

The Lager XI.

Lager and football is a killer, nigh on unbeatable combination. Getting simply too pissed is neither big nor clever; but sometimes, when your team pulls off a big win, or succumbs to a devastating defeat, or lurches to a dull draw, and the lager is flowing? Well, you can be forgiven - we'll leave it at that!

It's a symbiotic relationship, alright, but could it become closer still? In the unlikely event someone were to task you with constructing an all-lager XI, which fizzy brews would possess the tekkers and guts for the beautiful game - and which, appropriately, would bottle it?



Goalkeeper: Peroni



Classy doesn't begin to cut it. With Peroni between the sticks, the outfield beers know they have a calm, experienced head who they need never worry about. Not be the most modern of goalkeeping lagers - no one's praising it for its fancy footwork or distribution; Guardiola won't be signing Peroni. But if you want an assured lager that won't let you down, Peroni's the first name on the team sheet.

Right Back: Holstel Pils



Galloping up and down the flanks tirelessly is the ever-underrated Holsten Pils. This is the type of lager to generate a deluge of ironic but well meaning memes after putting in a better-than-expected performance against Neymar at home, the type of lager that once a season curls in an absolute peach from 30 yards and is so surprised it forgets to celebrate. Club legend status after laughing off an aggressive come on from Raheem Sterling.

Centre Backs: Tyskie, Zywiec



Towering pillars of strength in front of goal, these two Polish lagers are always up for the game getting physical. If they had it their way, they'd spend the whole match out-jumping £40 mil strikers for mildly threatening headers and hoofing the ball the length of the field before smacking one another upside the bonce in a jocular fashion that, if they did it to you, would leave your ears ringing for a day and a half.

Left Back: Kronenbourg



Kronenbourg combines incredible defensive nous with continental flair. Kronenbourg has won all there is to win in the game and has nothing to prove, but will still absolutely howl at a teammate for an undercooked back pass that meant it had to run unexpectedly. Has a rocket of a shot, doesn't understand the meaning of the phrase "precision over power". Has one final move in it to a relegation-battling club, from which it will retire midseason without telling anyone.

Midfielder: Amstel



An evergreen ball carrying midfielder, Amstel is the lager XI's Mr Reliable. No one's favourite lager, perhaps, but the one that keeps the team ticking over. A lager praised more in its absences; You won't see a lot of *Amstel 5* shirts, but should it be sidelined for a game, all hell breaks loose. Amstel puts in a 7/10 every week without fail. Amstel scores precisely three league goals per season, two of which inevitably cap off a 4-0 drubbing.

Midfielder: Carling

It's impossible to love Carling if it's lining up for a rival, but if it's pulling on your team's jersey it's nothing short of a hero. Surprisingly adept at social media matters, and a keen user



of the “fishing rod” emoji. It understands only the full blooded type of tackle; anything else just seems a waste of time. After its playing career ends, Carling will either balloon behind the Sky Sports pundits’ table, or go on to petrify the youngsters as part of England’s developmental set up.

Midfielder: San Miguel



A smoothest operator; the smoothest thereof. San Miguel doesn’t move very much, because San Miguel doesn’t have to. It dictates the tempo, pulls the strings, and runs a good 40% less than any of its colleagues. Criticise San Miguel’s approach and you’re liable to be the victim of a 40 yard lob to the back of the head. San Miguel has no intention of learning the local language - it is fluent only in pinpoint passes and impossibly precise through balls.

Right Wing: Desperados



Desperados is the flash Harry of the team. Destined to wind up Graeme Souness and leave pundits musing on wasted potential years after it’s scuttled off to China for the big bucks. Decried as a YouTube lager, until it pulls out a tricky move that sends Harry Maguire and Victor Lindelof splatting into each other. The opposition fans will raise the roof when it gets scythed down, but they’ll soon shut up when the referee points to the spot (Amstel, 73’).

Left Wing: Red Stripe



A perennial tabloid favourite for its familiarity with the club scene, Red Stripe is forever having to silence its critics, but silence them it does time and again. Pacy and direct but far from a one-trick lager, Red Stripe will provide many a full back with a torrid afternoon, then gleefully banter off Piers Morgan on Twitter barely an hour after the final whistle. The kind of lager you hate after it leaves your club, but you’d have back in a heartbeat.

Centre Forward: Stella Artois



Big and strong but with poise, technique, and a cultured finish, Stella Artois is the complete modern striker. It boasts robust physique and cannot be bullied, along with the skill and smarts to turn a half chance into a goal. Stella Artois tracks back without being told to, and earns terse but respectful praise from Alan Shearer every Saturday night on MOTD. Stella Artois enjoys knocking a centre back around the box as much as it does putting the ball into the net.

Substitutes

Fosters - decent cup keeper, strong dressing room presence, content with remaining on the bench most of the time.

Carlsberg Export - utility lager, can slot in anywhere in the back four, though erratic moments can cause consternation in the stands.

Budvar - a strong and sturdy midfield option. When it's time to tighten up, you bring on Budvar.

Supermarket Stubby - rough around the edges, but for those in the know, one of the best lagers going. Expect big things.

Asahi - a hard working lager on either wing. Hardly prolific in front of goal but the effort is appreciated.

Grolsch - for the purists, the finest finisher in the squad. Lacks Stella Artois' strength, but this smooth operator is unerringly clinical.

Manager: Theakston's



Theakston's is not keen on the trappings of the modern game, and has only reluctantly set the Lager XI up in a 4-3-3. The very idea of a player diving sends it apoplectic for the entirety of a post-match interview.