

The Global Game

A FOOTBALL MONTHLY

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1 • JANUARY 2003

This being the first issue of *Global Game*, it will be much easier to explain what the publication is not rather than what it is.

This is not a publication concerning football results, training and coaching methods, tactics, finances, transfers, club news,



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personalities, supporters, scandals or refereeing. Countless websites and magazines—readers in the United States will be most familiar with [Soccer America](#)—write about these aspects of the game and write about them very well.

I have never played the game at a high level, so I lack this kind of insight. I played as a preteen in suburban Washington, D.C., which means that the tenets were expressed to me like this: “Don’t bunch up and don’t be afraid” (not bad advice for other things besides soccer). Some feel, however, that

this distance between the observer and the game is an advantage. Thus [Phil Ball](#) quotes Jorge Valdano: “The professional player is never a great narrator of his experience.”

Which brings me to why this newsletter—I will never refer to it as a “webzine” or “e-zine”—is subtitled “A Football Monthly.” I have heard that Americans should not call the game “football.” It is said that this would be pretentious. Well, I make a distinction between “soccer” and “football.” The sport I played as a youth was undoubtedly soccer. The sport I watch now, the game practiced by such artisans as Thierry Henry, Marinette Pichon, Tiffeny Milbrett, Aly Wagner, and [Zinedine Zidane](#), is football. I’m not that interested in soccer, but football concerns me very much.

Readers will notice that I play favorites: Wagner and Zidane, mentioned above, play with the touch and humility that I favor. I learned to love the sport watching women, so I pay the women’s game special attention. My wife and I are season-ticket holders to the [Atlanta Beat](#), a franchise in the [Women’s United Soccer Association](#).

MEDIA GLEANINGS

In the *New York Times* of 31 December 2002, **James Brooke** writes of the developing tensions over North Korea, noting that anti-American



rallies in the South—a major rally was planned for New Year’s Eve—are “an outgrowth of last summer’s mass rallies of World Cup soccer fans.” It tempts one

to wonder whether the seemingly apolitical action of watching a football match can have political implications in creating or re-creating habits of association. The *Times’s* **Jere Longman** alluded to such a possibility on 30 June (“How Soccer Galvanized South Korea”), writing that South Korea “became united and self-confident in ways that people could not have imagined” as a result of hosting the World Cup, and reaching the semifinals. **E. S. Kim**, manager of international relations for the South Korean soccer federation, told Longman that the event was “like a soccer coup d’état.” Longman himself referred to the fervent Korean crowds as “soccer’s version of the Velvet Revolution.” “Last year, South Korea made a quantum leap,” **Yoon Dae-kyu** of the Institute for Far Eastern Studies tells **Julie Chao** of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (“Generation Gap Shifts Views on U.S., North,” 21 January). “It was beneath the surface for a long time.” . . .

In an interesting report in Britain’s *Prospect* (January 2003), “[What the World’s Poor Watch on TV](#),” the popularity of football as a television sport is confirmed. The network making the most money worldwide is Disney-owned ESPN, with more than 120 million subscribers in Asia and 14.5 million in Latin America. “Sport,” **Bella Thomas** writes, “dominated by soccer, has had the greatest expansion [in viewership] in the last ten years.” Thomas raises images of satellite dishes being erected in rural areas around the globe, making me think of the film *The Cup*, in which

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monks at a Tibetan Buddhist monastery convince their abbot to let them watch the 1998 World Cup final. . . .

Four books about football made the *Sports Illustrated* list of top-100 sports books in the 16 December issue: **Nick Hornby's** *Fever Pitch* (#10); **Bill Buford's** *Among the Thugs* (#59); **Eduardo Galeano's** *Soccer in Sun and Shadow* (#79); and **Joe McGinnis's** *Miracle of Castel di Sangro* (#99). McGinnis's book was the only one I have not read, and I was surprised to see it on the list. Is it better than **Tim Parks's** *Season at Verona?* We will have to read and find out. I would certainly have moved Galeano's book ahead of Buford's, whose reporting was excellent but cannot compete with Galeano's lyricism. . . .

Speaking of Galeano (at left), he writes beautifully, as translated by **Mark Fried**, in the January 2003 *Harper's* ("Miracles and Anthems: The Alchemy of Soccer"). These twenty sketches, following the form and sentiments of *Soccer in Sun and Shadow*, will perhaps be included in the revised edition of the book, expected from Verso in the spring. . . .

There was fascinating discourse on grass—specifically the grass on British football pitches—in the [Lon-](#)



don Review of Books of 14 November. **Andrew Sugden**, in a review of *The Forgiveness of Nature: The Story of Grass*, by **Graham Harvey**, notes the technology and money expended at top-flight Premiership clubs. "Almost

Leaning, with bias, toward Wagner and Zidane

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This publication will offer website reviews and links, book reviews, art, poetry and random observations in "Media Gleanings," stirred by print and electronic sources. As mentioned, I hope to develop a focus on the women's game and, as the publication's title would suggest, a global focus. I would also hope to include correspondence from readers, with your own photography and poetic strivings.



In citing the work of journalists and authors, I hope that each recognizes the acknowledgment implicit in each quotation. I supply links where possible to the complete text or to websites containing additional information.

Although I am positioned in the southeastern United States, I consider this a publication without borders. The farther I can range in these pages, the better. Let me know how I'm doing by e-mailing globalgame@mindspring.com.

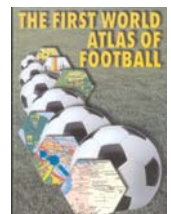
—JOHN TURNBULL

as much money is lavished on the pitch as on the star players, and there is scarcely a scar to be seen on these pitches whatever the time of year." Given the recent deluges in Britain and the rest of Europe, however, television cannot hide the swampy conditions. Pitches are becoming, in Sugden's words, "a single, glutinous grassless expanse."

NOTABLE BOOKS

Our highest recommendation goes to *The First World Atlas of Football*, published by [Infokart](#) in the Czech Republic—printed originally in Czech, but now available in English—and up to date through January 2002.

The amount of work represented in this volume is staggering. Out of curiosity, I looked up what the atlas might be able to say about football in Togo. In just a few minutes I learned that the West African nation, located between Ghana and Benin, has been domi-



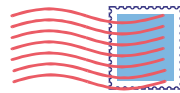
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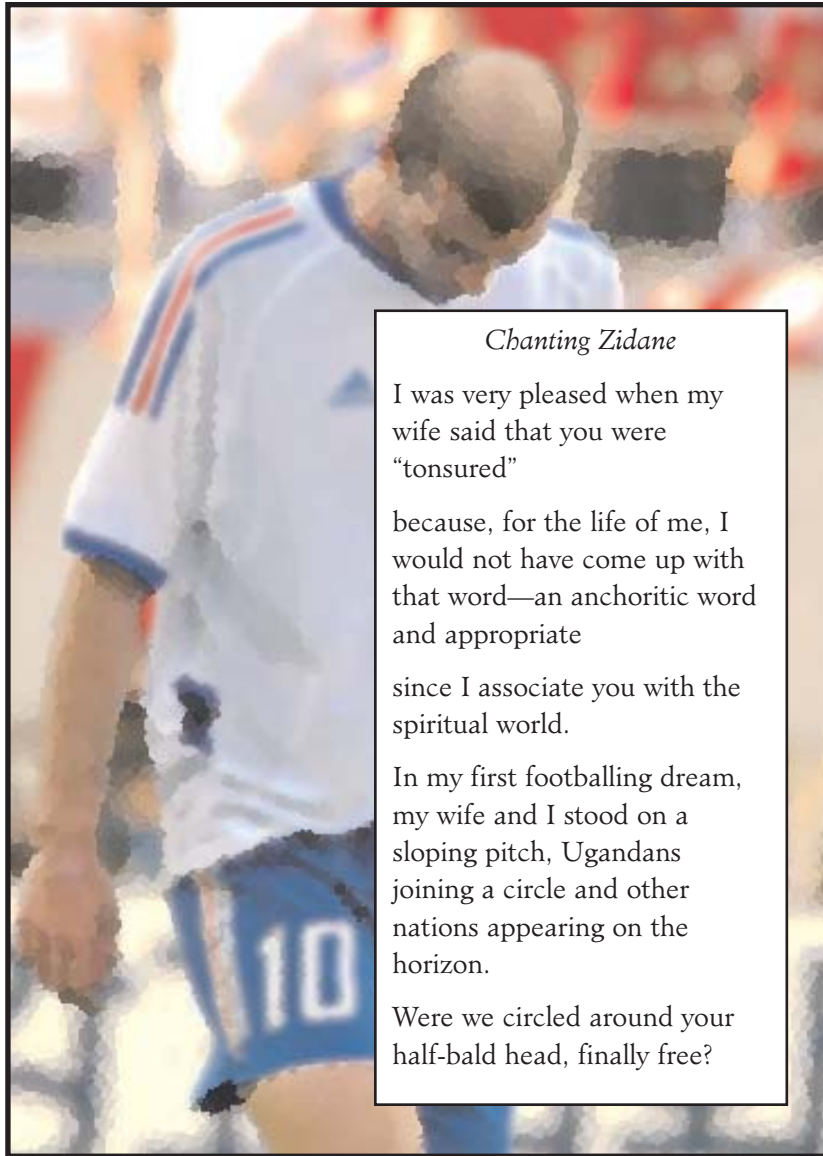
POSTCARD FROM TAMIL NADU

Writing from Kodaikanal, a small post in Tamil Nadu, India, **Navin John** has asked for football equipment for students at the international school there. "We have started spreading the game to rural areas and villages,"

Navin writes on [BigSoccer.com](#), "and a football is all they need. They have lots of playing time after their school hours; others [are] not so lucky to attend school, [but] could take a football with them while they go to the forest to graze their cows, water buffaloes, and practice their kicks." Unfortunately, Navin's request met a crude response on BigSoccer. Perhaps *Global Game* readers can help meet his request for footballs, shoes, jerseys, shin guards, goalie gloves, teaching materials and so on. "I have tried the local government bodies," Navin writes in personal correspondence, "but their resources are committed only for the big established clubs, which have a lot of funds already." I agree with Navin that "football is a unifying force all

around the world." The address is: Navin John, Brooklyn, Convent Road, Kodaikanal 624 101, Tamil Nadu, India. Navin's e-mail is navinjohn@eth.net.





Chanting Zidane

I was very pleased when my wife said that you were “tonsured”

because, for the life of me, I would not have come up with that word—an anchoritic word and appropriate

since I associate you with the spiritual world.

In my first footballing dream, my wife and I stood on a sloping pitch, Ugandans joining a circle and other nations appearing on the horizon.

Were we circled around your half-bald head, finally free?

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nated professionally by Semassi Sokodé AC, who have won nine first-division titles. Consultation in the appendices indicates that these titles came consecutively from 1978–79, 1981–83, 1993–95 and, most recently, in 1999. Curiously, Semassi is located some 175 miles north of the capital and port city of Lomé.

This illustrates the density of information included in the volume’s cartography, tables and graphics. The graphics feature extended presentations of the income structure in European leagues, patterns of professional transfers and capacities of world stadia. The atlas includes an 80-page

index in which one can look up the name of almost any functioning or extinct club side. If the publishers wish, they can include our made-to-order book blurb: This is a stunning work. . . .

Simon Kuper’s newest book, *Ajax, the Dutch, the War*, recently translated into English, is [tantalizingly previewed](#) by **Uli Hesse-Lichtenberger** on ESPN’s Soccernet.com. “Kuper lived in Holland during his youth, where he learned that every Dutchman fought in the Resistance and gave shelter to Jews during the occupation, thus earning the country the moral right to forever despise all things German,” writes Hesse-Lichtenberger, author of *Tor! The Story of*

German Football. “Many years later Kuper went back to examine the truthfulness of this story by having a close look at how football players and teams spent the war years.” Later, Hesse-Lichtenberger calls Kuper’s book “the most painful, bleakest football book I’ve ever read.”

BEST OF THE WEB

Without question the most unpredictable and entertaining English-language site is [Football Culture](#), maintained by the BBC and the British Council.



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Football, close to home



WEBCAM IMAGES FROM QUEEN OF ANGELS SCHOOL, ROSWELL, GEORGIA, U.S.A.
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The site's existence, through its inclusive spirit and varied stories of fans from around the world, helped inspire *Global Game*. In fact, my [footballing biography](#) has been posted on the site, and readers are encouraged to post their stories as well. Poetry is available, discussion of the media, racism, gender and religion—all in connection with football—photography and the aforementioned supporters' profiles.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Mark Zeigler, writing in the [San Diego Union-Tribune](#), makes clear the importance of 2003 to women's football in the United States. "The reality is that the next 10 months could determine the fate of



American women's soccer for the next 10 years." The impression is that the U.S. women must win the trophy in order to sustain the professional league, the Women's United Soccer Association, which, in turn, is helping to keep soccer America's most important team sport for women. WUSA Commissioner **Tony DiCicco** has already said the league is in "survival mode." "It is unfair, really," Zeigler continues, "to strap a group of athletes and coaches with this burden, with leading—and in this case, preserving—a cultural revolution of women's sports. Their job is to put a white ball into a white net at the end of a green field, not to convince investors to write seven-figure checks to an eight-team league or compel the American media to cover women's futbol the way it does men's football." News in Britain is not good, either,

with word that the Football Association's [plans for a professional women's league apparently have faded](#). . . .

Keeping in mind a more peaceful aspect of brewing conflict on the Korean Peninsula, North Korea will take part in the Asian Women's Championship from April 19–May 2 in Thailand, in which, with Japan and China, it will be considered one of the favorites. The top two finishers besides China will advance to September's World Cup, with the third-place team facing a qualifier against Mexico. China, as World Cup host, has an automatic berth. North Korea posted a 1-2 record in group play at the 1999 World Cup; its victory was against Denmark.

QUOTABLE

"It's very important when people think football can be something close to art. I love to think that people can just put the TV on and watch Arsenal because they just love the kind of football we play."—**Arsène Wenger**, Arsenal manager, [World Football](#) (BBC), 14 December.

"It's a bit scary being in front of a whole crowd of footballers."—**Par-minder Nagra**, star of *Bend It Like Beckham*, [FIFA.com](#), accessed 15 January 2003 (film scheduled for March release in New York and Los Angeles).

PUBLICATION DETAILS

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