

Westa World Cup Newsletter

Italy Here we Come

Congratulations to all the WESTA chaps who booked Milan in advance with the San Siro coming up trumps. The Azzuri are 3 times World champs and will be surely a difficult nut to crack. The past record shows that they are not invincible as the 1965 Hampden victory testifies.

My prediction is a 2 – 0 Italy victory courtesy of 2 free kicks, 1 in each half. Just a hunch but the goalie, Big Rab looks as if he is carrying a groin strain and may not last the full game!

1965 and all that

The SFA with uncharacteristic imagination had appointed Jock Stein as part time Manager and miracle worker. Stein had great talent at his disposal but must have been wary of the amateur organization of football from the bottom down and worse the lack of commitment from clubs to the national cause.

The omens did not look good as we entered the Italy game on the back of a 2 -1 defeat by Poland. 106,000 cheered mightily as Scotland captained by Billy McNeill commanded a 1- 0 lead well into the second half when disaster struck and a sudden calamity saw 2 late goals send then fans homeward to think again.

Back they came in good voice for the visit of the silky skilled Latins and 101,000 saw a cattenachio defensive display stem the blue attacking wave until; Greig, Baxter Greig and goal. A beautiful, scorching apple and peach of a goal. Pandemonium and that was only in my living room in Aberdeen as a 7 year old allowed up late danced a highland fling. Ok my mother had recently sent me to lessons, but the sword dance had been on the cards as the Faither had the cutlery out for a bout of ritual tartan hare kare.

John Greig became a legend, forever more. Back in at the Hampden Roar men burst into tears, hugged strangers and kissed policemen. We were back in business.

Hey, this only left the small matter of the return in Naples and a call off list that would make Craig Brown weep. Baxter exiled to rubbish in England called off injured , Liverpool's Ron Yeats a massive statue lined up at centre forward and played behind the goalie, usually picking the ball from the net. 0 -3 and worse still the only team capable of stopping the 1966 disaster was out of the world cup.

And so we enter a World Cup Qualifier against the Azzuri on the back of a dreadful run of games and with a new manager. 10,000 fans will almost outnumber the home support and with coins not allowed in the San Siro that only leaves bags of urine to dodge when we are pelted with missiles when we go 1 – 0 up with a late goal from a 1 -2 from the full back to the silky number 6 and a piledriver from the edge of the area. Grown men will cry and wee boys in Aberdeen will dance the Highland fling.

<p>04/06/05 Moldova Home 08/06/05 Belarus Away 17/08/05 Austria Away / Friendly 03/09/05 Italy Home 07/09/05 Norway Away 08/10/05 Belarus Home 12/10/05 Slovenia Away</p>
--

Obituary

Rinus Michels died recently the architect of Total Football, manager of Ajax, Holland and Barcelona. The Dutch '74 side blessed with genius were beaten by teutonic might and 4 years later humbled by Scotland eventually losing to the home nation in the final. He had a magnificent managerial record of winning European Cups and his early sides promoted the concept that each player could play in any position and even more were a joy to watch. A revolutionary with theories on football that never quite caught on here. It has been rumoured that we now have one player who can kick with 2 feet and one who can trap the ball further than he can head it!

Letters to the Editor

Thank goodness WESTA has seen sense and a new Broon has swept away the old guard. What use is a Chairman that runs a bus trip to the largest country in Europe and then can't find it? The shambolic meetings have thankfully been replaced with a semblance of order and I look forward to meetings starting on time and even more points of order.

Katy Moira

Me and my pals traveled down to watch the WESTA teams in the Ally Mcleod tournament recently. What we desperately need is a good striker. I remember a peach of a goal being scored by Tam Coyle not that many years ago. We think he would solve the current lack of firepower. The campaign starts here, bring back Tam.

Timmy Macmallet

Ask Hamish

What was the score, scorers and attendance at the Scotland – Ireland game in 1931? - Frankie Machankie.
Studying my Grandfathers diary it was a 2 -1 victory, goals from Stevenson , Mcgrory, Mcphail and he took the 34 bus from Hillington. Crowd 40,000, Ibrox Park

What was the score the last time we played Italy at home and where did you park that night? - Rita Mcfadzean
A disappointing 0 – 0 draw at Ibrox with the Italian fans occupying the Broomloan Road Stand. I took the train from Ayr that afternoon and met Taggart star Mcmanus in the Queens Park café before the game.

My pie was cold at the last 13 home games , is this a record? Martha Mydear

No I can remember a run of 8years of luke warm pies in the 50's. The SFA have advised me that their records show that the oven had broken during the 1952 Wales game and rather than pay a call out repair fee they waited until a mysterious fire allowed them to claim on the insurance. Partick Thistle bought the remaining ovens as a job lot and they remain in disuse today.

Who scored the winner in the 1889 away game against England, who played left back and what did he have for breakfast? Rodger Macdodger

England scored first and Anderson equalised with Queens Park's Mackinnon scoring the winner in the 47th minute. It rained heavily in the first half as it was a typical March day. This result made us official World Champions. Left Back was Joseph Taylor, again of Queens Park and he had kippers for breakfast.

When did Scotland last win a friendly at Hampden? Marty Mcfly
Sorry, can't remember!

Retirement

Westa is sorry to announce the retirement from active service of David Watson, leader of the Watson family. A career traveling for 34 years has come to an untimely end. A veteran of 4 world Cups and an eternity of duff friendlies the Moldova game was sadly a trip to far. He has been offered a position as a consultant for other supporters whose clubs are on a downward slide. We will miss his cheery disposition. A song, and a plea from his pals 'Will ye no come back again?'

Book Review

There are 2 iconic figures in Scottish Fitba who stand out for differing reasons. Archie Macpherson can claim to have known Jock Stein well and on more than one occasion tells us but nevertheless has written an insightful book *Jock Stein The Definitive Biography* on the great man's life. A man who crossed the great divide to play for and manage Celtic he led them to their and Scotland's greatest football achievement and when discarded by the club he loved took on the challenge of the national job for the second time.

He had been badly injured in a car crash and may never have sufficiently recovered to survive the pressures of the game. A passionate Scot who was fully aware of our shortcomings, his task was to rescue us from the Ally Mcleod era and bring us back to reality and managed as we landed with a thud!

On the other hand Ken Gallagher's *Slim Jim Baxter* reflects on a Fifer escaping the pits and entrancing a nation with his silky left foot, a figure of great humour and as his colleagues agree a born winner. His view on the game was reflected his penchant for mickey taking and an arrogance in showing the rest of the world that they were simply not as good as him. Rangers manager Scott Symon thought so much of him that he allowed the club to foot his legendary drinks bill at the St Enoch's hotel. His greatest performance for Rangers was in Vienna where he managed 20 nutmegs before revenge was swift with a last minute broken leg. 4 victories in 5 appearances against the Auld Enemy was testament to his ability to win at the top level and in his own mind his best performance was alongside Eric Caldow in the '63 win with 2 goals.

Jock Stein died in the service of his country and the game he loved. Jim played only two more times for Scotland after Wembley '67 and his career suffered from his lack of training and drinking habits. Mr Stein made a career out of his ability to knee the ball prodigious distances and Baxter's lifestyle stopped his talents from appearing in Serie A or England with Manchester Utd or Liverpool. Two Scottish heroes, both flawed but one towering over a nation as the greatest footballing Scot ever. Shame about Hansen and Miller though!

Jock Stein, The definitive Biography £18.99 Highdown , Slim Jim £10.99 The Definitive Biography£10.99.

Video Review.

When Baxter died one of the characters interviewed laid testament to his skill and his friendship. Jimmy Johnstone used to visit his pal Baxter and told us that Slim Jim watched the Jinky video to cheer himself up. On borrowing said video from a friend I can vouch for classic entertainment. The skill of the wee man was phenomenal. The highlight was the Gento testimonial for Real Madrid weeks after the Celts had won the European Cup. Johnstone was unbelievable. There is a period of play where Jinky has the ball and the Madrid players won't go near him, he turns and retreats 10 yards turns and they stare at him, motionless and in fear of their lives. I cheered and wept tears of frustration at the skill of the man. Jimmy had a hard time with a section of the Scotland fans but my best Scotland memory was him continually skinning the England full back Pejic in the '74 home win 2 – 0. I gave the video back so can't remember the name!

Big Mac

This column welcomes the new Chairman and a good riddance to that old faceless nonentity full of inconsequential drivel. The fresh start paying immediate dividends. Out with the old and in with a Jim! The performance of the fitba teams in the Ally Mcleod Tournament was in part down to new breed of players and also to the Manager Glen who now has the full backing of the dressing room. The Masons will be fearful of the influx of youth and hopefully the Boss will resist the recent clamour of the fans to bring back Tam Coyle, the so called people's Champion.

As a Scotland fan of many a year can I endorse the campaign to bring back the tartan scarf and tammy. Is it no coincidence that the nation's rankings have plummeted with the advent of the designer kilted fan? A Hampden packed with a support fully kitted out in scarf and official programme, those were the days! And whilst on the subject where are all the macaroon bar sellers? I fully intend to flaunt my scarf from now on and make a plea to all sane Scotland fans to follow suit, and preferably wear one.

A new era and a new start. Walter Smith could hardly have had a more difficult start in Italy. A breath of fresh fresh air wafted in as Tommy Docherty's short managerial stint began with a well earned 2 -1 home win against Portugal. Willie Ormond's frightful 5 – 0 Anglo Saxon drubbing on a frosty February night. An inauspicious start and a horrible first year year in charge. He went on to lead us to a German World Cup which seems a step too far for Wattie. Ally's Army debut was an uninspired goalless draw in Wrexham preceding the mayhem a week later in the '77 Wembley victory.

Jock Stein promised a more sober outlook but I can't imagine a quiet night at Hampden when 65,372 celebrated Dalglish and Archie Gemmill's score 2 late, late goals to deny Norway.

Andy Roxburgh's first game was a soulless, goalless home draw to Bulgaria and Craig Brown was fleeced in Rome by 3 goals but all of these pale into insignificance as WESTA ran a hearse to Bertie's Paris inaugural drubbing. This column wishes Walter all the best, he needs it. Still I have a gut feeling that the Italians may score 2 free kicks.

Praise indeed from Graham Spiers in The Herald recently extolling the virtues of the TA. Slightly bewildered at the current fashion for vilification he joined with Supremo Walter Smith in recognizing us as the new superpower in world politics!

Baxter's Bridge

Wembley has been the mecca for Scottish football fans since the Legendary Wizard's victory in 1928. A 5-1 win against all the odds, a patronising English media pack and 20,000 travelling fans established the Wembley weekend in the hearts of the Tartan Army.

The fixture had started off as the World Championship, a draw and then an England win in 1874. Hampden Park emerged as the largest stadium in the world peaking with over 149,000 attending the England games in 1937 and 1939. The size of the travelling Scots support rose in the sixties as the Anglo fans gained briefs for themselves and relatives at home. The '77 and '79 games saw a Scottish support numbering 80,000 plus by my estimates and to minimise the Scots travelling a ban was introduced for the '81 game. A crowd well under capacity and dominated by tartan hordes witnessed a dreadful game and a Scotland victory courtesy of a John Robertson penalty. The number of England fans venturing to Glasgow was always minimal and reached a peak in 1968 when over 3 dozen were allocated the North Enclosure pie Stand.

The emergence of the [World Cup](#) and The Euro Championships diminished the importance of the Auld Enemy fixture, Northern Ireland won the last Home International and we entered the Rous Cup. The Scotland England game excited the 2 Nations in the Euro 96 clash and the more recent Euro Playoff in '99. True to form we missed a penalty to allow Gascoigne to score a cracker, performed miserably at home and beat England at Wembley but went out when David Seaman saved a Dailly header in the closing moments.

There are 2 sets of goal posts and 70,000 slabs of turf in Scotland that testify to the importance of the game against the Auld Enemy. Wembley clubs set up after '28 and the modern day Tartan Army Clubs followed, set up to follow Scotland in foreign and more exotic cities than London.

But to Scots of a more vintage age and to those more likely to wear a tartan scarf than a kilt the memories to be cherished are of Last Minute Lawrie Reilly, Jimmy Cowan and Jim Baxter. A marvellous record of only one defeat in 5 England games his best Wembley performance was in the 2 -1 win in '63. His ambition to score a hat - trick was spoilt by a late England strike. He had earlier failed to convince goalie Bill Brown to allow him to score an own goal if he himself had failed to score the third. The keepie up in the '67 3-2 humiliation of the World Champions set him up as an icon for the Tartan Army who have tended to celebrate the party side to his character. His career at that stage was already on a downward slope and was only to gain two more caps.

The campaign to name the bridge after Jim Baxter has captured the imagination of the nation and with a host of happy memories coupled with the odd 9 -3 disaster the Scots feel that there should be a part of the new Stadium that should be forever Scottish. We are due a visit soon to inaugurate Wembley, a homecoming for many of us. I may just partake of a wee Bacardi in ' Baxter's Bar ' to celebrate a famous Scotland victory.

Kirkcaldy Tartan Army are holding a fund-raising Sports Personality Dinner on Saturday April 23rd in Pinkertons, Glenrothes, 7-00pm finishes 1-00am. Proceeds from the event will be split between Forth Park Neonatal Unit, Kirkcaldy and the Tsunami Appeal through Save The Children. Guests speakers are former Scotland goalkeeper Alan Rough and comedian Jimmy

Stirling Tickets are priced at £20, which includes a 3-course dinner, disco and raffle. WESTA have taken a table, please contact Tam Coyle for details.