

UMBRO ICONS

1966 WORLD CUP



All but one (USSR) of the 16 teams in the 1966 World Cup wore Umbro kits, including eventual winners England.

ROGER BANNISTER



In 1954, Bannister wore Umbro when he became the first person to run a sub-four minute mile.

PAUL GASCOIGNE



Gascoigne was in an England Umbro kit when he broke down in tears in the 1990 World Cup semi-final.

ROBERTO CARLOS



Roberto Carlos wore Umbro boots when he scored that freekick for France against Brazil in 1997.

MANCHESTER UNITED



Umbro made all Manchester United's kits during their historic treble-winning campaign in 1998/99.

Past, present and future shaped by Umbro

The Middle East is now home to a sports brand steeped in history

The 1990s was a revolutionary era for football, particularly in England with the creation of the Premier League, which saw viewing figures and revenues skyrocket as fans couldn't get enough of the country's newly established top division.

On the international stage, fans were being treated to some of the most iconic moments in the history of the game – Gazza's tears in Italy at World Cup 1990, followed six years later with his stunning solo strike against Scotland. Not to mention 18-year-old Michael Owen lighting up football's world stage with his wonder goal for England against Argentina at France '98. In European competition, Sir Alex Ferguson finally got his hands on the Champions League trophy when Manchester United completed their historic treble-winning campaign in 1999, thanks to their dramatic injury-time comeback against Bayern Munich. While fans were enjoying all the excitement on the pitch, there was reason to celebrate for a sports brand that seemed to have a knack for being in the right place at the right time.

1930

The year Umbro established their first factory

Born in Manchester, England, in 1924, Umbro began life in the cupboard of the Bull's Head Hotel, owned by the parents of the Humphreys brothers, Wallace and Harold. The pair had little experience in business, although two years prior to starting the brand, Harold had launched his own sportswear retail business.

By 1930, thanks to growing sales, Umbro had their first factory established and were able to offer a 48-hour delivery service, which was unheard of at the time. Umbro, which is an abbreviation of Humphreys Brothers LTD, would remain in the factory for the next 80 years.

It wasn't long into the brand's inception before the eyes of football fans were locked on to its shirts, having made kits for major clubs, including Manchester City and Portsmouth who both wore Umbro during the 1934 FA Cup final.

Arguably the sports brand's finest moment in their 95-year history came when 15 of the 16 teams in the 1966 World Cup wore Umbro kits, including England – who continued to don the Humphreys brothers' creation until 2012. Sir Alf Ramsey's side weren't the first team to win the Jules Rimet trophy in Umbro kits either – Brazil famously lifted the World Cup in



Wear and tears: Gascoigne will forever be associated with an Umbro shirt.

1958 with the help of a 17-year-old Pele. The year would prove pivotal in the brand's success as Manchester United came on board when manager Sir Matt Busby teamed up with Umbro to produce a winter range of sportswear. Still striving for more, the company broke the mould yet again when it became the first sportswear brand to make junior kits so youngsters could wear replica kits.

Things continued to blossom with the brand's first major player endorsement, Man United's Dennis Law signed an exclusive sponsorship deal with the firm in 1960. In the 1990s Umbro had some of the biggest names in football signed to endorsement deals,

including the Premier League's all-time top scorer Alan Shearer and rising star Owen, who wore Umbro's famous Speciali boots when he scored that famous goal against Argentina in 1998, thrusting himself into the global spotlight. In 2018, Umbro would re-release their classic boot, celebrating 20 years of Owen's wonder goal. Famous faces away from football were also getting in on the act, notably Liam Gallagher who wore the brand during an Oasis gig during the height of the Britpop era in the '90s, at Maine Road, the old home of current Premier League champions Man City.

Although predominantly a football brand, Umbro have



Pioneer: Harold Humphreys.

enjoyed success away from the 'Beautiful Game'. British athlete Roger Bannister wrote his name in the history books in 1954 when he became the first man ever to run a mile in under four minutes – wearing Umbro. The feat wasn't seen to be humanly possible until

Bannister proved otherwise. Prior to Bannister's heroics, the British Olympic team had worn Umbro at the 1952 games in Helsinki. Away from sport entirely Umbro made the uniforms for the Lancaster bombers during World War Two – a decision that not only benefited the British Army but also proved vital in keeping the company alive during that period. Factories would have been shut down with the male workers at war, and sportswear deemed not important enough for the female workers to continue with during wartime.

In modern times, Umbro still has a large presence in football, supplying kits for the likes of Everton, West Ham and Bournemouth along

with PSV Eindhoven and Schalke 04 to name but a few. The brand's direction has now led them to branch out into the Middle East and the company is setting targets high this year as it aims to propel itself further into the market. While the company is not new to the region, clubs such as Egypt's Al Ahly SC and Al Ahli of Saudi Arabia are already wearing Umbro kits, and as of 2019 it has a new license partner in Brand-Folio LLC.

"Umbro is the most authentic football brand in the industry and with football being the biggest sport in the region our ambition is to be where football is," says Head of Umbro Middle East Tom Grzelak. "We have signed a three-year

partnership with Al Ahly Egypt and with three major academies in the UAE, with more partnerships to be revealed shortly. This month we will be opening the first mono branded Umbro store in the Middle East, followed by a brand campaign called OUR GAME." The former head of football at Adidas Emerging Market continued: "It's going to be a busy time ahead, but after 13 years with Adidas football I'm enthusiastic to be a part of an underdog brand and to offer consumers more variety in football and lifestyle."

By Nick Watkins

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LACELESS LEATHER

Innovation and leather boots have always been part of Umbro's DNA – the iconic Speciali boot was the lightest in the world when it was released in 1992. The Medusae 3 Elite combines these two traits to create a genuine first, a laceless leather boot that combines the touch and speed of previous generations of the Medusae with an innovative one-piece k-leather upper. Umbro consulted with professional players over two years before releasing the boot.



Dream factory: Umbro started from humble beginnings in the north of England.