URGENT

TO: DR. HENRY KISSINGER  860-927-1198
FROM: FAREED ZAKARIA

Dear Henry,

This is superb, not just more than I had hoped for but a fascinating meditation that abstracts out the essential elements of soccer. I would not dare to say this is your real expertise but clearly a real passion.

My tweaks are all suggestions. It is brilliant as is. Just have your office email me a final before you leave for Europe.

All best,

[Signature]
On June 9, host country Germany will open the competition for the [2006] soccer World Cup by playing Costa Rica, inaugurating a month of football frenzy. For the first two weeks, there will be three matches a day as the thirty-two survivors of a global competition that started three years ago are whittled down to sixteen by playing in eight groups of four. The top two teams [of] each group advance to a sudden-death round, culminating, after some 62 matches, in the final on July 9 in Berlin. Thus each team is guaranteed a minimum of three games, and the ultimate winner must prevail in seven games over the course of a month. Billions around the world will be glued to their television sets when the games are being played; this means early morning hours in Asia for the evening games. Millions will find ways to
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I will be one of those viewers and have arranged my schedule to accommodate its necessities. Most viewers would find it difficult to describe what it is about the game that so enthralls the world. They would probably identify it with their passionate adherence to their favorite team – a passion that, in America, is shared only [by] the fanatical adherence of major college football teams.

I grew up in Fuerth, a little town in southern Germany, where soccer had the status of football in Green Bay. Soccer in the 1920s and 1930s was played by amateurs, and it happened that Fuerth won the German championship there [for the first] time in a decade. I have not lived in Germany for many more decades than I care to admit, [but] I still follow the fortunes of that club, which has fallen on
hard times in the age of high salaries and has been relegated to the second division. It makes periodic efforts to emerge from this condition but always manages to fall just short of the third place in the standings, which would enable it to advance – thereby guaranteeing the continuation of misery and hope that sustains the typical football fan. (This is true even of Brazilian fans, whose national team wins every third World Cup – a higher number than any other nation – but not satisfactory to its irrepressible and buoyant fans.)

But those fans who go beyond the frenzy evoked by eleven men on each side maneuvering a ball along a 100-meter long field into an opposing goal [see] additional mysteries of the game reveal themselves. For one thing, manipulating a ball by foot for prolonged distances requires an activity analogous to ballet. Especially teams that concentrate on this aspect of the game – like the Brazilians and many South American teams – astonish one with their versatility and
abandon. On the other hand, they sometimes are so infatuated by their artistry that they forget that the purpose of the game is to score goals, and they are sometimes overcome by more elementary and single-minded, tactically-oriented teams.

This is because only the rarest players — Pelé for Brazil, Maradona for Argentina, Platini for France — can score goals by essentially solitary efforts. For almost all other circumstances, it is teams, not players, which win games. The reductive quality of soccer resides in the almost intellectual penetration with which the best teams move the ball down the field to solve the challenge, which seems so simple but is prone to turn into a riddle: how to get a ball past eleven opponents, with each side moving at high speed, one of whom — the goalie — is permitted to use his hands to intercept the ball. This turns the game into an exercise like a mathematical equation, an ability to find uncovered open space, leading to a position from which
to launch an unimpeded shot on the goal. The great field generals like Zidane or Beckenbauer had the uncanny skill of distributing the ball among their teammates in a manner that seemed inconceivable in the abstract and self-evident in execution. Soccer at its highest level is thus a game of complicated simplicity.

Over the decades the game has become increasingly strategic:

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The practical consequence is that goals are much harder to come by and that defense tends to dominate over offense, at least compared to the situation when I first became acquainted with the game. Teams therefore play first of all not to lose and rarely launch all-out attacks.

[you might note this is an interesting contrast to most other sports than have become more high-scoring over time.]
unless, of course, they find themselves behind. Since the number of points on the field from which a shot on goal has a prospect of leading to a goal is finite, a disciplined defense can occasionally thwart a technically superior team. Thus a superbly coached Greek team defeated a Portuguese team of probably superior individual players in the 2004 European Cup, and a very disciplined German team overcame a marvelous team from the Netherlands in the World Cup of 1974. Similarly, almost every Italian national team over the decades has relied on its tenacious defense to wear down the opponent. These theoretical aspects can be illustrated by looking at the finals of the World Cup over the last twenty-five years. I have attended seven of the last nine and never cease to be mesmerized by their different character[s].

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after the Argentine victory, Buenos Aires celebrated with such
tumultuous abandon as to observe for a brief moment the bitterness of
the national style. [I don't quite understand this. Why bitterness?]

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game a systematic German team overcame a hard-boiled and
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[underline]broadening the ball and many small American teams

[underline]not astonish one with their versatility and abandon.

On the other hand they sometimes are so infatuated by art

[underline]that they forget that the purpose of the fame
is to score goals and they are sometimes overcome by more elementary and tactically oriented teams.

This is because only the recent players

- Pele for Brazil,
- Maradona for Argentina,
- Pelé for France - can score goals by essentially solitary efforts. For almost all other circumstances, it is teams

not players which win games. The reductive quality

of soccer resides in its intellectual penetration with

the best

which seems more the ball down the field to solve the

challenge which seems no might but is prime to time

clean with a visible. How to get a halfpass against opposition

[with each side running at high speed] one of whom

in pe - the finale - is permitted to use his hands to

intercept the ball. This turns the game into an equation

like a mathematical equation, an ability to find

an uncovered open space, adapt to a position from which to funnel an unexpected shot onto
the goal. The great field generals like instance on Bekenbauer had the uncanny skill of distributing the ball among their teammates in a manner that seemed inevitable in its abstract and inevitably self-evident in execution. Soccer at its highest level in the genre of unimplicated simplicity.

And look back over the decades in this game in its increasing complexity, when it first became a game, the ten field players were distributed with five attackers, three midfield players, and two defenders. As a result, the attackers usually outnumbered the defenders—especially as the players learned and played in their assigned positions. There was no radical change in the deployment as it took place. It started with the midfielders moving in effect as a second defense, and one of the forwards taking his place at midfield. By now it has evolved into redefining the attackers.
forwards to 2 and deploying the remaining players
in various spots. For illustration purposes
the 4:4:2 system is among the most widely used.
As a practical matter one of the midfielders is
usually assigned the role of libero intended to act as
a "smoke" on defense with reinforcing
to most threatened positions on the field. Bednarek
fused the role an additional significance by acting
as quarterback on defense and like an American
quarterback in directing. That is,
offensive

the speed of modern Game and the conditioning of
the players, adds to a kind of total football which
means that regardless the assigned positions of the players
his task is to reinforce the center of gravity, attack or
defense depending on the situation.
The practical consequence is that for all
much harder to come by that defense tends to diminish
merit offense at least compared to the situation when
I first became acquainted with the game because you can play just about all to score and rarely found all-out attacks unless of course they found themselves at the back. Since the number of good books and the study of goalkeeping is a high prospect of leading to a goal infinite a disciplined defense can occasionally throw a technically superior terror.

Thus a supposedly weak Greek team defeated a Portuguese team of the most superior individual players in the 2004 European Cup and a very disciplined Swiss team overcome a traditionally strong team from the Netherlands itself.

In the World Cup of 1974, national teams were set aside and the whole country was turned into a footballing dream. Theoretical aspects can be illustrated by the bowing at the finals of the World Cup over the last 25 years. There are still memories of the best overall and never cease to be remembered by their different character.

1970 was my first exposure to the Brazilians all-in nothing style of Brazil.
football, led by its incomparable Rétel, tried to take all the rest of powerful resistance the Belgians put up, literally come into a very good Italian team literally came a very good team with two goals by a score of 2:0. The Italian team was in a form which usually in international football gives it the opportunity to apply its tactical skill in frustrating the opponent, with such speed and by a give-no-quarter defense. But Belgium did not play by the book. It abandoned a realistic tactical formation it entered the game with and their every player in a wild offense literally running to the help. The match was as usual with the ball in the ground. The Belgian, with skill and precision, high altitude of Verde and with quickness on the little leg by the semifinal between Italy and Germany, was forced by the Argentinians in overtime and so came the game with its own in the story. But the Italian team didn't want to go. White attacking offensive triumphed in 1970. In the psychological shift France the table in 1974. A game between the Netherlands and Germany, The Dutch
was elegant + offensive-minded. The match was
of the all-time greats - Cruyff. It had developed
Brazil in the semi-final by the complexity of a movement
in the final
rather than the individuals in the final. And it looked
a penalty kick on the goal-line
whether the referee awarded a penalty
kick in the first minute gaining a 1:0 lead. It was
a principled dislike. For if tempted the Dutch to abandon
their finely tuned game in favor of an attacking style
defense. The Germans led by Beckenbauer change
their everything into an all-out attack successfully
by a generous home public. This led to a 2:1 lead
which Germany defended tenaciously through the next
half. In 1978 the Netherlands found itself once
more in a final before a rabid home crowd.
In an extraordinary game the Dutch faced an Argentine
team playing with Brazilian flair and European
kicks, virtuoso in its best moments. But after
years earlier they could not stop the course and
presenting

not in accordance to the home team - Argentina.

a demonstration of the lacking power of soccer.

Argentina was whacked beforemando was punished!

that official

after guest had a worse with armed events.

But for forty-eight hours after the Argentina meets

celebrated with end

 Yemeni, over to meet a tournament, 

the to observe for a brief moment the bitterness of

the national stage.

In the while Germany extended to

seven games 2 watched: Brazil, France,

Argentina, and Italy three times each the Netherlands twice. The

only team from the United States went to France

What expectation for the

What if there the United States is

historically small? Well this will be doubted.

in the World Cup about the left it is hard to judge.

place must make a

prediction: expect England to reclaim a place

major in the next through the recent signing of its star
In the remaining games, Italy beat Germany in their first match in 1982. An Italian team that had been hit hard in the group stage emerged as dominant. An early goal became dominant in its final. In 1990, an uninvited France, a systematically German team, overcame a lackluster and uninvited Argentine side. In 1998 an old French team overcame a Brazilian team which after a bullet-ridden semi-final victory met the Netherlands in an inexplicable shootout.

The most disappointing match for me was the final of the 1994 World Cup, which was lost to Brazil in Pasadena. As honorary chairman of the organizing committee, I had hoped for a lift-saving match that might do for American soccer what its French football team inspired the public interest in professional football.

Unfortunately, the game was decided.
in a penalty shootout after 120 minutes of scoreless tactical manoeuvring.

What next?
player Rooney reduces its prospects. This may be the year for an African team to emerge. Their lack of technical brilliance has so far been invisible to the press. The United States plays in a very difficult

in that game. It would have to overcome Italy both established soccer power and legal, Republics for reach the final, elimination round. If it goes and face the US team, major

quarter will be the 2007 officials. The German team has been a mystery. It has never invented

and a passionate public support. If it puts on a suit it could go far.

Then and that is always Brazil which will guarantee excitement and fans

arriving for happiness rather than endurance. By July 9,

But we will know the answer for the meantime.

& Thirty two games guarantee to make the Chelsea

for football of over the most famous fans to the extent that their addiction to the game remains it