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## When Football Went Global: Televising the 1966 World Cup

*Fabio Chisari*\*

**Abstract:** The aim of this article is to show how the televising of the 1966 Football World Cup in England can be considered to be the real turning point in the connection between football and television. Live transmissions in Europe and overseas, new technical devices purposely engineered such as the slow-motion machine, huge economic and human investments, large audience figures throughout the world: all these things are nowadays considered to be normal for a TV broadcast of a major football event, but emerged for the first time during the 1966 World Cup in England. The TV broadcasting of this World Cup can therefore be considered to be the launch pad for the future development of televised football as well as for the globalisation of soccer through television.

### Introduction

Although the World Cup is organized by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), it is not solely due to FIFA that it has become a global event. As Christiane Eisenberg writes in the chapter about football and the media in the FIFA centennial book, this development “is more the result of a mature and increasingly complex relationship between the media and football”.<sup>1</sup> In this complex relationship, though, we would be blind not to spot the importance of one media in particular, TV, in relation with the transformation

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Lanfranchi, Christiane Eisenberg, Tony Mason, and Alfred Wahl, *100 Years of Football. The FIFA Centennial Book* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2004) 254; see also Christiane Eisenberg, “Medienfußball. Entstehung und Entwicklung einer transnationalen Kultur”, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 31 (2005): 586-609.

of the FIFA World Cup in a global sporting event drawing the attention of billions of people in the Four Corners.

As far as the development of the relationship between football and TV is concerned, there are a lot of important moments: Switzerland 1954 was the first World Cup ever televised; in 1970 the World Cup was broadcast in colour; in 1978 the wall of 100 countries receiving pictures of the tournament was broken; USA '94 had a cumulative TV audience of more than 30 billion; the joint Japan and South Korea 2002 World Cup fed live pictures of the competition to as many as 213 countries all over the world, more than the UN members (which were 191 at this time).

But, to some extent, the 1966 World Cup deserves to be regarded as the key-moment in the process of globalisation of football as well as the most important turning point in the bond between TV and the FIFA World Cup. In this regard, there are at least three aspects that have to be highlighted and examined in detail: the contract and everything related to the direct involvement of TV authorities in the organisation of the tournament; the technical production of the televising of the World Cup, especially as far as new technologies are concerned; and the audience and new patterns of consumption.

## The Contract

The official contract between FIFA and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) for the exclusive rights to televise the 1966 World Cup was signed in Zurich on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1962, along with the contract for exclusive television broadcasting of the forthcoming 1962 competition to be held in Chile a few months later. In the opinion of FIFA (which, incidentally, matched the view of the EBU), the 1966 Jules Rimet Cup would be the real turning point in the transformation of the World Cup into a global event. There were two reasons for this: firstly, because of the growth of the world-wide television audience;<sup>2</sup> secondly, because England was the country that, USA apart, had the best TV organisation and facilities, and it was very likely that there would be a real chance to offer a really well made broadcast. Thus, given these considerations, FIFA offered the EBU<sup>3</sup> the chance to bet on this horse of unknown potential, but with undoubted thoroughbred qualities. The EBU did not need further

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<sup>2</sup> If at the time the contract was signed the potential audience figures were not so impressive, according to some market investigations they would be much larger in 1966.

<sup>3</sup> Europe was the continent more interested in football, and all the major West-European TV networks were members of EBU. All the East-European networks were members of Inter- vision, which was not rich enough to face the cost of such an operation. The networks of South America, the other part of the world where football was very successful, were not united under a single organisation, and anyway it would be very unlikely that a South American network could mount such an effort.

persuasion. The result of this gamble, compared with the money spent, would bring prestige and, more prosaically and down-to-earth, recoup the original investment, along with the strong possibility of bringing in further revenue from selling the broadcast throughout the world.

FIFA opened the negotiations with the EBU late in 1961, suggesting proposals for a joint 'Chile 1962-England 1966' contract. The idea of FIFA was to undersell the television rights for the Chile tournament to the EBU, with the real aim to close the negotiation for the 1966 tournament as quickly and as remuneratively as possible. The reasons for putting a low estimate on the 1962 World Cup broadcasting rights were: a) the television coverage of the championship in Chile would be necessarily troubled, due to the time zone as well as the objective difficulty of obtaining TV material, and also to the delay in showing pictures of the matches in Europe because of the geographical distance (satellite transmission was still experimental); b) as a consequence of this, the possibility of receiving substantial revenue from the sale of the television rights to any network was quite unlikely; c) the time before the event to be held in Chile was running short.

When the negotiation started the first request by FIFA valued the 1962 World Cup recording and film rights as worth \$ 100,000; thereafter, as a consequence of the acceptance of this request, the EBU would get an option for unrestricted 'live' television, film and recording rights for the 1966 World Cup matches at a fee of \$ 800,000.<sup>4</sup> As in every serious negotiation, the EBU's offer was obviously lower. It was the view of the EBU that the maximum offer for Chile should be \$ 75,000 and no more than \$ 675,000 on an option basis for the rights in England. As Peter Dimmock, General Manager of British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) TV Outside Broadcasts, suggested in writing to the director of BBC TV Broadcasting on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 1961, "at the moment, EBU is in a strong position to push this home because of FIFA's anxiety to get some finance out of Eurovision (its largest single customer) for the Chile Championship".<sup>5</sup> He was right. The negotiations did not last long (good old days...), and four months later, on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1962 both contracts were being signed. The eventual economic terms were, as it was easily predictable, a compromise between the contenders' bids: \$ 75,000 for the Chile '62 (as offered by the EBU), and \$ 800,000 for England '66 (as asked by FIFA).

Let us now consider the contract, just to pinpoint some interesting points related to the intervention of TV in the organisation of the World Cup. About the role of TV in the scheduling of the matches, Article 5 says:

- a) In the case of the 1/8 finals not more than four matches shall be played on any day and, if there are more than two, arrangements shall be made to stagger the K.O. times of the others and to ensure that the playing times do not over-

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<sup>4</sup> The actual sum was in British Pound: £ 300,000 (£ 1= \$ 2.7 about – Spring 1962).

<sup>5</sup> British Broadcasting Corporation Written Archives Centre, T14/3266/1 (Reading: BBC WAC, 12 December 1961).

lap so that no more than two matches of the 1/8 finals shall be played at any one time on any day. b) In the case of the Quarter finals not more than two of the four matches shall be played on any day and the K.O. times of these matches shall be staggered and steps taken to ensure that actual playing times do not overlap.<sup>6</sup> c) In the case of the semi-finals only one shall be played on one day.<sup>7</sup>

And Article 6 adds:

The overall dates and details of organisation of the 1966 World Championships shall be made known to the EBU not later than March 31<sup>st</sup> 1963 (...) The FIFA and the Football Association of England will collaborate with EBU or its Appointed Agent to work out dates for the 1966 Championships which shall be acceptable to all authorities concerned.<sup>8</sup>

Art. 6 gave the EBU and its appointed agents the chance to know well in advance dates and hours of the matches, so to possibly intervene if those were not considered suitable with television needs. Thus, it happened that, due to TV necessity, there were changes for some matches to be played at Wembley Stadium. The changes were intended to “avoid the showing on television of England’s matches at the same time when other Eighth Final matches were being played, whereby the revenue from those matches might be reduced”,<sup>9</sup> but also to have the chance to televise some more matches, given the fact there would no longer be overlapping. The matches in question were the Opening Match, that was anticipated from the original date, Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> July, to Monday 11<sup>th</sup>; the Mexico-England match, with the alteration of the kick-off time from 3 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.; the Mexico-Uruguay one, with the alteration of the kick-off time from 7.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. In this last case the alteration was evidently responding to the television necessity of broadcasting at least one match in the afternoon, given that there were other three matches scheduled in the evening.

## Facilities at the Grounds

The choice of the grounds on which World Cup matches would be played was one of the most important decisions within the whole organisation of the competition. When the English Football Association (FA) and the Organising Committee had to take the final decision regarding this point, several issues had to be given serious consideration.

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<sup>6</sup> But this point will not be kept in consideration, given that all the four Quarter Final matches were played on the same day, 23 July 1966.

<sup>7</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3266/1, Contract FIFA/EBU.

<sup>8</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3266/1, Contract FIFA/EBU.

<sup>9</sup> Football Association (FA) Archives, *World Cup Organising Committee Minutes*, London, 9 March 1965.

Four key points were to be considered in picking the grounds to host the World Cup: 1) capacity (not less than 50,000); 2) seating capacity; 3) size of the pitch (115 x 75 yards at least). The fourth and last, but not least, factor was the provision of enough room to allocate mass-media facilities. As Harold Mayes, Press and Publicity Officer of the World Cup Organisation, wrote in the FA official report on the World Cup, this kind of necessity was “an automatic requirement with the present-day scale of world coverage of major sporting events by Press, radio, and television”.<sup>10</sup> So, if a stadium meeting all the requirements was not capable of ready conversion for the accommodation of the media, “all of the other facilities it might possess would be of little value”.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, when the final decision was taken, television was one of the key factors. We would say that for the first time in the history of a major football event, television was considered one of the necessary conditions within the whole organisation of the event itself. We do not mean that TV would be as fundamental as the footballs or the players, but, in the eyes of the organisers, the tournament would not be as successful as it eventually was if there was no good television broadcasting.

Once the grounds had been selected, the second part of the operation, the one regarding the ‘make up’ of the venues, began. Since the early stages in late 1962, the Organising Committee, in inspecting the grounds, took in the highest consideration the importance of working along with the media representatives:

The requirements of the Press, Radio and Television at the various grounds which the Secretary had visited were outlined. (...) It was suggested that representatives should visit the grounds and tell the Club management what additional facilities they would wish to have for the World Cup Matches.<sup>12</sup>

The first round of inspections was conducted in the presence of Denis Follows, FA chairman, during the period between 22<sup>nd</sup> January and 18<sup>th</sup> February 1963, in order to assess the television and radio facilities available in each instance. These grounds were visited by a group representing both the BBC and ITV, which at that time were still unaware of the future arrangements that would lead to the birth of the ‘Consortium’ appointed by EBU in order to look after the TV broadcasting.<sup>13</sup> Following these preliminary visits, further inspections and surveys were held throughout 1964.

One of the main aims of these visits was to assess the allocation of cameras at each ground. Since the beginning, a minimum of nine camera positions was requested: three ‘live’ cameras to provide both for live television broadcasting and video tape recording; four 16 mm film cameras for the benefit of those

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<sup>10</sup> Harold Mayes, *The Football Association World Cup Report 1966* (London: Football Association/ Heinemann, 1966) 20.

<sup>11</sup> Mayes.

<sup>12</sup> FA Archives, *World Cup Organising Committee Minutes*, London, 10 December 1962.

<sup>13</sup> A BBC Sound staff was present too. Radio was always kept in the highest consideration during the preparation of the tournament, too.

countries who could not take live broadcasting; two camera positions to be available to BBC News and ITV News. This first plan developed and enlarged as time went by, eventually reaching a definitive layout only for the World Cup matches. At every ground, but Wembley, there was installed a single four-camera unit. A high platform opposite the centre line, on which there was room to accommodate eight cameras, two electronic and six film, was specially built at every venue. The two electronic cameras allocated on this platform were positioned for general coverage of play. One further electronic camera was placed on a lower platform, again opposite the centre line and directly below the main one (better if over the players' tunnel), for incidents – goal scorers, fouls, injuries etc. – by using maximum close-up. Space for a further platform for eight film cameras was also provided at every ground. In every case there was a fourth electronic camera in the 'Interview Room'. A system was devised to conduct interviews with managers of the competing team in a special 'Interview Room', an absolute new feature in the history of TV World Cup, where the interviews would be carried out by television commentators, a journalist from each of the competing countries, and one on behalf of the British press. These interviews would be relayed live by CCTV to the Press Working Room, so as to allow the press not to be denied the information they needed, as well as for normal television broadcasting (for security reasons it had been decided that under no circumstances would newsmen be given access to dressing rooms).

Another problem to be faced was the preparation of commentary positions. At the earliest stages the estimated requirements for commentary cubicles were as follows: group matches: fifteen positions; quarter finals: twenty positions; semi-finals, third place final, final: thirty positions. But at that stage this was just a hypothesis based on the experience of previous World Cups and on a 'guesstimate' of the possible competing countries. The estimated growth in television since the 1958 World Cup played in Sweden was also taken into account (the 1962 Chile competition could not provide any clues as there had not been live television broadcasting). After the analysis of many factors, the figure of thirty positions at every ground (fifteen each for television and radio) was suggested. The allocation of these positions did not always match the capacity of the grounds, though. Particularly disappointing were the figures of Sheffield and Middlesbrough, where less than 50 % of the positions available were allocated.

Finally, on the subject of commentary control points, equipment and technical staff, it is interesting to note the important help given to the Consortium by the other Eurovision members. Several TV organisations, such as the Spanish, Mexican, Brazilian and the two West Germany services, sent representatives to England during the preparation period for detailed discussions, greatly assisting the Consortium in meeting their requirements. Italian RAI supplied equipment at Everton's ground, Finnish YLE equipment and staff at Manchester, Swedish SRT equipment and staff at Middlesbrough, Swiss SRG equipment and staff

at Sheffield, and French ORTF equipment at Sunderland. This was a real example of 'Pool Operation'.

## The Slow-Motion: a Wonderful Innovation

But the reasons for the extraordinary success of the technical operation have to be found also in the first utilisation ever of an innovative device that would reshape the perception of football as a perfect TV show item: 'slow-motion' replays.

The use of slow-motion was, probably, the major technical improvement that TV inherited from this World Cup broadcasting. As Garry Whannel points out, "the end of the 1960s was a watershed for technical innovation as far as sport is concerned", and "from the mid 1960s emphasis swung to developments that gave a greater ability to construct and to manipulate the basic elements".<sup>14</sup> Thus, the BBC engineering staff did not want to miss the opportunity to make their mark at such an important outside broadcast. In which direction did they have to move? What was the first need for a football enthusiast who wanted to enjoy on TV his favourite sport's most important contest? "In every soccer competition there is always something which happens so quickly that not even the sharpest and most experienced observers can be absolutely sure of what exactly took place".<sup>15</sup> That was it! So BBC's design department invented a particular videotape-recording machine just for the Football World Cup. This machine was able to feed the portion of tape to be re-shown into a magnetic disc, which could make four images of each picture to give the slow-motion effect. The success of this new device was universal and immediate: "those very quick flashbacks of goals scored left me quite breathless", one *Radio Times* reader writes to the editor.<sup>16</sup> Even the least enthusiastic viewers were really impressed by this new ability to give slow-motion pictures of crucial moments of the matches as soon as they had happened. If we read what is written in the "Independent Criticism of BBC Television" pages of *The Listener* we find that "this sleight of hand with time (...) added an entirely new dimension".<sup>17</sup> This was history of television in its making.

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<sup>14</sup> Garry Whannel, *Fields in Vision: television, sport and cultural transformation* (London: Routledge, 1992) 64-65.

<sup>15</sup> *Radio Times* [London] 7 July 1966.

<sup>16</sup> *Radio Times* 11 August 1966.

<sup>17</sup> *The Listener* [London] 4 August 1966: 179.



## The International Coverage: a World-Wide Success

Using credible sources, we can affirm that for the World Cup final there were “four hundred million fans linked by cable, radio and that spinning, bleeping satellite Early Bird, glued, riveted, or otherwise trussed to their tellys, watching the Greatest Show on Earth”,<sup>18</sup> as we can read in the *Daily Mirror*. “What an awful lot watching a football match”, said in a leading article of *The Times* headlined “Four hundred million can’t be wrong”, which went on to say:

The gnomes of mass communication – if that might describe the backroom boys in this game that is every bit as international as the loading and offloading of sterling – must be preening themselves at their own world record on Saturday afternoon. Four hundred million viewers in four – or was it five? – continents were transfixed to their tellies watching twenty-two footballers. The last occasion when viewing on this world scale went on was during the funeral of a true world statesman – CHURCHILL. But Saturday’s figure exceeded that total by fifty million.<sup>19</sup>

This is, we think, an authoritative acknowledgement of a social event that must be regarded with the utmost interest, given that it was an irrefutable matter of fact that the worldwide broadcasting of the Football World Cup set a stunning audience world record.

The pictures to Europe, both for Eurovision and Intervision, were principally live, even if recorded matches were also shown, particularly when there were matches played contemporarily (the case of the quarter-finals). Programmes for the rest of the world were mainly on 16 mm film rather than on video-tape. Mexico (for the matches in which Mexico were involved, and for the Final match) and the USA (for the Final match) had the chance to be fed a live transmission through the ‘Early Bird’ satellite.

The complete list of all the 75 countries that joined the broadcasting of the 1966 World Cup, either live or tele-recorded, thanks to the EBU and its Appointed Agent BBC/ITV Consortium (for Eurovision and Intervision members we will state the name of the television organisation, too) was as follows:

- Eurovision: ARD West Germany (1<sup>st</sup> Television Service); BRT Belgium (Belgian Flemish); CLT Luxembourg; DR Denmark; JRT Yugoslavia; NRK Norway; NTS Holland; ORF Austria; ORTF France; RAI Italy; RTA Algeria; RTE Eire; RTB Belgium (Belgian Walloon); RTM Morocco; RTP Portugal; RTT Tunisia; SRG Switzerland (Swiss German); SRT Sweden; SSR Switzerland (Swiss French); TSI Switzerland (Swiss Italian); TVE Spain; YLE Finland; ZDF West Germany (2<sup>nd</sup> Television Service).
- Intervision: BT Bulgaria; CST Czechoslovakia; DFF East Germany; MT Hungary; TSS U.S.S.R.; TVP Poland; TVR Rumania.

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<sup>18</sup> *Daily Mirror* [London] 30 July 1966.

<sup>19</sup> *The Times* 1 August 1966.

- Rest of the World: ABC Australia; Aden; Argentina; Barbados; Bermuda; Brazil; Canada; Chile; Colombia; Cyprus; Ethiopia; Ecuador; Greece; Honk Kong; Iran; Iraq; Jamaica; Japan; Kenya; North Korea; South Korea; Kuwait; Malaysia; Mauritius; Mexico; New Zealand; NBC New York; Peru; Philippines; Rhodesia; Saudi Arabia; Singapore; Sudan; Trinidad; Tunisia; United Arab Republic; Uganda; Uruguay; Venezuela.

Analysing the final report from the Consortium, there are some interesting curiosities that are important to point out. For instance, among the Eurovision countries only West Germany broadcast all the matches, either live or video-recorded.<sup>20</sup> The Opening Match was broadcast live in all the Eurovision and Intervision countries save Finland. The two semi-finals, the third-place final and the final itself were relayed live in all the Eurovision and Intervision countries. Semi-finals and Finals apart, the matches that stimulated most interest, especially in East Europe, were the ones in which Brazil was involved. Intervision countries showed more interest in the Hungary and Bulgaria games than in the USSR ones. RTP of Portugal, in spite of the successful campaign of Eusebio and company, was the organisation that broadcast the least number of matches (nine, but all live), while Finland had the lowest figures in terms of live programmes (only six). The organisations that televised the highest number of live matches were all from Intervision, with TSS of USSR the service leader in this special hit parade with seventeen matches broadcast live (followed by Belgian BRT, Dutch NTS, East German DFF, Czech CST and Polish TVP, with fourteen).

As for the rest of the world, in South America both Argentina and Brazil transmitted all the thirty-two matches (Argentina in 16 mm, Brazil in video-tape<sup>21</sup> and 16 mm), but none of them live. Mexico (fifteen matches, four live), Chile (eighteen) and Peru (seven) broadcast their programmes in video-tape and had their own commentary position on site. In Africa, Sudan relayed in 16 mm all the thirty-two matches of the competition. Rhodesia, in spite of the total ban on exports to that country, was able to buy from the BBC and relay 16 mm pictures of sixteen matches.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> On ZDF, the 2<sup>nd</sup> national service; ARD, the first television service in West Germany, televised only the West Germany matches and the other most important games. The two German networks made extensive use of their own video-recording facilities in London.

<sup>21</sup> Only the 1/8 finals games in which Brazil or Portugal were involved, with commentary position on site.

<sup>22</sup> 'A television recording of part of the World Cup series of Association football matches has been sold and dispatched to Rhodesia by B.B.C. Television Enterprises, the B.B.C. said. Government Departments were at a loss to explain how this export had slipped through the sanctions controls. The Commonwealth Relations Office could not comment. Government sources say there is an almost total ban on exports to Rhodesia, except for printed matter and humanitarian supplies. The best explanation offered was that the programme might remind Rhodesia of their isolation from the world.' – *The Times* 11 August 1966.

## Patterns of Viewing in Britain: “Shouting housewives!”

One issue that cannot be kept away from any analysis of the broadcasting of the 1966 World Cup is the one related to the huge audience figures that characterised the television coverage in the UK.<sup>23</sup> If the number of viewers who watched the first matches in the World Cup in which England took part on both television networks was equivalent to almost half the English population aged five or more,<sup>24</sup> “well over half the population of the U.K. aged five and over watched the World Cup Final on television last Saturday”.<sup>25</sup> To be more precise, the count made by the BBC Audience Research Department showed that 26,5 million viewers watched the match on BBC1 and 4 million on ITV, for a total of 30,5 million.<sup>26</sup> These figures were very large, although it is fair to point out that the BBC comedy series *Steptoe and Son* regularly drew audiences of over 50 % in October 1964, and also that some special events, such as the televising of Churchill’s funeral, had had audiences rivalling that of the World Cup Final. However, it is undoubtedly true that “there is little that can rival an actual big sporting event seen as it takes place”.<sup>27</sup>

The aspect that immediately strikes is the huge number of people, in terms of percentage, who have been spending their time in front of a TV set to watch the World Cup, no matter whether the England team were directly involved or not. It has been calculated that this massive coverage of the World Cup had, as more evident effects, an increase of time spent watching TV from a normal July level of about 11 hours 20 minutes per week to 13 hours 35 minutes, as well as a rise in size of the average audience from about 24 % of the population to about 29 %.

Delving into this analysis of the World Cup viewing audience, it is fascinating to observe the viewing patterns related to sex, age and social class. A very interesting aspect that emerges from this process is the extraordinary involvement of women as a new factor within the audience for sports. Male viewers, as expected, outnumbered the female ones, especially in the early stages of the competition. Nonetheless, for the Final match the disparity between the proportions of the sexes viewing was notably narrower, if not, as happened with the ITV audience, with an inverted trend of women overtaking the men.

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<sup>23</sup> The sources for the data content in this chapter are from BBC WAC, T14/3264/1, 17 August 1966; T14/3271/2, 2 August 1966; T14/3271/2, 17 August 1966; T14/3271/3, 1 August 1966. See also BBC, *The Coverage of Sport on BBC Television* (London: BBC, 1974) 13-18.

<sup>24</sup> “What the five-year-old thought of it would be fascinating to know”, *The Listener* 4 August 1966.

<sup>25</sup> BBC WAC, R44/810, 3 August 1966.

<sup>26</sup> “A further 2 ½ million listened to the live radio commentary on the BBC’s Third Network”, R44/810, BBC WAC, 3 August 1966.

<sup>27</sup> *The Listener* 4 August 1966.

Evidently the initial concerns, especially from the BBC side, about the reaction of British housewives towards this blanket coverage would twist their usual pattern of viewing (“some housewives, one understands, are complaining that the BBC is devoting too much time to the televising of the matches”),<sup>28</sup> turned out to be groundless. Peter Dimmock himself was quite surprised by this unexpected reaction from the female audience:

Housewives have begun to appreciate that football is not just 22 chaps kicking a ball about, but something involving a great deal of skill. A woman in front of me at Wembley on Tuesday was screaming ‘Hold it! Hold it!’ when she thought one of our players was going to pass too early. She told me afterwards she had never been to a match before. She’d learned it all from the telly.<sup>29</sup>

Just to give further examples of this general involvement of women in being glued to the TV set as well as their husbands and sons, we would like to submit to your attention some extracts from letters sent to Sir Alf Ramsey, manager of the England team, after the end of the tournament:

My husband and I arrived in England from Australia for short visit home. Glued to T.V. for every match of World Cup Series.

Although my husband, my father & son know a fair amount about the game, I’m afraid I know nothing, but I really must say again how I enjoyed the hours spent watching your team on the T.V. (Mrs Jean Spencer)

How extreme delighted we were to see Britain [*sic!*] win the Cup on our T.V.! (Mrs Maria Romans)

Thank you for giving so much pleasure to all who have been able to watch all your games on T.V. (Miss E. Fitzgerald)

My brother who is 90 years of age enjoyed every match on the T.V. and may I say only shouted for ENGLAND. (Ms Freda Perris)<sup>30</sup>

This new situation probably had as its consequence a change in the way of presenting the matches, adding to the usual technical commentary a rich series of stories and opinions that were not just strictly related to what was actually happening on the pitch, but that could present the protagonists in a different way. Probably for the first time, football players began to be seen as human beings rather than just footballers. Not normal human beings, of course, but people with a private everyday life, some of which to be shared with the wider audience:

Others felt there was too much talk altogether. Again, it is sometimes said that one does not want to hear about the number of children a footballer (or cricketer or tennis-player) has or whether he eats bananas for his tea, and requires only an accurate description of what precisely is happening and who is who.

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<sup>28</sup> *The Listener* 30 June 1966.

<sup>29</sup> Quotation from an unknown newspaper, T14/3264/1, BBC WAC.

<sup>30</sup> Letters of congratulation to Alf Ramsey. Courtesy of the FA Archives.

But can any rate women viewers [*sic*] be tempted to watch unless such tit-bits of information are used to gild the lily?<sup>31</sup>

It could be said that there was the beginning of the ‘age of the football stars’ (or of the ‘tabloid heroes’ era): not only did the sporting celebrities draw popular attention because of their skills, but even, and sometimes especially, because of their public/private lifestyle.

Even the way of televising the matches started to change, with the prying eye of the cameras trying to slip into the private side of the footballers’ life. In the specific case of the televising of the World Cup final this *pruderie* was satisfied by framing the “women of the heroes” amidst the crowd: “was it not fascinating to see last Saturday evening the mother of the two heroic Charltons and the blonde wife of England’s triumphant captain?”<sup>32</sup>

As a last note, as far as the social class of the viewers was concerned. Middle-class viewers were considerably less inclined to view the pictures and to listen to the commentaries than were those from the working-class., the audience appears to be sufficiently equally distributed between BBC and ITV, while talking about age groups, with a slight preference of the elderly for ITV.

## Conclusion

What conclusions can be drawn and what are the key points worth highlighting from this analysis of the organisation of the television broadcasting of the 1966 World Cup? First of all we would like to pinpoint how, from the point of view of the overall organisation of the tournament, television coverage was always given the highest consideration. Since the first steps in 1962 television was considered a necessary element, and, for instance, the grounds selected were chosen for their suitability to meet the demands of television, and television authorities influenced the scheduling of the matches.

Secondly, we would emphasise the major technological developments that characterised the broadcasting of the 1966 World Cup and which left an indelible mark in the history of television. As we have seen, it led the BBC to produce and develop the slow-motion machine. If we consider that two years later, for the broadcast of the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City, the outside broadcasting department of the BBC sought to provide the best-ever coverage of a sports event, making the maximum use of satellite transmission for live pictures and pushing their engineers to build a new colour converter, we can see how the televising of sporting events can be considered as an engine of technological development. Additionally, for the first time in the World Cup TV broadcasting history, there was a special ‘Interview Room’ for interviewing

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<sup>31</sup> *The Listener* 4 August 1966.

<sup>32</sup> *The Listener* 4 August 1966.

the protagonists of every match (and this, courtesy of Sir Alf Ramsey, caused some diplomatic turmoil between the England FA and South American Associations).

Thirdly, in relation to the audience, it can be said that the televising of the 1966 World Cup was a real best-seller, an extraordinary success and a world record: "Four hundred million can't be wrong". These figures, destined to grow and grow television spread around the world, show the exceptional audience appeal and the inescapable 'televisual' quality of football, on this occasion at its best in terms of importance, organisation, and television facilities. Furthermore, and finally, as far as the audience figures and patterns are concerned, we have seen how in 1966, for the very first time, TV broadcasting of football was no longer just a male business, but managed to attract the attention of a very large number of women. This new trend will be confirmed and reinforced two years later for the TV broadcasting of Mexico City Olympics, when the women will represent a huge factor within the audience figures.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See Chisari, Fabio, "An Armchair Seat at the Olympics – The BBC television coverage of the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games", *The Sports Historian* 21.2 (Nov, 2002): 1-22.