

# World Cup

Group A



Group B



Group C



Group D



## World Cup fever

The earth's population currently stands at about six-and-a-half billion. Between 9 June and 9 July 2006 more than one in six of these people will have watched at least one of the international football matches being held in Germany during the 2006 FIFA World Cup.

For developed countries with a national team taking part in the tournament the proportion of the population tuning in will be much, much higher than one in six. How many young people in England will be following the fortune of Sven's boys?

Teachers, how many of the young people you work with will be watching England (or Trinidad and Tobago, or Brazil) play this summer? How many will watch every England game? How many will aim to watch all 64 of the games which will determine the World Cup holder for the next four years?

Are you aware of the opportunities the World Cup offers for connecting with the excitement generated amongst young people? Do you remember the thrill of watching such an event during your own childhood?

Did you flinch when England lost to Brazil in Japan/Korea in 2002, instead of marking homework?

Did you despair when David Beckham was shown the red card in England's 2-1 defeat to Argentina in France in 1998?

Were you rooting for Jackie Charlton and the Republic of Ireland in the USA in 1994?

Did you cry along with Gazza as 'we was robbed' in Italy in 1990?

For me, the excitement started by staying up far too late to watch games being played in Mexico in 1986. I still remember being told off for falling asleep in class after an all-night vigil which allowed me to see the infamous 'hand of God' goal and the 'goal of the century' within the same match when Argentina defeated England.

Do you remember your own first experience of World Cup glory?

## Learning from sport

We have a chance to capture this interest and use it productively with the young people we are responsible for. The possibilities are endless.

Why not hold your own international soccer tournament at school? Let each team pick a national team from the real World Cup finals which they have to represent.

Create interest in the countries taking part and set challenges for the pupils to research background information about their nation. Check out their political history, sporting history and natural history as well as their demographic stats.

Are there schools you could partner with from another country in the tournament? Sending correspondence, swapping photos and making pen-pals is great fun. Try cooking food from the countries taking part in each match.

Compare and contrast the values (and rules) of sport to the values (and rules) of Christianity. How do these values affect the way we play sport and/or live our lives?

Design new team strips incorporating national colours. Make match programmes. Create an advertising campaign based on the tournament.

In English/literacy lessons write match reports and produce radio/TV programmes.

In maths/numeracy lessons work out budgets for hosting sports events, compile match and player

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# crazy

statistics as the competition progresses, or go shopping for sports equipment.

## Media hype can help

The challenge is to harness the media hype and energy which inevitably surrounds these kinds of international events in such a way that it helps us to engage with young people.

Values in the world of sport are often directly comparable to those expected in the Christian faith, and the passion for football shown in young people can so easily be directed into conversations about personal lifestyle and direction.

Young people will respond to questions about themselves such as:

- What motivates you to achieve in life?
- What is it about a certain footballer you admire most?
- What skills/gifts do you have?
- What would you like to achieve and why?
- What excites you so much that you would want to train every day (like international footballers) in order to reach to the top?

Arguably, over the last few decades football has become a religion in its own right. There are places of worship throughout the UK and around the world which host up to 100,000 'worshippers' weekly. Special clothes are worn. Specific songs are chanted. Certain dates determine the activities of the whole calendar. Leaders are elected. Ceremonies are performed.

Barry Mason is 29 years old and Teesside born and bred. He spent much of his youth working for his father's grocery business before attending Loughborough University to study PE/Sports Science and Mathematics. He has been National Sports Co-ordinator for British Youth for Christ (YFC) for five years. Barry lives in Salford with his wife Becky, a primary school teacher, and daughter Olivia.

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## Kick

Christians have to re-establish a presence in this world. British Youth for Christ runs a project which attempts to equip churches and youth leaders so they are able to connect to young people through football. The project is called 'Kick'. Kick helps local Christians to use football as a way of presenting the Gospel to young people for whom church has never been an option. There are Kick team volunteers placed throughout the country working with young people to introduce them to the Bible and the Christian lifestyle.

On the Kick website you will find the ideas mentioned above (plus many more). So, if you want to explore ideas for connecting with young people, or enthusing those you are already connected with, go to: <http://kick.yfc.co.uk>

My role as National Sports Co-ordinator allows me the privilege of seeing the way school-leavers can feed back their gifts and talents into the educational system in such a way that they grow in the Kingdom of God and introduce Jesus Christ to other young people. I am passionate about sport, I love Jesus Christ, and God has given me a heart for young people. I honestly can't think of any other job I would rather do!

YFC is always looking to recruit volunteers for its sports ministry teams, so please share these ideas with anybody you think might be interested in using their sporting passions to serve God evangelistically.

I believe sport has a role to play in developing young people within the Kingdom of God and in wider society. Do you?

■ Barry Mason

Group E



Group F



Group G



Group H



# Christian too!