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Words in **bold** are explained in the glossary on page 78.



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th lifted the European Cup as AC Milan captain.

15 Defenders

Some people say that while goal-scoring strikers will win you soccer matches, goal-stopping defenders will win you championships. Defenders organize, tackle, and do almost anything they can to stop the ball hitting the back of their own net.



▲ *Paolo Maldini spent his entire career of 25 seasons with AC Milan. In that time, he won 23 trophies with club and country.*

FULL BACKS

When soccer began in the 19th century, the full backs were the only two defenders in a team. Today, this term is used to describe the two defenders who play on the right and left wings. Many full backs enjoy surging forward. Brazil's Roberto Carlos liked to shoot from long distance. Germany's Philipp Lahm could play as either right back or left back, while Italy's Paolo Maldini played on the left or in the center.

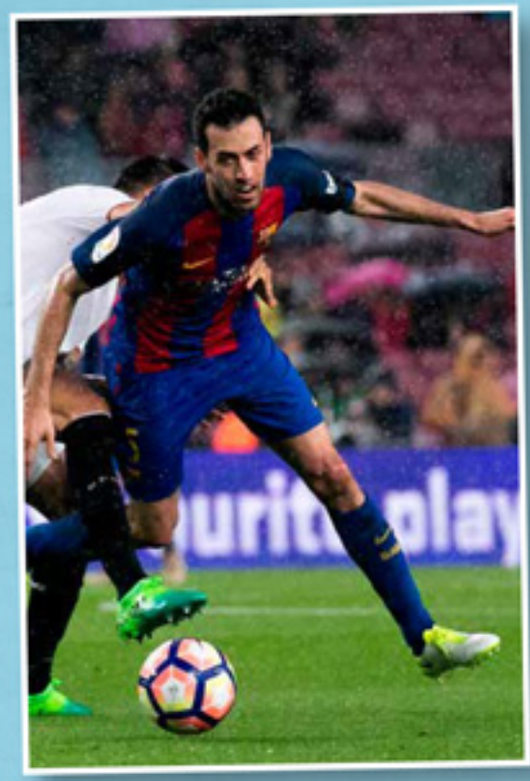


CENTER BACKS

Most teams play with two or three players in the center of defense. Often one of the center backs will be good at tackling and organizing, while their partner might be more comfortable passing the ball to the midfielders. In the 1960s, Germany's Franz Beckenbauer played as a sweeper, or "libero," at the back. His job was to break down opposition attacks, then carry the ball forward to start an attack for his own team.

◀ *Franz Beckenbauer played most of his club soccer for Bayern Munich. As well as being a great tackler and all-around defender, he was famous for setting up dangerous attacks.*

Midfielders 16



▲ *Barcelona's Sergio Busquets gets past an opponent in a Spanish league match against Sevilla. He is physically strong, but also very skillful and rarely gives the ball away once he has won it back.*

As the name suggests, midfielders play in central positions on the field between defense and attack. They need to help out defenders and create chances for forwards, which means they need to have lots of stamina and be very creative.

DEFENSIVE MIDFIELDERS

Defensive midfielders are great tacklers and anticipate danger from their opponents before the ball gets close to their own penalty area. They are fierce competitors who break up attacks and win the ball. The work of defensive midfielders such as Spain's Sergio Busquets may go unnoticed, but it is essential to their team's success.

ATTACKING MIDFIELDERS

These are often known as "playmakers." They are creative players who can pick out teammates with accurate passes, have the vision to create chances for their strikers, and also score their fair share of goals. Spain's Andrés Iniesta would open up the opposition by dribbling past helpless defenders, while France's Zinedine Zidane used his strength and skillful control to create time and space to set up an attack.



◀ *French playmaker Zinedine Zidane scored two goals in the 1998 World Cup Final, in which France beat Brazil 3–0.*

In 2006, Zinedine Zidane became the fourth man ever to score in two World Cup Finals.

Thirteen countries competed in the first World Cup in Uruguay in 1930.

22

Major nations

Soccer is a global game, and FIFA, the sport's governing body, has 211 member countries—more than the United Nations. However, only a few countries have consistently set the highest standards. These major soccer nations have enjoyed the greatest success in the top international competitions.



GERMANY

Germany has played the most World Cup matches: 106 to Brazil's 104. As West Germany, it lifted the trophy in 1954 and 1974, and then again in 1990, the year East and West Germany reunited. Mario Götze scored the winning goal in overtime against Argentina in Brazil in 2014, giving Germany its fourth World Cup title to go with three European Championships.

▲ *The German team celebrates after winning the 2014 World Cup Final, after beating Argentina 1–0.*

SPAIN

Spain won the European Championship in 1964, but this was followed by 40 years of underachievement. Then a stunning Spanish side won three tournaments in a row: the 2008 and 2012 European Championships and the 2010 World Cup. The team featured stars such as midfielders Xavi Hernández and Andrés Iniesta, and strikers David Villa and Fernando Torres.



▲ *Xavi Hernández of Spain (l) fights for the ball with Riccardo Montolivo of Italy during the UEFA Euro 2012 Final. Spain won 4–0.*

ARGENTINA AND URUGUAY

Outside the United Kingdom, no countries have played each other more often than Uruguay and Argentina. They met in the first World Cup Final in 1930, which Uruguay won 4–2. Both teams have won the World Cup twice. Uruguay has won the South American championship, the Copa América, a record 15 times. Its most recent victory came in 2011, led by Luis Suárez and Edinson Cavani.



► *Uruguyan striker Luis Suárez is his country's top goal scorer.*

BRAZIL

Five-time World Cup winner Brazil is famous for a skillful playing style. Many of their most famous players, including Ronaldo, Ronaldinho, and Neymar, developed their skills juggling a football on the beach. Brazil legend Pelé is the only player to win three World Cups: in 1958, 1962, and 1970.



► *Striker Ronaldo was top-scorer when Brazil won the World Cup in 1994.*

ITALY

Coach Vittorio Pozzo led Italy to World Cup glory in 1934 and 1938, and he is the only coach to win the trophy twice. Italy had to wait until 1982 for its third title, however, when the team was led by 40-year-old goalkeeper Dino Zoff. Fabio Cannavaro lifted Italy's fourth World Cup in 2006. Italy's top division, known as Serie A, is one of the world's most successful leagues.



▲ *Dino Zoff won the 1968 European Championships with Italy, and lifted the World Cup 14 years later.*

The women's game

Women's soccer is on the rise across the world. New professional leagues are being established and TV audiences for major events such as the Women's World Cup are growing enormously. In the USA, female international soccer players are now often more famous than the male players.

EARLY PIONEERS

In 1920, one of the most popular soccer teams in the world was made up of women from a munitions factory in Preston, northwest England. The side, known as Dick, Kerr's Ladies FC, was watched by tens of thousands of people, not only in England but also on tours of other countries. In 1921, however, the Football Association in England announced that it was banning women from playing soccer in official stadiums. This ban lasted until 1971.

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

The first FIFA Women's World Cup took place in China in 1991. The USA were the champions, beating Norway 2–1 in the final. The USA also won the most recent tournament, held in Canada in 2015, where it defeated Japan 5–2 in the final. The match was watched by a TV audience of 750 million people.

▼ *The Dick, Kerr's Ladies team, pictured here in 1920, was founded in 1917 to raise money for wounded soldiers.*



GROWING GAME

Lots of girls play soccer in U.S. schools and colleges and there have been several attempts to establish a women's professional league. The most recent, the National Women's Soccer League, began in 2013. It has attracted some of the world's top players such as Marta from Brazil, Scotland's Kim Little, Canada's Christine Sinclair, and Sam Kerr from Australia, as well as US stars such as winger Megan Rapinoe. The most successful team is FC Kansas City, with two league championships.



▶ *Brazilian star Marta is a skillful, strong, and competitive player. She has played club soccer in Europe and the USA.*

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONS

The Netherlands hosted the UEFA Women's European Championship in 2017—and won the tournament for the first time, after beating England 3–0 in the semifinals and Denmark 4–2 in the final. England's Jodie Taylor was the top scorer with five goals, but Dutch attacker Lieke Martens was voted the tournament's best player. Germany has won the competition a record eight times, including six tournaments in a row between 1995 and 2013.

▲ *Striker Lieke Martens scored for the Netherlands in its win over Denmark in the 2017 European Championships Final. She won the Golden Ball as player of the tournament.*

Out of FIFA's 211 member countries, 180 of them have a women's national team.

Playing host

Hosting a World Cup, or another of soccer's showpiece tournaments, is a huge honor for a country, but also a great responsibility. Nations that successfully apply must have the cities and the stadiums to cope with welcoming players, officials, and thousands of supporters from across the globe.

ENORMOUS STADIUMS

A country may have to construct huge, purpose-built stadiums if it is chosen to host the World Cup finals. Mexico was the first country to stage two World Cup tournaments—first in 1970 and again after stepping in to host the 1986 tournament when original choice Colombia dropped out. The country's huge Azteca Stadium hosted the Finals for both tournaments, and is only the second venue to do so, along with Brazil's Maracanã stadium.

▼ *The Azteca Stadium in Mexico City holds 87,000 spectators. In addition to two World Cups, it also hosted the 1968 Olympic Games soccer final.*



FIRST TIMERS

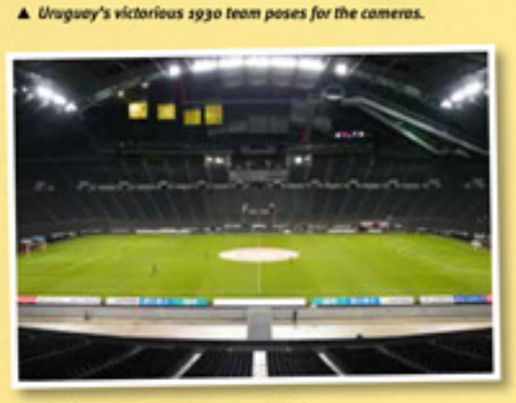
Uruguay hosted the first-ever World Cup in 1930. Organizers struggled to persuade teams to travel to South America, and only four European countries accepted the invitation to play: Belgium, France, Romania, and Yugoslavia. Uruguay remains the smallest country to stage—or win—the tournament.



▲ *Uruguay's victorious 1930 team poses for the cameras.*

AMERICAN WELCOME

The World Cup was held outside Europe and Latin America for the first time in 1994, when the USA was the host nation. The tournament attracted 3.6 million spectators to the games, more than any tournament before or since. The Final, between Brazil and Italy, was watched by 94,194 fans inside the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California, which later staged the 1999 Women's World Cup final.



▲ *The Sapporo Dome, Japan, was built for the 2002 World Cup. The field is regularly wheeled outside so the grass gets enough sunlight.*

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Japan and South Korea co-hosted the 2002 World Cup. This was the first and so far only time the World Cup has been played in two different countries. The opening game was played in Seoul, South Korea, and the final in Japan's 70,000-capacity Yokahama Stadium.

NEW FRONTIERS

Europe and the Americas took turns to host the World Cup between 1958 and 1998, until the first tournament held in Asia in 2002. The first in Africa was held in South Africa in 2010 and organizers are continuing to spread the competition farther afield. Russia, the first Eastern European host, was chosen for the 2018 finals, and the first finals held in the Middle East will be in Qatar in 2022.

▼ *Zabivaka, the official mascot for the 2018 World Cup, is a soccer-playing wolf. He was chosen by the Russian people in a TV vote.*

