

Lifting the silverware

An exploration of English football jargon

by Susan Jellis



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**World Cup
COMPETITION**

With the World Cup now only a couple of months away, it's time to 'warm up' for the deluge of football commentary and expert analysis.

You will find some of the specialist words and phrases included in this article and shown in *italic* in the *Macmillan English Dictionary (MED)*. Some of the others, shown in **bold**, however, are not included in MED. You'll find a list of these words and phrases in the glossary below.

Essential English for football fans

English football jargon is travelling worldwide. David Beckham is a global brand – his old team Manchester United has supporters in countries all over the world. Stars from other countries come to play **the beautiful game** in Britain and their national supporters *follow* them (= watch their progress) – if not physically travelling, at least watching them play on satellite TV. *Following* (= understanding) the English commentary can sometimes be challenging. There are specialist terms (sometimes several for the same thing), typical expressions, and verbs that behave in unusual ways. This article includes a selection of the common terms you'll often hear used when people talk about football.

Every football player has a dream of becoming a *champion* and **lifting the silverware**. Winning players usually lift up the trophy, often a large silver cup with two handles, in turn – and may kiss it as well – when it is presented to them. Perhaps there's also a feeling that they *lift* it (in the sense of 'steal it' or 'take it away') from their opponents.

However, before they can *triumph*, players have to first *get into the squad* and then be *selected* for the *side* (or *team*). Will they be in the *starting line-up* or will they be on the *bench* as *substitutes*, hoping they'll be asked to *warm up* later in the *game* (or *match*)? Some key players usually *start* for their team, unless they are *coming back from injury*, while other players may be **supersubs** – able to *come on* late in a game and quickly influence the action, sometimes even with their **first touch**.

Out on the *field* (which might also be called a *pitch* or, especially in commentaries, *the park*¹, what are the

manager's tactics? What *formation* has he decided on for the game? How many *strikers* are there? Who is in the *midfield*? Is there a **back four** and is it *flat* (= in a straight line) or is there a *sweeper*? How *solid* is the *keeper* (or *goalkeeper* or *goalie*)? And who is the *skipper* (or *captain*)?

Playing the game

When it comes to the match, **possession**, or keeping the ball *in play* between the members of your own team, is crucial if your team is to *dominate the game* – *taking possession* early and keeping it from the *other side* (= opposing team). Fluid *passing* to other members of the team so that you are not **caught in possession**, accurate *crossing*, close *marking* (or **man marking**), avoiding the **offside trap** and clean **finishing** are all important. **Losing possession** can be very costly; an opposing player might **break** and, leaving the *defenders* behind, *head for goal*.

Players *dribble* the ball, *pass* to another player or maybe play a quick *one-two*. They might **backheel** the ball to a player behind them or use a complicated **stepover** to confuse an opponent. One player might **lay** a ball **off** to a *teammate* who is running up or might *win the ball* from an opponent. If a player is **nutmegged** the ball goes between his legs. An unwise *foul* and a player who is already **on a yellow card** is **shown the red card** (or **is red-carded**) by the *referee* (or *ref*) and **heads for an early bath** (or *is sent off*).

Getting a goal

Some players are good at *making* (or *setting up*) a goal for one of the *strikers*. The striker might *power*, *slam*, *volley* or *lob* a ball into the goal, or *bury* it, or *hammer* it *home*; or they might *put* it away, *slot* it *in*, *tap* it *in* or even *sneak* it *in*. There's a good chance of scoring from a *set piece* like a *free kick* or a *corner* (or *corner kick*), but, alas, quite often the ball just slams into **the wall**. The worst thing that can happen is for a *defender* to score an *own goal*, by putting the ball into his own net. Almost as bad is *conceding a penalty*; a player is *brought down* in the *area* – or did he *dive* (= deliberately fall)? When a player makes a **late tackle** in the *penalty area*, if the referee sees it, a *penalty* is *awarded* (or *given*).

Getting the ball in the back of the net (or *scoring goals*) is the aim of the game – or at least, not *conceding* any. Will the team be able to keep a *clean sheet* or will the keeper *let in* a goal? Sometimes the keeper *muffs* or *fumbles* a catch or leaves the goal wide open – much better to **gather** or **collect**² safely! When the keeper takes a *goal kick* he often *boots* the ball as far down the pitch as he can. A player *shoots* – the ball goes across **the face of the goal** (or *goalmouth*) but the keeper *dives* (= moves quickly towards the ground) to save it and the player is *denied*. Another **shot on goal** – the keeper **goes the right way** but the ball hits the *woodwork* (either the *upright* or *post* (= *goalpost*) or the *crossbar*); the following shot smashes into the **netting**. Someone tries to *sneak* a ball *past* the keeper and *get on the scoresheet*. But he can't manage to *beat* the keeper. A player **climbs** (= jumps high) to *head* the *cross* but it goes *wide*.

The second half

It's a **game of two halves** – when the teams *come back out after half time*, the *second half* may be quite different from the *first half*, with a different style of play. Who will score first? No one wants a **goalless draw**. Someone suddenly scores *against the run of play* – the rush is on now to *equalize* (or *to get the equalizer*). A brilliant *header*³, from a player who is **good in the air** (= good at jumping to head the ball), clinches it and the scorer *celebrates*. And then another brilliant **finish** – what a great feeling to be the **matchwinner** (= the person who scores the *winning goal*) even though there's no *hat trick* today. When it comes to *injury time* (or *stoppage time*, or sometimes

in commentaries, *overtime*) to make up for the time lost in *stoppages* when a player was *injured* or **stretched off**, **they think it's all over**⁴ but there's always a chance of a late goal and the team surges forward – there are lots of (red/blue/etc.) *shirts* (= players) in *the box* (or *penalty box* or *penalty area*).

Some games have to *go into extra time* or even *go to a penalty shoot-out*, but not this one. The referee's blown *the final whistle*! Now it really *is* all over, bar the *lap of honour* (or *victory lap*) and the *post-match analysis* by the pundits. Your team has *topped* the group (or *gone top* or *won*) and the other side has *gone down* (or *lost*) two-one. **Result!**

Notes

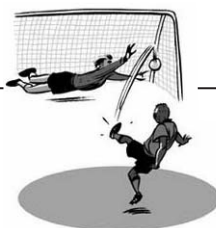
- 1 You can *take the field* (= go on to the football field to play), but you can't ~~*take the pitch/park*~~.
- 2 Football verbs are often used unusually without objects or complements, e.g.:
Beckham *arrives* (= comes into the area of play),
Owen *takes* (= takes a free kick or a penalty),
a defender *climbs* (= jumps high to head a ball).
- 3 A *header* is also a player who heads or is good at heading a ball. There are many *-er* words of this type, based on verbs, to describe players and their skills: e.g. *scorer*, *passer*, *crosser*, *striker*.
- 4 '*they think it's all over*' is a humorous expression based on a remark made during the commentary of the England v Germany World Cup final in 1966 just before England scored a fourth and final goal to seal their victory.

Glossary

The following specialist words and phrases you will not find in the *Macmillan English Dictionary*. They are listed here in order of appearance.

the beautiful game	the game of football
lifting the silverware	winning a trophy
supersub	a player who often scores as a substitute
first touch	a player's first contact with the ball in a game
back four	a line of four defenders
possession	keeping the ball between the members of your own team
caught in possession	caught by an opposing player when you have the ball
man marking	close marking of an opposing player
the offside trap	a move by opposing players to make a player offside
finishing	successfully scoring a goal
lose possession	let the other team get the ball
break	run with the ball towards the other team's goal away from the main group of players

backheel	kick the ball behind you
stepover	a set of moves over and around the ball without kicking it, to confuse an opposing player
lay off	pass the ball to a player who is running down the side
nutmeg	kick a ball through the legs of a player
on a yellow card	having one serious warning for breaking the rules
be shown the red card	be told by the referee to leave the game after a second serious warning for breaking the rules
be yellow-carded/ red-carded	receive a yellow/red card
head for an early bath	leave the game because of being sent off
the wall	a line of players trying to block the way to the goal
a late tackle	a move when a player doesn't win the ball and knocks into the opposing player
get the ball in the back of the net	score a goal
gather	(of a goalkeeper) get hold of a loose ball in the area near the goal
collect	(of a goalkeeper) receive a pass
the face of the goal	the open front of the goal
shot on goal	an attempt to score a goal
go the right way	(of a goalkeeper) guess correctly which way a player will kick a ball at the goal
netting	the net around a goal
climb	jump to head a ball
a game of two halves	a game in which the final result can be very different from the score at half time
a goalless draw	a game without goals
good in the air	good at jumping to head a ball
finish	skilful way of scoring a goal
matchwinner	the person who scores the winning goal
stretcher off	carry off on a stretcher



World Cup COMPETITION

by Andrew Holmes

In a few short months the opening game of the 18th World Cup will kick off in Germany. Brazil are the holders and will start favourites to win a sixth trophy but there will be fierce competition from traditionally powerful teams such as Italy, Argentina, England, France, and not forgetting the hosts Germany. Many of the world's top strikers will be on show at the finals although they will have a hard job to beat or even match the 13 goals scored by Just Fontaine in Sweden in 1958, a record that stands to this day.

QUESTION 1

For which country did Just Fontaine score 13 goals during the 1958 World Cup competition in Sweden?

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