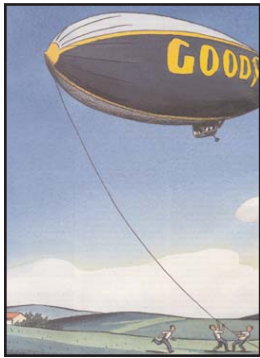


The Global Game

A FOOTBALL MONTHLY

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 6 • JUNE/JULY 2003

An article in the [New Yorker](#) about flying the Goodyear blimp (David Samuels, “The Light Stuff,”



9 June, 69–79) stirred an odd memory about my career as a youth footballer.

Actually, I had intended to mention what has become known as the “blimp incident” in an earlier column, as part of my association between competitive sport and anxiety. The cruelties and oddities of

human behavior that one sees on the football field, alas, are not soon forgotten.

I recall standing on the sidelines in a match at our grade-school pitch, bored senseless, looking for something to fill the time until the clock ran out. Gradually, somewhere beyond the landscaping berm and rows of tract housing, a muffled mechanical groan began to build. I do not remember if someone yelled on spotting the blimp’s silver nose—“Look, the blimp!”—or if all of a sudden it appeared in full view. But soon it was trundling above us . . . and close, no

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WOMEN’S ISSUES

The major women’s football story over the past two months has, of course, been the relocation of the [World Cup](#) from China to the United States. The August and September issues of *Global Game* will include discussion of what FIFA’s decision means for the women’s game in China, both near- and long-term.



Seemingly unrelated to football, though, our attention was riveted to **Annika Sörenstam**’s efforts at the Bank of America Colonial golf tournament May 22–23 in Fort Worth, Texas. Sörenstam’s courage and self-awareness—demonstrated by her lack of guile in answering queries for an almost exclusively male press corps—quickly made one woman’s quest more far-reaching. Of relevance to women’s football, and to other women’s sports, are the questions of (1) how women’s sports relate to their men’s counterparts and (2) whether public performance by female athletes

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COURTESY THE [CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY](#).

Coming in August: Women’s World Cup Preview, Part 1

Among the forerunners of modern women’s footballers was the Pullman Car Works side (pictured at left in 1922) of Chicago. According to Dave Litterer and the [American Soccer History Archives](#), Pullman’s men’s team was the first to play a match in Chicago under association rules. Less, however, has been written about the women’s team. The archival record does not name the eleven players; the man and woman standing with them are “unidentified.”

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is a necessary component in maintaining civil society.

A throwaway line by the *New York Times's* **George Vecsey** about the [Women's United Soccer Association](#) typifies the "sensitive" male writer's assessment: "[T]hey're not as big or fast as the men; get over it" ("Another World Cup in the U.S. Is a No-Brainer," 7 May). That one can make such a statement, however, indicates an inherent male bias. The assumption is that size and speed brings superiority. Why? For one with a vested interest in the players or organization, youth-league soccer or golf among the disabled might be that sport's superior manifestation.

With regard to soccer specifically and the WUSA, this also comes from the *New York Times*: "Tension has long existed between men's and women's soccer in this country. It is not without considerable irony that [[Major League Soccer](#)] could become a rescuer of the Women's World Cup and a potential savior of the struggling women's professional league. 'A lot of people here have been asking: "What's good for us? The W.U.S.A. folding or surviving?"' the M.L.S. official said. 'After a lot of ambivalence the last three years, the board and the commissioner have come to believe that anything that increases the water level for soccer is good for us'" (**Jere Longman**, "U.S. Close to Being World Cup Site in '03," 7 May). The "rescuer" and "savior" imagery here is an interesting choice. The assumption, despite the "MLS official's" statement about water levels, is that men and women are waging a zero-sum game: when the women are up, the men are down, and vice versa.

Which leads to the second issue raised from Sörenstam's foray on the PGA Tour. That women can play sports in the public eye helps work against assumptions that privilege men. Why is it important that women are afforded opportunities in athletics? We think first of **Beatriz Vélez's** eloquent [reply](#) when asked about women's football in Colombia: "[I]t would make society more equitable, less sexist, more democratic, and would put an end to much suffering for women. . . ." In the thought of

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The many distractions of hot air aloft

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more than a thousand feet away. It even seemed to be circling, like at a televised golf tournament.

The game itself came to a halt, children, parents and referee with their chins thrust skyward, caught in one sustained "ahhhh." One does not expect the Goodyear blimp to show up at a kids' soccer game; no doubt the pilot was in the throes of confusion, perhaps battling a slow leak and looking for a place to moor. But no one could deny the simple fact that the blimp was here.

For our coach, "Coach D," though, the experience was traumatic. His competitive instincts were well-known; he had once pulled his own son out of goal, grabbing him by the neck and hauling the crying boy over the near touchline. Once it became clear that the blimp was going to be with us for a while—circling, in slightly wider arcs but still failing to gain altitude—the game resumed. But in the battle for young boys' attention it was going to be hard to compete with a zeppelin. The game was taking place late in the day, so when the blimp occupied the western sky it cast a shadow that covered most of the field.

[N]o one could deny the simple fact that the blimp was here.'

Coach D was growing more frustrated. "The next boy I see looking at that blimp is coming out the game!" he warned. I had no concern; I was out of the game already. I gawked at the blimp as if I were watching an alien autopsy. But for the players it was, honestly, hard to get the blimp out of one's field of vision. "Are you going to watch the blimp or the game?" Coach D yelled to anyone who seemed to be losing focus. Samuels is right when, in his *New Yorker* piece, he refers to the airship's "odd, lumbering vulnerability" that "could inspire wonder and yearning in children and grownups alike" (73). We were witnessing a living demonstration.

Curiously, zeppelins and football have a history. The July issue of [When Saturday Comes](#), in a back-page brief on [Hartlepool United](#), notes that a German airship bombed the main stand at Victoria Park in 1916. A "temporary" wooden stand was erected. In 1985, the temporary stand was finally replaced. It is not clear if the Germans ever made reparation.

—JOHN TURNBULL



OmniBall
the world's interactive football encyclopedia

POSTCARD FROM BARCELONA

We have not counted the entries in [OmniBall](#), the online football encyclopedia available at [CONMEBOL](#), but **Annie George**, vice-president of [En-Linea](#) (which manages the site, along with the websites for [FIFA](#) and the [Asian Football Federation](#)), puts the total at more than 20,000 (in Spanish and English). Another 5,000 entries on women's football will be added before the Women's World Cup in September. The following, titled "Football," is the main entry in the "Historical Perspective" section. The writer is **Jorge O. Peréz**, OmniBall senior editor, and the article is reprinted here with the kind permission of En-Linea, Inc. Click [here](#) for an interview.

An eleven-a-side team game played on a grass pitch in which players move the ball around, using the feet or head, with the object of putting it into the goal defended by their opponents. This brief summary of the mechanics of the game, however, is far from exhaustive. Football, like any other human activity or manifestation, embraces many meanings which partake of its very origins, history and present and which, needless to say, are not immovable. As a game played by two opposing teams, it can be seen as the peaceful representation of war, an activity that has traditionally kept large segments of the human species occupied.

As a team game ("Association Football"), it represents the image of collective work or engagement and, therefore, the very concept of the organised community. As an activity involving struggle, it is a synthesis of competition, the essential element in such human ideas and undertakings as trade, patriotism, ownership, arithmetic and the theatre, each of them in their variants of profit, commitment and fanaticism, egoism or generosity, adding and subtraction and dramatic or farcical representation. The attributes of football depend on the particular point of view and circumstances: It can be an athletic activity, a business, an art form, a job, a television spectacle, a family crusade, an element of reflection or a leisure activity, or all or none of these.

However this may be, the importance of the football phenomenon is such that it is a constant topic of conversation in debates, the media, the street and even on the information superhighway. But of all its possible definitions or attributes, that of the "game" would appear to be the most generally suitable, combining with any of the above: "game and business," "game and sport," "game and spectacle," rather than merely business, sport or spectacle alone.

'Football, like any other human activity or manifestation, embraces many meanings which partake of its very origins, history and present and which, needless to say, are not immovable.'

—Jorge O. Peréz

Because football always begins as child's play (hence the shorts?) and that is how it must have all begun with primitive man. Since the beginnings of humanity, *Homo sapiens* have had different reasons to feel fascination for the rolling sphere. Kicking and running after a ball (or something which might resemble, for example, the head of an enemy, as the stars refused to come down to earth) has always been an attractive pastime for individuals and groups, as well as a source of happiness. It was a way of escaping for a while from the hardships of life while at the same time strengthening the muscles and sharpening the instinct.

In the beginning, no doubt, there was just a ball and a foot. No goal, no teammates, no opponents, much less any spectators. The foot, relegated to the obscurity of locomotive labours, developed a skill as subtle as it was ephemeral, converting the ball into a prolongation of itself. And this forced the brain to think of football and, eventually, even to head the ball. History is packed with well-documented ancient games of ball and foot, and archaeological evidence exists of such activities in such venerable cultures as the Chinese, the Egyptian and the Aegean.

There are even Biblical references to such a game. In Japan, there was a game of characteristics comparable to what we know as football known as *kemari* (right), played in the 6th century BC. The



Roman legions exercised by playing at *harpastum*, a derivative of the Egyptian *epysciros* and a precursor of *calcio* and *soule*. Chaucer mentions the game in his poetry, Shakespeare in his plays. In the 9th century AD, the Toltecas used feet, legs and elbows to pass a rubber ball through their opponent's ring. The victory, a bloody affair, was rewarded on the sacrificial stone. And if the first champions emerged under the hungry gaze of gods, people were not slow to realise that the good of the spectacle required more subtle reward and that, for once, they should not kill the goose which laid the golden eggs.

Now, according to FIFA, football provides a living for people all over the world. Since the unification of the basic rules and regulations in a London pub in 1863, where rugby was separated from association football both technically and ethically, up to the present version of them (based on the 17 rules established by Sir Stanley Rous in 1935), this game, sport or

business has gone on to become one of the most distinctive and controversial features of the turn-of-the-millennium period.

QUOTABLE: 'FOOTBALL IS FOOTBALL'

Raman Narayanan of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* recently addressed journalists attending "[Reporting the World Home](#)," a [Poynter Institute](#) conference sponsored by the International Press Institute and the Knight Foundation. A native of Malaysia who speaks Malay and Tamil—and a Manchester United supporter—Narayanan joined the *Journal-Constitution* in January 2002 to become editor of the newly launched "[Atlanta & the World](#)" section. He received the 2003 Arnold Rosenfeld Editor of the Year Award in a competition among [Cox Enterprises](#) media. The judges cited "his leadership in launching a weekly section that reflects the diverse and changing cultural landscape of metro Atlanta."



In his talk on 9 May, Narayanan addressed lessons learned since he has been editor of "Atlanta & the World." The following is an excerpt, with the full text, with questions and answers, available [here](#).

[W]e deliberately decided that we would not talk down to our readers. We would not insult the intelligence nor would we be snide or smart-alecky with what we do. I found out, personally, that was easier to do with the readers than it is to do within the newspaper itself. Newspapers have cultures of their own, approaches of their own, and when you try to buck that, it takes a lot of energy and effort. . . . I'm a football fanatic—soccer, if you want to call it that—but I wanted to get the story of the [2002 Champions League] final into the paper somehow. I've been trying for ten years to get football into the [newspaper] and finally got a chance to do it. We had a one-hour debate about a headline on that because the copy editors insisted we should put the word "football" in quotes in the headline. I said, "No, football is football." And they said, "No, football here means something else." I said, "No, you mean NFL. That's not football. Please, that's something else. That's a travesty." Football—that's all we were talking about. I lost the fight; obviously, he put it in quotes. It will never happen again.

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philosopher **Hannah Arendt**, despite qualms among feminists regarding her supposed embrace of patriarchy, self-expression on a public stage—think the WUSA or Annika Sörenstam—is a necessary component of the human condition. "In Arendt's thinking, 'action' is what we do when we put ourselves forth in this world, when we present ourselves to others and try to express who we are. . . . According to Arendt, it is through the desire to throw oneself courageously into the world and the creation of a state of politics that humans can fully know themselves" (**Nelli Kopola**, "Is the Concept 'Active Women' an Oxymoron in Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*?" *NORA: The Journal of Nordic Women's Studies* 6, no. 1 [1998]: 48–57, here 49, 51). Seen in this light, Sörenstam's supposedly egotistical and market-savvy venture to play with men—and the ongoing fight of other courageous women to play in a professional soccer league—has a distinctive ripple effect. . . .

Speaking of women under pressure, referee **Silvia Regina Oliveira** and assistants **Aline Lambert** and **Ana Paula Oliveira** on 29 June became the first all-woman officiating team to preside over a first-division match in Brazil. According to Reuters, they were jeered off the field after disallowing two goals by home team Guarani, which lost 1–0 to São Paulo. "It was a good performance," said former referee **Claudio Cerdeira**. "All three were very competent. The problem is that there's a lot of sexism in football."

MEDIA GLEANINGS

Another possible link between violence and football came to light in an article in *Ha'aretz* (**Arnon Regular**, "[Hebron's Playing, and Plotting, Field](#)," accessed 31 May). Six players



for the Jihad Mosque team of Hebron (field at left) committed suicide bombings that killed more than 12 Israelis. The link came to light as Israeli security forces looked for common associations among likely bombers. The six mentioned in the *Ha'aretz* article are alleged to have belonged to a branch of terrorist group

Hamas. The article describes the father of one of the terrorists, **Fadi al-Fahudi**, holding his son's No. 15 jersey. "When **Ziyad al-Fahudi**, who works for the Hebron Municipality, looks out of his window, he can see the simple soccer field of his son's team. The 50-by-20-meter field is located between hillside ridges used to cultivate olives in the former orchard. The stones signifying the goalposts are still in place." The ability of soccer clubs around the world to organize gangs and violent activity is not in dispute. We recently were alerted to **Aldo Panfichi's** encouraging description of steering youths from football-related violence in Peru ("[Changing the Rules of the Game: Soccer and Youth Leadership in Peru](#)," *ReVista: Harvard Review of Latin America*, spring 2002, 11–14). Panfichi writes, "The failures of democratization and the histories of political violence and social exclusion often add additional fire to the passions of the fans. In societies with strong social divisions, the followers of rival clubs (called *barras bravas* in Latin America, hooligans in Europe) build their own identity on the troubled histories and identities of their beloved teams." . . .

Finally, a court in England [ruled](#) that use of the word "Paki" at a football match is racially offensive. The offender, on arrest, said, "It's racist, innit?"

PUBLICATION DETAILS

The Global Game is published monthly by [JZ Editing & Publishing](#), 629 2nd Ave., Decatur, GA 30030, USA. All



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