

THE AMAZING CHRISTMAS

STORIES FROM FOOTBALL'S PAST

Bumper crowds flock to stadiums over Christmas, especially for the Boxing Day matches. But there was a time when teams played on both Christmas Day and Boxing Day - and the fans absolutely loved going to watch!

1. WRAPPING UP WARM

Christmas Day is one of the few days of the year on which there is **no football**, with fans instead spending their time opening presents, eating turkey and avoiding kisses from elderly relatives! But that wasn't always the case, as for many years football was traditionally played on **Christmas Day**. Christmas was a rare public holiday and, before TV and video games existed, fans would wrap up in their new **hats and scarves** from Santa Claus and head out to watch their favourite teams.



2. DOUBLE TROUBLE

There was a full schedule of matches on **Christmas Day** and, usually, another one on **Boxing Day**. And players complain about being tired these days! However, often these matches would be **local derbies** so there wasn't much travelling involved.

Sometimes teams played two games on Christmas Day, one in the morning and another in the afternoon. One would be a league match, and the other would usually be an **exhibition match** to raise money for local charities. Some clubs played "**pantomime matches**", with the players dressed up as characters such as **Aladdin** or **Cinderella**!



G TRADITION OF RISTMAS FOOTBALL!

3. CAROLS & ORANGES

Fans really enjoyed Christmas Day football, and clubs often had their biggest attendances of the season. Crowds would join together to sing **Christmas carols** before kick-off, and would pass around Christmas treats such as oranges, which were popular stocking-fillers. This led to the strange Christmas Day custom of **throwing orange peel** at the players, which was regarded as good festive fun!



4. FROZEN PITCHES!

Some Christmas Day games were played in very wintry conditions. Matches were hardly ever abandoned, even if the **pitch was frozen**. Fans were asked to help clear snow from the pitch, and some built snowmen on the terraces!

The last Christmas Day English league match was **Blackpool 4-2 Blackburn** in 1965. By then, people preferred to stay at home and football was no longer a **Christmas Day tradition**. Fans had to go without football – until Boxing Day!