

# The Global Game

A FOOTBALL MONTHLY

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## MEDIA GLEANINGS

The thumbnail biographical sketch of recently apprehended and alleged al-Qaida plotter **Khalid Shaikh Mohammed** includes telling detail, according to **Moni Basu** of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* ("[Culture Hits Home for N.C. Colleges.](#)" 4 March, p. A5; article available online until 11 March). Likely drawing on a *Los Angeles Times* profile from December, Basu writes that Mohammed, while attending [North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University](#) in the mid-1980s, "was part of a sizeable Middle Eastern contingent, who watched soccer instead of football, socialized mostly among themselves and lived off campus." The description is interesting for many reasons; for our purposes, it's noteworthy that soccer, understandably, given the development of the two sports in the United States, is seen as football's opposite (when they actually developed from the same root). More implicitly, the article hints that soccer is countercultural and, perhaps, an activity that one should be wary of. . . .

In addition to more-rigorous training and restrictions on "tennis football," the Chinese national team might be looking toward another means of improvement: milk. **Lin Diansheng**, a vice-director at China's Ministry of Agriculture, tells **Kathy Chen** of the *Wall Street Journal* that the nation's dietary routines could stand improvement ("New Craze Seizes China's Consumers: A Glass of Milk," 28 February, p. A1). Chen writes, "Mr. Lin says that soccer players representing soccer-crazy China generally can hold their own against European teams in the first half of games, but can't keep up in the second half. 'That's because they don't drink enough milk,' he says, only half-joking. He proudly notes that China's annual milk production has finally caught up to that of its grain alcohol." . . .

[His design](#) and that of his cohorts at



## *Falling hard for the women's game*

I must confess ambivalence when women's football in the United States pushes aggressively to the status of a major sport. Of course, I want the women to display their prodigious skills and to gain media exposure. But I dread—probably without reason—the commodification of the game and even more false "atmosphere" at [Women's United Soccer Association](#) games, piped-in music and public-address announcers' pleas to stand for corner kicks.

This ambivalence extends to the game as a whole. The game can represent some of the worst instincts of humanity, as in men's desire to dominate at the cost of loving, giving and realizing oneself in others (taken from Beatriz Vélez's essay, excerpted on [page 3](#)). Or rapture in the game, perhaps illustrated by the mere existence of this publication, can degenerate into ignorance of the wider world, as noted in heartbreaking fashion by Hebe de Bonafini and Matilde Sánchez in the recently published *Argentina Reader* (see below, "Notable Books").

Finally, though, to quote David Brent of BBC's comedy *The Office*, "I bloody love football, don't I?" I can't help

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BACKGROUND PHOTOGRAPH  
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[THINK](#) for the grounds of the World Trade Center ultimately was not selected by the [Lower Manhattan Development Corporation](#), losing out to [Studio Daniel Libeskind](#). Were articles in the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* (**Jess Bravin**, "Ground Zero Finalist's Past Draws Questions," 26 February, p. B8), detailing architect **Rafael Viñoly's** connections to a repressive Argentinean regime, including his designs for structures at the 1978 World Cup, partly to blame? Who knows? "In 'Rafael Viñoly,' just published in the U.S., Mr. Viñoly describes outmaneuvering rivals to win the World Cup project," the *Journal* article states. "He was chauffeured to work by military escort, and enjoyed the fruits of success—a huge house, a boat, a practice with 75

people.' He designed the broadcast center for the government-run network known as ATC." Because of the recent publication date, I was not able to obtain a copy of the Viñoly book to learn more details of his World Cup projects. . . .

How wonderful is the perspective from across the Atlantic! **Ian Whittell**, writing with **Simon Kuper** in the *Times* (London) ("[PR Nightmare in the Theatre of Dreams.](#)" 24 February), laments poor media relations with Premiership teams, especially Manchester United. He quotes, to the extent possible, salty language from **Sir Alex Ferguson** in defense of Argentinean midfielder **Juan Sebastián**

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Verón, and mentions journalists being barred from press conferences for negative reporting. “There is,” Whittell writes, “a gigantic philosophical chasm between the manner in which American sport approaches its public relations and the approach favoured by United and most of the Premiership.” For his part, Kuper says that the [Barclaycard English Premier League](#) is great for fans, not so great for players. In a **Bill Buford**-like moment, Kuper travels with ManU fans for a Champions League fixture against Juventus. “Crammed into the Altrincham tram with hundreds of half-drunk men on a windchilled night on the way to the Juventus game, you realise why Zidane and Ronaldo never came here. When the Barcelona and Real Madrid team buses chug through the English North West, gasps of horror emit from inside.” From the American perspective, of course, this is part of the “spirit of carnival” (Bakhtin) lacking in U.S. football and perhaps from domestic professional sports in general. **Thomas Strychacz**, in his article pre-saging the 1994 World Cup (“American Sports Writers and ‘Unruly Rooters’: The Significance of Orderly Spectating,” *Journal of American Studies* 28 [April 1994]: 84–89), lamented this absence in noting American sportswriters’ obsession with English and European hooliganism. . . .

#### WOMEN’S ISSUES

This will not become a custom in *The Global Game*, but I have to poke a little fun at the selection of photographs in [Soccer America](#)’s recent article on the [Women’s United Soccer Association](#) (**Scott French**, “WUSA Banks on the Future,” 3 March, 44–48). One suddenly understands why **Aly Wagner** said she felt “like a dork” after being asked to dress in her new uniform as the top pick in the league draft. Wagner is pictured in the magazine in full [San Diego Spirit](#) kit and cleats (curiously, the kit is Adidas, boots from Nike), dribbling through fresh landscaping at Cox Communications headquarters in Atlanta. Having attended the

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## A developing focus on the women’s game

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it. Clearly there is value and spiritual enrichment in women advocating for themselves within sport. Julie Foudy of the San Diego Spirit and president of the [Women’s Sports Foundation](#) made explicit that her submission, with Donna de Varona, of a [minority report](#) to the presidential commission examining [Title IX](#) had implications for women’s rights, not just for women’s athletics. Foudy’s courage is necessary when, in the United States, only 13.8 percent of national legislative seats are held by women and other supposed advocates for women—in this example, coach Geno Auriemma of the University of Connecticut women’s basketball team—make statements such as the following: “What will it take for women’s basketball to capture the imagination of people? It’s the forbidden word that you can’t use when discussing women’s sports. It’s got to be sexy. Women are afraid to use that as a positive. . . . Maybe I don’t understand because I’m not a woman, but I am a fan and I’d like to think I know what fans like” (Wendy Parker, “Lead Husky’s Having Fun,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 2 March, p. D23.)

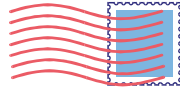
Women are demonstrating such courage, of course, all over the world, especially in Latin America and in other lands where machismo is an entrenched part of culture. I hope that we in the United States can take from the positive aspects of footballing passion in other nations—the carnivalesque enthusiasm—and with advocacy for the women’s game give women worldwide, whether as player or fan, a chance to enjoy “the fragile pleasure of three points gained” (Phil Ball).

As a follow-up to the editorial in [issue 2](#), which questioned, among other things, whether Americans should continue to sing the “Star-Spangled Banner” at sporting events, I call attention to a [column](#) by Richard Crepeau on the same topic (“Sport and Society,” 27 February). Crepeau writes, “In recent years the National Anthem has lost its patriotic air in most sports venues. It has become an occasion for entertainers to display their talents or lack thereof, fans to create new cheers, and the networks to run commercials. Its symbolic significance has been overshadowed by commercial purposes and public indifference. . . .” I agree. I do try to sing along, but the pacing and harmonics of various a cappella singers and community choruses are sometimes hard to follow.

—JOHN TURNBULL

## POSTCARD FROM MEDELLÍN

*The Global Game* below excerpts an article (“Where Are the Women?” [Hemisphere: A Magazine of the Americas](#) [Florida International University] 11 [fall 2002]), in translation, by Colombian sociologist Beatriz Vélez of the [University of Antioquia](#). Vélez, pictured below, led a three-year university study, “La escenificación del género en el fútbol, hermenéutica de la feminidad y la masculinidad en Colombia” (The staging of gender in soccer: Hermeneutics of masculinity and femininity in Colombia), into the intensely masculine world of *fútbol*. *The Global Game* thanks the editors of



*Hemisphere*, especially Alisa Newman, who also translated the article, for permission to reprint part of Vélez’s essay:

Sociological indicators reveal how deeply soccer is rooted in daily life in Colombia [*ed.*: see country fact box at right]. Soccer is a ubiquitous pastime on weekends, after work and during other leisure time. The streets are transformed into improvised stadiums, where men of all ages vent their aggressive impulses and psychic eroticism. These stages serve as spaces for socialization, inciting competition, cooperation and interaction in a context of friendship and extreme emotion. They are also a training ground for learning physical skills, social norms and aspects of gender identity.



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The insignificant participation of women on these sports stages is reinforced by the pejorative language used to refer to female players, referees, sportscasters, commentators or coaches. Some women have reacted by starting training programs for girls, as well as the Colombian Women’s Soccer Association. But in general, women play a public role in soccer only in peripheral areas: in cheering on their teams; in the company of male fans; or as vendors outside of the stadiums. . . .

Colombian soccer players generally come from the poorest sectors of the population. They learn to play on the streets, where, by dodging every sort of obstacle—vehicles included—they develop complex physical skills. On the field, these abilities produce the rhythm and grace that characterize Latin American soccer. Colombians’ passion for soccer, a key element of their national identity, leads us again to the question: Where are the women?

Stereotypes translate into actions that have harmful effects on women. In Medellín, a big soccer town, female physical education students were barred from taking soccer classes until 1986. In 1998, a group of young women who wanted to participate in a community program centered around soccer reported being harassed by their fathers or other male relatives. Field research in Medellín in 1999 turned up other girls who were beaten, mocked or insulted just for playing soccer. Women who have the talent and desire to become professional players must carefully consider their options or give up their dreams for fear of projecting a counter image of femininity.

But it is rare for men or women to question why so few women are active in soccer, whether at the amateur or professional level. Only now are academics beginning to examine the foundations of a sport that exalts the masculine values of usurp-accumulate-to-be, embodying potencies and fluids of the gendered body in opposition to feminine symbols.

By perpetuating gender inequalities, these values conceal human suffering. What are we to think of a society that celebrates a vision of humanity based on the “humiliation” of the other through the demonstration of physical prowess before a crowd of spectators? . . . Is there an equivalent social venue for women to serve as models of human perfection through the mastery of physical skills? Are beauty pageants adequate forums for women to exercise sovereignty over their bodies, or do they seal the triumph of nature over the power for transcendence of the female subject, trapping her in her flesh?

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draft on 2 February and seen the surroundings, one could no more play soccer there than trap a mountain lion. League president **Lynn Morgan** is also pictured, dressed in corporate regalia and casually tossing a soccer ball to herself in a barren rock garden. I suppose it’s a sign of the league’s relatively low status in the American sportscape that its principals must

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## FÚTBOL IN COLOMBIA

As a new feature in *The Global Game*, we will try to briefly highlight facts and news related to football from a focus nation. Information, unless otherwise noted, comes from *The First World Atlas of Football* (Prague: [Infokart](#), 2002). See [issue 1](#) for review.

Introduced by the English, football established itself first in *Barranquilla*, also the site of the first organized competition. The professional game in Colombia started in 1948 and—“in connection with money from the trade of illegal drugs”—came to be concentrated in *Bogotá*, *Medellín* and *Cali*. Of the 52 titles available between 1948 and 2000, only seven went to other cities. The game flourished to such a point that, from 1949 to 1953, the *Millonarios de Bogotá* (13 titles through 2001) club side was known as “the blue ballet” (see [OmniBall](#)). Challenges to football include the diverse climate and topography—*Bogotá*, for example, is 8,563 feet above sea level—and the activity of left-wing guerrilla groups that control much of the country. Still, Colombia was scheduled to host the World Cup in 1986, but had to withdraw due to financial problems (see [BBC](#)).

On 5 March, a bomb set off by suspected rebels in *Cúcuta*, near the Venezuelan border, killed seven and set a shopping center on fire. The Associated Press referred to “shocked survivors wandering around the shopping stalls, blackened Ash Wednesday marks still on their foreheads.”



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submit to staged photographs. . . . As reported in several news outlets, Qatar in late February announced that it plans to form a women's national team, a possible step forward for women's rights in the Middle East. "Qatar's initiative is a boost to women's football not only in Qatar but to Asia," said **Dato' Peter Velappan**, general secretary of the [Asian Football Confederation](#).

#### NOTABLE BOOKS

From [Duke University Press](#) comes



*The Argentina Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (ed. **Gabriela Nouzeilles** and **Graciela Montaldo**), an anthology that includes two excerpts directly related to football. **Eduardo Archetti** ("Soccer and Masculinity," 519–24) analyzes

soccer chants in large Argentinean stadia. These chants, Archetti writes, often include sexual innuendo to put down the opponent and thus to reinforce the chanters' virility. One of the few printable chants is directed toward supporters of San Lorenzo de Almagro ("Here's the famous San Lorenzo gang / Who haven't got a field / Who

#### PUBLICATION DETAILS

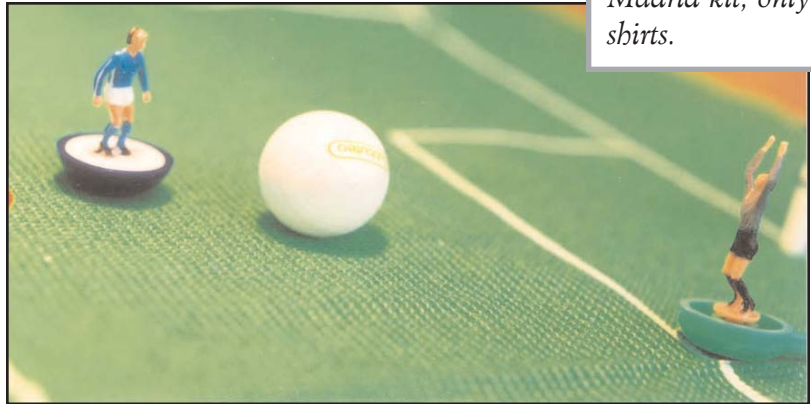
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## Football, close to home



*Indulging in Champions League fantasy, I try to recreate, using [Subbuteo](#) men, Zidane's stunning winner against Bayer Leverkusen in the 2002 final. But I do not have a Real Madrid kit, only blue shirts.*



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were pushed aside / So they set up a supermarket / And they send them on Sundays / To do the shopping").

A delightful excerpt is **Roberto Arlt's** "Soccer and Popular Joy" (263–65), one of Arlt's *aguafuertes porteñas* that he wrote for the daily Argentine press in the 1920s and '30s. His observations of an Argentina-Uruguay match are simple and disarming, including a fan being hit in the head by an orange: "The back of his neck was dripping with rotten garbage, his face was worn out from clinging to the fence for so long, and he sank down on the cement walkway. To the great satisfaction of the hurler of all those oranges."

Most arresting, however, is an essay that relates indirectly to football, a woman's account of demonstrations against the military regime during the 1978 World Cup (**Hebe de Bonafini** and **Matilde Sánchez**, "The Madwomen at the Plaza de Mayo," 429–39). The demonstrations concerned the crisis of "disappeared children" and, with savvy, attracted international media attention. "And the World Cup began: Argentine

flags, confetti thrown from every office window. This meant the indifference of others, of all those Argentines who didn't want to know anything about death but preferred to celebrate to the end the mad fiesta power had offered them, stuffing themselves full with the four TV channels until they were sick or thoroughly brainwashed."

#### QUOTABLE

"I don't know if Magath could have saved the *Titanic*. But all survivors would have been in excellent shape"—**Jan-Aage Fjørtoft** on the conditioning regimen mandated by **Felix Magath**, manager of the Bundesliga's VfB Stuttgart (quoted in **Uli Hesse-Lichtenberger**, "[Young Guns Go for It](#)," ESPNsoccernet.com, 18 February).

"Even when you're winning you still have to go to the toilet, so when you're losing there's no need to go and shut yourself up in a submarine"—**Mono ("Monkey") Burgos**, Atlético Madrid goalkeeper (quoted in **Phil Ball**, "[Of Mavericks and Monkeys](#)," ESPNsoccernet.com, 11 February).