

Introduction and guidance

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Contents

Session 1	5
Introduction and guidance	5
Session 1 What makes sport political?	7
Introduction	7
1 What makes sport political?	8
2 When sport becomes political	10
3 Sport and international relations	12
4 Politics in sport: a football perspective	13
5 Summary of Session 1	15
Session 2: International politics and FIFA	17
Introduction	17
1 Early developments in international football politics	18
2 How has FIFA responded to international politics?	21
3 What 'sportwashing' claims exist in football?	23
4 World Cup power dimensions: African resistance	25
5 People power: the World Cup and activism	27
6 Summary of Session 2	29
Session 3: The World Cup and national identity	31
Introduction	31
1 Citizenship, nationhood and nationality: what's the difference?	32
2 Citizenship: not as straightforward as it seems?	33
2.1 Migrants and diaspora	34
2.2 Nationhood: playing for a new flag	34
3 Nationality: a claimed win for diverse France?	37
4 Qatar: an opportunity for identity development?	40
5 Summary of Session 3	43
Session 4: Women and the World Cup	45
Introduction	45
1 A brief outline of women's football origins	46
2 Sepp Blatter: sexist leader or godfather of the women's game?	48
3 Female fandom at the World Cup	50
4 What might make women's football potentially more political than men's?	52

5 Women's World Cup inequalities: discrimination or just commercial reality?	54
6 Summary of Session 4	56
Session 5: Notable politically infused World Cup matches	58
Introduction	58
1 How are rivalries influenced by political themes?	59
2 'Political' World Cup matches: what's your view?	60
3 England vs Argentina: the good, the bad and the ugly	62
4 USA vs Iran: grandiose claims of the most politicised World Cup match?	64
5 USA vs China PR: an iconic image emerges	66
6 Summary of Session 5	68
7 Bringing things together	69
Where next?	70
References	70
Acknowledgements	76

Session 1

Introduction and guidance

If you are a sports participant or fan and interested in how politics plays a role in one of sport's biggest global events, the FIFA World Cups (men and women), then this thought-provoking course will be ideal for you. You will explore what makes the sport and the football World Cups political, with a focus on power relations, national identity and the stories behind how each tournament developed. Through a range of illustrative examples and video clips you will find out more about what lies behind symbolic matches, photographs, topical incidents and national rivalries. You may be surprised by some of the insights and by the end of the course have a deeper understanding of football, international relations and your own national identity.

This course will take approximately 10 hours to complete and is divided into 5 sessions. You can progress at your own pace. The sessions are:

1. An introduction to sport, politics and political themes
2. International politics and FIFA
3. The World Cup and national identity
4. Women and the World Cup
5. Notable politically infused matches

After completing this course you should be able to:

- understand how sport and politics are connected
- describe how political themes have impacted both men's and women's World Cups
- discuss the concept of national identity and understand how it has influenced the World Cup
- identify how the women's World Cup has developed and illustrations of the political challenges faced by some women.

Moving around the course

In the 'Summary' at the end of each session, you will find a link to the next session. If at any time you want to return to the start of the course, click on 'Full course description'. From here you can navigate to any part of the course.

It's also good practice, if you access a link from within a course page (including links to the quizzes), to open it in a new window or tab. That way you can easily return to where you've come from without having to use the back button on your browser.

You can now go to [Session 1](#)

Session 1 What makes sport political?

Introduction

‘You have to stand proudly for the national anthem or you shouldn’t be playing, you shouldn’t be there, maybe you shouldn’t be in the country’ – Former US President, Donald Trump (Carpenter, 2018)



Figure 1 American footballers Eli Harold, Colin Kaepernick and Eric Reid take the knee during the American national anthem ahead of a game.

Despite the common cliché that sport and politics should not mix, sport has consistently demonstrated itself to be a breeding ground for political endeavours. The argument that sport and politics should remain independent of one another is perhaps most prevalent when it comes to athletes voicing political opinions (Butterworth, 2016). Politicians themselves project similar viewpoints across sport as emphasised by the quote from Donald Trump above when responding to the national anthem protests that have spread across the United States since 2016.

This first session is designed to give a broad introduction to sport and politics, before delving into football and the World Cup more specifically in subsequent sessions.

First, take a brief moment before you get started by putting the term *politics* into some context. Politics has been described as a series of activities through which it is decided, often by negotiation but frequently by force, who should get what, where and how (Bairner *et al.*, 2016), and can be explained by the use of a lower case and capital letter:

- Small ‘p’ politics refers to any form of social organisation where matters are concerned with getting or using power within a particular group e.g., there is plenty of ‘office’ politics within, and often between, sports organisations.
- Big ‘P’ Politics often focuses on governmental decision making, world trade agreements and global affairs. The Politics in Europe does not often address sport.

Throughout this course you will see examples of both and within the next section you will be introduced to how sport often has political dimensions.

1 What makes sport political?



There are occasions where controversies or issues occur that remind us of the relationship between sport and politics. The assumption of sport's autonomy from wider socio-political contexts has been widely held over the years (Bairner *et al.*, 2016). Historically, sport was considered a perpetual innocent victim, corrupted by its connection with politics. The Fédération Internationale de Football Association, or FIFA as it is more commonly known, itself has experienced significant controversy relating to the internal politics (or the small 'p' politics) of the organisation. However, before you delve into FIFA, take a moment to explore what is meant by 'political' in this course.

Activity 1 Identifying political themes relating to this course

 Allow approximately 30 minutes

Watch this video clip and identify the political themes within sport.

[Sports and politics: more than just a game](#) (open the link in a new tab or window so you can easily return to the course)

Make some notes in the box below.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

The video identified several overlapping political themes which can be present within sport. You might have noticed the following:

1. Power relations – the ability to attract, hold influence over and persuade, often subtly and implicitly, through the strong symbolism sport offers (e.g., belonging, unity, striking stadia, opening ceremonies).
2. Nationalism and identity – sport provides a strong sense of identity and belonging, which can be linked to national identity or resistance to cultural

practices, and power relation dominance within countries (e.g., the use of national emblems and anthems).

3. Inclusion or segregation – sport participation practices can promote inclusion of some groups and exclusion of others (e.g., women or Black and Minority Ethnic groups).
4. Activism – individual athletes or sports teams engaging in activism which places the spotlight on non-sporting issues (e.g., apartheid, taking the knee before a game).

While not explored in the video clip itself, other linked themes could be:

5. Conflict – the explicit, openly expressed struggles, debates and power relations between national and/or supranational bodies (e.g., African representation at the football World Cup).
6. Commercialisation – sport operates as part of a global system which centres on the commercial interests of lead organisations and its partners. However, challenges between partners can sometimes develop (e.g., Coca-Cola, one of the football World Cup's bigger and long-standing partners, criticised FIFA for its handling of the investigation into corruption over the bidding process for the 2018 and 2022 men's tournaments).

It could be suggested that the first point, power relations, sits at the heart of politics. This can work in varying ways, with the potential to operate at different levels within sport. However, as you will learn throughout this course, there is often a lot of overlapping between the themes.

In this course when the term 'political' is used, this is referring to one or more of the six different political themes outlined in the activity above.

The *politics* of sport in this course refers to the activities associated with the governance of a sport, a multi-sport organisation, a sporting region, facility (e.g., club) or league. This is especially pertinent to the tensions within a sport between individuals or groups having control.

2 When sport becomes political



Figure 2 From left to right: US athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos raising their fists in the Black Power salute at the 1968 Mexico Olympic Games; Eli Harold, Colin Kaepernick and Eric Reid of the San Francisco 49ers take the knee during the American national anthem; poppies on the Leicester City kit for a Remembrance Day fixture.

The relationship between sport and politics has been a controversial and complicated one. Over the years, many sports organisers have rejected the notion that the two exist in parallel with one another. In 1956, Avery Brundage, then President of the International Olympic Committee, famously declared that sport had little to do with politics (Grix, 2015). While others have used sport for their own political gain, e.g., Adolf Hitler and the 1936 Berlin Olympics, or Qatar hosting the men's World Cup in 2022, to showcase their development on the world stage.

Activity 2 High-profile examples of when sport became political

 Allow approximately 20 minutes

Below is a list of examples where our political themes manifest within sport. There are two tasks here:

1. Identify which examples you are already aware of (don't worry if you aren't familiar with all, or many, of them).
 2. Take this further by considering how these examples relate to the six ways that sport can be political outlined in the previous section. For reference, these were: power relations, nationalism and identity, inclusion or segregation, activism, conflict and commercialisation.
- Jesse Owens challenging racial supremacy at the 1936 Berlin Olympics
 - Joe Louis (USA) vs Max Schmeling (GER) boxing matches in 1936 and 1938
 - Jackie Robinson breaking baseball's colour barrier in 1947
 - Muhammed Ali's ban from boxing in the 1960s
 - The Black Power Salute at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics
 - Terrorism at the 1972 Munich Olympics
 - Battle of the Sexes tennis match in 1973
 - Boycotts of the 1980 Moscow and 1984 Los Angeles Olympics
 - Justin Fashanu becoming the first 'out' gay professional footballer in 1990
 - Colin Kaepernick taking the knee during the 2016 United States NFL season
 - American athlete strikes in 2020
 - Poppies on English football club shirts around Armistice Day each year

Provide your answer...

Discussion

This activity is used to show you how consistently sport and political themes have been associated with one another since the 1930s. By considering how these examples relate to our six political themes, you might notice that some of these events connect with more than one theme. For example: through unpacking how Jesse Owens challenged German racial supremacy ideology at the 1936 Berlin Olympics you could identify the following themes:

- Segregation – while Owens himself wasn't segregated from the Olympics, many others were. In fact, only 18 out of the 359 American athletes were Black (yet they contributed a quarter of all medals won by the US team).
- Power relations – in terms of how Germany used the Games to present their Nazi regime to the world.
- Nationalism and identity – the patriotic symbol of Owens as an American national, challenging German ideologies.

This example goes to show that explaining the association between sport and political themes is neither straightforward, nor one-dimensional.



Figure 3 England players Bukayo Saka, Kyle Walker and Jordan Pickford taking the knee ahead of kick off.

As you have seen, the twentieth century saw innumerable examples of political themes permeating through sport. More recently, sport has become a prominent site for the Black Lives Matter movement, with athletes across the world among the campaign's most visible advocates through national anthem protests and the act of taking the knee, showing clear association with the political theme of activism.

3 Sport and international relations



Sport can be recognised as a social and political phenomenon which has a great impact on public opinion and has repeatedly become a pawn in international relations. History shows us that governments have used international sports events to pursue their own interests rather than understanding, friendship and peace among nations (Kissoudi, 2008). Sporting victories for a national team can improve and reinforce superiority of its political regime – for example both the 1934 World Cup in Italy and the 1936 Berlin ‘Nazi’ Olympics.

In the next activity you will explore how war has impacted sport and international relations. Author George Orwell once famously described international sport as ‘war minus the shooting’ in a statement that has become ubiquitous within politico-sporting vocabulary (Beck, 2013).

Activity 3 A timeline of sport, war and international tensions

 Allow approximately 10 minutes

Click on the link to the timeline below to learn about how war and sports events have been inextricably linked over the years.

[A timeline of sport, war and international tensions](#)A timeline of sport, war and international tensions(open the link in a new tab or window so you can easily return to the course).

Discussion

This activity serves as a snapshot for how international relations can impact sport and vice versa. There are, of course, several other examples that could have been included here. Hopefully you thought about some further events or situations. You will look at some more in the next session.

4 Politics in sport: a football perspective



In this section you will be encouraged to think a little more systematically about how politics occurs within sport itself. Earlier in this session, it was suggested that politics refers to the activities associated with the governance of either a sport, a multi-sport organisation, a sporting region, facility (e.g., club) or league. This tends to occur at various different levels, ranging from the politics involved at local levels all the way up to the politics involved within international bodies. Here, you will begin your focus more specifically on international football.

It is unavoidable to discuss football and politics without acknowledging the accusations of corruption that has engulfed FIFA in recent years, particularly after awarding the 2022 World Cup to Qatar. Interesting to this story is how FIFA developed from a small, amateurish organisation into the global and political powerhouse that it is known today.

Activity 4 The development of FIFA as a global and political brand

 Allow approximately 25 minutes

Listen to the clip from the BBC 'FIFA: Football, Power and Politics' podcast. This extract focuses on the state of FIFA post João Havelange's presidency (1974–1998), and the longer-term political aspects within the organisation. As you listen consider how presenter David Goldblatt and the other contributors explain:

1. FIFA's growth during and post Havelange's reign.
2. The subsequent political challenges faced by FIFA.

In both questions, try to relate your thoughts to the political themes that have been previously introduced.

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 1 FIFA: football, power and politics

Provide your answer...

Discussion

1. Post-Havelange, FIFA had become a far more affluent organisation and a global player in world politics, therefore exerting increased power relations and control over the game. As FIFA developed into a brand in its own right, their leadership positions became something worth fighting over and positions within the Executive Committee more attractive. FIFA developed further under Sepp Blatter's reign as the sport became subject to commercialisation and more money filtered into the organisation.
2. FIFA grew so quickly and dramatically that the organisation didn't always know how to cope with their increased wealth, and the power relations of those in office became more important than ever. The fall of ISL (International Sport and Leisure – the Swiss sports marketing firm) saw a corruption scandal which had consequences for FIFA. Despite Swiss MPs' ultimatum to FIFA for greater integrity, Executive Committee members were still suspended for soliciting votes during the 2018 and 2022 World Cup bidding process.

5 Summary of Session 1

Having completed this first session you should now have a better understanding over the terms used in the course and how a historical view of sport and politics shows a number of reoccurring themes. The main learning points are:

- Politics refers to the activities associated with the governance of a sport, a multi-sport organisation, a sporting region, facility (e.g., club) or league.
- The six political themes explored were: power relations, nationalism and identity, inclusion or segregation, activism, conflict and commercialisation.
- You have explored selected examples of how sport, armed conflict (i.e., war) and impact international relations intersect and are likely to have thought of your own examples.
- Politics has influenced FIFA's development, largely due to the commercialisation of the sport and the increased power relations that this brought.

Before you look towards Session 2, we would really appreciate you answering the two brief questions below so that we can gather some feedback on this session.

1. How much did you enjoy Session 1?

Interactive content is not available in this format.



2. Which of the following statements best applies about the knowledge you gathered by completing this session on an introduction to sport, politics and political themes?

Interactive content is not available in this format.



Moving forward, have you ever wondered how power relations, nationalism, identity and international politics impacts football and FIFA? In the next session you will explore what topics, debates and tensions have shaped the football World Cup's development over the decades.

When you are ready, go to. [Session 2: International politics and FIFA](#) Session 2

Session 2: International politics and FIFA

Introduction

‘Football has been inscribed with tribalism, protest, military propaganda, political symbols and modes of masculinity since its inception’ (Power *et al.*, 2020)

Within the previous session you were introduced to the concepts of *politics* and *political themes*. Both these terms will remain important throughout subsequent sessions.



In this session you are going to explore the impact and influence of international politics. This covers a multitude of themes, including conflicts and power relations between nations and multi-national bodies. FIFA and the World Cup are good examples through which to examine this, and you will learn how the developments of international football from the early 1900s emphasised how sport can become embroiled in wider political trends, arguments and struggles. You will discover how FIFA responded to global political issues, including the contentious issue of ‘sportswashing’ (i.e., cleansing reputations). Finally, you will see insights behind two examples of protest and boycotts of World Cup tournaments.

1 Early developments in international football politics



While these days FIFA's reach and influence might be global, it had modest early foundations. Although versions of football can be traced back to ancient history, the game we recognise today was invented by the English and disseminated through British imperialism across the world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Goldblatt, 2007).

Activity 1 The unusual World Cup creation story

 Allow approximately 20 minutes

This activity is broken into two parts and you will learn about how FIFA developed in their early years.

1. Watch this video clip, developed by FIFA, which shows a brief history of their foundation. Note down FIFA's early objectives and see if you can think of any early possible tensions to these ambitions from the founding nations and others who contributed.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1 The story of FIFA



2. Now read this article, produced by course authors Ben Oakley and Steph Doehler. What surprises you about some of the politically related decision making in this article?

[Why did FIFA lag behind the Olympic movement?](#) Why did FIFA lag behind the Olympic movement?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

1. The video suggests that following their inception FIFA's aim was to attempt to unify the laws of the game. Given that only seven nations, all in Western Europe, convened to form the governing body, this would have initially been a challenging objective – especially as the four individual British FAs did not join the international organisation. This highlights the potential power that the initial nations had in the development of international football.
2. Although Britain is perceived as being the birthplace of football it's fascinating that their FAs were reluctant to get involved in FIFA's World Cup, yet they did participate in football at early Olympic Games (though, as you'll have read, only amateur footballers were permitted to compete here). Exploring why this was the case is an interesting avenue to read more about if you are a British football fan.

FIFA remained silent during the First World War (1914–18), not wanting to become involved in the political issues faced by their affiliated nations. The aftermath of the war saw problems within FIFA itself, with the Allied FAs wanting to exclude the defeated countries of Germany, Austria and Hungary (Krüger, 2015).



Figure 1 The Italian team performing a fascist salute before the 1934 World Cup Final.

The men's World Cups of the 1930s (1930 Uruguay; 1934 Italy; 1938 France) were inconsistently presented unlike today's slick, highly staged 'brand'. FIFA had neither the staff, money nor authority to decisively shape the tournaments, and the absence of global television and radio meant that coverage of the tournaments was limited and local (Goldblatt, 2014). Political characteristics permeated through early World Cup events; some examples of these are shown in Table 1. There is also reference to the six political themes from Session 1 (power relations, nationalism and identity, inclusion or segregation, activism, regulation of sport and commercialisation).

Table 1 Examples of politics in games

World Cup	What happened?	Political categorisation
1930 Uruguay	Used as a celebration to mark Uruguay's 100 years of independence from Spain (Rinke and Schillier, 2014).	Nationalism and identity
1934 Italy	Used to improve the national image of Prime Minister Benito Mussolini's fascist regime. Following a successful final, the Italian team turned towards Mussolini in the stands and gave the fascist salute (Sbetti and Serapiglia, 2020).	Power relations Nationalism and identity
1938 France	Organised in a divergent response to its predecessor as an example of what a democracy could achieve within a continent of dictators. Bitter political conflicts made their way into matches with an infamous example of Italy vs France in 1938.	Conflict Nationalism and identity

Notice the overlapping themes in Table 1. Nationalism and identity both play a significant role in each tournament with the host nations tending to use the event as a means to showcase their national standing to the rest of the world. Meanwhile wider political themes associated with host governments, especially in 1934 and 1938, were also prevalent.

2 How has FIFA responded to international politics?

Figure 2 Jorge Rafael Videla, President of Argentina during the World Cup match between Argentina and Peru in Buenos Aires, 1978.

Despite a desire to be apolitical, several international events have challenged FIFA's ethos to remain impassive, or as Jiménez-Martínez and Skey (2018) put it, 'politically avoiding the political'. In the next activity you will look at the infamous men's 1978 World Cup hosted in Argentina.

Activity 2 Is doing nothing an option for FIFA?

 Allow approximately 25 minutes

Read the article [Remembering Argentina 1978: The Dirtiest World Cup Of All Time](#) by Hersey (2018), which should give you an understanding of the political backdrop of the tournament. Then listen to the audio from Professor Alan Tomlinson who talks about the 1978 World Cup and, more specifically, the Argentina vs Peru match which caused suspicions of match fixing.

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 1 Alan Tomlinson on the 1978 World Cup

As you engage with both sources, consider FIFA's stance in relation to what is being discussed. What political factors were at play which might explain why they didn't intervene?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

The 1978 World Cup came at a time when the highly oppressive Argentinian government needed to renew legitimacy to their 1976 military coup and seek consensus from civil society. FIFA were reluctant to involve themselves in the internal politics of a host nation. Furthermore, FIFA may have felt it too late to secure another host for the tournament emphasising a stance of impartiality for the governing body's own gain. The article infers that FIFA's apolitical stance was, in fact, extremely political. Ensuring the success of the tournament at all costs appeared a key motivation for FIFA. Despite accusations of match-fixing in the Argentina vs Peru tie (where the hosts needed to win by four clear goals to progress to the final – they won 6-0), FIFA didn't investigate. In 1978, 'doing nothing' certainly was FIFA's main approach.

There are several further examples of nations participating in World Cup tournaments despite their involvement in political and civil unrest include, such as: France during the 1950s despite their bloody wars against movements of independence in Algeria and Indochina (Szymanski, 2022), while Nigeria was permitted to play in World Cup qualifiers for the 1970 Mexico tournament while engaging in a brutal civil war with Biafra which caused more than one million deaths (Nwaubani, 2020).

Activity 3 Firm action or bowing to pressure?

 Allow approximately 20 minutes

Despite several instances where FIFA didn't act amid global political challenges, their suspension of Russia in 2022 highlights a different approach. Read the article [FIFA's suspension of Russia is a rarity – but one that strips bare the idea that sport can be apolitical](#) by Professor Stefan Szymanski for *The Conversation* and consider the following questions:

1. Why does Szymanski believe FIFA acted against Russia, but not other nations embroiled in political conflict?
2. How does Szymanski suggest FIFA, and other sport authorities, could better handle issues of political upheaval throughout the world?
3. How do you respond to his suggestions?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

1. Szymanski suggests that Russia's brutality was one reason for their suspension, as was the innocence of Ukraine in the conflict. He also cited the sympathy shared throughout Europe where many top Ukrainians play domestically.
2. Szymanski infers some criticism of FIFA, suggesting that they responded after public pressure in their actions. However, he advises that organisations should develop long-term policies which consider the legality of suspensions and bans and focuses on developing a consensus regarding ethical standards and participation.
3. This is a very subjective issue. Szymanski acknowledges the challenges of his suggestions. For example, excluding nations could weaken the prestige of the World Cup. Additionally, by creating human rights-based criteria could lead to several other nations barred from future events which could threaten the tournament.

3 What 'sportwashing' claims exist in football?



While *sportswashing* might be a relatively modern term, the concept is far from new. Popularised by Amnesty International in 2018, sportswashing describes the use of sports by oppressive governments to legitimise their regimes and distract from human rights abuses (Zidan, 2022). The perception of sportswashing is, understandably, negative: 'there can be no false innocence from here, no hope against hope, fingers crossed, for something real behind the platitudes' (Ronay, 2022).

Early examples of sportswashing include the 1934 men's World Cup in Italy and the 1936 Berlin Olympics, both mentioned in Session 1. More recently, the concept has been debated in relation to the ownership of several football clubs including the likes of Manchester City, Paris Saint-Germain and Newcastle United, all of which have controversial Middle Eastern owners. There is also the hosting of high-profile sporting events such as the men's World Cups of 2018 in Russia and 2022 in Qatar as reputational enhancers. The Qatar World Cup is explored in Session 3.

Activity 4 Can sportswashing have unintended benefits?

 Allow approximately 15 minutes

Read the two excerpts below where both journalists discuss football's links with sportswashing, and then answer the question underneath.

The United Arab Emirates and Saudi takeovers of Manchester City and Newcastle have led to far greater scrutiny in Britain of those countries' human rights records than would otherwise have been the case...Who would have considered the rights of migrant labourers in Qatar before it bid to host a World Cup?

(Wilson, 2022)

If sport can take anything from this horror [Russia's invasion of Ukraine] it is that we now know beyond any doubt that this [i.e. authoritarian regimes' abuses] is all for real. That those who talk...about dictatorships and human rights are speaking from a place of real consequences

(Ronay, 2022)

How do you react to this claim of some benefits?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Personal perception will have driven your response here. Some may feel that if sportswashing is going to occur, then shining a light on human rights issues is a vital by-product of the concept. Conversely, others may disagree and feel that sports authorities should be doing all they can to prevent sportswashing in the first place. With FIFA's general ethos of remaining apolitical, football provides a platform to be explored by sportswashing.

4 World Cup power dimensions: African resistance



While there are several examples of activism and protest in relation to World Cup events, the next sections will focus first on the African nations' boycott of the 1966 men's World Cup and secondly, the public protests at the 2014 men's World Cup in Brazil.

Although the 1966 men's World Cup is best remembered, particularly by English fans, for Bobby Moore lifting the Jules Rimet trophy, it was equally important as the only World Cup in history to be boycotted by an entire continent – Africa. This stemmed from Africa's protest at the number of spots FIFA awarded the continent in World Cup tournaments and highlights a power struggle by a group of nations who had historically been forgotten by the governing body.

Activity 5 African protest and resistance

 Allow approximately 20 minutes

Listen to three clips from the BBC documentary *Missing the World Cup* and respond to the subsequent questions.

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 2 Missing the World Cup 1

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 3 Missing the World Cup 2

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 4 Missing the World Cup 3

1. Why were the African nations so disappointed in FIFA's allocation of World Cup spots and what did they want?
2. How does the Ghanaian player Kofi Pare's view highlight political aspects of power?
3. What main political issues, outside of football, impacted the boycott?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

1. FIFA's allocation of World Cup spots disproportionately disadvantaged African nations with just one nation from all of Africa, Asia and Oceania able to compete at the tournament. They believed that Africa should have at least one finalist at the 1966 men's World Cup
2. Kofi Pare indicated that African players would have liked to have competed at the 1966 World Cup. This highlights the political power that the governing bodies held in Africa over their players. Of course, this isn't a concept restricted to Africa, but it shows that players and authorities don't always agree on the best course of action. In this instance, the African players of Ghana, whom many considered were best placed to qualify for the World Cup, were the unwitting innocent party of the political conflict between African football authorities and FIFA.
3. The African nations were frustrated by their lack of representation and voice. Pride played a role here – with decolonisation and their subsequent independence the nations felt they should have been perceived better and with more respect by the rest of the world.

The boycott itself proved to be the turning point for better recognition of the continent's national teams. By 1982, the men's competition had been extended to 24 teams and increased again in 1998 to 32 nations, giving greater recognition to African and Asian nations. These decisions were partly motivated by a desire to better accommodate previously disenfranchised constituencies at the World Cup (Darby, 2019). By 2022, Africa were guaranteed five spots in the men's World Cup in Qatar (the second most represented continent, behind Europe).

5 People power: the World Cup and activism



If you think back to the ways that sport can be political from Session 1, activism was one such theme. While that example referred to athlete activism, this section focuses on how a general population can try to exercise political authority by embarking on activism aimed to disrupt an event.

By 2014, football had become a highly commercial entity with the World Cup being watched by billions worldwide. Beginning in 2013, and continuing throughout the 2014 men's tournament itself, Brazilian protestors brought global attention to the deprivation and wealth disparity in their nation to an international audience (Nalani Butler and Aicher, 2014).

Watch the BBC news report below which shows clashes between protestors and the Riot police on the opening day of the World Cup.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 2 Clashes at Sao Paulo, 2014



In response to protests, FIFA acknowledged the civil unrest throughout Brazil before and during the men's World Cup. In their 2014 Sustainability Report FIFA reference how they 'explored and debated the origins of the protests, highlighting that football could be used to tackle the social inequalities and injustices underlying the concerns of the Brazilian people' (FIFA, 2014). Further to this, FIFA implemented a Human Rights Policy in May 2017, which included their commitments to the fundamental freedoms of human rights defenders and protesters. Following the 2018 men's World Cup in Russia, FIFA suggested that while the spectators and populations in the Russian host cities enjoyed a heightened degree of public freedom during the tournament, there was a small number of instances where, in FIFA's view, the limitations imposed by authorities on small-scale protests were overly strict (FIFA, 2019).

Arguably the example in Brazil highlights how significant protest may influence the governing body's recognition of the right to protest. At the time of writing, it remains to be seen if Qatar will afford its visiting spectators a degree of cultural freedom and right to protest.

6 Summary of Session 2

Having completed the second session you should have a better understanding of how a range of politics issues have impacted not only the tournament, but FIFA more generally. The main learning points are:

- FIFA have a chequered history when it comes to involving themselves in international politics through their responses to global issues.
- Despite this, both FIFA's formation and early men's World Cup tournaments were impacted by political themes.
- Activism and boycotts both have the ability to disrupt World Cups.
- Sportswashing, while generally considered negative, arguably has some unintended benefits relating to the visibility of human rights.

As with the previous session, we would really appreciate you answering a couple of quick questions relating to Session 2.

1. How much did you enjoy Session 2?

Interactive content is not available in this format.



2. Which of the following statements best applies about the knowledge you gathered by completing this session on internal politics and FIFA?

Interactive content is not available in this format.



Moving forward, you will have the opportunity to explore how the World Cup impacts national identity. Think about your own nation – how do people respond during World Cup tournaments? Does World Cup fever take hold? Session 3 will look at national identity from both player and country perspectives.

When you are ready, go to [Session 3: The World Cup and national identity](#) Session 3

Session 3: The World Cup and national identity

Introduction

'I am [viewed as] German when we win, but I am an immigrant when we lose' – Former German international, Mesut Özil

Within this session you will explore the notion of national identity through the lens of the World Cup. The event provides endless opportunity to consider the nature of their own and others' national identity. During tournaments, a 'carnavalesque' atmosphere is often witnessed with fans displaying their national colours through clothes and symbols. The World Cup also provides a stage for cultural and religious diversity, as examples throughout this section will highlight.

Conversely, the World Cup can also instigate debates about poor fan behaviour and its relationship to national identity. For example: some English fans have often been criticised for their actions.

The Özil quote above followed Germany's exit at the group stage in the 2018 men's World Cup. Members of the German Football Association and far-right politicians blamed Mesut Özil for the nation's performance. A key stimulus to the criticism was Özil's decision to pose with the Turkish President prior to the tournament, at a time of heightened tensions between Germany and Turkey. Özil, being of Turkish heritage, explained that he was simply being respectful to his ancestors' roots. This event underscores how delicate discussion of identity and belonging can be.

Before you get started on this session, take a few moments to listen to the audio between Steph Doehler (course author) and Professor Alan Bairner, who reflect on the concept of national identity in relation to sport, offering interesting grounding on how they interact with one another.

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 1 Steph Doehler and Alan Bairner on the concept of national identity

Through this session you will be introduced to the concepts of citizenship, nation and nationality, and explore examples of how these issues permeated through football. You will also examine how the Qatar World Cup in 2022 is being used to forge a new identity for the Qatari population.

1 Citizenship, nationhood and nationality: what's the difference?

According to Oonk (2020) the terms 'citizenship', 'nationhood', and 'nationality' contain different, though overlapping, senses of belonging and identity. The World Cup tournament's history provides a rich history of examples. However, before focusing on the three terms take a moment to understand what each refers to.

Activity 1 Defining citizenship, nationhood and nationality

 Allow approximately 5 minutes

Using the drag and drop function below, match the definition you think Oonk (2020) uses with the key term.

The formal membership of a state

Membership of a community or nation

A combination of both other terms

Match each of the items above to an item below.

Citizenship

Nationhood

Nationality

Discussion

These definitions highlight the complexities of national identity. It is common in World Cups for players to represent a country in which they were not born, therefore blurring the lines between multifaceted concepts.

Figure 1 Diego Costa.

An example which exemplifies the challenges of these terms is that of Diego Costa. The Brazilian born striker was capped twice for his birth nation before requesting to switch allegiance to Spain, where he had recently been granted citizenship. As Costa had only represented Brazil in friendly matches, FIFA approved the request. This decision was not without controversy in the lead up to the 2014 men's World Cup, held in Brazil. The host nation's head coach at the time, Luiz Felipe Scolari, criticised Costa, suggesting that he had turned his back on the dream of millions to represent the national team (Hay, 2014).

2 Citizenship: not as straightforward as it seems?



Between 8 and 12 per cent of male players competing in World Cups from 1930 to 2018 represented nations in which they were not born (van Campenhout *et al.*, 2018). While this statistic shows that the case of Diego Costa certainly isn't an isolated one, numbers only ever tell half a story and they fail to explore the historical contexts associated with changing national allegiances.

In relation to footballers, the acquisition of citizenship tends to occur in one of three ways, as evidenced by those who have a choice in who they represent at national level (see Table 1).

Table 1 Three routes footballers may use to decide which nation to represent at international level

Reason	Explanation	Example
Birth in the territory	Citizenship granted based on footballer being born in that nation.	England's Leah Williamson was born in Milton Keynes. Therefore she has English citizenship.
Through descent	Citizenship granted based on the nationality of a footballer's parents or grandparents.	German-born Kevin-Prince Boateng opted to represent Ghana at full international level. He was able to do this due to his Ghanaian father. Interestingly his brother, Jérôme, chose to represent Germany.
Stakeholder principle	Citizenship granted to a footballer who migrated to a nation, often by playing in that country for a set number of years.	Brazilian-born Mário Fernandes gained Russian citizenship after playing for CSKA Moscow since 2012.

While players representing more than one nation is uncommon, some well-known instances occurred before FIFA introduced regulations to prevent nation swapping in 1962. Argentine-born Luis Monti played in the 1930 men's World Cup final, before going on to represent Italy in the 1934 final, while Alfredo di Stefano played for Argentina, Spain and Colombia during an international career which spanned from 1947 to 1962 (though the latter wasn't recognised by FIFA at the time).

2.1 Migrants and diaspora

Figure 2 The Morocco team during the 2018 World Cup.

In addition to those changing their allegiance, World Cup history has several examples of diasporic nations – i.e., when a country plays an active role in attracting overseas footballers who are often born and raised in a foreign country but, via their parents or grandparents, still have ethnic or kinship connections with the nation. The 1934 men's Italian World Champion side included five players born in Argentina and Brazil to migrant Italian parents (Van Campenhout *et al.*, 2018). In the preparation for the 2018 World Cup the Moroccan football federation actively reached out to male footballers with Moroccan parents in a campaign aimed to 'bring back talents belonging to the soil' (Kuper, 2018). Seventeen of the twenty-three players in their final squad were born outside of Morocco, resulting in them being called an 'imported team' with instructions conveyed in English, French and Arabic (Panja, 2018).

2.2 Nationhood: playing for a new flag



Despite FIFA's 1962 ruling that prohibits footballers from representing two different nations in competitive matches, there is a special circumstance which allows this to occur – the dissolution or fragmentation of nations, e.g., the likes of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Military history inevitably shapes debate on national identity and what it means to be patriotic. As such, representing a new country (i.e., partly switching allegiances), exemplifies this perspective from both players and nations. A striking example here is the expansion of Germany in 1938, which saw the Austrian national team dissolve and combine with Germany's.

Activity 2 The creation of a new German football team

 Allow approximately 20 minutes

There are two video clips in this activity, both taken from the 2003 BBC documentary *Football and Fascism*. Take some time to consider the first question and video clip, before moving onto the second.

1. How did the German annexing of Austria impact football?

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1 Football and fascism 1



2. What implications were there for the new-look German side at the 1938 World Cup?

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 2 Football and fascism 2



Provide your answer...

Discussion

1. Germany saw this as an opportunity to recruit Austria's star footballers. This came at a time when the Austrians were the superior side, having beaten Germany 6-0 and 5-0 earlier in the decade. The 1938 men's World Cup presented the Germans with a chance to present a new-look, possibly enhanced, German side. However Austria's star centre-forward, Matthias Sindelar, refused to play citing his hatred for Nazi-Germany. The following year Sindelar and his girlfriend were found dead in their Austrian apartment. Although the official verdict cited carbon monoxide poisoning, speculation remains over whether his death was, in fact, a murder (Jonze, 2018).
2. Five Austrians featured in Germany's first match of the tournament against Switzerland. With old rules, a replay of the tie was necessary following a draw. Despite going two goals up in the replay, the new German side capitulated and lost 4-2. It was clear that the Austrians, who had been forced to represent Germany, harboured severe dislike for their new nation – this new 'united' nation was anything but.

The Germany-Austria example highlights contentious issues surrounding national identity. Austrian players and supporters became symbols of political resistance. A further instance demonstrates the flexibility in allegiances and borders over time: the break-up of Yugoslavia. Several players were able to select their new allegiance to the likes of Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro or Slovenia. All the examples in this section highlight how player recruitment can be impacted by ethnic, civil and national identities.

3 Nationality: a claimed win for diverse France?



Colonial relations have played a significant role in the development of various footballing nations and international relationships. In France, opportunities afforded by colonialism have had a largely positive impact on their national team, and the team have often been considered as representing ethnic diversity (White, 2018). On both occasions when they won the men's World Cup (1998 and 2018) more than 50 per cent of their players had at least one parent who was not born in France.

You may recall the video used in Session 1 which highlighted how the French team was put at the front and centre of the nation's campaign on diversity following their victory in 1998. The slogan 'Black Blanc Beur' (Black, White and Arab) was used in the media to celebrate a supposed integrated France (Smith, 2018), a nation which some long considered as the most racially divided country in Europe (Hussey, 2006). In the lead up to the 2022 men's World Cup one journalist wrote 'football is an intensely political issue in French society, where it straddles racial and religious divisions' (Sage, 2022).

Activity 3 The development of multicultural France

 Allow approximately 20 minutes

Watch the video below from Vox, an American news site, which outlines how France developed into a more multicultural society, and its subsequent influence on football. As you watch, think about the following questions:

1. Why was there an influx of immigrants into France post Second World War?
2. What long-term impact did this influx have on France's national football team?

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 3 Why France produces the most World Cup players



Provide your answer...

.....
Discussion

1. Post Second World War labourers were recruited from Europe and French colonies to help repair the damaged caused by the conflict. A labour shortage in the 1960s and 70s saw more immigrants arrive from French colonies in Africa and the Caribbean.
2. France struggled to qualify for several international tournaments throughout the 1960s and 70s. Consequently the French Football Federation created a national structure for developing talent. Over the years several elite players, including those in both their World Cup winning squads, were immigrants themselves or children of immigrants who came to France following both the war itself, and from Algeria in the aftermath of their independence from France in 1962.

Despite being hailed as the symbol of a new harmonious multiracial nation in 1998, some years later football became a 'racial battleground' through representing the polarities of the French population (Hussey, 2006). Developments in France and many other nations emphasise Anderson's (1991) concept of the 'imagined community', through which the significance of sport in expressions of nationality result in bringing a nation together and help people to perceive themselves as one nation (Nosal *et al.*, 2021). This raises questions over whether eleven individual players really represent a national community. Evidence suggests a supposed unity when teams are winning. Yet, as seen during France's mediocre performances between 2001 and 2017 and Germany's Mesut Özil's experiences, when performances aren't meeting expectations all sorts of other issues get propagated. This shows an uneasiness around the representation of the football nation by players with migration backgrounds, and also the fragility of national belonging (van Campenhout and van Houtum, 2021).

4 Qatar: an opportunity for identity development?

Much has been written about FIFA's controversial decision to award Qatar the hosting rights for the 2022 men's World Cup. The focus in this section will be to explore how football may contribute to national identity, both in Qatar and other nations.

Qatar has been an independent nation only since 1971 and their government's National Development Strategy 2018–22 clearly shows that the sport would play an important role as a driving force in three areas:

1. adaptation to the global market place
2. improve the country's image
3. contribute to the national identity as a healthy and sporting nation.

(Elsborg, 2018)

Activity 4 What makes up national identity?

 Allow approximately 30 minutes

This activity has two parts.

1. First, read the following outline on what national identity is based on – it is a simplified version of an article from a Qatari [Living2022.com](https://www.living2022.com) website inspired by the hosting of the World Cup and the development of the Qatari national brand.

National identity is socially constructed as people align themselves to the alleged characteristics of their specific nation. It may be based on a nation's:

- history
- traditions
- culture or language
- ideology and values
- achievements
- pastimes.

If you align yourself with your nation's identity it may create a sense of who you and we are i.e., belonging. It is built on commonality. National symbols are created, such as flags and emblems, to represent the identity. These may be used to show our belonging and shared pride. For instance,

- National flags are generally designed to mirror a nation and citizen's characteristics and to signify significant history.
 - National emblems are used in addition to a national flag to act as a symbol of a nation.
 - National animals are sometimes chosen by countries as a symbol that represents the nation's values and attributes and/or their place in the nation's culture or myths.
2. Using some of these ideas how you would complete column C for your country? Some examples from France have been added to give you ideas.

A	B	C
National characteristics	Examples from France	Examples from your country
Culture or language	Own official language, with several regional dialects. Distinctive cultures based on cinema, fashion and cuisine	Provide your answer...
Ideology and values	National motto of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. Catholicism the predominant religion.	Provide your answer...
Achievements	Winners of men's World Cup in 1998, 2018	Provide your answer...
Pastimes	Football and rugby union, cinema, literature	Provide your answer...
National symbols		
Flags	Blue, white and red	Provide your answer...
Emblems	Great Seal of France, Cockade of France	Provide your answer...
Animals	Gallic rooster	Provide your answer...

Discussion

1. The short reading of items that make up national identity is a useful prompt to think about your own understanding of what is used in your own nation's expression of this sense of belonging. For example, each nation's flag colours can become the national colours, often reflected in the playing kit of the team and their supporters' use of colour.
2. Thinking about how to complete parts of this table will be easy with tangible symbols such as emblems but harder when it comes to culture, ideology and national achievements. For the English you might say the culture is based on democracy, freedom and fairness and this is often reflected on the football field with the English hatred of injustice. The English achievements reflected in national identity often reference wartime experiences and in some cases supporters wear a red (St Georges) cross emblem.

What is pertinent to Qatari ambitions with such a young nation is what Brannagan and Giulianotti (2015) have described as 'soft disempowerment' – which occurs when a nation aims to develop a new global image, and subsequently any shortcomings are quickly

judged. The 2022 Qatar World Cup is perhaps one of the most explicit examples of where new image making can work against a country, as claims of bribery, poor human rights and unethical working conditions have continued to grow since they were named as hosts in 2010 (Ingle, 2021).

A final thought for this session is about national identity and gender...

Often in sport, national identity is dominated with the actions and feelings of only half a population, i.e., predominantly men. This is especially acute in sport with its historical male bias. In the next session you will explore how the women's game has developed and in some instances changed perceptions and influenced national identity through the World Cup.

5 Summary of Session 3

Having completed the third session, you should now have a better understanding of how national identity impacts the tournament, particularly in relation to the competing nations. The main learning points are:

- The concepts of citizenship, nationhood and nationality all create senses of belonging and identity.
- The men's World Cup in particular has a long history of challenges, controversies and opportunities relating to national identity through merging nations, diaspora and diversity.
- A significant opportunity for Qatar in 2022 is the development of their own national identity through their hosting of the men's World Cup.

As with the previous sessions, we would really appreciate you answering a couple of quick questions relating to Session 3.

1. How much did you enjoy Session 3?

Interactive content is not available in this format.



2. Which of the following statements best applies about the knowledge you gathered by completing this session on the World Cup and national identity?

Interactive content is not available in this format.



So far you have focused quite heavily on men's football. In the next session you will explore how political themes impact the women's game too. For example, did you know that post First World War women's football was gaining popularity in such huge strides that over 53,000 spectators crammed into Goodison Park on Boxing Day in 1920 to watch Dick, Kerr Ladies vs St Helens Ladies? Yet the following year the English FA effectively banned women's football by preventing women from using FA affiliated facilities. In the next session you will explore the development of women's football and the politics involved.

When you are ready, go to [Session 4: Women and the World Cup](#) Session 4

Session 4: Women and the World Cup

Introduction

'The Future is Feminine' – Sepp Blatter, then General Secretary of FIFA in 1995 (Williams, 2006)



So far in this course you have predominantly explored how politics has impacted and influenced the men's World Cup. However, political themes have also permeated through the women's tournament since its inception in 1991.

Within this session you will examine the women's game, addressing a brief history of women's football, their fandom at World Cup events and exploring how women's football tends to be more politically charged than men's football.

1 A brief outline of women's football origins

Figure 1 Scottish XI V Dick, Kerr Ladies, 1921

A great deal has been written about the history of women's football (see the likes of Williams, 2007; Williams, 2013; Kryger *et al.*, 2021). Here you'll take a very brief journey through the earlier developments in the sport. From the very start of organised football, the women's game has been organised at national and international level in parallel but often entirely separately to men's football (Dunn, 2016). As you will discover, the history of women's football is both lengthy and complex.

In the next activity you will learn about the origins of women's football in the UK, as well as how the sport was impacted in the aftermath of the First World War.

Activity 1 An early stumbling block in the development of the women's game

 Allow approximately 20 minutes

This activity is in two parts, based on a video and then an audio.

1. Watch the video clip and consider how might the English FA's ban on women's football in 1921 have been political?

History Of Women's Football

2. Listen to the conversation between Steph Doehler (course author) and Dr Carrie Dunn (sports journalist and scholar). Identify key moments and periods from the 1920s to the 1970s in the development of women's football.

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 1 Steph Doehler and Carrie Dunn on the development of women's football

Provide your answer...

Discussion

1. While the FA didn't actually ban women's football, their action to ban women's use of its affiliated grounds did, effectively, put a stop to the game's development. It could be argued that this in itself was a deeply political move from the FA who cited strong opinions about football's unsuitability for females. It called on clubs belonging to the associations 'to refuse the use of their

grounds for such matches' (Jenkel, 2020). Suggestions could be made that the FA feared the popularity of the women's game threatened to surpass that of the men's. Furthermore, questions relating to gender and its socio-political importance were already matters of contention in the early twentieth century. For example, women over 21 were only given the same terms to vote as men in 1928 in the UK. Thus, the FA's move could be considered a method of re-establishing social and political order. If you take a moment to think back to Session 1, where political themes were outlined, two notable areas are present here: power relations and conflict. The FA held the power to stop women's progress because they monopolised resources within sport, and conflict arose through these power dynamics.

2. Dunn outlines that despite the FA ban in 1921, women still played football in the interim years before the ban was lifted in 1971, with the 1960s playing a pivotal role in the development process following England's victory at the 1966 men's World Cup. Interest in women's football increased and while a women's World Cup didn't materialise in this decade, an unofficial international tournament took place in 1971 in Mexico in front of enormous crowds. Politics continued to play a role here though with England manager, Harry Batt, banned from football for life simply for his leadership and involvement in the women's game. Nonetheless, growing interest in the sport developed, forcing governing bodies to become increasingly engaged in women's football. It was a long and slow process full of political barriers both nationally and internationally, and it still took another 20 years until FIFA oversaw the first women's World Cup in 1991.

2 Sepp Blatter: sexist leader or godfather of the women's game?

Figure 2 Swiss women national football team coach Martina Voss-Tecklenburg, Swiss goalkeeper Antonia Albisser, FIFA President Sepp Blatter, Swiss player Nicole Remund and FIFA Head of Women's Competitions Tatjana Haenni.

It might be an understatement to suggest that former FIFA President, Sepp Blatter, is one of the more controversial figures in world football. Indeed, in the wake of the 2015 corruption scandal Blatter's reputation was severely damaged, arguably beyond repair. His history of blunders has been well documented, including the time he offered fashion advice by suggesting that women players wear tighter shorts for 'a more female aesthetic' (Christenson and Kelso, 2004).

Yet among all the controversy remains a figure who some claim shepherded the women's game into a position it might have never reached without him (Macur, 2015). Blatter, never one to hide his ego, once described himself as the 'godfather' to women's football (Wire, 2015).

Activity 2 Blatter's influence on women's football

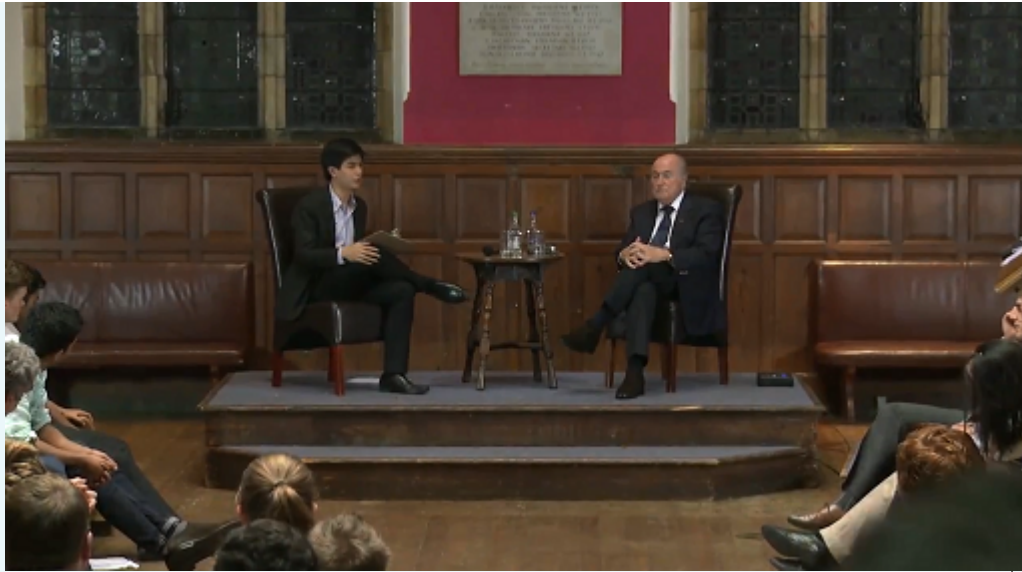
 Allow approximately 20 minutes

Watch the below video clip recorded by the Oxford Union in 2013 where Blatter gives his views on women's football, and then read the *New York Times* article by Macur (2015). Respond to the following questions:

1. Are you convinced by the claims in either source of Blatter's influence in the development of women's football?
2. What other factors might have been attributed to the growth in women's football, particularly throughout the 2010s?

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1 Sepp Blatter on women's football



To access a free version of 'A little praise for Sepp Blatter. Very little' by Juliet Macur, follow these steps:

1. Open a search engine, e.g., Google.
2. Type in 'a little praise for Sepp Blatter'
3. Select the top result from the *New York Times* website

Provide your answer...

Discussion

1. This is an interesting debate given the reputation of Blatter as 'unapologetically sexist' (Venetis, 2015). Nevertheless, it's difficult to argue that under Blatter's presidency an expansion of women's football around the globe took place. Whether he spearheaded this or, as USA star Megan Rapinoe put it, simply allowed it to grow remains up for discussion.
2. The expansion of teams competing in the 2015 World Cup (from 16 in 2011 to 24 in 2015) ensured wider coverage throughout the world. Meanwhile, there has been a growth in professional women's football as a result of greater investment. Most top domestic teams across the world are now fully professional and many countries have professional women's leagues. Growing participation internationally has translated to an improved quality of football and therefore better competitive balance (Scelles, 2021) boosting fandom and reputation. The 2019 World Cup in France generated a record-breaking number of viewers, with 1.12 billion people watching the final between the United States and Japan (FIFA, 2019).

It may be generous to suggest that Sepp Blatter is a football hero of any kind. After all, the same year he proclaimed to be the godfather of women's football, he failed to travel to Canada for the women's World Cup (Dunn, 2016).

3 Female fandom at the World Cup



In March 2022, Iranian authorities prevented female fans from entering a men's World Cup qualifying match against Lebanon. Video footage shared online showed women allegedly being pepper sprayed, despite having bought a ticket (Dollimore and Bezants, 2022). The incident came two months after Iran had permitted a limited number of women to watch Iran secure their entry into the 2022 World Cup. Admittance to stadiums had been off limits to women shortly after the Islamic Revolution in 1979 (Motamedi, 2022). Despite this alleged pepper spraying incident, football has become an increasingly popular spectator sport for females around the world.

Activity 3 How do female football fans experience World Cup tournaments?

 Allow approximately 25 minutes

Listen to the two audio clips of conversations between Steph Doehler and Dr Carrie Dunn and answer the questions.

1. Do you agree with the differences Dunn identifies regarding how fans engage in women's World Cup tournaments compared to the men's?

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 2 Steph Doehler and Carrie Dunn on fan engagement in women's football

2. Dunn conducted extensive research into fan's experiences at the 2015 women's World Cup, hosted in Canada. What political motivations did she notice in supporter's fandom at the event?

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 3 Steph Doehler and Carrie Dunn on the 2015 Women's World Cup

Provide your answer...

Discussion

1. Dunn infers that despite the move towards professionalism in women's football there is still a Corinthian, amateur mentality to the sport where she argues, players represent their nations for the love of the game, which is well received by fans. This is in contrast to what she claims is the more mercenary perception of male footballers and fewer nationalistic ties by women fans during women's World Cups, i.e., sometimes fans follow an individual or nation other than their own. Certainly the commercialism of the men's game is far more developed and with 60 years more history behind it the men's World Cup may be more nationalistic, but this is very difficult to measure and judge.
2. Dunn noted that many fans engaged with teams for non-nationalistic political reasons connected with symbolic causes. The USA was used as an example given their general ethos of speaking out about social issues, and therefore supporting them has become a way of fans saying they also support these causes.

Research suggests that the 2015 women's World Cup provided a historical moment from which the women's game was relocated in popular culture, moving away from the established dominant male standard (Black and Fielding-Lloyd, 2019). However, unlike the men's game where engagement in football remains relatively stable at different points of a World Cup cycle, women's football tends to experience peaks and troughs depending on when tournaments take place.

In the women's game the Olympics offers women further opportunity to increase their profile as, unlike the men's Olympic football tournament, it is not constrained by the U23 rule (men's squads can only have three players over 23 years of age). Therefore, the women's game has a distinct biannual rhythm of World Cup and Olympic Games tournaments which is not evident in the men's game.

4 What might make women's football potentially more political than men's?

Figure 3 The US women's national team celebrating winning the 2019 World Cup.

It could be argued that women's football is inherently more political than the men's game for several reasons.

A personification of how politics imbues a women's football team is evident in the modern US women's national team, more commonly known as USWNT. Over recent years, there have been several instances of politics impacting the American national side to varying levels of controversy. In 2019, the USWNT won their fourth World Cup title (previous wins being in 1991, 1999 and 2015). However, the story of their 2019 tournament success often centred on politicalised rhetoric rather than their victory.

Activity 4 Politics and the USWNT

 Allow approximately 20 minutes

Watch the video from *The Washington Post* and then read the article by Drew Weisholtz. Identify two or more examples of how this case provides instances where politics was present in a manner we don't tend to see as frequently within the men's game.

[How the US Women's World Cup win became political](#)

[Megan Rapinoe explains why she's not participating in national anthem](#) by Drew Weisholtz.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Here are some comments on three examples.

- The USWNT class action lawsuit – wage discrimination is obviously far more pertinent to women's football, given that males tend to earn significantly more from their salaries and endorsements. In 2014, the men's national team received £5.19m for reaching the second-round of the World Cup in Brazil, compared to £1.29m that the women's team received when winning the 2015 competition (Banyanhub, 2015).
- Rows with political leaders – given the USWNT's position of speaking out over societal issues it is perhaps not surprising that captain Megan Rapinoe became embroiled in a row with divisive then US President, Donald Trump. During men's World Cups we rarely witness players taking combative stances against political leaders of either their own nations or others. Though we did see members of the English men's national team challenging government officials over the criticism they faced for taking the knee prior to fixtures at Euro 2020.
- National anthem protests – this one is not so clear cut as different between the men's and women's World Cups. This form of protest has been common in American sport since 2016, yet has occurred less frequently across the rest of the world. While many support players raising awareness of political issues,

others feel protests during anthems disrespects national flags and patriotism. Similar themes occurred during the 2020 Tokyo Olympics (held in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic) with one sportswriter claiming 'When it comes to political and social demonstrations ... 2021 is the year of women' (Planas, 2021). Women's football teams who knelt during Tokyo 2020 included USA, Sweden, Chile, Great Britain and New Zealand.

Within this section you have seen perhaps what makes women's football more political than men's. However, why might this difference exist? Reasons may include the decades of discrimination women have faced, and feminist culture which resists such discrimination. There is one more possible factor which there is not space to explore in this session. The sexuality of female players in some nations is far more open compared to male footballers i.e., they are able to openly express same-sex relationships while men do not yet. Gender related and other socio-political issues are arguably part of women's experience which is perhaps why these are more visible in the women's game.

5 Women's World Cup inequalities: discrimination or just commercial reality?

In 2019 FIFA launched their new Women's Football Strategy, which intended to overcome historical and ongoing challenges around institutional neglect and lack of investment, with FIFA themselves recognising that women's football is in 'both rude health and in the need of fundamental change' (FIFA, 2019). One of their pledges is to raise the profile of the World Cup and use it as a driving force for the development of women's football.

Despite this, following the 2019 women's World Cup FIFA still faced criticism. One such example included this type of comment: 'This was a tournament that often felt as if it was happening despite FIFA and not because of it. Playing catch-up at your own event is an odd choice – but I guess that's FIFA politics for you' (Hyde, 2019).

Divergent opinions on the prestige of women's football, particularly in relation to the World Cup, regularly focus on the inequalities relating to the finances of the game. FIFA's prize money for the 2022 men's World Cup is \$440m, while at the 2023 women's tournament it stands at \$60m (Lutz, 2022). This begs the question: are these inequalities actual discrimination or simply a commercial reality of a sport which doesn't generate as much income as their male counterparts? This is a discussion which draws on arguments around both gender equality and the finances involved in World Cup tournaments. In the activity below you will explore this further.

Activity 5 A place for gender parity in World Cup tournaments?

 Allow approximately 20 minutes

The purpose of this activity is to help you begin to draw your own conclusions about this issue. Read the article below and answer the following questions:

1. What examples of gender inequality does the author present relating to women's football?
2. Taking into consideration FIFA's mission to: 'Develop the Game, Touch the World, Build a Better Future', do you believe the author offers a compelling reason for increased gender parity within World Cup tournaments, and what makes you feel this way?

[I thought the main issue in women's sports was equal pay. I was wrong](#) by Anya Alvarez in *The Guardian* (2019).

Provide your answer...

Discussion

1. Alvarez claims limited marketing and promotion of events in comparison to men's football is used as a means to explain why women's competitions don't generate the same level of attention of men. While she cites differences between rewards for the USA men's and women's teams at the men's 2014 and women's 2015 World Cups, statistics alone don't always tell a full story. It is indisputable that the men's World Cup generates significantly more revenue than the women's tournaments and, as such, debates around money in the sport often focus on this revenue generation argument.

2. Based on what you have read, you might support Alvarez in her suggestion that FIFA, and other sports authorities, should be spending more money on the promotion of women's sport. Conversely, given the revenue generation argument it remains inevitable that FIFA would strongly fund men's football. The men's World Cup has flourished financially as a result of FIFA's aggressive marketing and investment in it over several decades. Meanwhile, the women's tournament is only a little over two decades old and FIFA has taken a more cautious and uncommitted approach. Considering FIFA's mission is an important element of this discussion. Considering FIFA's mission to grow football globally the benchmarks of their success, in theory, should perhaps be focused on getting more people playing, watching and caring about football. Some may view growing the women's game is a far easier proposition than an already popular men's game.

While there are some clear disparities between the men's and women's World Cups (and men's/women's football more generally) there have been some small steps taken which positively impacts women involved in the sport. Qatar 2022 will make history as the first men's World Cup to have female referees in charge of matches. While in May 2022, US Soccer announced that its US men's and women's teams will share prize money from their respective World Cups. While not focused on the World Cup, England women's European Championship victory in 2022 saw several records broken – their final against Germany became the highest ever attended women's international match, and it also filled more seats than any other women's or men's European final.

6 Summary of Session 4

Having completed the fourth session you should have a better understanding around some of the challenges and tensions faced within women's football – whether as a player, supporter or those governing and organising the sport. The main learning points are:

- The history of women's football is both lengthy and complex, with several political themes permeating through the development of sport.
- Women's football is, arguably, more political than men's football, best exemplified by the USWNT.
- A range of inequalities exist in women's football, compared to men's. Though questions remain over whether this is direct discrimination.

As with the previous sessions, we would really appreciate you answering a couple of quick questions relating to Session 4.

1. How much did you enjoy Session 4?

Interactive content is not available in this format.



2. Which of the following statements best applies about the knowledge you gathered by completing this session on women and the World Cup?

Interactive content is not available in this format.



You are going to complete this course with an intriguing final session that pulls all your learning together. It considers your perspective of what have been the most political matches in World Cup history.

When you are ready, go to . [Session 5: Notable politically infused World Cup matches](#)
Session 5

Session 5: Notable politically infused World Cup matches

Introduction

‘It’s very clear that politics should stay out of football and football should stay out of politics’ – FIFA President Gianni Infantino in 2018 (Hyde, 2019)



Several matches within World Cup history offer clear examples of where sport and politics collide despite what FIFA President Gianni Infantino says. Paradoxically, his words are from a press conference in Iran, following the nation’s diplomatic rift with Saudi Arabia. This session will pull together themes from throughout the course to show how the World Cup often reflects some of the current and historical political issues at play during matches.

Through the session you will be drawing on what was explored in Session 1 about how sport can be political to help explain current and historical issues, often viewed as national rivalries during individual matches. You will see through the session how different rivalries in World Cup matches illustrate how they are often politically infused. It helps illustrate how sport and the World Cup is political and provides a neat end to the course.

Admittedly, the match examples that have been selected are a ‘convenience sample’: they are ones about which there has been considerable popular and academic debate. Before you delve into the selected matches, explore the short list in the next section and what made them political.

1 How are rivalries influenced by political themes?

Figure 1 England v West Germany lining up in the 1966 World Cup.

‘Rivalry’, ‘derby’, ‘conflict’, ‘confrontation’, ‘clash’ and ‘enmity’ are words that characterise the spirit of any sporting competition and contest (Bandyopadhyay, 2018). Take a moment to consider an enduring sporting rivalry that means something to you. This may well stem from the team/athlete you support or even through your own competitive experiences in sport.

Sporting rivalries can be broadly divided into the following categories as outlined below.

Table 1 Four main types of political rivalries in sport

Type of rivalry	Example within football
Geographic competition neighbours	Brazil vs Argentina – occupying close geographical locations
Colonial	Portugal vs Brazil – as coloniser vs colonised nations
Ideological	USA vs China – democratic capitalist vs authoritarian communist nations
Former wartime conflict	England vs Germany – following two twentieth century world wars

Most of these rivalries are underpinned by political aspects as nations compete away from the football pitch for influence. For example, when England plays Germany the match can be deemed ‘political’ due to links between some of the six themes from Session 1: power relations, nationalism and identity, inclusion or segregation, activism, conflict, commercialisation. Conflict is the most obvious theme evident in the rivalry as a result of the two world wars, and nationalistic sentiment infuses through narrative around the fixture, particularly from the English. Before progressing to the next section, can you identify any political themes evident in the other examples presented within Table 1?

2 'Political' World Cup matches: what's your view?

Figure 2 Italy v Chile, 1962 World Cup.

Listed below are several examples where politics and rivalries have intersected and played into World Cup matches, including qualifiers. This is not an exhaustive list of so-called 'political' matches. Perhaps you can think of others. If you aren't familiar with some of these examples, why not have a quick read about them before you move onto the next activity.

1. Italy vs France (1938 men's quarter-final) – authoritarian fascism's clash with a democracy.
2. Honduras vs El Salvador (1970 men's qualifier) – neighbourly rivalry culminating in the Hundred Hours' War conflict.
3. West Germany vs East Germany (1974 men's group stage) – neighbourly and ideological rivalry formed in the aftermath of the Second World War and re-entry into international football in the 1950s.
4. Argentina vs Peru (1978 men's second-round group stage) – non-rivalry but instead: neighbourly collusion in claimed match fixing.
5. England vs Argentina (1986 men's quarter-final) – wartime conflict fixture four years after the Falklands War.
6. United States vs Iran (1998 men's group stage) – ideological rivalry forged in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution (1978–79), including Iranian hostage-taking crisis (1979–81).
7. United States vs China PR (1999 women's final) – ideological rivalry of capitalism vs authoritarian communism.

Activity 1 Examples of political World Cup matches

 Allow approximately 5 minutes

Which one of these matches is, for you, the most appropriate example of a political World Cup match?

Interactive content is not available in this format.



Discussion

All these examples have been suggested by a range of sources as being politically infused. The space within this course doesn't allow you to explore each of these in detail, so the last three (i.e., 5, 6 and 7) have been selected to be explored within this session. In making this selection, there are varied examples from both the men's and women's World Cup.

Now get going with the first example, which is often quoted as being one of the most political matches in World Cup history, and from which the shirt of the leading protagonist was sold for £7.1m in 2022.

3 England vs Argentina: the good, the bad and the ugly

England vs Argentina (1986 men's quarter-final)

The background:

This match is remembered for 'the good' (a sublime goal from Maradona), 'the bad' (an obvious handball by the same player) and 'the ugly' (context of a recent war). If you think back to the categorisation of rivalries in the previous section, the following could be relevant here:

- Former wartime conflict – the Falklands conflict in 1982 between Argentina and Britain added fuel to a long-standing rivalry and was symbolically re-enacted within this tie.
- Ideological rivalry – less so in the typical sense of ideologies centred around nation's ways of living as Argentina were no longer ruled by the military dictatorship introduced within Session 2, but more from the perspective of footballing ideologies. As the Argentinian style of creole football evolved (one that was restless, individualistic and skilful) the English suggested that Argentina struggled to play football with moral values (Rock, 2008), emphasised by their own style of being disciplined, methodical and physically powerful.
- Colonial (an observation) – England did not colonise Argentina, but English merchants and seamen did bring the game to the country. So, there is a historic backdrop and cultural resonance of Argentina enjoying playing and establishing superiority over the English (linked to playing styles).

The match:

Argentina secured a 2-1 victory over England with two contrasting, yet equally famous, goals from Maradona. His goals are claimed to have characterised Argentina – gifted, but susceptible to trickery and deception if needed; the perfect embodiment of fútbol criollo [creole] (Sibaja and Parrish, 2014). The first, the notorious 'hand of God' saw the diminutive striker outjump goalkeeper Peter Shilton, fisting the ball into the back of the net. Replays showed an obvious handball but the referee saw no infraction and the goal stood. Minutes later, Maradona picked up the ball in his own half and dribbled past every white shirt that approached him, before calmly slotting the ball beyond a helpless Shilton. A late consolation goal for England did little to suppress Argentina's celebrations.

Activity 2 Political meaning from an Argentinian perspective

 Allow approximately 20 minutes

Much of what you might have previously read about this fixture probably comes from the English perspective. However, let's explore how politics were involved in this match from an Argentinean standpoint. Watch the video below and answer the following question:

- Using the six political aspects of sport from Session 1 (power relations, nationalism and identity, inclusion or segregation, activism, conflict and commercialisation), identify the meaning of this match to Argentinians.

[Argentina v England: the socio-political rivalry](#)

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You might have considered the following aspects to be prevalent:

- Nationalism – this undoubtedly reinforced Argentinian nationalism in the shadow of defeat in conflict. Maradona later wrote in his autobiography: 'More than defeating a football team, it was defeating a country' (Maradona, 2004, p. 127).
- Identity – the symbolism of beating the English to strengthen the Argentinian footballing identity is clear.
- Conflict – victory came at a time when Argentina was still hurting from its defeat in the Falklands where they lost 649 military personnel, while there were also 255 deaths among the British forces (Grice and Brown, 2022).

You will notice crossover here. That is because rarely do the political themes permeate in isolation. Instead, they tend to touch on a range of interlinking thoughts and perceptions.

The aftermath:

Argentina went on to win their second World Cup title, beating West Germany in the final. The match itself has been widely considered the most controversial game in World Cup history and Maradona's second goal was since voted Goal of the Century in a FIFA poll (FIFA, 2018).

4 USA vs Iran: grandiose claims of the most politicised World Cup match?

United States vs Iran (1998 men's group stage)

The background:

Since the Iranian Revolution (1979), and the subsequent fall of US-backed Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlevi, tensions between the nations had become increasingly hostile. Later in 1979 Iranian militants stormed the US embassy in Tehran, holding over 60 American citizens hostage. The stand-off lasted 444 days and the US severed all diplomatic ties with Iran. 'The mother of all games', is how the president of the US Soccer Federation described the moment that USA and Iran were drawn together in the group stage of France 98 (Billingham, 2022). 'We're not going to let politics play a part in this', said then US head coach Steve Sampson in the lead-up to the match (Galarcep, 2018). Iran, on the other hand, were less implicit in their political subtext: 'We will not lose. Many families of martyrs are expecting us to win', claimed striker Khodadad Azizi (O'Callaghan, 2018).

The match:

The fixture itself provided FIFA with a potentially red-hot political situation which would necessitate careful handling. One issue required immediate attention. Iran was designated 'Team B', meaning that according to FIFA regulations they should walk towards their opponents for the pre-match handshakes, but Iran's Supreme Leader Khamenei instructed that the Iranian players must not walk towards the Americans, presumably to avoid a perceived symbolic, submissive action to their opponents. Iran went on to secure a 2-1 win, their first victory at a World Cup tournament.

Activity 3 A different kind of 'political' match

 Allow approximately 15 minutes

Watch the video below and answer the two questions:

1. How does this fixture differ compared to how people perceive other kinds of 'political' matches?
2. What political themes might be evident here? (Just in case you forgot, here are the categories: power relations, nationalism and identity, inclusion or segregation, activism, conflict and commercialisation).

[Breaking barriers: United States v Iran 1998](#)

Provide your answer...

Discussion

1. When some people refer to political matches, the description often signifies how politics causes heightened tension between nations competing in sporting events. Yet, despite pre-match concerns, football brought the two countries together on this occasion. Players showcased gestures of respect, standing shoulder to shoulder before kick-off. Iran presented the US with a bouquet of white flowers as a symbol of peace. Displays of sportsmanship showed

players, staff and spectators how much they had in common and how the game of football bonded them together. After the game, US's Jeff Agoos remarked 'We did more in 90 minutes than the politicians did in 20 years' (O'Callaghan, 2018).

2. While previous tensions instigated a rivalry between the nations, it could be suggested that themes of power relations and nationalism were present here – certainly from the Iranian officials who didn't want to be seen as inferior to their American counterparts.

The aftermath:

Eighteen months later the two teams played each other again in a friendly in California. Iranian-born Mehrdad Masoudi, FIFA's media officer for the match, suggested that the friendly would not have taken place had the World Cup fixture not been a success (Billingham, 2022). Nonetheless, tensions between the two nations re-emerged in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attack.

When drawn together in the group stage of the 2022 men's World Cup, both national team coaches sidestepped the political resonance, saying they were focused on the tournament and its ability to bring people together (Harris, 2022).

5 USA vs China PR: an iconic image emerges

United States vs China PR (1999 women's final)

The background:

The original plan had been for the third women's World Cup to be hosted in a selection of considerably smaller grounds across the US's east coast, but the US's Olympic victory three years earlier generated serious interest in the sport (FIFA, 2019). The event organising committee saw clear value in the commercial aspect of the tournament and sought to capitalise on this by securing several larger stadiums to house the matches (Longman, 1999). This was an interesting development considering how FIFA had previously displayed limited interest in the women's tournament, only retrospectively awarding the 1991 tournament World Cup status after it was originally called 'The FIFA Women's World Championship for The M&Ms Cup' (Glendenning, 2019a), due to Mars' (maker of M&M confectionary) sponsorship of the competition.

The 1999 final came just weeks after a US-led NATO bombing on the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, killing three Chinese journalists and injuring a further twenty people, sparking anti-US demonstrations across China. Despite the US government's claim that the attack was an accident, US-China tensions escalated.

The match:

90,185 spectators, including President Clinton, attended the World Cup final. The match ended in a 5-4 penalty shootout victory for the home nation. In the six seconds it took for her jubilant teammates to sprint from the halfway line to swarm her, Brandi Chastain found the time to remove her shirt and swing it about her head in triumph. In her black sports bra, Chastain sank to her knees and raised both fists in triumph. The match and the iconic image of Chastain's celebration placed women's football firmly into the public's consciousness.

Figure 3 Brandi Chastain celebrating.

The aftermath: The match has since been considered a defining moment in the history of women's sport (Brownell, 2015). FIFA later called the action of the US organisers to switch matches to larger stadia a 'gamble that paid off' (FIFA, 2019).

Activity 4 A breakthrough in the women's game

 Allow approximately 15 minutes

Watch the video clip below and identify how the 1999 World Cup provided a breakthrough for the women's game. Try to consider this from a political perspective in terms of status and power.

[1999 women's World Cup: A breakthrough in the women's game](#)

Provide your answer...

Discussion

The 1999 World Cup epitomised the growing reach of women's football since the first World Cup eight years previously; though, as outlined in Session 4, this is not to suggest that developments in women's football were quick and straightforward. The clip might be a little generous in suggesting that the superstar status of the likes of Mia Hamm meant that following 1999 women's football had stars to rival the men's

game. However, it did ensure that females around the world suddenly had new role models. The Chinese team returned home as heroes but their success in reaching the final has not been repeated. However, China's national sporting profile soared in the aftermath with a successful Beijing's 2008 Olympic bid, as well as hosting rights for the 2003 women's World Cup (awarded but later moved to USA following a severe SARS outbreak).

Chastain's celebration has been claimed as the 'most iconic photograph ever taken of a female athlete' (Longman, 2019). While China PR forward Sun Wen, recipient of both the tournament's Golden Ball and Golden Boot trophies, later said: 'We lost by a penalty kick but I think the result of the match is not important anymore. What's important was that we pushed women's football to a higher level. For me as a footballer it was a very proud moment in my life' (FIFA, 2020).

Although it would be disingenuous to suggest that this fixture alone put women's football on the map, especially considering 76,489 fans attended the Olympic gold medal match between the same countries three years earlier, it certainly marked the dawn of a new era for the sport, with an estimated 40 million people watching on TV in the US (Glendenning, 2019b).

From a political relations standpoint, President Clinton wrote to Chinese Premier Jiang Zemin following the match to express congratulations for such a spectacle. Jiang, who refused communication from Clinton following the embassy bombing, quickly responded praising the sportsmanship and friendship of the American women, and thus China-US relations returned to equilibrium (Brownell, 2015).

6 Summary of Session 5

Having completed the fifth and final session you should now understand specific examples of how politics intertwined with various matches throughout the tournament's history, as well as how specific rivalries can play into these politically charged fixtures.

To take your learning further, you could go back to the start of this session to explore the other games mentioned within Section 2. Can you identify the aspects of politics involved in them?

As with the previous sessions, we would really appreciate you answering a couple of quick questions relating to Session 5.

1. How much did you enjoy Session 5?

Interactive content is not available in this format.



2. Which of the following statements best applies about the knowledge you gathered by completing this session on politically infused World Cup matches?

Interactive content is not available in this format.



7 Bringing things together

Congratulations and well done for reaching this point! By now you hopefully will have been informed, challenged, and inspired to consider more carefully the relationship between sport and politics through the contextual backdrop of football and World Cup events. As you watch future World Cup events (or indeed, sport as a whole), see if you can notice more examples of how the two entities interlink with one another.

There is an understandable perception that when sport and politics collide it creates a negative impact yet, as highlighted in some of the examples explored within Session 5, it also has the ability to bring nations together or help develop the sport itself.

Sport is an immensely symbolic cultural aspect of the contemporary world and there are fewer higher-profile, global, public stages than the football World Cup. The tournament exists as part of a political economy with political implications domestically, internationally and diplomatically and, as such, will continue to be representative of both the politics involved within FIFA, and the wider political aspects of public life.

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