

Benvenuto Capello

When new England football manager Fabio Capello and his wife move to London they won't be lonely — his countrymen have been making the capital home for decades, says one Italian-born society hostess

AS AN Italian, a British person, and an old admirer of Juventus I'm delighted that Fabio Capello is coming to England. I went to a convent

near Turin, and like all the girls I was in love with John Charles, from Wales, who played for them in the late 1950s. But from the 1960s I lived as a diplomat's wife in London with my husband Charles Powell, and now I don't know what nationality I am. But I do know the England team needs help, and I think an Italian manager will be good for them.

The Italian community has always been fully integrated in London society, although there are many more of them now than when I first moved over. London has always been very welcoming to us.

Before I married Charles, I was waiting for him outside the Foreign Office, and Alec Douglas-Home, the prime minister, came out of Number 10 and just started talking to me. Italian exuberance and English reserve complement each other. Both nationalities are incredibly romantic, and both of us have problems with the French; the Brits because of Agincourt, the Italians because we feel they look down on us.

But Italians can get away with murder in London if they are charming enough, like me or the jockey Frankie Dettori. My countrymen have also always emulated English style, Barbour jackets and so on, but the one piece of advice I would give to Mr Capello is to concentrate on content rather than surface. In London it is less about "la bella figura" — making a show — than about the essence of things.

When I first lived in London the expat community included society people like Count Paolo Fila Della Torre, Prince Niccolo Pignatelli, and Charles Forte, who was very much the patron of our set. Mara Berni, who became famous as Princess Diana's confidante, had just

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opened San Lorenzo, and that was where we all met up, the "in" restaurant. But I also entertained simply in my kitchen: the company was the most important thing. Even when I arrived there was a well-established Italian community in Soho and South Kensington, and if we were homesick, we'd all go for prosciutto or salami to La Picena in Walton Street, or I Camisa in Soho, which are still there.

Mr Capello should be assured that although London is huge, it still feels like

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a village. You can walk to a park in no time and have the same beauty and peace you would have in an Italian mountain town.

London is also a comfortable and well-organised city to live in, whereas in Italy the bureaucracy is mind-bending. That's why no Italian wants to leave London if they come here.

Sadly, six years ago, I left London and returned to Italy. Although I used to love the London weather, if you are born in sunshine there comes a time where you can't bear to wake up to rain. And London now is so expensive: Ken Livingstone has priced me out of town, because this poor Italian pauper can now no longer afford to take taxis.

Of course, I don't think that will be a problem for Mr Capello. Do you?

**INCH CAN
E DIFFERENCE.**

ACTUAL SIZE

NAV
TOUCHSCREEN.

WHERE TO FIND THEM