

Fédération Internationale de Football Association

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626 days before the start of the first African FIFA World Cup™, the cloud of secrecy surrounding the Official Mascot was lifted.

The Official Mascot Zakumi, a leopard, has been designed and produced exclusively in the host country. The name is a composition of "ZA", standing for South Africa, and "kumi" translating into "10" in various languages across Africa. Inspired by his football idols, Zakumi has dyed his hair green as he felt it would be the perfect camouflage against the green of the football pitch.

The original creator of the design is Andries Odendaal from Cape Town, and the mascot costume itself was produced by Cora Simpson of Cora's Costumes cc in Boksburg. "Zakumi is a proud South African and, as such, an ideal ambassador for the first African World Cup. He was born in 1994, the same year as the country's democracy. He is young, energetic, smart and ambitious, a real inspiration for young and old, not only in our country," explained Danny Jordaan

The tradition of the Official FIFA World Cup Mascot has been in place for more than 40 years. World Cup Willie was the first-ever FIFA World Cup Mascot, invented for the 1966 tournament in England. Official Mascots have come to play a more and more important role in the FIFA World Cup™ as with their infectiously positive attitude, they have over the years added to the atmosphere of each competition in their own unique way.

Over the years

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| 1966 | England | World Cup Willie (lion) |
| 1970 | Mexico | Juanito (boy) |
| 1974 | Germany FR | Tip and Tap (two boys) |
| 1978 | Argentina | Gauchito (footballer) |
| 1982 | Spain | Naranjito (orange) |
| 1986 | Mexico | Pique (hot pepper) |
| 1990 | Italy | Ciao (stick figure player) |
| 1994 | United States | Striker (dog) |
| 1998 | France | Footix (cockerel) |
| 2002 | Korea/Japan | Spheriks (energy) |
| 2006 | Germany | GOLEO IV (lion) & Pille (ball) |
| 2010 | South Africa | Zakumi (leopard) |