

Will the fashion police blow the whistle in 2010?

By  Dr Nikolaus Eberl

4 Nov 2009

One of the most prolific media spectacles off the pitch during the 2006 FIFA World Cup - and sure to be replicated in 2010 - was the shopping spree of the English footballers' wives and girlfriends (also known as WAGs).



How much can you spend in one hour? While England's players were on the field earning their keep, their WAGs were off it, spending it generously.

A fashion expert from the German tabloid *BILD*, who spent countless hours following the WAGs around the sleepy German spa town of Baden-Baden, exposed the trophy women's spectacular spending habits. The six partners under investigation from the fashion police managed to blow almost €80 000 in one hour - an astounding €13 300 every 10 minutes.

The power of the WAG purse

So, what exactly do footballers' wives and girlfriends like more than watching their beloved dribble down the pitch and drive one into the back of the net? Chanel, Gucci and Prada, of course.

["The partners of the English footballers come shopping here every day."](#) said Monica Scholz, owner of Baden-Baden's most exclusive clothing shop.

"There are lots of things here for fashionable young women. We sell Prada, Gucci, Dolce and Gabbana and Dior. Wayne Rooney's girlfriend has been in here, as has Louise Owen, Michael Owen's wife." Scholz declined to reveal exactly how much has been spent in her stylish boutique but she said tellingly: "I hope that England remains for a long time in the tournament."

The town's canny shopkeepers made sure they changed their window displays every day to keep the WAGs' attention, who

made it a daily habit to wander the short walk from their five-star hotel to peruse the shops along the narrow streets.

A few doors down, Ulrika Jung from a designer outlet called Nanou, recalled that Mrs Owen bought herself a €390 Diane von Furstenberg dress and a necklace to match. ["To some people it may seem a lot of money but compared to](#) what their husbands earn, it isn't that much at all... I heard that on their first day here they spent €3300 in three minutes but that isn't too difficult with a top here and a Dolce and Gabbana bag there."

The world cup of paparazzi

Prominent WAGs of the class of 2006 included Victoria Beckham, wife of former England captain David Beckham, whom the *New Yorker* described as "Queen of the Wags" and the *Sunday Times* as "the original Wag"; Cheryl Cole, of the group Girls Aloud, who married Ashley Cole in July 2006; Coleen Rooney, who married Wayne Rooney in June 2008 and who was dubbed by the tabloid newspaper *The Sun* a "super WAG" and, by the end of the year, listed by the *Times* as a "national treasure"; and Carly Zucker, wife of Joe Cole, a fitness instructor, described by *Sunday Times* as a "new WAG on the block [who] has set the tone for the season's most wanted muscles".

The foreign press, while barely mentioning their own local WAGs, marvelled at the shopping antics of the 2006 World Cup. "Between matches the British wives and girlfriends have their own championship — for the title of WAG queen," [reported Italy's La Gazzetta dello Sport](#).

Putting shopping first

According to Roy Keane, the former Manchester United captain and current manager at FC Sunderland, the WAGs' penchant for shopping is now also encroaching on the choices footballers make when signing up with a club. [In a recent interview with the UK Guardian](#), Keane said: "If a player doesn't want to come to Sunderland then all well and good. But if he decides he doesn't want to come because his wife wants to go shopping in London, then it's a sad state of affairs. It's not a football move, it's a lifestyle move. It tells me the player is weak and his wife runs his life."

"The idea of women running the show concerns me and worries me, but the players we're talking about are soft. Priorities have changed in footballers and they are being dictated to by their wives... You can see quite clearly now with one or two of the big players that their wives and girlfriends are running their lives and that's a bad sign. I might have to start persuading players that Sunderland's closer to London than it really is. The player won't say it but you know what they're thinking because they say: 'I need to speak to my wife'."

Unleashing a media feeding frenzy

Many believe that the WAG phenomenon was encouraged by the TV drama series *Footballers' Wives* (launched in 2002). "Yes, we were there first," [said Eileen Gallagher](#), MD of the production company. "Now it's a feeding frenzy. The real world of these WAGS is much wilder than *Footballers' Wives*."

To further feed the frenzy, ITV introduced a "reality" television series in January 2007 called *WAG's Boutique*. This featured two teams of WAGs (some of whom had been among the party in Baden Baden during the World Cup) who competed to run fashion boutiques over a period of three months.

What are the spending sprees that the 2010 fashion police will unearth? And which South African retailer will win the world cup of wagging the dog of bling?

ABOUT DR NIKOLAUS EBERL

Dr Nikolaus Eberl is the author of *BrandOvation™: How Germany won the World Cup of Nation Branding* and *The Hero's Journey: Building a Nation of World Champions*. He headed the Net Promoter Scorecard research project on SA's destination branding success story during the 2010 FIFA World Cup, co-authored the World Cup Brand Ambassador Program 'Welcome 2010' and was chairperson of the inaugural 2010 FAN World Cup. Email nikolaus@brandovation.com and follow [@nikolaueberl](#).

■ Leadership lessons from the Iron Lady - 11 Apr 2013

■ Lessons from Obama's presidential campaign - 8 Nov 2012

- Can SA restore investor confidence? - 18 Oct 2012
- Should SA bid for hosting 2020 Olympic Games? - 16 Aug 2011
- [2010 FIFA World Cup legacy] The true legacy of 2010 - part 2 - 8 Jul 2011

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>