

WHAT

THE

WORLD

CLIP™

MEANS TO ME

**What The World Cup™
Means To Me**

Featuring:

Paul Dempsey (Setanta)

Simon Kuper (Soccernomics)

Rebecca Lowe (ESPN)

Phil Schoen (GolTV)

Misha Sher (Soccerex)

Tommy Smyth (ESPN)

Tim Vickery (BBC)

Peter Lupson (Thank God For Football)

And Others

Foreward

The 2010 World Cup will be the biggest tournament in soccer history. More people than ever before will be watching it. And more people will be ranting and raving about it on the Internet.

Between now and July 11, expect to hear so many stories about the footballers, the managers, tactics and highs and lows. But rather than dwell on that (which we undoubtedly will on our website, [World Cup Buzz](#)), we want to focus on you instead. We want to know what the World Cup means *to you*.


When you think about it, the World Cup means different things for different people. Every one of the billions of people who watch the tournament will have a different story. So what we've done is collected stories from 21 of the top soccer writers, analysts and bloggers from around the world to share with you. Stories that will hopefully enlighten you, touch your emotions or trigger your memories of past World Cup tournaments.

We're honored that some of the top writers in the world contributed to this eBook collection. Writers such as Simon Kuper (co-author of *Soccernomics*) and Tim Vickery (respected journalist for BBC and other media organizations) and media personalities from ESPN, GolTV and Setanta, and others.

As you read through the collection of stories in the next few minutes, think about what the World Cup means to YOU. And at the end of this free eBook, we'll share more details of how you can share your story with us.

The World Cup is a magical time when billions of soccer fans around the world come together for the biggest sports tournament on earth. It's a magical time. Whoever you support, I trust you'll enjoy it and savor it.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "The Gaffer".

The Gaffer

Simon Kuper

Co-author of [Soccernomics](#), and [Financial Times](#) columnist

There's only one

Eric Foucault

One ... Eric Foucault

Gave us a beer, So give him a cheer,

Walking in a Foucault wonderland.

Foucault, a French train driver, had just presented cans of Kanterbräu to the tired Scottish fans slouched in the corridor behind his compartment. Still, he hadn't expected them to serenade him. He couldn't speak English, but he looked pleased.

The fans were coming back from Saint Etienne, where their team had been beaten 3-0 by Morocco and knocked out of the World Cup.

Perhaps, Mr Foucault inquired through an interpreter, the Scots were better at rugby? No, the fans informed him, they sucked at that too.

Yet no one on Mr Foucault's train will have received a sucky impression of *l'Ecosse*. At one stop a Moroccan fan carrying his national flag got onto the train, looked startled to find himself surrounded by enemy fans, and even more startled when they all gave him a cheer. He strode up and shook hands with each Scot.

"He's a brave man," said one. There followed a debate about Scotland's penchant for failure: the country has played in six of the last seven World Cups but always failed at the last gasp to reach the second round. The fans on the train agreed it

was time to break the tradition of romanticizing defeat. Scotland will soon have its own parliament; on the field, too, its destiny was in its own hands.

Mr Foucault reappeared and led the Scots in a French singalong. Then he passed the fans his microphone. They sang “Flower of Scotland” for the whole train.

PS, 2010: Scotland have never played a game in a major tournament since that night.

Rebecca Lowe

[ESPN UK](#) analyst

Excitement. That's the first feeling I get when I think about the World Cup. The four year wait, the intensity it brings and the stories it creates. As a kid it was all about the England penalty misses of Italia '90, that was my earliest memory and my first taste of football heartbreak. I went on to support Crystal Palace though so I soon got used to it...

There's something about the World Cup that unites people for that short space of time. And I don't just mean in England. I was lucky enough to work for the BBC at the last World Cup in Germany and the spirit of that country, so often adverse to patriotism, was startling.

During the tournament, suddenly the focus of everyone's life is a common cause. Everyone has the same hope, and hope is what football is all about. It is such an unpredictable game that it allows us all to be hopeful, a quite child-like way to be. Everyone's a dreamer and football allows us that, none more so than with the World Cup.

Winning the Jules Rimet – in my country – is always likely to be a once in a lifetime experience. The 1966 triumph is held up as England's proudest sporting moment by quite some distance and for anyone who didn't live through it, we're desperate to know that feeling. Desperate for the pride, the euphoria and the party but also desperate to be a part of history. Because that's what the World Cup means to me. It writes history. It's precious, it's all-consuming and it's bloody exciting!

Paul Bestall -
[EPL Talk](#) blogger

One of my earliest memories as a child is sitting on my mother's knee, cheering on Argentina in the 1978 World Cup final. Quite why we were supporting Argentina, I've never understood but it underpinned for me what the World Cup means the world over. A young family, in Yorkshire, watching a football match from half a world away. I fell in love with the game that night and I adore it just as much today.

Back in those far away days, it was the only place you would ever get to see players like Cruyff, Pele, Kempes and Muller. It was an event for the audience in a time where football was only sporadically seen on television screens. It seems unthinkable now that for most people, it was the only football that really got shown on British TV other than domestic finals.

As I've aged, the World Cup has always been an event for me regardless of where or what I have been doing throughout my life. Since Argentina 78, I've seen every World Cup and absorbed as much of each tournament as I possibly can. Gone are the days of collecting Panini stickers and trying to fill my book for each tournament. Now it's become a social event for me and my circle of friends.

We've already arranged where we will watch each of England's games, co-ordinated who will wear the home or away shirts for each match and planned the day's events months in advance. Since the draw for the group games were made, I honestly count down the days until the opening match kicks off. I always watch every game in the first two rounds of the opening groups, regardless of who's playing.

It just holds something magical for me; I can cast my mind back and remember the great goals, the wonderful players and the games I've sat through over the years. The footballing gems who so often get overlooked these days, players like Enzo Scifo, Georghe Hagi and Didier Six. It has a grip on my very soul like nothing else I've ever known.

I remember all the tears, the joy and the hangovers but overall it's just the feeling that the World Cup still holds me in a magical spell and takes me back to when I was a wide eyed 5 year old boy watching ticker tape rain down on that pitch in Buenos Aires. Nothing can ever beat that feeling of falling in love with football for the first time.

Tim Vickery

[BBC](#) Analyst

It means being nine years old and arguing over the park about who was going to be Valdomiro or Sparswasser. It means knowing how to spell Czechoslovakia because they'd reached two finals. It means meeting someone called Popescu and knowing that she was of Romanian origin. It means being a council estate kid who had never got further than the Isle of Wight, but who still knew that he was part of the big, wide world.

Adam Spangler -

[This Is American Soccer](#) blogger

Freedom fighting, biding time for lightning to strike—that next explosion of pain, anger, elation, or love cultivated and palpated moment by moment by an inflated ball, perfecting our very nature through the destruction of worldly complications. Impregnated with knowledge and wisdom, so as not to aggravate or confuse, but to elaborate and allocate the education of their ability, heroes give the world a glimpse at freedom. Emotion spills onto playing fields and remains resplendent, protected from the misgivings of our humanity. Enraptured in this beauty we stray not or dare tempt the worst part of our being. In soccer, we find perspective from oppression and a promise of freedom. I know not how to express this but by what it means when I cry freedom. But still - freedom is there, in sight, if not in reach, and forever will be like the greatest trophy. The World Cup, the highest pyramid of sport, rests with ancient unconsciousness so that we never forget freedom is obtainable. And so that you come to know there is so much more than you, so much more than me, so much more than we – or whatever it is you think I mean.

Tommy Smyth -
[ESPN](#) analyst

The World Cup means to me the excitement coming out of a Pye radio. Make sure the wet batteries were charged to the full. Keep in mind also that when I was growing up we always considered any international game to be part of the World Cup. So we always had the opportunity of saying "Ah yes Ireland have a World Cup game next week." It give us the thrill of thinking Ireland were in the World Cup.

Then of course we moved to playing in qualifications and we had to take our lumps that we were not really in the World Cup finals. That was until 1990 when we got to Italy and we had quite a run until Schillaci beat Packie Bonner and the dream was over.

Of course from the World Cup in the early days we did not have the advantage of pictures. We could only conjure up in our minds what it was that Pele, Vava, Garrincha, Eusebio or the other heroes looked like. We would go to the picture houses after and see the newsreel clips of what the World Cup final looked like. It had that mysterious aroma which added to what a final was like and how it looked and felt. That was the amazing part of the World Cup in the good old days. This was the element that made your mind play the games. You kicked every ball.

When the radio went silent for even an instant you were in agony as to what might be happening on the field. Now the mystery is gone as to what the players look or play like. We have it all on ESPN. Still when they kick it off it brings back so many childhood days in the little village called Knockbridge in Ireland. The comments of the older folks fill my mind and the World Cup final brings the little boy out in me one more time. Roll on South Africa.

Brian Phillips

The Run Of Play blogger

There was a moment during the semifinals of Euro 2008 when a lightning bolt knocked out the international television feed from the game and several hundred million people suddenly found themselves not watching soccer. *Not watching soccer* was, of course, in this case, something completely different from the run-of-the-mill not watching soccer that we all do every day. Germany and Turkey were tied 1-1 in the second half of a terrific game, and we--those millions--had been raptly following to see who would make the final. Everything was fine, and then, with no warning, static, confusion, and if you lived in the United States, a quick cut to an apologetic Rece Davis.

Not watching soccer, in other words, is something you do individually and unconsciously, while you're waiting in traffic or buying a carton of milk; *not watching soccer* was something we all did together and were all utterly aware of. I remember thinking, after the signal went out and I'd jumped to feet in dismay, that some meaningful percentage of the population of the earth had jumped to its feet at the exact same moment I did. What had been me watching a game in my living room suddenly felt like a shared experience on a massive scale.

And that's one thing the World Cup means to me, because whatever you make of the mysterious unifying power sport can exert simply by holding a lot of people's attention at once, the World Cup is its full moon. In America, the touchstones for "where were you when" are the moon landing and the Kennedy assassination, but unimaginably more people saw the Zidane headbutt: an event whose significance is in fact largely confined to the fact that so many people watched it happen. That's an amazing thing to think about, and it's one reason why, for all the reasons it gives us to be cynical, the game can still create legends. It means something because it means something to everyone.

Richard Whittall

[A More Splendid Life](#) blogger

The World Cup means everything to me, because it introduced me to soccer. Prior to USA '94, I had never seen a full competitive match on television. To me, soccer was just a game parents forced their kids to play after school, like volleyball.

The month before the World Cup kicked off that summer, a friend of mine invited me to see Canada play Holland at Toronto's Varsity stadium in a warm-up friendly. I remember Canada got walloped, but I didn't know until much later the caliber of players I had seen play that day. Marco Van Basten. Dennis Bergkamp. At thirteen, they were just Dutchman playing a children's game in a half-full stadium.

That would all change later on that summer, when my extended family paid a visit to our suburban house. My uncle insisted at one point on watching something on TV, and so I went and joined him. "This is the World Cup," he said, but it was clearly much more than that. It was the sound of tens of thousands of voices singing with delirious abandon, it was the freedom of players on a vast green surface, a perfectly divided rectangle within which geometric formations would appear and disappear, moving in tandem to one end and then the other. It was continuous, unending. Was it infinite?

"How long are the periods?"

"They're halves, forty five minutes. We're about five minutes in." I said a quiet thank you to the blue sky outside and sat down to watch. I haven't gotten up since.

Richard Farley

[EPL Talk](#) and [Set Piece Analysts](#) blogger and podcast host

Minivan rides from Bakersfield to Pasadena with a driver's license too new for a pocket's ride through the wash. The barren landscape near Pyramid Lake. The trip to my first World Cup match: June 18, 1994 - Romania and Colombia at the Rose Bowl.

I had never heard of Gheorghe Hagi and was under the misapprehension that the Romania team beating Colombia was some kind of huge upset. Like many in the U.S., my football was unduly centered on Pele, whose pick of Colombia to win the tournament was almost everything I knew about football.

That, and Romario.

And Baggio.

Having grown up with no television exposure to the international soccer, 1994 was my act of faith. Playing the game as a kid I was told soccer was the world's game, but sports media did little to affirm that idea, an inconsistency I resolved with a naive but ultimately validated logic:

How could we be right and the rest of the world be wrong about soccer? Clearly, I knew very little of the world, but having grown up in rural, central California, places like Romania and Colombia may as well not have existed.

In Pasadena, I was shown: the world was right about soccer. Seeing Hagi's magic on a playing field defined more by natural green than a white grid or dirt lines, I finally got it.

Only through the World Cup can a Romanian footballer show a teenager from California's Central Valley: The Beautiful Game as a gateway to the world.

Phil Schoen

Go!TV commentator

I remember walking into Orlando's Citrus Bowl in the summer of 1994 trying not to act too proud of the media badge on my belt. It was a dream come true. Sure, it was the hottest part of the day in a typical Florida summer but nothing bothered me on that day.

It reminds me of that scene in *Fever Pitch* where the young boy is dumbstruck as he steps up through the tunnel and the glorious green grass of Highbury captures his soul.

By 1978, the Strikers had landed in nearby Fort Lauderdale and *Soccer Made in Germany* and *Star Soccer* had opened my eyes to the beautiful game.

There were no English language broadcasts for the 78 World Cup in Argentina, but living in South Florida there were already Spanish stations and I remember Tony Tirado on SIN (the precursor to Univision) calling the games.

From that point on I was hooked. From the grace of Cruyff, Michel's magnificence, Vermees denied by the backside of Zenga - every moment is framed in its glory. Whether I was there or on the other side of the globe, it didn't matter.

Be it a booth in Bristol, at a stadium in Germany or trying to make sense of the flickering images from Canadian stations across the border in Windsor I have been gripped by the glorious fever of the grandest stage of the greatest sport ever known.

John Devlin

True Colours blogger and author

When I was growing up, the excitement of the World Cup was all about 'the difference.'

After four domestic seasons of 3 o'clock rainy Saturday afternoon kick offs watching teams comprised mainly of local lads in shirts numbered 1 to 11 bellowed at by drab-clad supporters, you were suddenly exposed to the spectacle of the World Cup. Staying up late to experience the thrill of exotic football, featuring players whose names you couldn't pronounce being relayed via a TV commentary that sounded like it was being phoned in from a call box. All accompanied by the constant hubbub of drums and whistles from scantily clad fans who looked like they were at a carnival rather than a football match and my Dad explaining to me how people from under-developed countries couldn't play football as well as we could. It was a world away from the domestic game.

Watching as our boys were thrown into the sweltering arena to do battle with the foreign enemy on an alien turf, attired in kits featuring squad numbers and names on the back of the jerseys and pulled away from the relative comfort of a climate and match schedule they were accustomed to.

This is it.

This is the moment of glory.

But as a Scotland supporter it never was.

For us Scots the World Cup seems to mainly consist of a soul-sapping defeat to a country you couldn't pinpoint on a globe (often the very same country whose football had been so confidently dismissed by my Dad) before being shuffled off back to the airport.

But basically, for me, the World Cup was different. A magical event, sure...but it was the difference to everyday football that created the excitement.

Nowadays with the domestic game full of players whose names I can't pronounce wearing squad numbers/names and being cheered by shirtless men banging drums perhaps the difference is not so marked. But it's still there...and that's what makes it special.

Paul Dempsey -
Setanta Sports presenter

I have two great hopes for the 2010 World Cup. The first is that an African nation reaches the Final for the first time. This would be the greatest step forward in the world game in modern times -- and boy, we've been waiting for it long enough -- since Zaire made it to West Germany in 1974. Imagine the excitement level right across the continent if it were to happen. And it would also ensure that this event would be remembered for ever -- transcending any of the negative experiences that may be encountered in South Africa.

My other great hope is simultaneously my greatest fear. The entire qualifying campaign was overshadowed by the Thierry Henry handball in the France - Ireland play off. To me it was the absolute proof that the greatest game in the world cannot continue to allow itself to be held up to ridicule in the 21st century. It is simply not good enough for FIFA to say that the policy remains that the referee is the sole and final arbiter -- when in point of fact he is not in any case, for example on discipline. It is even more laughable for them to fob off such incidents as part of the "controversy" and eternal "fascination" of the game that keeps us all arguing about important incidents. And I nearly cried in disbelief that after all of that, at the International Board meeting held in March 2010, the proposal to look further into the use of technology was voted down. I can only pray there will be no repeat in the Finals because if there is, in a game of consequence, the whole debate will rage bigger and harder than ever before -- and may well overshadow everything else! And I'm not just sore six months on because I am Irish!

Laurence McKenna -

[EPL Talk videographer and podcast analyst](#)

Sun. Orange sun fills the World Cup. My local park was bowl shaped, perfect for hours of recreating moments during France 1998. Running from TV to turf was a daily routine for *that* month.

I was nine.

My friends and I would change the result of a game. Like football demi-gods, we decided that Beckham didn't get a card; Owen had a hat-trick; or that Denmark somehow made it to the final. We took the World Cup and made it ours. It was before I felt any anxiety in football, blissfully unaware of form or significance, my romanticised view of "the beautiful game" was still alive.

Each evening was spent by a television, exhausting the collective experience, aware that I held my breath with millions of people. Our young patriotism was innate but not affected. This pride was formed around our youthful reality of goals and saves; we examined technique and reproducing what we saw. Touch for touch, moment for moment.

Then, as the final whistle sounded and the sun peeped over the horizon, we would evacuate the living room and sprint to the park. The game had picked our heroes for that night and our imagination did the rest.

We experienced loss, delight, anger, doubt. In our tiny theatre of Stapenhill Park, we played those emotions out.

John Nicholson -

[Football 365](#) and [EPL Talk](#) blogger, and author of *[Footy Rocks](#)*

It was July 30th 1966 when, as a five-year-old boy, I realised the power of World Cup football for the first time. England were in the process of winning the Jules Rimet Trophy live on our 12-inch black-and-white television but outside our house in Hull, our new next-door neighbours, the Coates, were cutting their grass and ignoring Bobby Moore's triumph.

My mother peered out, tutted and said:

'Look at them, doing that, on a day like this. There's something wrong about them.' Dad nodded sagely.

'Cutting the grass while England play in a World Cup final! It's unpatriotic if you ask me,' he said, peering over his glasses at the action out on their front lawn.

'You're right, Eric, it is,' she said, unusually agreeing with him. 'It wouldn't surprise me if they were Scottish, on the quiet.'

'Aye, probably changed his accent or something,' said Dad, the paranoia increasing, 'He might be a German, in fact!'

Mam frowned and wagged her finger at me.

'Don't you go speaking to them John. We don't want you talking to people like that; isn't that right, Eric?'

'Aye, it is. You never know with people like that, could be up to all sorts,' said Dad ominously, as Nobby Stiles kicked Wolfgang Overath, maybe as revenge for the Luftwaffe bombing his chippy.

Previously, these neighbours had been blameless in my parents' eyes, certainly not regarded as odd, possibly enemies of the state, Germans or worse still, Scottish. However, now that they had shown disregard for the World Cup they were now some kind of dangerous outlaws.

Even at the time I thought this was a bit odd. You don't have to like football. Not wanting to watch England kick a ball around doesn't mean you want to assassinate the Queen, establish a fourth Reich or even wear a kilt.

That day I realised football is not a normal sport, it is a cultural phenomenon around which all manner of attitudes, beliefs, hopes and desires are wrapped. Even as a boy, as I witnessed it being used by my parents as a stick to beat the neighbours with, I realized this World Cup thingy was rather important and worth keeping an eye on.

**Misha Sher -
Head of business development at [Soccerex](#)**

The meaning of the World Cup goes far beyond the 32 nations which will contest the famous trophy. We live in a world that is divided on so many levels. Whether it's religion, ethnic division, economic disparity, or something else, we are constantly reminded of our differences and conflict is never far away. The rich live by different rules to the poor. The Jews live by different rules from the Muslims. Those on the left view society very differently than those on the right. Yet soccer has the unique ability to unite people from all over the world, from all walks of life, making all of us forget our differences and unite us as human beings. When it comes to soccer, we all accept and embrace the same set of rules and we compete as equals under the laws of the game. That includes North and South Korea, two countries which share a border but couldn't be farther apart on everything else. The World Cup is a true celebration of one of the only things humans have in common – a passion for a game of soccer.

This summer's tournament will be the first time the world's biggest prize will be contested on the African continent. What a great occasion for Africa and the people who have suffered and continue to suffer every day. From Sudan to Somalia, and from Congo to Zimbabwe, our fellow human beings are subjected to unimaginable pain resulting from endless wars, hunger, and disease. But for the month of June, they will fill the streets of South Africa with their dances, their songs, their vuvuzelas, and their incredible energy and they will share the occasion with thousands of fans from around the world. They will all be speaking a different languages and dialects yet they won't have any problems understanding each other. Regardless of who emerges victorious, the World Cup will be a welcome distraction from many problems facing millions around the globe and will serve as a reminder that while soccer is being played, we're all equals. And that's what I love about this tournament!

Jesse Chula -
[EPL Talk](#) blogger

What the World Cup Means to Me:

In short, everything.

The World Cup means everything to me because in its own simplistic way, it explains life. The grand spectacle that is the World Cup costs hundreds of millions of dollars to construct and execute. If one were to take a step back in a moment of innocent reflection, minus the millions, there's no better definition of a naturally occurring sporting tournament. It's the perfect storm that results in the rebirth of nations. Once every four years, this hurricane of desire calls upon 32 countries to emerge from their social, economic or political upheaval and compete as gladiators on the world's stage against one another to determine a winner. One country will stand victorious while others will fail, but to compete on the field of battle at the world's sport versus the world's best, remains a distinct honor for the participants.

Football, soccer, the beautiful game, it's the unique allure of the bright lights that emit from the rising and shining stars of some of the greatest athletes on the planet. The passion on display from supporters for their nation or adopted nation remains unsurpassed when compared to other sports. The World Cup is for and about the people, the diehard fans and even the neutrals, they live for this, they crave this competition. In some ways, supporting a country in the World Cup defines purpose. Its promised glory is what we dream of when we're young, and when we grow up, those same fantasies of triumph continue to hold our imagination. We watch the event with an unabashed focus, poised and determined that our hopes are strong enough to somehow empower our country to victory.

We hold the power during the World Cup.

The event itself is the unification of nations to form one world for one short month, where we put our differences aside to come together for a common purpose. It's for our love of football, but also to devote, to emote, to sing, to dance in the streets, to celebrate life, love, and heartbreak as we follow our country through battle, through win or loss, and for the love of competition.

It. Means. Everything.

Chris Oakley

[Some People Are On The Pitch](#) blogger

The World Cup, quite simply, symbolizes everything that I've ever loved about football - a sense of excitement and expectation about the unknown. The teams competing from parts of the world rarely heard of, the players - in many cases non-entities to the watching millions around the world, and the venues – exotic, enthralling and colorful. In direct contrast to the football we watch week in, week out in our own home countries, the World Cup gives the majority of us a captivating glimpse through the looking glass at a spectacle that frustratingly only comes our way every four years.

As a child, my first World Cup memories were of Spain '82, and it was here that some wonderfully evocative images would be burned into my mind for years to come. Bryan Robson scoring after 27 seconds for England against France, David Narey's wonder strike for Scotland against Brazil and the mind-boggling flair and goal-scoring ability of the Brazilian team itself.

Since then, every passing World Cup has created its own memories, its own unique atmosphere and a list of star players to talk about for every future footballing generation. Whether your own team qualifies for the Finals or not, you can't fail to be drawn into the drama and spectacle that the World Cup generates without end. It is the biggest sporting event on the planet bar none and for very good reason – you never quite know what's going to happen, and that in itself is a very exciting prospect indeed.

Daryl Grove

[The Offside](#) and [World Cup Blog](#) blogger

The action-packed storylines of the World Wrestling Federation seemed much more interesting to my 10 year old self than the beautiful game. But that was before the 1990 World Cup entered our house through the television. All of a sudden my whole family (dad, brothers, sisters, uncles) were crowding the room to watch Bobby Robson's England, and I wanted to be involved.

So I watched. I soaked up the adventures of Gary Lineker, David Platt and Gazza. I asked stupid questions like "Why can't England buy Paul McGrath?" and waited impatiently between England games. It never occurred to me to watch the other countries play. When Chris Waddle skied that spot-kick and we were out in the semis, my only question was: "When do England get to try again?"

The answer was supposed to be four years, but turned out to be eight. So the Three Lions-less 1994 World Cup was where I learned it wasn't *all* about England, started paying serious attention to all the teams involved, and had my eyes opened to the talents of Gheorge Hagi, Roberto Baggio and Romário. There was a whole world of football out there.

To me the World Cup is not just about supporting my team or even about seeing all the talent that other teams have to offer. It's about new generations (young or old) discovering the joys of being a football fan. Because it turns out wrestling isn't real, but the World Cup most certainly is.

The Gaffer

[EPL Talk](#) and [World Cup Buzz](#) blogger

The World Cup, for me, is a barometer of where I am in my life, to look back and reflect where I was and what I was doing every four years.

For my first World Cup, in 1978, I was eight years old and living in Wales. I still remember the vivid scenes and the deluge of ticker-tape that descended from the stands, on to the pitch. I remember Archie Gemmill's incredible goal, and the long range goals by Peru.

In 1982, I was 12 and a massive soccer fan by that age. I remember being stunned by the beautiful wizardry of Brazil (Socrates, Zico and Falcao) and the skill of Michel Platini (France).

For the 1986 World Cup, I was 16 and living in Florida and was still getting adjusted to American life and culture after being in the States for two years. It was such a strange experience watching the tournament on US television with the commercial breaks and spotty coverage. My main memory is the Hand Of God followed by Diego Maradona dribbling past half the England squad in a game that sent England home from Mexico.

In 1990, I was in love and engaged to my first wife. We decided to travel to England and Wales during the middle of the World Cup, and it was a magical time. I remember watching the England games on TV in my uncle's living room deep in the heart of west Wales. And getting caught up in the enthusiasm of seeing such drama unfold in front of our eyes especially when Paul Gascoigne cried.

Nineteen ninety four was the turn of the World Cup to come to the United States. Still married to my first wife, the

tournament was full of mixed emotions for me. Just weeks before the tournament kicked off, I was rushed to the hospital and almost died when blood clots filled my lungs. I spent the beginning of the '94 World Cup tournament in hospital watching games and was released two weeks later but missed most of the games in Orlando that I had tickets to. I did manage however to make it to one game, which was the Republic of Ireland's 2-0 loss to Netherlands. I blissfully remember standing in the Irish section singing "Always Look On The Bright Side Of Life" as tears rolled down my cheeks.

The World Cup of 1998 was a blur for me. I remember watching all of the games in the tournament, but it was an unhappy time in my life and a year later I had separated from my first wife.

The year 2002 was far more uplifting. I was deeply in love, engaged to Debbie and spending each night of the tournament waking up at 2am to watch several hours of games before we both drove to work together. For the mid-morning matches, I remember carrying a handheld black-and-white television with me and trying to pick up the signal of the local Spanish TV station.

In 2006, I was fortunate to be working at a software company that understood how important the World Cup was. The founder of the company along with the head of IT came up with a plan to put a satellite dish on top of the building and then beamed ESPN and ESPN2 to each of our desktop computers. So while all 3 games were on during work hours, we were able to watch every game live from the comfort of our own offices and we still were able to get our work done in between.

Living in America, the World Cup to me is a crusade. A wonderful event that should be experienced by as many American residents as possible. Sure, it's a brilliant month of soccer filled with highs and lows. But it's also an opportunity. An opportunity to introduce your friends, workmates and strangers to the beautiful game. That to me means everything.

Peter Lupson

Author of *[Thank God For Football](#)* and *[Across The Park](#)*

There's surely no competition in football more magical than the World Cup. For a whole month the very best players on the planet grace our screens and delight us with their grace and flair. But there are always some real surprises and it's these that give the competition its added spice. In the 2006 World Cup, for instance, eventual winners Italy only defeated unfancied Australia in the last 16 by a controversial last minute penalty. And what about the minnows of Cameroon beating World Cup holders Argentina 1-0 in 1990 or the unknowns of Senegal defeating World Cup holders France 1-0 in 2002? The brilliance of world class players will always thrill us but it's shock results like these that give the competition that something extra.

I'm especially pleased the tournament will be held this year on the African continent for the very first time. It shows how far football has developed as a truly global game bringing all nations together. The legendary Pele once predicted that an African country would win the World Cup before 2000. Although he was wrong, could it be that an African team will fulfil his expectations this time round? After all, Cameroon won the Olympic men's football tournament in 2000 and Nigeria reached the final in 2008. Anything can happen in the beautiful game and I, for one, am looking forward to a few surprises!

Kartik Krishnaiyer

**Director of Communications [North American Soccer League](#) &
[EPL Talk](#) contributor**

Every four years the world stops and celebrates football. The World Cup is more than a football tournament, it is a international celebration of sport, culture and people. It is the single greatest unifier of the world's people and the planet's most important sporting event. Throughout the globe people interact with and learn about foreign cultures and societies, while the beautiful game plays on television screens from Argentina to Zimbabwe. The World Cup is a one of a kind event which makes myself and so many others I know of different ethnic backgrounds obsessive for a month every four years.

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So, what does the World Cup mean to you? Now is your chance to tell *your story* with soccer fans from around the world.

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Thanks in advance for sharing your story.

World Cup Buzz

WorldCupBuzz.com is your daily source for news and analysis of the 2010 World Cup. Before, during and after the tournament, we'll feature articles from some of the top bloggers as well as a daily World Cup Buzz Podcast released each night.

Hosted by Richard Farley, the daily World Cup Buzz Podcast will feature a recap of the day's matches as well as a preview of the next day's games. Plus, all of the analysis and news you would expect to find in addition to featured guests.

The World Cup Buzz Podcast is available on iTunes as well as at WorldCupBuzz.com

In addition to the daily podcast, be sure to play the [World Cup Fantasy Challenge](#) where you can pick your team of the tournament and compete against other fantasy players.

And play the [World Cup predictions game](#) to see if you can pick which countries will win each match.

Plus World Cup Buzz, in association with EPL Talk, will be hosting an official viewing party in South Florida for the game between USA v England. Visit WorldCupBuzz.com or EPLTalk.com for more details.

World Cup Buzz is part of the EPL Talk Network of sites. During the World Cup, be sure to visit these other sites in the network for complete coverage of the 2010 tournament:

- [EPL Talk](#) -- Coverage of the England national team as well as analysis of ABC/ESPN's TV coverage of the World Cup; and of course Premier League news,

- [Major League Soccer Talk](#) -- Coverage of the US national team,
- [La Liga Talk](#) -- Coverage of the Spanish national team,
- [Serie A Talk](#) -- Coverage of the Italian national team,
- [Bundesliga Talk](#) -- Coverage of the German national team,
- [Champions League Talk](#) -- Coverage of European countries in World Cup other than the above ones,
- [Championship Talk](#) -- Coverage of World Cup players who ply their trade in the Coca-Cola Championship league.

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