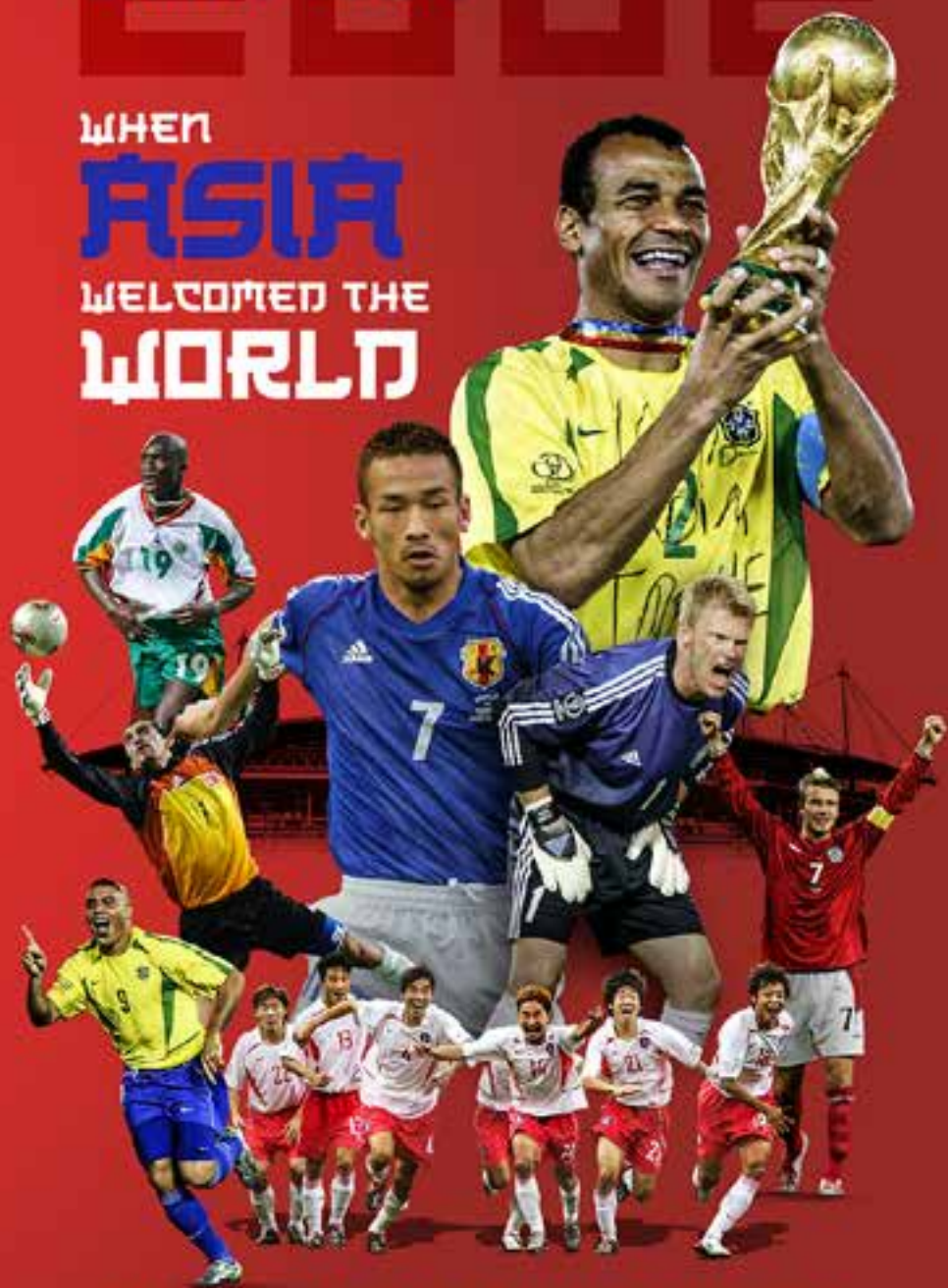


DANNY LEWIS

WHEN
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THE 2002 WORLD CUP REVISITED

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Introduction

FOR A six-year-old child who was only just getting into football, the 2002 World Cup felt truly magical. Every day there were games, I would do everything I could to catch a glimpse of the action, and there was even a television screen set up in my school where we could watch the England games.

Flags lining the streets, a pack of Panini stickers every time I went to the shops and *MATCH* magazine brought plenty of joy throughout the tournament. Even so, nothing at home – no matter how impressive – could compare to what was broadcast from South Korea and Japan.

There were so many incredible characters throughout the competition who couldn't possibly be ignored: Rüştü Reçber, the mad goalkeeper with lines drawn on his face; Oliver Kahn, who threw himself in front of everything; El Hadji Diouf, whose bleached hair was almost as eye-catching as his performances for Senegal; David Beckham, the star almost every England fan adored; Brazil's incredible trio of Ronaldo, Ronaldinho and Rivaldo who swept teams aside. Wherever I looked, there was a player ready to make me fall in love with football that little bit more.

Then there were all the major upsets, which showed me that anything is possible in football, and it is never guaranteed

that one team will beat another. However not everybody shared my youthful naivety, and those upsets that had caught my attention became part of what is now a divisive legacy for the tournament.

Unbeknown to me, there were calls of corruption that had helped certain nations progress, while there is also the argument that scheduling put the stronger nations at a disadvantage – in turn, making the upsets that took place less impressive or noteworthy in the minds of some.

No matter the wider opinion about the World Cup's 2002 edition, this is a tournament that has maintained a strong place in the history books and is still being looked at and discussed 20 years later – whether that's reminiscing on moments of brilliance or questioning decisions. This edition will always be historic as it was the first to be hosted in Asia, as well as the first to be co-hosted by two nations.

So this book will delve into the first time Asia welcomed world football to its shores, reliving those incredible moments that captured my attention so emphatically, as well as the things that have stained the tournament in the minds of many others.

Bringing the World Cup to Asia

SOUTH KOREA and Japan eventually became the first countries to co-host a World Cup, but that wasn't always the plan. The two Asian nations had initially gone up against each other (and Mexico) in a bid to host world football's biggest tournament. Both countries are said to have poured money into their publicity campaigns, partly fuelled by a historically poor relationship.

Eventually, the head of the Asian Football Confederation stepped in and the two nations were given an ultimatum: they would host the World Cup together or not at all. Mexico had always been deemed a long shot, so the pair had a straight run at co-hosting after the decision was made to partner up. There was even talk of some games being played in North Korea to help ease relations, but that was eventually ruled out.

There were complaints from some about the hosting situation. European fans were unhappy that they wouldn't be able to watch games at a time comfortable for them, while many questioned the logistical challenges of hosting a World Cup across two countries. The tournament's start date was also questioned, with the Asian climate playing a part in

the decision to play the first match just over two weeks after the Champions League Final and 20 days after the Premier League season ended.

Japan had never played in a World Cup when the hosting rights were awarded in 1996 – though they did in 1998 – which initially caused further questions to arise.

Queries even surrounded the Adidas Fevernova ball that was used throughout the tournament. Mick McCarthy said in *Ireland's World Cup 2002*, 'The ball is lively. It moves differently in the air, the bounce is unique and its unusual colour scheme deceives the eye as it comes up off the turf.' There were also issues with unused tickets being slow in being returned from the countries they were sent to.

There were positives as FIFA and the United Nations branded their partnership with a slogan reading 'Say Yes For Children'. The campaign was advertised at every game, aiming to encourage people to improve and protect the lives of children. Roger Milla was also brought in as an ambassador to help address AIDS during the tournament.

In addition, Japan and South Korea both heavily invested in their infrastructure to ensure they would be able to build and improve their venues so that they were up to the level required for football's biggest competition. In fact, eight of the ten arenas had 'World Cup Stadium' in their names.

No matter the questions that had arisen, there was a real buzz in the build-up as everyone waited to see who would be crowned world champions.