



DON'T
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THE
WORLD
CUP

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INTRODUCTION

'Football,' Gary Lineker once remarked, 'is a game played by 22 players. And then the Germans win.' It's been a century since England and Germany first met on the football pitch and, despite brief flirtations with Argentina, France and Scotland, the Germans remain England's number one rivals. English football supporters love above all else to beat the



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Germans, and not even that 5–1 dream win in Munich has cured this complex.

This summer, Sven's boys go to Germany, the nation still obsessed with the idea that through efficiency, discipline and even some mystical pact with Satan himself, the Germans are destined always to triumph over a morally superior English side. The painful World Cup and Euro Championship defeats of 1970, 1972, 1990 and 1996 have shown us that.

As a *Guardian* writer once put it, 'England and Germany are in an S & M relationship, and no prizes for guessing who is the dominant partner.'

And despite the current German side being, in the words of former Bayern Munich manager Uli Hönemann, 'a catastrophe', you can't keep a good people down, and at 7/1 they're second favourites to take the World Cup for the third time. If they win it this summer, it's theirs forever.



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So this June, make friends with some Germans, enjoy a drink and a joke (they do have a sense of humour, remember), but please – don't mention the World Cup.

CHAPTER 1

ENGLAND VS GERMANY – 100(ISH) YEARS OF SPORTING CONFLICT

1880s

British academics and businessmen attempt to convert the Germans to football, rugby and cricket, but only the beautiful game takes hold, the German royal family admiring its manliness. The Germans' public school-based British teachers, with remarkable foresight, declare that football will provide 'an education in that spirit of chivalry, fairness and good temper'.

1899

An England team made up of gentleman amateurs and ghastly 'trade' professionals tour Germany for the first time, winning 13–2 and 10–2, the games covered by a British press eager to patronise the plucky Germans. When the English side beat a combined German/Austrian team 8–0, the *Manchester Guardian* commends their 'excellent' goalkeeping. Bless.

1901

The Germans arrive in England for a return series, where an amateur English side beat them 12–0 at White Hart Lane. The tourists then go off to West Bromwich, where a team of professionals squeeze past 10–0.

Christmas Day, 1914

British and German soldiers on the Western Front take a break from the slaughter of the trenches to play a game of football in no-man's-land, the truce initiated by a group of soldiers from Saxony. Local commentators refer to the Germans' 'discipline' but the game finishes Lancashire Fusiliers 3 Saxons 2. Though, technically, no-man's-land — covered with shell holes, dead bodies and landmines — does not meet FIFA pitch criteria.