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TO GO

MEXICO

RETURN OF A

CHAMPION COACH

Real Madrid, Barcelona, Atletico Madrid

A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN

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Daniel Bilos could have played for Croatia at the World Cup. Instead he chose to represent Argentina and missed out on a place at the tournament.



A league of their own

Real Madrid, Barcelona and Atletico Madrid are locked in a head-to-head battle in Spain. Our cover image shows Madrid defender Sergio Ramos.

Helios de la Rubia/Real Madrid via Getty Images (photo)



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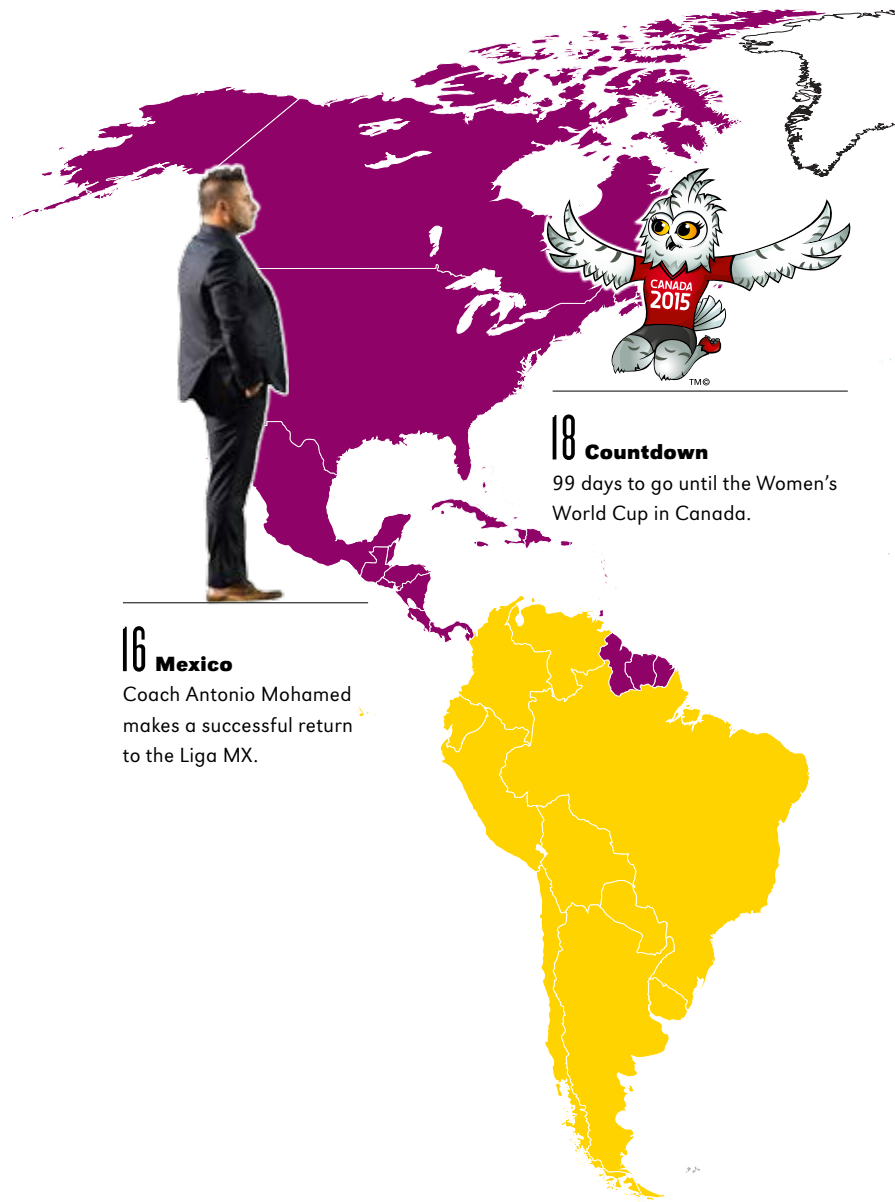
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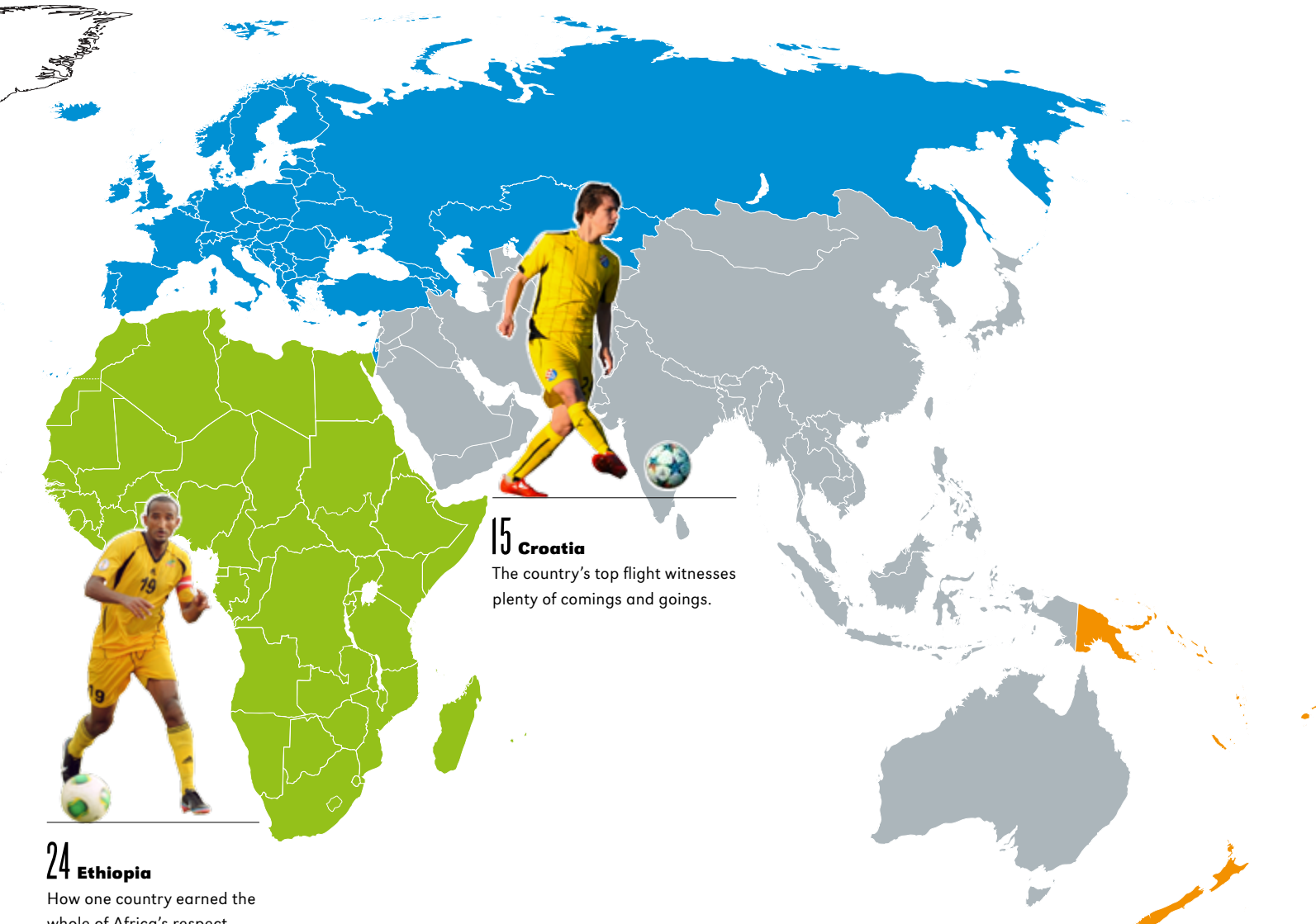
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Blue Stars/FIFA Youth Cup
13/14 May 2015, Zurich, Switzerland



FIFA U-20 World Cup
30 May – 20 June 2015, New Zealand



FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup
9 – 19 July 2015, Portugal



FIFA U-17 World Cup
17 October – 8 November 2015, Chile



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Riding high in La Liga, at a low ebb with La Roja Barcelona's Andres Iniesta (left), Real Madrid goalkeeper Iker Casillas (centre) and Fernando Torres of Atletico Madrid.

Mixed feelings

The mere mention of the Primera Division, Premier League or Bundesliga conjures up images of the players in our mind's eye. The fans' chants reverberate around our heads and we are instantly filled with anticipation for the next round of matches.

Although the thoughts accompanying each country's national teams are every bit as colourful as those of its league, the challenge of reconciling the quality within a championship with that of the national team seems to be a problematic one. While the Premier League has been exhibiting consistently high-level growth over the past five years, the Three Lions' performance curve slopes downwards - and the same is true on the Iberian Peninsula. La Liga's popularity may continue to outstrip that of every other European league but, despite winning two European Championships and a World Cup in recent years, *La Roja* have slipped back to where they were in the FIFA world ranking ten years ago. How do we explain this discrepancy?

Our report from Jordi Puntí and an interview with world and European champion Sergio Ramos shed further light on the situation in La Liga and *La Roja* - two words capable of opening up whole worlds of imagination. ⚽

Perikles Monioudis



An all-Madrid affair Atletico take on Real in the Copa del Rey on 7 January 2015.

La Liga and the elusive search for balance



The Primera Division is a three-horse race between Real, Barça and Atletico Madrid. This imbalance is having a significant impact on the national side. Nevertheless, Spain are getting back on track.

Jordi Puntí



Challengers Barcelona's Suarez, Neymar and Messi.



Reigning champions Atletico's Gabi, Gimenez and Godin.



Record breakers Real Madrid's Ronaldo, Bale and Benzema.

The business end of the Spanish league season is upon us once again. With almost two thirds of the campaign gone and all the issues still to be decided, fans are assessing their teams' options ahead of the run-in. For many of them, there is little cause for celebration or optimism. There are few clubs in Spain these days who can say with any certainty that they are on the right path.

The clubs that populate the country's footballing middle class have been feeling the pinch for many years. Possessing long traditions and loyal fanbases who cannot help but dream whenever a new signing arrives, they began the season with sights set on qualification for Europe. Many now find themselves, at this late stage of events, left counting the points they need to avoid the drop.

A glance at the league table shows that the 2014/15 season is panning out in much the same way as its predecessor. Perched high above the rest are the usual trio of Real Madrid, Barcelona and Atletico Madrid, who continue to gobble up points, their trophy chances still virtually all intact and oblivious to their rivals' progress, or lack of it.

Below them all is uncertainty, with stadiums growing emptier by the week and discontent rising at the way La Liga is being run. The 17 other clubs who make up the fixture list have become accustomed to playing in a different league, one in which they celebrate a coveted slot in the Champions League play-off or the Copa del Rey final with the same enthusiasm as they once would have done a major title.

Giantkillers in blue and white

No team better sums up the emotional ups and downs of the middle class than San Sebastian's Real Sociedad, the only team in Spain's top two flights that has yet to win away from home this season. *Los Txuri-Urdin* made a slow start to the season and were knocked out in the group phase of the UEFA Europa League, with Scottish coach David Moyes coming into replace Jagoba Arrasate in November. Real fans can now content themselves with the fact that they are the season's undisputed giantkillers, the only side to have beaten the top three at home.

The trio's respective, and pointless, visits to San Sebastian have each been a turning point in their seasons. Ancelotti's men lost 4-2 there on matchday two, this after surging into a 2-0 lead inside ten minutes, an uncomfortable reminder that a haughty attitude is not always conducive to gathering points. Much the same happened to *Atleti*, who went down 2-1, with new arrivals such as Mario Mandzukic and Guilherme Siqueira quickly



What a backdrop! Barça and Atletico's players prepare for kick-off at the Camp Nou.

learning the lesson that the team's greatest asset was its fighting spirit, that it was a diminished force without it. Barcelona lost 1-0 on their trip to the Anoeta, where they failed to hit the target in a passionless outing that marked the lowest point yet in the relationship between Messi and Luis Enrique. That defeat was also something of a watershed for *Barça*, who promptly pressed the "reset" button and won their next 11 matches on the trot, a run that only came to an end with last Saturday's 1-0 loss at home to Malaga, one of the season's surprise packages.

As you were

The three-horse title race is proving another evenly contested affair and has also thrown up some revealing combinations of results.

Not for the first time, the destiny of the title will in all probability hinge on the outcome of the latest instalment of El Clasico, the most global of all rivalries.

Much to the delight of their fans, Atletico have lorded it over their city rivals this season, beating them home and away in the league and knocking them out of the Copa del Rey. In turn, Barcelona have got the better of Atletico, beating them at the Camp Nou and then knocking them out of the Copa. It remains to be seen whether Real Madrid can complete the sequence against Barcelona. Having comfortably beaten the Catalans 3-1 at the Santiago Bernabeu, Real have the chance to do the double over them when the two sides meet again on 22 March. Not for the first time, the destiny of the title will in all probability hinge on the outcome of the latest instalment in the most global of all rivalries.

Injuries to key players such as Sergio Ramos, Luka Modric and Pepe have robbed

“Perhaps Germany learned the most from Spain”

Despite winning silverware with Real Madrid last year, success was more elusive for Sergio Ramos with the Spanish national team. “You can’t compare the two,” insists the defender.

You have been playing for Real Madrid for a decade, during which time many well-known players have come and gone. What is it like in such a star-studded dressing room?

Sergio Ramos: Everything is based on mutual respect, although of course it’s difficult when players from different cultures, languages and countries come together. There’s a bit of everything thrown in there and you have to be able to deal with it. With humility and respect, we always try to make life easier for new players so that they can integrate as quickly as possible. That’s very important to Carlo Ancelotti. He was a footballer himself, he knows the players who arrive and is understanding of any problems.

What other qualities does he have?

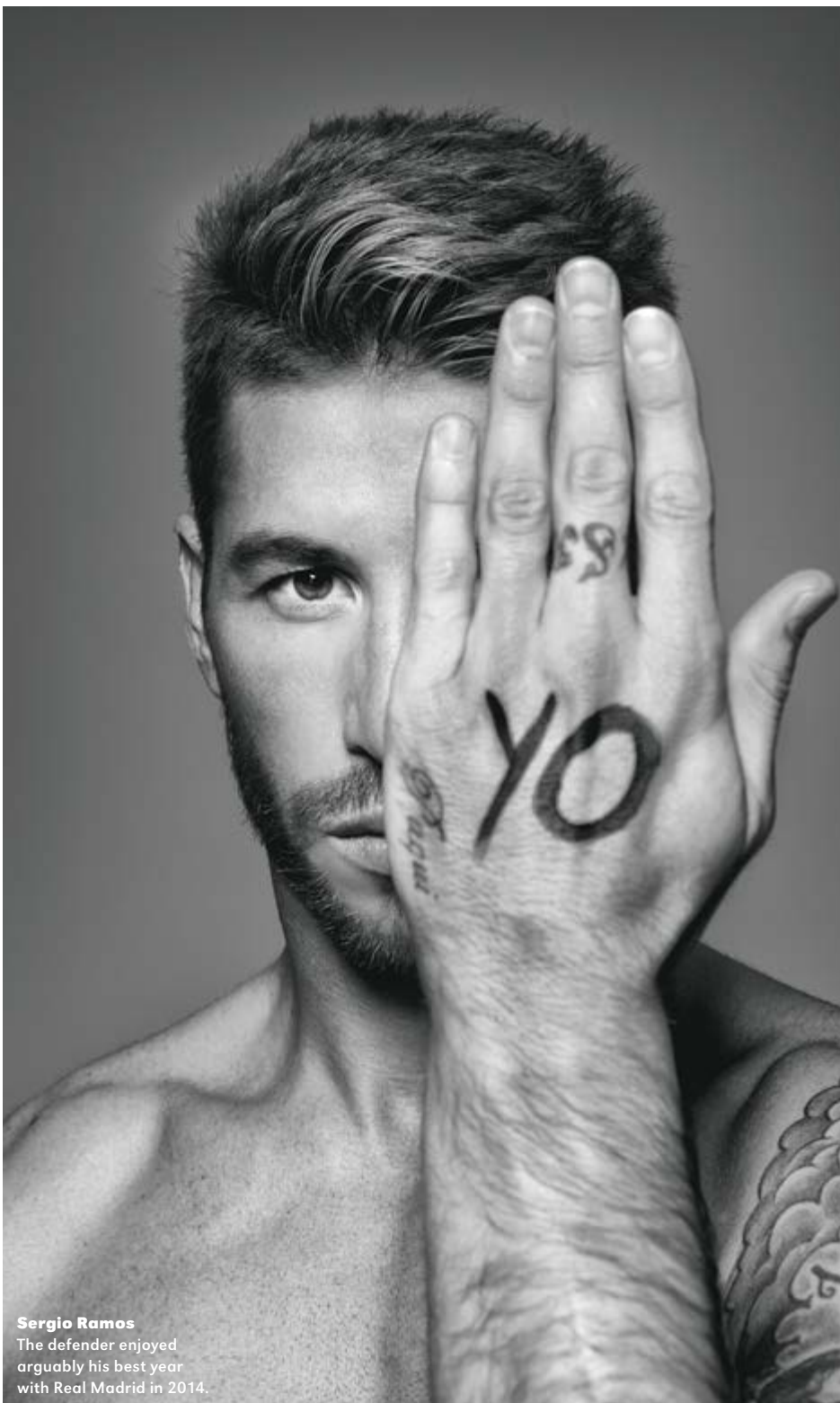
He pays attention to how a player settles in, to whether or not he opens up to certain team-mates. He’s the kind of coach who takes you to one side and talks to you. He makes things easy for you, both professionally and on a personal level. That’s his key to success and that’s why he’s a great coach; he’s one of the best I’ve ever had in my career. On top of that he’s a wonderful person and that makes interacting with players a lot easier.

Who would you say are the other top coaches you have experienced?

Luis Aragones. And Joaquin Caparros, who really believed in me when I was still starting out. I’ve had some great coaches.

2014 seems to have been a special year for you. Would you call it the best ever?

Yes, I think so. It was a fantastic year, both professionally and personally. What else could you want in life? I became a father, which is a unique feeling, and have good stability at home and in my family. It’s also amazing to win games and titles with your team.



Sergio Ramos
The defender enjoyed arguably his best year with Real Madrid in 2014.

The Spanish national side were not as successful, though.

Well, the two things need to be viewed separately, you can't compare them. But it would definitely have been crazy to have had a good World Cup as well. 2014 was a very intensive year with lots of draining games, so maybe we weren't in great shape in Brazil. Our run of success lasted many years and obviously you can't always win. It was a unique time with a crop of extraordinary footballers.

“Ancelotti makes things easy for you, both professionally and on a personal level. That's his key to success.”

Did Germany deserve to win the World Cup?

I think so. Anything could've happened; in a final either team can win. After all, Argentina were one of the title favourites right from the start. But Germany had regularly reached the semi-finals for years and in my opinion had a unique playing style and togetherness. Germany have got outstanding players, who don't only perform well in the Bundesliga but also in the national team.

Some people believe that Germany would not have achieved their success without Spain's tactical influence.

Do you agree with that?

I don't know. When one country excels at certain things, others try to incorporate them to help their own game in the future. In my view, the group of players we had that were so successful for many years defined an era and left their mark on the game. Everyone enjoyed watching us play. There may be teams who have picked up ideas, tactics and other little details from us. We played Germany regularly

and they're the ones who suffered from our success the most, so to speak. But perhaps that also meant that they're the ones who learned the most from it.

You have scored a relatively high number of goals for a defender. Is that not a contradiction?

Us defenders have to live with the fact that our work isn't as widely recognised. Nobody ever talks about whether you defended well or kept a clean sheet. At the end of the day, the only thing people pay attention to is what the score was and who got the goals. That's what brings the money in and drives football today [laughs]. I was lucky enough to score in the semi-final and final of the Champions League and at the Club World Cup.

Sergio Ramos was speaking to Bruno Sassi

Name

Sergio Ramos Garcia

Date and place of birth

30 March 1986, Camas (Spain)

Position

Defender

Clubs

2003–2004 Sevilla Atletico

2004–2005 FC Sevilla

Since 2005 Real Madrid

Spain national team

124 caps (10 goals)

Major honours

World champion (2010)

European champion (2008, 2012)

Champions League winner (2014)

La Liga champion (2007, 2008, 2012) and

Copa del Rey winner (2011, 2014)

Real Madrid of some of the momentum they acquired in the first half of the season, while *Barça* have built a head of steam of their own in recent weeks, thanks in the main to the improved understanding between Messi and Neymar. As has become the norm, the rivalry between the two sides is also being played out on an individual front, with Ronaldo and Messi trading blows at the top of the scoring charts, the Portuguese having scored 28 to date to the Argentinian's 26, tallies that are sure to rise in the weeks ahead.

A Basque miracle

The chasm between La Liga's aristocrats and the rest is reflected by the fact that 12 sides have scored fewer goals this season than either Cristiano or Messi. Yet while that statistic is but one of the stark realities of life in La Liga, there are some grounds for optimism for the league's lesser lights, among them Villarreal, who bounced back from a season in the second division to qualify for the Europa League last year. Coached by Marcelino, their style of play is turning heads again, with siblings Giovanni and Jonathan Dos Santos providing balance in midfield and promising Argentinian striker Luciano Vietto a steady supply of goals. Sevilla and Valencia have also embarked on processes of renewal, founded on creative football and the goals of Carlos Bacca in the case of *Los Rojiblancos* and Dani Parejo and Paco Alcacer in the case of *Los Chés*.

One club with its feet very firmly on the ground and yet still somehow living the high life is Eibar SD. Competing in the top flight for the first time in their humble history, the Basque outfit are providing a throwback to the game's more romantic days. Representing a town with only 27,000 inhabitants, Eibar have been delighting their fans with an uncomplicated yet pure brand of football that has proved very effective at the highest level, all on an annual budget of four million euros and at a stadium, Ipurua, with a capacity of only 7,000. Perhaps the best representative of their happy adventure to date is the 26-year-old midfielder Errasti, a local boy who has fulfilled a dream beyond the reach of most players: running out in the top flight with his hometown club.

Del Bosque's conundrum

It is hard to avoid drawing a comparison between the situation the national team currently finds itself in and the course being charted by a league dominated by its traditional big two and Atletico Madrid. Vicente del Bosque fashioned a virtually unbeatable side thanks to a sizeable posse of Barcelona players and a smaller contingent from Real Madrid. Footballers such as Andres Iniesta,



Field of dreams Basque club Eibar are playing in the Primera Division for the first time.

Sergio Busquets, Jordi Alba, Pedro, Gerard Pique, Iker Casillas and Sergio Ramos, all of whom helped popularise *tiki-taka*, remain key components of the current side, though the retirement of mainstays Xavi, Carles Puyol, David Villa and Xabi Alonso created a void that has yet to be filled.

The root cause of the problem can perhaps be found at Spain's leading clubs. Real Madrid have long seemed to prefer signing high-profile foreigners than nurturing home-reared youngsters, hence the lack of playing time available to the promising Jese and the departure of Alvaro Morata to Juventus this season. The situation at Barcelona is different and yet the same. The club's fabled youth academy is producing less first-team players, thus slowing down the generational handover. While Xavi remains a regular first choice at the age of 35, Thiago chose to decamp to Bayern Munich, Sergi Roberto remains on the bench and Denis Suarez and Gerard Deulofeu have been farmed out to Sevilla on loan.

Team	MP	W	D	L	Pts
1 Real Madrid CF	24	20	0	4	60
2 FC Barcelona	24	18	2	4	56
3 Atlético Madrid	24	17	2	5	53
4 Valencia CF	24	15	5	4	50
5 Sevilla FC	24	14	3	7	45
6 Villarreal CF	24	13	5	6	44
7 Málaga CF	24	11	5	8	38
8 Celta de Vigo	24	8	7	9	31
9 RCD Espanyol	24	8	5	11	29
10 Real Sociedad	24	6	9	9	27
11 Eibar	24	7	6	11	27
12 Athletic Club	24	7	6	11	27
13 Getafe CF	24	7	5	12	26
14 Rayo Vallecano	24	8	2	14	26
15 Deportivo La Coruña	24	6	6	12	24
16 UD Almería	24	6	5	13	23
17 Elche CF	24	6	5	13	23
18 Levante UD	24	5	7	12	22
19 Granada CF	24	3	10	11	19
20 Córdoba CF	24	3	9	12	18

26.2.2015

- UEFA Champions League
- UEFA Champions League Preliminary
- UEFA Europa League
- UEFA Europa League on domestic cup
- Relegation

Following Spain's disastrous World Cup campaign, Del Bosque began to make the changes he should have perhaps embarked on before heading to Brazil. Every friendly and EURO 2016 qualifier is now an opportunity to test and bed down new players. The coach has also been calling on an increasingly large number of overseas-based players, a development that can perhaps be explained by the fact they have more to offer than their colleagues in mid-ranking Spanish teams. Spain's foreign legion includes Cesar Azpilicueta, Cesc Fabregas and Diego Costa of Chelsea; Juan Bernat and Thiago of Bayern Munich; Manchester United's David De Gea and Juan Mata; Manchester City's Silva; and Santi Cazorla of Arsenal. Joining them, as relative newcomers to the international scene, are the likes of Atletico Madrid threesome Juanfran, Raul Garcia and Koke; Dani Carvajal and Isco of Real Madrid; Marc Bartra of Barcelona; and Valencia duo Alcacer and Rodrigo Moreno. *La Roja's* main advantage as they seek to put together another



Time for a change National team coach Vicente del Bosque has regularly placed his confidence in youth since last summer's poor World Cup performance.

Barça's fabled youth academy is producing less first-team players, thus slowing down the generational handover.

Spain's EURO triumphs in 2008 and 2012 and the World Cup win sandwiched in between, the country's players are in huge demand around the world. Perhaps now is the time for them to regain the selfsame stature in La Liga. ⚽

winning side is that they have a solid base to build on. Such is Spain's footballing pedigree that new stars continually roll off the production line. The only problem is that La Liga, with its massive variations in quality and the yawning gap between the triumvirate at the top and the middle-class make-weights, is no longer a stage where they can ply their wares week in week out. Thanks to

LA FURIA ROJA



- Coach:** Vicente del Bosque
- Captain:** Iker Casillas
- Leading scorer:** David Villa (59 goals)
- Most-capped player:** Iker Casillas (160 appearances)
- Major honours:**
 2010 World Cup winners (beat Netherlands 1-0 aet in the Final)
 1964 European champions (beat USSR 2-1 in the final).
 EURO 2008 winners (beat Germany 1-0 in the final)
 EURO 2012 winners (beat Italy 4-0 in the final).
- World Cup:** 14 appearances



THERE WILL BE HATERS



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ON THE INSIDE

Croatia: Prva Liga

The lure of Europe



Roland Zorn is a Frankfurt-based football correspondent.

Considering the Prva Liga is run like an import and export business these days, it should come as no great surprise that the Croatian top flight is in a constant state of flux. Youngsters brimming with potential and promise often leave for one of Europe's top leagues as teenagers while players from the second or third tiers in European or South American countries are brought in.

Dinamo Zagreb have been operating a similar policy for years. The record champions signed 15 players and let 17 others leave the club during the most recent transfer window, while HNK Rijeka and Hajduk Split, Dinamo's closest challengers, follow the exact same business principle. Dinamo's Maksimir Stadium recently witnessed the departure of two of the most gifted members of the club's title-winning squad in

2013/14. Duje Cop, last season's top marksman and second-highest scorer this term, has joined Cagliari on loan, while midfielder Marcelo Brozovic has been loaned to Inter Milan. Both Serie A clubs have options to make the moves permanent for seven-figure sums.

However, the biggest stir this winter was caused by the transfer of the division's current leading scorer Andrej Kramaric, who left second-placed Rijeka for Leicester City, a team stranded at the foot of the English Premier League, for nine million euros. The 23-year-old Dinamo Zagreb youth product is still adjusting to the rough and tumble of the English top flight. Having netted 21 times during the first half of the Croatian domestic campaign, he has only managed to score once in five league appearances for his new club. Cop's goalscoring record in Serie A is identical, while Brozovic has also failed to make much of an impact in his short time at Inter.

The path from being a star in the Croatian first division to becoming one in a top European league can be bumpy, but Mateo

Kovacic and Tin Jedvaj have shown recently that it can be negotiated successfully. The duo left Dinamo in 2013 and are now permanent fixtures at Inter and Bundesliga heavyweights Bayer Leverkusen respectively.

Meanwhile, the departures of Kramaric, Cop and Brozovic have had little effect on the Prva Liga table. Unbeaten Dinamo are heading towards a 17th league title, while Rijeka have remained in second place since Kramaric's exit. A fresh crop of promising young talent is also beginning to emerge, including 17-year-old Ante Coric, another graduate of Dinamo's world-renowned youth academy. The tricky midfielder has made 17 appearances for the club's first team and has already drawn favourable comparisons with a pair of Dinamo legends. "He's better than Zvonimir Boban and Robert Prosinecki when they were that age," said head coach Zoran Mamic recently. It remains to be seen, however, how much longer a player of Coric's potential will remain at the Croatian record titleholders. ⚽



Imminent departure? Youngster Ante Coric (17) is making quite a name for himself in Croatia.



Mexico: Liga MX

Return of the comeback kid



Sven Goldmann is a leading football correspondent at *Tages-spiegel* newspaper in Berlin.

Despite taking place in Mexico, there was much talk of Brazil and Argentina in the run-up to a recent Liga MX match. The encounter between Club de Futbol Monterrey and Queretaro was meant to be the story of two main protagonists from South America – Argentinian Antonio Mohamed on the coach’s bench and Brazilian magician Ronaldinho out on the pitch – but it came to nothing as Queretaro’s erstwhile international star was forced to miss the match with a stomach upset.

In recent weeks the former Barcelona legend has been making headlines with rumours that he may soon have a new employer. Mexican newspapers have been awash with reports that Ronaldinho is on the brink of a switch to Kabuscorp in the Angolan capital

Luanda, where his compatriot Rivaldo enjoyed a short spell three years ago. The 34-year-old has never really settled at Queretaro, with president Olegario Vazquez expecting a little more from him than three goals in 15 games. Ronaldinho recently caused a stir by returning from his Christmas holiday in Brazil almost three weeks later than originally planned. Meanwhile, his team have scored a solitary point from their last five matches, prompting the dismissal of coach Ignacio Ambriz after the 2-1 defeat in Monterrey. Former Mexico national coach Victor Manuel Vucetich is currently in talks to replace him.

The seventh matchday of the Torneo Clausura was an altogether better one for Argentinian Antonio Mohamed and marked his successful return to the Liga MX. The man from Buenos Aires stepped away from Mexico’s top flight two months ago after leading the capital’s Club de Futbol America to a record twelfth championship title. Mohamed attracted a great deal of attention upon his departure by saying: “I’m leaving the club but I’m keeping my dignity.” He had previously sparked consternation for suspending Mexican international Paul Aguilar for reasons that were never fully explained, after which it

became an open secret around the Aztec Stadium that Uruguayan Gustavo Matosas would soon be appointed as the 44-year-old’s successor.

Although Mohamed subsequently resigned and returned to Argentina, he is now making a comeback in more ways than one, having played for Monterrey between 1998 and 2000 towards the end of his playing career. As a player, the closest he came to Mexican championship glory was as a runner-up with Toros Neza in 1997, but as a coach he led Tijuana to a sensational league win in 2012 before repeating the feat with America last December. Nevertheless, Mohamed has inherited a difficult legacy at the country’s oldest club. Monterrey sank deep into the relegation mire under the hapless Carlos Barra, with the win at Queretaro only their second of the current campaign. Edwin Cardona’s decisive 88th minute goal also marked a personal triumph for *Los Rayados*’ new coach, who introduced the Colombian as a substitute exactly one minute earlier. ⚽



Midas touch
Coach Antonio Mohamed guided Monterrey to their second win of the season.



Malaysia: Super League Slow start for the Tigers



Andreas Jaros is a Vienna-based freelance writer.

Malaysian top-flight team Johor Darul Takzim, or JDT for short, have a problem most clubs can only envy. It is the same dilemma faced by free-scoring Bayern Munich, namely intense levels of expectation to win every game, ideally in eye-catching style. Never mind that the defending Malaysian champions, from the south-eastern state of Johor, lifted the title in 2014 with an average of fewer than two goals per game.

Unfortunately for their demanding fans, the Southern Tigers, the first team in the country to treat their fans to an electronic scoreboard, have started the 2015 campaign looking more like tame kittens. The title favourites have picked up just four points from their opening three assignments, and

A poor start to the 2015 campaign has left the Southern Tigers looking more like tame kittens.

their situation could have been even worse. The top game on Matchday 3 of the new season was JDT's tie away to fierce rivals and last year's runners-up Selangor FA, who, in Brazilian striker Paulo Rangel boast last season's 16-goal top scorer. The game had only just kicked off when the visitors went 1-0 down after Andik Vermansyah struck inside the opening minute. JDT took a while to recover their composure after the shock of going behind, but eventually managed to earn a point in the 62nd minute through Argentinian forward Luciano Figueroa, who counts River Plate, Boca Juniors and Panathinaikos among his previous employers.

Last year Figueroa had a high-profile compatriot alongside him, as former international Pablo Aimar, who played for Valencia and Benfica in his prime, graced JDT and the 12-team Malaysian first division with his presence. The renowned dribbler – nicknamed 'El Mago' – was once described by

Diego Maradona as “the only footballer I would pay to see play.” However, the diminutive 35-year-old's spell at JDT was a short-lived one, as injury problems led to him returning to his homeland in April 2014.

That coincided with JDT announcing a strategy of “rejuvenation with home-grown talent”, relying on a head coach, Bojan Hodak, who is well-versed in local customs. The Croatian has a wealth of experience in the region, having been coaching in Malaysia since 2006, albeit interspersed with stints in Cambodia and China. The bald 43-year-old Zagreb native, who hails from a family with a military background, swiftly led the red-and-blues to their first major title in his debut campaign at the club, so it is likely that the team will find its rhythm again soon enough. In the meantime, Hodak and JDT can use the domestic cup and continental AFC Cup to get up to speed before the championship resumes on 7 March. ⚽

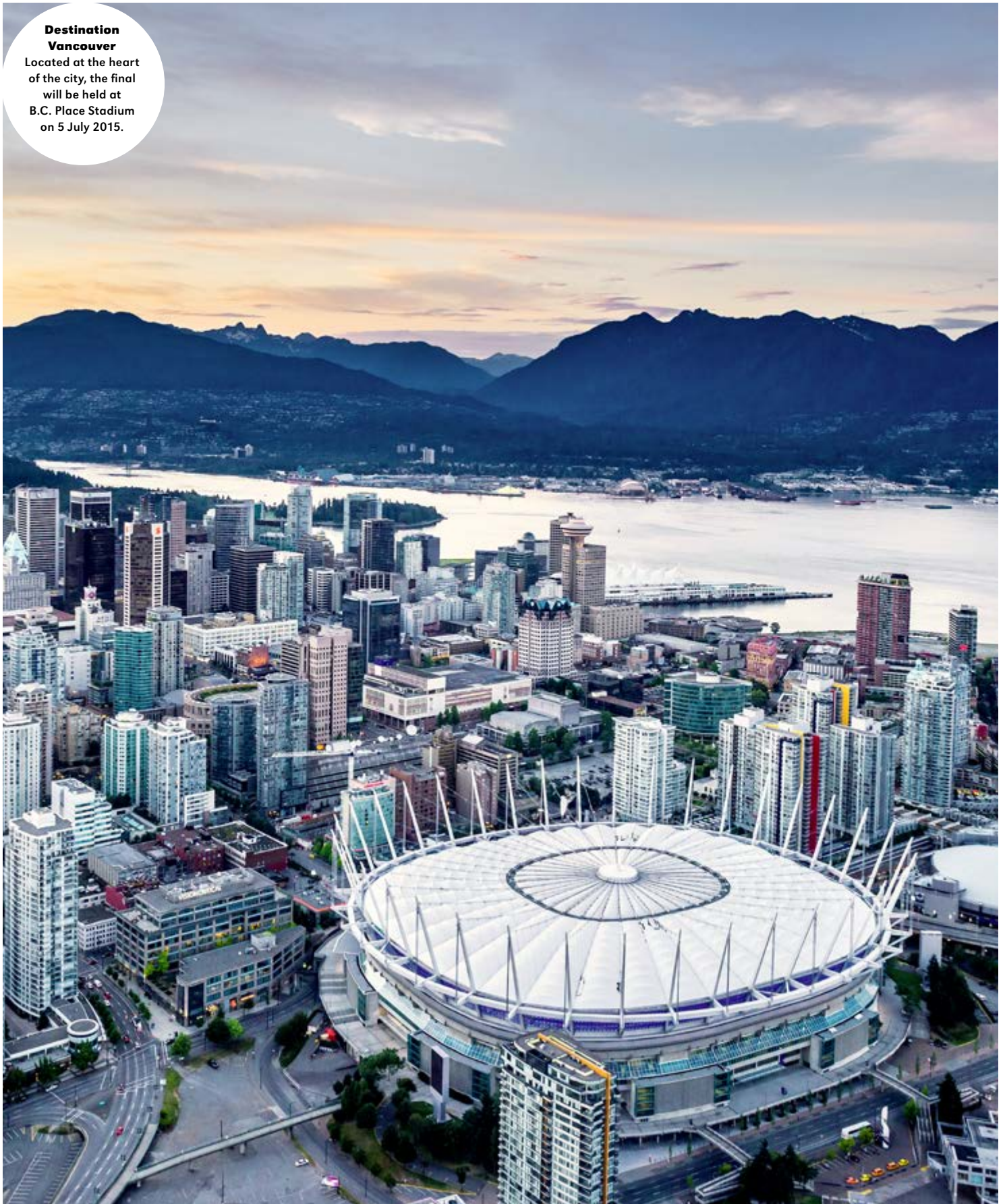


Finding their stride

The Southern Tigers' Mohd Shas (l.) tussles with Selangor FA's Guilherme de Paula (r.) in JDT's 1-1 away draw.

**Destination
Vancouver**

Located at the heart of the city, the final will be held at B.C. Place Stadium on 5 July 2015.



550,000 fans have already reserved their tickets

26 February marked 100 days “To a Greater Goal” at the Women’s World Cup Canada 2015, with celebrations from coast to coast in the six Host Cities of Vancouver, British Columbia; Edmonton, Alberta; Winnipeg, Manitoba; Ottawa, Ontario; Montreal, Quebec; and Moncton, New Brunswick.



To celebrate this milestone, a range of facts, clips, interviews and documents have been put together to give fans a taste of what they can look forward to in the lead-up to and during the event. A selection of 100 fantastic goals from the previous six FIFA Women’s World Cups can be viewed via FIFA on YouTube. Fans can also follow all the build-up to the FIFA Women’s World Cup on Facebook and on Twitter @FIFAWWC, and FIFA will also be sharing the very best photos during the tournament on Instagram.


In exclusive video interviews, FIFA’s female Executive Committee members Lydia Nsekera, Sonia Bien Aime and Moya Dodd share their expectations for the tournament, as does Steffi Jones, President of Germany

in 2011 and a FIFA Women’s World Cup winner in 2003. Victor Montagliani, Chairman of the FIFA Women’s World Cup Canada 2015 National Organizing Committee (NOC), also talks to FIFA.com about Canada’s preparations and what will make this tournament so special.

With 100 days to go, more than 550 000 fans have already claimed their seats for the Women’s World Cup Canada 2015. The Visa presale period alone provided over 150,000 fans with the opportunity to secure their spot to catch the action live.

Individual tickets will go on sale on 26 February (12.00 ET / 18.00 CET) to give fans “100 opportunities” to be part of the biggest and most important women’s football event. Ticket prices will start from as low as CAD 20.15 and

in recognition of Visa’s valued sponsorship FIFA prefers Visa.

In Canada, the six Host Cities will unveil scarves featuring the official slogan “To a Greater Goal” to kick off a scarf campaign that will continue through the tournament. FIFA President Blatter is featured in the launch of the campaign, which will present prominent personalities from the world of football and beyond sharing their “Greater Goals”. To celebrate 100 days until Canada welcomes the world, the nation goes red, an iconic Canadian colour, with notable buildings lit up in red in the six Host Cities. 

tfw

For more information visit: www.youtube.com/FIFATV

FIFA Women’s Football and Leadership Conference

As part of its annual celebrations around International Women’s Day (IWD), FIFA will this year host a one-day conference on Friday 6 March covering key topics related to women’s football and women in sport governance.

The FIFA Women’s Football and Leadership Conference is set to take place at the Home of FIFA in Zurich and will bring together experts from across the world of football and further afield to present the latest research and information about new strategies to further grow the women’s game and increase representation of women in leadership positions. FIFA President Blatter will officially open the conference while the list of high-profile guest speakers will include: Lydia Nsekera, FIFA Executive Committee member; Moya Dodd, co-opted member of the FIFA Executive Committee and chairwoman of the FIFA Task Force for Women’s Football and Hope Powell, former England international and head coach. Additional guest speakers and panel members will be revealed shortly. Registration is now open to the general public via womensday.questionpro.com, with limited spaces available.

The event kicks off a year in which women’s football will be firmly in the spotlight due to the staging of the FIFA Women’s World Cup in Canada from 6 June to 5 July as well as the 6th FIFA Women’s Football Symposium in Vancouver from 3-5 July, which will bring together around 500 representatives of FIFA’s member associations to discuss the ongoing and future development of women’s football. Meanwhile, in terms of development, FIFA has doubled its funding for women’s football for the 2015-2018 cycle.

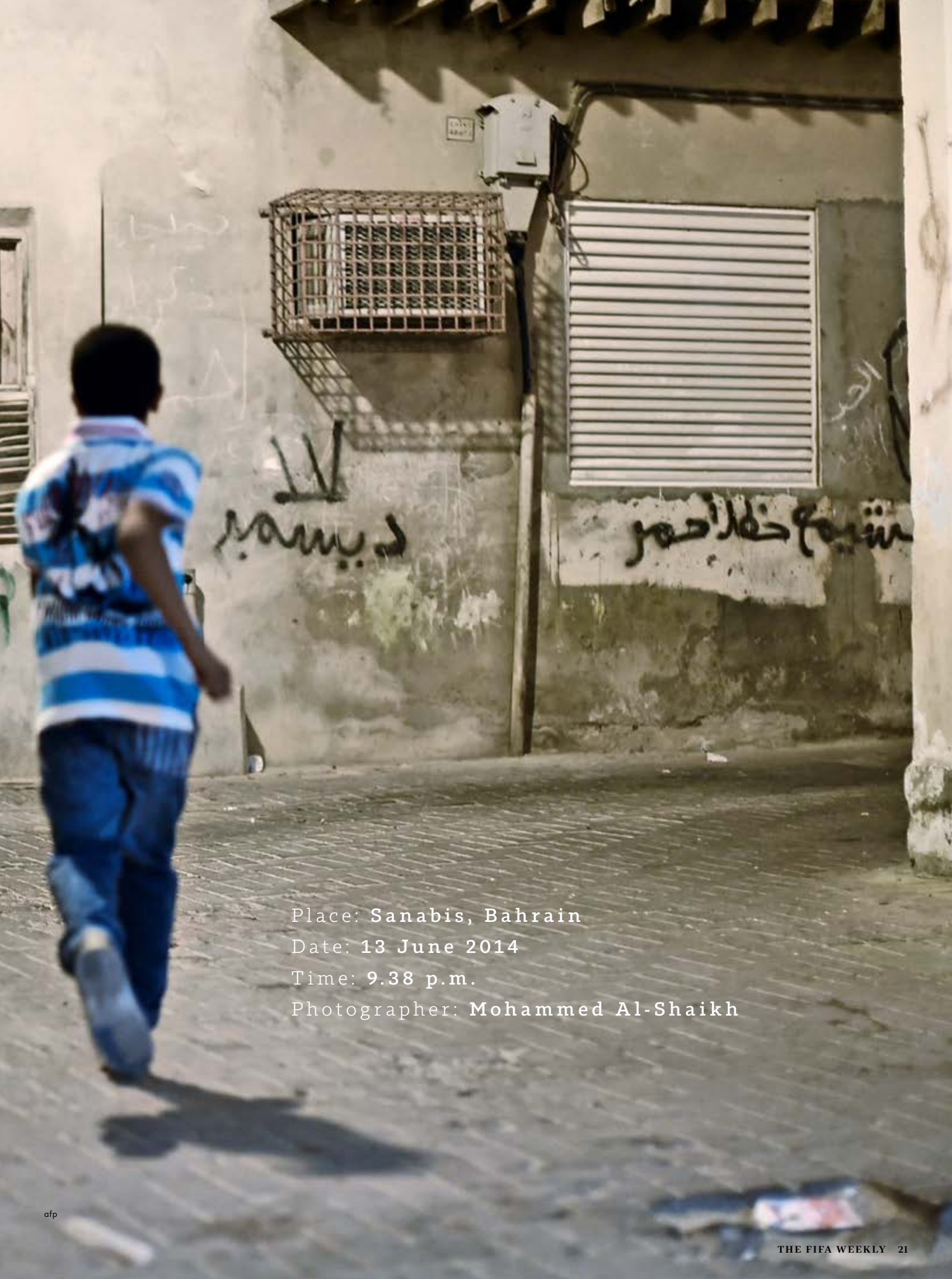
International Women’s Day is celebrated each year on 8 March and is a day of global celebration marking the economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future. It has been observed since the early 1900s and this year’s theme is “Make it Happen”.

For more information visit: www.internationalwomensday.com



First Love





Place: Sanabis, Bahrain

Date: 13 June 2014

Time: 9.38 p.m.

Photographer: Mohammed Al-Shaikh



DEVELOP THE GAME

Developing football
everywhere and for all

TOUCH THE WORLD

Organising inspiring
tournaments

BUILD A BETTER FUTURE

Caring about society
and the environment

For the Game. For the World.

FIFA is committed to developing football for the benefit of all. Our mission is to:

Develop the game

FIFA's primary objective is to develop the game of football in our 209 member associations. The FIFA World Cup™ gives us the resources we need to invest USD 550,000 per day in football development across the globe.

Touch the world

FIFA's aim is to touch the world through its international football competitions and events, uniting and inspiring people everywhere.

Build a better future

Football is much more than just a game. Its universal appeal gives it a unique power and reach which must be managed carefully. FIFA believes it has a duty to society that goes beyond football.

The guardians of the game

The brainchild of the English FA, the IFAB met for the first time on 2 June 1886.

Comprising representatives from each of the UK's four football associations (England, Scotland, Wales and the island of Ireland), the new body was created with a view to drawing up a uniform code at a time when each country applied different rules. Once established as the guardian of the Laws of the Game, the IFAB's role was to preserve, monitor and study them, and amend them if necessary.

The game of football spread rapidly around the globe in the years that followed, and in 1904 seven nations came together in Paris to found the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). In 1906 the former head of the English FA, Daniel Burley Woolfall, took over as FIFA President. The English FA joined world football's governing body that same year, with FIFA becoming a member of the IFAB in 1913.



Founding fathers The secretaries of the Irish, Scottish, English and Welsh associations pose for photographers.

Granted four votes, FIFA would enjoy the same voting rights as the English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish associations combined in the new-look IFAB. That is still the case today, with the committee comprising eight representatives entitled to vote: four from FIFA and one each from the other aforementioned nations. The only difference nowadays is that the Irish association only has jurisdiction over Northern Ireland, which remained a part of the United Kingdom. The association itself has essentially stayed the same since 1882, only that its reach has been restricted to Northern Ireland since 1921.

A three-quarters majority is required in order for a new motion to be accepted. Suggestions or proposed rule changes can be made by FIFA and the four UK associations, and are discussed and ratified at the annual general meeting, which usually takes place in February or March. ☺



Intuition trumps changing the Laws

One of the main reasons for football's popularity is its stable values. The fundamentals of the Laws have barely changed since they were first laid down by the English Football Association in 1863. In 1886 the International Football Association Board (IFAB) was set up to control, monitor and, if necessary, adapt those Laws. The Board's annual meeting takes place in Belfast this weekend.

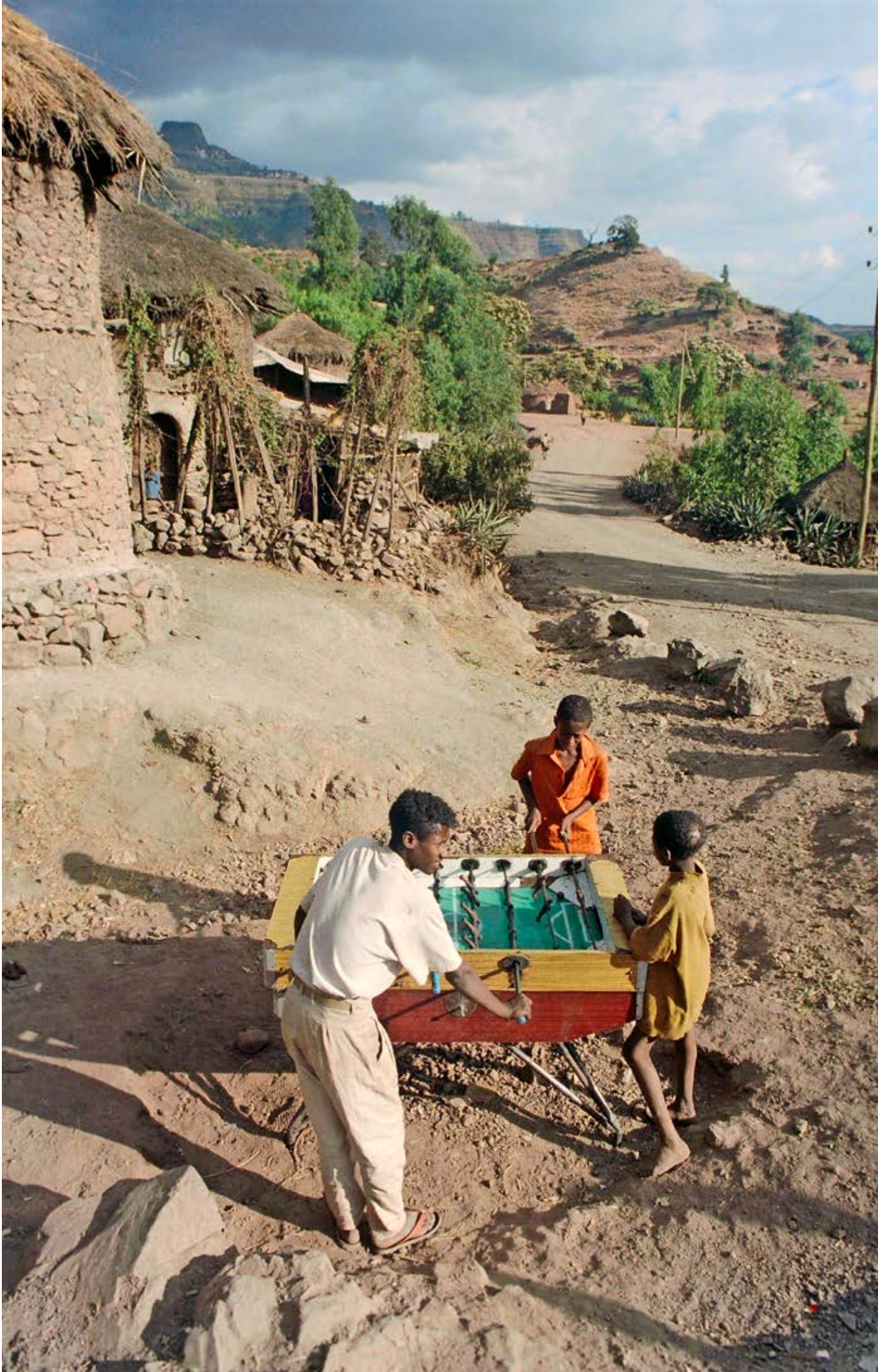
The IFAB treads the fine line between conservation and modernisation with great assurance and has proved the Keeper of the Grail in the most positive sense. It refuses to be knocked off course by short-term (and short-sighted) swings in the public mood.

A prime example is the never-ending debate about the (so-called) 'triple punishment' for offences in the penalty area – a debate based on a misinterpretation, because the Laws set out clear guidelines, regardless of whether a foul (or handball) is committed in the box or outside. Law 12 lists the ten offences to be punished by a direct free kick, from kicking an opponent, via charging or pushing, through to deliberate handball.

The same clause stipulates the offences for which a sending off is due. These include serious foul play, violent conduct, and denying the opposing team an obvious goalscoring opportunity. Where the offence takes place is immaterial. A foul is a foul, wherever it takes place on the field.

However, if the foul takes place in the penalty area the referee must give a penalty instead of a free kick. This is also entirely non-negotiable. It changes nothing about the facts of the incident (and the required sanctions) whether the player committing the offence is an outfield player or the goalkeeper. The Laws apply equally to all. I've said it often enough, and I'm happy to say it again: interpreting the Laws demands intuition and dexterity. The responsibility lies with the referees and their assistants.

Best wishes, Sepp Blatter



**Lalibela,
Ethiopia**
Youngsters play
table football
outside their
homes.

The roots of Ethiopian club Saint George can be traced back to the era of colonial rule, when the entire African continent was filled with the outposts of European countries whose armies fought the indigenous population in a grab for land and natural resources. It was against this backdrop that the club was founded by Greek and Armenian settlers in the capital, Addis Ababa, where it quickly became the country's most formidable side. Many attributed the club's potency to the support of the patron saint that gave it its name.

These were difficult times. It was 1935 and Ethiopia had just been invaded by Italy. Although young people had already begun to set up football teams, they soon sought to emulate their European occupiers, whose experience in the sport stretched back much further. Fascism had other more immediate impacts on the country's football; Ethiopian teams were forced to change their names, while sides made up of local players were separated from those consisting of Europeans.

This turn of events made the satisfaction all the greater when Italian side Fortitudo Addis Ababa – composed exclusively of the occupying power's international players – faced Saint George in 1942. The Ethiopians briefly exacted revenge for the oppression and violence they had encountered by scoring four goals along the way – a victory made all the more impressive when you consider that, unlike their opponents, the local side were forced to play barefoot. On that day Saint George became a symbol of national unity among the Ethiopian people.

The club's current captain and icon Adane Girma is well aware of the power of the beautiful game. "I was born in Awasa and grew up with my family in a suburb named Korem," he explains. "I was the third of four children, and my parents died when I was still a young boy. At school I played football from an early age; throughout my life it has helped me to remain strong and confident." As well as leading his national team, the 29-year-old also coaches an under-18 side he founded, and speaks animatedly of the passion shown by his players.

Enjoying life in Ethiopian football

Adane has played for Ethiopia's most successful team since 2007, winning no fewer than five championship titles along the way. When asked about the secret of his success, the all-rounder explains: "A footballer has to show discipline. His most important role is to serve his team."

He knows what he is talking about. Having originally played as a defender, Adane was subsequently moved into a midfield role. He has even been effectively deployed as a striker under some coaches, scoring many times with both feet during his career. "I've never had a particular position," he laughs. "My club and national team coaches can use me equally well in midfield or up front."

The Ethiopian Premier League is made up of 14 teams who play each other home and away in a format closely resembling that of most European leagues, including the English championship from which it takes its name. Saint George's biggest rivals are Ethiopian Coffee, Debedit, Sidama Buna, Mebrathail and Awasa Kenema in a league whose star players include Dawit Fedaku, Michael Desta, Dawit Estifanos and Nigerians Filip Aus and Samuel Salone.

Adane Girma has no complaints when it comes to the wages earned by Ethiopian footballers. The father of two says that a player's average salary is very good compared to the national average. "With more and more private companies investing in the sport, the life of a professional footballer has improved considerably over the past few years," he explains.

Ethiopia currently sit 102nd in the FIFA world rankings, placing them 28th among African sides. Adane has already worn the green shirt, yellow shorts and red socks of his national team 46 times, scoring eight times along the way.



Captain Versatile Adane Girma
A two-footed maestro who can be deployed in any position.

African football, European legacy

Many years have passed since Ethiopia last once won the Africa Cup of Nations. The FIFA Weekly explores the history of a nation that has had to fight hard to establish its footballing identity.

Emanuele Giulianelli



Ethiopia 1990
A match unfolds
in the capital
Addis Ababa.



Cult club
The Saint George
team in 2014.



ETHIOPIA

Population: 97 million
(world's most populous landlocked country)

Official language: Amharic

Birth rate:
Average 5.3 children born per woman

Highest point: Ras Dashen, 4,533 m

National team highlights:
Africa Cup of Nations winners 1962,
runners-up 1957

Registered players: 56,245

Unregistered players: 3,418,000

Clubs: 1,004

FIFA: As part of the Goal development project, FIFA provided the Ethiopian Football Federation with \$970,000 of financial support between 2009 and 2010, enabling improvements such as the construction of one artificial and one grass pitch at the national technical centre in Ambo. FIFA is also planning to build a new Federation headquarters in Addis Ababa.



World Cup heartache Despite the lively support of their fans, Ethiopia failed to qualify for Brazil 2014.

Earning respect in Africa

One of these goals was scored during the second leg of their Africa Cup of Nations qualifier against Sudan in October 2012 and sparked ecstatic celebrations across Ethiopia. Needing to overcome a 5-3 first-leg deficit, the *Walias* won 2-0 to secure a spot at the African championship for the first time in 31 years. The two names on the scoresheet that day were Saladin Said – and Adane. “I’ll never forget that moment,” the Saint George skipper says. “It was the greatest of my career, not just because we scored but also because I knew that this victory would help our nation’s football to move forward. We earned the respect of the entire continent. What’s more, we shouldn’t forget what it meant for our country. Ethiopia is a nation made up of different tribes and people of different faiths. Football brings the whole country and all its people together. When the national team plays, all Ethiopians unite to experience these wonderful moments together.”

The East Africans were once a force to be reckoned with at the Africa Cup of Nations, winning the 1962 tournament on home soil after getting the better of the United Arab Republic (now Egypt) in the final after extra time. That winning side included brothers Italo and Luciano Vassallo, who were born to an Eritrean mother and an Italian soldier during the Italian occupation. Luciano Vassallo later coached the Ethiopian national team on several occasions.

A doppelganger at Juventus

Incidentally, Adane is also the subject of an entertaining anecdote. The Italian press once noticed a striking resemblance between Ethiopia’s

current captain and Italy defender Giorgio Chiellini. Word quickly spread, and the Ethiopian is now known as the Juventus defensive stalwart’s doppelganger. “A journalist here in Ethiopia once told me that we looked alike, but I didn’t realise then how right he was,” Adane says. “It’s amusing and strange that two players from different continents can look so similar. We still haven’t come across one another, but I’d like to meet him one day.” ☺

“In 2012 we earned the respect of the entire continent.”



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Almost three months to the day since suffering a partial tear of his cruciate ligament, Augsburg goalkeeper Marwin Hitz made his first-team comeback last weekend - and what a return to action it was. Trailing 2-1 in a Bundesliga game against Bayer Leverkusen, Augsburg were awarded a corner, for which they sent everybody forward into the opposition penalty area, including Hitz. The delivery came in and Leverkusen's rearguard were unable to clear their lines. There was a ricochet, a back-heel and suddenly the ball landed at the feet of Hitz, who swivelled expertly on his axis and rifled a first-time shot into the roof of the net for the equaliser! There could barely have been a more dramatic end to the match, and at full time the 27-year-old keeper/striker was understandably delighted: "I've told my team-mates a few times already that I would easily score five goals a season if I went forward for every set-piece. I just had to prove it to them." The Swiss custodian's strike was only the third goal by a goalkeeper in Bundesliga history, after Jens Lehmann for Schalke 04 in 1997 and Frank Rost for Werder Bremen in 2002. However, Hitz is the first to score with his feet, after his two predecessors converted close-range headers. 🍷

Sarah Steiner

In all seriousness - and, as ever, with complete impartiality - you have to wonder how much longer Queens Park Rangers will stick by their captain Joey Barton. After Christmas the man from Liverpool was shown seven yellow cards in seven successive matches - many of them justified, as you might have guessed -, a streak no other player in England's top flight has ever matched. As if that wasn't enough, Barton's attitude in QPR's relegation scrap against Hull City was so aggressive that he was given his marching orders for striking opponent Tom Huddlestone in the groin after just 32 minutes. His latest disciplinary lapse proved particularly frustrating for Rangers, who were hoping to pick up some valuable points but instead fell to a 2-1 defeat after a late goal for the Tigers. Although Barton later apologised for his uncouth behaviour via Twitter, the gesture had failed to improve his popularity with the fans by the time this issue went to print. 🍷

Alan Schweingruber

Africa specialist Gernot Rohr is on the move again, adding another location to his already extensive CV. After previous stints in Tunisia, Gabon and Niger, he has now arrived in Ouagadougou and is looking forward to his new job as Burkina Faso coach. Naturally, it is no accident that Rohr has again come to rest in a French-speaking part of the world: the 61-year-old was born in Mannheim and is a former Germany youth international, but his greatest successes came in France. He was a three-time league champion and two-time cup winner with Girondins Bordeaux, before leading the same club to the UEFA Cup final as coach. He did once return to the land of his birth, but a spell as technical director with Bundesliga side Eintracht Frankfurt ended in mutual dissatisfaction back in 1999, by which time Rohr had already become a French citizen. Out of interest, his great-uncle Oskar Rohr was one of Germany's first-ever professional footballers back in the 1930s - in France, with Racing Club de Strasbourg. 🍷

Sven Goldmann



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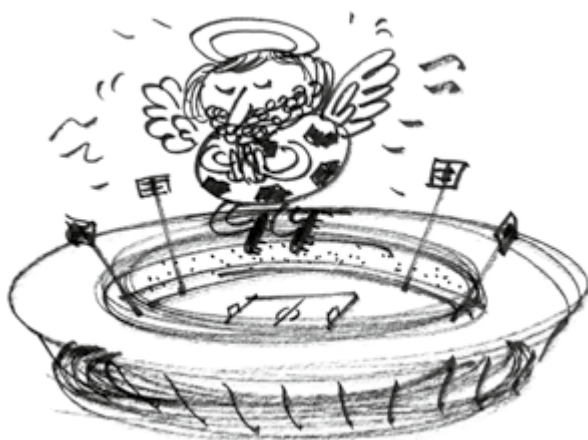
[Advanced High Strength Steel]



[Blind Spot Detection]



[Smart Power Tailgate]



Summer holidays for all in 2022

Alan Schweingruber

Although ironic expressions can be entertaining, they must be used with caution. After all, if the listener does not understand a joke, it not only loses its special effect but can also create utter confusion. When a frustrated fan at a match recently declared: “That shot’s going all the way to the moon,” it prompted a young boy to ask his father: “Daddy, why does the man want the ball to reach the moon?”

Provided that neither Armstrong, Shepard, Scott nor any of the other astronauts left a football up there – a reasonable assumption given that they were all American and thus more likely to prefer sports such as baseball or basketball – then we can safely say that the moon currently remains free of footballs, so at least the boy’s question was plausible.

But back to the matter at hand. Irony can be refreshing, but the recipient needs to be able to read between the lines in order to fully appreciate it. Failing that, he or she can hope that the person commenting at least makes a gesture to accompany their wry observation – a knowing smile perhaps, or a little wink. Of course this is not always possible, particularly when broadcasting from space. The example “Houston, we have a problem,” neatly illustrates why, if in doubt, a sentence can never be ironic if it is meant to be taken seriously.

The exception to the rule. “Summer holidays at last!” was the title of an entertaining and ironic newspaper commentary this week concerning a welcome yet serious piece of news. The topic of the article was the provisional scheduling of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar in November and December, prompting

the author to imagine the disruption this would cause to the European winter. Excerpts from the piece included: “The players rejoice... football up until Santa Claus comes... millions of fans can use their vacation allowance for a proper summer holiday... big screens at the Christmas markets...”

Although the writer appears to have pretty much realised his full potential for irony in the article, the care and skill with which he selected his words means this is unlikely to have posed any problems. Older readers will have read between the lines, leaving youngsters to simply wallow in the facts. “Daddy!” the young boy from the match cried at the breakfast table. “That all sounds brilliant. It’ll be the best World Cup ever!” 🍷

The weekly column by our staff writers



GENERAL INFORMATION

FIFA Trigramme:

MDV

Country:

Maldives

Official name:

Dhivehi Raajjeyge Jumhooriyyaa

Continent:

Asia

Capital:

Male

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Surface area:

300 km²

Highest point:

2.4 m

Neighbouring seas and oceans:

Indian Ocean

MEN'S FOOTBALL

FIFA Ranking:

135th

World Cup:

–

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

FIFA Ranking:

–

FOOTBALL STATS

All players:

20,286

Registered players:

5,486

Unregistered players:

14,800

Clubs:

60

Officials:

178

T H E N

Dortmund, Germany



1999

Bayern Munich keeper Oliver Kahn disposes of a banana during his team's meeting with Borussia Dortmund.

N

O

W

Rotterdam, Netherlands



2014

Daley Blind and Joel Veltman of Ajax Amsterdam deal with an inflatable plastic banana.

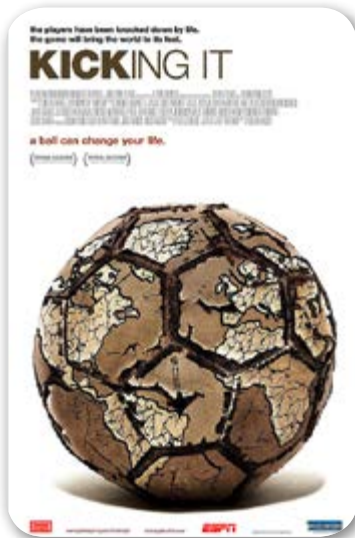


FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP
CANADA 2015™

6 June - 5 July

Nothing to lose

Ronald Duker



Have we already mentioned that football is the best ball game on the planet? What still needs to be done, however, is to refute the widely-held view that football is the best leisure pursuit in the world. Indeed, only people who lead lives that are so comfortable that everything is effectively a pastime can see it that way. The outlook may be rather different for those without that luxury, such as the unemployed or homeless.

Does football have the power to change their lives? And can it change them completely? That is the question posed at the start of the documentary "Kicking It", which focuses on the 2006 Homeless World Cup in Cape Town, South Africa. With each participating country allowed eight squad members, a total of 500 players from across the globe took part at the competition, although the heart of the film, which was released in 2008, does not lie with the sporting events themselves.

The majority of the film, in fact, serves a prequel of sorts to the tournament: American director Susan Koch selected seven players and accompanied them in their respective homelands. As a result, viewers become deeply immersed in the protagonists' hardships, from which football provided them with a unique, if temporary, escape. We are introduced to Najib from war-torn Afghanistan; Alex, a slum-dweller in Kenya; Damien and Simon from an drug rehabilitation centre in Ireland; Craig, who was picked up off the

streets in Charlotte, North Carolina; Jesus, from a homeless shelter

in Madrid, and finally Slavan, an illegal immigrant from St. Petersburg in Russia.

As diverse as their saddening biographies and difficulties in their respective nations are, the seven characters do share one common trait on camera: they have the carefree manner of people who literally have nothing left to lose. And they celebrate football with a passion rarely found in the professional game.

That the documentary is neither depressing nor sombre is entirely down to the protagonists. And it is not being melodramatic to say that the film is a foray into the heart of a game that overcomes cultural and linguistic barriers to create a sense of community. It is a game that can only be thought of as the best leisure pursuit in the world by those who do not truly need it. ⚽

"Yes, I have already received an offer from Manchester City. They said they will sell Nasri, Kompany and Yaya Toure to get me!"

Slaven Bilic laughs off reports of an approach from Manchester City

"I have played in some really tough places in terms of the noise and the passion the fans create. Every game I have played in Turkey stands out for passion created by the fans. But the best has been at Celtic Park."

Inter Milan's Nemanja Vidic picks his favourite stadium

"It should have been Henderson. Mario has been a bit mischievous. I think six or seven players would have wanted to take that penalty so if they all say they are taking it, what happens then?"

Rules are in place for a reason."

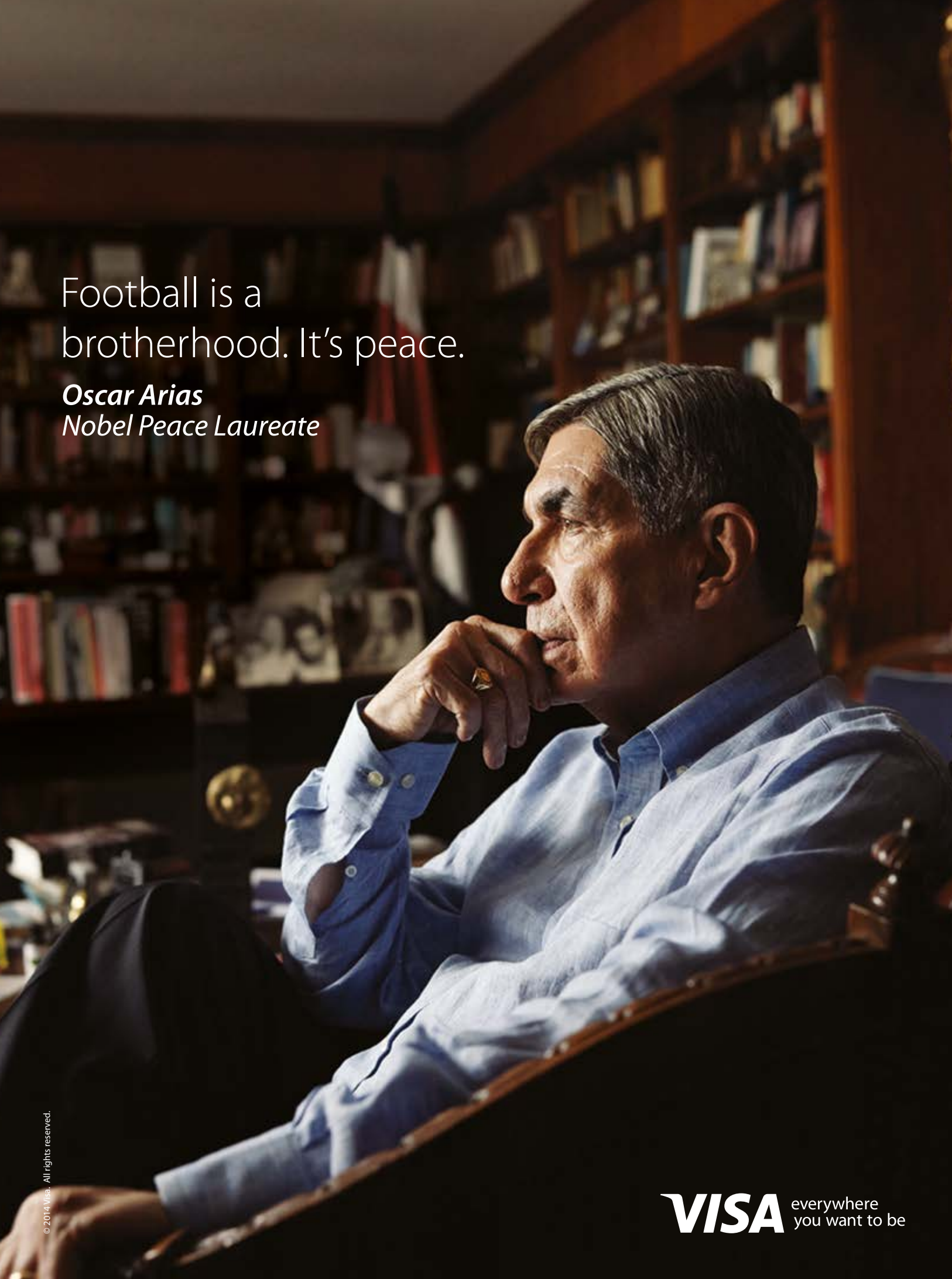
Steven Gerrard (Liverpool FC) rebukes Mario Balotelli after a dispute with Jordan Henderson over penalty duties

"I'll not forget this day for the rest of my life. The margin of victory is the right one. By the end, I was hoping that we wouldn't lose by double digits."

Hamburg coach Josef Zinnbauer

"I am always aiming high and the dream signing would be Messi. I can only say that he likes Sampdoria's colours and that I am here to win things and not to count ants."

Sampdoria owner Massimo Ferrero

A man with grey hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, is seated in a dark wooden chair. He is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression, his hand resting on his chin. The background is a large, dimly lit room filled with bookshelves packed with books, suggesting a library or a study. The lighting is warm and focused on the man, creating a contemplative atmosphere.

Football is a
brotherhood. It's peace.

Oscar Arias
Nobel Peace Laureate



“For a few seconds I put reason to one side”

Daniel Bilos had to choose between Croatia and Argentina. After the longest night of his life, he followed his gut feeling – and was right to do so.

I couldn't sleep that night. It was March 9, and three months before the 2006 World Cup that was taking place in Germany. In fact, I hadn't slept for a few days. I was anxious. It was because I had a choice: I was 25 years old and I had to make the most important choice of my career.

Croatia wanted me to play for them in the FIFA World Cup. Although I was born in Argentina, they had been asking me to play for them, as my great grandmother had been born in Split. They had even given me a Croatia shirt while I was playing a pre-season tournament for Boca Juniors in Holland.

However, the Argentina national team coach Jose Pekerman and his assistant coach Hugo Tocalli had told me I had a small chance of playing for Argentina at the FIFA World Cup. It was a really small chance. I knew that because they told me one day. They had been really honest with me. They said: “It's your choice. We cannot promise you that we will call you for the World Cup, and we won't tell you what to do.” So I had to make a choice.

If I said yes to Croatia, I would be ending my hopes with the Argentina team. And playing for Argentina had been my dream since I was a little kid. “What should I do?” I kept asking myself that night.

My family and friends gave me advice. My father told me: “It will be hard for you to play for Argentina. Croatia is offering you a great opportunity; you would be playing at a FIFA World Cup, and not many players around the world do that.” On the other hand, my wife Julieta had told me: “You must not listen to us. You must do what you feel and follow your instincts. Otherwise, you will regret it.”

I was playing for Boca and was hardly an unknown, so even people on the street would give me advice or ask me what I was going to do. It was not easy, because I was playing well and the media and the fans were calling on Pekerman to pick me. Everyone had their opinion, except me. From that moment on, I decided to listen to nobody else. For a few brief seconds I put reason to one side and I searched my feelings. I asked myself, “What do I want to do?” instead of “What should I do?” And the answer was that I really wanted to play for Argentina, no matter how tiny the chances of being at the FIFA World Cup were. It was my dream. So, on March 10, 2006, I said ‘thanks, but no thanks,’ to Croatia.

Finally, I was selected for an international friendly against Brazil, where I even played alongside Lionel Messi, but Pekerman didn't pick me for the World Cup. It didn't matter. I had played for Argentina – what an honour! ❄️

Name

Daniel Ruben Bilos

Date and place of birth

**3 September 1980
Pergamino, Argentina**

Position

Midfield

Clubs

**2000-2005 Banfield
2005-2006 Boca Juniors
2006-2009 Saint Etienne
(2007 Club America – on loan)
(2007-2008 San Lorenzo – on loan)
2009 Banfield (until retirement)
2011- Douglas Haig (return from retirement)**

Argentina national team

3 appearances (1 goal)

Adapted by Ben Lyttleton

In Turning Point, personalities reflect on a decisive moment in their lives.



Leader
 Moves into top ten
 Moves out of top ten
 Matches played in total
 Most matches played
 Biggest move by points
 Biggest move by ranks
 Biggest drop by points
 Biggest drop by ranks

Germany (unchanged)
none
none
76
Côte d'Ivoire, Congo DR (7 matches each)
Equatorial Guinea (up 370 points)
Equatorial Guinea (up 69 ranks)
Libya (down 156 points)
Libya (down 35 ranks)

Last updated:
 12 February 2015

Rank	Team	+/-	Points	Rank	Team	+/-	Points	Rank	Team	+/-	Points	Rank	Team	+/-	Points
1	Germany	0	1729	55	Japan	-1	605	109	Qatar	-17	305	162	Puerto Rico	-1	119
2	Argentina	0	1534	56	South Africa	-4	592	110	St Vincent and the Grenadines	11	300	164	Suriname	-1	115
3	Colombia	0	1456	57	Egypt	3	590	111	Namibia	0	293	165	Swaziland	-1	103
4	Belgium	0	1430	58	Gabon	4	585	112	Sudan	-4	288	166	Guyana	1	101
5	Netherlands	0	1385	59	Peru	-6	566	113	Libya	-35	281	167	Belize	8	100
6	Brazil	0	1333	60	Zambia	-10	556	114	Cuba	-1	271	167	Tahiti	-1	100
7	Portugal	0	1189	61	Panama	-6	555	115	Liberia	0	268	169	Gambia	-1	95
8	France	-1	1168	62	Trinidad and Tobago	-7	551	116	Kenya	1	266	170	Montserrat	-1	86
9	Uruguay	1	1146	63	Australia	37	548	117	Canada	-5	264	171	India	0	85
10	Spain	-1	1144	63	Albania	-5	548	118	Niger	1	263	171	Pakistan	17	85
11	Switzerland	1	1117	65	Montenegro	-6	537	119	St Kitts and Nevis	1	258	173	Sri Lanka	-1	78
12	Italy	-1	1112	66	United Arab Emirates	14	529	119	Zimbabwe	-12	258	174	Comoros	-1	75
13	Costa Rica	3	1074	67	Republic of Ireland	-2	521	121	Lebanon	1	254	174	São Tomé e Príncipe	-4	75
14	Chile	0	1037	68	Burkina Faso	-4	513	121	Moldova	2	254	176	Turks and Caicos Islands	1	66
15	England	-2	1028	69	Norway	-2	512	123	Mauritania	15	251	177	Seychelles	1	61
16	Romania	-1	1022	70	Bulgaria	-4	506	124	Burundi	4	249	177	Nicaragua	-4	61
17	Czech Republic	0	990	71	Uzbekistan	0	493	125	Lesotho	-1	243	179	Yemen	-3	60
18	Algeria	0	981	72	Rwanda	-4	492	126	Georgia	0	234	180	Bermuda	-1	55
19	Croatia	0	945	73	Finland	-3	475	126	Palestine	-11	234	180	San Marino	-1	55
20	Côte d'Ivoire	8	932	74	Armenia	5	470	128	Kuwait	-3	231	180	Dominica	4	55
21	Mexico	-1	912	75	Togo	-13	465	129	Luxembourg	-2	225	180	Nepal	6	55
22	Slovakia	-1	903	76	Uganda	1	464	130	Liechtenstein	2	223	184	Solomon Islands	-1	53
23	Austria	0	881	77	Honduras	-5	459	131	Azerbaijan	5	222	184	Cambodia	-5	53
24	Greece	0	871	78	Haiti	-5	454	132	Aruba	-3	221	184	Chinese Taipei	-2	53
25	Ghana	12	864	79	Venezuela	8	440	132	Vietnam	1	221	187	Timor-Leste	-2	51
26	Tunisia	-4	860	79	Jamaica	-4	440	132	Philippines	-3	221	188	Macau	-2	50
27	Ukraine	-2	859	79	Paraguay	-3	440	135	Maldives	-4	220	189	South Sudan	0	43
28	Denmark	2	846	82	China PR	14	429	136	New Zealand	-1	216	190	Mauritius	0	36
29	Ecuador	-3	840	82	Guatemala	-9	429	137	Tajikistan	-1	215	191	Vanuatu	0	34
30	Bosnia and Herzegovina	-1	832	84	Angola	-3	391	138	Guinea-Bissau	-5	212	192	Fiji	0	30
31	USA	-4	824	85	Estonia	-2	385	139	Kazakhstan	0	203	192	Samoa	0	30
32	Israel	0	805	86	Sierra Leone	-1	382	140	St Lucia	0	202	194	Mongolia	0	29
33	Russia	-2	792	87	El Salvador	3	381	141	Myanmar	0	198	195	Bahamas	0	26
34	Wales	0	764	88	Morocco	-6	378	142	Barbados	1	191	196	Tonga	0	17
35	Cape Verde Islands	5	756	89	Cyprus	-3	376	143	Thailand	1	184	197	US Virgin Islands	0	16
36	Senegal	-1	744	90	Mozambique	8	371	144	Afghanistan	-2	181	198	Brunei Darussalam	0	15
37	Iceland	-4	743	91	Oman	2	368	145	Central African Republic	0	178	199	Papua New Guinea	0	13
38	Scotland	-2	738	92	Bolivia	-8	362	146	Chad	0	177	200	American Samoa	0	12
39	Serbia	-1	723	93	Malawi	-5	361	147	Turkmenistan	0	170	201	Andorra	0	9
40	Poland	1	709	94	Iraq	20	360	148	Madagascar	-1	166	202	British Virgin Islands	0	8
41	Iran	10	701	95	Benin	-6	359	149	Malta	-2	164	202	Eritrea	0	8
42	Nigeria	1	664	96	Lithuania	-5	355	150	Syria	1	147	204	Somalia	0	6
43	Guinea	-4	662	97	Jordan	-4	353	151	Kyrgyzstan	1	146	205	Cayman Islands	0	5
44	Sweden	0	654	98	Saudi Arabia	4	351	152	Korea DPR	-2	144	206	Djibouti	0	4
45	Cameroon	-3	646	99	Antigua and Barbuda	-4	344	153	New Caledonia	0	143	206	Cook Islands	0	4
46	Congo DR	11	641	100	Latvia	-4	342	154	Malaysia	0	142	208	Anguilla	0	2
47	Slovenia	-1	640	101	Belarus	-2	331	155	Grenada	0	137	209	Bhutan	0	0
48	Hungary	-3	634	102	Ethiopia	7	323	156	Singapore	1	136				
49	Congo	12	630	103	Bahrain	7	322	157	Bangladesh	8	129				
49	Equatorial Guinea	69	630	104	FYR Macedonia	-3	320	158	Indonesia	1	128				
51	Northern Ireland	-4	626	105	Faroe Islands	-2	317	159	Hong Kong	-3	127				
52	Turkey	-4	619	105	Botswana	1	317	160	Curaçao	-2	125				
53	Mali	-4	613	107	Tanzania	-3	315	161	Laos	-1	123				
54	Korea Republic	15	608	108	Dominican Republic	-3	310	162	Guam	-1	119				



<http://www.fifa.com/worldranking/index.html>

THE WEEKLY

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S U D O K U

The objective of Sudoku is to fill a 9x9 grid with digits so that each of the numbers from 1 to 9 appears exactly once in each column, row and 3x3 sub-grid.

1

EASY

2						9		3
				9			5	
			8	3		2	7	
6	9				5	4		
4			7		3			5
		3	1				8	2
	1	4		7	8			
	5			2				
8		9						4

2

MEDIUM

	9		2				8	4
5			9			3		
8	7						2	
	1				7			8
7		5				1		2
4			1				9	
	5						3	6
		2			4			9
1	4				6		7	

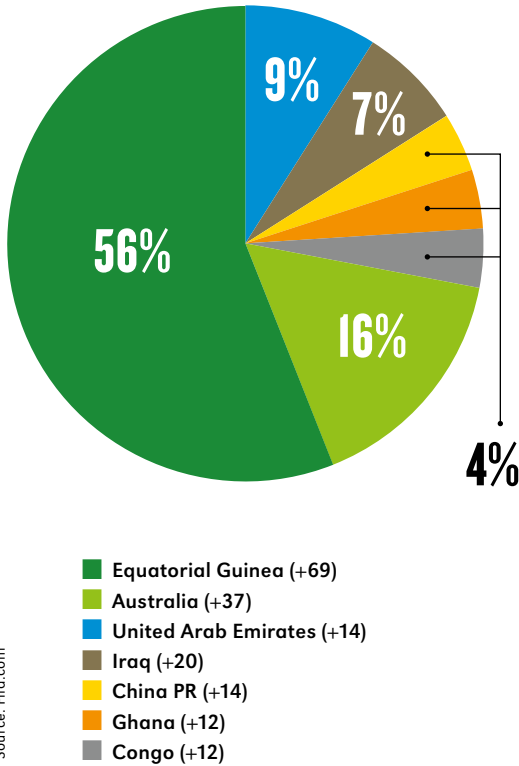
3

HARD

		3			2			5
			8	6			4	
					9	2	1	7
				2	3		5	9
2								1
6	5		9	1				
4	8	1	7					
	7			8	4			
3			2			4		

LAST WEEK'S POLL RESULTS

Which country's jump in the latest men's world ranking was the most surprising?



Source: Fifa.com

THIS WEEK'S POLL

Which of these former champions is your favourite to win the 2015 CAF Champions League?



- Al Ahly (EGY)
- Asante Kotoko (GHA)
- Enyimba (NGA)
- ES Setif (ALG)
- Esperance de Tunis (TUN)
- Raja Casablanca (MAR)
- TP Mazembe (COD)

Cast your votes at:
FIFA.com/newscentre

WEEK IN NUMBERS



penalties have already been given against SM Caen and their keeper Remy Vercoutre (pictured) in the current league season. Twenty-six matches into the campaign, it means the French Ligue 1 side have already equalled the European 'record' set by Atalanta Bergamo in Italy's Serie A in the entire 2006/07 season.



goals were scored recently in the meeting between the leaders and the bottom club in Guam. It was a one-sided affair to say the least, as top dogs Rovers put 24 past unfortunate opponents Doosan. Rovers' goals were shared among ten different scorers, with Ian Mariano (pictured) and Yaw Antwi-Agyei both ending up on half a dozen.



Spanish top flight appearances is the proud total now boasted by keeper Iker Casillas. Only six players had previously passed that milestone. Furthermore, following Real Madrid's victory over Elche CF, the keeper finished on the winning side for the 328th time in the league, passing the previous club record set by Raul.