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PRETTY
POLY

THE HISTORY OF
THE
FOOTBALL
SHIRT

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The Shirt

LIKE ANY other institution, football does not exist in a vacuum. It has always been strongly influenced by the economic, political and technological state of the wider world and this extends to developments in the humble football shirt. In this context, it is important to remember that organised football as we know it is a modern invention at a little over 150 years old. Association football was only formally codified for the first time in 1848 with the more widely accepted 'Sheffield rules' being written in 1858. The world's first football club, Sheffield FC, had been formed the previous year, and in England the Football Association (1863), FA Cup (1871), international football (1872), legalisation of professionalism (1885) and the Football League (1888) all emerged within just 30 years. As you will see throughout the book, key developments in shirt design resulted from these rapid changes in football itself or commonly in response to events in the wider world. These varied from the advent of legalised football professionalism to the invention of television and even the passing of the UK's Copyright Act in 1968.

As kit was not considered an important part of football in the early days of the sport, few direct contemporary references

are available whereas in later years items like league handbooks provide robust evidence. Researchers are dependent on evidence such as match reports from newspapers, manufacturer and retailer catalogues, and black and white photography, the latter making aspects such as shirt colours hard to define. Dave Moor is a kit expert who founded and runs the Historical Football Kits website, maintained by an army of amateur researchers. The site tracks the history of football shirts, with a primary focus on British club and international sides. Dave described the early evolution of the football shirt. Initially, there were no team kits and players would use a cap or sash to mark out one team from another. Players would wear whatever garment they had to hand, with cricket whites commonly being worn as regular players sought a winter sport. As uniform kits began to emerge in the 1870s, they were initially the preserve of teams of players from wealthier backgrounds due to the cost of paying a tailor to construct a custom garment. The shirts would be made by independent manufacturers, meaning there was substantial variation evident even within teams.

The National Football Museum regularly displays a jersey worn by Arnold Kirke Smith of Oxford University in football's first international match, England v Scotland in 1872. Casting aside its place as one of the most precious relics of the game, what strikes the viewer is how ordinary the garment is. Save for the embroidered three lions crest, the woollen shirt with its low-profile collar and thick cuffs looks like winter underwear rather than an artefact at the heart of the game's birth. In several early England internationals, including the team's first meeting with

Wales in 1879, the players wore their own club jerseys. Press criticism of the players' mismatched outfits in that game was the catalyst for the FA's decision to finally supply players with standard shirts later that year.

The codified game of association football grew initially from public schools. University and workplace teams founded and populated by graduates from these institutions dominated the early club competitions. However, the game quickly spread to the wider population, evidenced by Blackburn Olympic's FA Cup win in 1883. This working-class side, composed largely of northern factory workers, was very different to the wealthy Home Counties amateur teams that had captured the first 11 FA Cups. In particular, the club provided jobs for players and offered additional payments to supplement their income. While the newer northern clubs swiftly pushed for legalisation of professionalism, the FA initially resisted the move away from the amateur ideal.

This would become a recurring theme as football associations across the globe continued to show a conservative attitude to changes in the game. It was only when a group of around 30 clubs including Aston Villa, Preston North End and Newton Heath (later to become Manchester United) formed a breakaway British Football Association that the FA relented. The advent of legalised professionalism in 1885 led to unified team kits as clubs began to provide equipment for their players. Being mindful of their costs, they would often pick simple, cheaper designs. 'I find the social history of this topic fascinating,' said Dave Moor. 'To see how the game developed from its roots in

the public schools and became taken up by the working classes and the impact that had on aspects like the design of football kits was significant.’

The emerging market for team sportswear was served by new firms such as Bukta in 1879, meaning that mass-produced outfits were available for the first time. Shirts were commonly sold by the dozen, and available in a variety of fabrics. Flannel or worsted wool knit was a common option available in different grades, with more expensive cashmere shirts also available although these could cost 50 per cent more than the basic versions.

At this point, it is appropriate to highlight the pioneering role that British football played in development of the game. The move to overt professionalism was decades ahead of other leading modern football nations such as Italy and Spain (1926), France (1932), Argentina (1931), Brazil (1933) and West Germany (1963). In many cases, development of the game in these countries was led by British immigrants across the social strata. The British FAs retained this sense of superiority even when other nations had developed beyond them. This may explain why the association and teams were slow to adopt later innovations in areas such as shirt sponsorship.

While trends in shirt colours changed over the following decades as described in ‘The Colour’ later in this book, there was little innovation in the basic design over that period. The shirt was a purely functional garment used to clothe the player, and from 1891 to identify their team as club colours were mandated by the Football League. The concept of performance design was

still a long way off, as players trudged round in heavy, ankle-high leather boots whose primary purpose was protection.

This is not to denigrate the physical ability of the early players presented unsmiling in unfamiliar outfits in Victorian team photos. Footage from the Mitchell and Kenyon collection recorded at the turn of the 20th century shows a dynamism that is surprising given that their outfits appear better suited to the factory floor than the football pitch. While the videos betray some tactical and technical naivety, clips of mazy dribbles, rifled shots, and crunching tackles show no lack of physical talent. The frantic appeals to the referee seemingly over each decision would also be very familiar to the modern fan. There was little commercial impetus to adapt shirts in the absence of a replica shirt industry, and the concept of a 'brand identity' was not developed. Therefore, in the absence of a strong motive for innovation, changes were largely confined to minor design tweaks. For example, around the turn of the 20th century laced collars became popular in England, only being replaced by the familiar rugby-style collar in the 1930s.

In addition to the development of the men's game, women's football was also growing in the UK with the first international match played between Scotland and England in May 1881. A replay of the match later that month attracted over 5,000 fans, and the inaugural fixture of one of the first women's club sides, British Ladies' Football Club, took place in front of a crowd of over 10,000 spectators in 1895. As in many areas, the development of shirts for female football players has received a lot less attention than those of the men.

Professor Jean Williams, an expert in the history of football and the women's game, detailed the development of shirts for female players from the Victorian period onwards. The Rational Dress movement of the middle and late Victorian era promoted simpler, more comfortable and functional clothing like split skirts, bloomers or pyjama trousers as part of a move towards sex equality. Although these developments were not widely adopted in everyday clothing until after the First World War, they did take hold in women's football. Looking at pictures of British Ladies' Football Club founded by the pioneering Nettie Honeyball, the players wear football boots, shin pads, bloomers and baggy shirts. 'That was a little bit different to what was happening with rational dress in different contexts,' explained Professor Williams. 'For example, women who would wear it to cycle in the street were sometimes attacked for being seen in public.' In contrast, this very male silhouette became established as women's footballing 'uniform'.

The popularity of women's football in England increased dramatically during the First World War, as women replaced the men who had gone to the frontline. This was in the workplace as they were recruited as police and fire officers, transport conductors and particularly munitions factory workers, but also to replace the entertainment of men's football. This would mean that in many workplaces, much simpler, more 'male' items such as trousers and suits were worn for performance and safety. This led into football as women's teams began to wear coloured jerseys in similar styles to those of the men, complemented now by shorts and stockings making the two sexes almost

indistinguishable. Threatened by the popularity of the women's game, the Football League pressured the Football Association to ban it. This was put in place in 1921, when women were prevented from playing football at any Football Association-affiliated club or facilities until 1969.

The FA considered football unsuitable for women, despite their demonstrated ability to complete a full week's factory work in place of men before playing at the weekend. Many of the wartime matches played by women had raised large sums of money for charities including for injured servicemen. After the war, the type of causes expanded to include support for the families of striking miners. It has been suggested by some historians that this move to support working-class people may have contributed to government pressure to implement a ban. Despite the ban, some large organisations including retailer Marks & Spencer organised women's work teams from the 1930s – these teams would play in simple men's kits. Thereafter, women participating in amateur leagues and competitions would adopt the fit and design of the men's team shirts due to a lack of alternatives.

At the start of the 1950s, football shirts were largely indistinguishable from those worn at the turn of the century. However, a series of technological, political and social changes inside and outside the game would lead to substantial changes in the following decade. The first innovation was floodlighting and evening matches. While floodlit matches date back to 1878, they were limited by the reliability of batteries and generators. Arsenal manager Herbert Chapman had permanent lights

installed at Highbury in the 1930s, but the FA initially refused to sanction their use during Football League and FA Cup matches. The advent of the National Grid in 1938 improved convenience and reliability, and Southampton became the first club to install floodlights, in 1950, although the primitive systems were only partially effective.

To improve visibility, Manchester United and Wolverhampton Wanderers pioneered the use of reflective kits made from artificial materials like rayon. Kits had previously been made from natural fabrics such as wool and latterly cotton, Umbro's Peruvian pima cotton 'Tangeru' fabric being an early example of technology branding when introduced in the 1930s. The new fabrics came to the fore in the 1953 'Stanley Matthews' FA Cup Final played under natural light, as Bolton Wanderers dazzled in a brilliant white Umbro rayon jersey. As the number of floodlit friendly matches increased, the FA eventually relented and the first nighttime England match (November 1955) and Football League game (February 1956) took place soon after. Unfortunately, the rayon shirts were less of a success with players, and the uncomfortable, sweat-retaining garments were phased out by the end of the decade.

The early growth of the game in the UK meant that matches were played in the cold British winter, reflected in the heavy, long-sleeved, collared shirts worn with a third of the garment being tucked into the shorts. The foundation of national leagues in Spain, Italy and France as well as the advent of international tournaments such as the Copa América (1916) and World Cup (1930) saw the development of the professional game in

warmer climates and different cultures across the globe. As such, innovation increased as did the means by which new technologies and trends could be adopted by other teams.

Brazil, Cuba, the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) and Germany were the first World Cup sides to wear short-sleeved shirts, in 1938. Having finally adopted short sleeves in 1949, England were humbled in a 6-3 loss to Hungary in 1953 – their first defeat at Wembley. Like their tactics and technical ability, the visitors' lightweight shirt and deep V-neck (a style also worn by the likes of Uruguay and Real Madrid) seemed light years ahead of that of their opponents. Inspired by this, Umbro released a new 'Continental' style in 1954 which may be considered their first performance-focused design. Worn initially by England, it was then enthusiastically adopted by teams in the Football League and abroad.

Another innovation which has since dominated the development of football shirts is television. While live matches were broadcast in several countries in the 1930s, the limitations of transmission technology and the relatively low ownership of television sets meant that initial interest was low. However, both improved from the 1950s and live broadcasts of the 1954 and 1958 World Cups and the new European Cup from 1955 allowed fans to see foreign sides in action for the first time. While the commercial value of this exposure was yet to be realised, dominant sides such as Real Madrid and Brazil began to grow a global fanbase. Real's long-sleeved, crew-necked jersey was subtly marketed by Umbro as the 'Real' style and adopted by leading teams such as Manchester United and

Liverpool. Indeed, work led by Chris Stride from the University of Sheffield showed that 95 per cent of Football League teams wore collarless shirts by the mid-1960s up from only 20 per cent in the previous decade. The Real shirt was later more brazenly rebranded as 'Aztec' in the run-up to the 1970 World Cup in Mexico. The match between West Ham and Liverpool in 1969 was the first to be broadcast in colour, adding a new dimension to the technology, and influencing the bright colours and white shirts which would feature in the early 1970s.

The increased media exposure of football and rise of celebrity players also saw the shirt's silhouette begin to reflect prevailing fashion trends. Economic growth and the advent of rock 'n' roll and the teenager in the 1950s saw a revolution in high-street fashion, as a wider variety of less conservative clothing began to appear in the 1960s. Footballers also began to realise the commercial benefits of their increased exposure, aided in England by the abolition of the maximum weekly wage of £20 in 1961. Fulham star Johnny Haynes immediately became the first player to earn £100 per week, with Manchester United's George Best earning ten times that by 1968. The collarless fitted Real jersey matched with the sleek, simple 'mod' style of the 1960s, before broad collars made a return to the pitch and the high street in the 1970s with over 80 per cent of Football League teams sporting a collared shirt. This trend has continued to oscillate almost every decade since, and the fit of shirts has also waxed and waned in line with fashion. The skin-tight strips of the 1980s were replaced by ultra-baggy jerseys in the 1990s, as trends such as grunge and skateboarding

culture were reflected in the acres of polyester which hung off even the largest players.

The now ubiquitous polyester was one of several innovations in clothing technology which began to impact on shirt designs in the final two decades of the millennium. As described later in this book, the birth of the replica shirt industry saw bolder, club-specific designs emerge for the first time in the 1970s. This was supported by the adoption of polyester shirts in the 1980s, which replaced cotton. Some teams had earlier worn lighter nylon shirts during the warmer months in place of traditional wool or cotton shirts. New sublimated printing techniques dramatically increased the range and complexity of designs which could be incorporated into shirts. Sublimation uses solid inks which turn into gas under heat, combining with the fabric to become permanently printed into the garment. The invention of the electronic Jacquard machine in 1983 soon permitted rich patterns to be woven into the fabric of the football shirt itself, with these jacquards adding another dimension to designs.

To combat the unfamiliar heat encountered in Mexico at the 1970 World Cup, England instead looked back to a technology invented in 1888. Manchester firm Aertex's perforated fabric had been used in British Army uniforms in hot climates, and in school wear including sportswear. Aertex worked on the principle that air trapped within the material would act as a barrier against warm and cold weather. Umbro licensed the technology and incorporated it into their Airtex shirts which were worn by Sir Alf Ramsey's team. The shirts were also adopted by the Scottish national side over the following

decade, and by clubs including Liverpool, Arsenal and Rangers. Typically, the garments were worn in summer matches including competition finals and pre-season games.

Into the late 1990s, improvements in physical preparation saw the emergence of sports science and nutrition in football and the shirt was targeted in the pursuit of marginal gains. Gone were the heavy, patterned fabrics of the early part of the decade and in came the likes of Nike's Dri-Fit. Lighter than previous shirts, the material aimed to wick sweat away from the body rather than absorbing it and therefore weighing the player down. Unlike cotton, which can absorb nearly a tenth of its weight in water, polyester only absorbs less than one per cent.

However, displaying the remarkable ability of the football fan to be offended by change, this innovation came under fire from Boca Juniors fan and ex-governor of Buenos Aires, senator Antonio Cafiero. In a 1998 column in Argentina's largest newspaper, *Clarín*, he asked, 'How can we demand or implore our players to give everything on the field and soak their jersey with sweat if the jersey itself precisely prevents them from doing so? ... I want a shirt that leaves a puddle on the locker room floor. That shows, with no shame, the result of honest work and being worn out.' The Dri-Fit shirt fabric also included SPF 30 protection against the sun's UV rays as another adaptation to warmer climates.

Player shirts began to feature ventilation holes and mesh panels to increase air flow and keep players cool. Into the new millennium, several brands (notably Kappa) introduced a skin-tight shirt aimed at reducing garment weight, although that

ended up being a less flattering fit for the average fan. Indeed, at the birth of the sports science age of nutrition and fitness, norms were changing and for many players yet to adopt the new professional lifestyle these garments offered no hiding place. The shirts were made of materials like elastane, which is less breathable than polyester. However, they could stretch to several times their length before tearing, providing a closer fit and protection against shirt pulls.

American firm Nike have a long-held reputation for athlete-focused design, and they introduced several further innovations aimed at improving performance in the early 2000s. Craig Buglass and Ffion Appleton-Jones, two members of Nike's design team during this period, described some of the technologies they implemented. To help players cope with the heat in the 2002 World Cup in South Korea and Japan, the company launched dual-layer Cool Motion shirts. These were worn by the Nike-sponsored teams in the competition, although many of the United States players cut out the inner layer. 'We tried as hard as we could to convince them to take the kit [as it was] but they just wouldn't,' Buglass told ESPN in 2022. 'We were disappointed ... But if you look at any of the images [from the tournament] ... they are absolutely drenched.'

While they were successful in achieving their original aim, the shirts proved difficult for players to put on and take off, particularly when wet. This led to a couple of high-profile incidents, such as when Manchester United player Diego Forlán took off his shirt after scoring against fellow Premier League side Southampton in November 2002. Having been unable to

put it back on, the Uruguayan played on topless for another 30 seconds, even managing a successful tackle on a Southampton player. At this point the referee halted the game and – with the aid of United’s backroom staff – Forlán was helped back into his jersey. Nike also worked on the principle of ‘zero distraction’, aiming to ensure that the strip was as comfortable as possible so that players could concentrate solely on their football. To that end, the design team introduced bonded joints between the fabric segments in place of itchy sewn seams. While revolutionary and expensive at the time, bonded seams are now commonly used in player specification shirts.

As competition in the replica kit industry continued to grow, kit launches began to resemble more closely James Bond’s gadget briefings by Q. Press releases gushed with details of space-age technologies able to unleash the wearer’s innate and long-hidden potential. The fabric of Portsmouth’s 2007/08 Canterbury ‘IonX’ shirt, in which they won the FA Cup and secured their highest league finish for over 50 years, contained a negatively charged electromagnetic field claimed to increase blood flow and oxygen levels. Harnessing advances in biomechanics, Adidas’s 2010 World Cup Techfit kits were equipped with Powerweb technology, plastic bands which store and release elastic energy during movement. Throughout the decade the use of ‘wearables’ such as the Apple Watch, which tracked health-related data such as physical activity, heart rate and sleeping patterns, exploded into an industry worth over \$100bn annually. This rise was reflected in Tottenham’s 2011 deal with Under Armour, allowing them to include the firm’s E39 biometric

technology capable of recording body temperature, heart and breathing rate and of tracking players' movements.

Material features began to assume an active role, with Puma claiming that the ACTV tape introduced for Italy's 2014 World Cup shirts massaged muscles, increasing blood flow and endurance as well as stability. Even Hollywood became an inspiration, as Nike used the 3D motion capture underpinning CGI creations such as *The Lord of the Rings*' Gollum alongside body scans to identify the areas where sweat-wicking and more breathable regions were placed in player-issue shirts. More recently, Adidas's 2014 Climachill fabric contained spheres designed to cool players, made from aluminium and titanium, the same material from which the Terminator is hewn. Finally, an obsession with lightweight fabrics led to Puma's 2021 Italy ULTRAWEAVE shirt, at 72g the lightest football shirt ever and only around 40 per cent of the weight of the team's Euro 2020-winning shirt.

The arms race for technical superiority has led to changes in the fundamental laws of the game, as authorities look to keep pace with innovation. In 2002, the International Football Association Board (IFAB)'s Laws of the Game simply stated that players must wear 'a jersey or shirt'. For the 2002 Africa Cup of Nations, Puma designed a sleeveless shirt for Cameroon to reduce weight and prevent shirt-pulling. FIFA banned the kit in advance of that year's World Cup, communications director Keith Cooper stating, 'They're not shirts, they're vests.' The design also left nowhere for the tournament patches introduced for the competition to be applied. While Puma appealed and

sought alternative solutions including temporary tattoos of the tournament logos, they eventually attached loose black sleeves to comply. The revised 2003 IFAB rules pointedly included the decision that ‘jerseys must have sleeves’, while the laws were finally adapted in 2008 to state that players required ‘a jersey or shirt with sleeves’.

Puma and Cameroon continued to exploit ambiguity in the rules, with the team wearing a UniQT one-piece design for the 2004 Africa Cup of Nations. The result was criticism from the FIFA president, a £154,000 fine and a six-point World Cup qualifying-stage penalty. These were all later retracted after Puma issued a lawsuit, but the saga resulted in FIFA tightening their kit rules and insisting that countries submit their designs 12 months in advance of a tournament.

While the men’s game saw massive commercial growth and innovation in kits throughout the second half of the 20th century, this was much less evident in the women’s game. Having been forced to play in public spaces and being unable to charge spectators for nearly 50 years, the ban on women’s football in England was gradually rescinded, beginning in 1969, with the ban on use of FA-affiliated facilities ending in 1971. Initially the Women’s FA was set up like a county association and did not receive any funding, its first paid employee joining in 1981. The FA did not take over the running of the women’s national team until 1993, and initially struggled to attract suppliers, relying on designs from smaller brands such as Spall and Ribero. Gillian Coultard, the first England women’s player to 100 caps, wore an England men’s shirt which was not cut for women and was

much too big. The first women's World Cup did not take place until 1991, and in 1995 the USA team were the first team to wear a design distinct from the men's team.

The 2019 World Cup saw a revolution as most of the teams wore bespoke kits with separate designs to the men's team. Not only did the shirts feature different patterning, but they also incorporated female-specific design features requested by the players. This included a longer short sleeve to avoid exposing the whole upper arm, a wider neck to allow shirts to be put on over a ponytail and an altered fit to account for male–female differences in body shape. The US team's shirt went on to become Nike.com's best-selling single-season shirt of all time over the following year.

In 2004, the ever-progressive Sepp Blatter had offered his 'advice' to the nascent women's game, 'Let the women play in more feminine clothes like they do in volleyball. They could, for example, have tighter shorts ... Female players are pretty, if you excuse me for saying so, and they already have some different rules to men, such as playing with a lighter ball. That decision was taken to create a more female aesthetic, so why not do it in fashion?' While these comments were rightly condemned, there have been concerns that commercial considerations are shaping the development of women's kit design in a way that does not best represent the playing community.

Professor Jean Williams noted that many female footballers have adopted a hyper-feminine silhouette adopted by the likes of Mia Hamm featuring 'the ubiquitous ponytail', perhaps in part to maintain sponsor interest. Nike and Adidas have adopted

this narrow palette of femininity, using pinks, purples, flowers, and other very traditional stereotyped symbols of femininity in their designs. While this on its own is a legitimate component of femininity, its pervasiveness in current designs leaves little room for other types of female identity.

Professor Williams laments the lack of football-related iconography in women's design, in the same way that historical references appear to dominate the mood boards inspiring designers in the men's game, 'I like my shirt history, and I was a bit disappointed with some of the feminisation of design. There's long been a move to make things pink or purple if women are involved. Certain colours are very laden with symbolism and I didn't like the Euro 2022 shirts with floral patterns. They reminded me more of surfing motifs – why do we need to have flowery shirts because women are involved? I found some of the designs to be a bit predictable and not really originating from football history which is all about insignia, regalia, militarism, etc. Flowery football shirts are not for me!'

One potential contributing issue is the relatively short lifespan to date of the professional women's game. While many men's teams have over a century of uninterrupted history to call on, restrictions on women's football mean that the reservoir is much shallower. This is exacerbated by the fact that until recently women's teams shared kit designs with men and so the number of distinct kit references to draw upon is quite limited.

For so long, the long-sleeved jersey had been a characteristic feature of football, particularly in colder countries. However, Kevin Plank's Under Armour firm introduced close-fitting base

layer garments which exploded in popularity in American sports around the millennium. As with football shirt technologies, the manufacturer claims are impressive, with oxygen supply to the muscle increased and the added support allowing players to turn more quickly. Manufacturers, particularly Nike with their Pro range, started to promote the garments in football – Manchester United’s Wayne Rooney being a prominent early adopter around the time of the club’s 2008 Champions League triumph. As a result, many players opted for short sleeves with these new garments underneath. This time IFAB were quick to act, and the 2008 laws stated, ‘If undergarments are worn, the colour of the sleeve must be the same main colour as the sleeve of the jersey or shirt.’ The new garments were an irritant for kit designers, as they often impaired the effectiveness of innovations such as venting or dual-layer designs.

The issue of sleeve length caused controversy at Arsenal in 2013, where there had been a long-standing tradition of the captain and kit man choosing the team’s sleeve length. Midfielder Mathieu Flamini, a confirmed fan of short sleeves, crudely chopped the sleeves off his long-sleeved shirt for matches against Marseille and Manchester United. This caused him to receive a public dressing-down from manager Arsène Wenger and ex-player Lee Dixon, and behind closed doors he was apparently involved in a heated row with the Arsenal kit man Vic Akers. In February 2017, Theo Walcott defied the same tradition by wearing a short-sleeved shirt against the captain’s choice for a Premier League match against Hull City. Again there was uproar from fans and ex-players but this proved to be

the end for the long-held rule. Indeed, less than two weeks later Walcott retained his short-sleeved shirt when named captain for an FA Cup tie against Sutton United, although his team-mates all wore long sleeves.

The trend for short sleeves with or without base layers has become entrenched, such that by 2020 long-sleeved diehards such as Cristiano Ronaldo, Sergio Ramos, Gerard Piqué and James Rodríguez were firmly in the minority. Commercial pressures mean that many clubs now no longer offer long-sleeved shirts to players or fans. In the 2021/22 Premier League season, only Arsenal, Everton, Manchester City, Norwich City and West Ham made long-sleeved home, away and third shirts all available commercially in adult sizes. Manchester United offered a long-sleeve home shirt only, whereas for 14 clubs no long-sleeved shirt was available. Their demise is even more pronounced in continental Europe, where no Serie A side offered long-sleeved shirts in 2021/22 and Bayern Munich and Real Madrid were the only top clubs to offer fans an option on sleeve length.

Shorter sleeves are just one of the features that would render modern shirts unrecognisable to the Edwardian footballing pioneers. As we have seen throughout this chapter, economic, social and technological developments in the wider world have all at various points acted as agents of its evolution. As a result, the slim-cut, space-age materials and laser-cut features are now a world away from the baggy, functional and mismatching garments which clothed early players. But while the modern shirt now has its silhouette, and finally one that is distinct for

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men and women, it is, at this point in the story, a garment devoid of character and meaning. No player ever kissed a mesh panel in celebration. No fan's abiding first memory of the game is sweat-wicking fabric. The shirt itself has little to link it to a team, or a player, or a moment. The primeval emotions of joy, rage, despair and the unfailing devotion which football inspires need an equally ancient force to stimulate them. Something into which every fan can channel their hope, their loyalty, and their loathing. They need colour.