

Historic Events: **The World Cup— A pictorial history on stamps**

by John F. Dunn

With the World Cup beginning on June 12 and running through the championship game on July 13 in Brazil, we present here stamps that trace the history of this worldwide event from the first, 1930, competition to date.

Prelude:

The world's most popular sport, football—known in the United States as soccer—has elements that trace back to ancient Greece and Rome, but the rules of the sport as we know it today came into fruition in the mid-19th Century in England, where various forms of the game were played as far back as the eight century.

The first formal “International” competition was held in 1872, albeit it between England and Scotland. By 1900 the sport was sufficiently widespread that it was introduced as a demonstration sport (with no medals awarded), and then as a medal sport in the 1908 London Olympics.

It was not until the 1920 Olympics that a non-European nation competed—Egypt, along with 13 European teams—in a competition that was won by Belgium. Uruguay won the 1924 and 1928 Olympics.

By 1930, under the leadership of its President, Jules Rimet, the Federation Internationale de Football Associations (FIFA) was ready to stage its own tournaments, free of the amateur restrictions of the Olympics. Having won the previous two Olympic Championships, and with the South American nation celebrates its 100th Anniversary of independence, Uruguay became the natural choice as the first World Cup host country.



Jules Rimet and the first trophy, named “The Goddess of Victory,” which later came to be known as the Rimet Cup, on a stamp from Hungary.

1930, Uruguay



From comprehensive sets recording the history of successive World Cups: top, Yemen, showing a landmark in Montevideo, Uruguay; left, the Championship game teams, Uruguay and Argentina (the latter in the familiar blue and white stripes); center, the Jules Rimet cup being presented to a representative from Uruguay; right, a 2000 Uruguay stamp for the 100th Anniversary of the Uruguay Association, also recognizing the 1930 World Cup victory.

The first World Cup was somewhat limited in international representation, primarily because of the expense of transporting a team across the seas. As a result, the tournament consisted of 13 teams: 4 from Europe, 7 from South America, and 2 from North America.

All of the matches were played in one city, Montevideo. The original plan was to play all matches in a new stadium built expressly for the tournament, the 90,000-seat Estadio Centenario, but construction delays forced some early matches to be played in two other Montevideo stadiums.

Despite the sparse turnout of teams, the tournament itself was a success, with the host nation retaining its world leadership with a victory over Argentina in front of 93,000 spectators.

Such was the fervor surrounding the final between neighboring countries, spectators were searched for weapons and the referee agreed to officiate only after his safety had been secured and a boat prepared for a quick escape should he need it.

Some things never change.

1934, Italy



Host nation stamps from Italy (left and right) and a site stamp from Yemen) above

In 1934 the World Cup moved to a format that would continue until 1982, with 32 teams competing in a qualifying round and 16 teams making it to the finals tournament. In the regional distribution, twelve teams were eligible from Europe, three to the Americas and one to Africa/Asia. The United States qualified in a playoff match with Mexico, played in Rome.

For the only time in the history of the World Cup, the host team had to qualify for the 16-team finals tournament.

Likewise, for the only time, the reigning champions also did not participate, but this was by choice. Upset over the lack of European teams who traveled to the 1930 World Cup in their home country, Uruguay, the 1930 Champion, opted out. With Chile and Peru also not entering teams, Argentina and Brazil were able to qualify without having to play any matches.

Still another dropout was the United Kingdom, whose teams from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland decided to participate in their own “International Championship.” Also noteworthy was the participation of Egypt, which did not qualify again until 1990.

This was the first World Cup to be played at sites throughout the host country, from Milan and Trieste in the north to Naples in the south.

With the non-European teams eliminated in their first

matches, the tournament quickly became a European championship, with Italy defeating Czechoslovakia, 2-1.



The winners, Italy, on stamps from Nicaragua, Bhutan, Great Britain and Italy; and the runners-up, Czechoslovakia, on a stamp from Hungary, the “azzurri,” Italy, in their familiar blue shirts.

1938, France



Host country stamp from France; host site stamp from Yemen, and 1938 “Coupe de Monde” FIFA promotional label

This was the first World Cup that was affected by war. With the storm clouds of an impending World War gathering in Europe, Spain, beset by its own civil war, was unable to compete. Austria, which had been occupied and annexed by Germany, withdrew and five Austrian players joined the German team. However, divisiveness between the German and Austrian contingents was blamed for the first-round loss of Germany, for the only time in which they competed in a World Cup.



Meanwhile, Uruguay—expecting alternating tournaments to be played in Europe and South America—again refused to travel to Europe and was joined by Argentina.

As a result, only 14 teams participated in the finals, but this did not dampen the competition, with five of the seven first round matches requiring extra time to determine the winner—Sweden having advanced without having to play as a result of its opponent, Austria, having withdrawn from the tournament.

The Championship match was not as competitive, with Italy defeating Hungary 4-2 after taking a 3-1 halftime lead.

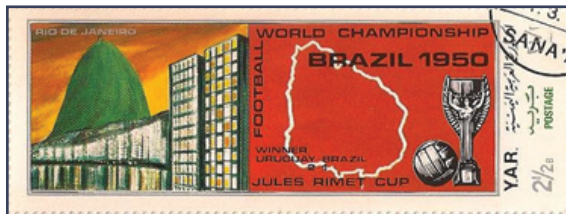


The Italian team winners on a stamp from Bhutan; and the s on a stamp from Hungary, along with an Italian player.



Note that the Great Britain and Italy stamps on page 4 also recognize Italy's victories in 1934 and 1982.

1950, Brazil



Host site stamp from Yemen; and host country stamp from Brazil

With the onset of World War II, no World Cup championships were held in 1942 or 1946. Throughout this period, Italy retained the trophy, which was hidden in a shoe box under his bed by FIFA's Italian Vice-President, Dr. Ottorino Barassi.

So a trophy that went under the bed as “The Goddess of Victory” came out as “The Jules Rimet Cup” in honor of the founder of the World Cup and his 25th anniversary as president of FIFA.

Brazil was a natural choice for the renewed competition. It had been expected to be selected as the host in

1942 in order to return to the alternating Europe/South America schedule. Further, there were few host candidates in war-torn Europe.

Brazil as host, and Italy as defending champion, were automatic qualifiers, Germany and Japan were not allowed to compete, and the UK decided to return, with England and Scotland qualifying out of their own British Home Championship instead of a World Cup qualifier.

The Iron Curtain countries boycotted the tournament, so that in addition to the Soviet Union, also not participating were strong teams from Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

Other nations that opted out included Argentina (in a dispute with the Brazilian Football Confederation), Belgium, Scotland (who had preannounced they would not go if they finished second in the British Home tournament), and France (which agreed to compete, then withdrew after the draw of the four competing groups was set).

At the urging of Brazil—and the threat to withdraw their hosting of the tournament—a new format was adopted. The 14 teams (which would have been 16 if a full complement could have been assembled) were divided into four groups, or pools, each pool playing in a round-robin tournament within the pool to determine who would move on to the final group and another round-robin competition.

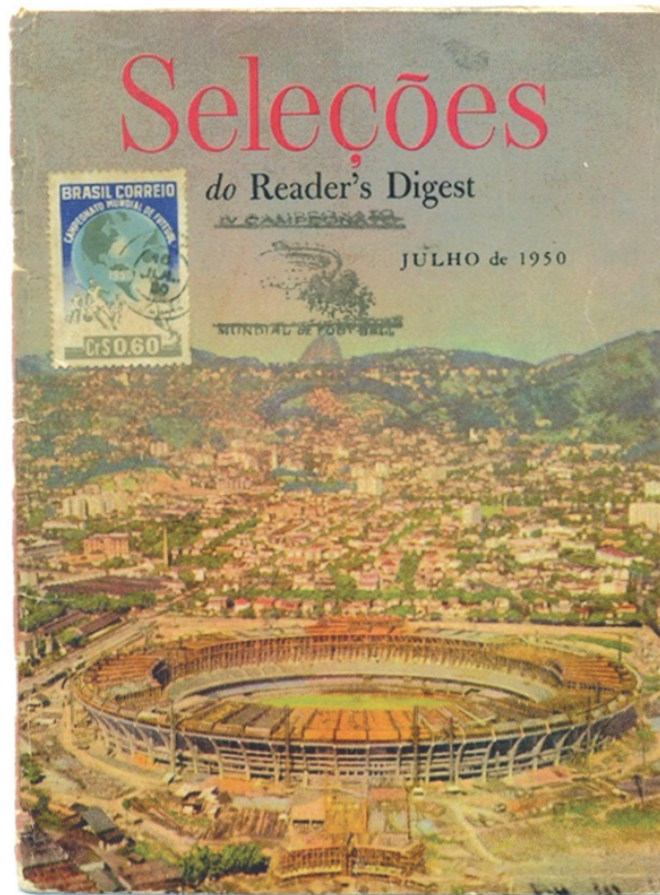
As a result, a total of 30 matches would be played instead of the 16 matches that were played under the previous format in 1934 and 1938. This meant much more revenue for the host country to recoup its construction investment and more of an incentive for the European teams to participate.



Left, a 2000 Uruguay stamp celebrating its 1950 victory; and right, the Hungary stamp showing players from Uruguay and Brazil.



Emerging from the pools were Brazil, Spain, Sweden and Uruguay; and in the final before a crowd of almost



A magazine cover with a Brazil host country stamp affixed, picturing the Estadio do Maracana in Rio de Janeiro, where almost 200,000 fans assembled for the final.

200,000 fans, a heavily favored host country team was upset, 2-1, by Uruguay, which was playing in its first World Cup since winning the 1930 Championship.

1954, Switzerland

By 1954, although the Cold War was still raging, some semblance of order had returned to the world sports stage and neutral Switzerland was an appropriate symbolic choice for the World Cup.



Yemen host site, Bern, Switzerland

With an unusual, never to be used again, format, the 1954 tournament was the highest scoring World Cup in history, establishing scoring records that still stand.

Host country stamp on a maximum card that shows the tournament cities and the winning German team.

In the final, a heavily favored Hungary team got off to a quick 2-0 lead against West Germany, but in a match beset by controversial calls, the West Germans came back to win 3-2.

As Germany did not have a professional league at this time, this is the only time in

World Cup competition that a team of amateurs won the World Cup. Reminiscent of the “Miracle on Ice” victory of the 1980 U.S. Olympic hockey team of amateurs’ victory over the Soviet Union and its subsequent Olympic finals win, the West German squad’s 1954 World Cup is popularly called “The Miracle of Bern.”

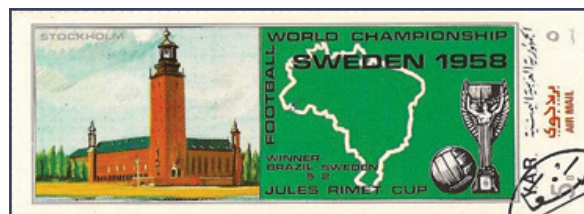


Left, a British stamp celebrating Germany’s 1954, 1974 and 1990 victories and right, the Hungary stamp showing players from Germany (in white shirt) and Hungary.



1958, Sweden

The 1958 World Cup was spread out over an extraordinary 12 cities in Sweden, some of which struggled to reach



Yemen host site stamp, Solna, Sweden

the required 20,000 seat capacity. World politics played a very small role in the team selection process, with only Indonesia, Sudan and Turkey being eliminated by refusing to play qualifying matches against Israel, the latter country losing in a qualifier against Wales, which made its one and only finals appearance.



Sweden host country stamps May 8, 1958 First Day of Issue cover. The World Cup tournament began on May 30.

On the other hand, this marked the first appearance of the Soviet Union. It also was the only time in World Cup history that all four UK teams—Britain, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales—qualified for 'the round of 16' finals.

Perhaps the most memorable event in this World Cup, in addition to Brazil's first victory, was the bursting onto the scene of a young Pele who went on to become a legendary star who is still recognized wherever he goes.

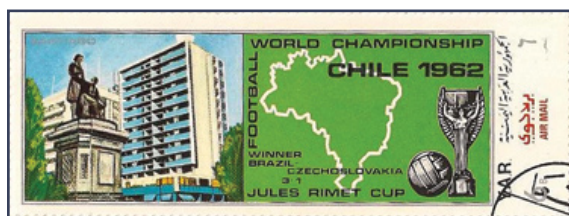
Spurred on by their home crowds, Sweden was able to make it to the Championship game, and take a one goal lead against Brazil. But led by goals from Pele (2), Vava and Zagallo—you know you've made it in football when you simply are identified by one name—Brazil went on to win its first of an unmatched five World Cups, 5-2.



Left, a British stamp celebrating Brazil's record 1958, 1962, 1970, 1994 and 2002 victories and right, the Hungary stamp showing players from Brazil and Sweden. (Although the colors do not match the Championship game uniforms, this may be an artist's rendering of the young Pele scoring one of his two goals.)



1962, Chile



Left, Yemen host site, Santiago, stamp;
right, Chile host country issue



By 1962 the World Cup had taken on a huge worldwide following, with a total of 52 nations participating in a qualifying process that began two years earlier.

A powerful, 9.5, earthquake in May 1960 did considerable damage to some of the planned host cities, so that by World Cup time the number of host cities had been reduced to four from the planned eight and three of the four stadiums each seating less than 20,000 people.

Brazil went down 1-0, only to go on and win the World Cup, with an injured Pele being replaced by Amarildo, who scored one of three goals—the others being scored by Zito and Vava—in Brazil's 3-1 victory over Czechoslovakia.



Hungary souvenir sheet with flags of the 16 participating nations.



Left, Brazil victory celebration issue;
above, Hungary stamp with finalist teams; right, Czechoslovakia issue celebrating their team's unprecedented second place finish.



1966, England



Yemen host site, London, and two of the stamps in a 21-nation British Commonwealth Omnibus leading up to the World Cup

The 1966 tournament, held from July 11-30, was the one and only World Cup hosted by England to date—and the only one in which they were the winners.

Before the matches began there was the usual off-field action, as 16 African nations decided to boycott the tournament rather than have to play in a second qualifying round of three African and one Asian team. The Asians did not boycott, and North Korea thus made it to the World Cup round of 16.

An event of a more unusual sort was the theft of the Jules Rimet Cup from a display before the tournament began. In what might be described as a typical British



We couldn't find a stamp with Pickles, but here he is held by his owner, nervously looking as if he would rather be somewhere else.

scenario a dog—named Pickles—came up the hero, sniffing out the trophy under a bush in London, thus bringing a happy ending to a nationwide hunt. (A replica, made in case the Cup was not recovered, and is now on display in England's National Football Museum.)

Something new was added to the World Cup in 1966, a mascot, World Cup Willie, a cartoon lion wearing a Union Flag jersey.

While there was plenty of action on the pitch, there was very little scoring. The winners, England, set two records at the time: least average goals scored by the Champions and least average goals conceded by the Champions—both records having subsequently been broken.



June 1, 1966 Great Britain World Cup stamp, above, also



seen with "England Winners" inscription on a maximum card cancelled on the August 18, 1966 First Day of Issue of the victory stamp.



A Germany cacheted cover, cancelled on the day of the Championship game.



Shortly after Eusebio died in January 2014, Portugal issued a pair of memorial stamps with the sheet margin header, Eusebio Forever.

The individual star of the tournament was Portugal's Eusebio, who carried his home nation to third place in their first ever World Cup—an achievement that is still unsurpassed with only Croatia matching it in 1998—on the strength of his nine goals.

For the Champions, the hero roles were shared by Bobby Charlton, who scored both of England's goals in their semi-final win over Portugal; and Geoff Hurst, who

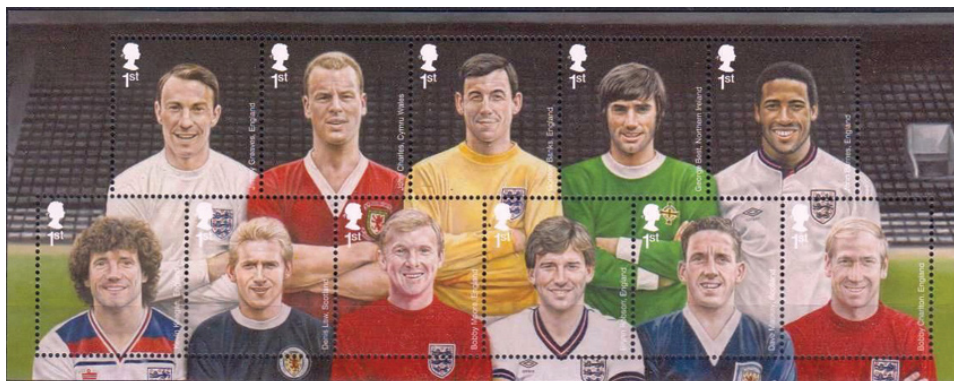


Bobby Charlton

scored all three of England's goals in their Championship win over West Germany, and goalkeeper Gordon Banks. All three were subsequently knighted for their achievements.



Geoff Hurst on an Antigua & Barbuda stamp issued for the 1994 World Cup



Gordon Banks is seen in the center in a yellow shirt in this Great Britain issue with the complete 1966 Championship eleven.

By this time the world of philately also had discovered football as a popular topical and the British Commonwealth, with its sophisticated philatelic programs went all



out. In addition to the Commonwealth Omnibus (page 11), Great Britain's issues included the



stamp above left that was discovered with a black color missing error, above right. The 2014 Scott Catalogue values for a Sc. 459 mint single are 25¢ for the normal stamp and \$200.00 for the black color omitted stamp. (The stamp with red missing catalogues for \$12,000!)

1970, Mexico



Above, Yemen host site stamp; left, Mexico host stamp on cover and a pair of singles promoting the 1970 World Cup.



Romania sheetlet shows the four Groups.
Romania, in Group 3, is listed in the lower left margin

The 1970 World Cup was the first to be staged outside of Europe and South America. The 9th FIFA World Cup, it is widely regarded as the greatest ever, with all four of the semi-finalists—Brazil, Germany, Italy and Uruguay—being former World Cup Champions, and the Brazilian winners deemed to be one of the greatest, if not the greatest ever World Cup team.

Although the tournament got off to a 0-0 draw between Mexico and the Soviet Union, it eventually became one of the highest scoring finals, with the defensive approach of the 1966 World Cup being left back in London on the Wembley pitch, and an aggressive style of play being the norm despite the high altitude of the Mexican sites.

The semi-final game between Italy and West Germany is often referred to as “The Game of the Century,” with a monument outside the stadium where it was played, as Italy and West Germany entered extra time tied 1-1, with five goals scored in the 30-minute extra time, with Italy winning 4-3.

Meanwhile, Brazil was defeating Uruguay 3-1, after falling behind 0-1, leading up to a Championship game between Brazil and Italy. Up until this time the Jules Rimet

Cup had been in the temporary possession of the current World Cup Champion, but with Brazil and Italy both being two-time World Cup Champions, whoever won this match, as three-time winners, would be awarded permanent possession of the Cup. Tied at 1-1 in the 66th minute, Brazil went on to score three unanswered goals, winning 4-1.



Issues celebrating Brazil's victories: souvenir sheet from Uruguay for all five Championships, issued for the Brazilians Philatelic Exposition, and a Brazil single for the 1970 victory.

1974, West Germany



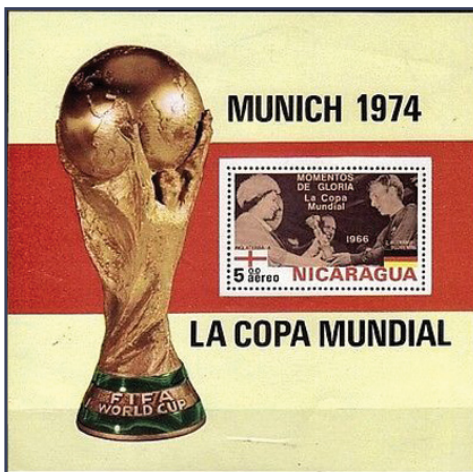
Left, Germany host country issue First Day Cover; below left, Nicaragua finalist country flags; below right, Netherlands German host cities maps.



With the Jules Rimet Cup having been retired by Brazil in 1970, the 1974 World Cup marked the first appearance of the FIFA World Cup Trophy.

With the host, West Germany, an automatic qualifier, for the first time East Germany also was able to make it to the round of 16 finals. Group 1 featured a match between the divided German nations, with East Germany winning in a tight match with East Germany scoring the only goal.

One of the most interesting first round results came out of Group 2, as Brazil, Yugoslavia and Scotland played draws against each other. As a result, the teams that would move on to the second round was determined by how each had fared against Haiti, which was making its first World Cup finals appearance. With Yugoslavia (9-0)



Nicaragua souvenir sheet showing the new FIFA World Cup Trophy

and Brazil (3-0) faring better than Scotland (2-0), leaving Scotland as the first team to ever be eliminated from the Finals without losing a match.

Still another new format was used for the 1974 World Cup, with the two top teams from each of the four groups moving on to a second round containing two groups of four, and the winners of each of those groups—West Germany and the Netherlands—playing each other in the World Cup Final, and the hosts, led by Franz Beckenbauer, winning 2-1 after both teams scored on the first two penalty kicks in World Cup history, followed by the winning goal by Gerd Muller in the 43rd minute.



Left, a 1974 World Cup Cinderella stamp produced by the Eynhallow local post; right, the winning West Germans on a 1974 Bhutan issue.



1978, Argentina



Above, an Argentina set showing the “kits” (uniforms) of the teams in the four groups. Right, photos of the five Argentina World Cup host cities.



It was inevitable that the 1978 World Cup would be beset by controversy. Two years earlier a military junta had forcibly seized power in the host country, causing some

nations to consider withdrawing from the tournament, but eventually all participants opted in and for the first time more than 100 nations attempted to qualify.

Controversy continued into the finals, with the host country able to obtain favorable timing for some of its games so that it would know the results of other games before having to compete. There were even unproven accusations of a fixed second round match with Peru that enabled Argentina to score a 6-0 victory over Peru that gave it a sufficient total goal differential to move on to the Final.

And the Final game also had its share of controversy, with the other finalist, the Netherlands, accusing Argentina of stalling tactics before the match and refusing to attend the ceremonies after the match.

With all of that going on, the Argentine team ultimately won the World Cup Championship on the field, beating the Netherlands 3-1 with two goals in extra time.



Top to bottom, Paraguay souvenir sheet with the results; Argentina victory cacheted cover; Argentina souvenir sheet showing the Buenos Aires final site; Great Britain World Cup Winners stamp for Argentina's 1978 and 1986 victories.



1982, Spain

Top to bottom, a host country promotional stamp; a cover with A 1978 souvenir sheet issued for a philatelic exposition in

Madrid with a joint issue symbolizing the transition from the 1978 host, Argentina, to the 1982 host, Spain;

A souvenir sheet with stamps picturing four of the match venues.

Even the Disney characters got into the act.



Coming off the record number of nations that attempted to qualify for the 1978 World Cup, FIFA expanded the finals from the previous 16 to 24 teams, with six groups of four teams each, now identified by letters A-F instead of by numbers. This also resulted in an expansion of venues, with 14 stadiums in 12 Spanish cities serving as tournament sites.

As usual, there were controversies:

Before the tournament the English squads considered not competing while the Falklands war was going on with Argentina, but they decided to stay in the tournament and by the time the World Cup started the war had ended. That no other nations were going to go along with the protest may have also been a factor.

On the field a first round game between West Germany and Austria, in which the two sides deliberately held down the score so that both could move on over Algeria drew chants from the fans and prompted FIFA to changed the



Everyone's a winner: Italy celebrates its 1982 World Cup Championship while Northern Ireland celebrated its team's qualifying for the round of 24 with a pictorial cancel and cacheted cover.

rules so that the final two games in each group would be played at the same time so that competing teams could not play to the known results of other games.

The tournament itself went off well, with Italy defeating West Germany 3-1 to win their third World Cup.

1986, Mexico

Originally slated for Colombia, which was selected by FIFA in 1974, the site was awarded to Mexico in 1983 after Colombia resigned in 1982 due to economic concerns. The United States and Canada also had bid to replace Colombia, but Mexico readiness based on its having



1986 souvenir sheet depicting the participating team flags with the host country colors also in ribbons



A football art set of five stamps from Mexico for the 1986 World Cup

hosted the 1970 World Cup, as well as the 1968 Olympics. At that, a strong earthquake one year before the World Cup posed one other potential obstacle, but the stadiums were undamaged and the tournament went on as scheduled, with nine venues in eight cities.

Still more fine tuning with the format resulted in changing the second round from a round-robin to a knockout format. Not only did this add to the importance of each game but eliminated the possibility that a team could play to the results of other matches that had either ended or were still in progress.

There were the usual controversies in the matches. The most memorable was the “Hand of God” goal scored by Argentina star Diego Maradona, who punched the ball into England’s goal. The referee did not see the illegal handball, leading Maradona to explain that it was scored “A bit with the head of Maradona and another bit with the hand of God.” Later in the match Maradona dribbled past five English defenders to score what has been called the “Goal of the Century” and a 2-1 victory over the English side in what the Argentinians saw as revenge for their loss in the Falklands War.

Ultimately, Argentina went on to defeat West Germany 3-2 in a Championship Final that was televised in color around the world.



A victory sheetlet from Argentina shows Diago Maradona in the bottom block of four, olding the World Cup aloft.

1990, Italy

By 1988, 116 nations applied to compete and 103 actually played in the qualifiers that would lead to 22 teams making it to the final rounds, with host Italy and defending champion Argentina moving into the field as automatic qualifiers. One noteworthy qualifier was the United States, for the first time since 1950. (Not yet ready for World Cup level competition, the U.S. lost all three of its Group A matches.)

For Italy, this was the second time they hosted the World Cup finals, the previous time going back to 1934. The final selection process came down to Italy and the Soviet Union,



Four of the six sheetlets issued by Italy, depicting the insignias of the participating national football associations and the venue stadiums.

and it is believed that the Soviet bloc's boycotting of the 1984 Olympics—and the possibility that a boycott of a Soviet-hosted World Cup might take place—was a factor favoring the choice of Italy.

Twelve venues were used, all of them with either new or substantially upgraded stadiums, spread across Italy from Udine in the northeast to Palermo on the island of Sicily. Cagliari, on the island of Sardinia, became a convenient venue to which the English team—with its “hooligan” followers—could be assigned.

In a return to defensive play and outright stalling tactics, the 1990 World Cup resulted in a record-low average of 2.21 goals per game. (For the 1994 World Cup rules were installed to try to cut down on back-passing as a time-killing tactic and to award three points for a win in order to encourage risk-taking scoring attacks.

For the second time (and last time to date) the four finalists were former World Cup Champions: Argentina, England, West Germany and Italy. In the Championship game, West Germany took down its third World Cup, besting Argentina 1-0. In keeping with this low-scoring tournament, it was the first time a Championship game finalist failed to score.

1994, United States

The United States selection as a World Cup host was an unopposed choice, in hopes that it would popularize the sport in the U.S., and on the condition, which was met, that a professional league (Major League Soccer) be formed.



A July 9, 1990, Frankfurt am Main cancellation celebrating the German victory one day earlier.



Gibraltar's issues included this map in the colors of the U.S.



and Hungary with an image of Elvis.



The magnitude of the U.S. host country is shown on issues from Gibraltar and Tuvalu



Among participating nations, the U.S. issued a three-stamp souvenir sheet and the Netherlands issued stamps with a margin that gave the team's World Cup opening round schedule.



The large size of the U.S. stadiums—the smallest being the 53,000+ seat Foxboro, Mass. Stadium and the largest being the 91,000+ seat Rose Bowl in Pasadena, Cal.—resulted in a record-breaking total attendance.

Showing progress from their 1990 0-3 record, the host team was able to qualify for the second round on the strength of a victory over Columbia that qualified the U.S. as one of the four best third-place teams in the six Groups. (In the next, knockout, stage the U.S. squad performed admirably, but lost to powerhouse Brazil, 1-0.)

The loss by Colombia led to a tragic result. The team had been beset by problems, and was believed to have been subject to pressures from drug and gambling cartels. Defender Andres Escobar scored an own goal, putting the ball into his team's own net, leading to Colombia's loss and ouster from the tournament—and ten days later he was shot to death outside a bar in Colombia.

With the 1990 disintegration of the Soviet Union, the 1994 World Cup saw dramatic changes in the makeup of

the teams. Russia was back in the competition and Germany qualified as a unified team. On the other hand, Yugoslavia was banned from competing as a result of the atrocities taking place in that war-torn country.

In the World Cup Final game, Brazil and Italy—both three-time winners—squared off in a match that went scoreless through extra time, a total of 120 minutes. This led to the first final to be decided on penalty kicks, with Brazil winning three scores to two, and thus becoming the first nation to win four World Cups.



Brazil's celebration included this souvenir sheet

1998, France



Above, a France host country single; below and right, in a single and a sheet of ten, Monaco and France identified the ten host cities.



As more and more nations were developing World Cup caliber teams, FIFA opened up the World Cup finals to 32 teams from the previous 24. Ten stadiums in as many host cities employed by the host country, France, were kept busy handling the tournament of 64 games.

A tournament that spanned more than a full month, from June 10 to July 12 ended with the final game being played just before France’s Bastille Day national holiday.

FIFA maintained the same first round format of four-team groups, now expanded to eight groups, lettered A-H. With the expansion of the number of groups, two teams moved on to the knockout stage and the four best third place teams no longer could move on as was the case in 1994.

One significant change was the introduction of a “Golden Goal” if a team scored in extra time—ending the game right then, as opposed to a full, 30-minute extra time being played out. (This is a much more positive description than the “sudden death” tag used in most U.S. sports.)

In a relatively controversy-free tournament, France faced off against Brazil in the final and won 3-0 in front of 80,000 spectators.



Great Britain World Cup winners single identifies France’s one victory.

2002, Japan/South Korea



Host country issues from South Korea, left, and Japan, right

During the host country selection process, Japan and South Korea decided to combine forces to win the host assignment over Mexico, which also enabled the two nations to spread the costs of preparation and staging the tournament. With both host teams qualifying automatically, along with defending champion France, this left 29 slots in the 32-team finals to be competed for by a total of 199 national teams.

On the negative side, the 2002 World Cup marked the

high profile failure of defending champions France, who did not score one goal in their group and were summarily ousted from the tournament with two losses, a goalless draw and a divided team.

The United States team was once again able to make it out of their Group D into the second round, and for the first time out of the second round into the quarter finals, where they were ousted 1-0 by a German team that eventually moved on to the Final.

In the final, Brazil once again came out on top, winning their unprecedented fifth World Cup in a 2-0 victory over Germany.

Right, Japan recorded the results at its 72,000+ seat Yokohama stadium, including the victory of Brazil in the Championship final.



Left, still another stamp from Brazil celebrating still another World Cup Championship



England, which celebrated its qualification with this souvenir sheet, was eliminated by Brazil in the quarter finals



2006, Germany

With the defending champion no longer an automatic qualifier, host West Germany was the only automatic qualifier, leaving 198 nations to compete for 31 spots in the World

Cup finals. As the rest of the world caught up with mid-level qualifiers, nations that qualified for the first time ever included Angola, the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, and Trinidad & Tobago, while recent previous qualifiers such as Turkey, Greece, Belgium and Cameroon failed to qualify.



A host country block of four from Germany

The United States finished a disappointing last in its Group of four, which included newcomer Ghana, but also included eventual 2006 Champion Italy.

At the top, traditional powerhouses returned to their former dominating positions as all eight seeded teams moved on to the second round and no teams outside South America and Europe made it through to the quarter finals.

The elimination of Argentina and Brazil in the quarter finals left four European teams to battle it out in the semi-finals. In the semis, Germany was ousted by Italy and Portugal was ousted by a French team that was making a dramatic comeback after its 2002 embarrassment.

Twelve venues in as many cities were used for the 64-game tournament. In the Championship match that was viewed by more than 74,000 fans in the Berlin Olympiastadion and more than 715 million television viewers around the world, Italy won its fourth World Cup with a 5-3 penalty kick victory over France.



A September 9, 2006 First Day Cover for an Italian World Cup Championship stamp.

2010, South Africa

With host bidding for the 2010 World Cup open only to African countries, and with the support of Nelson Mandela, South Africa was selected over Egypt and Morocco.

As a by-product of this selection, the tournament may be remembered as much for the constant, overpowering playing in the stands of the South African vuvuzela horns, pictured, above right on a South Africa souvenir sheet.

A record 204 nations vied for the 31 open places in the field of 32, with the host South Africa being an automatic qualifier.

Other than the host country, no totally new first time teams qualified, the closest being a “Slovakia,” team that would have previously been part of Czechoslovakia. For the first time ever, the host country was eliminated in the first round; however they did have the consolation of being joined by former champions Italy and France.

African teams, expected to perform well in their home continent, turned in disappointing results, with only Ghana moving to the second round while the other five were ousted in the first round. Meanwhile, in a relatively weak Group C, the United States finished first on the strength of one win and two draws, but lost to Ghana in the knockout stage.

In the quarter finals, three South American teams were ousted by European opponents. Only Uruguay moved into



A South Africa host country pre-tournament souvenir sheet

the semi-finals, with a win over Ghana—only to be ousted in the semis by the Netherlands while Spain was ousting Germany.

The final resulted in another scoreless 90 minutes, with Spain scoring in the extra time and holding off the Netherlands, 1-0, for its first ever World Cup.

2014, Brazil

The 20th FIFA World Cup is scheduled for June



The 2010 Champions on a Spain souvenir sheet



In this portion of a sheet depicting the 12 host cities, Manaus (see text discussion) is represented by a parrot on a crossbar.

12 to July 13 in Brazil at 12 venues including the inland city of Manaus in the heart of the Amazon jungle.

Following controversial errors in previous World Cups, FIFA has finally given in to using goal line technology that was

successfully tried in three previous tournaments in 2012 and 2013. Another innovation that is intended to end some of the wasted time and movement before a free kick is the use of a vanishing spray that referees can use to mark where the ball is to be placed and a ten-yard line behind which the defending team must stay.

* * * * *

For a comprehensive presentation of each World Cup we refer you to Wikipedia, where much of the information in this article was found.

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