

THE 2026 WORLD CUP ALPHABET

W is for

WAGs – Notorious acronym for “Wives and Girlfriends” of British footballers (since the acronym doesn’t work in other languages – in German it would be FuF!).

It was first coined during the 2006 World Cup by the British press to denote the female entourage accompanying the English team: a scene which resembled the hordes of “loose” women that used to follow mediaeval armies into battle. However, these women were less Mother Courage and more Paris Hilton. Thus, when England (inevitably) didn’t win the World Cup the same press who had been so distracted by the antics of the WAGs subsequently blamed them for the football team being crap. To put this into context it is like Donald Trump blaming JD Vance for having chosen JD Vance as Veep.



England's WAGs demonstrating a five woman defensive formation at the 2006 World Cup.

To be called a WAG by the British press is considered a term of great disrespect (unless you are a blonde with a fake tan and have a name ending in a vowel: in particular Leah, Tia, Mia, Sophia and Tia Maria, plus the ubiquitous Danielle). Furthermore, the term is clearly homophobic since it makes no allowances for the partners of gay players – not that any England player has come out yet....

Alas, the golden age of WAGs seems to have gone – not because footballers wives are more intelligent than before but, in part, due to the decline of the importance of the press and, in part, WAGs now monetising their own worth by self-publicity as “influencers”.

Waistcoats – With the disappearance of Gareth Southgate this is no longer a relevant football/fashion topic.

Watches – as well as fancy cars and blonde babes, the “must have” accessory for footballers today are expensive watches (in the plural!) When the reserve goalie for Everton has his house robbed in order to steal his watch then you know that footballers have a) too much money and b) are spending it on very expensive watches. In 2019 then Arsenal players Mesut Ozil and Sead Kolasinac were attacked whilst driving home in an attempt to steal their luxury watches worth £200,000!

If you want to see footballers wearing obscenely-priced timepieces then follow this link:

[The Hottest Watches at FIFA Euro 2024 | Wristcheck](#)

(the image of Kyle Walker with a watch is like seeing a cat sat in front of a laptop – neither knows what to do with it.....). Sadly it doesn’t feature David Beckham with his Mickey Mouse watch (or Mickey Mouse with his David Beckham watch)

Water – expect to see lots of images of managers sipping designer water from 33cl bottles. Or sometimes struggling to get the cap of the bottle back on. I’m sure that there are sponsorship deals going on here...



Water Carrier, the – the name that star player and madman Eric Cantona gave to his French teammate Didier Deschamps who he deemed unworthy of playing in the same team as him. Unlike Eric, the Water Carrier got a World Cup winners medal with France, and subsequently also led them to victory as manager.

Weisz, Arpad – A name that deserves mention in the history of football is Arpad Weisz. A Hungarian by birth, Weisz moved to Italy and played for Inter Milan before retiring through injury. He then became manager of Inter and under him in 1929-30 they won the league, making him at age 34 the youngest ever manager to win the league in Italy. He then went on to win the league two more times in 1936 and 1937 with Bologna. However, his story ended tragically. Because he was a Jew he left fascist Italy and went to Holland (where he coached Dordrecht) but was eventually rounded up and was murdered in Auschwitz in 1944.

THE 2026 WORLD CUP ALPHABET

Wembley Tor – Non-German speakers may be surprised to know that ‘Wembley Tor’ (meaning ‘Wembley Goal’) is now a phrase in the German language. It was coined to signify the feeling of contentment that the German people had with Geoff Hurst’s second goal at Wembley during the 1966 Final. Possibly the greatest goal ever scored in a World Cup final. As the attached video clip shows the ball clearly crossed the line:

Greatest ever World Cup goal

So, the next time you are in a high-powered meeting with Germans or the next time you are on holiday and you find a German lying on the next sunbeds to you don’t forget to slip the phrase ‘Wembley Tor’ into the conversation. Guaranteed to break the ice!

Wenger, Arsene – As manager of Arsenal Arsene Wenger brought innovative ideas to English football, both on the pitch – such as passing is good – and off it – that players should eat salads and not be drunk all of the time. However, other coaches soon copied from him and he became a sad example of somebody who was in the same job too long.



Now 76, Wenger is FIFA’s “Chief of Global Football Development” (nope, I’ve no idea what that job entails) and, based on the myth that an elderly person in glasses and wearing a blazer must be wise, has a platform to come up with bonkers ideas.

Hearing Wenger now is like listening to the man standing outside of the railway station drinking from a 2 litre bottle of cider trying to tell anybody who will listen how he was once an important person and still has good ideas (*ed: that sounds like me!*)

White, Ben – In the English language there exists the term “nominative determination”. This means that if you are called baker, say, then you become a baker. Arsenal defender Ben White breaks the rule of nominative determination since he has an urge not to be white but rather look like Donald Trump.



Apparently, he’s a miserable git too. Thankfully an end-of-season injury meant that he could not be selected for England’s World Cup squad, so he can spend the time on his sunbed (or get some more tattoos).....

White handkerchiefs – When things are going bad at Real Madrid or Barcelona the fans suddenly pull out white handkerchiefs and start waving them. But why is this? (No, it’s not to mop up the tears of weeping fans who cannot handle defeat). And why only in Spain?

Well, the answer to the second part of the question is because this is a tradition called *panolada* that comes from bullfighting. But in the bullfighting arena the waving on handkerchiefs was not a protest but, on the contrary, to complement a bullfighter. Spectators who felt a bullfighter had performed well waved white handkerchiefs to ask for him to receive the dead bull’s ear, or two ears, or even a tail, which is the highest honour.

As football became Spain’s most popular mass spectacle in the 1950s, with superstars Alfredo di Stefano, Ferenc Puskas and Paco Gento helping Madrid to win the first five European Cups, supporters attracted from the bullring to the stadium brought the *panolada* with them and waved their handkerchiefs to show their appreciation of a great play, or especially a great goal. So it is hard to understand how it went from being a positive gesture to a negative one.....

Wiener Derby – We mentioned earlier how the Glasgow ‘old firm’ Derby is the oldest in professional football. The oldest on mainland Europe is the Vienna derby between Rapid Wien and Austria Wien. Since their first meeting in 1911 the two clubs have played each other 311 times, with Rapid currently leading 138-120 in the number of victories.

Historically, Rapid were the ‘working man’s’ club – their original name was *First Workers Club of Wien*, whilst Austria were the ‘posh’ team, originally being the *Wien Amateur Sports Society* – they even had a minimum intelligence requirement for their original members!

Sadly, in recent years the Wiener Derby has been marred by crowd trouble which has resulted in recent matches being played with no ‘away’ fans in the grounds.

THE 2026 WORLD CUP ALPHABET

Wilkes, Faas – relegated to obscurity over time Servaas "Faas" Wilkes was one of the best footballers ever to come out of Holland, being especially known for his creative style of play and brilliant dribbling. He played 38 times for the national team, scoring 35 goals. What makes that even more impressive is that he was banned from the national team at the peak of his career for being a professional!! (Until 1955 the KNVB did not allow professional players to represent their country!).

And he was a professional as, in 1949, he had moved from Holland to Inter Milan and then onto Torino and Valencia. He was only the fourth Dutch player to play abroad – long before Cruyff and Neeskens went to Spain, and Gullit and van Basten were in Italy.

Wingers – nothing to do with aircraft. The wings are what the sides of the football pitch are called, and attacking players who play on the sides of the pitch – or ‘out wide’ are called wingers. (No, I don’t know why defenders playing wide were not also called wingers). Traditionally, the winger would be 1m60 tall and weigh about 60kg i.e. with the physique and speed of a greyhound, and would invariably play with no shinpads and socks around their ankles, as if goading opponents. Consequently, they spent much of the game recovering from being kicked by irate, slow defenders. Due to their puny physique they would also not be expected to defend – or even be able to tackle.



Today, however, the winger is also expected to be 1m90 and 90kg and be able to defend too – one reason why CR7 stopped being a winger.....

Wins, Most – It is of little surprise to learn that Brazil has won the most games at the World Cup, with 76 wins. Second on the list is Germany with 68 wins and third is Argentina with 47 wins. France need to win six games at this World Cup in order to come level with Italy in fourth place.

Wolfsburg/Wolfsberg - in the two Bundesligas (that’s the German league and Austrian league) you will find the teams of Wolfsburg and Wolfsberg. One is the official team of VW, the other is team of a small provincial town in Carinthia who plays under the unfortunate name of RZ Pellets WAC - try getting your fans to make a song including that name!

What both teams have in common is that they had miserable seasons, fighting relegation – and, in the case of Wolfsburg, failing to do so. WACs demise was particularly surprising given that the previous season they missed out on winning the Bundesliga only on goal difference!

Woltemade, Nick – How many Germans are called Nick? And how many top-level footballers are 1.98m tall?! With his dodgy hair he looks like Rudi Völler on growth hormones. However, like Rudi, Nick knows how to score goals - possibly the only one in the German team who does..... Or at least he did know how to score goals until he had a season at Newcastle United (played 50 games, scored 11 goals).



Womens World Cup – The Women’s World Cup is in 2027 (in Brazil). So is the Rugby World Cup and the Cricket World Cup - and I won’t be doing a sweepstake for those either ...

World Cup Song – What have Nikki Minaj, Anastacia, Ricky Martin and R.Kelly got in common (other than none of them feature in my music collection)? The answer is that they have all sung official World Cup songs.

As if mascots are not bad enough FIFA decreed back in 1990 that every tournament should have its own song. This time it is “dai dai” by Shakira, which has been co-written with Bumma Boy, sorry Burna Boy.

Shakira is not a newcomer to World Cup songs, having sung the 2010 South Africa World Cup song “wanka wanka” (dedicated to Gianni Infantino).

Having just watched the video it appears that someone seems to think that the 2026 World Cup is also in Africa. See what you think:

[Shakira, Burna Boy - Dai Dai \(Official Video\)](#)

THE 2026 WORLD CUP ALPHABET

World Cup Willy – it sounds like a social disease as a result of excessive celebration of a World Cup victory (and so never experienced in Holland). However - as those of you who read our piece on World Cup mascots will know - Willy was the first ever World Cup mascot. He was created for the 1966 Finals in England: and back then it was definitely a “he” since the only gender fluid in 1966 was that which the doctor prescribed to cure your world cup willy.....



If you didn't read our excellent analysis of World Cup mascots here's the link to the page on our website: [World Cup Mascots](#)

Wrist bandages – there are many ways that one can pick up a wrist strain (*ed: please, absolutely no references to World Cup Willy.....*) but have you noticed how many footballers wear wrist bandages when playing? We are not talking about sweatbands worn on the wrist, but a proper hand wrap: thumb anchored, wrist secured, taped up towards or even over the knuckles, much like what boxers wear underneath their gloves to prevent injury, but on only one hand. Something that you need a physio to put on for you. On almost every team there seems to be at least one player with their wrist strapped up like this (during a Manchester City game I counted five City players bandaged up!).

It seems that the explanation is superstition. In almost every case the player did at one time have a hand injury that required a bandage but because the player did well whilst wearing the bandage they believe it is good luck and so continue the habit long after it is needed medically.

Take Karim Benzema. When he was playing for Real Madrid, he broke his finger in a game against Real Betis in 2019. Doctors told him that surgery would sideline him for two months. The France striker opted to wait until the end of the season to have the operation, so he bandaged up his hand and played on. In his next four games, with the bandage on, he scored seven goals, so he never took it off.



"I have absolutely no idea why I have my wrist bandaged"

Footballers: as superstitious as old women (*ed: are you allowed to say that?*).