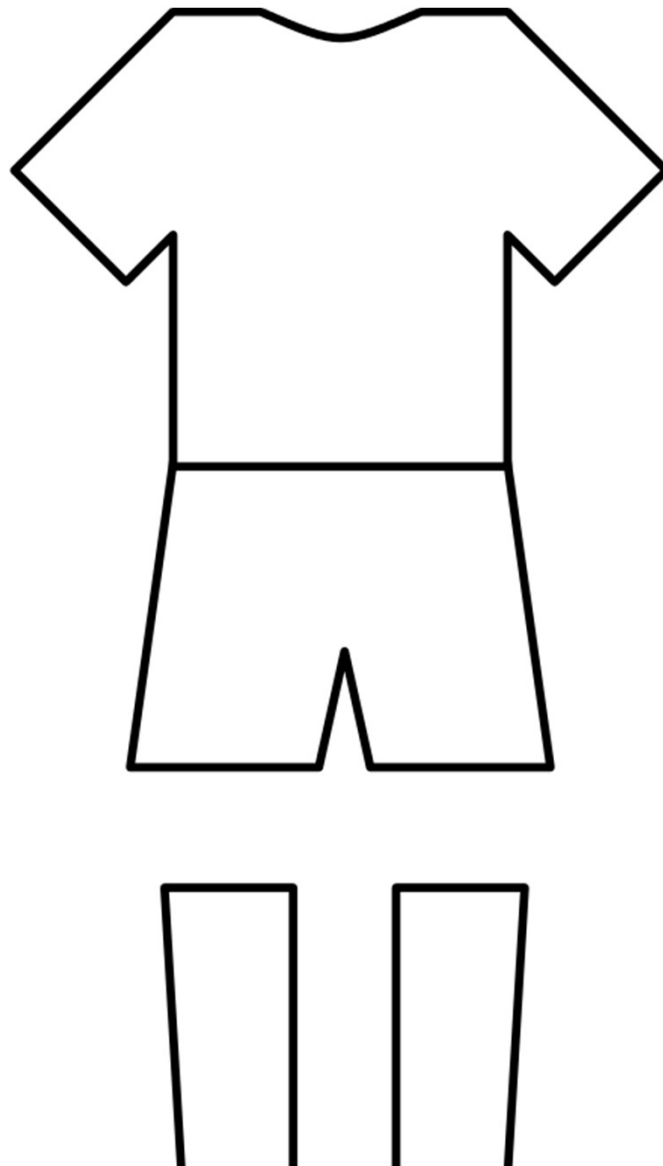


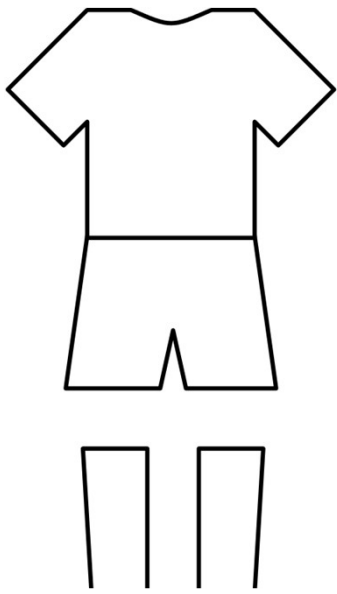
# The Perfect Football Shirt



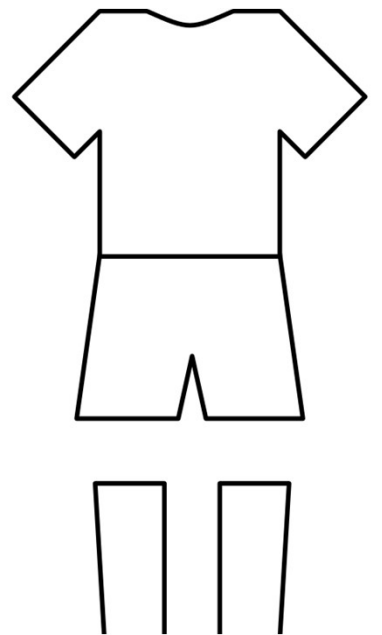
By Stan Stanger

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# INTRODUCTION



In the early spring of 2020, there was a significant world event that changed the lives of a lot of people. A global pandemic, not experienced for multiple decades led to a change of pace in life. Home-schooling, working from home, Zoom *nights out*, and more virtual quizzes than you care to count became the new normal for many.

COVID-19 had a huge number of negatives, which cannot be ignored, but at a time when we were being told you could only leave the house once a day, it became incredibly important to cling onto parts of your life that were positive (no pun intended) One momentous positive in my experience of the COVID-19 was falling back in love with a passion that had taken a sideward step, mainly down to *growing up*, having a family, and focusing on a career; namely prioritising what I thought was important. Of course, all those elements were, and still are important but having time to be able to rediscover a hobby and then being able to embrace it has been so much fun, and a reminder to me not to stop doing the things that make you happy, however quirky, or geeky they may be.

My hobby is football. It always has been, and I am now fairly convinced it always will be. During the 2020 lockdown, I created my own online football magazine, The Halfway Line, to help me kill time and I could not have enjoyed doing it more. No bad time for a plug, so feel free to take in some of my issues at [www.thehalfwayline.org](http://www.thehalfwayline.org) but what also happened during that time was that my love of football shirt collecting was re-ignited.

At around 12-13 years of age, I had a notepad containing template after template of football shirts that I had designed myself as I believed my destiny was to be a football shirt designer. What I wouldn't give now to find that notepad to admire and critique my attempts in those early teenage years. By then I already had the collecting bug, and my designs were fuelled by my early accumulation of Arsenal shirts, which soon evolved to shirts from leading European teams that I was being exposed to on television. Before that, my exposure had been primarily to domestic football teams with the opportunity to have sight of the international offerings during major tournaments every two years. Football magazines and the introduction of foreign leagues being televised in the UK opened my eyes to a new and improved world of football shirts and my collection began to grow. Teenage distractions, and then being tricked into growing up happened and my passion and the collection hit a wall.

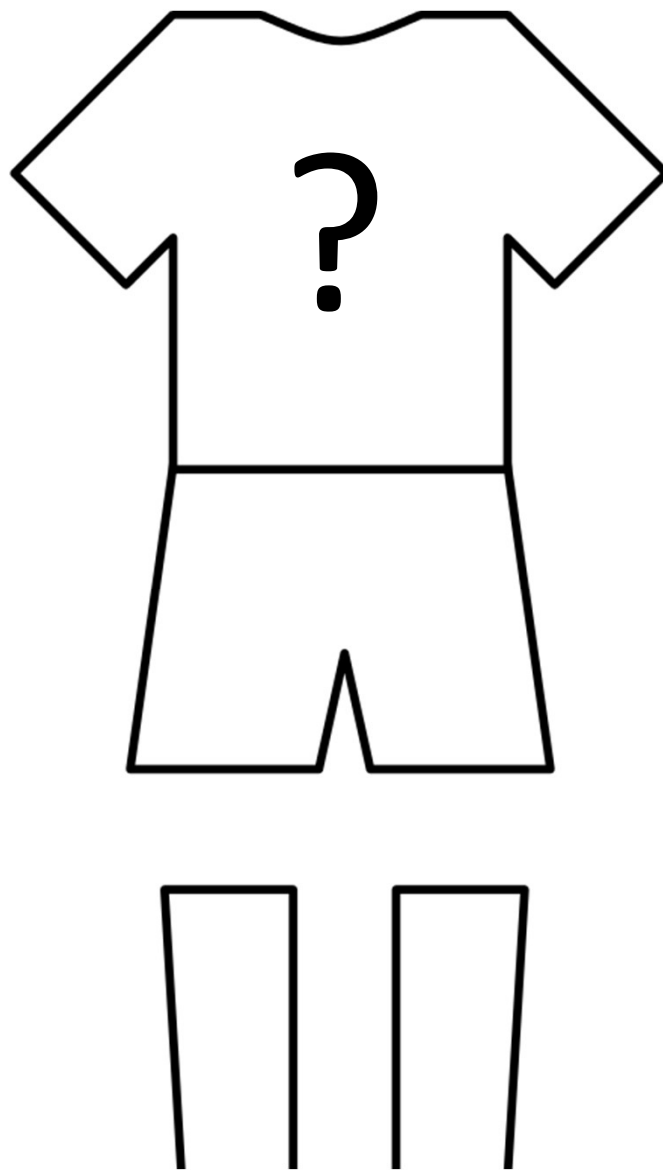
On to 2020 and to the COVID lockdown and aided by an emergence of online retailers selling football shirts and an ever-growing community of enthusiasts on social media my exposure to football shirts blew up! Interaction with others who shared the same passion and seeing the wide range of collections on show had me spellbound. Accepting that this hobby is OK to have, and be involved in, and does not mean you are a geek/saddo/loser was and is, just downright fantastic! The buzz was back, and yes, a new notepad was purchased!

There are hundreds of thousands of football shirts. Old and new. The number will only ever grow. The commercial world of football, as it is today, means football clubs' desire ability to sell merchandise, globally will not waiver. Home shirts, away shirts, third shirts, goalkeeper shirts, European shirts, special edition shirts, tribute shirts, and even fan shirts. The great part of this is that every shirt out there has the potential to be somebody's favourite. Be it a new release, or one from the archives, there is often a personal reason behind a particular shirt being someone's most treasured. It could be a particular memory you have from a game or a season or you might hold a shirt in high acclaim because a certain player you worshipped once wore it. It could even be that it was the first shirt you owned. A personal football shirt collection can contain shirts with all of those histories and more and can be 2 or 1000 shirts. It might be that the diversity of shirts in your collection makes it a never-ending quest to have a favourite, but if faced with the question, "Your house is on fire, and you can only save one shirt; which one do you save?" every collector will know which is *the one* that gets rescued.

The caveat is I am a 40-year-old male, and I am very aware that this is all based on my history and intake of football, which is exclusively focused from 1990 and onwards and concentrated on the male game. So, there may be a silky mid-1980s shirt or a female shirt that is the perfect shirt out there for someone and the truth is I just do not know about it...yet.

This is not my attempt to change your mind on your favourite shirt, nor to say my opinion is correct, nor, is it trying to argue that your favourite shirt has to be the perfect shirt, but instead, it will set out the factors that need to be considered to answer the question: what makes the perfect football shirt?

If we put all those factors together, can we then say we have the recipe for the perfect shirt?



First of all, let's try to cover why do people buy football shirts? The wonderful thing about this question is that there is no wrong answer! Whatever your reason, it is your reason, and no one can argue with you as to whether it is right or wrong.

Think of it this way, in a box of chocolate Celebrations, some individuals, unbelievably, pick out the miniature Bounty options. Shocking I know, but that is the reality; some of us out there have different tastes. Now all of us buy boxes of chocolates, but in football shirt land we are no Forrest Gump's – we know exactly what we want and what we are going to get! (Unless of course you head down the mystery box route!!)

As said in the introduction it is the story behind the shirt, the linking to an era or a game or a certain player or another link to an occasion, that means every shirt bought has a unique story and it is the uniqueness that is the driver. That is until you share your purchase with the community and discover a group of others just like you that share the same rhyme and reason for owning that shirt.

Deny it if you dare, but football shirts are a way of life. Growing up as a young teenager in the early 1990s, I knew Arsenal supporting families that would only own electronics that were made by JVC. The entire entertainment system in the lounge was kitted out by the Japan Victor Company, purely down to the fact the company name adorned the front of the Arsenal shirts at the time.



I am in no doubt this approach was replicated across Mancunian families in the same era only prepared to watch You Bet and Blind Date on a Saturday night on a Sharp Electronics TV. I hope that the Arsenal family are more flexible nowadays in choosing what airline to fly to their holiday destinations, or it could be slightly costly!!

Football shirts are a serious business, and they can even help you make day-to-day decisions. Picture the scene; you have been sent out to go and buy some pasta for the dinner. It just so happens a new Italian deli has opened on your High Street. You head straight there, and it turns out there is one hell of a selection of pasta options, and you are by no means a connoisseur to know which is best. On the first shelf you come to there are two brands, 'De Cecco' and 'Barilla'. The immediate association with the classic AS Roma shirts of the 1980s and early 1990s makes the decision a no-brainer, and the Barilla is in the shopping bag, job done.



Associations with football shirts can even change your mood. Imagine you are being dragged around shopping in Germany on what was supposed to be a romantic trip away with your partner. You have been sold a dud; you're bored and see no end of the pain. All of a sudden you have a spring in your step as you've entered an S. Oliver store and you're now prancing around as Andreas Moller did in a golden Borussia Dortmund Nike home shirt from 1998, with the very same clothing line inscribed across the shirt. You are now keen to get a bag from the assistant with the store name on it to take back as momentum from the trip. Weekend saved!



A shirt collection (2 or 1000 shirts) is personal to you, and you should never be told differently. It is no coincidence that in my eBay account, my last two watched items are a Portsmouth home shirt (2002) and a Walsall home shirt (2003), both with 'Merson 10' name sets on the back of them. Paul Merson scored the first-ever goal I saw as a youngster at a live match on April 17th, 1991. He struck the opener for the Gunners in a 2-2 draw on a dark Wednesday evening against Manchester City at Highbury. He became my favourite player and with it (now) comes the burning desire to own his club career played out in football shirts. The association of a player in a shirt is a magical connection. I dare you to look me in the eye and tell me you would turn down a Manchester United, Real Madrid, LA Galaxy, AC Milan and PSG offering all with Beckham (7, 23 and 32) on the back. No chance you would. Everyone has a favourite player and to express that with a collection of shirts is a cracking way of celebrating an idol of yours.

Then you have the club you follow. Come to the late July release date (as it should be), but more likely the last home game of the season date, you are treated to next season's offering. This is where you find yourself buying shirts that you don't necessarily love, but instead feel the need to help assist the growing club shirt collection. An astute collector may wait until the following August to pick it up in the sales at a reduced price. I think a shirt collector's biggest single club haul will be the club they follow as a fan. I think the beauty of having a solid collection of shirts from the club you follow is the memories it brings with it.

Memories are priceless, and if you can cast your mind back to celebrating a Cup win family, or a European adventure with mates just by looking at a shirt on the rack, isn't that a special thing? You would do the same thing with a photo, no? People are known to keep particular dresses that were only worn once as it brings back happy memories. Wearing a football shirt 38 times for a season and then keeping it forever, surely that makes sense as well.....

If an era has grabbed you, then it can dominate your collection. If you look back with fond memories of watching James Richardson plough through pink newspapers whilst sipping on an oversized cappuccino and snacking on an even more oversized pastry, then a collection of mid-90s Serie A shirts might just be your personal choice. A Fiorentina Lotto shirt with a 7Up sponsor or an ERG logo emblazoned across an Asics Sampdoria shirt, or even a Danone print over a yellow Kappa Juventus away shirt would not look out of place hanging in a gallery, so there is no embarrassment if they are hanging in your wardrobe.

Personally, a look through my collection of Parma shirts from the nineties immediately brings thoughts of Faustino Asprilla scoring at the San Siro, Gianfranco Zola and Mario Stanic banging in spectacular goals, and the emergence of talents such as Hernan Crespo and Enrico Chiesa. One look at the shirts can transfer me straight back to the moments I lived and loved as a kid. Christ, every time I see the Umbro Lazio home shirt of 1993, with Banca Di Roma on, I say in my head, Golaccioooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo! I am not on my own with that right?

The 'accidental fluke' is quite often present in a collection. As a Brit-Pop fan in the mid-'90s, I and six mates, when entering into a 5 a-side football tournament decided to buy matching Manchester City Away Kappa shirts with the Brother sponsor from the 1997 season.

The shirt remained in the cupboard and 24 years later it hangs proudly in the collection, in the classic section. I was Mad for It then, and for varied reasons, I am Mad for It now.

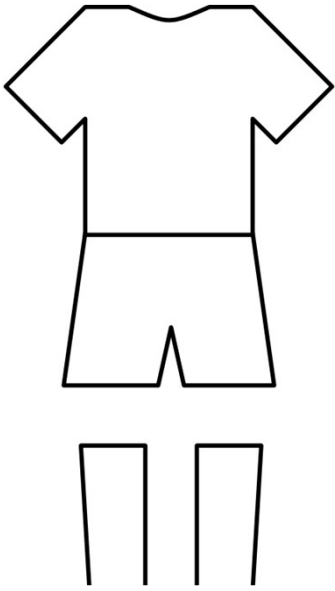


Not one to avoid difficult conversations, so let us be honest and look at another factor behind why people collect shirts. It is what the youth call FOMO. The Fear of Missing Out. It is no secret that in today's world several influencers are utilising the platforms of social media, and if one of these 'cool' people has a particular football shirt, or tells you that you must have it, then you pounce. I am guilty of it myself. I owned a Norwegian nation team away shirt because those that influence me told me it would be a future classic. I have no affiliation with Norway, I have never been to the country, and I do not hold any Norwegian players of this era in high esteem, but luckily, I really liked the shirt and yes, I wore it when I watched Frozen with my kids! There is an occasion for every shirt you own you see!

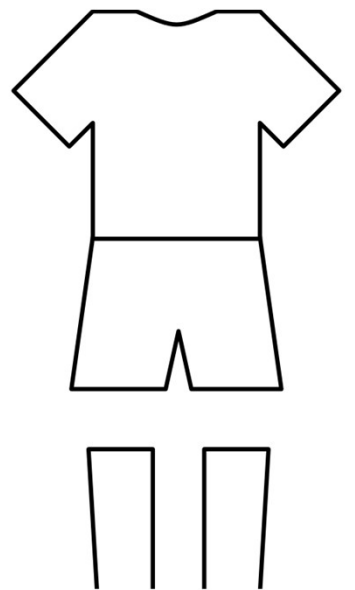
Ultimately your collection is the one that matters, everyone else's (with tags on or without) is merely an example of someone else's opinion.

So, there are multiple reasons and opinions why to collect football shirts, and the reasons touched upon do not suggest the collector's dream is to find the perfect shirt but it should be a hell of a ride to work out what that perfect shirt could look like.

Let us start the journey in our virtual Inter Sports high street store and see what the contributing factors and configurations need to be to find the perfect shirt.



COLOUR



The first cut is the deepest, so let us deal with the hardest factor in the search for the perfect shirt, the colour of it. There are quite a few options, but combinations could help here.

Some things in life are just meant to be combined, like Tea and Biscuits, Apple Pie and Custard, Tom and Jerry or Neil Warnock and Paddy Kenny. The same can be said for some colours on football shirts.

Starting with a somewhat cult colour combination, made famous in the 1990s with Bundesliga giants Borussia Dortmund. Neon Yellow and Black. Many a person has had tea and biscuits as well as Apple Pie and Custard, but despite the undisputed success and demand for the Borussia Dortmund home kit range from 1990 to 1998, not many, if any, have followed suit. That is surprising as the near luminous shine of the neon yellow is complimented by the bluntness of the sharp black.

The total offering from Dortmund with the neon yellow and black colour combination in the 1990s was nine home shirts. Eight for the Bundesliga games, and one additional for their European adventure in 1996/97. That European shirt, as well as the home shirts from 1991/92, 1992/93, 1993/94 and 1996/97, stuck firmly to the colour combination, it was **only** neon yellow and black. No other colours were invited. Additional white features appeared on the other shirts, in the main of the shirt or on the collars. The fact that the sponsor was also in black along with the manufacturer logo and club badge, this duo colour combination is firmly on the shortlist.





Club bias is going to have several opinions with this factor blurred by rose-tinted glasses, or that should be red-tinted glasses or blue-tinted glasses.

Club colours rule the home kits of all football clubs all around the globe with a vast number of offerings having a sole colour dominating the shirt. The red of a Manchester United, Benfica or a Bayern Munich shirt or the blue of a Chelsea, Glasgow Rangers or a Napoli shirt make the shirts instantly recognisable. Most of the time the dominant colour is accompanied by white, but not in equal measure. Hardly rock science you are thinking...So far three main colours have been mentioned, and they are the primary colours, Yellow, Red, and Blue, backed up with Black and White!

The point here is I want more in a shirt than just one colour, but must recognise why there is a place in the wardrobe for the plain colour shirt.

Luckily home kits can and do benefit from more than one colour, and it just so happens the combination of the latter two primary colours ticks a lot of boxes for us.

Blue and Red is a faultless partnership and when combined in equal measures we've another two colours on the shortlist. It has now dawned on me that we should of course be calling this the shirt list and will do so moving forward.

A notable example of the combination can be seen with 1995/96 Bayern Munich's home shirt, and it would be amiss not to include the Crystal Palace home shirt of the following season. Simple but extremely effective colour combinations. The Bavarian club, aside from the 2014/15 offering has since 1997, avoided the equal red/blue balance, leaning more toward a red-dominated combination, before fully outing the blue from 2015.



Crystal Palace, has, and rightly so, retained the balance.

Throughout the search for the perfect shirt, I will do my best not to focus on just the 'higher-tiered' clubs around the globe, but if we are talking blue and red combinations, we need to bring Paris Saint-Germain to the table. Specifically, 1993 to 2001. The colours are not by chance, as the city of Paris' flag is blue and red. Since 2001 the red feature and its involvement have varied, until finally the home shirt offering of 2021/22, saw the red vertical feature disappear altogether.



I'd preferred it to have remained, as I like the colour combination and if a shirt can retain some tradition in these commercial times, that goes a long way to making that perfect shirt.



If making a perfect shirt and the only remit was it's for a club in the Dutch first division, the Eredivisie, then there is only one colour combination worth discussing. Traditional yes, effective yes, but in this context not very original. The leading clubs in The Netherlands, based on league title wins are Ajax Amsterdam, PSV Eindhoven, and Feyenoord. Ajax has won it thirty-five times and been runners-up on twenty-three occasions. PSV's record reads twenty-four wins, fourteen runners up and Feyenoord has won it fifteen times and won the best supporting actor some twenty-one times. What links them all? Their kits are red and white. If you include club side AZ Alkmaar and FC Twente, who both play in red and white kits, you must go back to the 1963/64 season for a team not in red and white to win the Eredivisie! Fifty-seven seasons! Red and white is a great combination and its on the shirt list.



Will Smith once told us, “The good guy’s dress in black, remember that...”

There are 3 categories that the black kits can fall into:

**1 – The Originals 2 – AIK and 3 – The trend followers**

The black shirt right now is very fashionable, very in vogue, and ticks the box for an extremely attractive-looking strip.

Those pre-2018 had an intuition that this would be the case.

We see examples of European giants Manchester United, Juventus, AC Milan, and Real Madrid with a black away kit with very simple designs, but the dark colour allows for the sponsor, kit manufacturer, and other details to pop out and be all the more striking.

Then in 2018 AIK struck. Along with Nike, the Swedish top-flight side released a classic black kit and it sold out within minutes of the release. The design blacked out everything. The Nike tick, the club badge, and the print across the middle of the shirt. It is an awesome offering and so slick. That kit with a pair of blacked-out Copa’s, and you are suddenly the James Bond of football players. The club has followed up the blacked-out kit with other limited-edition releases, all extremely sought after, successful, and bloody good-looking.

And post that the trend was set and they all followed. Chelsea, Inter Milan, Paris Saint-Germain, Monaco, Barcelona, Manchester City, Wolverhampton Wanderers, and even international sides Portugal and Holland. All producing away kits that are predominately black, and it just works.

So much for the fashion trend, the likes of Glasgow Rangers and Liverpool also released black shirts that are fan's shirts. Fully blacked-out shirts that are not for the first team but are released for only the fans to wear.

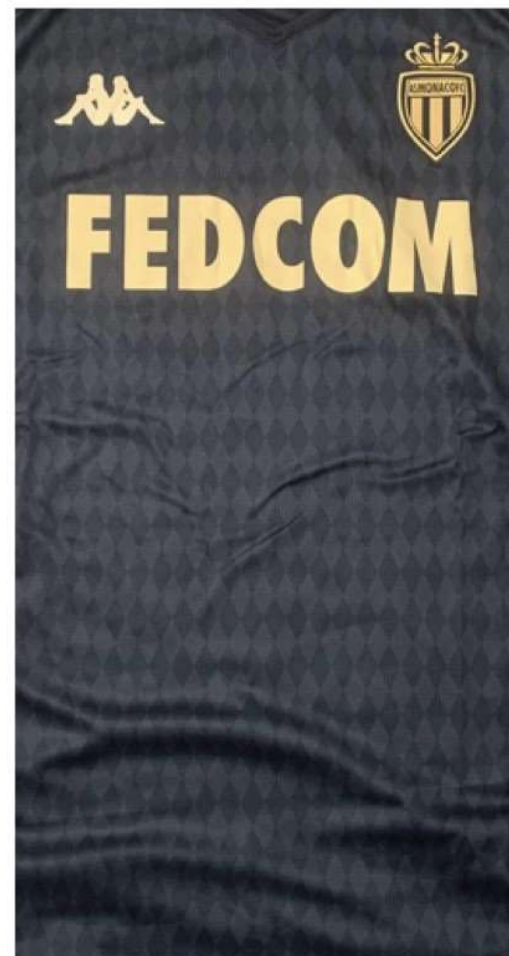
The trend has continued with celebratory kits. Not often Borussia Dortmund and Torquay United are mentioned in the same sentence, but both released 'blacked' out kits to recognise significant anniversaries.



The one outlier in the black offering is that of the Los Angeles Football Club. Founded as recently as 2014, LAFC is a wearer of a black kit, but it is their *home* kit offering. Not many have gone down that route but for us, that decision should be widely applauded.

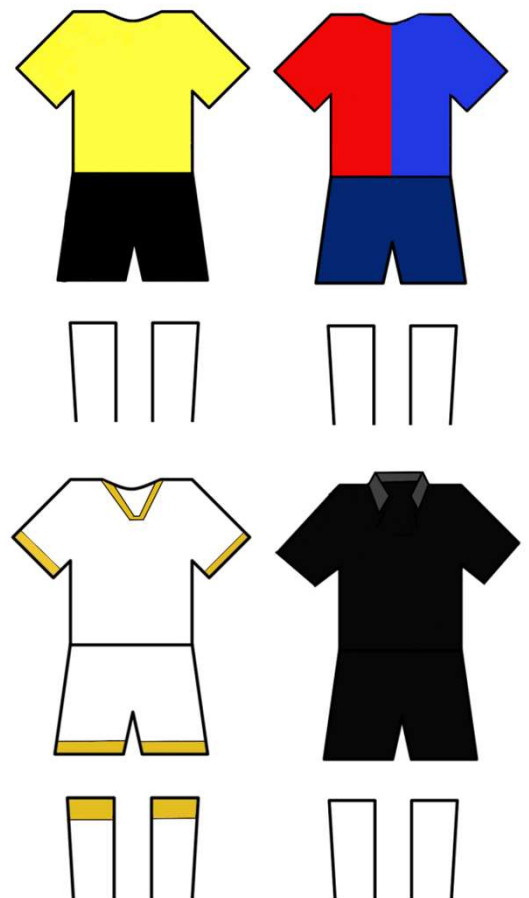
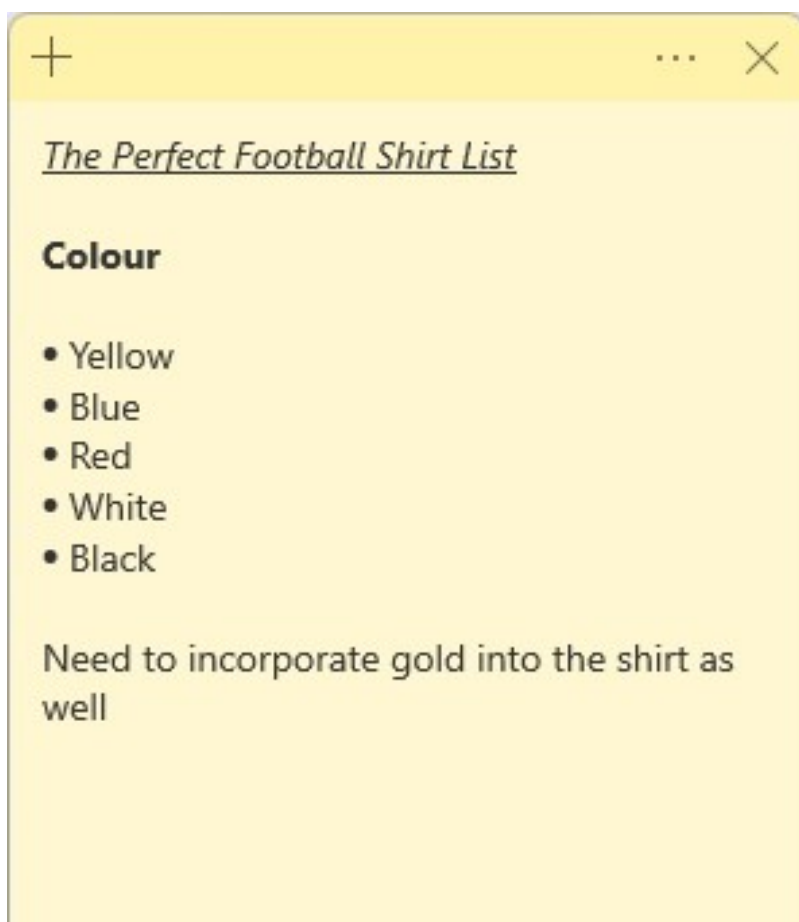
The LAFC home offering in 2020 was, for me, the standout kit from their releases, as the kit manufacturer sign, the club badge and the shirt sponsor were in the colour gold, which was set off beautifully by the jet-black kit. If we are looking for an accompanying colour to compliment a kit, we may have struck.... gold. Excuse the pun.

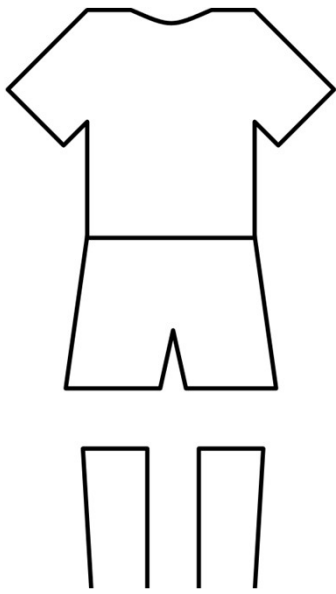
LAFC, Chelsea's home shirt in 2012/13, Real Madrid's home in 2019/20, the latest AIK Solna limited release in 2022, Arsenal 2005/06, Swansea City 2012/13, Southampton's red home kit in 2012/13, Monaco's away in 2019/20, Copenhagen's 2013 away and even another mention of Torquay United (2019) have featured gold as the secondary colour to the shirt and it's not just because of the arrogance the colour carries with, it is just so pleasing to the eye, so it goes firmly on the shirt list.



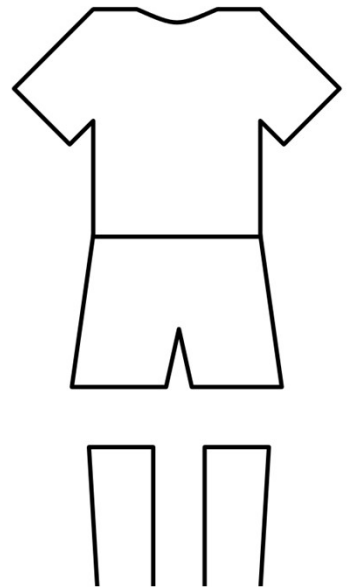


Far more colour combinations are hitting the rails in this era of football shirts, and it is becoming OK again to wear the shirts as fashion items, as well as when going along to support your team. It is not just multiple colour combos, but also colours that perhaps clubs and individuals weren't brave even to embrace. Pink shirts and even rainbow colour offerings are more prominent, which is a huge development in the drive to break down barriers in football that had previously been so hard to break down, as these colours and combinations may well not have been accepted.





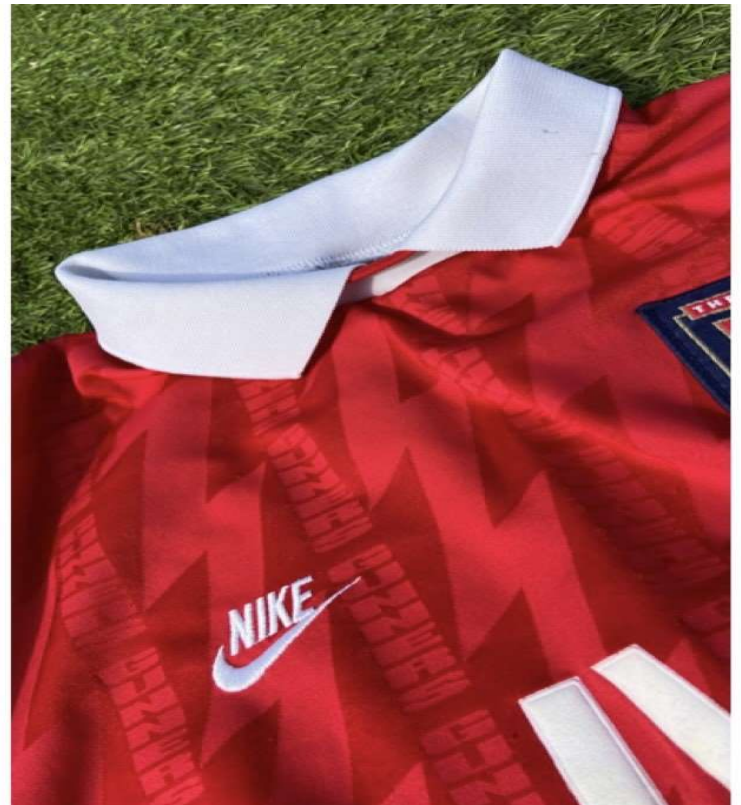
**COLLAR**



Can a collar make a shirt? Ask Eric Cantona!

It may not make or break a decision to purchase a shirt, but it is an incredibly important factor to consider when putting together the perfect shirt. To start with I thought this factor would be limited to collar or no collar, but it is way more than that.

But let us start with the basics. In simple terms, the shirt can have a fold-over collar, that, as we referenced can be turned up by the player. It was not only Eric Cantona who styled this look, but fellow Old Trafford striker Dwight Yorke was also partial to a little extra starch on his collar for it to be worn up. The alternative is a round neck or V-neck collar, that takes away the extra folded over material. Again, we've seen Premier League strikers make their style, with Ian Wright, when at Arsenal, constantly tucking away the collar on the 1995/96 Nike home and away shirts to have it look like a round neck.



A round neck or V-neck sounds of limited variety, but designs can still differ.

One option for the V-neck is to make a greater statement with it and make it a big V-neck. A capital V if you like. The Marseille 1996/97 offering, both home and away, and the Newcastle United 1996/97 away took the design of a thick V-neck collar, and along with the 3 Adidas strips incorporated works to a successful effect. Hard to argue that the Welsh international shirt of 2006, or the Everton home 2009/10 is a roaring success as the design of the V seemed overly large and dominated the design of the shirt too much.



Round neck collars, well are the plain digestive biscuit of the shirt collars. Everyone has some of them in the cupboard, they are ok and somewhat inoffensive, but never going to be the favourite choice.

To me, the round neck has a place, but it's a t-shirt, or a warm-up/pre-match shirt, not a matchday shirt.

Monaco in 2006 with a Puma design tried to jazz up a round neck collar with an off-centre slit. The expression you can't polish a turd, but you can roll it in glitter springs to mind.

A variation on this theme is the 2021/22 Glasgow Rangers anniversary shirt. A round neck collar, with a left to the centre row of buttons. Innovative yes, looks like a misshape in the factory, and for the reject pile, yes. Nevertheless, a nice segue to buttoned collars.

When done correctly (i.e., centrally) this is a great addition to the shirt and an accessory that would not be lost on a perfect shirt. A great example of this working on a collar would be the 1995/96 Newcastle United home and away shirts from Adidas. On both shirts no less than four big bold buttons as a feature coming down from the collar.

Blackburn Rovers home shirt offering from Asics in 1996/97 season bought three buttons to the collar and did not look out of place.



There are examples of buttons with a fold-over collar on the shirt, but if a round neck is the home for a T-shirt, then a fold-over collar and buttons are the home for an office shirt, not a football shirt, at least, not the perfect one.

A common substitute for the button is that of the popper, and although I have mentioned it, it doesn't need to be considered. Similarly, with that of the zip. The Manchester United home shirt of 1998/99 was accessorised with a zip from the collar. I can only hope Ryan Giggs never caught one of his chest hairs in the zip when getting ready before a game.

A definite inclusion on the shirt list, when it comes to the collar design is that of the lace collar. A dying fashion, the early nineties was a wash for lace collars. The addition of a crisscrossed piece of shoestring-like material adds an almost vintage touch to the shirt like it is a nod to the olden times when football was in black and white, and players' shorts looked like something MC Hammer took inspiration from.

It is no surprise when football clubs release centenary or celebratory kits, quite often the lace collar is resurrected.

Great examples from the early Premier League years saw clubs such as Chelsea, Aston Villa, Ipswich Town, Sheffield United and the inaugural champions Manchester United don the lace collar, and this was mirrored in Italy with the likes of Roma, Reggiana, Parma and not to mention the trilogy offering from Sampdoria. Others worthy of note are the Ajax away kit from the 1993/94 season, and Benfica's double offering with away kits in 1997/98 and 2003/04.



Other alternatives to the collar feature can be to incorporate the club's name, and colours, or even the nation's badge or colours.

We have seen Barcelona and Boca Juniors include the club's badge and nickname at the base of the collar, which is a nice discreet touch, as was the inclusion of the three lions' badge on a button on the 1994 England home shirt, but we would question the inclusion of both that badge and the badge on the chest.



The Republic of Ireland used their collar to great effect on the 1994 home shirt, combining the three colours of the nation's shirt. Instantly recognisable, and a fantastic feature on the shirt.





Alternatively, the space at the base of the collar makes a great spot for the sports logo from the actual kit manufacturer. Great from an advertising point of view for the brand, but we are not sure that is a motivation for the perfect shirt.



The turnover collar could well be going in the same direction as the lace collar. At the start of the 2021/22 Premier League season, just one of the twenty clubs had a turnover collar on their home shirt offering. There is definitely a place for it on the perfect shirt, however.

The only remaining question would you believe is the size of the turnover collar. England's 2006 home shirt had a tiny turnover collar fitted to the shirt, although big enough to hide a St. George's flag beneath it. That is a lovely touch, though not big enough for us.



A decent size turnover collar can then incorporate a brand's logo, and jazzy pattern, the club's name, or as mentioned, a nod to the club's colours.

That is why big turnover collars are going on the shirt list.



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*The Perfect Football Shirt List*

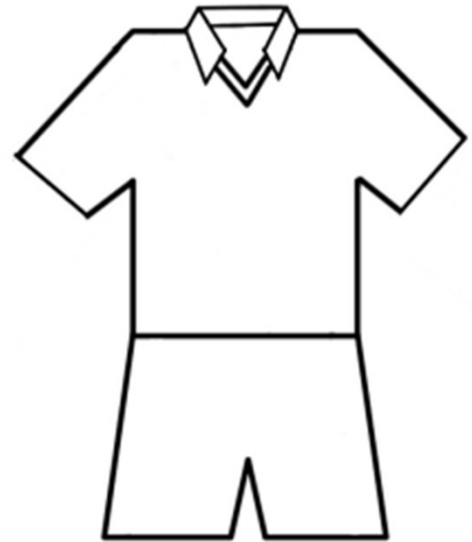
**Colour**

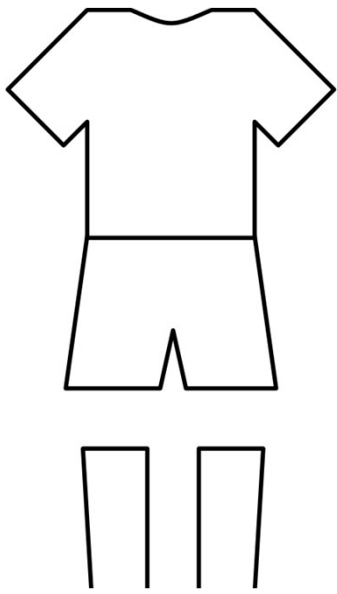
- Yellow
- Blue
- Red
- White
- Black

Need to incorporate gold into the shirt as well

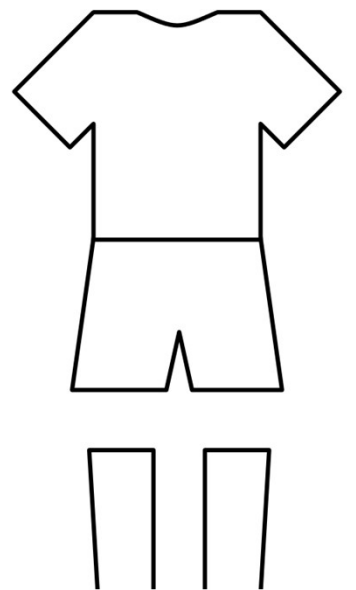
**Collar**

- Turnover collar
- Of size
- Lace collar
- V-Neck
- Pattern/colours
- Not plain





MANUFACTURERS



Every fan or football shirt collector will have a favourite brand. As a teenage boy in 1994, the delight I took in Arsenal switching from Adidas to Nike was in line with the joys I took with the club's new summers signings. To be fair that summer's player transfers in were Stefan Schwarz, John Hartson, Chris Kiwomya, and Glenn Helder!

At the time though I was team Nike and the America brand designed Gunner's kits and they did a rather good job. Fast forward 18 years, and it's evident that Adidas is doing an equal if not a better job with the club's kit designs, however, a little bit keen on multiple 'drops' each season.

Adidas and Nike have and will continue to dominate the football shirt offering, as in the main they are the biggest sporting brands globally.

To tackle the manufacturer's aspect of the perfect shirt, I will look to tackle the chapter by splitting it into categories.

- The big players and their templates
- Old School
- Old and now retro *cool*
- New Kids on the Block

## ***The big players and their templates***

To go through the offering of great Adidas and Nike football shirts would require a follow-up effort (not ruling it out if this goes well) so instead for these two brands I will look at something they've done significantly well in the past, and that's design and produce template kits that multiple clubs and nations can wear. Very often club shirts are the easily identifiable ones because of colours and sponsors but the design of a branded kit means you can effortlessly know which brand has made it.

**Adidas** carry with them a very advantageous characteristic. The brand with three stripes can very handily be incorporated into the design of a kit, as we have already seen with the collars reference in an earlier chapter. Moving those three stripes onto the main design of the shirt can have some seriously impactful designs.

Starting with the bold efforts, we are a huge fan of the over the shoulder number. In 1991 the Adidas template of three thick bold stripes on the right shoulder of the Bayern Munich home and away kit was a thing of beauty. Not to mention the colour combinations worked perfectly. An instant classic, and transferable across clubs and nations. Beneficiaries of the template included Liverpool, Silkeborg IF of Denmark, Olympic Marseille, even into lesser-known leagues with Aris Limassol of Cyprus and then to the national teams of Sweden, Finland and The Republic of Ireland.



The template continued for multiple seasons, with its presence growing over more European leagues. The design also evolved, and in the 1993/94 season, Adidas extended the three stripes to also appear from the bottom left of the shirt. The stripes would never meet allowing for the shirt sponsor to take centre stage. Bayern Munich again fashioned this design on their home and away shirts, along with fellow Bundesliga club side Stuttgart.

Arsenal in their last season in the 1990s associated with Adidas had the design on their away kit, as well as home offerings from Belgium giants Anderlecht and Standard Liege.



The ease with which the template of three stripes can be manipulated around the shirt is a real gift. The next evolution was to drop the over the shoulder number, and instead have both sets of three stripes come up diagonally from the bottom of the shirt, sitting at the base of the rib cage. This template was again adopted by multiple club sides, Liverpool the highest-profile, but also national sides, which also coincided with a huge international tournament. The World Cup 1994, hosted by the USA, saw four nations have the template as their home shirt. Romania, Norway, Bulgaria, and Sweden with the latter two meeting in the third-place fourth place playoff.



The 1994 World Cup also saw Germany style an Adidas template, which steered away from the three stripes, but its effectiveness can not be argued against.

Imagine a giant eagle's wingspan and place it over the neck and shoulders of a football shirt. Then alternate the diamond-like shaped feathers into colours that match the country's flag. It works right? The nations of Spain, France, and Argentina (away) took the template of an off-centre vertical stripe of three lines of diamond shapes, but the eagle wingspan is brave, innovative, and different but in a class of its own. National sides with slightly less success than the Germans adopted the design, namely Georgia and Latvia. Club sides also wore the design. Hapoel Haifa and Bnei Yehuda of Israel, BVSC-Dreher of Hungary, Austria Vienna, FC Aarau of Switzerland, and Besiktas of Turkey were amongst the European club sides to style what I am now calling the Eagle wingspan design, as did River Plate in Argentina for their away kit. The closest rival to bettering the German nation team version is the Mexican club side, Club America, whose more colourful version challenges the very best of them. Add to the fact that the home and away kit followed the same pattern and template, this is a huge factor when discussing the perfect shirt. More to come on that later.



Stay with me on this one for one more moment, as we began to put together the images of the perfect shirt. Indulge me and shut your eyes and imagine a Bayern Munich home shirt with a red, white, and blue eagle wingspan across the neck and shoulder and tell me that is not potentially a thing of beauty. Absolutely one for the kit design notepad.



**Nike**, although giants in the football kit space now, their first venture into branding football in Europe was short and surprising. In 1983 Nike manufactured the shirts of Sunderland, though likely more to do with the location of their factory as opposed to the global pull of the Black Cats. Nothing to write home about on the kit, however, and it was not until the Arsenal partnership in 1994 when Nike appeared in the UK again on football shirts. Now of course Nike offerings are two-a-penny, and they produce some nice kits.

The latest to fall into a type of template follows the design is shown here on the Republic of Korea 'Zebra' kit, where the material on the sides of the shirt come together and form a zigzag like lightning bolt strike. This is visible in others like the 2020 Norway away 'ice' kit, the Jumpman PSG fourth shirt in 2020/21, and the 2019 Kaiser Chiefs, of South Africa shirt. It's a nice finish, but it's not on the shirt list.



The Perfect Shirt

Instead, we go back in time to 2004, at the start of the European championships. The tournament was hosted by Portugal and their national team had their shirts designed by Nike. It was part of the Nike Total 90 range, and the templated shirt was so simple, yet effective. Three other nations, Russia, Croatia and the Netherlands also wore the Total 90 template in the tournament, and then from the August of 2004 for two years, the kit design seemed to be everywhere.



The Arsenal Invincibles follow up season, Brazil national team, Manchester United, Valencia, Basel, the Australian Socceroo team, USA national team, PSV Eindhoven, Porto, Inter Milan, Juventus, and plenty more.

The fact that it travelled to so many teams is a compliment to the design of the template. As said, it is simple and effective and made what it is by three easy features, two of which were not always on show.

Firstly, the Nike tick. On show on every Nike kit that had ever come before, but a slight tweak in it's positioning and suddenly, a classic template was born.

The tick was moved up ever so slightly and moved closer to the shoulder on the right-hand side of the shirt.

A change so small and discreet, yet makes the shirt stand out immediately.



The second feature, which didn't carry over to every team was almost like an internal border on the shirt, front and back. From the back view, it looked like the player's number was almost framed, and with some of the players that donned the Total 90 template, rightly so! The framing feature from the front seemed to help focus on the Nike tick, the club or nation's badge and the sponsor like it was giving those details centre stage.

The third feature, that only appeared on the national shirts, was the player's number on the front of the shirt. International football, certainly in Europe had only begun featuring players' shirt numbers on the front of the shirts from the Euros in 1992, incidentally, the first tournament to also include players' surnames on the rear of the shirts. The Total 90 template for the international team's shirt added a circle around the number, which fits nicely with the rest of the Total 90 range but made for an eye-catching feature on the shirt.

Rumours are unsubstantiated that when Manchester United took on the Total 90 template, Sir Alex Ferguson requested a special range to be produced and called Total 90 +5, in case his team was losing as the full-time whistle was approaching.



## *Old School*

Many a kit manufacturer come and go; some remain but are in the shadows as large corporate brands dominate the playing field.

Brands such as Admiral, Pony, Diadora, le Coq Sportif were all in the pack as football grew in global audiences and interest post the highly successful World Cup in Italy in 1990 but looking at the current day offerings, they are not overly present. The old-school brand offerings for this section are still in the game, but their past glory days are behind them.

**Umbro** was very much in the pack in the 1990s and can point to an association with some remarkably successful teams, both domestically and internationally. The era they found themselves in you could argue may not have had the most imaginative shirts, but what Umbro did, they did with a vanilla approach. Nothing too fancy but pleased the majority.

As an England supporter, it is difficult not to look back on the Umbro offering with memories, sadly not all great. All my childhood memories and tournaments from 1990 through to 2012 were England-based, and England Umbro kit-based.

Gazza's tears, Lineker being subbed, 'it's coming home,' Owen's solo run, Beckham's redemption, the Golden Generation, and a lot of penalties. Umbro was with me all the way. Memories play an important part in the perfect shirt configuration, and as proven with the above recollections, they do not always have to be successes.

A tournament that sticks in my mind, and this time due to the absence of England, was the 1994 World Cup, and it was an Umbro shirt worn by the eventual winners, Brazil. A fraudulent slip not to mention the yellow, green, and blue combination in the colour chapter, because let us face it, the Brazil nation kit colours are harmonising when combined. The almost golden yellow of the shirt matched off with the green turnover collar. The collar not only

includes the Umbro diamond logo, but also the nation's name on the rear. The V-neck collar is finished off with a nod to the country's footballing federation.

The Umbro brand name is thickly stitched on, in all its glory, all in capital letters, which is seldom seen in many other



brands on football shirts (bar perhaps Nike in the mid '90s), and within the shirt itself there are three oversized Brazil nation badges, emblazoned across the midriff. This is a beautifully designed kit.





Success was not absent for the domestic clubs Umbro was associated with. For the first decade of the Premier League, Manchester United wore Umbro-made shirts including the 1999 treble season, and for the entire ninety's decade, Ajax Amsterdam's kits were made by Umbro. The Ajax home shirt of a structured template of white, red, white would challenge any kit manufacturer, but what Umbro did superbly as have their successors, is excel at the away kit design.

A sign of a strong, classic shirt is when regeneration takes place. Kit manufacturers recognise shirts of the past and relaunch them with a modern take on them. It has been seen with Arsenal's blue lightning bolt kits and bruised banana kits, as well as the likes of Real Betis, Roma, and LA Galaxy, all basing new shirts on old classic designs of yesteryear.



What about a shirt so good, it has been relaunched twice?

Umbro made the Inter Milan kits in the early and mid-nineties, and in 1997 released a third shirt, which would be made famous by the then FIFA World Player of the Year, Ronaldo Luís Nazário de Lima.

The shirt was hooped mixture of dark grey and blue and light grey, with ever so discreet lighter blue trimmings, bright yellow sponsor print, and the capital letters of Umbro, also in yellow to the right of the club badge.

There was also a graphic of the club badge submerged into the short print. An instant classic made even more stunning by the performance of Ronaldo, culminating in a UEFA Cup final where he would perform, and excel on the world stage, not for the last time.

This Umbro creation has indeed been reincarnated twice since, both times by Nike. In 2004 as part of the Total 90 template, the grey hoops, and stand-out yellow features returned, and once again in 2021, Inter Milan's away kit was dark and light grey hoops, a yellow text sponsor, and a brand logo placed towards the right shoulder. This offer even carried over the blue trimming. What makes the three times offering even more remarkable, is that despite the 23-year difference between the first and third kit, the same sponsor is featured across the shirt. Will get to that later in the book.



A mark on Umbro's behaviour card is that of the Celtic shirts of 1997 through to 1999. The club kits were manufactured by Umbro, and inexplicably also sponsored by Umbro – a double whack of Umbro. It is not that we are against Umbro, but no shirt sponsor should ever be the same as the shirt brand unless the desire was to create an imperfect shirt. The Celtic offering can lay to rest with the Bolton & Reebok, the Leeds United and Admiral, the Norwich City & Asics, and the Derby County & Pumas partnerships.

The second offering of a kit manufacturer that enjoyed the dizzy heights of the 1990s is the Italian sports brand, **Lotto**. Lotto warrants a place in the discussion not based on any templates or easy to stop shirts, but more so for the variety of shirts they produced.

Understandably we start in Italy, and with Fiorentina. First, it is a shirt that goes against an argument of mine for the perfect shirt. Imprinted and embedded designs of the kit make brand should not be permitted. A football shirt should not be the opportunity for the brand to cake their logo across the shirt like advertising hoarding.

That said, the Fiorentina home shirts of 1991 and 1992, that do feature the Lotto logo, upon mass over the shirt, look quite good. The colouring (purple on purple) and the scratch effect produced on the Lotto logo make the design subtle enough for our approval. The away shirt from the 1991/92 season, also grabs our attention. Yes, there is a Lotto logo amidst the spillage of purple colours through the centre of the shirt, but it is cleverly camouflaged with the triangular shapes used as the design.

Using the main colour from the home shirt and incorporating that into the away shirt is a massive plus for us when considering away shirts. Who says the perfect shirt must be the home shirt? Lotto tripped up the following season in 1992/93 as their away shirt offering for Fiorentina featured what appeared to be multiple swastikas – this somewhat tarnishes their previous efforts!

Staying in Italy, Lotto was charged with designing the shirts of AC Milan from 1993 to 1998. As with the challenge of creating inspirational Ajax home shirts, the same can be said with that of AC Milan. Lotto made no moves to change the red and black stripes associated with the home shirt, and with that combination, why would you?

The standout offerings were from the 1995/96 season. The away shirt is all white, except for a red and black vertical line through the centre of the shirt. Again, the nod to home shirt colours is noted and makes the shirt instantly recognisable. Even the third kit, although a striking English mustard type yellow, the lining on the collar and sleeves is red and black. The simple yet effective approach proves quite the compelling argument.





The Lotto design of the fourth kit from that season strikes as somewhat of a freebie, and you could argue not needed. That is backed up by the fact that the team never wore the shirt in a competitive fixture. It does allow showing off the fact that a season later the equally glamorous Grimsby Town styled the exact lotto design.



Many others have fashioned Lotto design in Serie A, including Genoa, Palermo, Udinese, and even a return from Fiorentina, but we leave the Italian Lotto offerings with the 1998/99 Parma home shirt. The yellow and blue were a significant change from the predominately white shirts the club had worn since the 1920s. The change to yellow and blue, “Gialloblu” was a tribute to the club’s colours upon creation back in 1913. It paved the way for the club to wear the colour combinations for the following six seasons, though Lotto parted ways with Parma after the first season. More to come on this later.





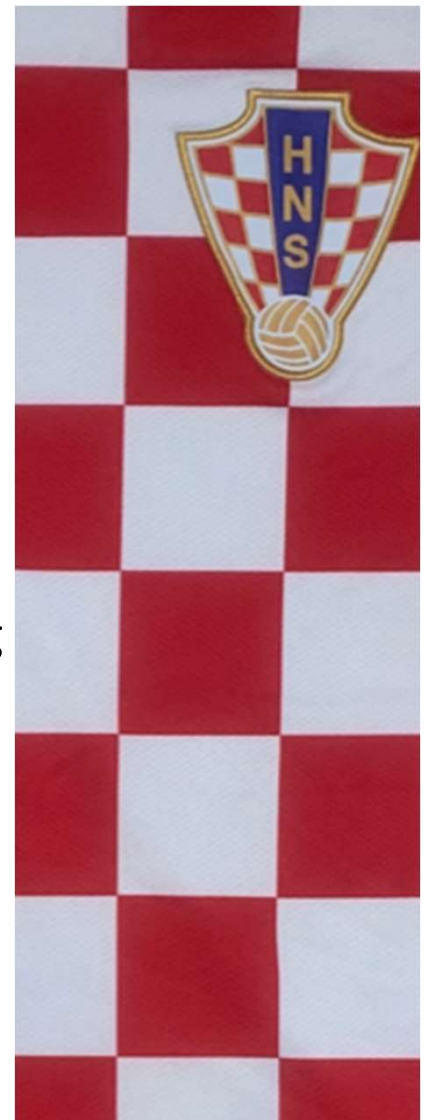


Lotto has also created international kits, and the 2006/07 offerings for Serbia & Montenegro, and Ukraine were their attempt at templated kits. Club sides Palermo, Udinese, as well as Real Zaragoza in Spain, used these designs. This is alongside the team Nazionale Stilisti, a team of Italian designers that comes together once a year to play a match.

If the design is good enough for a team of Italian designers, the home of fashion, then surely it must be on the shirt list. Not only do we love the almost target-like design, pointing to the club badge, but it is also using the gold colour as the secondary shade.

The final Lotto international kit design to mention must be that of Croatia. In their inaugural international tournament, Croatia won over fans in the Euro '96 campaign due to their entertaining style of football, insanely skilful footballers, and of course their national football shirts. The red and white chessboard effect on the shirt pays homage to the country's coat of arms and makes it one of, if not the most recognisable football shirts in world football. The 1996 Lotto away shirt continues the theme with the coat of arms, this time with a pattern that continued down the sleeves of an otherwise plain white shirt. The sight of Davor Suker chipping Peter Schmeichel in the shirt was one of the most memorable moments of that Euro '96 tournament.

Speed forward two years from then, and to the nation's first-ever World Cup in 1998, and the home shirt somehow surpassed its predecessor. Lotto outclassed not only old Croatian shirts but arguably produced the shirt of the tournament. The full chessboard effect was replaced with a flag-type effect draped across the right shoulder and the front of the shirt. Each red square on the pattern had a grey shadow beneath it, giving it an added dimension to the shirt that hadn't been seen before. Lotto finished off the design with the red and blue trimmings on the collar and sleeve ends and a centralised brand logo and nation badge. The highest quality offering from Lotto, that in my view they have yet to better.



# Old and now retro cool

The Umbro and Lotto brands certainly made their marks in the 1990s, but we've two brands for this section that was prominent in the 1980s and 1990s, appeared to go away for a while, but are now firmly back with a bang.

First up is **Hummel**. The Danish-based sportswear manufacturer I think somehow won the 1980s for football shirts, certainly for English domestic club sides. The chevron design that accompanied most of their designs in that decade is so eye-pleasing.

Southampton, Coventry City, Aston Villa, Norwich City, Middlesbrough, Sunderland, Wimbledon, and Tottenham Hotspur all carried the V-shape design, down the sleeve. This was also adopted by Feyenoord in the 1980s as well as European giants Real Madrid and the national sides of Wales and Norway.

The standout Hummel offering from this era is unlikely to come as a surprise. The Danish national team, for the 1986 World Cup donned a templated home and away shirt that would be welcomed as a kit combination in the modern-day. Somehow Hummel incorporated a half and half design, yet also a striped offering at the same time. Added to the shirt were of course the chevrons down the sleeve and the kit was an instant classic. The Southampton shirt mentioned is a carbon copy and just because of the sponsor, it should not be held in any less esteem.





In the 1990s the Hummel kits remained, but the chevrons become less and less evident as a key feature, and the Hummel kits' impact also reduced, similarly in the 2000s. The re-birth is on however and in the last ten years, Hummel has started to produce high-quality designed football shirts once again. The most pleasing to the eye was the 2021 Denmark third shirt, which took inspiration from the 1986 design but added a further element with an all-red approach, despite somehow retaining the half and half & striped design. Madness, but it worked, and an extraordinary shirt was born.



In vogue club offerings coming out of the USA recently and have become very marketable, examples being Forward Madison and Providence City FC. These Hummel designs, plus the Premier League appearances with Aston Villa and Everton are great to see, but for the hunt for the perfect shirt, although we are pleased Hummel is back, it is the 1980 designs that are we going to add to the shirt list.



Next up is **Kappa**. Three of the most successful European clubs in the 1970s and 1980s were Ajax, Juventus, and AC Milan and somehow, under the radar from 1986 to 1989 Kappa sponsored all three clubs. The brand was headquartered in Turin, Italy so the Juventus link was a little easier to understand. The shirts were conservative and were a little easy on the eye, but no wow factor.

The deals for Ajax and AC Milan expired as we have learned already with examples of other brands, but Kappa retained Juventus and added Spanish giants Barcelona to their CV. It was then in around 1992 and onwards when the brand exploded and all thanks to two people, sitting down next to each other back-to-back. The Kappa logo.



The Ajax away kits in the late 1980s had carried the Kappa logo down its sleeves but it was not until the increase of clubs added to the brand's repertoire that its true quality shone.



The sight of multiple Kappa logos sprawled repetitively down the shirt sleeves of clubs like Barcelona, FC Porto, Monaco, Vasco Da Gama, Gremio, Red Star Belgrade, Real Betis, Sparta Rotterdam is dreamy. The trend travelled to England and was styled by Manchester City.

Even the previously reluctant Juventus buckled and sported the logos down the sleeve in the 1999/2000 season.



The player association with these kits added to their value. Ronaldo at Barcelona, Romario at Vasco, Jardel at Porto, Ronaldinho at Gremio, Denilson at Betis, and to buck the Brazilian trend, Georgi Kinkladze at Manchester City and Dejan Savicevic at Red Star. The kits seemed shinier, the players looked cooler, and it was a time when wearing football shirts was acceptable.

Then the unfortunate happened. In 2000 the Kombat kit appeared, and the multiple Kappa logos disappeared. In the search to establish the perfect shirt, you must discount some along the way.

Do not get me wrong the Roma, Auxerre, and Napoli amongst other kits that Kappa produced in that era aren't the worst, but these have to be put to one side. Even the slightly amended offerings where a giant Kappa logo appeared on the shoulder, popping up at Borussia Dortmund and Werder Bremen, does not sit right. Some of the later designs, where the repeating Kappa logos were visible on the hip part of the shirt were certainly improvements. The black and gold Monaco shirt had that, as well as many of the Napoli offerings.



The concept of 'sizing up' is a strange one. Perhaps it is the older (and wider (not wiser)) adult rejecting these. A perfect shirt must be one that the players and the fans can wear and enjoy.





The good news is Kappa is on the way back to what they do best.

The reaction to 2021/22 Venezia releases was huge, and no coincidence the multiple Kappa logos along the sleeves returning played a part in that, and the new shirt released for the likes of Bari and Vasco Da Gama suggest Kappa has realised in this instance, less is not always more.



Once you have settled for your kit manufacturer, you would think that was it. It is never that easy. Consideration for what display of the manufacturer you want on the shirt needs to be given. Shirt designs vary over the years, and so do the way logos are presented on kits. For the shirt list, I am favouring just the logo and leaving behind the text. Surely you cannot be as bold as Nike when they produced the Italian national shirt for the Euro 96 tournament, and no Nike tick or wording was present on the shirt!



# The New Kids on the Block

To make the shirt list you need to have been around the block a bit and we have seen the stiff competition from the brands already covered, and there are of course plenty of established manufacturers of football shirts that were not mentioned. So, whilst we will not sample selections or details of the newcomers, we can say to the Macrons and the Castores of the shirt manufacturing world, that there are lots of pointers to take on board.

Get it right and you are firmly in the game or get it wrong and you are long forgotten.



**C A S T O R E**



## The Perfect Football Shirt List

### Colour

- Yellow
- Blue
- Red
- White
- Black

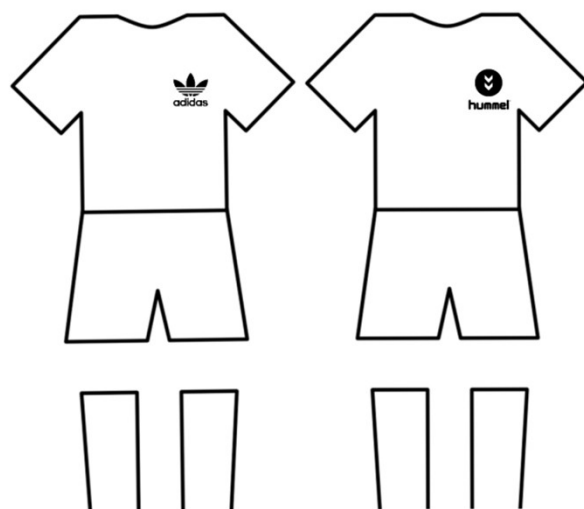
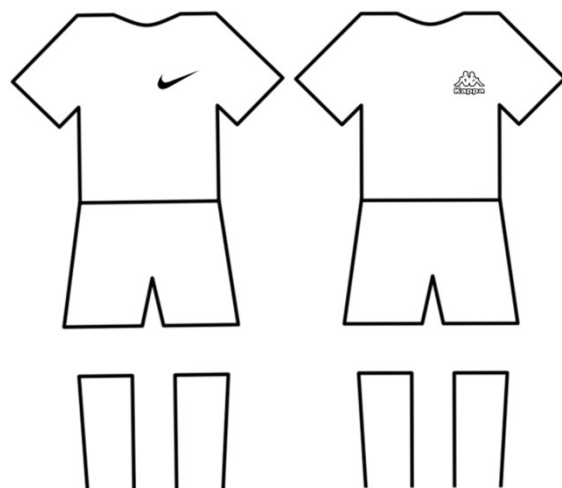
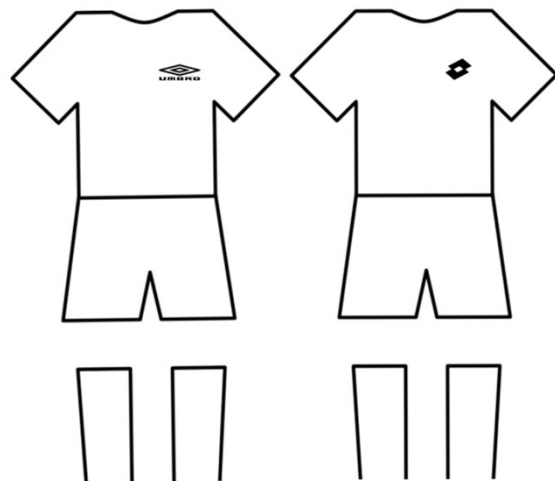
Need to incorporate gold into the shirt as well

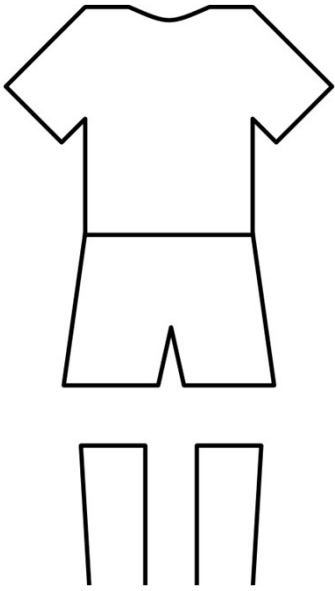
### Collar

- Turnover collar
- Of size
- Lace collar
- V-Neck
- Pattern/colours
- Not plain

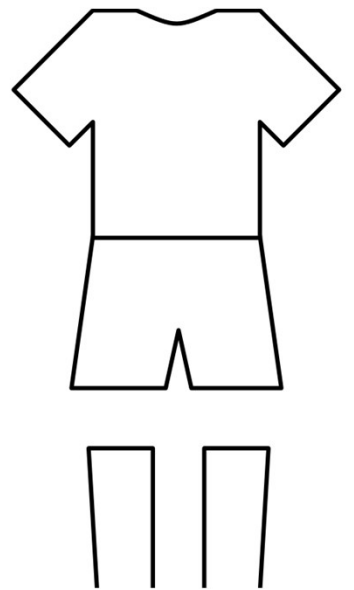
### Manufacturers

- Adidas
- Nike
- Umbro
- Lotto
- Kappa
- Hummel





# SLEEVES



It was better to get the Manufacturer's chapter done first before we moved on to the sleeves. As you find out, it plays a key role.

The first debate for the perfect shirt is long sleeves or short sleeves. In the style of Brian Clough, listen to both sides of the story, and then we'll go with my view. Why would you go for short sleeves, when with a long sleeve version, you can roll them up if you are hot? That was always my argument as a kid, and I stand by it. Also, the more shirt material the better, surely? Let us not get started on the Cameroon sleeveless, that's not getting debated.

It is a personal view of course, but I much prefer a long sleeve shirt. It looks more complete to me and if you can get a brilliant design on it, the more design the better.

That takes us nicely to be the link from the previous chapter. Taking the Kappa logo as an example, the full sleeve dominated by the continuous pattern is hypnotic. There is nothing that does not work about it. It is the same argument for Hummel chevrons. The symmetrical design down both sleeves is crucial and that is a big feature to move to the shirt list. The continuous pattern can be seen on the 1999 Manchester United home shirt, with the Umbro logo on loop all the way down.





We've waxed lyrical about the Adidas three stripes, and the sight of those heading down the sleeve, in parallel, like a military march is another eye-catcher for any sleeve design.

Sleeves that do not match will also need a rather good reason to be considered, as will plain sleeve endings. It is another factor to suggest that long sleeves are superior. With a long sleeve shirt, you will need a shirt ending, being a change of material to create the cuff. Due to the change of material the design will be easier to incorporate some colour changes or added detail. It will be a combination of colours already used in the sleeve, but it's an important detail not to overlook.





A short sleeve football shirt that merely ends with no acknowledgment of said end, is a football shirt crime, and damn right lazy.

All it takes is trim in a different colour or the inclusion of the club's or nations colours or even a manufacturer's brand to finish off the sleeve.





To make a fair discussion it is only right to hear both sides, and there is an argument for a short-sleeve shirt.

If the shirt warrants extra detail on the sleeve, it can quite often look somewhat lost on a long sleeve version. League patches are OK on both styles but if a team has moved around badges to compensate for additional ones due to league or cup success, or they simply have more than one badge, it can sometimes look out of place on the long sleeves.



As seen there are examples of shirts having multiple club badges to show off, and it is not uncommon for the main shirt sponsors, or additional sponsors to want extra real estate, and the top part of the sleeve is prime placement. When that is the case, the short sleeve shirt comes into its own. It must be said now, however, sleeves are no place for sponsors. Forget Angry Birds, we are talking Angry Stan.

When there is no sponsor present, nor the kit brand apparent all the way down the sleeve then again, it's down to personal preference. The examples below are Parma shirts from the 1990 and 00s. When going for a loud and bright option for a sleeve the winning argument for us is to make the most of it and show it off, therefore the long sleeve option will always come out on top, and because of that, it takes its place on the shirt list.







## The Perfect Football Shirt List

### **Colour**

- Yellow
- Blue
- Red
- White
- Black

Need to incorporate gold into the shirt as well

### **Collar**

- Turnover collar
- Of size
- Lace collar
- V-Neck
- Pattern/colours
- Not plain

### **Manufacturers**

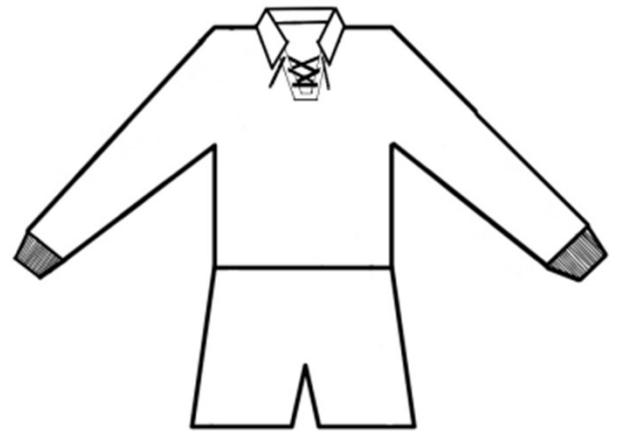
- Adidas
- Nike
- Umbro
- Lotto
- Kappa
- Hummel



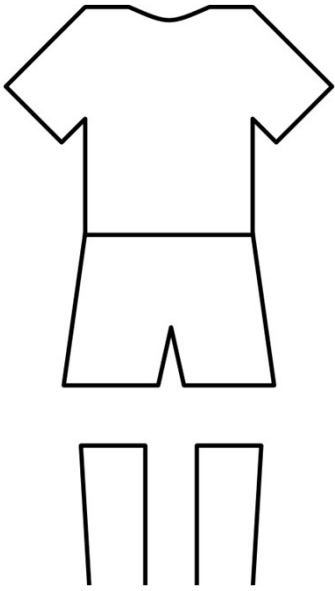
## The Perfect Football Shirt List

### **Sleeves**

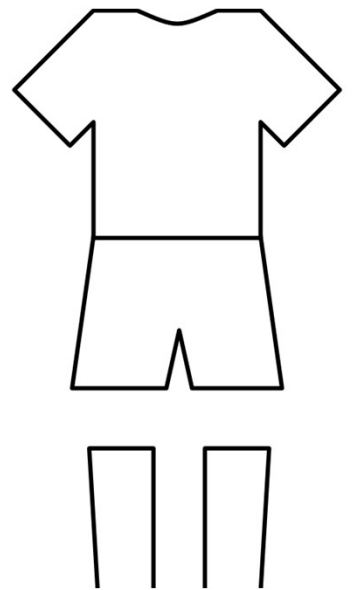
- Long sleeves
- Hear pressed patches
- No sponsorship visible



The Perfect Shirt



**SPONSORS**



Aside from the colour, the first feature you see on a football shirt is likely to be the sponsor. It is if you are looking at the 1980s and early 90s French Ligue 1 club shirts. These clubs had a thing for oversize sponsors.



It is such an important aspect of the kit. Get the sponsor wrong and you will struggle to qualify for the classic status. Get it right, and you have yourself a timeless piece of art.

Although sponsors are so pivotal to the success of a football shirt it can be solved in three easy options;

- the sponsor is a beauty, and so the shirts are a success
- The sponsor is woeful and therefore so is the shirt
- The shirt is so good a) it does not need a sponsor or b) a discreet sponsor is sufficient

## *The good sponsors*

I tend to feel a good sponsor has proved its versatility. It is earned its stripes if you like. It is not to say one-team sponsors aren't good per se, but it is hard to judge if they aren't durable sponsors.

There is no doubt Candy was a great sponsor for Liverpool and the brand looked good emblazoned across the red shirts but we don't know if it suited any other club. Carlsberg did a sterling job as a successor, and it immediately feels like a more complete sponsor as it works on other shirts, like Copenhagen, Odense, and Hibernian.



The trouble with picking a perfect shirt, and selecting one club sponsoring company, is that you will immediately associate the shirt with the club. Take ABN Amro for example. If you place that sponsor wording on a shirt horizontally for a start it would look weird, and then if you change it to read vertically on the left of centre, your mind will immediately go to Ajax Amsterdam. It is not a bad association by any means but it will damage the ideology of the perfect shirt.

The problem exists now in the real world. Ajax men's team has moved on from ABN Amro, but all its replacements to date have not quite stood up to the task.

A remarkably similar argument could be levelled at Sampdoria. The ERG sponsorship is iconic to the shirt, and the club. The club's most successful period came whilst ERG was present on the club shirts, and arguably when they had their best players. In 1995 the club and sponsor parted ways, and although the shirt stayed true to its origins, and Sampdoria has never been one to waiver from those, the shirt never truly got to the previous levels of before. The club even saw the light and returned ERG as their club sponsor from 2002 through to 2010.

Like their great striker Gianluca Vialli's hair, nothing can last forever, and ERG is no longer a functioning company meaning the combination will sadly no longer be repeated.



Long before the likes of Emirates and the abundance of betting companies that dominate the shirt sponsorship scene, there were a vast number of examples of companies that played the sponsoring field.

Coca-Cola perhaps unsurprisingly has appeared on over 60 teams' shirts. Unsurprisingly due to their global presence and success. They are in the top twenty global brands in the world and the top three food and beverage companies in the world. A large majority of that sponsorship has been in Central and South America. Perhaps +60 is too many, but they will often appear as secondary sponsors and not front of stage.

A huge favourite of mine is the German car manufacturer, Opel, or as known to the Brits, Vauxhall. The Opel logo has appeared on seventeen club and national team shirts and has very much lasted the test of time.



In the 1980s it was the likes of Bordeaux, Fiorentina, and Feyenoord, and then in 1989, it began a long-standing relationship with Bayern Munich. The evolution into the 1990s not only increased its team coverage but bought with it the circle and horizontal zig-zag logo. This logo found a home on the shirts of Paris Saint-Germain, Young Boys of Switzerland, Sparta Prague, AC Milan, the Republic of Ireland national team, Standard Liege, and Lillestrom of Norway. Do not ask me why it works, it just simply does. Never a fan of too much change with regards to a stable sponsor, but even the infrequent changes to car offerings such as Astra and Zafira were acceptable.

Opel was redefining the term stable when it came to shirt sponsorship. The Bayern and Opel partnership was long (14 years), but it pales into insignificance when compared to others. Opel themselves sponsored Feyenoord for over 30 years, as did Philips Electronics for PSV Eindhoven.

Not as long of a relationship as the Dutch sides, but an iconic sponsorship we have already mentioned is that of Pirelli tyres and Inter Milan. The stylish shirt colours, design, the world-class strikers wearing it, and topped off with a stupendous sponsor decorating the midriff for 26 years. It is another sponsor to pass the test of time, and the fact we've seen it appear on the shirts of Penarol in Uruguay, Palmeiras of Brazil, and Velez Sarsfield of Argentina, means it can qualify for the shirt list.

Good sponsors also exist that do not survive the last test of time. Is the Nintendo print on the Fiorentina shirts in 1997/98 and the Super Nintendo sponsorship of Sevilla of 1992/93 shirts iconic? Yes, they are, as is the JEF United shirt of 1993 out of the J-League, where the SEGA print was accompanied by SEGA's star performer at the time, Sonic the Hedgehog. It is fun, it's different and it takes you back to a time of your youth, and yes is on the collector's item wish list, but sad to say the blue spiky-haired speed demon doesn't warrant a place on the perfect shirt.



Electronics brands (Sony, Panasonic, Philips, JVC) are certainly in for consideration, as are Food & Beverages firms (Coca-Cola, Pepsi as well as allowing alcohol brands, like Quilmes, Carlsberg, and McEwan's Lager) alongside the Car/Tyre options (Opel, Pirelli, Volkswagen). The beauty of creating the perfect shirt is that you can configure your shirts to suit sponsors. Imagine if it were that easy in the real world. Cadbury's Dairy Milk for Fiorentina, Vodafone for Ajax, Coca-Cola for Manchester United, FedEx for Perth Glory, and even putting Pepsi's logo on our eagle wingspan Bayern Munich shirt. The concept is starting to come together.

There is one sponsor that ticks several boxes. It is food-based, has sponsored a variety of clubs, and did so over a sustained period and it is not a quirky offering. It has quite a story to tell. Introducing **Parmalat**, whom I have a soft spot for.



The Italian dairy & food giant for 19 years from the mid-1980s appeared hellbent on cornering the shirt sponsor market, and they gave it a rather good shot. I just love the Parmalat text, and if it is accompanied by the company's flower logo, it is a combination that for me, makes it the best around.



It started in 1985, and you cannot aim for a higher profile club. **Real Madrid** was the first club to have Parmalat on their shirts, and the fact it was a Hummel-made shirt, it might be my favourite. With the purple chevrons down the sleeve, Hummel subtly apparent in the white of the shirt and the plain Parmalat text, it simply does not need anymore.

The likes of Emilio Butragueno, Hugo Sanchez, Bernd Schuster, and Michel were the mainstays in the Real team at the time and the Parmalat sponsorship deal seemed to not harm. In the 4 years of sponsorship, Real won four consecutive La Liga titles. In those four seasons, the kits (home and away) were the same design, 1 home kit and 1 away kit for 4 seasons!





Staying in Spain, the Italian dairy also sponsored the shirts of CD Badajoz. The sponsor only appeared for one season, 1998 - 1999

Then came the association with **Parma** and it was not difficult to understand why this came about. The company Parmalat was founded in 1961 in Parma, and from 1990 through to 2004 the company-sponsored what seemed to be everybody's second favourite Italian football team at the time. The sponsorship coincided with the club's most successful period. In fact, in those 14 years, Parma won 8 major trophies, and this is the complete list of major honours that contributes to the clubs' entire list.



The first tranche of success from 1990-1995, was in the traditional white of Parma, produced by Umbro, as well as a lace collared away shirt. The likes of Faustino Asprilla, Tomas Brodin, Gianfranco Zola and club legends Luigi Apolloni, Alessandro Melli and Antonio Benarrivo all contributing to Coppa Italia, Cup Winners Cup, Super Cup and UEFA Cup glory.







A favourite memory of mine in this era was a 1-0 victory for Parma at the San Siro against AC Milan in 1993. Not only was the winning goal a beautiful free-kick from Asprilla, but it ended Milan's record run of 58 games without a defeat. The cartwheel and a fist pump from Asprilla did the Parmalat shirt huge justice.

Then the second trance came between 1996 and 1999, and as previously mentioned the club changed its home colours to yellow and blue hoops. This period saw the Parmalat flower adorning the Lotto and Puma shirts and players of the ilk of Hernan Crespo, Lillian Thuram, Fabio Cannavaro, Juan Sebastian Veron and Enrico Chiesa fashioning the new club home colours. Another victory in the UEFA Cup, as well as Coppa Italia and Super Coppa wins marked this era.

Then the club moved on to Champion, the American sports apparel company, and a change of roster saw the likes of Hidetoshi Nakata, Adriano, Alberto Gilardino and Adrian Mutu wearing the kits. It is not a touch on Hummel sleeves, but the bold C on the sleeve on a Champion shirt is right up there. Although not the most successful period the club still managed to add one more Coppa Italia to their honours.



In the entire period where Parmalat sponsored Parma, it is tough to argue that the club bought out a poor shirt.

What Parmalat did towards the end of their tenure as club shirt sponsor of Parma was diversify the products they showed on the shirts. Santal, Joy, Stream, and Mr. Day amongst the variations shown focused more on the different product offerings they had. If you are interested, Santal and Joy were juice drinks and Mr. Day offers doughnuts amongst other treats!



It was not just the doughnuts that had holes in them – so did Parmalat's company financials.

The dream relationship between club and company came to a sour end, and these extreme financial failures of Parmalat saw both the company and Parma enter administration. Gladly for both entities, each reformed but no sign since of partnering up again. That said, based on recent efforts, Parma's kits have not suffered consequently.



Staying in Europe, Parmalat took to Portugal in 1994 and sponsored Lisbon giants **Benfica** for two seasons. In the first season, an Olympic branded shirt just had the Parmalat text and evolved to the text and flower on the front of the Olympic shirt the following season. Claudio Caniggia, Joao Pinto and Michel Preud'homme were the star men who wore these, but it wasn't a lucky charm for 'As Águias' as only a domestic cup was won in that period. Comfort could be taken in that time though as they had the chance to play in the Parmalat Cup, a pre-season tournament, sponsored by...yes you guessed it.



The next adventure for Parmalat was to Hungary and an association with a club with more name changes than Prince and P-Diddy combined.

The club, now known as **MOL Fehervar**, was called Videoton-Waltham in 1993. They took sponsorship from Parmalat but in return, there was a club name change as well to Parmalat FC! That is some heavy influence from the shirt sponsor! 3 years on, and 2 more name changes (still incorporating Parmalat) they parted ways with the dairy giant and became Videoton FC Fehervar.

Looking at the name change, to put this into some type of context if you took Videoton-Waltham's final league position in the 1992/93 season, it was a respectable sixth in the Hungarian topflight. Look then at the English top-flight for that same season and who finished sixth in the inaugural Premier League season, Liverpool.



If in the same season Videoton were renamed with Parmalat FC, this happened in England, we would have seen Carlsberg FC lining up in the Premier League. I guess some would argue that if Carlsberg did football teams, they would be the best in the world. Can you imagine in modern-day a drinks company taking over a football club..... it's enough to give you the shivers, or even wings...?

One last venture in Europe before we travel further afield, and it is to **Marseille**, who Parmalat sponsored for 1995/96 and 1996/97 seasons.

The first was in the French second division with the club having been relegated due to bribery scandals, and financial difficulties, though these were not linked to Parmalat.

The manufacturer of the kit was Mizuno

who are perhaps more often recognised for their football boots as opposed to sportswear. The club could call upon Republic of Ireland striker Tony Cascarino to fire them to promotion, which he did.

The club returned to the Ligue One in 1996 and Parmalat featured on a classic Adidas Marseille home and away shirt, styled by Yordan Letchkov amongst others. Templated home and away kits seem to be a thing of the past, but the simple approach of merely flipping the colours makes for a great set of shirts, and the three stripes across the torso are a tremendous Adidas touch and dare I say a cult classic.





The Perfect Shirt

Now we take a trip to South America, and we start in Brazil and at the **Paulista Futebol club**. In 1999 Parmalat began their sponsorship with the club but as Paulista was also a name of a Brazilian competitor to one of Parmalat's products they (again) changed the team's name! Introducing Etti Jundiai Futebol club. The club was from the Jundiai district of Sao Paulo and wore the sponsor Etti on their shirts, a tomato sauce-based product produced by Parmalat. As with the Hungarian adventure, this wasn't long term and within 4 years the club parted ways with Parmalat and is known as Paulista Futebol Clube once again.



Another Parmalat success story was due, and we stay in Sao Paulo in Brazil for it. **Club Palmeiras** had been on a very dry spell of success, with the entire 1980's decade returning zero major trophies. The wait for trophies was soon to be ended as in 1992 with Parmalat's sponsorship, suddenly Palmeiras was one of the richest clubs in the country.



They wasted little time and, in this period, up to 2000, they could lay claim to being the greatest team in Brazil. Multiple trophies including Rio state championships and Campeonato Brasileiro titles (Brazil's top division). Perhaps the success should not be too surprising considering the players they had at their disposal. Brazilian internationals Cafu, Rivaldo, Edmundo, Zinho, Cesar Sampaio and Djaminha to name a few.

In 1999 home, which was the year the club secured the Copa Libertadores under the guidance of Luiz Felipe Scolari, as well as having World Cup winners Marcos and Roque Junior on their books. When the sponsorship ended with Parmalat in 2000, so did the success, and the club suffered relegation just 2 years later.





The territory of South America sponsorship also saw the opportunity for Parmalat to increase the exposure of their name on the shirts. You see with the Palmeiras kits on show here. The shirt has Parmalat across the back of the shirt, as well as 1999 away & the third kit styling the flower on the sleeve for good measure.

Staying in Brazilian and exploiting the sponsorship one step further, the 1997 **Santa Cruz** home Diadora jersey, not only has the sponsor on the front and the back, but also on the shirt collar to maximise exposure, and why not!



Another Brazilian side, **Esporte Clube Juventude** also had the Parmalat sponsor, for 3 years from 1995 to 1998. The 1998 version advertises the Gelateria Parmalat brand (Gelateria translates to a shop selling Italian ice cream) hence the nice touch with the Parmalat flower logo coming out of an ice cream cone. The club managed to win their state division that year. Hundreds and thousands of fans came to cheer them.



Before we get to our final stop in South America, we have a few brief stops offs. To Ecuador and to club side **LDU Quito** who carried the Parmalat sponsor from 2000 to 2003. They also had the Santal product (and flower) on their jersey for the 2002 season, which matches up to the timing of Parma using the same product brand in the same year.

Parmalat even reached Venezuela, in 2000-2001 sponsoring **Deportivo Petare**.



Then to Chile for **Club Deportivo Universidad Catolica**, who had Parmalat sponsor the side from 1997-to 1999. The Lotto and Reebok offerings have the text and a slightly smaller flower logo, but surprisingly no Parmalat text on the reverse. Parmalat also briefly sponsored **Audax Italiano** of Chile in 1994.



**Club Atletico Penarol** of Uruguay had one of the longer tenures with Parmalat, from 1991 to 2000. As mentioned it is hard for a black and yellow combination not to work on a football shirt, and Penarol's Umbro and earlier Nanque's versions didn't disappoint, nor did the 1999/00 Reebok away kit, which had the famous Chile International shirt design with the Reebok logo emblazmed across the shoulder and chest of the shirt alongside Parmalat.





To Argentina now, and first a 2-season sponsorship of **Estudiantes**. The La Plata-based club, perhaps best known for its association with Juan Sebastian Veron carried Parmalat's name from 2001-to 2003 as did **Club Ferro Carril Oeste**. A lesser-known club, based in Buenos Aires, Ferro was sponsored by Parmalat in the years 1997-2000, most importantly with text and the flower on 1999/2000, home shirt is seen here on the New Balance long sleeve version.







Next on our Parmalat journey to Argentina with one of the big boys. And I mean in the sense of club and player. **Boca Juniors** played with a Parmalat sponsor from 1992-to 95. Replacing the Fiat sponsor with the Adidas brand was going to be a tricky undertaking based on the benchmark, but the first efforts were promising. Then came along the Olan manufacturer to make the shirts and a certain Diego Maradona to wear them, with his old pal Caniggia in tow.



The home shirt with the yellow gold bar sandwiched between the dark blue was complimented even further with the addition of the Parmalat print. In 1993 it was just the text (pictured with the away shirt, both re-issues) and then in 1995, the flower appeared above the text, albeit a slightly smaller flower design before Parmalat was replaced by Quilmes.

Diego's blond streak, the romance of him being back at the La Bombonera, and the iconic kit with the iconic sponsor. Does it matter if it did not work out? No, because football and the shirts are about the memories, not just results.



A hop briefly into Central America, with club side **Toros Neza** of Mexico. The Bulls were only founded in 1991 and donned the Parmalat sponsor in the 1998 season. Sadly, for them, their existence in their original form did not last much longer. You can see here another example of a templated home and away shirt.





The Perfect Shirt

Perhaps the most bizarre club I am going to mention associated with Parmalat, again in Central America, this time in Nicaragua, is the aptly named **Parmalat FC**. This is their name, no taking over a club and renaming it, this team is an original. In March 2000 the president of Parmalat at the time, Aldo Camorani founded the club and looked to bring in highly promising players from the under-20 Nicaraguan nation team. It seemingly worked and having started in the third division, 2 consecutive promotions and the team headed to the topflight and by all accounts performed admirably. However fast forward to 2005 and amidst all the financial troubles of the parent company, the team folded and sadly no longer exists.

Photo footage on the internet shows a distinct likeness of Parmalat FC's kit to that of the Parma Champion 2002 home kit.





Parmalat even headed down under, to Australia. The kit designers of Brisbane Strikers went against originality and essentially copied the Parma 1999 Lotto home shirt, but if you're going to copy a template, I could think of a lot worse!

The Brisbane Strikers rivals, Carlton SC, also adorned Parmalat on their shirts, and it remains, to my knowledge, the only Parmalat-sponsored shirt manufactured by American giants, Nike.



Parmalat's kit association covers manufacturers such as slight underdogs Buffalo, Topper, Mizuno, Olympic, Rhumell, New Balance, and Diadora as well as the giants Nike, Adidas, Umbro, Reebok, and Puma. Throw in Lotto and Champion and it's a *juicy* collection for shirts donning the Parmalat name.



Our final destination for Parmalat-sponsored shirts takes us to Russia, where Dynamo Moscow carried the brand on their shirts in the earlier 1990s.

We'll stop there, but it's also worth mentioning, that Parmalat was happy to diversify its product range, clubs, and sponsorship beyond just what you've seen. The Italian clubs Avellino and Genoa, seen below also styling the Santal product, as often seen on Cup shirts for Parma.



Perhaps this article doesn't do it justice, but I just adore the combinations, and for whatever reason, Parmalat sponsorships bring me.....Joy.

Fair to say the shirt list will be a relatively short one when it comes to deciding on the sponsor for the perfect shirt.

## ***The bad sponsors***

Having looked at options for consideration, it is worth looking at some of the worst sponsors to don football shirts.

The bombardment of gambling firm's overtaking the football shirt sponsorship market needs to be curbed, and all these firms automatically qualify as bad sponsors. These can be joined by financial loan companies and the new trend of Cryptocurrencies and tokens.

The slightly less present Airline companies and Insurance companies can also be discounted. Not because they are a bad influence, but they are simply boring and seldom help bring life to the shirts they feature on.



We have mentioned some quality food and beverage companies earlier on in the chapter, but the selection must be carefully considered. Italian food companies Motta, Barilla, and Berretta graced the shirts of Serie A sides, but hard to argue that the same can be said for Premier League appearances by Doritos and Pizza Hut.

A great example of how a bad sponsor can ruin a great shirt is that of the 2017/18 Club America home shirt offering.

The shirt is quite clearly inspired by the 1994 Adidas Eagle wingspan template, and why wouldn't you be inspired by that. Nike placed the wingspan of three diamonds alongside each other slightly further down the shirt. The combination of the triangle colours worked perfectly against the main two base colours of the shirt. Then an awkward orange square was placed slap bang in the middle, with The Home Depot being advertised in your face.

The Huawei text and logo complimented the shirt design, but all the good parts are then totally distracted by the poorly placed addition to incorporate The Home Depot eyesore.

The Club America shirt has a total of six different sponsors on the shirt. This leads to the next point of bad sponsors.... too many sponsors!





It is understandable why clubs pimp out their shirts to take the money. Running a football club is quite like collecting football shirts, it isn't cheap!

But caking a shirt with corporate names runs the risk of making the football shirt more like a sandwich board!

The Viking Stavanger shirt here is another example of six separate sponsors on the shirt, and the Cimarrones de Sonora FC of Mexico shirt carries no less than nine!



For the perfect shirt, surely it can only have one sponsor? This takes us nicely to the last section of the chapter. What if the shirt is simply good enough to ride solo without a sponsor, or at a push include one but not let it take centre stage?

## ***No sponsors?***

European giants Barcelona, one of the most marketable clubs in the world carried no sponsor on their shirts up until 2006, and not on their home shirt until a year later in 2007. The blank canvas approach didn't look wrong. If anything, the inclusion of a sponsor didn't quite sit right on the Catalan's colours.

If a shirt is good enough it can carry the burden of quality by itself.



Fierce enemies Roma and Lazio have both at different times entertained the no sponsor look, both to devilishly powerful impact.

The decision not to carry a sponsor can be taken out of the club's hand at times. When playing in Europe, for example, some countries do not allow for certain products or brands being advertised, for example, alcohol. This allows seeing what a football shirt as a blank canvas can look like.

Due to the financial reliance on the sponsorship money, despite the idealistic stance of not having a brand name across your shirt, it is slightly more realistic to embrace it. That said, there are examples of when a sponsor is on the shirt but dominating the landscape.

Often seen on celebratory or anniversary shirts, the role of the sponsor takes a backward step. The idea of these special occasion shirts is usually to pay homage to the *good old days* and in a vintage era when sponsorship wasn't a thing, the large text and images can look odd.

Clubs have used a variety of techniques to incorporate sponsors, and the obvious ones are the best. Reducing the size of the sponsor allows for it to still be on the shirt and the discreet version of the logos or texts is something we like.

Glasgow rivals, Rangers and Celtic, in 2012/13 were both sponsored by Tennant's. That is no surprise. It was often the case that the same brand-sponsored both clubs, as it lessened the chance of reduced business. Any business that only sponsored one would likely lose half of its customers! In the 2012/13 season, Celtic, and Nike produced a 125th-anniversary shirt and placed a very reduced size Tennent's logo beneath the club badge.

Rangers, despite no recognised celebratory occasion, followed suit and with Umbro released a very plain home shirt, with very minimal detail, and included the same style sponsor position for the Tennant's logo, reduced in size, beneath the club badge.

Highly effective, and further examples can be seen with Inter Milan's 2007/08 away shirt, Manchester City's 2009/10 third kit, and Fulham's 2012/13 third kit, which all embraced the reduced size sponsor font.

It may be the case that the corporate firm paying a club millions of pounds would rather their name and logo aren't reduced in size.

It's hard to argue against that.

Special commemorative shirts produced for Leeds United, Chelsea, and Bayern Munich in recent times have seen the sponsor logo and branding remain but have had the colour of the font changed to match the colour of the main body of the shirt, and sleeves. In the case of these three shirts, they were only ever worn in one competitive match. Leeds United 'whited' out their sponsors and shirt manufacturer, Chelsea 'blued' out their sponsors and manufacturer but both retained a gold club badge, whereas Bayern Munich whited out the badge as well. On the 125th anniversary release from Celtic, on their third kit, they whited out the reduced size Tennant's sponsorship on the white shirt as well.

Leeds United here pushing some serious buttons with gold trimmings, a lace collar, Kappa made and a discreet sponsor. Minus points for the betting company sponsor, but serious consideration for the shirt list.





## The Perfect Football Shirt List

### Colour

- Yellow
- Blue
- Red
- White
- Black

Need to incorporate gold into the shirt as well

### Collar

- Turnover collar
- Of size
- Lace collar
- V-Neck
- Pattern/colours
- Not plain

### Manufacturers

- Adidas
- Nike
- Umbro
- Lotto
- Kappa
- Hummel



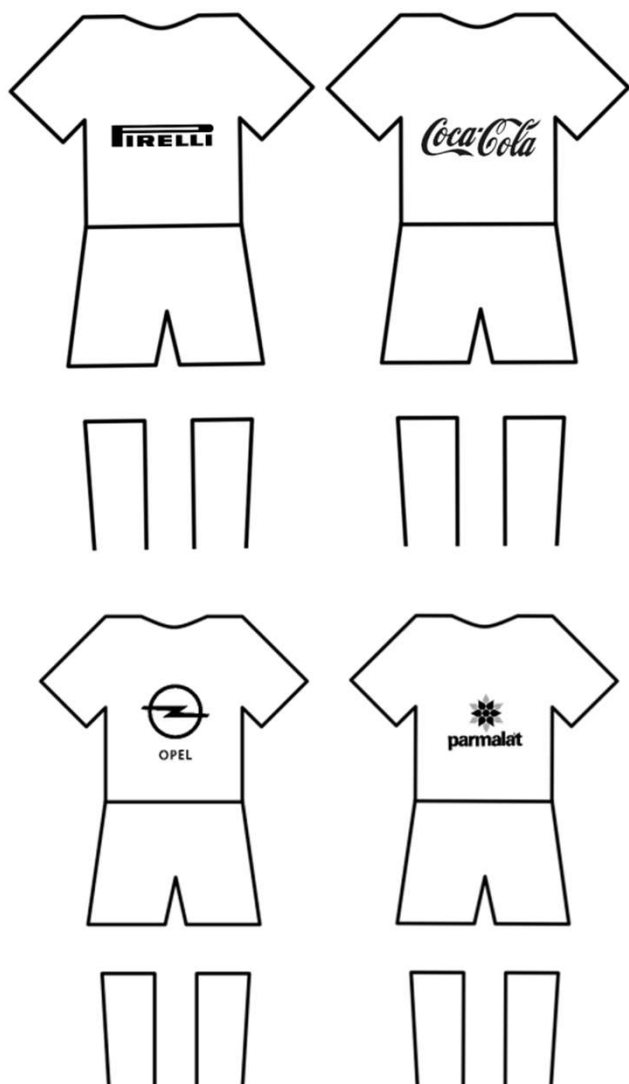
## The Perfect Football Shirt List

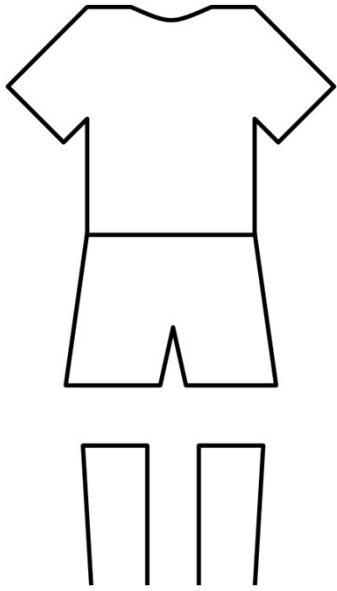
### Sleeves

- Long sleeves
- Hear pressed patches
- No sponsorship visible

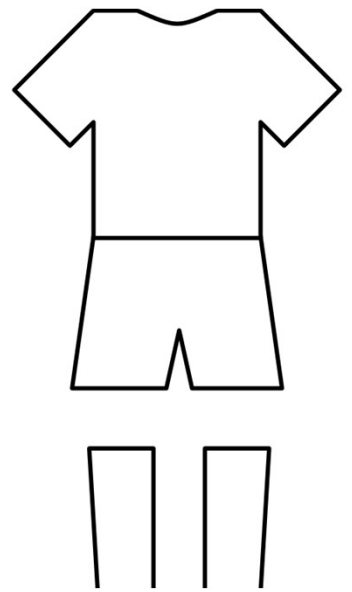
### Sponsorship

- Opel
- Pirelli
- Parmalat
- Discreet appearance
- Only on the front, not on sleeves or back





# DESIGN & DETAILS



It feels we have only touched the surface so far, but by getting into the design, it feels like the lifting of the bonnet. Out of all of them, the design could well be the key factor.

So where to start? Perhaps at the beginning of every shirt design, with a blank canvas. It has been said before, less is sometimes more.

Particularly with the home shirt offerings, an exquisite shirt can be shy of a design and all the fanfare that comes with it. Once the colour, manufacturer, sleeves, and sponsor is taken care of, being left to merely enjoy the shirt as it is, shouldn't be underestimated.

Traditional Roma, Real Madrid, Chelsea, and Manchester City home shirts, due to the lack of dependency on a second colour, have very often produced plain shirts and it is not frown upon.



Even looking back at the three shirts with the coloured-out sponsors in the last chapter, all those shirts were of a plain design. An additional characteristic on the Leeds United shirt was the incorporated graphic of a rose, in tribute to the flower of Yorkshire. Graphics within the shirt can be a very clever way to add an element of individuality to a shirt, as it will very often be unique to the club in question.

Past examples can be of stadiums, like Old Trafford on the Manchester United home shirt of 1994/95, and the Atletico Madrid home shirt from 1996/97. There was even a group of players pictured celebrating on the Netherlands home shirt of 1996, and very often club names nicknames or badges are common inclusions within the shirt material.





There are a plethora of football shirts outside of the plain design category. An abundance, way more than a brace. We are hammering home the same point but it's just that I love the words plethora, abundance, and brace when talking football. Throw in diminutive, aggregate, and aplomb and it's the complete set.

In the search for the perfect shirt, it's time to set some boundaries for the design part of the chapter. To keep it manageable we are keeping the design options to only the following.

- Stripes & hoops

- Half & Half

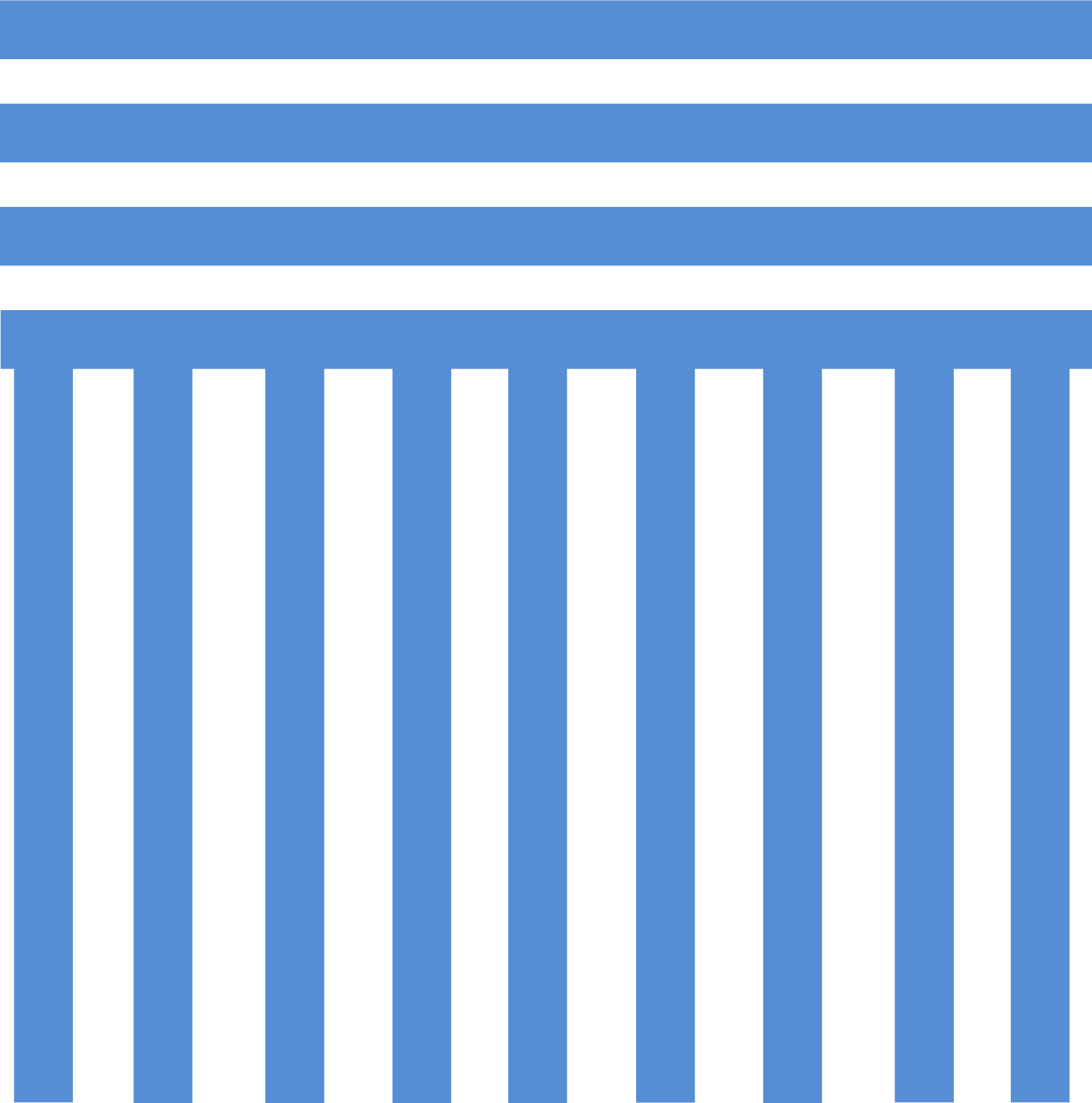
- Sash

- Vertical & Horizontal blocks

Fans of another style of design may well have to wait for the follow-up to this book. Perhaps the sequel could be called, 'The perfect shirt 2' or 'The return of the perfect shirt.'

Back to the present and let's take a closer look at which design could make it onto the perfect shirt list.

# ***STRIPES & HOOPS***



I mentioned earlier that the key to success in the Dutch first division, the Eredivisie, is to play in a red and white kit. Well, if you have any desire to win the Italian first division, Serie A, then you should head in the direction of a striped kit.

In the last 31 years, since 1990, AC Milan, Inter Milan, and Juventus have won twenty-eight of the titles. Only Sampdoria, Roma, and Lazio have managed to take the championship away from the Big 3.

The common theme, concerning their kits, is of course all three clubs play in striped kits. All feature black stripes, Milan with red, Inter with blue, and Juventus with white.



Red and black stripes would be my favourite of the combinations, with Nice and AFC Bournemouth just some of the other clubs to wear these colours. Once a shirt is in stripes, the deviations of a kit design will of course be limited, but that is the case for most designs. Exploring different thicknesses of stripes becomes your outlet, but in fairness to the three Italian clubs referenced, they have all done that well in the past.

Inter's 'black and blue' combo should have had a bruise association with it in the past as opposed to another famous kit that has carried that label for three decades! Teams such as Atalanta and Club Brugge equally fashion the combination as well as Inter, and with the combination of two dark colours, this allows for a sharper focus on colours used in conjunction with the kit, seen here with the yellow trim on the Inter home shirt of 2002/03.



The Juventus black and white stripe combination carries its own story. Juventus have played in black and white striped shirts, since 1903. Originally, they played in pink shirts with a black tie, which only occurred due to the wrong shirts being sent to them. The father of one of the players made the earliest shirts, but continual washing faded the colour so much that in 1903 the club sought to replace them. Juventus asked one of their team members, Englishman John Savage if he had any contacts in England who could supply new shirts in a colour that would better withstand the elements. He had a friend who lived in Nottingham, who being a Notts County supporter, shipped out the black and white striped shirts to Turin. Juventus has worn the shirt colours ever since.

Juventus, Notts County, Udinese, and Newcastle United are some of the names best associated with the black and white stripes though it's the Italians that have been the most daring when it comes to alternating their design.

Another traditional striped shirt club, Barcelona in recent years has tried multiple shirt designs. This is a huge evolution in moving away from only having one main design for a home shirt. That is usually territory for the away shirts, but rarely seen for the home shirt.



Barcelona like Juventus recently went for a half and half home shirt, but then also tried a hooped home shirt and even a squared version. Traditionalists may prefer sticking to one design for the home shirt, and to create the perfect shirt I tend to agree.



I mentioned earlier that I wasn't the biggest fan of the Kappa Kombat gear. What could be worse for an aging 40+-year-old? A Kappa Kombat gear shirt that had hoops. No hiding the love handles in one of those!

Hooped shirts I am sure have some fans, but they just don't generally do it for me as a shirt. Celtic, Queen's Park Rangers, and Reading are amongst the British clubs that continue (like a hoop) with the design, with Sporting Lisbon flying the flag in mainland Europe, and Flamengo out of Brazil, but it seems a design on the way out of fashion. Away kits seem a haven for the hoop, and we've already appreciated the Inter Milan triple launch. Newcastle United's blue and maroon away effort (with buttoned collar) in 1995/96 bucks the trend of unliked hooped shirts, as well as one other hooped collection that I hold in high regard.



I must confess to it, as I've alluded to it earlier, I enjoyed the Lotto release for Parma in yellow and blue. This was followed up with six seasons of the American brand Champion sponsoring 'I Crociati' and all in yellow and blue for the home kits, and all hooped. It is good to be proved wrong at times but long term, I am afraid hooped kits do not make the shirt list.

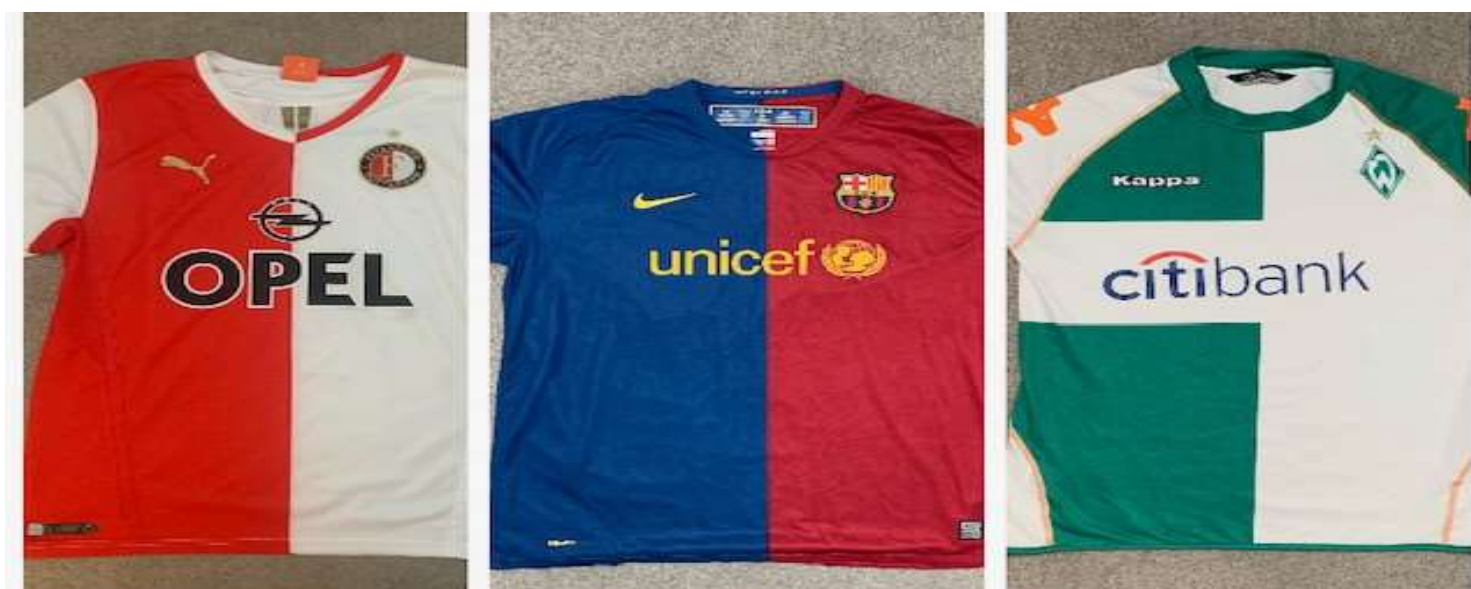


# *HALF & HALF*



Half and half shirts allow for a 50/50 split on the dual colour combination, but I must be quite honest from the start, it can sometimes feel that the shirt designer and club couldn't decide which one should be the dominant colour and so picked the easy way out.

Former Premier League champions Blackburn Rovers and Italian duo of Genoa and Cagliari stay true to their style, and Galatasaray have often gone two-tone, but looking through the archives a half and half tends to be more of a one-season wonder! Let's call it a Michu! Werder Bremen and Juventus as I have mentioned have gone for a Michu in the past. Barcelona has tried it a couple of times, once for a celebratory kit, as did Tottenham Hotspur as a one-off in 2007/08. I will concede and admit the 2001/02 European home kit that Roma wore, as a half/half was a hit, and there is of course the Denmark 1986 offering. That was a cheat, however, as Hummel managed to incorporate the pinstripes, which make it almost hypnotic!





# ***SASH***

A Sash, a diagonal stripe, a Peru – I am open to what you want to call it, but it needs to be discussed.

The style of a diagonal line, double line or pattern running from one shoulder of the shirt down to the opposite side to the hip is a feature on a football shirt, which is like, Marmite and Philadelphia, hard to explain, but it just works.

The shirt that immediately comes to mind for me is of course the Peru international team shirt. A bold red band drives right through the shirt as if Zorro has taken one slash with his sword.

The sash divides the shirt, but not opinions.

It is a lovely simplistic feature, versatile and gives the perfect opportunity to have a colour combination but allows for one colour to dominate the shirt.

The versatility makes it a great option. One colour or two on the sash. That should be enough, any more and seems like it's trying to dominate the shirt, and that's not the job. Not my preference but the sash can also be innovative, see Roma 2017 which brought the sash to life with a lightning bolt effect.

The sash should never be interrupted by the sponsor. That is an own goal and a big-time error. This is a rule that must be stood by, but it's not easy, or that popular with sponsored shirts. You don't stop poetry in motion, so please don't cut a sash in half.

Notable examples of clubs that continue to style the sash are River Plate with the home shirt and Vasco da Gama for both home and away. Inter Milan in 1993/94 had a superb white away kit, with a sash through the diagonal of the shirt but like several River Plate's efforts, the sponsor can get in the way. Had the Inter sponsor been Pirelli (as adopted below) I may have been whistling a different tune. They released a sashed version, with Pirelli as the sponsor, in 2012/13 as their third kit, but didn't seem as impactful.



Seen here are three other examples of an interrupted sash. Rangers and Barcelona away kits, and an offering from down under, the Newcastle United Jets, all disrupting the flow. Rangers did wear this kit in Europe without a sponsor and it made the shirt one hundred times better looking. Clubs, and nations with a sash shirt design, along with Vasco, that understand how a sash should be fashioned are the likes of Southampton, Legia Warsaw, and a lovely effort from Sweden for their Umbro away shirt in 2012. Sweden benefitting from the lack of sponsors on international teams' shirts.

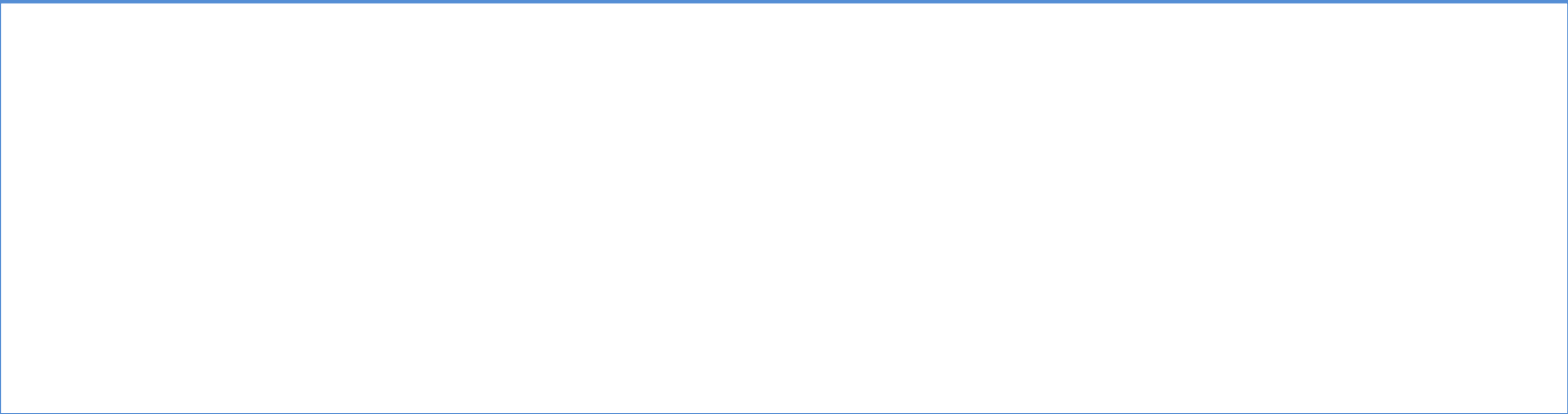
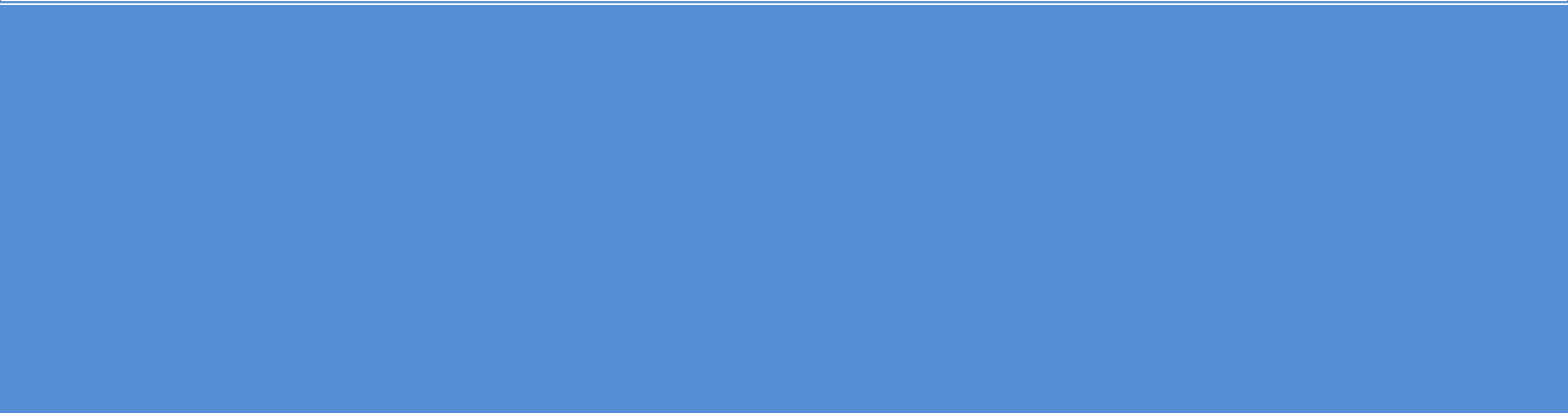
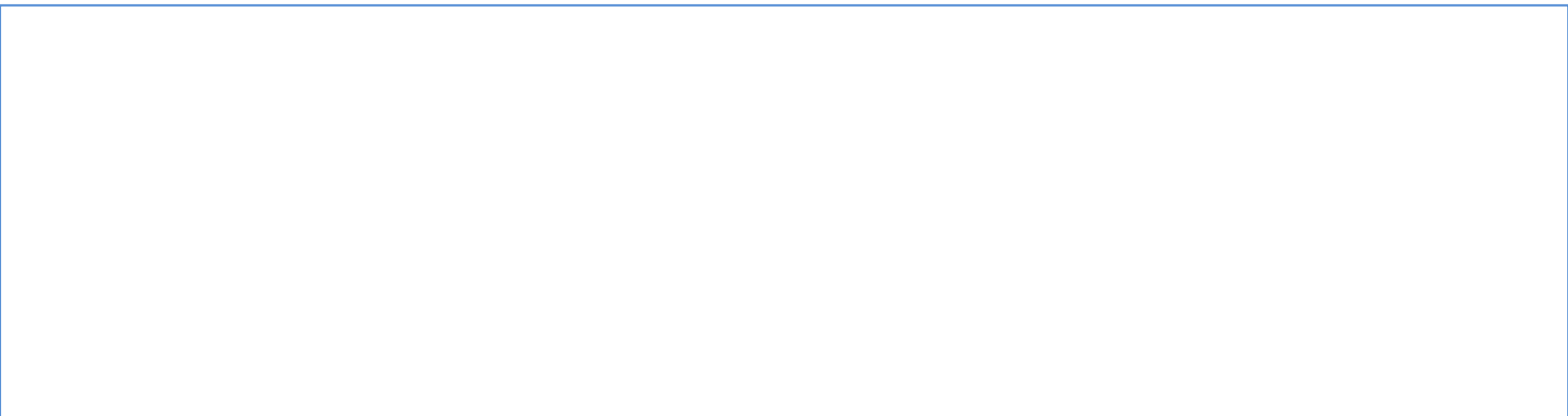
I like the sash, but this factor will play a big part in whether it can go on the shirt list. Sponsors and their placement are key, but we've seen ideas that can be played around with, and because of that it keeps it in with a chance.





The aforementioned Manchester City and Fulham shirts that experimented with the smaller sponsor feature allowed the sash on these shirts to flow, as did Crystal Palace's away offering in 2013/14, and credit where credit was due, it worked. Borussia Dortmund, for their 2008/09 away shirt, trialled a sponsorship within the sash. I like the initiative and how it didn't break up the sash. Looking through the archives and a beautiful example of a River Plate Adidas home shirt exists. An uninterrupted sash, and a small Peugeot sponsor on the chest to the side of the sash. Add to the fact that there were the three Adidas stripes present down the long sleeve version, this style is firmly on the shirt list.

# ***VERTICAL & HORIZONTAL BLOCK***





The least inspired description of a shirt design I think I could have come up with.

But when looking at the design, inspiration returns.

The horizontal block is the Ajax & Paris Saint-Germain design. Colour 1, then a thick block of another followed by colour 1 again. The Ajax vertical sponsor with ABN Amro is quite frankly genius. Why the club stop applying that method for the men's shirt is just downright crazy, as is the lack of other clubs taking it up as a design.

PSG fans were outraged at the start of the 2021 season, as the Nike home kit offering did not feature a vertical red line. Traditionally the line was thick and made the shirt very identifiable to the club, but the red element had got thinner, and thinner before completely disappearing in 2021. Shame, as in my view it's a superb characteristic of a shirt.



The horizontal block is the sponsor's dream. Slap bang in the middle of the shirt, a prim spot for a brand name.

The design lends itself perfectly to a colour combination. Take the mid-1990s Boca Junior and Club Deportivo Universidad Católica shirts as an example. Seemingly I am biased using the Parmalat example, but it worked a charm for the Boca shirt when replaced with Quilmes as well.



You could potentially argue the Sampdoria 'template' fits into this category, but of course, the club incorporates all their club colours into the block, or perhaps the band would be a more technical term.

There is a great deal more designs and templates out there but slightly more difficult to categorise. One of the most famous designs is the Adidas template styled by the Netherlands, Germany, Ipswich Town, and others in the late 1980s. I am not discounting the design as a classic, as it truly is, but first, it is out of my specified time period, and secondly would the template suit all the other factors we've discussed. I am just not sure it would and so at the fear of being chastised, it doesn't make the shirt list.

Whilst in the realms of controversy neither does the Soviet Union 1989 home shirt. Protected by my 1990 onwards stance, I can leave this shirt design out, but its sheer madness of a pattern also makes the shirt somewhat ahead of its time. The 1989 CCCP shirt, perhaps alongside recent attempts from Tottenham Hotspurs, and Paris Saint-Germain, amongst others, looks like the shirts have been dropped into a hydro dip. Kudos to the Soviets for the forward-thinking, but as a somewhat traditionalist I fear these patterns although make for a great statement they are also slightly faddy and dare I say gimmicky.



The Dutch 1988 kit can have its moment in glory, as the team wearing it experienced glory. Having a successful team, full of world-class players can also bring a kit to life. It's not a necessity though. Worth remembering that Arsenal, when existing League champions in 1992 lost to Wrexham when styling the now-infamous bruised banana shirt.

The importance of the finer details of a shirt can not be underestimated. An additional touch to a shirt can give it a certain Je ne Sais quoi, but for the perfect shirt, this can be quite a conundrum.

Many of the finer details are very bespoke to the club itself, so may not travel well to the perfect shirt, but it's difficult to ignore some of the features.

First, which is relevant to any shirt is the badge. Can a badge have that many options you're thinking to yourself?

Location. Do you want the badge central on the shirt, or left, on the chest where it appears most often? I have mentioned earlier that some clubs have moved the badge to the sleeve to accommodate other features or have a badge on the sleeve simply because they have more than one to show off. For me, the placing of the badge must be to the left or right of the chest, it's where it belongs.



Then there is how you fix the badge. The older style shirts would tend to have the badge imprinted into the shirt, or a felt badge essentially stuck on the shirt. Another option would be it sewn into the shirt, but the standout option for the perfect shirt would be the heat-pressed badge. The 3D element to the heat-pressed badge allows it to pop from the shirt with devastating effects.





Once you have the position and the method to attach it, then you must choose which badge!

In recent years clubs have redesigned their club badges to modernise the look. This doesn't sit well with me, and the originals should remain, especially when some of the new efforts aren't even an improvement. The one soft spot I have is if clubs go back in time and bring back some retro to the badge like Leeds United did with the LUFC stitching on the 1995/96 home and third shirts for that season. Motherwell has recently done this with their away kit offerings in 2019 and 2020.



Adaptions of badges can also be quite stylish. Sampdoria dropped the background of their club badge in the late 90s to just show the silhouette of the sailor and have been known to drop the badge altogether and merely include a crest with the Saint Georges flag as a pointer to the club's history.



What about sleeve patches. These choices will ultimately be defined by the shirt's end destination. The patches are used to identify what competition the team is wearing their shirt in. They can also be used for one-up-manship. Having a golden version and letting fans and opposition know you are the reigning champions is a no-brainer. Why wouldn't you? Seen below is the 2019 gold addition to the Barcelona home shirt, after their victorious 2018/19 campaign.





Of course, as with the club badges, there are options for how to fit the patches, with my preferred being the heat pressed or sewn on.

Our perfect shirt will not be associated with a team nor a competition, but by gosh, if it ever was, it's having heat-pressed patches on the sleeve!

A feature that will be present on the perfect shirt will of course be a number set on the back. A simple feature, but one that is easily accessorised by the addition of a club badge within the numbers, or the manufacturer logo. A fine detail but adds something that would otherwise be a plain number dominating the back of the shirt.





Whilst on the makeup of the back of the shirt there are further dos and don'ts.

We've covered the sponsorship angle on the front and sleeves of shirts, and these sponsoring brands are not fools. There are a lot of areas to be used on the rear of a shirt to get their brand exposed. It is dangerous territory, however. The Palmeiras shirt shown here is in real danger of an innocent passer-by thinking the club's left-winger goes by the surname Parmalat. A similar thought has crossed my mind in the past that Porto used to field an alarmingly large number of players called Super Bock in their team!



If there are to be additions to the rear of the shirt, outside of the actual player's names it should be aimed at the football club, and not the local tipple.

In the Bundesliga, it can very often be seen for several clubs to have the club's name above the player's number, and then the player's name appears underneath their squad number. Why? As a reminder that the club will always come before the player in terms of importance. When the Bundesliga clubs feature in other UEFA or FIFA competitions, the club's name will often be swapped around and appear at the bottom, in adherence to those associations' rules.



That is an excellent feature, and other clubs, although less formal, have had club names, or nicknames, placed on the lower back part of the shirt.

This creative way to highlight the club's name I am a huge fan of this and it goes straight onto the shirt list.

Other details can make a shirt stand out from the rest, and these next features are to recognise success.



I mentioned the golden league patch addition earlier, and in Italy, the holders of the Serie A title and Coppa Italia, attach badges on the following season's shirts to acknowledge the win. In addition, you will quite often see stars added to a shirt, usually above the club or nation badge. This will be to signify the number of domestic, European, or international trophies won.

World Cup-winning nations, multiple league winners, or European Cup winners often salute the fact with stars. It can now be fashionable, for World Club Cup-winning teams, or World Cup-winning nations to have a golden patch added to the shirt to recognise the achievement. If you've got it, flaunt it.



Tags to the shirt can be a nice feature as well, that could be a representation of club colours, nicknames, or regional or country flags. Not an overly innovative additional, but a nice touch regardless. If not done as a tag, often flags are sewn onto the shirt as a feature.

If not using a tag as a feature, club shirts will very often have additional print on the shirt. This can be used to recognise the year the club was founded, seen here for Parma and Odense.



This Odense shirt also features Danish script that translates to “Together for the club, the city, forever.”





A favourite and subtle addition to a shirt of mine can be seen on the back of the shirt, placed on the neckline of the PSV Eindhoven home shirt of 219/20 shirt, which reads D 22 43.

That stands for section D, row 22, seat 43. It is the position of the seat in the PSV Eindhoven stadium that Fritz Philips used to seat to watch the side. Fritz Philips was a director of the board of the Dutch Electronics company, Philips. The club was founded in 1913 as a team for Philips employees, and PSV stands for Philips Sport Vereniging (Philips Sports Association). Fritz was a huge fan, watching the team even when in his 100s, but chose to sit with the fans, and not in the corporate seats.





Seen recently on the FC Utrecht home offering 2020, on the bottom right of the front was a silhouette of the Down Tower, the tallest church tower in the Netherlands that is considered the symbol for the city of Utrecht. Additions such as this can make a shirt so special and unique.

On Boca Junior shirts, the text “La Mitad +1” is seen on the reserve. That is because Boca Juniors claims to be the club of "half plus one" (la mitad más uno) of Argentina's population! Or it could be as simple as the abbreviation of the club's name, like SSNC for Società Sportiva Calcio Napoli.

Whatever the message, flag or tag is, I think it's an addition worthy of going on to the shirt list.





### The Perfect Football Shirt List

#### **Colour**

- Yellow
- Blue
- Red
- White
- Black

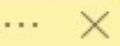
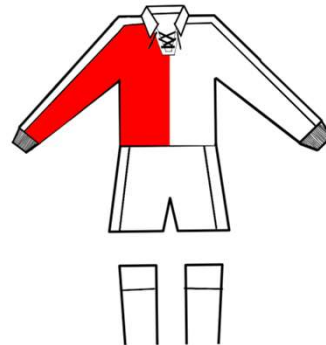
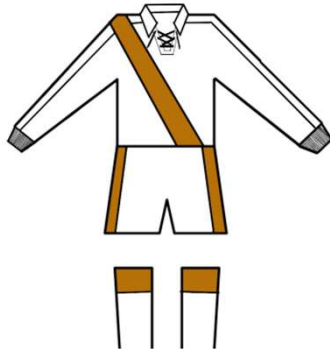
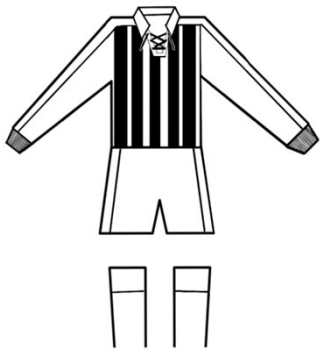
Need to incorporate gold into the shirt as well

#### **Collar**

- Turnover collar
- Of size
- Lace collar
- V-Neck
- Pattern/colours
- Not plain

#### **Manufacturers**

- Adidas
- Nike
- Umbro
- Lotto
- Kappa
- Hummel



### The Perfect Football Shirt List

#### **Sleeves**

- Long Sleeve
- Heat pressed patches
- No sponsorship visible

#### **Sponsorship**

- Opel
- Pirelli
- Parmalat
- Discreet appearance
- Only on the front, not on the sleeve or back

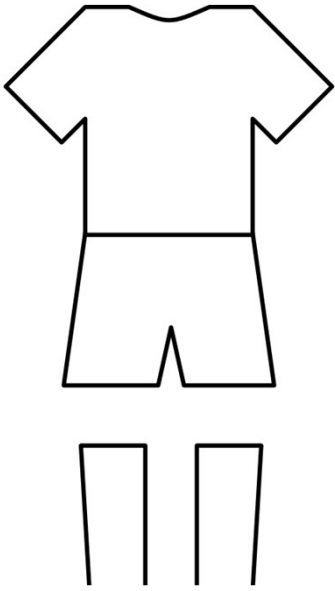
#### **Design**

- Plain
- Sash, uninterrupted
- Sponsor remains discreet

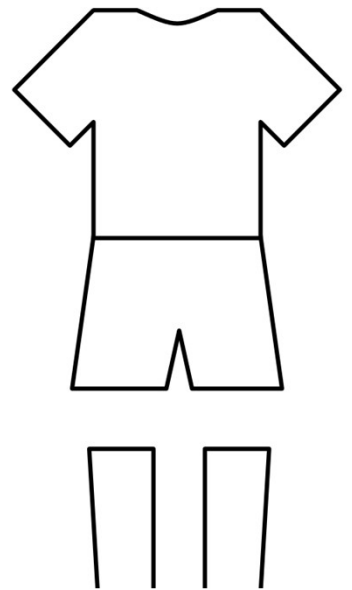
#### **Details**

- Heat pressed badge, on chest, to side
- Tags
- Club name included on the back of the shirt
- Shirt numbers to have club or brand within
- Words/Dates to be featured on the shirt





# PLAYERS



Before the conclusion of what makes the perfect shirt, a moment should be taken to consider what players would be best suited to wear it. I am not talking of the best players, ability-wise. Many sports pages and Twitter feeds have been taken up with that content. I mean what players have worn the best shirts, and therefore are qualified to wear the perfect shirt?

## **Juan Sebastian Veron**

The Argentine midfield maestro began his career at Estudiantes, in a classic red and white striped kit, before a move to Boca Juniors in the gold-banded blue kit, with Quilmes the sponsor. Over to Italy with time spent in the Sampdoria (blue ERG kit), the Parma (yellow and blue Lotto kit, with Parmalat sponsor,), and then at Lazio where he wore the stylish Puma European home kit, that he looked very at home in, as it gave off a hint of the Argentina national team kit. No kit joy during his time in England, which could be argued matched his form in the country. A loan spell at Inter Milan saw Veron line up in the second release of the Grey & Blue hooped shirt, this time by Nike and with the Pirelli sponsor.

Upon his return to Argentina, he re-joined Estudiantes and promptly won the Copa Libertadores in 2009 which meant of course the golden patch was added to their shirt the following year that Veron was able to fashion.

## Gabriel Batistuta

Staying on the Argentinian theme, Batistuta ticked three boxes in Argentina before heading to Europe. First, a half and half classic with Newell Old Boys, then the classic 1989/90 River Plate sash (not interrupted), and was followed by an Adidas Boca Juniors blue and gold classic, with Fiat as the main sponsor.

To Europe and the nine seasons with Fiorentina didn't disappoint. I mean that in the goals returned column as well as shirts worn. The classic purple kit of *I Viola* shirts worked wonderfully with sponsors such as 7up, Nintendo, Toyota, and Sammontana. He even managed to fit in the controversial swastika away kit. Some of these kits in the long sleeve versions were outstanding. Then to Roma and fair to say Batistuta could pull off the tight Kappa look, including the half and half European special. There was even time to fit in a Pirelli-sponsored Inter Milan shirt, with blue and black stripes finished off with the yellow trim. Batistuta's efforts just beat off competition from Hernan Crespo's kit career.

## Paulo Sousa

The Portuguese midfielder ticked the Hummel box at Benfica, the Neon yellow and black at Borussia Dortmund, the Danone and Sony era at Juventus, both Kappa and even snuck in Parmalat shirts at Parma and Pirelli shirts at Inter Milan. Not bad, especially considering some of the great Portugal national team shirts he also wore.

## David Platt

Although only announcing himself on the world stage in 1990 with that volley against Belgium in the World Cup, David Platt had already won a classic shirt. The Aston Villa 1988/89 was a Hummel beauty. A take on the Denmark 1986 template, half/half but pinstriped, with the chevrons all down the sleeves. Platt's move to Italy coincided with some more classic shirts. 1991/92 was the red and white of Bari, in a lovely Adidas template. Points also gained for the Bari club badge.

Then to Kappa and Juventus, with a simple black and white strip offering, with an amended badge, just showing two stars. Platt then conquered the lace collar at Sampdoria before moving to Arsenal and their second year being manufactured by Nike, and the lightning bolt away kit was a particular favourite. Add some lovely England kits worn during his career, Platt had some real gems to wear.



## **Clarence Seedorf**

Mr. Successful, who can still dine out on being the only player to win the Champions League with three different teams, also has a lovely shirt CV. Home-schooled at Ajax through the Umbro years, then Sampdoria for a season (missed the lace collar though) before a spell at Real Madrid in the simply but class white and purple. Then he got his Pirelli fix at Inter Milan before AC Milan shirts, including Opel sponsored. Worth also mentioning some other great Netherland national team shirts whilst we are here. Dutch compatriots Edgar David and Aron Winter wore some beauties in their careers as well.

## **Georgi Kinkladze**

The Georgian dribbling master is worth a mention mainly due to his national team career! Georgia not only styled the Eagle wingspan shirt in the early 90s but then ventured to the world of Kappa and their magical sleeve offering. This continued at Maine Road when he dazzled the Manchester City faithful. Add very short stints at Boca Juniors and Ajax, I think he qualifies being pointed out.

## **Brazilian front 3**

Throwing these three in together, but looking through the back catalogue of Edmundo, Romario and Ronaldo is worth anybody's time. Covering the likes of Palmeiras, Flamengo, Santos, Vasco Da Gama, and Cruzeiro in their motherland, and then PSV Eindhoven, the Barcelona Kappa years, Inter Milan's migration from Umbro to Nike, Fiorentina, AC Milan, and Real Madrid. Not bad I am sure you'll agree.

## Brian Laudrup and Michael Laudrup

We end this feature with a brother combination and Brian and Michael Laudrup could lay claim to have had the best career in kits, out of the lot!!

The former Danish internationals have a sensational shirt CV.

Michael Laudrup can show vintage offerings from his time in Serie A, with Lazio and Juventus. Then the early Barcelona Kappa years and to the simply Real Madrid colourings. Add a bit of Ajax in there, but if you're not convinced, simply marvel at the Denmark Hummel 1986 World Cup home and away shirts.

Then the brother comes into play. Too young for the 1986 kits, but still can show off some great other Hummel supplied Denmark shirts, with chevrons everywhere. This was also the case at Brøndby, so the chevron full sleeves box firmly ticked. Then to Germany, and a lovely blue and red combination at Bayer Uerdingen followed up with his first exposure to Opel, at the Bavarian giants, Bayern Munich. His time in Italy didn't disappoint (in shirts) with Lotto dominating. First at Fiorentina and the 7up shirt, and then a second Opel offering but with AC Milan this time.

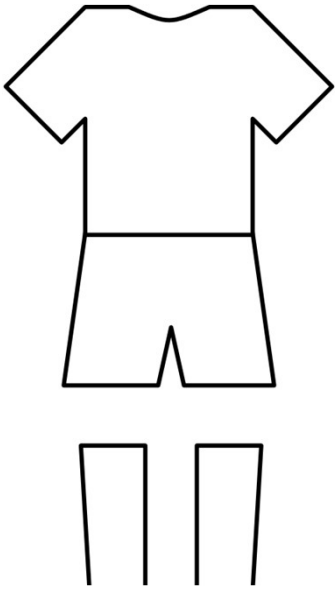
Perhaps the most successful period in his club career was at Rangers, in Scotland, and the shirts helped supplement his success. All kits were sporting the McEwan's Lager brand as the sponsor, and first up was Adidas. An array of classics, not just home but away as well, were released from 1994 to 1997.

The purple away as well as the red, black, and white squared away offering, are personal favourites of mine. Then Rangers switched to Nike for his last campaign at Ibrox. That too didn't disappoint.

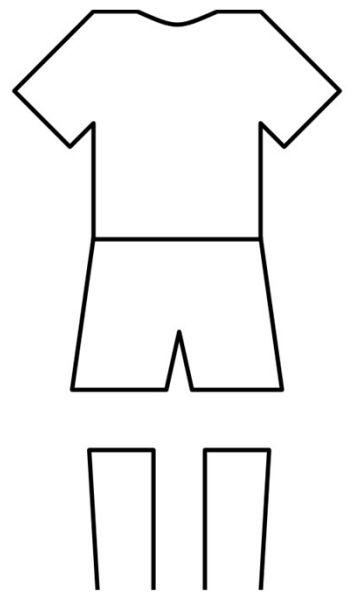
Not much doing at Chelsea, but at Copenhagen, in 1998 Laudrup popped his lace collar cherry. A stunning Umbro offering would have been a fitting finale, but he even managed to squeeze in the last Umbro Ajax offering in his ultimate season as a professional, in the season 1999/00.

If the perfect shirt were to ever launch, we would most certainly want the Laudrup brothers to be our models showing it off.





CONCLUSION





What a journey to get to the ending and now it comes to the decision-making part of the voyage.

There has been a great deal covered in the search for the perfect shirt, but it's important at this stage to reiterate what was outlined at the beginning.

It is all my words, photos, and opinions, and I completely accept what I think contributes to the perfect shirt is highly unlikely to match anyone else's list of attributes, but if it gets the brain working and ideas flowing, and kicks off discussions then I am taking that as a massive win.

Putting this all together has been a huge amount of fun for me to work through, research, and generally use it as an excuse to look, photo, and re-look at loads of football shirts, and pretend it was me working.

In all reality, the perfect shirt probably doesn't exist, and if it did, and I happened to find it, I wouldn't stop collecting football shirts.

However, the idea of putting together all my favourite characteristics of the football shirts I have spotted, sought after, and collected after all these years was way too much fun not to go along with it.

The sticky notes at the end of each chapter have helped me narrow down the selection, so time to take stock and make the tough decisions.

One dominant colour is the way forward for the base of the kit, and therefore in order not to have the shirt associated with a certain club, as I am trying to avoid bias here, the colour decision is going to be black. Some will no doubt argue that it is too faddy and trying to be on-trend. Fear not, we are not blacking out the kit fully. Gold and white trimmings will be present on the perfect shirt, to compliment the black.



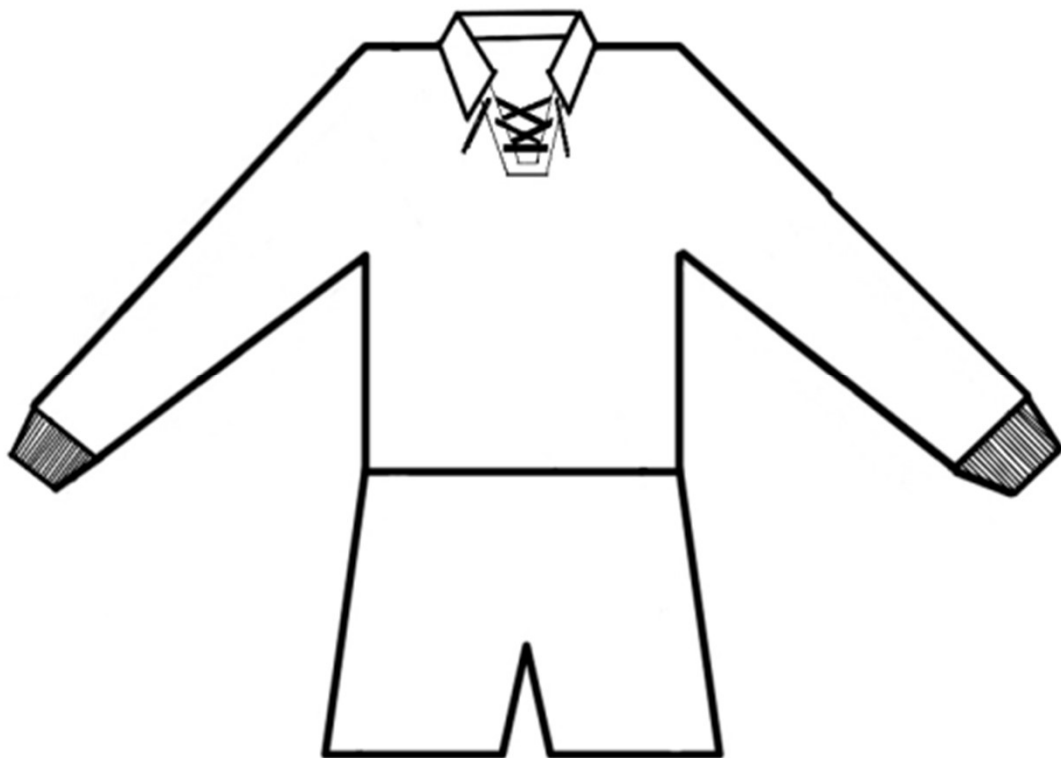
The shirt collar will consist of a turnover material collar, of decent size, with a V-neck incorporating string holes and lace material threaded through. The health and safety officers may not sign off the lace collar, but doesn't an element of rebelliousness add something to the shirt? The lace can be interchangeable from black and gold. Of course, there will be edging on the collar and a nod to the club's name on the rear. (N.B. I'm aware at this stage, there is no club!!)



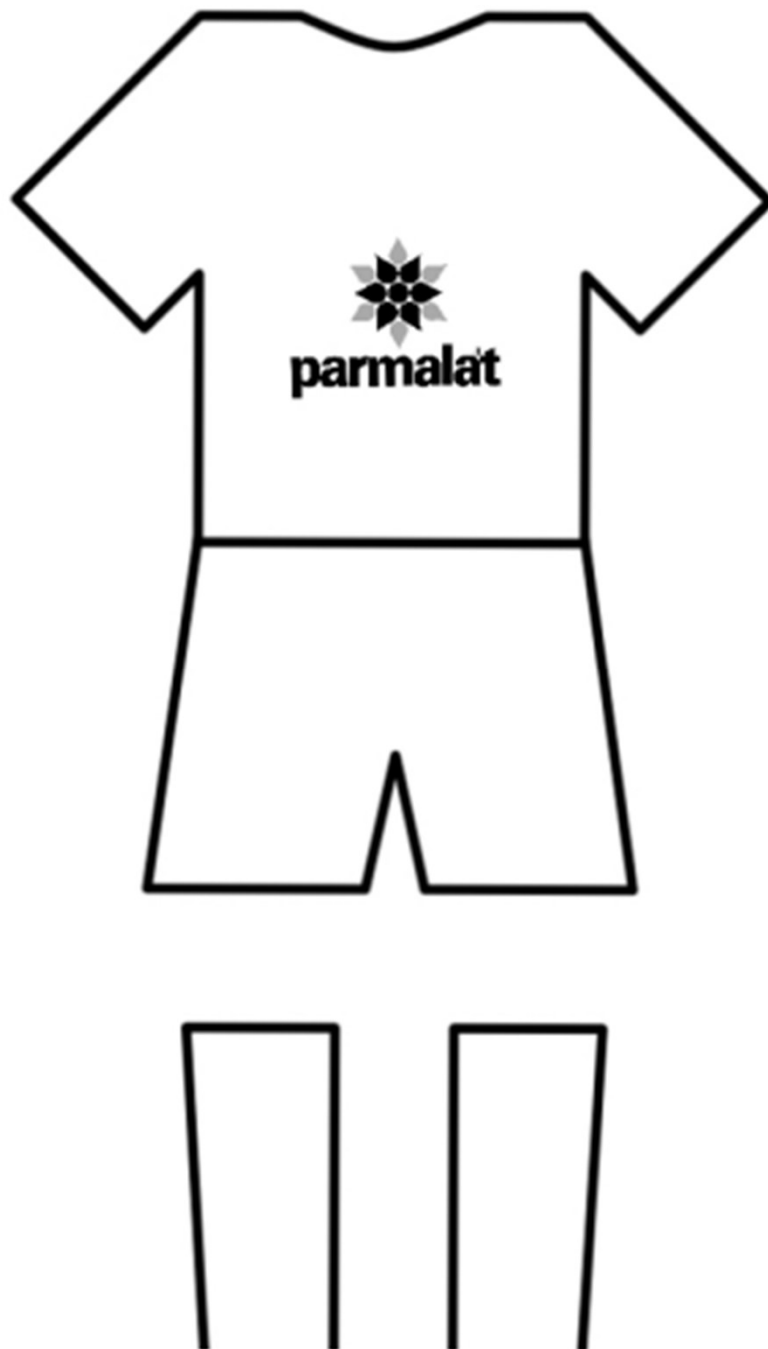
The competition to manufacture the shirt was a tough one, but it came down to Hummel or Kappa. The element of retro and still being a firm favourite in the modern age means the shirt will travel through time well. Forward-thinking to the sleeves of the shirt, the final choice for the manufacturer is to be Kappa.



Of course, it has to be a long sleeve shirt. The idea of a continuous print of Kappa brand logos down a long sleeve is just too much to ignore.

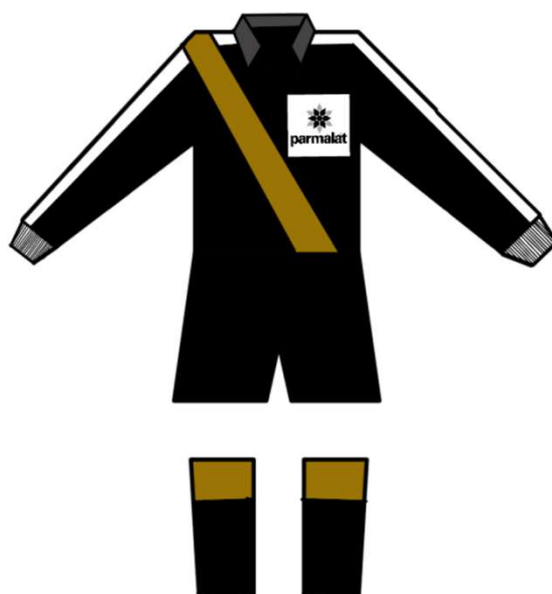


The sponsor for the shirt threw up some cracking options. We have to wave goodbye to Pirelli at this stage as I feel it has too much of an association with Inter Milan. Opel and Parmalat both put forward compelling arguments but it's the Italian dairy firm that comes out on top.



So many options for the design, but struggling to look beyond the sash diagonal through the centre of the shirt. Agnostic to the direction of the sash but whilst decisions are being made, let's go from right to left.

The sash is going to be one colour, gold, and cannot be interrupted, so that means the Parmalat sponsor will be made smaller and discreet and appear on the left chest part of the shirt.



In the absence of a club wearing the shirt, the Perfect Shirt FC, "PSFC", would have a badge within the sash at the chest level. This would not break the sash merely sit within in, attached via the heat pressed method of course.

There will be tags attached to the shirt. The year of creation would be apt, and also an inclusion of text/date to mark a historical event/happening related to the shirt/club. In this instance, the date shown on the shirt will be 16 03 2020, as that was the first date of lockdown in the UK, which has ultimately inspired me to return to my passion and embrace the world of football shirt collecting again.

A couple of additional pointers, before the shirt hits the rails...

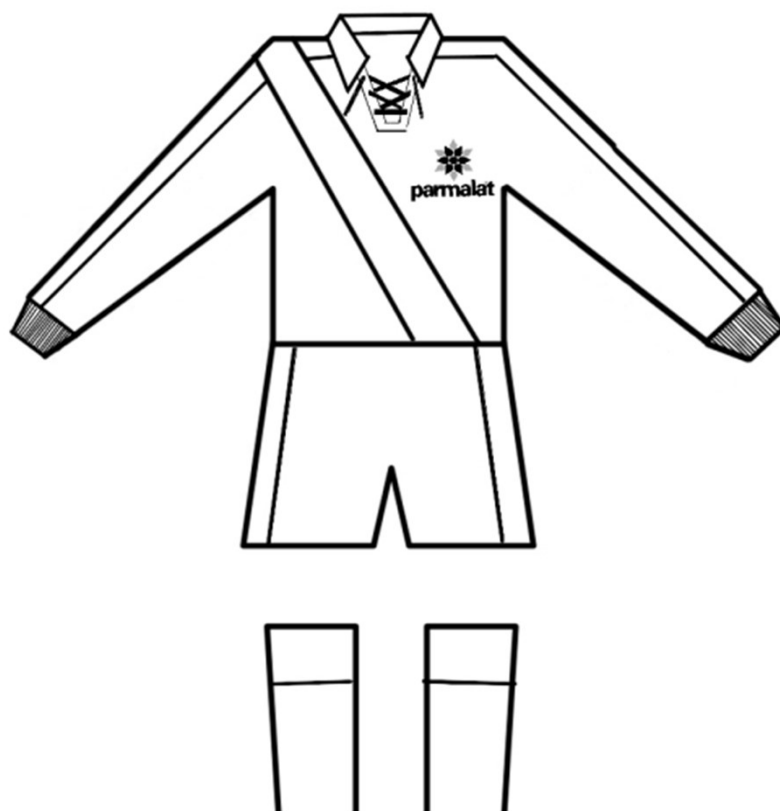
Firstly, there will be an away kit version that will be the same template. Matching home and away templates are brilliant and help bring even more identity to the shirt. The perfect shirt template will be using the same colours, flipped from black to white. When home and away shirts use the same template and merely reverse the colours it's a major triumph.



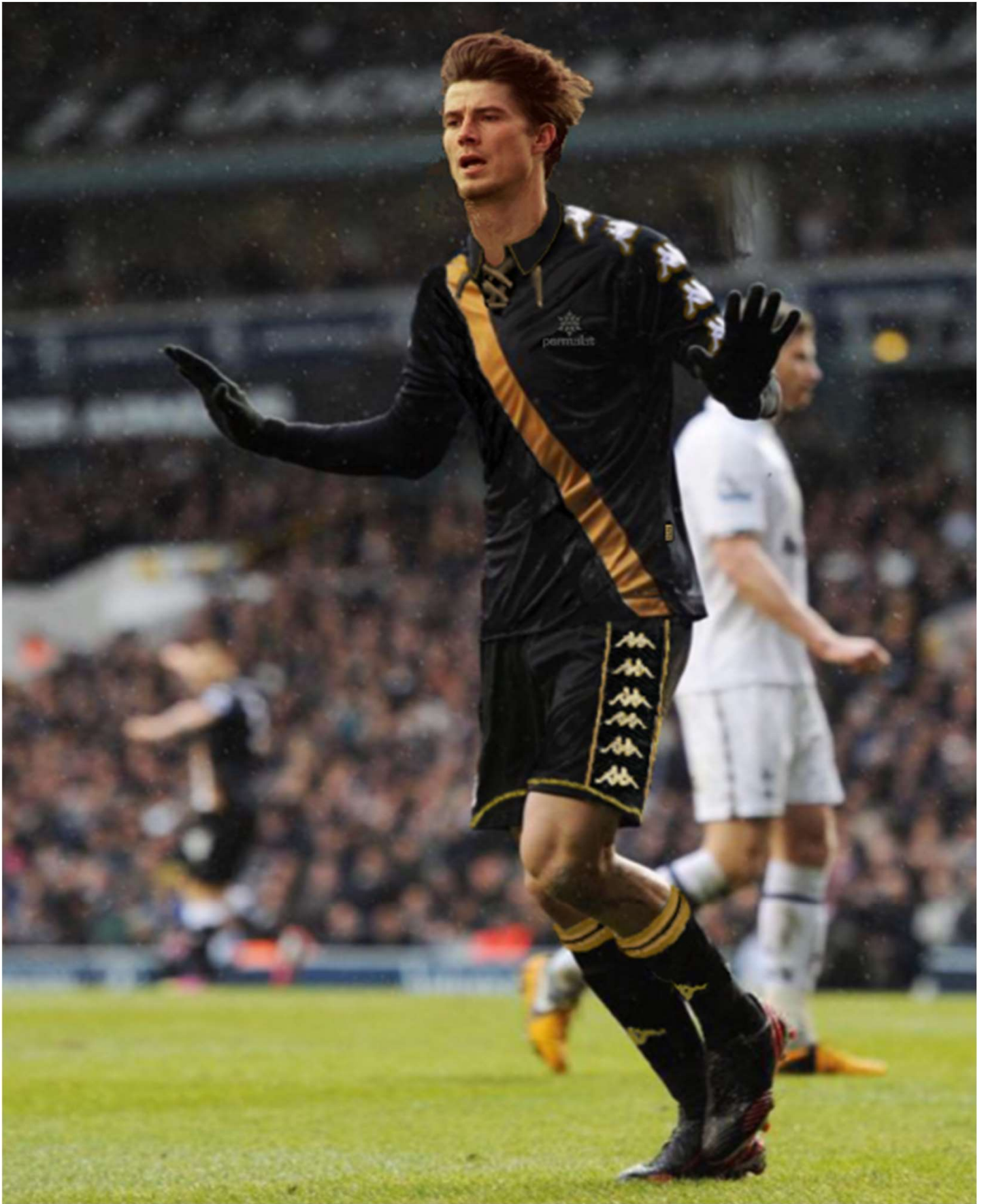
Lastly, but still of utmost importance, the shorts! What is a perfect shirt without the perfect shorts? Think Holland, AC Milan and Manchester United. All their shirts in the past combined with black shorts are automatically propelled to a higher level of greatness. The perfect shirt will be accompanied by black shorts with gold and white accessories and trimming.

That's it, we are done. The perfect shirt is complete. Thank you so much for coming on the journey with me, I hope you like the final decisions and can picture how the perfect shirt, for me, would look.

To help, here is the main man Brian Laudrup trying it on for size.



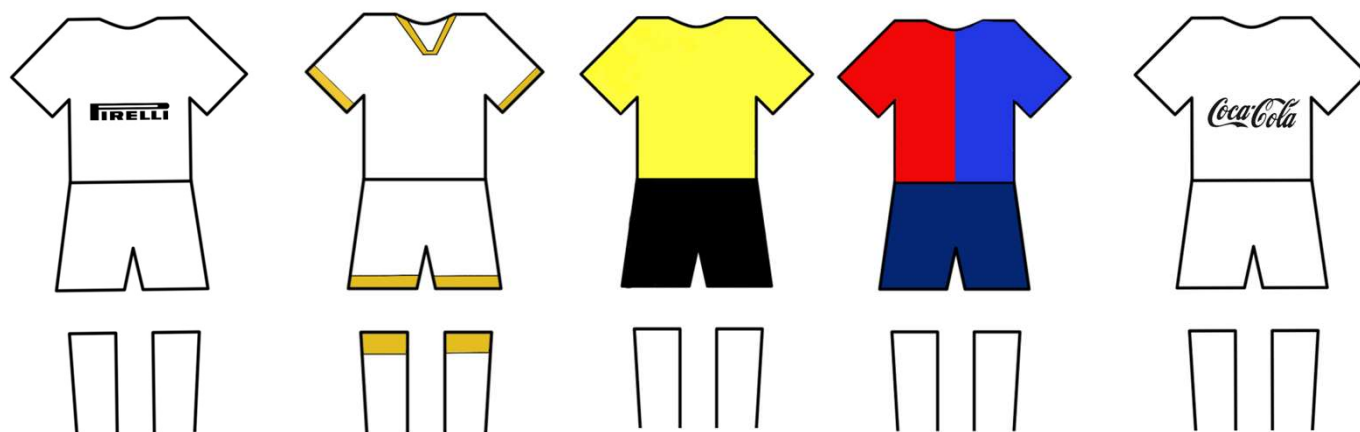
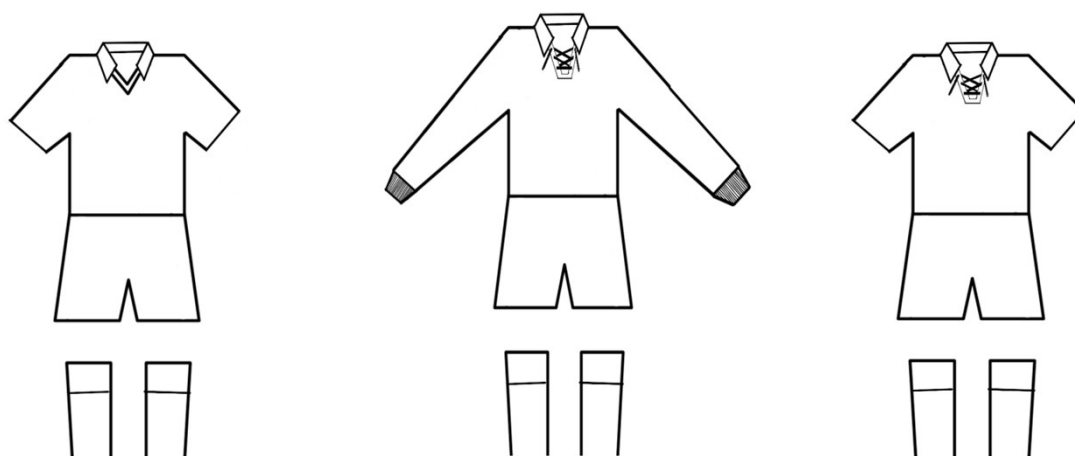
I am of course completely aware the perfect shirt doesn't exist, it can't do, because everybody's view is different, and that is the beautiful thing about football shirts, they are all perfect in their own way.





Come along for the journey to find what is needed to create the perfect football shirt.

This is an attempt to put together all the best bits of a football shirt, without the necessity to please a particular club fan base, but instead please fan's of football shirts in general.



You can't please everyone but you can have a great time trying.

[@10Stan1981](#)