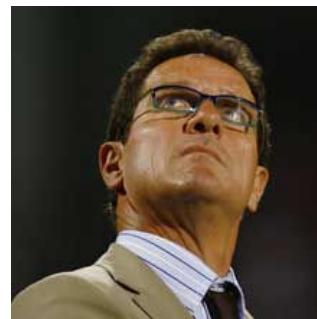


# The Pragmatist

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Uefa.com



Fabio Capello has already made history at Wembley. By scoring the only goal of Italy's visit to the 'home of football' on 14 November 1973, he secured a first victory for the Azzurri on English soil. If that was a momentous occasion, Capello has since gone on to enjoy many more as a coach and when the 61-year-old returns to the scene of arguably his finest hour as a player, there is good reason to believe he can make an even bigger mark there in charge of England.

## 'Indisputable' reputation

Capello the player enjoyed significant success in a career that took him from the Ferrara-based Spal Calcio via AS Roma to Juventus where he helped La Vecchia Signora to three league titles in four years. Capped 32 times by Italy, he later joined AC Milan where he won a fourth Serie A winner's medal in 1978/79, his final year as a player. Capello would eclipse those achievements as a coach, building a reputation that Sir Alex Ferguson described this week as "indisputable". Funny to think that when he first took over from Arrigo Sacchi at Milan in 1991, there was some scepticism surrounding his appointment. At the same time as Sacchi's Milan had been conquering Europe with the great Dutch trio of Ruud Gullit, Frank Rijkaard and Marco van Basten, Capello was working with club owner Silvio Berlusconi's ice hockey team.

“ The true mark of a 'Squadra Capelliana' is that it enjoys a physical challenge and possesses a steely backbone running through it ”

## Influenced by Herrera

He did not take long to prove the critics wrong, guiding the Rossoneri to four league titles in five seasons and a memorable 4-0 demolition of FC Barcelona in the 1993/94 UEFA Champions League final. That triumph, England fans should note, was not a trademark Capello performance. If the Italian does produce a winning England team, it is unlikely to be with a brand of spectacular football. Heavily influenced by Helenio Herrera, the inventor of Catenaccio and his coach during his final year at Roma, Capello has built his teams around a solid defence. "Helenio Herrera inspired me more than others," he told uefa.com recently. "He taught me not to be scared of my opponents, to be determined and to have the confidence to win." The true mark of a 'Squadra Capelliana' is that it enjoys a physical challenge and possesses a steely backbone running through it.

## 'No one system'

At Milan he introduced Marcel Desailly as a defensive midfielder in front of two central defenders with tremendous results and almost every side he has coached since has included a similar player - hence Brazilian midfielder Emerson following Capello from Roma to Juventus and then to Real Madrid CF. This should spell good news for the industrious, and intelligent, Owen Hargreaves. That said, Capello has no preferred playing system. "You have to find a way to play according to the players you have in the squad," he said. "Never stick to only one system. I think that is the biggest mistake you can make. Many people think there is one only good system but I think there are many." While comfortable with tactical variation, Capello is insistent on several key attributes: a winning mentality, a tireless work ethic and a willingness to follow his orders to the last detail.

“Capello was a dictator. His way was the way to go” *Gianluigi Buffon*

### **Disciplinarian**

Not taking a friendly game or training session seriously is a huge mistake with this disciplinarian. Indeed his autocratic style has made him enemies in the past, notably Roma captain Francesco Totti and Juventus skipper Alessandro Del Piero, who openly criticised their former boss after he had moved on. When Capello left Juventus for his second stint at Madrid, goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon told the Italian magazine Sportsweek: "Capello was a dictator. His way was the way to go." Capello treats criticism from players with the same disdain he has shown for the press - English journalists be warned - and he is not interested in making friends in football, only winning. "If you become a player's friend, the others are immediately jealous and then start to think someone is playing just because he is a friend of yours," he said.

### **Delivers results**

Yet he has enjoyed sustained success wherever he has coached. It has not always been pretty but his single-minded win at all costs formula has always delivered results, most recently earning a Spanish league title for Madrid last June (his seventh overall, discounting the pair that were stripped from Juventus). And if there is a language barrier for the Italian, it should pose no problem for Capello if Buffon's words are to be believed. "There was little or no dialogue with his players," he recounted. Whether Capello's approach will work on an underachieving England squad that missed out on UEFA EURO 2008™ remains to be seen. But if the Italian can't do it, who can?