

Home TV Radio Talk Where I Live A-Z Index

Search

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[E-mail this to a friend](#)

[Printable version](#)

[Sport Homepage](#)

Football

[World Cup 2006](#)

[Live Videprinter](#)

[Results](#)

[Fixtures](#)

[Tables](#)

[My Club](#)

[Gossip & Transfers](#)

[Premiership](#)

[Championship](#)

[League One](#)

[League Two](#)

[Non League](#)

[FA Cup](#)

[League Cup](#)

[Scottish Premier](#)

[Scottish League](#)

[Scottish Cups](#)

[Welsh](#)

[Irish](#)

[Internationals](#)

[Europe](#)

[African](#)

[Women](#)

[Football Focus](#)

[Match of the Day](#)

[Score on BBCi](#)

[World Football](#)

[Skills](#)

[Laws & Equipment](#)

[Get Involved](#)

[606](#)

[Five Live>>](#)

[Daily E-mail](#)

[Mobiles](#)

[Fun and Games](#)

[Question of Sport](#)

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The alternative World Cup

By [Caroline Cheese](#)

What with bungs, diving, rising wages and falling crowds, the beautiful game's image has taken a battering lately - but there are people who still believe in it as a force for good.

This month heralds the first staging of the Viva World Cup, a tournament for those nations and peoples excluded by football governing body Fifa.

They include Monaco, which has fought a long battle with Fifa to gain official status, and Lapland, the region in Northern Scandinavia occupied by the Sami people - who include Blackburn Rovers midfielder Morten Gamst Pedersen among their number.

Not that Pedersen, a Norwegian international, will be pulling on a Lapland shirt when the Viva World Cup begins with an opening ceremony on 19 November.

The tournament has been organised by the NF-Board, a football body founded in 2003 to represent non-Fifa nations.

The four entrants have funded their own participation, with many other nations, including an Aboriginal team, having to withdraw their interest because of a lack of sponsorship.

"Money is the recurrent problem," Viva World Cup vice-president Georges Wuethrich told BBC Sport.

And Wuethrich believes it is a vicious circle: Fifa inclusion would solve those financial problems but football's world governing body cannot afford to give official status to any more smaller nations.

"It is a problem for Fifa," he said.

"It already includes 207 nations, which has led to complaints from some of the larger countries, so recently the criteria for inclusion has become much stricter.

"That's why the Faroe Islands is a Fifa member but Greenland, which is right next door and has a similar population, is not.

"Kiribati is an independent republic in the Pacific Ocean. It is recognised by the United Nations, the Olympic Committee and several other international bodies - but not by Fifa.

"It is my own view that it comes down to money. I believe Fifa is interested in countries that bring money, rather than cost them money."

Despite the griping of larger countries about the questionable benefits of playing smaller nations like the Faroe Islands, the NF-Board believes simply in the "right to play competitive football".



What? Viva World Cup
Where? Hyères les Palmiers, Côte-d'Azur, France
When? 19-25 November 2006

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"We have respect for Fifa and we are in contact with them,"
NF-Board co-founder Jean-Luc Kit told BBC Sport.

"Our goal is the same: to get people playing football."

The Viva World Cup begins with a showdown between
favourites Monaco and Southern Cameroons on 20 November
at the Perruc Stadium.

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