

Season 2007/8

Podcast 25 Worksheet

The Glory of the Cup?

By Damian Fitzpatrick (January 24th 2008)

Pre-Listening (Background information)

Domestic cup competitions are played amongst teams from the same country and traditionally involve only one game. The winner progresses to the next round while the loser is out.

The FA Cup is the oldest knock out tournament in the world and has been played in England since 1872. The League Cup (or Carling Cup) is another cup competition in England. The Coppa Italia and the Copa del Rey are the Italian and Spanish equivalents.

A. Listening - vocabulary

Listen to the next part of the report and fill in the gaps with an appropriate word.

We all know that football is a simple game - whichever team scores more goals wins, and this (1) _____ is embodied in the idea of cup football. It is death or glory, if you win you (2) _____ to the next round and if you lose you are out and you don't play any more, nothing could be simpler.

Cup football has been big news this week with (3) _____ knock out tournaments taking place all around Europe: the FA and Carling Cups in England, Italy's Coppa Italia and the Copa del Rey in Spain. In Italy and Spain these cup competitions have never really (4) _____ to the footballing public with few tears shed by managers when their team was knocked out and fewer fans (5) _____ to even attend games. This, however, was never a problem in England as the FA Cup was part of the fabric of the game. Huge crowds flocked in search of (6) _____ or to see potential shocks, replays, penalties and to enjoy the romance of the Cup as teams fought hard to stay in the competition. But times have changed.

B. True or False

Listen to the next section of the report until the end and choose whether the following statements are true or false.

1. T / F The Italian Cup has always been popular among Italian fans.

2. T / F One reason that the FA Cup is losing its appeal is that players are tired.

3. T / F There used to be a penalty for not choosing your best team in the cup.

4. T / F Domestic cup winners qualify directly to the following season's Champions League.

5. T / F Damian fears that the future of the FA Cup is in danger.

C. Comprehension

Listen to the report and answer the questions below.

1. How many different countries' cup competitions are mentioned in the report?
2. 'With few tears shed by managers when their team was knocked out' What does this phrase mean?
3. Damian says that times have changed. How?
4. What does 'blooding young players mean'?
5. What do you think of the German system of having bigger teams always playing away from home?
6. Football is all about 'death or glory', do you agree with Damian?

ANSWERS

A. Listening - vocabulary

Listen to the next part of the report and fill in the gaps with an appropriate word.

- | | | |
|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1. simplicity | 2. Progress | 3. Domestic |
| 4. appealed | 5. Bothering | 6. glory |

B. True or False

Listen to the next section of the report until the end and choose whether the following statements are true or false.

- T / F** The Italian Cup has always been popular among Italian fans.
have never really appealed to the footballing public
- T / F** One reason that the FA Cup is losing its appeal is that players are tired.
Not mentioned in the report
- T / F** There used to be a penalty for not choosing your best team in the cup.
Previously a team would have been heavily fined if they fielded a weakened side
- T / F** Domestic cup winners qualify directly to the following season's Champions League.
Platini wishes to introduce this idea
- T / F** Damian fears that the future of the FA Cup is in danger.
may become nothing more than a reserve team competition in the future.

C. Comprehension

Listen to the report and answer the questions below.

- How many different countries' cup competitions are mentioned in the report?
Germany, Italy, Spain and England. 4
- 'With few tears shed by managers when their team was knocked out' What does this phrase mean?
The managers have no real interest and will not be too upset.
- Damian says that times have changed. How?
The glory of the Cup has been replaced with the quest for money
- What does 'blooding young players mean'?
Giving young inexperienced players a chance to play
- What do you think of the German system of having bigger teams always playing away from home?
- Football is all about 'death or glory', do you agree with Damian?

Transcript

We all know that football is a simple game - whichever team scores more goals wins, and this simplicity is embodied in the idea of cup football. It is death or glory, if you win you progress to the next round and if you lose you are out and you don't play any more, nothing could be simpler.

Cup football has been big news this week with domestic knock out tournaments taking place all around Europe: the FA and Carling Cups in England, Italy's Coppa Italia and the Copa del Rey in Spain. In Italy and Spain these cup competitions have never really appealed to the footballing public with few tears shed by managers when their team was knocked out and fewer fans bothering to even attend games. This, however, was never a problem in England as the FA Cup was part of the fabric of the game. Huge crowds flocked in search of glory or to see potential shocks, replays, penalties and to enjoy the romance of the Cup as teams fought hard to stay in the competition. But times have changed.

Though not as dramatic as the Italian or Spanish versions the cup competitions in England have definitely lost a bit of their glamour. Managers are so focused on keeping their team in the Premier League, with all its financial rewards, that having a cup run is seen as an obstacle to the safety of the club. Previously a team would have been heavily fined if they fielded a weakened side but now the clubs act with impunity or hide behind the guise of bleeding young players in order to avoid their top players participating in the cup.

Maybe a change in format would help. In Germany the 'bigger' club always has to play away from home against a smaller team ensuring the chance of an upset, while the UEFA President, Michel Platini, is still attempting to give a Champions League place to the domestic cup winners. These suggestions are admirable in their attempts to reinvigorate the Cup format but it is attitudes rather than rules that need to change. Until clubs, managers and players respect the history, tradition, simplicity and excitement of knock out football then the FA Cup may become nothing more than a reserve team competition in the future.