

We Still Believe

By Max Snell

I cannot start to clarify the fervour I have for football.

July 11th, 2018. England Vs Croatia. In the World Cup Semi-Finals. The day the entire nation had been hanging tight for. The time was as of then: 3:50pm, ten minutes before kick-off. I remained in a multitude of individuals, outside, in the searing, sweltering, scorching sun, all trusting that the time would eventually reach the fourth hour.

You could not ask for a better day, with the departed clouds leaving the sky for the sun to take up space and the atmosphere... well the atmosphere was simply unprecedented. The clamour made from fans with individuals chanting, shouting, cheering, created such an overwhelming experience, and it was going to be a memorable day. You could feel the confidence all around, this was England's year. At long last something to cheer about. Wherever you looked, you could see the enthusiasm pouring out of each individual, there was a look of faith in everybody, and that essence of solidarity in the pints of beer. (Obviously, you generally have those men with their tops off, with their barrel of a stomach exposed and their blood being made of liquor by now). It was clearly disturbing for a few, however to me, it just added to the entire experience, oddly enough.

It was nearly time for kick off; you did not need to take a glance at the time to figure that, the area turned out to be so unimaginably confined and cramped as hoards of people began to take their positions to watch the game. I was directly in the center, all things considered, with sufficient space to see the football on the screen in addition to breathing in all the excitement going on around me.

As the clock crawled to four o'clock you could see the players beginning to prepare to go to the pitch and impact our country forever. The two teams advanced onto the pitch and the sound of cheers and adulation gulped the country. We as a whole watched with unadulterated energy and passion as the players arranged to take their place to sing their anthems.

Croatia had completed their anthem and it was then England's turn; I have never felt and heard such passion, heart and emotion in my entire life. Our anthem started and, as one, we started shouting it; late with the music however, we always are, yet that didn't remove the craving for victory from all of us fans countrywide. We as a whole, at long last, felt as one for once and each part of the nation was in concordance with one another. As our anthem of praise and pride reached a conclusion; everything finished with a powerful thunder of elation from all the Three Lion fans. The clamour proceeded, right to when we heard that first whistle to begin the match. It was going to be hard to hear that whistle blow, with all the commotion going on. Together, we watched the players take their positions as it was nearly time for that exceptionally significant Kick-Off whistle. We watched the clock commence for that second, and the expectation was possessing me, nearly killing me. All the cheering and bellowing changed into a countdown, with everybody watching each second that happened upon the screen.

Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one.

The Whistle Blew.

The noise around intensified.

The atmosphere grew substantially.

Four impassioned minutes had passed and for each minute it was drawing us in, exciting us, making us believe and then...

England had built up an attack. They were attacking in numbers, charging towards the Croatian goal yet in an instant, an England player was fouled, just outside of the Croatian box. Screams came from around me for a freekick and you could hear a reverberation coming from the screen of fans at the game shouting for exactly the same thing. Be that as it may be, the Official blew for a freekick and this turned into an opportunity for England.

We all observed restlessly for the freekick to be set up. The longer we waited, the more the strain began, once again taking the air.

The Croatian wall was being set up and the ball was placed by Kieran Trippier. The wall was set and the goalkeeper was planted to his spot waiting for the ball to be kicked. Trippier removed his means back from the ball and prepared himself to strike it. We all simply waited for the referee to blow his whistle to allow it to be taken. For a couple of moments, we all paused, it was an unfathomable length of time. Silence had burned-through the entire country at this point. We paused, the quiet had gulped the atmosphere around me, although we were wanting it, surprising us, the referee blew his whistle.

Tripper stepped up and struck the ball.

The country's heart stopped beating for a moment.

We all watched the ball fly over the wall and pass the keeper that was still rooted to his spot.

GOAL!

The country thundered in excitement as pints of lager were flung into the air, they were quickly forgotten about. The wave of tumultuous applause and cheers could be heard wherever you were as the roar of the fans soared across the nation. The belief had grown substance. Maybe it was England's time. Maybe this really was going to be the golden era. Was it our time? It sure did feel like it.