

How to Win the **WORLD CUP**

Graham McColl



How to Win the World Cup

Graham McColl



BANTAM PRESS

LONDON • TORONTO • SYDNEY • AUCKLAND • JOHANNESBURG

TRANSWORLD PUBLISHERS
61–63 Uxbridge Road, London W5 5SA
A Random House Group Company
www.rbooks.co.uk

First published in Great Britain
in 2010 by Bantam Press
an imprint of Transworld Publishers

Copyright © Graham McColl 2010

Graham McColl has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs
and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as the author of this work.

A CIP catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library.

ISBN 9780593066225

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not,
by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out,
or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior
consent in any form of binding or cover other than that
in which it is published and without a similar condition,
including this condition, being imposed on the
subsequent purchaser.

Addresses for Random House Group Ltd companies outside the UK
can be found at: www.randomhouse.co.uk
The Random House Group Ltd Reg. No. 954009

The Random House Group Limited supports the Forest Stewardship
Council (FSC), the leading international forest-certification organization. All our
titles that are printed on Greenpeace-approved FSC-certified paper carry the FSC
logo. Our paper procurement policy can be found at
www.rbooks.co.uk/environment

Typeset in 12/15.5 pt Sabon by Falcon Oast Graphic Art Ltd.
Printed and bound in Great Britain by CPI Mackays, Chatham, ME5 8TD

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1



Graham McColl is a writer and journalist who contributes regularly to *The Times* and whose work has appeared regularly in a variety of newspapers and magazines. His many books include *England – The Alf Ramsey Years*, *Scotland in the World Cup Finals* and *'78: How a Nation Lost the World Cup*. He lives in Glasgow with Jackie, his wife, and Anna-Maria, Dominic and Joseph, his children.

For Dominic Nicholas, born 30 April 2009,
while this book was under construction

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Giles Elliott, my editor at Transworld, for backing this project and for providing inspirational encouragement in seeing it through to publication. Thanks also to copy-editor Julian Flanders, to Rachel for her work in collating the picture sections, and to Stan, my agent.

Thanks to all the players, managers, World Cup winners and others, whose insightful reflections have helped to illuminate my work on this book.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
<i>Introduction</i>	1
1 Because of the Cause	5
2 Have a Mad Manager	23
3 Avoid Great Expectations	46
4 Take Your Breaks	69
5 Don't Worry About Penalties	86
6 Don't Impress the Press	108
7 Take Your Time	129
8 Wallow in a Crisis	142
9 Play for the Team	157
10 Don't Worry About the Brazilians	173
11 Do Something Strange	203
12 Make Yourself at Home	211
13 Get Into Shape	233
14 You've Won It Once . . .	252
15 Facts and Figures	261
<i>Bibliography</i>	285
<i>Picture Acknowledgements</i>	286
<i>Index</i>	288

Introduction

WINNING THE WORLD CUP SHOULD BE A FAIRLY SIMPLE matter, shouldn't it? All you do is play the best, most entertaining football in each of your matches, overwhelm the opposition, captivate the world with an irresistible attacking style and win the Final in memorable fashion to establish your team as indisputably the best in the world.

The problem is, the World Cup has been won in this way on only a handful of occasions and the last time it happened was forty years ago, when Pelé inspired the brilliant Brazilians of 1970 to victory. That wonderful victory is still rolled out frequently as the way to win a World Cup but, as the nine champions of the world since then would tell you, that's not the only way to win. Indeed, on only a handful of occasions in the 80-year history of the World Cup have the eventual winners been indisputably the finest team in the tournament.

HOW TO WIN THE WORLD CUP

Finishing first is as much a test of nerve, adapting to the World Cup environment and combating circumstances as it is of pure footballing skill. No one will be more aware of that than Fabio Capello. Italy, his native country and the world champions in 2006, did not do much in that tournament to win over too many people outside their own country. Their approach to hurdling each stage of that tournament was not one designed to entertain people around the globe. Did that matter to the Italians? The two million people who turned out to welcome them back to Rome and who commandeered the country's fountains and squares to parade their delight after that triumph answered that question emphatically.

It goes against all our romantic preconceptions but if you are going to win the World Cup it is probably better if you are clearly not the best team in the competition. Those who have done most to light up a World Cup tournament by playing memorably attractive football tend to be more fondly remembered by the world at large than the winners themselves – such beautiful losers as the mesmerizing Brazilians of 1982, the Hungarians of 1954, the Dutch of 1974; even, to a degree, the Argentinians of 2006, though their general good impression was somewhat spoiled when they reverted to type and began a fantastic mass brawl at the conclusion of their quarter-final defeat to Germany. But you can still be sure that those teams would have instantly exchanged all the kind words and airy praise they have received in the years since for a good deal less popularity and the solidity of gold winners' medals.

As Fabio Capello ponders long and hard his England

INTRODUCTION

squad for the summer of 2010 in South Africa, he will also be devoting much thinking time to all of the other factors that determine success or failure on the world stage – the variety of means used to win the World Cup incorporating the bizarre, the funny and the fantastic. If he is seeking inspiration, this guide to the essential strata-gems needed to win the World Cup may be just the thing.

Because of the Cause

IF YOU'RE GOING TO WIN THE WORLD CUP YOU DON'T HAVE to have a demented dictator breathing down your neck, or commentators suggesting that your players are shooting up drugs and pairing off in homosexual relationships, or have a match-fixing court case beginning in the middle of the tournament that concerns more than half of your squad.

It does help, though. All of these factors have, as Fabio Capello will know well, helped Italy to attain their four World Cup triumphs, not least in 2006 when they became the current holders of the trophy. For the nation of Machiavelli, it seems essential for there to be a powerful element of intrigue involved if winning the World Cup is to become a going concern.

It is not only for the Italians that a powerful siege mentality or a strong cause is almost essential for a successful tilt at the World Cup. Several other nations have thrived

HOW TO WIN THE WORLD CUP

on being forced to turn inwards and draw on a feeling of solidarity necessitated by external pressures, but the Italians in particular appear to require a more powerful cause than merely winning the trophy to exert a grip on a World Cup campaign and drive the team towards victory.

For each of Italy's two triumphs in the 1930s, it was the gentle pleadings of Benito Mussolini, the fascist dictator, that helped bring the trophy home. 'Win or die!' was his encouraging message by telegram to the Italian squad as they set off for France in 1938 to defend their status as world champions. Mussolini, in common with many of the great football managers, was clearly aware of the importance of ensuring that his message got across to the players in black and white and without any possibility of confusion. Whilst that barbed, brutal demand could merely have been the type of zealous rhetoric that dictators can summon at will, the players would have been keen to take him at his word rather than test whether he was merely bluffing and acting the big bully boy again.

The trophy the Italians were defending had been secured in 1934, when the World Cup had been staged in their homeland to show off 'the pulsating of the masculine energies of a bursting vitality, in this our Mussolini's Italy', as Giovanni Mauro, an Italian FIFA delegate, put it. That aside, it may have helped, on a more practical level, that Mussolini hand-picked the referees for each match in which his team played. 'How can Italy not be champions?' Mussolini had mused philosophically at the start of the tournament, presumably while casting his eyes down the list of referees assigned to the World Cup and

BECAUSE OF THE CAUSE

picking out the ones that might best suit his team's progress.

'They were little crooks,' Josef Bican, the Austria forward, said of the Italians after their semi-final, won 1-0 by Italy and refereed by Ivan Eklind, the Swede, who impressed Mussolini so much that he was also given the honour of officiating at the Final between Italy and Czechoslovakia. 'They used to cheat a little,' Bican added. 'No, they used to cheat a lot. The referee even played for them. When I passed the ball out to the right wing, one of our players, Cicek, ran for it and the referee headed it back to the Italians. It was unbelievable.' Or, as Jean Langenus, a Belgian referee at the 1934 tournament put it, 'In the majority of countries, the World Championship was called a sporting fiasco because beside the desire to win, all other sporting considerations were non-existent and because, moreover, a certain spirit brooded over the whole championship. Italy wanted to win, it was natural, but they allowed it to be seen too clearly.'

For the tournament in France in 1938, a second World Cup contested by Italy in the cause of fascism, Mussolini chose for his team a tasteful strip consisting of the politically provocative black shirts, a fashion item indelibly associated with his regime. The Italians turned out in this natty little number of a change strip for the quarter-final against France at the Stade de Colombes in Paris. It had the immediate effect of bringing down upon the Italians' heads furious and near unanimous condemnation from the 60,000 crowd, both from the French themselves and from several thousand Italians who had been opponents of Mussolini's regime and who were now exiled in Paris.

The reaction of the onlookers had the unwanted effect,

HOW TO WIN THE WORLD CUP

for them, of unifying the Italy team, as Vittorio Pozzo, the Italy manager, had cleverly anticipated, with the Italians winning the tie 3–1 and going on to lift the trophy for a second successive time. Giuseppe Meazza, the captain, gave the fascist salute as he received the trophy and the boys dressed up nicely in sailor suits to be welcomed home by an ecstatic Mussolini, happy to have spared the team their lives in the wake of victory.

‘Whether beyond or within the borders, sporting or not, we Italians . . . shook and still shake with joy when seeing in these thoroughbred athletes, that overwhelm so many noble opponents, such a symbol of the overwhelming march of Mussolini’s Italians,’ is how Londo Ferretti, another of Mussolini’s propagandists, summed up the spectacle. England this summer might do well to consider opting for a last-minute change strip consisting of a Union Jack just to get the opposition really riled.

A more modern cause assisted the Italian team in their triumph in 2006. *Calciopoli*, the latest match-fixing scandal to hit contemporary Italian club football and described by Sepp Blatter, president of FIFA, as the worst in the history of the game, coincided with the 2006 World Cup – and the trial, involving Fiorentina, Juventus, Lazio and Milan, which began on the day before Italy’s quarter-final with Ukraine, was due to conclude on the day after the World Cup Final. Thirteen of the Italian squad were drawn from the clubs involved and as soon as news of the matter broke, the *Azzurri* were besieged by crisis. There were calls for the players from those clubs to be withdrawn from the tournament – even demands that the Italian team itself should be removed from the World Cup

BECAUSE OF THE CAUSE

– and there were repeated calls for manager Marcello Lippi to resign.

Lippi was forced to mount a stubborn and public defence, through extensive press conferences, of the right of his team and players to participate in the tournament. He even received the dreaded vote of confidence from the Italian Football Federation. Massimo de Santis, one of Italy's World Cup referees, and a man subsequently convicted of involvement in match-fixing, was withdrawn from the tournament by the Italian Football Federation and the Italian players themselves felt under siege as opinion swayed back and forth on the matter.

The Italian legal authorities could not have done more to boost the Italian team's tilt at winning the trophy. Indeed, given the labyrinthine manner in which justice operates in that country, it was possible to suspect that the trial had even been timed for exactly that purpose. It was surely odd for a match-fixing trial to be played out parallel to a World Cup. Lippi said during the tournament of *Calciopoli*'s unifying effects, 'We are a family now, like never before.' A pretty dysfunctional one, perhaps, but one whose new-found sense of closeness would see it through to victory with the 58-year-old, paternalistic Lippi at its head, a man who is a master at using psychological wiles to extract the very best from his team.

Having gone to the finals in Germany boosted and unified by the match-fixing scandal, the Italians received regular top-ups to maintain their closeness and sense of a cause during the tournament. With an operatic sense of drama, Gianluca Pessotto, the sporting director of Juventus, one of the clubs under investigation (and

HOW TO WIN THE WORLD CUP

subsequently demoted from the top division of Italian football), threw himself out of a fourth-floor window of the club's headquarters while clutching a set of rosary beads on 27 June, plumb in the middle of the World Cup. Pessotto, 35 and a former team-mate of several of the Italian players, thankfully failed in his suicide attempt, which had been sparked by his depression at the implication of his club in the *Calciopoli* scandal, although he suffered severe injuries that would hospitalise him for weeks. Alessandro Del Piero, Gianluca Zambrotta and Ciro Ferrara, the former defender who was by now a coach with Italy, flew home to visit their Juventus colleague in between the last-16 match with Australia and the quarter-final against Ukraine.

As if all that was not enough, the German hosts of the 2006 tournament, which boasted the slogan 'A Time to Make Friends' (and who characterized their hosting of the tournament as 'Operation Smile'), brought the Italians even closer together in advance of the semi-final in which the two nations were due to face each other.

'Lazy and greasy parasites and mamma's boys,' was how the Italians were succinctly described by the Hamburg-based *Der Spiegel* magazine in the build-up to the match. They were also characterized as slimy beach bums whose greatest concern was in perfecting their appearance and who had a habit of emigrating to other countries where, *Der Spiegel* suggested, they had a tendency to 'suck dry' their hosts in the manner of 'parasites'.

The magazine's front cover, entitled 'Holiday Guide to Italy', helpfully illustrated this stereotypical piece with a picture of a bowl of spaghetti with a revolver lying on top