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One World, One Event

It is the most-watched sporting event in the world. Billions of people tune in. Games air in every country. Fans cheer on every continent. This is the World Cup. It is the ultimate soccer championship.



The numbers are impressive. Over 3 billion fans watched in 2010. This was nearly half of all people on Earth. The same thing happened in 2014. A record was set in 2018. That year there were more online viewers than ever before. Over 1 billion people streamed clips.



FAST FACT: People even watch the World Cup in space. In 2018, astronauts streamed games from the International Space Station.





Why do so many watch? The answer may be the appeal of soccer itself. It is the world's most popular sport. Both men and women play. The rules are easy to understand. Each team wants to score goals. Players mostly use their feet. They cannot use their hands. These are the main ideas.

People may speak different languages. Still, they can share a love of soccer. Some call it a **universal** language. No other sport has spread so easily around the globe.

PLANET SOCCER

A group wanted to find out how many people played soccer. It counted players from around the world. There were about 265 million in 2006. That was 4 percent of the world population at the time. There are reasons the sport is so popular. Soccer does not require special equipment. All players need is a ball to kick. They can play anywhere, in any weather. Players can be any size too. It is their agility that matters.



CHAPTER

2

The First World Cup

Americans would say the World Cup is for “soccer.” But that is not the sport’s official name. The true name is association football. Most of the rest of the world calls it “football.”



The sport started in England in the 1800s. Boys played at school. Over time, its popularity grew. British people traveled around the globe. They took soccer with them. It spread to new places. By 1900, much of the world loved the game.

SOCCER OR FOOTBALL?

England's Football Association formed in 1863. It made official rules for the sport. At that time, there were two types of football. One was rugby football. The other was association football. Each type had a nickname. Rugby football was called "rugger." Association football was called "assoccer." This got shortened to "soccer." Association football spread to the U.S. However, Americans already played a sport they called football. This was the version played by the NFL today. Americans called association football by its nickname, "soccer," to avoid confusion.



Glossary

bias: a tendency to take one side over another, even if it is unfair

bribe: a gift given to a person in exchange for doing something illegal or dishonest

crisis: a difficult situation

dominate: to be the best at something

foul: an action that breaks the rules in a game

generation: a group of people born and living during the same time

host: a place that provides everything needed for an event

legend: a person famous for doing something well

match: a game or contest

penalty: a punishment given for breaking a rule

predict: to say what will happen in the future