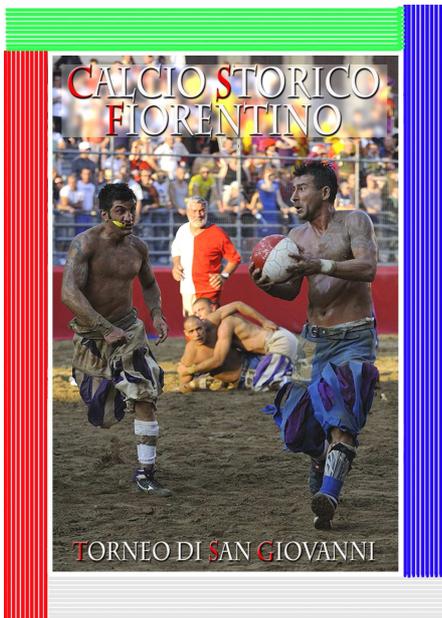




FLORENTINE CALCIO IN COSTUME June



The roots of the game of Florentine football, also known as "football in costume" or "football in livery" go back to ancient times. The first Italian dictionary of the Accademici della Crusca, published in 1612, confirms this theory supplying the following definition: "... *football is also the name of a game, ancient and proper to the city of Florence, in the form of an ordered battle, which passed from the Greeks to the Latins and from the Latins to ourselves*". An ancient Florentine game, therefore, but with its remote origins going back to the Greeks. Football was played daily in Florence, in an impromptu manner and by everyone, in the streets and squares using a ball: the youths played, and the adults in their breaks from work and on the occasion of the local festivals. The nobles also played, participating in matches which were particularly lavish and organised with dramatic scenography. But the most famous match of all, which

also became history on account of the critical moment at which it took place, was that held on 17 February 1530 during the siege of Florence, played partially so as not to interrupt the custom of holding the match during the Carnival period, but even more in the form of a spirited challenge to the besieging enemy.

Nowadays, Florentine football represents an important historic reconstruction of a local tradition, contributing to keep the proud character of the city alive even in modern times, preserving the ancient face of Florence against the inevitable assaults of time, of man and of changing social mores. The matches are organised every year in the month of June to mark the feast of St. John, the patron saint of the city. Everything is as it was in the past: the costumes, the arms and armour, the banners, the music and the regulations. When the match commences, the 54 players (27 on each side) fired by local pride and zeal for victory, immediately launch heart and soul into a dense battle of passes, catches, scuffles, scrums and tackles - at times fairly violent - giving rise to a lively and dramatic game which has something of modern football, something of rugby and more than a touch of all-in wrestling.