

LEARNING MADE EASY



3rd Edition

Soccer

for
dummies[®]
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Understand the
basics of the game

Learn how to play and coach the
world's most popular sport

Discover teams & tournaments
around the globe

Tom Dunmore

Soccer writer, executive and expert
explainer of the offside rule!

Scott Murray

Soccer writer



Soccer

3rd Edition

by Tom Dunmore and
Scott Murray

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dummies[®]
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Soccer For Dummies® , 3rd Edition

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Introduction

Congratulations! You have a copy of *Soccer For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, in your hands. This book has been written specially for people who want to know all they can about the greatest and most popular sport on the planet: Association Football, whose name is usually shortened in the United States to *soccer* (avoiding confusion with that other sport called football!). *Soccer For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, aims to satisfy your curiosity, help you to understand the basics of how to play the game, arm you with knowledge so you can enjoy watching it to the fullest extent possible, and show you a whole world of soccer to explore. There's a reason why soccer has taken off all around the globe and has become one of the most popular sports in the United States.

Soccer is the simplest of sports in principle — in the final analysis, all you need to know is that to win, one team has to score more goals than the other. Nevertheless, a plethora of rules, tactics, and skills exist that can easily flummox the beginner.

That's where this book comes in. I wrote it so that anyone who wants to enjoy soccer — whether by playing it, coaching it or watching it — can come to grips with the sport quickly and easily, without feeling overwhelmed or intimidated. And I promise it won't be long before you've become something of an expert on the most talked-about sporting pastime in the world. You'll never look back!

About This Book

The simple aim of this book is to provide you with all the basic skills and every scrap of crucial knowledge that you need to become a proper fan of the game. All the information you need is between the covers of this book. But although it's all crammed in here, don't feel daunted: You certainly don't have to read every word, from start to finish, to get the most from the book.

Each chapter covers a separate topic about soccer, so you can easily dip into the chapters to find out about something you don't quite understand. Say you're watching a World Cup game on television, but don't really know much about the history of the competition; just turn to the chapter that talks about the competition and this book fills the gaps in your knowledge.

If you're motivated to get up off the couch and play for or coach a team yourself, this book explains how you can get involved. The book offers plenty of handy hints and practical skills you can develop. Maybe you'd even like to become a referee. Well, that's no problem. I even help you find a whistle.

And if you're not an absolute beginner, that doesn't matter — I'm confident that *Soccer For Dummies* can still help you discover plenty that's new and fascinating from the long history of soccer.

Foolish Assumptions

Don't worry if you feel you know absolutely nothing about soccer. Chances are you already know more than you think, and this book helps you gain confidence in your knowledge.

But even if you don't have a scrap of understanding about the game to start off with, don't worry! This book soon gets you up to speed. And remember: Even folks

who think they know everything about the game have some gaps in their knowledge. Soon enough, I'm confident the information you glean from this book will make an expert of you.

At the moment you may ask:

- » Why do some teams kick the ball up in the air but others pass it around the floor?
- » Why are there two people running up and down the side of the field waving flags?
- » Why is there an offside rule, and how does it work?
- » Who was the greatest soccer player ever?

This book answers those questions — and many, many more. My only assumption is that you know nothing about the game to start with. I take it from there, and it won't be long before you understand all there is to know about soccer.

Icons Used in This Book

To help you navigate through this book, keep an eye out for these icons, the little pictures that sit in the margin. They help you spot particular snippets of information. This list tells you what the icons mean.



TIP

This highlights small pieces of advice that can help you become a better player or a more knowledgeable soccer expert.



REMEMBER This information is especially useful to remember. If you only remember one thing from each page, make sure this is it!



WARNING Hopefully, this won't come up too much — but when it does, take heed, because the information accompanying it ensures you'll be prepared.



TECHNICAL STUFF The great thing about soccer is the amount of random trivia it generates. There's lots of trivia in this book, and you'll quickly become an expert if you commit all these facts to memory.

Beyond the Book

In addition to the abundance of information and guidance related to arthritis that we provide in this book, you get access to even more help and information online at Dummies.com.

Check out this book's online Cheat Sheet: Just go to www.dummies.com and search for "Soccer For Dummies Cheat Sheet."

Where to Go from Here

So here you are, ready for kickoff. Exactly what you get out of this book depends on your needs. If you're a complete beginner, the book gets you up and running. If

you already know a bit about the game, the book soon fills in the gaps in your knowledge. And even if you think you may be something of an expert, well, everyone's still learning, so hopefully you'll find something new and fascinating in here, too.

But although I'd advise beginners to start at the beginning, even they don't have to. This book is designed for you to dip in and out of — so if you want to find out about the world's most famous clubs first, turn to that chapter. You can always turn to a different chapter to bone up on the rules of the game. Or its history. Or its most famous games. Or the hardest tricks to pull off to impress your team mates. Or ...

Part 1
Kicking Off

IN THIS PART ...

To break you in gently to the great game of soccer, this part provides an introduction to the game, covering how it began, and what it is all about. Those of you who are new to soccer will receive a comprehensive rundown of the whys and wherefores of the game right here.

This part of the book describes how soccer has become the most widely played and watched team sport on the globe. It explains the basic aims of the game, the field on which the game is played, and, last but not least, what gear you need to have fun playing it.

Chapter 1

Introducing Planet Soccer

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » **Understanding why soccer is the simplest game**
 - » **Learning how to play: The basic aims and rules**
 - » **Playing and watching**
 - » **Explaining why people love soccer so much**
-

Association Football — soccer, as it's known in the United States — is the most popular sport in the world. It's referred to by many different names around the world: *football*, *footy*, *soccer*, *fitba*, *fútbol*, *calcio*, *futebol*, *voetbol*, *le foot*, *foci*, *sakka*, or *bong da*. Whatever it's called, the game remains the same: two teams of 11 players, each team trying to kick a spherical ball into a goal more times than the other.

Soccer is fiendishly addictive, whether you watch, compete, or do both. Across the planet more supporters and spectators follow the professional game than any other sport, and at grassroots level more amateur participants enjoy the game than any other athletic pastime. Though its growth has been slower in America than elsewhere, it's become one of the most popular participation sports in the United States. As a spectator sport, millions now attend games and tune in to international soccer games via television or online, and the top professional leagues in North America — Major League Soccer (MLS) for men and the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) for women — are both growing fast and thriving.

Soccer arouses passion in spectators and players like no other game in the world — and perhaps like nothing else known to humankind. It has done so ever since some British rule-makers formalized the pastime of kicking a ball around into a sport during the late 1850s and early 1860s. (That's 150 years and counting, *and it's still getting more popular by the day.*) But why have billions of men and women, boys and girls, adults and children been enthralled by this simplest of sports for such a long time? What makes soccer so special? Read on for some ideas.

Nothing as Simple as Soccer

John Charles Thring was spot on the money when, in 1862 in Uppingham, England, he wrote a set of draft rules for the game that later became known as Association Football. With the sport yet to be christened, Thring decided to entitle his rules "The Simplest Game."

Thring's rules were tweaked before being ratified by the newly founded Football Association in England the following year, but the new sport of Association Football remained *the simplest game*. Because no game (with the possible exception of running in a straight line, and that's not really a game, is it?) is less complicated than soccer.

The basic aim: It really is that simple!

The object of the game is simple: for a team of 11 players to guide a ball into a goal and do it more times than the opposition team can manage.

That's it!

So why is soccer so popular around the world?

Pop psychologists have written more words attempting to explain why soccer is so popular than on any other subject (except organized religion, maybe, although some soccer fans will tell you that's pretty much the same thing).

The truth is, nobody's ever been able to quite put their finger on why the game is so popular, so I'm not going to pretend to give you a definitive answer. There simply isn't one. The best I can do is offer you the following three suggestions:

- » **Its simplicity makes it readily accessible.** You only have to watch a couple of minutes of action to work out what the teams are trying to do.
- » **Goals have a rarity value and are at a premium.** Basketball involves scoring tons of points and a tennis player may win a point every 30 seconds. But you can watch 90 minutes of soccer and not see a single goal scored by either team. Some skeptics say this makes the game boring, but its massive popularity around the world suggests that the rarity value of goals only increases the excitement of soccer for many, many people.
- » **The teams belong to the people.** Despite its origins in British private schools, organized soccer quickly became a working-class sport, a release from the tedium of everyday life all around the world. Results really began to matter. Following a team became tribal, with a sense of belonging and a commitment to a cause.

Having said that, thousands of other, better reasons may exist. After you've watched a few games, or played soccer yourself, you no doubt have a few theories of your own. Actually, that's another great thing about soccer: Everyone's got an opinion about it — often a strong one!

Where do people play soccer?

Everywhere, basically. The game, in a very basic form, is thought to have started out in China over 2,000 years ago, with the ancient Greeks, the Romans, and indigenous Australians playing variations on a theme over the centuries.

It wasn't until the mid-1800s that the game as you know it today developed in Britain, but by 1900 it had spread all over Europe and to South America. Fast-forward another 110 years and every country and continent in the world is now playing the game. That includes the United States, a country that has long favored other sports such as baseball and its own version of football, but now has well-established professional leagues, the most successful women's national team in the world, and a huge level of participation in youth soccer.

SOCCER: NOT AN AMERICANISM

One of the great myths in the sport is the origin of the word *soccer*. It's generally considered to have been coined in the United States — where the game commonly known as *football* in the United Kingdom is indeed called *soccer*. But in fact, the word is a creation of the English elite.

In British universities and elite private schools, well-spoken students had the habit of abbreviating nouns and then appending them with the suffix *-er*, to create a new informal word. For example, someone with the surname Johnson would be known as *Johnners*. Similarly, the game of rugby union was called *rugger*.

According to legend, in the mid-1880s, someone asked an Oxford student named Charles Wreford-Brown whether he wanted to play a game of rugger. Preferring to play football, he shortened the *association of association*

football to *soc* and tacked on the usual colloquial suffix — quipping back that he'd rather have a game of *soccer*.

In America, it makes sense that the game is most widely known as soccer, to distinguish it from another popular form of football now dominated by the NFL — similar to why the term was coined all those years ago by Wrexford-Brown, who went on to captain England's *soccer* team!

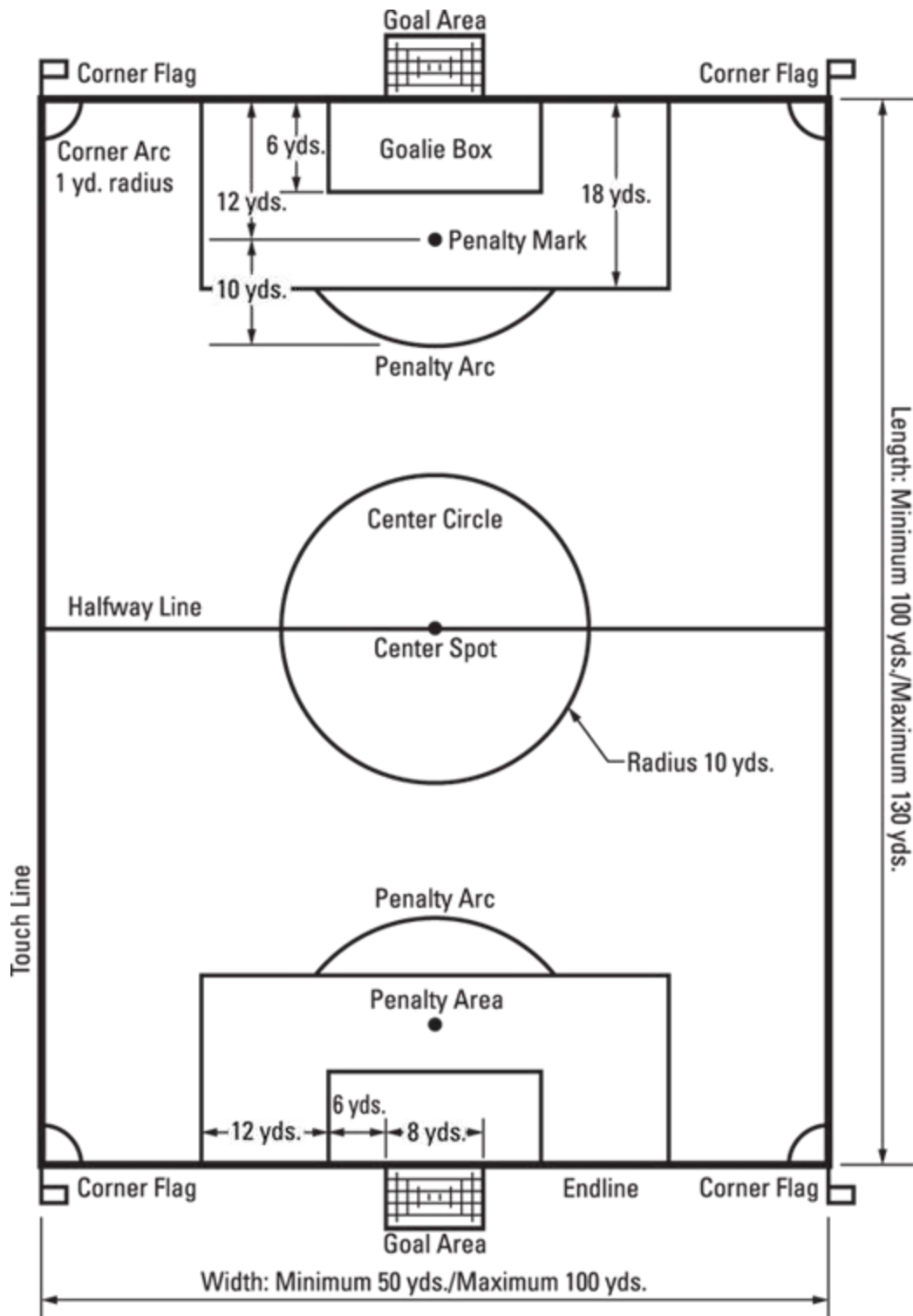
Explaining a Few Rules

So how does this team of 11 players actually go about playing the game and scoring these elusive goals? I go into further detail about the laws of the game in [Chapter 4](#), but first here's a brief overview of how you play a soccer game.

The field

You usually play soccer on grass, occasionally on artificial surfaces, but always on a field no bigger than 80 yards wide and 120 yards long. You might also hear it called the “pitch.” [Figure 1-1](#) shows you how the field looks.

Each end of the field has a goal, composed of two upright posts 24 feet apart and 8 feet high, topped with a horizontal crossbar. One team tries to score in one goal, and the other team tries to score in the other goal. While both teams are trying to score, they are also trying to stop the other team from scoring.



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FIGURE 1-1: The field.

Play stops if the ball leaves the marked field. If a player in one team kicks the ball off the field, then a player in the opposing team must throw or kick the ball back in.

The players

Each team has 11 players. Ten of these players aren't allowed to touch the ball with their arms or hands. They're called *outfield players*. The other member of the team is called the *goalkeeper*; this player can use their hands and arms in the penalty area around the goal they're tending.

Four basic positions exist:

- » **Defender:** A defender's job is primarily to defend their team's goal and stop players from the opposing team scoring.
- » **Forward:** A forward's role is to score goals or create them for other players.
- » **Goalkeeper:** The goalkeeper's job is to stop the ball going in the net at all costs, thus ensuring the opposing team doesn't score a goal. The goalkeeper can do so by using any part of their body.
- » **Midfielder:** Midfielders — usually the team's most adaptable players — cover a lot of ground and help the defenders defend and the forwards attack.

These players are arranged in different places around the field, and the variations on ways to do this are known as *formations*. The most common is 4-4-2: four defenders, four midfielders, and two forwards. An alternative is 4-3-3: four defenders, three midfielders, and three attackers, a more offensive lineup than a 4-4-2. You may notice both of those formations only add up to 10 players, not 11: That's because the goalkeeper isn't

listed in the formation; that position is taken for granted. Find out more about the fun of formations in [Chapter 5](#).

General behavior

A referee is on hand to officiate every game, and the referee's decision is always final.

Players aren't allowed to shove each other away from the ball, kick each other, trip each other up, or obstruct each other. If they do, they give away a *foul* and the referee awards the other team a *free kick*. (See [Chapter 4](#) for more on free kicks.)

If one team concedes a free kick close to the goal, the team awarded the kick has a fair chance of scoring directly. If a team concedes a free kick in its own penalty area, the referee awards the opposition a *penalty kick* — a free shot from 12 yards out with only the goalkeeper, who must stay on the goal line until the ball is kicked, in the way (not surprisingly, this usually results in a goal).

Referees can *send off* (eject for the rest of the game) players who continually concede fouls or do something *really* bad. Find out more about free kicks, penalties, and obeying the laws of the game in [Chapter 4](#).

Goal!

To score a goal the whole ball has to cross the whole goal line, going between both of the posts and under the crossbar.

Players are allowed to score by shooting with their feet or heading the ball into the goal. This sounds easier to achieve than it actually is, which is why goals are greeted with such unbridled joy by crowds.

Keeping score ...

The scoring system in soccer is simple. If Team A has scored one goal and Team B hasn't scored any then the score is 1-0. If Team B then scores two goals the score is 1-2. It's pretty simple, which is why fans will sometimes chant the hopeful ditty: "We're gonna score one more than you!"

In a less thrilling result, a game may end with neither team scoring a goal. This score is 0-0; traditionally known as a *nil nil* scoreline, though zero zero works fine too.

... and keeping time

A game (also called a "match") lasts 90 minutes, split into two 45-minute halves, with a 15-minute break in between. The team with the most goals at the end of 90 minutes wins the game. If both teams have the same number of goals, the game is a tie (also called a *draw*). Depending on the rules of the competition the game is being played in, ties are sometimes settled by playing extra time or going to a decisive penalty shootout.

Playing the Game

The beauty of soccer as a sport is that anyone can play it, anywhere. That's something you can't say about horse racing or NASCAR.

You don't even really need any equipment, apart from a ball — and even then you can improvise. In fact, famous players like the Brazilian legend Pelé and Argentinian icon Diego Maradona both grew up in shanty towns and played with rolled-up newspapers for a ball.

Playing solo

Although soccer's a team sport, you don't even need anyone else to play it with. Soccer is a game you can