

# World Cup 2010: England told it's OK to have a beer before Germany

Experts back Fabio Capello's new policy of allowing his players to drink alcohol before games – as long as there's no shots

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Fabio Capello celebrates England's win over Slovenia. The Italian had allowed his players to drink beer 24 hours before the game. Photograph: Lee Smith/Action Images

Much has been made of the beer – or two – apparently consumed the night before England's victory over Slovenia. Is there a lesson to be learned ahead of Sunday's match with Germany, or is clean-living the only way to the World Cup?

Henrietta Bailey, nutritional therapist with Pure Sports Medicine, suggests a zero-tolerance approach is indeed the best way forward: "If there is a big sporting event coming up then no alcohol should be consumed the day before."

None at all? "If there absolutely is a need to drink," Bailey said, "then the key is to pace yourself – no shots, and match each drink with water."

"The main issues with drinking before a match are dehydration and potential sleep deprivation. One to two per cent dehydration can lead to a drop in performance of five to ten per cent – resulting in lethargy, poor coordination and problems with concentration. If I was Fabio [Capello] I'd have them under lock and key."

Lethargy, poor coordination and lack of concentration – sounds familiar. But personal trainer and sports nutritionist Jon Bell disagrees and thinks Capello could do far worse than letting his players enjoy a beer on Saturday evening.

"These players are in the prime of their lives, they're more than capable of running round a pitch for 90 minutes," he said. "What they're less capable of is relaxing and concentrating for 90 minutes. The team are preparing for a hugely pressurised occasion. One drink – like a pint of average-strength beer – will give them the psychological benefit of relaxation, but won't cause them any physical harm."

Bell's message for Capello is – give them a beer, but do it nice and early. "I suggest Fabio lets them all have a pint with their dinner on Saturday," he said. "As long as they're not downing drinks straight before they go to bed – which could disturb their sleep – then they won't feel any negative effects. The longer the drink the better, so they get maximum relaxation for minimum alcohol intake. If they really want to make a night of it, I suggest shandy."

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