



# Football Fever!

LANGUAGE LEVEL  
**BASIC**

Track **5**

Speaker: Mark Worden  
(Standard British accent)

**Il 17 maggio si gioca la finale della Coppa d'Inghilterra (FA Cup). È un torneo seguitissimo, a cui possono partecipare tutte le squadre indipendentemente dalla serie in cui giocano: basta avere uno stadio degno di questo nome. Ma la finale, a Wembley!**

By John Rigg

What can bring a country to a stop, and make children and grown men<sup>1</sup> cry? If you're in England on May 17th, you will discover the answer: the magic of the **FA Cup Final** – the world's **oldest football competition**. The match is broadcast<sup>2</sup> live on television with an estimated worldwide audience of half a billion<sup>3</sup>. What makes the FA Cup so special?

It's unique because every club that belongs to the Football Association (FA) has a chance to win it – at least, in theory. The FA includes amateur teams from small regional leagues: there are **24 levels**, from the Premiership, the top division, down to the minnows<sup>4</sup> of Bristol Downs Division Four. This year a record 731 clubs entered the competition.

## SHOCK HORROR!

Imagine this magical scene: it's January 26th and we're at the legendary **Anfield stadium in Liverpool**. The home team's opposition is Havant & Waterlooville FC from the Conference South (a sixth level league). The score is 1-1. After thirty minutes Havant score<sup>5</sup> and their supporters are crying on the terraces<sup>6</sup>. This is a team of taxi drivers, dustbin men<sup>7</sup> and builders<sup>8</sup>... not millionaire footballers, but they are winning against Liverpool! Eventually Liverpool win the game 5-2, but their manager, Rafael Benítez, still shakes his head in disbelief: "This could only happen in England!"

Incredibly, Barnsley, a team from the Championship, the Football League's second division, beat Liverpool 2-1 at Anfield in the next round<sup>10</sup>, and then beat Chelsea in the quarter finals.

## DEATH AND DISASTER

The FA Cup has also known tragedy: ninety-eight people died at the 1989 **Hillsborough** disaster in **Sheffield** during a semi-final between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest. After a

government investigation (the Taylor Report), English stadiums introduced new safety regulations: no standing<sup>11</sup>, no fences around pitches<sup>12</sup>, and strict crowd control using CCTV systems<sup>13</sup>. As a result, the tragedy had one fortunate legacy<sup>14</sup>: **hooliganism**<sup>15</sup> in English stadiums is now a rarity. The magic of the Cup touches everyone. Gary Lineker remembers: "Winning the Cup with Tottenham Hotspur in 1991 was the best moment of my career," while Chester City fan Adrian Lee, whose club has won nothing in the 28 years he has followed them, says: "The Cup gives us hope: I know, one day, our time will come!"<sup>16</sup>"

## History

The first FA Cup took place in the 1871-1872 season with just 15 teams. The Wanderers, a team of former university players, won 1-0 against the army's Royal Engineers. In 1923 the final moved to London's Wembley Stadium, where 200,000 spectators watched Bolton Wanderers defeat<sup>17</sup> West Ham United 2-0. The stadium had a capacity of 125,000 and people sat on the grass around the pitch. Wembley remained the home of English football until 2000. Last year the final returned to the new Wembley Stadium, which cost €975 million to build, and five years to complete.

Below: the new Wembley. Left: Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard with the F.A. Cup in 2006. Far left: Chelsea won in 2007.



## Glossary

- grown men** - uomini adulti (lett. cresciuti).
- broadcast** - trasmesso.
- half a billion** - mezzo miliardo.
- down to the minnows** - giù fino ai pigmei.
- score** - segna.
- terraces** - spalti.
- dustbin men** - spazzini.
- builders** - operai edili.
- in disbelief** - incredulo.
- round** - girone.
- no standing** - niente posti in piedi.
- no fences around pitches** - niente reti intorno al campo.
- strict crowd control... systems** - controlli severi del pubblico con telecamere a circuito chiuso.
- legacy** - conseguenza.
- hooliganism** - vandalismo.
- our time will come!** - verrà il nostro momento!
- defeat** [di'fi:t] - sconfiggere.
- suitable** ['su:təbl] - adeguato.
- home advantage ... draw** [dɹɔ:] la squadra che gioca in casa viene decisa col sorteggio.

## The Unique Format

All FA-registered teams can enter the competition if their stadium is suitable<sup>18</sup>. There are five qualifying rounds for non-league clubs (teams outside the top four divisions), and then six rounds, followed by the semi-finals and final. Each round consists of a single match, so home advantage is decided at the draw<sup>19</sup>.

# We Are the Champions

LANGUAGE LEVEL  
**ADVANCED**

Track **6**

Speaker:  
Justin Ratcliffe  
(Standard British accent)

## Glossary

- 1 **loudspeakers** - altoparlanti.
- 2 **late lead singer** - cantante solista, ora scomparso.
- 3 **the fans could latch on to** - di cui i fan potessero sentirsi partecipi.
- 4 **to be overcome** - essere superate.
- 5 **to achieve** - ottenere.
- 6 **commitments** - impegni.
- 7 **I've paid my dues** - ho pagato ciò che dovevo.
- 8 **I've pulled through** - ce l'ho fatta.
- 9 **chorus** - ritornello.
- 10 **chant** - coro.
- 11 **aimed** - indirizzata, rivolta.
- 12 **togetherness** - spirito di comunanza.
- 13 **challenge** - sfida.
- 14 **bowing** - inchinandosi.
- 15 **my curtain calls** - la mia chiamata alla ribalta.
- 16 **pleasure cruise** - crociera di piacere.
- 17 **struggle** - lotta.

The F.A. Cup Final isn't the only important soccer match this month. There's also the Champions League Final, which will take place in Moscow on May 21st. The victorious team will be considered the best in Europe and, as they receive the trophy, the famous Queen song, "We Are The Champions," will be played over the loudspeakers<sup>1</sup>. This is appropriate. As Queen's late lead singer<sup>2</sup>, Freddie Mercury, declared in a 1978 interview: "I was thinking about football when I wrote it. I wanted a participation song, something that the fans could latch on to<sup>3</sup>."

The song opens with a description of the difficulties that have to be overcome<sup>4</sup> to achieve<sup>5</sup> success. The singer has honoured all his commitments<sup>6</sup> many times ("**I've paid my dues**<sup>7</sup>"), and has suffered, like an innocent man in prison, for things he hasn't done ("**done my sentence... committed no crime**"). Although he has made a few bad mistakes and has been the victim of aggressive actions ("**sand kicked in my face**"), he has survived ("**I've pulled through**<sup>8</sup>").

The chorus<sup>9</sup> is the instantly recognisable triumphant chant<sup>10</sup> of "**We are the champions.**" In a recent magazine interview, Queen guitarist Brian May remembered the song being "aimed<sup>11</sup> at an audience that wanted to feel a togetherness<sup>12</sup> and a power and an optimism. Freddie knew people would sing it." The chorus promises the champions' fight will not end until the challenge<sup>13</sup> is

Un inno buono per tutte le occasioni in cui c'è da celebrare, energetico, vitale, entusiasmante. Analizziamo il grande successo dei **Queen** e dell'indimenticabile **Freddie Mercury**.

over, and that they have no respect for those without the same determination ("**no time for losers**").

In the second verse we see the singer concluding his performance, bowing<sup>14</sup> and returning to the stage ("**my curtain calls**<sup>15</sup>") and thanking those who have supported him on the road to "**fame and fortune and everything that goes with it.**" He repeats that it hasn't been easy, saying it was "**no bed of roses, no pleasure cruise**<sup>16</sup>", but continues to see his life as a struggle with the world watching ("**a challenge before the whole human race**") and does not intend to lose.



The song was recorded for the 1977 album *News Of The World* and immediately became a concert favourite. It would also be the last song Freddie Mercury ever performed with Queen. This was at the Knebworth Festival on August 9th, 1986. Mercury died in 1991, at the age of 45.

To appreciate this article fully, we suggest you type "We Are The Champions lyrics" into an Internet search engine, and refer to them as you read. This recording features 15 seconds of the song "We Are the Champions" written by Freddie Mercury in 1977 and recorded by Queen the same year.

## English Through Music...

Fergal Kavanagh, the author of this article, runs the website [www.tuneintoenglish.com](http://www.tuneintoenglish.com). The Students' Area features activities for learning English through pop music.

