








## Will England leave Brazil as World Champions?

The general verdict seems to be 'probably not'. As of writing, the market seems to have settled to a pessimistic 30-1 and even the press seem to have reined in their customary hyperbole.

So what hope if there for the England fan hoping for glory in Brazil? Possibly more than you'd expect due to the existence of the Unofficial Football World Championships (<http://www.ufwc.co.uk/>). Described as 'probably the least known but most exciting football competition on Earth', a team claims the title by beating the previous holder, counting all FIFA matches (friendlies included).

Since 2010 the champions have been:

Holders	Date won	Date lost	Matches held	Days held	<a href="#">FIFA World ranking at time of gaining title</a>
<a href="#">Spain</a> 	11-Jul-10	07-Sep-10	3	58	2 †
<a href="#">Argentina</a> 	07-Sep-10	08-Oct-10	1	31	5
<a href="#">Japan</a> 	08-Oct-10	15-Nov-11	15	403	30
<a href="#">North Korea</a> 	15-Nov-11	23-Jan-13	15	435	124
<a href="#">Sweden</a> 	23-Jan-13	06-Feb-13	<a href="#">1[18]</a>	14	19
<a href="#">Argentina</a> 	06-Feb-13	15-Oct-13	8	252	3
<a href="#">Uruguay</a> 	15-Oct-13	Current holders	3	234	7

(table from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronology\\_of\\_the\\_Unofficial\\_Football\\_World\\_Championships](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronology_of_the_Unofficial_Football_World_Championships))

Uruguay currently holding the title gives England a great chance for glory, either by:

- 1) Dethroning Uruguay on their way to being joint official and unofficial champions (a feat achieved by Spain in the final of the previous World Cup)
- 2) Following the example of Chile (1950), Mexico (1962) or Colombia (1994) and getting themselves eliminated in the group stage despite holding the unofficial title.

There are a number of result combinations that end up with England leaving the competition as unofficial champions; they can be grouped together into the following scenarios:



Scenario	Description	WC Probability
1	Costa Rica beat Uruguay Costa Rica don't lose to Italy England beat Costa Rica England don't qualify	0.53%
2	Uruguay don't lose to Costa Rica England beat Uruguay England don't lose to Costa Rica England don't qualify	1.52%
3	England take the title and qualify from the group England win the world cup	1.64%
4	England don't take the title but qualify from the group The title holder qualifies England win the world cup	1.42%
Overall	World Cup Glory	5.11%

(The probabilities have been generated by using the implied market probabilities of various match outcomes & outright along with 10,000 group simulations.)

Combining the probabilities together, we've boosted England's chances by 50% (relative probabilities are much more exciting), from 3.33% to 5.11%.

Although we've boosted the chances a bit, there is a controversial tactic, not yet picked up on by the press, that will give England an even greater chance of coming home with world cup glory - *Deliberately losing against Italy*.

Although this reduces our chances of winning the World Cup final, it increases the probabilities of winning the world cup via the first two scenarios, doubling the measly probability given to us by the bookmakers:

World Champ probability, given we lose to Italy	
Scenario	Probability
1	1.19%
2	3.77%
3	1.44%
4	0.46%
Overall	6.86%

We should probably wait and see what the result is in the Uruguay vs Costa Rica game first though, if Costa Rica pull off an upset in that game, then England's chances shoot up to 7.4% - come on Los Ticos!

