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]
ARTICLE

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
interrupt their work schedules. The national morale in winners and losers will be affected particularly by the sudden-death elimination games.

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. [The former—dribbling & passing but not scoring—are surely all tactics & no strategy.] 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: When I first became a fan, the ten field players were distributed as five attackers, three midfield players, and two defenders. As a result the attackers usually outnumbered the defenders – especially as the players were not as well conditioned as today, so they more or less stayed in their assigned positions on the field. Since then a radical change in deployment has taken place. It started with the center midfielder becoming in effect a third defender and one of the forwards taking his place at midfield. By now it has evolved into reducing the forwards to two and deploying the remaining players in various ways,
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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.]
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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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In 1978, the Netherlands found itself once more in a final before a rabid hometown crowd. In an extraordinary game, the Dutch tied an Argentine team playing with Brazilian flair and European killer instinct in the last minute. But as four years earlier, they could not stay the course and lost in overtime to the home team, providing a demonstration of the healing power of soccer. Argentina was wracked
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On the other hand, they sometimes are so infatuated by the sport that they forget that the purpose of the game
is to score goals and they are sometimes overcome by more elementary and tactically oriented teams.

This is because only the recent players can achieve – Pele for Brazil, Maradona for Argentina, Pelé for France – can score goals by essentially solitary efforts. For almost all the circumstances it is teams and players which win games. The reductionist quality of soccer resides in the intellectual penetration and control which teams mean the ball through the field to score the challenge which seems as simple but is found in time with a skilled and precise, clever, clean, smooth opponent [with each side moving at high speed] one of whom is permitted to use his hands to intercept the ball. This turns the game into an exercise like a mathematical equation, an ability to finish and uncease open space which is difficult to a position from which it channel an unimpeachable shot and an
the goal. The great field generals like Bismarck or
Bekenbauer had the uncanny skill of distributing
the ball among their teammates in a manner that
allowed inevitability in the abstract and inevitably
self-evident in execution. Soccer at its highest level
is thus a game of implicated inevitability.

And look back over the decades in
strategic
mentality. The game of increasing complexity
when I first
saw strategy became a San the ten field players
were distributed with five attackers, three mid-field players,
and two defenders. As a result the attackers usually
outnumbered the defenders—especially as the players
more often stayed
more and as well conditioned as to stay on the field
in their assigned position—were thus a radical change in
deployment has taken place. It started with the
midfield, the half
working in effect a direct defense
and one of the forwards taking his place at midfield.
By now it has evolved into redeeming the attackers.
fowards t & d deploying the remaining players in various spots. which for illustration purposes the 4:4:2 system is among the most widely used. as a practical matter one of the half backs is usually assigned the role of libero in order to act as a "sniper" in defence with remaining to most threatened positions on the field. bedenko gave this role an additional significance by acting as a receiver in defence and like an narrower in directing. option football quarterback on the attack. it transfers the speed of modern games and the conditioning of the players constant to a kind of total football which means that whatever the assigned positions of the players his task is to sharpen the center of gravity on attack or defence depending on the situation.

The practical consequence is that goals are much harder to come by. that defence tends to dominate over offense at least compared to the situations when
Teams that first became acquainted with the game, because the play suited all met to lose and rarely forced all-attack unless of course they found themselves fat behind. Since the number of players fell from which a good team had a high prospect of leading to a goal infinite a disciplined defence can occasionally thrust a technically superior team. Thus a supposedly weak Greek team defeated a Portuguese team of the famously superior individual players in the 2004 European cup and a very disciplined German team overcame a supposedly strong team from the Netherlands. Similarly the supremacy that Brazil retained in the World Cup of 1974 was not based on its superior offensive to wear down the opponents. These theoretical aspects can be illustrated by the bowling at the finals of the World Cup over the last 25 years. The main attended never of the best mine and never seem to be remembered by their different characters.

1970 over my level cosmone was connected with all or nothing style of Brazilian.
football. Led by its incomparable Pelle and an able trio of
all the rest of miraculous virtuosi, the Dutchmen
literally turned a very good Italian team literally into a very good team with the
forward by a score of 4:1. The Italian team was
just which usually in international football gives
it the opportunity to apply its traditional skill in
frustrating the opponent into not even by
a give-no-quarter defense. But the Dutch did not
play by the book. It abandoned its tactical
formation and entered the game with and then every
player with a wild offense literally running the Dalmatian
Penal Offense and with the ground. The high-pressure defense at altitude of Federico Vico, which returned to
me little by the semifinal between Italy and Germany.

Won by the Argentinians in overtime and never
the game with its easiest

that the Dutchman missing disbuted his shoulders completed

while the other offense triumphed in 1970

a psychological shift from the table in 1974.

games between the Netherlands and Germany, the Dutch
was elegant and offensive-minded. The quiet game of the all-time great, Cruyff, had defeated Brazil in the semifinal by the complexity of its movement. In the final, rather than the individual virtuosity, both teams entered a penalty kick on the scores which turned out to be decisive. Awarded a penalty kick in the first minute gaining it a 1:0 lead, 21 years a promised victory. For it tempted the Dutch to abandon their finely tuned game in favor of an attacking style defense. The Germans led by Beckenbauer Changes their everything into an all-out attack rendering the Dutch's scheme ineffective. This led to a 2:1 lead which Germany defended tenaciously through its entire half. In 1978, the Netherlands found itself once more in the final before a rabid hometown crowd. In an extraordinary game, the Dutch tied an Argentinian team playing with Brazilian flair and European killer instinct in its last minutes. But after years earlier, they could not stop the course and
PROCEDING<br>to an interview to the same team, Argentina<br>a demonstration of the leading power of soccer.<br>Nevertheless, Argentina was matched difficultly was matched<br>by that official<br>shot for shot, guests led 2 more with armless event<br>but for forty-eight hours after the Argentine winning<br>celebrated with equal.<br>Buenos Aires, was apparent in Buenos Aires, was apparent in<br>festive observation for a brief moment and the bitterness of<br>the national stage.<br><br>In the other group, Germany together with<br>the seven games I watched I saw Brazil twice,<br>+ Argentina<br>and Italy three times and the Netherlands twice. The<br>only team that<br>ever three competitions for the<br>What is the official dispute in<br>historically? What will this event be remembered<br>in the World Cup above it? It is called to judge<br>to the national teams, it is here<br>prediction; I expect England to reclaim a place<br>among the elite through the recent signing of its star
In the remaining pages:

and Italy beat Germany in Spain in 1982.

An Italian team that had been hit hard in the group stage emerged as dominant, easily defeating Cameroon in the finals.

In 1990, an unimpressed France, a systematically

German team overcame a hard-boiled and

unimpressed Argentinian side. In 1998 an older

French team overcame a Brazilian team

which, after a brilliant semi-final victory over

the Netherlands, seemed inexplicably off-target.

The most disappointing match for

one was the final of the 1994 World Cup at The Rose Bowl

in Pasadena. As honorary chairman of the organizing

committee, I had hoped for a life-saving match

that might do for American soccer what its friends

- let to football fame of 1984 - which inspired the

public interest in professional football.

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

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 overstated by television. The United States plays in a very difficult group. It would have to overcome Italy, both established soccer powers, and Israel. The USA does not have the United States to count on. France shocked the world and a passionate public support. If it fails in a role it could go far. Then and this is always Brazil which will guarantee excitement and fans arriving for happiness rather than endures. By July 9., But we will know the answer for the wondering. Of thirty two games guarantee to make the choice for football of even the most fervent fans - it is too early that they abandon to the Games permits it.