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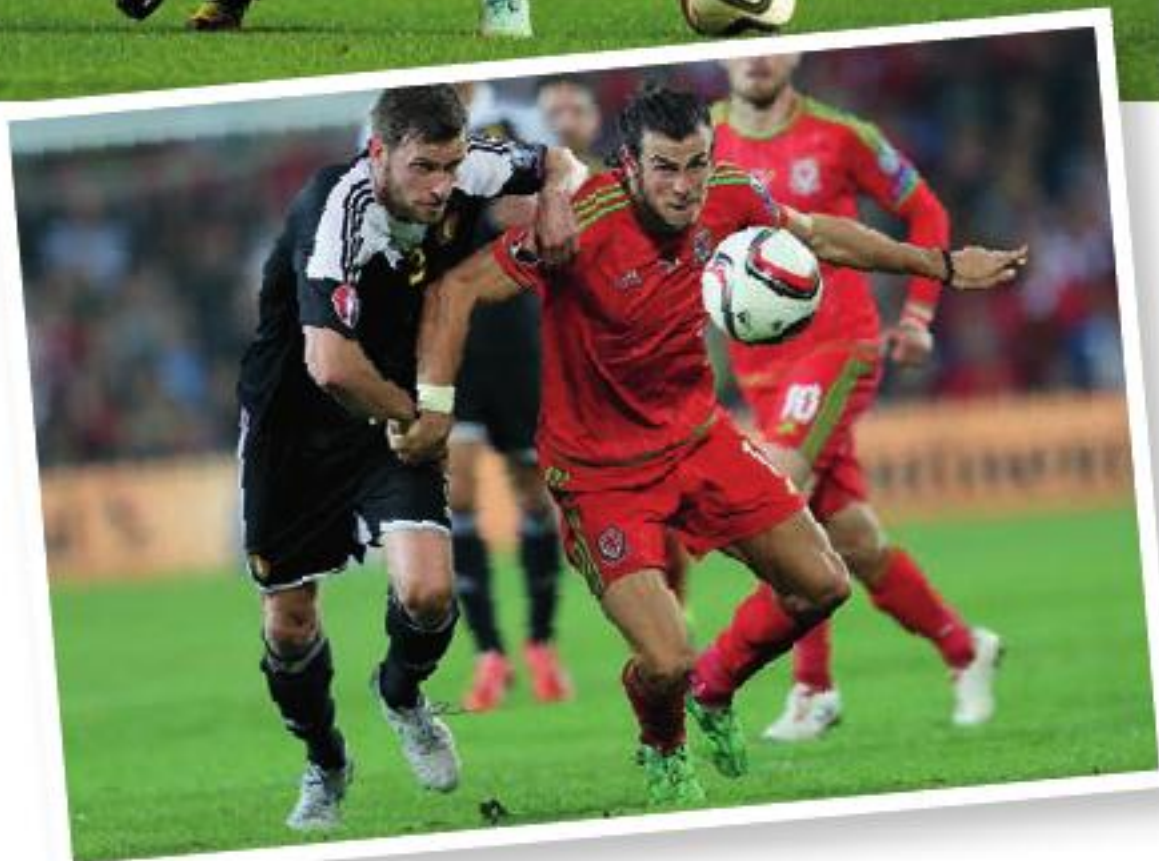
England meet familiar opponents following the recent World Cup draw in Russia. Here's the inside track on England's group

Friends reunited might be pushing it, but there was certainly a sense of familiarity to England's opponents when the draw for the FIFA 2018 World Cup was made at the Konstantin Palace in St. Petersburg in July. England were drawn in Group F alongside Slovenia and Lithuania, two opponents the Three Lions have faced in the current round of European Qualifiers.

The headline fixture, though, will be against Scotland: it is the first time the two Auld Enemies have been drawn to face each other with World Cup qualification at stake (although back in 1950 and 1954, the British Home Championship was also a World Cup Qualifier). After 143 years, 112 matches and 370 goals, this will be the first authentic World Cup game between the two.

"There are many fixtures back in the past that, when you look at what happened on the pitch, it was good and intense," said England coach Roy Hodgson. "The Scotland fixtures fire the imagination of the fans."





Hodgson was in charge when England beat Scotland 3-2 in a thriller at Wembley in August 2013. Scotland twice took the lead before England substitute Rickie Lambert scored the winning goal with his first touch as an international player. More recently, England won 3-1 at Celtic Park last November, with two Wayne Rooney goals after Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain's opener.

The qualifiers will also call to mind one of England's best goals at Wembley. At Euro '96, Paul Gascoigne chipped the ball over Colin Hendry and volleyed it past Andy Goram in the Scotland goal. It was the second in England's 2-0 win.

Slovenia showed they can be dangerous by beating tonight's opponents Switzerland in Group E. They also took the lead in England's 3-1 Wembley win last November, and in the thrilling 3-2 away win in Ljubljana in June.

The other two opponents in Group F are Slovakia and Malta. The former should not be underestimated, having beaten Ukraine away and Spain at home in the

current European Qualifiers. With Martin Skrtel of Liverpool as captain and Napoli's Marek Hamsik pulling the strings, Slovakia could prove awkward opponents. But if England can repeat the form of the European Qualifiers, then even the Auld Enemy won't stop the Three Lions taking their place in Russia in 2018.

GROUPS ROUND-UP

The England-Scotland tie was not the only 'local derby' served up at the 2018 FIFA World Cup draw. Wales, currently rated ninth in the FIFA rankings (with England one place higher), will face Republic of Ireland, as well as Serbia, Austria, Moldova and Georgia in their bid to reach Russia. Austria and Ireland were also drawn together in the 2014 World Cup Qualifiers, finishing third and fourth respectively.

Northern Ireland face a difficult task in their qualifying group with World Cup winners Germany the top seeds, as well as Czech Republic, Norway, Azerbaijan and San Marino.

Euro 2016 hosts France will face World Cup semi-finalists Holland in Group A, along with Sweden, Belarus, Luxembourg and Bulgaria, who cost them a place in the 1994 World Cup after a shock 2-1 loss in



England and Scotland (right and top left) will resume rivalries while Wales (left) are hoping to qualify for their first World Cup since 1958

THE TIE OF THE QUALIFIERS COULD BE BETWEEN TWO RECENT WORLD CUP WINNERS, SPAIN AND ITALY

Paris. That result cost Gerard Houllier his job as France coach, and David Ginola his international career.

The tie of the Qualifiers could be between two recent World Cup winners, Spain and Italy, who were drawn together in Group G. For a long time, Italy was seen as Spain's bogey side; it was only after Cesc Fabregas scored the winning penalty in the Euro 2008 quarter-final shoot-out that Spain overcame the hoodoo. They won the next three tournaments, including a devastating 4-0 win in the Final of Euro 2012.

The hardest group to call could be Group I, where there is little to choose between the top four sides: Croatia (ranked 13), Iceland (24), Ukraine (30), Turkey (45). Finland (89), who recently appointed ex-Manchester City assistant coach Hans Backe, make up the group. Croatia beat Iceland 2-0 in a two-legged play-off to make it to Brazil in 2014. Iceland are currently battling with Holland and Czech Republic to qualify for Euro 2016.



SWITZERLAND

Switzerland: mainly a country of skiers, right?

Well, they have won 20 Olympic golds in alpine, three in cross-country, three in freestyle and one in biathlon, so yes. But don't forget the gymnastics.

The gymnastics? Yes.

Louis Zutter started it in Athens in 1896 taking a gold in the pommel and silvers in the parallel bars and the vault. Since then the Swiss have taken a total of 16 gymnastics golds, four of them to Georges Miez.

And football? They've been World Cup quarter-finalists three times, most recently in 1954 as hosts.

And what happened? Their game against Austria was the highest



scoring in the history of World Cup Finals. It was a ferociously hot day with temperatures reaching 40 degrees in Lausanne. Switzerland scored three goals in quick succession to go 3-0 up after 19 minutes, but Austria replied with five goals in nine minutes and led 5-4 by half-time, despite missing a penalty. The Swiss captain and left-back Roger Bocquet had to have

treatment for sunstroke, which perhaps partly explains the crazy scoring. Austria won 7-5 but were beaten by West Germany in the semi-final.

So a team renowned for riotous attacking football? Maybe back then, but there was a regression to the mean

at the 2006 World Cup, at which they didn't concede a goal in four games before going out to Ukraine on penalties in the last 16.

And at 2014? The free-scoring nature made a return, as they netted seven and conceded six over their three group games. They went out 1-0 to Argentina in the last 16, after a very late extra-time winner.

VITAL STATISTICS

LAST FIVE RESULTS

14.06.15	Lithuania	2-1	Vilnius	Euro Qualifier
10.06.15	Liechtenstein	3-0	Thun	Friendly
31.03.15	USA	1-1	Zurich	Friendly
27.03.15	Estonia	3-0	Luzern	Euro Qualifier
11.11.14	Poland	2-2	Wroclaw	Friendly

ANY PREVIOUS?

In 23 matches between the two nations, the Swiss have only beaten England on three occasions, two coming either side of World War II. They have met three times at Finals, in 1954, 1996 (see p48) and 2004, when Wayne Rooney scored twice.

DID YOU KNOW?

Catenaccio, the defensive system made famous by Helenio Herrera's Internazionale in the sixties was originally developed at the Swiss club Servette by the Austria coach Karl Rappan as a way to get round the fact that his semi-pro side lacked the fitness of professional opponents.

Johann Vonlanthen became the youngest scorer in the history of the Euros when he netted in 2004, breaking a record Wayne Rooney had set four days earlier, against Switzerland.



1924

Biggest win 9-0 v Lithuania, Paris

117

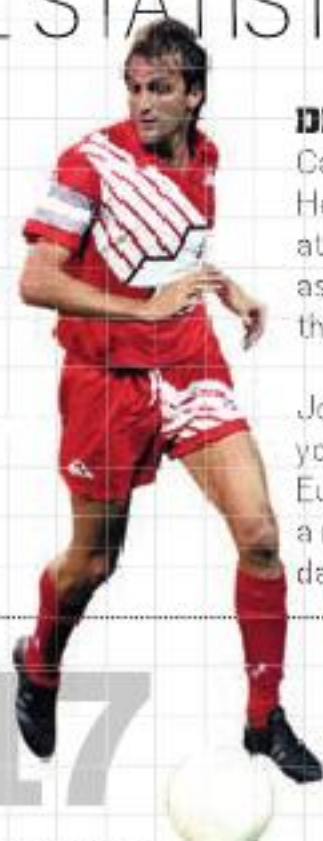
Record appearances
Heinz Hermann (above)

0-9

Biggest defeat v Hungary, 1911

42

Record goals
Alexander Frei



MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THESE

England's exploits in Italy at the 1990 World Cup may be a lifetime ago for some fans, but to these three England supporters, the highs and lows of Italia 90 seem like yesterday

On the recent 25th anniversary of England's World Cup semi-final clash with West Germany at Italia 90, members of England Supporters Club were asked to send us their memories of the Three Lions' first appearance in the last-four on foreign soil.

We've picked out some of our favourites to share with you, but if you have any tournament tales of

your own while following England away, then share them with us via Twitter @england or Facebook/EnglandTeam using the hashtag #FollowEnglandAway. You can also post your stories on englandsupportersclub.com

KEITH GURNEY

"I was at Cagliari for the group games. Great memories. We stayed in a beachside villa just along from the Forte Village and saw Gazza [Paul Gascoigne] and Steve Bull on a boat moored just offshore. The Egyptian navy turned up in a battleship to support their side. I also remember the local support getting quite miffed at our refusal to take part in the Mexican wave and the announcer flamboyantly calling the player names: 'Gaaahriiii Line acre'. Lovely times."

RICHARD KEEP

"I was there at Italia 90 and was very glad I was one of the early members of the England Supporters Club and paid for tickets right up to the Final. People who did not join were fighting for tickets. What a downer when that ball looped back into the England goal. I actually turned away thinking it had been cleared, then turned back wondering what all the noise was about."

MARTIN PARKES

"I have a lot of memories and it's still the best tournament I've been to. We skipped the group stage as we were that confident but had a mate in Turin, so four of us joined him in his one-bed apartment. There we came up with 'bed-betting', basically predicting match scores would decide if you had a bed, a sofa or the floor that night. The most bizarre thing that happened was watching the last group game in a restaurant. The police were there and they were all young, carrying revolvers and looked very scared – about ten of them. In the end they watched the second half with us and I have still got a photo with them and some of us wearing their hats. After we won the game we went straight to the train station and caught a sleeper to Rome, where my company had an office, so we could pick up the tickets I'd provisionally booked for the round of 16 game in Bologna. I have lots more memories, and had no idea what Nessun Dorma was until we got home!"

If you'd like to make your own memories in France next summer – should England secure qualification – then join the official England Supporters Travel Club for your best chance to secure tickets for Euro 2016. For more details visit www.englandsupportersclub.com



Share your England tournament memories with us
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TEENAGERS



XI



BILLY MOON

England's youngest keeper before Jack Butland. In 1888, aged 19, he starred in a 5-0 win in Glasgow. Three years later, he was captain in another victory over Scotland.



MICAH RICHARDS

In 2006 he became England's youngest-ever defender, and less than a year later he scored against Israel.



RIO FERDINAND

First capped at 19, formerly the most expensive defender of all time, he captained England seven times.



JONATHAN WOODGATE

Injuries restricted the calm and elegant Woodgate to eight caps in nine years after his debut at age 19.



LINDSAY BURY

Made his debut as a 19-year-old, against Scotland in 1877 and was 'Perhaps the strongest back of the day'.



THEO WALCOTT

England's youngest-ever player, he was also the youngest to score a hat-trick – against Croatia in 2008, when he was still 19.



JFM PRINSEP

'One of the prettiest half-backs that ever did duty for the Rose', he won his only cap at 17, beating Scotland 5-4 in 1879.



DUNCAN EDWARDS

The 'young oak' would surely have won 100 caps if he hadn't sadly died in the Munich air crash aged only 21.



THURSTON ROSTON

Won his two caps in 1881 when he was just 17. England lost both games, but 'Tot' hit a post in each one.



WAYNE ROONEY

Overtook Prinsep as England's youngest – and he's still the youngest – goalscorer (against Macedonia and Liechtenstein in 2003, when still 17).



MICHAEL OWEN

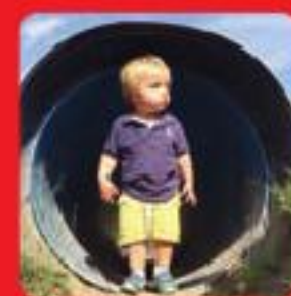
The famous goal against Argentina at the 1998 World Cup was his fourth for England while still 18. Scored his 40th and last before he was 28.

SUPPORTERS CLUB

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

If you want to put a personal message in the programme to celebrate a birthday or something else, simply email editorial@TheFA.com

Wishing Connor Williams a very happy 18th birthday today. Enjoy the match, love from Mum, Dad, Callum and all your family xx



Happy second birthday to Charlie, who's looking forward to visiting Wembley next year.

Lots of love from Mum, Dad, Nanny, Granddad, Grandma, Grandpa, Uncle Sam and Auntie Clare.

NEXT UP: ENGLAND v ESTONIA

England will wrap up their Euro 2016 Group E home Qualifiers against Estonia here at Wembley on Friday 9 October and tickets are still available.

It will be the fourth meeting between the two nations. The first occurred during Euro 2008 Qualifying, with England winning 3-0 in Tallinn on 6 June 2007.

The most recent was almost a year ago. The only goal of that contest was scored by Wayne Rooney – his 43rd England goal in 99 appearances.

Ticket Details

Prices: £65, £55, £45, £35

Concessions: OAPs, Students and U16s

Hotline: 0844 847 2010

Website: TheFA.com/tickets

Disabled Supporters Hotline: 0800 389 1966



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