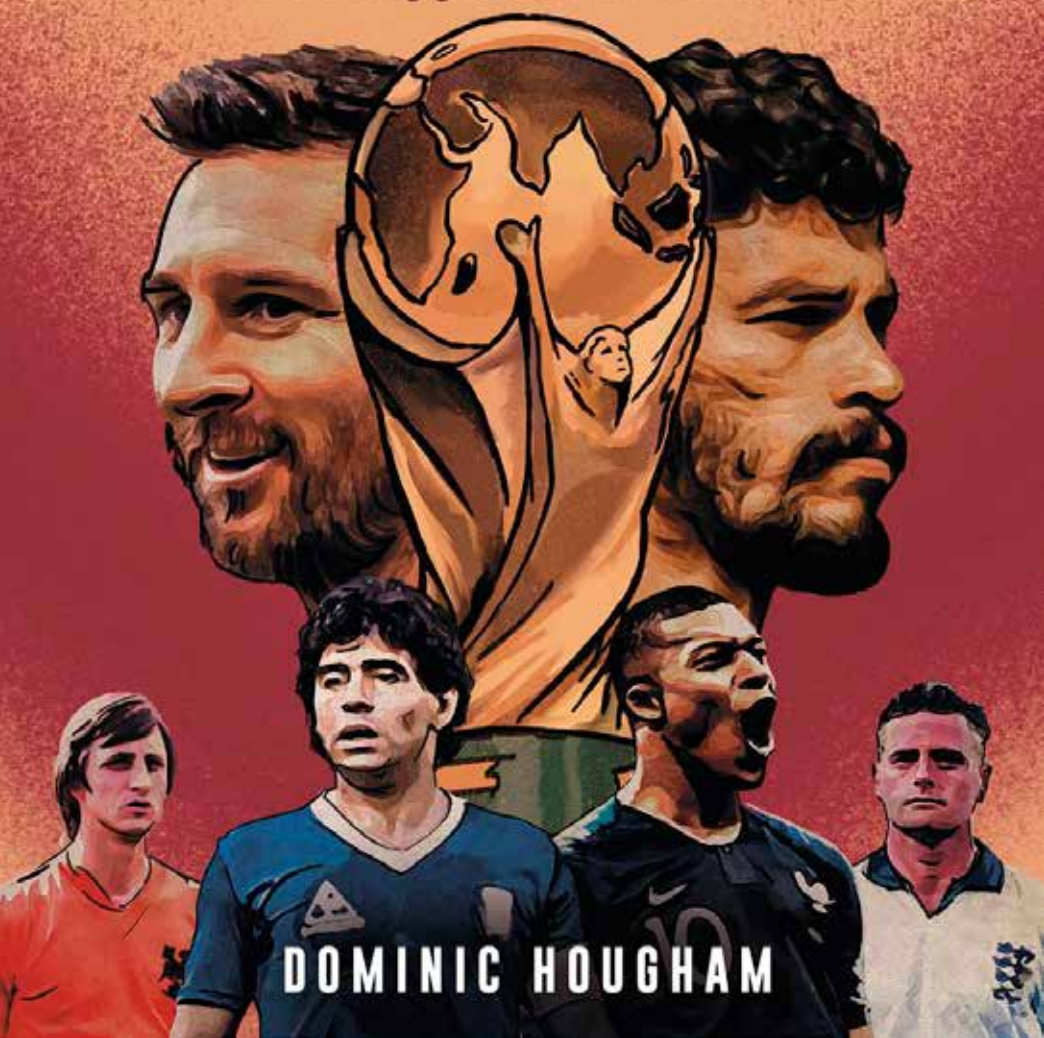


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GREAT WORLD CUP MATCHES
... and why you should watch them



DOMINIC HOUGHAM

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Game 1
1974 World Cup

East Germany v West Germany

22 June 1974
Volksparkstadion, Hamburg
Attendance: 60,200
Stage: First Round, Group 1

Why you should watch it

Following World War Two, the German region was divided, producing two new countries – West Germany within Europe and East Germany within the Soviet occupation zone. These were separated both ideologically and physically as the Cold War evolved, leading to the construction of the Berlin Wall, as West Germany rebuilt itself from the ashes of the war as a democratic, capitalist state while East Germany sat under the control of the Communist Soviet Union. Former neighbours were divided as travel was extremely limited between the two, and as part of this divide, both countries developed their own football sides. The two national teams became eligible for participation in World Cup qualifications, with West Germany enjoying the most success, winning the trophy in 1954 in ‘The Miracle of Bern’ while also reaching the final in 1966. East Germany, meanwhile, had failed to qualify for a single World Cup finals tournament since the nation’s formation.

As qualification for the 1974 tournament got underway, West Germany had no need to go through the process, being the host nation. East Germany did not have this luxury and were placed into a qualification group alongside Romania, Finland, and Albania, winning five of their six games to top the group, one point ahead of the Romanians, and book their first trip to the World Cup finals. Immediately there was talk about how dramatic it would be if the two countries ended up facing one another, but first the draw had to be made.

And so, on 5 January 1974, the draw took place in Frankfurt, beamed out to a global audience. West Germany had been assigned Group 1 and as the draw developed, FIFA president Sir Stanley Rous made the historic announcement – East Germany were drawn into Group 1 alongside their western neighbours. A silence filled the room, followed by loud applause. The 1974 World Cup was set for drama even before kicking off.

The two teams had never met until this moment and so the game was full of political intrigue, especially being played in West Germany. West Germany's manager, Helmut Schön, was originally from East Germany before fleeing to the West in 1950. And there was so much more than just pride at stake – it represented socialism vs communism; a clash of ideologies. This clash meant that many East German citizens would be secretly cheering for West Germany, not wanting their unloved regime to gain positive publicity.

The West Germans went into the tournament as one of the favourites, having just won the 1972 European Championship after reaching the World Cup semi-finals in 1970, only to lose out in a classic against Italy. The team included Franz Beckenbauer at the back, playing as *libero*, along with the ace finisher Gerd Müller, *Der Bomber*, both members of the Bayern Munich squad that had just won the European Cup. There was also the emergence of Günter Netzer, a free-flowing midfielder who had played so well during the 1972 European Championship, but whose style was slightly at odds with Schön's more disciplined structure. Schön had doubts about playing Netzer, even though the German public clamoured for his inclusion.

The draw had placed West Germany against East Germany as the last group match, meaning anticipation would build over the first few days as both teams played the other group teams – Australia and Chile. On the West German side, the squad was suffering from internal strife, especially over bonuses, which saw Schön furious that his players were

motivated by money instead of national pride. Although finally settled through the mediation of Beckenbauer, the team seemed a little out of sorts and, while they won their first two games, they were far from impressive. Their form was not a great omen ahead of the hyped final match.

East Germany, meanwhile, went into the tournament as a dark horse. As usual in those days, little was known about the team but there were signs that they could be dangerous. Ahead of the World Cup, FC Magdeburg had just won the Cup Winners' Cup, beating AC Milan 2-0 in the final – a Milan team containing Gianni Rivera and Romeo Benetti. Playing in attack for that FC Magdeburg side was one Jürgen Sparwasser, who would also play for the national team, and had a reputation as a clinical goalscorer.

While West Germany were winning their two opening matches, East Germany beat Australia in their first before drawing with Chile. That meant that both sides of the divide were unbeaten ahead of the final meeting and knew that they had secured the top two places and so would progress to the next round. The game would, however, determine who would top the group – but much more importantly, which of the clashing ideologies could claim the high ground. It was a game that encapsulated the political climate of the times.

What happened?

Over 60,000 fans packed the Olympiastadion in Berlin to witness the first footballing meeting between East and West. Given the East German government's reluctance for its people to witness the ways of the West, only around 1,500 'fans' were allowed to travel for the match, carefully handpicked and vetted.

The first half saw both sides playing in a cautious manner, with neither wanting to make a costly mistake. It was obvious that there was mutual respect between the two teams and that each realised the significance of the meeting. Chances were few and far between, with the more experienced West

Germans unsurprisingly dominating, their first chance falling to Heinz Flohe whose shot flew narrowly wide. Next a pass from Beckenbauer found Müller in the penalty area, *Der Bomber* turning his marker before crossing to Jürgen Grabowski inside the six-yard box. With the goal gaping, Grabowski tried to twist as the ball fell slightly behind him but could only succeed in placing it inches past the post. East Germany then carved out a chance of their own when a throw-in reached midfielder Reinhard Lauck, whose cross flew across the six-yard line where fellow midfielder Hans-Jürgen Kreische was lurking. A goal seemed inevitable until Kreische committed the cardinal sin of leaning back, sending his shot over the bar. It was an awful miss – the question was how costly would it prove?

The second half commenced in much the same vein – some long-range shooting but neither keeper seriously troubled. On 65 minutes, the East German manager Georg Buschner decided to freshen things up, bringing on midfielder Erich Hamann for Harald Irmischer. The West Germans countered with their own changes, including introducing Günter Netzer to the delight of the partisan crowd.

The East German substitution soon paid dividends when, on 77 minutes, a break saw the ball fall at the feet of Hamann who accelerated into the West German half. Seeing Sparwasser making a run through the middle, Hamann chipped it into him. Chesting it past the great Beckenbauer, Sparwasser fired the ball into the bottom corner to silence the 60,000 West German fans. Seemingly stunned by his own achievement, Sparwasser celebrated with a slightly awkward forward roll before being engulfed by team-mates. The TV cameras did successfully manage to find the handful of East German supporters, waving their flags in joy and probable disbelief.

A dumbfounded West German team, realising that they were now facing finishing second in the group, tried to retaliate, pressurising the East German goal with a series of

free kicks and corners, but all to no avail. The East Germans hunkered down and, as the final whistle sounded, they faced a pitch invasion from a barrage of photographers, capturing the historic moment. East Germany had topped the group and beaten their ideological neighbours.

Final score

East Germany 1 (Sparwasser 77) West Germany 0

What was the aftermath?

This ended up being the only game between the two teams during the 41-year period of division. East Germany won the group and moved on to face another group containing the Netherlands, Brazil and Argentina – a harsh reward for coming top. Two defeats, and a draw against Argentina, followed, meaning East Germany were eliminated. West Germany's reward for losing, meanwhile, was to move on with second place to a group containing Poland, Sweden and Yugoslavia – arguably a much easier prospect. Were they Machiavellian enough to 'lose' the game with this in mind? Doubtful given the rivalry between the two nations at this time.

The defeat to East Germany caused internal navel-gazing within the West German camp, with some hard truths being aired. Rumours abounded that Helmut Schön was suffering from a nervous breakdown and locking himself in seclusion, while Franz Beckenbauer took command of the squad, even to the point of making team selections. It turned out to be a timely wake-up call as they won all their second group matches, taking them to the World Cup Final.

East Germany never qualified for another World Cup – they got close in 1990 but just missed out to Austria and then, in October 1990, Germany was reunified along with its national teams. The last competitive game played as the DDR was a friendly against Belgium in Brussels on 12 September 1990, which the East Germans won 2-0. From that time forward, there was just one German team.

FIFTY GREAT WORLD CUP MATCHES

Teams

West Germany: Maier, Vogts, Breitner, Schwarzenbeck (Höttges 68), Beckenbauer (c), Cullmann, Overath (Netzer 69), Hoeneß, Grabowski, Müller, Flohe

Manager: Schön

East Germany: Croy, Bransch (c), Weise, Wätzlich, Kische, Kurbjuweit, Kreische, Lauck, Irscher (Hamann 65), Sparwasser, Hoffmann

Manager: Buschner

Iconic moment

Sparwasser's goal after 77 minutes – it earned him fame within the footballing world, but he remarked later in life, 'Rumour had it that I was richly rewarded for the goal, with a car, a house and a cash premium. But that is not true.' He also said, 'If one day my gravestone simply says "Hamburg 74", everybody will still know who is lying below.' Thankfully this has not been tested yet as Sparwasser remains alive and kicking, having defected to the West in 1988 – one year before the Berlin Wall came down.

Trivia fact

Nine of the West German team came from just two club sides – Bayern Munich and FC Köln. Bayern Munich had just won their first European Cup, and after this tournament they would continue to dominate European football, winning the European Cup again in both 1975 and 1976, making them champions for three successive years.