

## Living in Scotland Hasn't Turned Me Anti-England, England Have

Despite leaning more towards banter than malice, the Anyone-but-England shirts are, according to media reports, still selling like hot cakes. Or maybe that should be teacakes, considering the main areas of interest are in Scotland. However, I highly doubt that the frustration at the flood of constant puffery surrounding England's impending World Cup campaign is limited to 'anywhere but England'.

It isn't limited to just shirts either; the media have also picked up on the humble Mars bar, which is currently draped in the white and red of St. George, immediately branding it 'controversial', 'insensitive' and other such buzz words which awaken even the most passive Scottish football fan from their SPL-induced coma and realise that they should boycott them until everything's back to normal. Far be it from me to forget that it's always been a Scotsman's prerogative to stop the next English invasion at the drop of a see-you jimmy hat; the tell-tale sign that it's coming, apart from the Four Waist Coated Bulldogs of the Apocalypse coming over the Pennines, is the arrival of chocolate bars in slightly different packaging.

In truth, it's not so much a planned invasion of the rebellious indifferent Scots, as it is akin to giving a drunken man a loud-hailer and sending him into a crowded street; we're going to have to tolerate the English until they go away again, and that's coming from an Englishman. Oh heck no, the Scots are far from alone in being fed up with the hype machine; the source of indifference also stems from within the luscious cricket greens of Englandshire, as well.

Much like Red Nose Day, the loud drunk comes around every other year no matter how indifferent the country is. England are world beaters! England will win [enter any international tournament of the last 20 years] this year! Time to drape your flag over your Corsa and piss off the Muslims! Listen to Ian Wright and Chris Kamara tell you England are *just 7/1* to win! Bargain!

No, we've grown up. The footballing masses are watching much more South American and European League football. Gone are the days where we could be genuinely shocked that teams from France, Spain, Italy and Germany would make up the final four of the Champions League. Even outside of football, the nation became tired of being told what to make number one in the charts, or who to vote for. Now, more than ever before, we genuinely don't need to be told that England can win something, as we know better. We've made up our own minds. We've seen Messi, we've seen Sneijder, we've seen Ribéry, we like that grass on that side over Heskey, Crouch and Carragher.

It's that very point that makes everyone else hate us. England just cannot admit to being average, the equivalent of mid-table obscurity. The public have to endure the Mars bar wrappers, the rubbish musical pantomime songs, the TV adverts scarring portly ex-professionals, their careers in tatters across the cutting room floors (Barnes, Venables et al) Sending twenty-three footballers off to South Africa to play in an international tournament can be replicated up and down the country by mums and dads: fill your youngest kid full to the eyeballs of e-additives and send them out to play with some popular kids from a neighbouring school; the results will be almost identical - it always ends in tears.

Avid supporters may point out that I'm being too pessimistic over this and maybe that's true, but I tire of the 'Good ol England' bandwagon before the tournament begins. If you're going to choose a team that way, don't go for vastly overrated millionaires squeezing out one last hurrah from their international careers, go for a team who would openly admit to being underdogs, despite being pretty solid in their own right, a team who nobody has been talking about, and has been underestimating throughout the build-up, a team that hardly anyone knows about in their own back yard.

For that reason, I'm supporting the United States. For no particular reason than it might annoy Wright and Kamara. That, and of course, it's 'anyone but England'.