URGENT

To: DR. HENRY KISSINGER 860-927-1198
From: FARREED 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 tactics-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: 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,
of which, for illustrative 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 that is to act as a "sweeper" in defense, charged with reinforcing the most threatened position on the field. Beckenbauer gave this role an additional significance by acting as a sweeper on defense and like an American football quarterback in directing the attack with his subtle passing. Whatever the formation, the speed of modern soccer and the conditioning of the players lead to a kind of total football, which means that, whatever the assigned position of the player, his task is to reinforce the center of gravity, attack or defense, depending on the situation.

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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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
by near-civil war conditions and brutal repression so that official
guests had to move with armed escorts. But for forty-eight hours
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?]

In the remaining final, I saw Italy beat Germany in Madrid in
1982. An Italian team that had been lethargic in the early group
matches emerged as dominant in the finals. In 1990, in an uninspired
game a systematic German team overcame a hard-boiled and
uninspired Argentine side. In 1998, an elegant French team overcame
a Brazilian squad which, after a brilliant semifinal victory over the
Netherlands, turned inexplicably lethargic.

The most disappointing match for me 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 high-scoring match that
might do for American soccer what the Giants-Colts football game of 1957 did [by inspiring] the public interest in professional football.

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

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Will this elite be broadened in the World Cup about to begin? Not having seen the national teams, I dare not make a prediction. I expect England to reclaim major role, though the recent injury of its star player Rooney reduces its prospects. This may be the year for an African team to emerge; their technical brilliance has so far been thwarted by lack of experience. The United States plays in a very difficult initial group. It would have to overcome Italy and [the] Czech Republic, both established soccer powers, to reach the elimination
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On June 9, a game for the new World Cup will open the World Cup competition. The opening game, between Costa Rica, will be played at a month of football frenzy around the world. Billions will be glued to their television sets when the games are being played. This means early morning in Latin America and Asia for the evening games. For the first three weeks, there will be three matches a day as the survivors of a global competition that started three years ago are whittled down to 16 by playing each in four groups of four. The top two teams in each group advancing to a sudden death round. Eight teams will compete, culminating in the final on July 9 in Berlin. Thus, to 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 will watch on many to interpret their work schedules. The natural inquisitive mind will be stimulated by the sudden death condition of games.
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Thus by guaranteeing the excitations of anxiety and hope that sustain the typical football fan. This is true even of Brazil's fans when national team wins every third World Cup - albeit in a higher manner than any other nation has been able to do so regularly and satisfactorily in the best football fans.

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from which to launch an unimagined shot -
the goal. The great field generals like Zinnere or Beckenbauer had the uncanny skill of distributing the ball among their teammates in a manner that seemed inevitable in its abstract and unerringly self-evident in execution. So even at its highest level is this a game of complicated simplicity.

And back to the decade in which it began to emerge as a game of increasing complexity when I first saw strategy become a factor, 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 increased in size. They kept on the field in their assigned positions, thus the need is not as radical changing deployment has taken place. It started with the midfielders working in effect as field defenders and one of the forwards taking his place at midfield. By now it has evolved into redefining the attackers...
Forward to 2 and deploying the remaining pieces in various ways. Which 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 "snake" in defense most with responsibility to most threatened positions on the field. Beddoes gave the role an additional significance by acting as a free man defense and ride an armless in directing. Whatever football quarterback or the attack its function with its pushing the speed of modern soccer and the conditioning of the players lead to a kind of total football which means that whatever the original position of the players his task is to reinforce the center of gravity, attack or defense depending on the situation.

The practical consequence is that far are much harder to come by, that defense tends to dominate once offense at least compared to the situation when
I first became acquainted with the game. Because of the way it is played, if all went to lose and rarely found all-attack unless of course they found themselves far behind. Since the number of goals scored per field from which a goal could be a high prospect of leading to a goal in finite a disciplined defense can occasionally threat a technically superior team. Thus a supposedly weak Greek team defeated a Portuguese team of the supposedly superior individual players in the 2004 European cup, and a very disciplined German team overcame a Canadian team from the Netherlands in the World cup of 1974. National teams have to depend on their armies' defense to wear down the offense. These theoretical aspects can be illustrated by the holders of the finals of the World cup over the last 25 years. They extended never of the best nine and never cease to be mesmerized by their different characters.

1970 was my first encounter with the continent all on nothing style of Brazilian
football. Led by its incomparable Pelé and an
all-star cast of experienced veterans, the Brazilian
national team was a very good team when it
finally met a good team with the
fronted by a score of 4:1. The Italian team was
just what usually in international football gave
it the opportunity to apply its brilliance skill
frightening the opponent into fear correctly
a goal-scoring defense. But Brazil did not
play by the book. It abandoned cautious theoretical
formation. It entered the game with and then every
player with a wild offensive literally running the balls.
Brazilian was a solid
team with the ground. ThisSpaceresidently
Prefers high altitude of Veracruz City which required an
\text{–} \text{me little by the semifinal between Italy and Germany,}

\text{−} \text{from the Argentinian in overtime and to calm}
the finish with a calm

\text{–} \text{that Argentina leaving disheartened its shoulder completed}
Wolfsburg favorite offense triumphed in 1970

\text{–} \text{a psychological shift from the table in 1974. For}

\text{–} \text{a game between the Netherlands and Germany, The Dutch}
was elegant & offensive-minded. The quiet game of
the all-time great - Cruyff. It had deserted
Barcelona in the semifinal by the conclusion of its
memorable battle for the individual victory. Boat it had
awarded a penalty kick in the 28th minute
and then, in the 29th minute, awarded a penalty
kick in the first minute giving it a 1:0 lead. It was
a primed delight. For it tempted the Dutch to abandon
their finely tuned game in favor of an Helenistic style
defense. The Germans led by Beckenbauer, guiding
them everywhere into an all-out attack reinforced
by a jocund home public. This led to a 2:1 lead
which Germany defended tenaciously through the entire
half. Then, in 1978, the Netherlands found itself once
more in a final before a rabid hometown crowd.
In an extraordinary game the Dutch tried an Argentinian
team playing with Brazilian flair and European
delicacy rivaled in its best minutes. But after
years earlier, they could not step the course and

proceeding
but in contrast to the home team, Argentina
a demonstration of the leading power of Europe.

Argentina was treated with such a display
that official
shock for future guests led to more with armed events

But for forty-eight hours after the Argentina victory
celebrated
Bueno Aires, most central terrorism,

was to observe for a brief moment the bitterness of
the national stage.

In the whole game, I never felt the

seven games I watched were Brazil, 

Argentina
and Italy three times each the Netherlands twice. The

only team that
better than expected in France

What I thought was for the

What a shame the World Cup elite is

historically small. And this time it is diminished.

in the World Cup almost to the point that Ireland

the national teams it is clear

prediction: I expect England to reclaim a place

in the next through the recent signing of its star
In the remaining matches, and Italy beat Germany in their semi-final in 1982. An Italian team that had been highlights in the Group stage emerged as dominant, despite France becoming dominant in the finals.

In 1990, an unexpected France, a systematically German team overcame a lackluster and uninteresting Argentine side. In 1998, an elderly French team overcame aBrazilian equal, which after a thrilling semi-final victory over the Netherlands earned inexplicablyGullit.

The most disappointing match for me was the final of the 1994 World Cup in Washington, D.C. A late goal by Brazil in the final match of the tournament I had hoped for a life-saving match that might do for American soccer what its friends - like football fans of 1984 - which inspired the public interest in professional football.

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

What next?
player. Rooney reduces his prospects. This may be the year for an African team to emerge, their lack of technical brilliance lesser far then esteemed by stronger. The United States place is a very difficult one. The group, it would have to overcome Italy, both established names, and the United States place is a very difficult one. The group, it would have to overcome Italy, both established names, and the United States place is a very difficult one. The group, it would have to overcome Italy, both established names, and the United States place is a very difficult one.