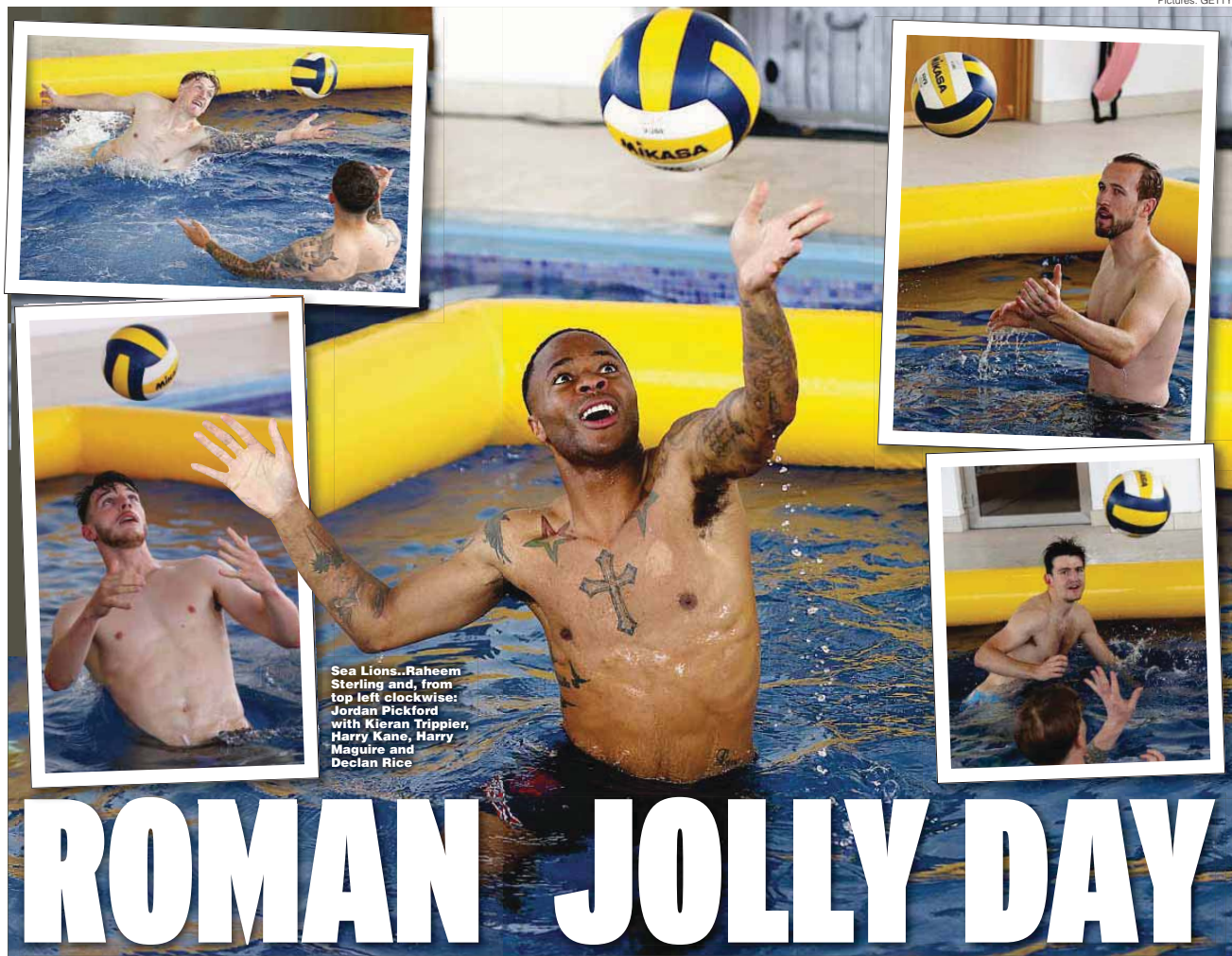


ENGLAND GLORY: NATION SET TO PAINT TOWN RED

Pictures: GETTY



Sea Lions..Raheem Sterling and, from top left clockwise: Jordan Pickford with Kieran Trippier, Harry Kane, Harry Maguire and Declan Rice

# ROMAN JOLLY DAY

By **Steph Spyro**

GARETH'S Gladiators are off to Rome – and England's legions of fans are preparing to back them with plenty of ale, Caesar.

Millions of supporters in holiday mood will roar for the Three Lions on Saturday night, in a "welcome boost" to pubs hit hard by Covid curbs.

Excitement in the country is set to hit fever pitch for England's Euro 2020 quarter-final clash with Ukraine in the Italian capital.

Hospitality sector chiefs said crowds watching the televised game in

bars and restaurants will help recover some of the lost trade.

Emma McClarkin, chief executive of the British Beer & Pub Association, said manager Gareth Southgate and his team are the pride of England.

She believes Saturday's game will be a "welcome boost" but added that the restrictions mean inns are still struggling. Emma said as fans are barred from flying to Rome: "The pub is the destination to watch the game."

"I urge England fans to support the team – and our pubs – by watching the game at their local."

But she added: "Until all restric-

tions are lifted, pubs will continue to be unviable even with a Euros boost."

## Standstill

The team spent yesterday training at their base in St George's Park near Burton, Staffs – and relaxing with a spot of volleyball in the pool.

The country is expected to come to a standstill for the 8pm kick-off – with even more watching on TV than saw England beat old footballing foes Germany 2-0 on Tuesday, when goals came from Raheem Sterling and captain Harry Kane.

England's triumph attracted a peak television audience of 20.6 million – 80 per cent of viewers available at that time, the BBC said. The Wembley match pulled in a further 6.5 million live streams online, pushing the total viewing figure above 27 million.

TV industry sources believe there is a chance the clash could also top the 27.5 million who tuned in for England's 2018 World Cup semi-final defeat to Croatia, the biggest television audience since the 2012 Olympics opening ceremony.

The match at Rome's Stadio Olimpico will be live on BBC One and on BBC iPlayer.

Fans are expected to pour into bars to watch on big screens. Millions more will host viewing parties at home with family and friends. Temperatures are

forecast to bounce back too – kicking off a rush for barbecue foods.

Supermarkets are tipped to benefit from a £2.5billion boost this week as shoppers stock up on their favourite match-day snacks and tipples, said market research agency Spark Emotions.

The firm's senior researcher Tara Moran predicted spending on food and drinks for the game will grow as excitement builds, with an estimated £350million splashed on beer, wine and spirits in stores.

She added: "If England progresses to the semi-finals, this could provide a springboard to boost spending for July even further."

Martin McTague, vice-chairman of the Federation of Small Businesses, said success "will hopefully lift the economy. Whether it's choosing a pub to watch the match in, or stocking

up to watch from home, fans cannot only cheer the national team but can also make the economy a winner as well by backing smaller, independent retail and hospitality businesses."

Andrew Goodacre, chief executive of the British Independent Retailers Association, said England's progress will spur on sales: "We hope to see the public buying what they need

for the next game from their local independent shop – whether it is food for the barbecue or an England flag."

Anita Naik, of VoucherCodes.co.uk, said she had seen "huge spending" already during the tournament.

She added: "Saturday is set to be no different as fans flock to watch the game at pubs, bars and other venues.

"For those watching from the comfort of their own homes, a large sum will be spent on food and drink as people stock up their fridges ahead of kick-off."

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**OPINION: PAGE 12**



**Southgate yesterday**