



After the misery of Steve McClaren's tenure as head coach, some people would argue that the only way was up for the England team once Fabio Capello was handed the reins. But only a brave man would have predicted eight wins out of ten games and an unbeaten start to the 2010 World Cup qualifying campaign. An Italian job well done?



Winners

John Terry
Spent the first eight months of Capello's regime sweating over losing the captaincy, but has more than vindicated his retention of the armband. Can be guaranteed to lead by example by reporting for duty when nowhere near fit and is on course to achieve a childhood dream - leading England in the World Cup finals

Wayne Rooney
Not present in Berlin because of injury but remains the main man even in absentia, with Capello having realised that the Manchester United striker represents England's best hope of scoring and creating goals. Has won the battle with Steven Gerrard to have the side built around his unique talents

Frank Lampard
Another excused the trip to Germany, but the Chelsea midfielder player will be one of the first names on the teamsheet for the friendly against Spain in February. Capello prizes Lampard's goal threat and discipline and plans to play him in his preferred position in central midfield

Stuart Pearce and Under-21s
Surprisingly promoted to become one of Capello's assistants and now a crucial voice in selection, with Michael Mancienne called up on his recommendation. The youth set-up has been boosted by Capello and Pearce can look forward to taking a strong squad to next summer's European Under-21 Championship finals

The FA
The biggest winners of the lot, with Brian Barwick's decision to bet the house on Capello's credentials justified. Watching England has become an enjoyable experience again, which is good news for everyone hoping to make money out of football in these difficult economic times

Losers

Michael Owen
Before the 2006 World Cup an England B international match was arranged with the specific aim of improving the Newcastle United striker's match fitness. Such has been his fall from grace that now he cannot even get a game in the reserves. Even more galling must be that he is not being missed

David Beckham
Should regain his place in the squad when the MLS season resumes next year, but is very much on the periphery and may not start a game again. The former captain's determination to keep on collecting caps is either noble or incredibly self-indulgent, depending on one's view of 'Brand Beckham'

Premier League managers
The first test of Capello's authority could not have gone better, with the manager asserting his right to demand that injured players report for duty and the second-string performing well enough to ensure that no one can afford to cry off next time. Even Rafael Benitez may struggle to keep Gerrard away

WAGs
Another World Cup is in sight for everyone's favourite hangers-on, but it will be nothing like their endless soirée in Baden-Baden two years ago. Capello has banned families and friends from the team hotel and the likes of Cheryl Cole may not bother to travel to South Africa at all

Steve McClaren
The former manager is doing his best to rebuild his reputation with Twente in the Netherlands, but Capello's success with the same group of players who performed so wretchedly last season is doing him few favours

Words by Matt Hughes

The chosen ones

Capello has selected 35 players but there is still a pattern emerging of the favoured line-up. David James, below, (810 minutes) and Gareth Barry (782) are the ever-presents, epitomising the consistency Capello seeks, while Rio Ferdinand (642),

Wayne Rooney (638), Ashley Cole (607), Wes Brown (572) and Steven Gerrard (552) have played 70 per cent of the matches. David Beckham's role as a bit-part support player (261) is emphasised as he has not completed a game under this manager



On your marks...

Considering he succeeded the least successful England manager of modern times, Fabio Capello deserves great credit. Only Glenn Hoddle started his tenure more impressively than the Italian whose eight wins from ten games is twice the number Steve McClaren managed

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Win %
Glenn Hoddle	10	9	0	1	18	3	90
Walter Winterbottom	10	8	1	1	41	8	80
Fabio Capello	10	8	1	1	25	8	80
Graham Taylor	10	7	3	0	15	5	70
Ron Greenwood	10	7	2	1	19	8	70
Sven-Göran Eriksson	10	7	2	1	24	8	70
Don Revie	10	6	3	1	21	6	60
Alf Ramsey	10	6	1	3	32	17	60
Bobby Robson	10	5	4	1	16	8	50
Terry Venables	10	5	4	1	16	8	50
Kevin Keegan	10	4	5	1	15	5	40
Steve McClaren	10	4	4	2	15	5	40

* Only includes managers to have been in charge of ten or more matches

McClaren v Capello

The stats back up what you know: Capello's first year in charge has been better than McClaren's last. England have averaged more goals and more shots on target. McClaren's team, surprisingly, kept more clean sheets but conceding only two goals in the process of outplaying Croatia and Germany away is more satisfying

