a playing history. Football was better seen as a form of leisure. Today, football has been transformed into business.

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The media is today awash with stories of billionaires across the world trying to take over the best clubs in the world, with soccer managers sometimes also recruited based on their popularity. This is partly attributable to the media, which has popularized the globally and consequently attracted wealthy investors. Concurrently, the media has partly been deciding whether

respective club administrators stay. If a club performs poorly or accumulates massive debts under a certain regime, the media has, alongside the fans, been openly expressing discontent.

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The same applies to soccer managers/coaches today. Overall, the media has been core in significantly changing the outlook of football over the past 50 years. The public profile of the game has totally changed and most people regard the sport highly. Similarly, the profiles of many soccer players have been elevated. In conclusion, the media has played a central role in transforming the face of football in the past five decades. It has to an extent affected all aspects of the game, and apparently outlined future trends in the sport.

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And one would not be mistaken to predict that the media will be crucial in dictating all aspects of the game in future. For instance, some of the proposals on football being widely discussed in the media today are likely to have been accepted and implemented in 10 years' time. One of the issues is the introduction of goal-line technology to overcome the situation where referees wrongfully allow or disallow goals. This has been subject to hot debate by media outlets across the world, majority of who support the introduction electric gadgets, and this is likely to become a reality soon.

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Publicity of the sport is also likely to increase, and this will result in even more fans, further enhancing the popularity of the game. Current proposal to have a European Super league or have Premier League team play abroad are also likely to be passed since the media is supporting them. References Alex F, (2010) BBC iphone app to stream World Cup matches: 1 Maynor R, (2010): Petition-Football Changes; 1 Raymond B, (2004) Football in the New Media Age: 180-224 Raymond B, (1995) The Rise of Football Fanzine Culture; 92 Richard, H, and Boyle R, (2007) Sport, Media and Popular Culture; Power Play; 72