

Content guide for *1958 World Cup*



The **1958 FIFA World Cup** took place in a world still being reshaped by political upheavals. The Hungarian team arrived weakened as key players had fled into exile after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. The Soviet Union made its debut, symbolizing the increasing influence of Eastern Bloc nations in global sports. England was deeply affected by the Munich Air Disaster, which robbed the squad of several key players from Manchester United. And the African boycott of the qualifiers exposed growing dissatisfaction with unequal representation on the world stage. Yet, against this backdrop of political and social turbulence, soccer flourished. Just Fontaine delivered a record-breaking 13 goals for France, a feat that remains unbeaten, while Didi, the architect of Brazil's fluid play, was named the tournament's best player. Harry Gregg, Northern Ireland's heroic goalkeeper, played outstandingly despite the trauma of Munich, and a 17-year old Pelé helped Brazil to their first World Cup victory, ushering in a new era of attacking football and South American dominance. 1958 was a World Cup of transformation—where football overcame adversity and new stars were born, and the game itself evolved into a more global and artistic spectacle.

The **Top Star** was the **official match ball**, was a significant step forward in football design. Manufactured by Sydsvenska Läder & Remfabriks AB, it was chosen from over 100 ball prototypes tested by FIFA. The Top Star featured 24 hand-stitched leather panels, creating a more spherical and consistent shape, improving flight stability and control. It was designed to withstand Sweden's unpredictable weather conditions, ensuring durability in wet matches.

17 years old Pelé made his World Cup debut in 1958, becoming a global sensation. He scored the winner in the quarterfinals against Wales, a hat-trick in the semifinals against France, and two goals in the final as Brazil won their first World Cup title. His six goals in four matches showcased his brilliance, making him the youngest player to score in a World Cup final.

The **tournament structure** introduced a group stage with four groups of four teams. Rather than balancing the groups based on team records, each group had one team from the UK, the Americas, and W. and E. Europe. After each team playing the other teams in the group, the top two teams advanced to the quarterfinals. A unique feature was that if two teams finished level on points for second place, a playoff match was held instead of using goal difference, making it the last World Cup to settle ties this way. The extra playoff matches created scheduling challenges and fatigue for teams forced into playoffs.

Crest of the 1958 World Cup Champions (Brazil)

Waldyr Pereira "Didi", holding the **Jules Rimet trophy**, was the midfield maestro of Brazil's 1958 World Cup-winning team and was retrospectively named the tournament's best player (**Golden Ball Award**). Didi dictated the pace of Brazil's attack with his elegant passing, vision, and composure throughout the tournament. His calm demeanor, control, leadership and creativity allowed his team mates to shine, and cemented his legacy as one of football's greatest midfielders.

Elements from the official 1958 World Cup poster.

Northern Irish goalkeeper Harry Gregg was retrospectively selected as the best goalkeeper (**Golden Glove award**). Gregg survived the Munich Air Disaster in February 1958, and heroically rescued teammates and passengers from the wreckage. Despite the trauma, he played in the World Cup just months later, delivering outstanding performances for Northern Ireland, helping them reach the quarterfinals in their only World Cup appearance.

World map highlighting the **16 finalists** countries participating in the 1958 World Cup.

The 1958 **Golden Boot winner**, Just Fontaine, delivered one of the greatest individual performances in World Cup history, scoring a record 13 goals in just 6 games—a feat that remains unbeaten. His lightning pace, clinical finishing, and ability to find space between defenders made him an unstoppable force. He scored in every game for France, including four goals against West Germany in the third-place match, cementing his status as one of football's greatest finishers.

All **games and results** from the four initial groups and the knockout stages. For each game the names of the teams, the scores, and the goal scorers are listed.

The Munich Air Disaster on February 6, 1958, tragically killed 8 Manchester United players, many of whom were key members of England's national team (e.g. Duncan Edwards, Roger Byrne, and Tommy Taylor). This devastating loss significantly weakened England for the World Cup, and they failed to progress beyond the group stage for the first time.

The **Hungarian Revolution** of 1956 was brutally crushed by Soviet forces, leading to political upheaval and mass emigration. The turmoil severely impacted Hungary's legendary Golden Team, as several key players chose exile over returning to Communist rule, leaving it a shadow of its former self and marking the end of an era.

The **4-2-4 formation** was a revolutionary tactical system that played a key role in Brazil's success at the 1958 World Cup.

Råsunda Stadium, in Stockholm, was Sweden's first purpose-built football stadium. It played a central role in the 1958 FIFA World Cup, hosting eight matches. It remained the national team's home and later hosted major European competitions before being demolished in 2012.

The official **Team of the Tournament**

The **host country** Sweden with locations and names of the 12 **host cities**.

