

# Football – World Cup preparations for England

**As the preparation build for the World Cup there are more decisions loom for Hodgson**

England boss Roy Hodgson [named](#) his 23-man squad for the World Cup before leaving for Miami with the countdown to the competition entering its final stages.

Hodgson did not spring many surprises in his squad for the competition in Brazil except perhaps Ashley Cole's [absence](#), which was expected as the former Liverpool boss went for youth rather than experience.

Here is a breakdown for his potential starting eleven for the [Three Lions' opener](#) against Italy on June 14 and see if people should back the team [to achieve World Cup](#) glory.

## **Goalkeepers**

Joe Hart had an excellent second-half of the season for Manchester City after recovering from a [poor start](#) to the 2013-14 campaign. He played an instrumental role in City's charge to the Premier League title as Manuel Pellegrini's side conceded just 16 goals in their last 19 matches. The 27-year-old is a lock to start against the Italians and bar any injuries the rest of the tournament.

Should anything happen to Hart, Hodgson can rest easy to know he has a more than capable backup in the form of Fraser Forster. The Celtic stopper caught the eye with an [impressive performance](#) in the Bhoys' defeat to Barcelona in the Champions League last year and has been in outstanding form for the SPL Champions all season.

## **Defenders**

Arguably the weakest area of Hodgson's squad is the defence. Only Glen Johnson has experience of playing in a major international tournament among the seven defenders in the squad in England's Euro 2012 campaign.

Due to Kyle Walker's absence he will start at right back for the Three Lions alongside Gary Cahill and Phil Jagielka, who were Hodgson's starting centre backs during the qualifying campaign. Both players had impressive seasons for Chelsea and Everton respectively, although Jagielka [missed time](#) late in the season with a hamstring injury.

Leighton Baines will be the starting left back after solidifying his place with a solid season with the Toffees. His ability going forward is unquestioned as well as quality from set pieces, but his defending will be brought under the spotlight against some of the best players in the world which could be an area of concern of Hodgson.

Southampton's Luke Shaw will back up Baines and is in a similar mould of being an [attacking player](#), he could provide a better physical option should form or health desert Baines.

## **Midfielders**

Captain Steven Gerrard will lead England for the third tournament in a row and he will be looking to progress beyond the quarter-final stage for the first time.

The 33-year-old is ending a bittersweet season for Liverpool as the club narrowly missed out on the Premier League title, but he notched 13 goals in the top flight, the second most in his career. Gerrard should be in prime form for the Three Lions, but the question is who should partner him in the midfield in Brazil.

Gerrard's Liverpool teammate Jordan Henderson has an excellent chance to be one of those players after an excellent season with the Reds.

The 23-year-old finally lived up to his £20m price tag for Brendan Rodgers's side as he covered every blade of grass in almost every game to allow his side's creative players to thrive. He could fulfil a similar role for Hodgson's side this summer.

Adam Lallana earned a lot of plaudits for his [performances](#) for Southampton this season and rightfully so, he is now the [most in-demand player](#) for the top clubs to sign in the Premier League this summer.

The 25-year-old has an eye for goal and a lot creative flair and is the perfect complimentary player to the duo of Henderson and Gerrard, as he serves a similar sort of role as Philippe Coutinho did at the Reds this season.

The [injury bug](#) hit Jack Wilshere again this season and blighted a promising campaign for the 22-year-old. Wilshere is arguably one of the most talented players in Hodgson's squad, but due to his lack of football in 2014 he may have to settle for a place on the bench, pending the system Hodgson decides to use.

Ross Barkley could also push for a starting berth following a strong end to the campaign and his incredible goal against Manchester City, his experience could hold him back but he provides Hodgson's with a good option from the bench.

## **Forwards**

Hodgson could follow the example of his old club Liverpool and go with the [three-pronged attack](#) approach with Daniel Sturridge and Raheem Sterling already in place in the system. The duo along with Luis Suarez propelled the Reds to the brink of the Premier League title, only for them to fall at the end of the season.

Sturridge and Sterling were in magnificent form throughout the campaign notching 30 goals between them, and due to their

familiarity and understanding in their respective roles they have to be at the top of list for the starting roles against Italy.

Wayne Rooney should fill the other slot as the leading striker fulfilling the role Suarez did for Liverpool. Although Manchester United struggled throughout the last campaign Rooney still [managed to keep his standards](#) high as he [notched](#) 16 goals in the Premier League.

His form will be crucial throughout the tournament as if England can find the net, they can ease the burden on the inexperience backline and progress out of the group stages.

Danny Welbeck and Rickie Lambert offer decent alternatives on the bench. Lambert notched 14 goals for Southampton in the Premier League and could provide a physical edge for the Three Lions in the final third.

Welbeck notched nine goals for United and struggled to find consistent form, he will probably be used as backup should Sturridge or Rooney succumb to injury or suspension during the tournament.

*Featured article.*