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
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 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: 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].

My first exposure to the exuberant all-or-nothing style of
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very good Italian team by a score of 4:1. The Italian team scored
first, which usually in continental football gives it the opportunity to
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abandoned whatever theoretical formation it entered the game with
and threw every player into a wild offense, literally running the Italian
team into the ground. Panache was aided no little by [the] high
altitude of Mexico City, which wore down the defenders [in] the brutal
semifinal between Italy and Germany. [It] was won by the Agguris
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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
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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
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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
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Unfortunately, the game was decided in a penalty shootout after 120 minutes of scoreless tactical maneuvering.

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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 1986 World Cup will open the World Cup season in Mexico, playing Switzerland. Costa Rica, opening a month of football frenzy, will be glued to their television sets when the games are being played. This means early morning in Latin America for the evening games. For the first two months, there will be three matches a day, as the tournament of a global competition that started three years ago is reduced down to 16 by playing in 16 in four groups of four, with the top two teams each group advancing to a sudden death round, after 62 matches, 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.

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On the other hand, they sometimes are so infatuated by activity. Thus shall it be, 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 most skilled players can achieve - Pelle for Brazil, Maradona for Argentina, Pelé for Brazil - can score goals by essentially solitary efforts. For almost all other circumstances, it is teams and players which win games. The destructive quality of soccer resides in its intellectual penetration with the best which teams move the ball down the field to solve the challenge which seems so mighty that is found at times with a willow. How to get a highway and when opponents will and win moving at high speed? One of them is still - 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 finish and maneuver open space, a boot to a position from which to launch an unanticipated shot and its
the goal. The great field generals like Zincke or Beckenbauer 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 is thus a game of implicit simplicity.

And look back, over the decades, to when the game was young. The numbers were then at a bare minimum—six players total. As the game evolved, the numbers increased, and the game became more complex. The game was played on a field with various sections, each with its own rules and strategies. The game became more complex, and it required a greater number of players to play.

In this era, the game was more focused on tactics and strategies, with each player having a specific role. The game was more dynamic, with teams deploying different strategies to gain an advantage. The game became more complex, and it required a greater number of players to play.

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fowards to 2 and deploying the remaining players in various ways which for illustrative purposes the 4:4:2 system is among the most widely used. As a practical matter one of the widefielders is usually assigned the role of libero intended to act as a "sneaker" in defense with aumphyring to most threatened positions on the field. Beckersen gave this role an additional significance by acting as a center in defense and like an American quarterback in attacking. Whatever the methods of modern soccer and the conditioning of the players success is a kind of total football which means that whatever the assigned 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 once a well

must handle to curve big + tact defense tends to diminish once offense at least compared to the situation when
I first became acquainted with the game because the players of all met to lose and rarely found all-and-attacks unless of course they found themselves left behind. Since the number of possessions is field from which a goal is scored, it is a good test of leading to a goal infinite a disciplined defense can occasionally throw a technically superior team. Thus a uniquely coachless team defeated a supposedly
notably superior international player in the 2004 European Cup and a very disciplined German team overcame a supposedly team from the Netherlands in the World Cup of 1974. National teams often think to wear down the offense. These theoretical aspects can be illustrated by the bowing at the finals of the World Cup over the last 25 years. I have attended
never of the last nine and never ceased to be amazed
by their different character.

1970 versus Brazil
the contrasting all-on nothing style of Brazilian.
football, led by its incomparable Pele, tended to
all the rest of surprisingly viscous, weak-footed,
literally seen by a very good Italian
team literally when being good team in the
finals by a score of 4:1. The Italian team was
for the first time in international football gave
the opportunity to apply its tochiere in the
frustrating the opponent in the past correctly
a give-no-quarter defense. But the Brazilians did not
play by the book. They abandoned their theoretical
formation, and entered the game with and their every
player with a wild offense literally running the field.
Remark was evident teams to win the ground. The
team was subjected to high altitude of Rockies City.
A second team, moving forward

even, little by little semiafinal between Italy and Germany.

Favoring by the Argentin in overtime and
the same with its own
that Paraguay having eliminated in six goals completed
White triumphed offense triumphed in 1970
helped in the psychological shift France the table in 1974.

Game between the Netherlands and Germany, the Dutch
was elegant and offensive-minded. The quiet game of the all-time greats - Cruijff. It had defeated Brazil in the semifinal by the simplicity of its movement. In the final, rather than the individual virtuosity, Brazil looked instead at a penalty kick in the extraneous situation of the penalty kick. In the first minute gaining a 1:0 lead. It was a promised deliver. For it 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 juggling born public. This led to a 2:1 lead which Germany defended tenaciously through its entire half. But in 1978 the Netherlands found itself once more in a final before a rabid hometown crowd.

In an extraordinary game the Dutch tried an Argentine team playing with Brazilian flair and European look, more instinctive in the best moments. But after years earlier, they could not start its course.
proceeding
sent in to announce to the home team, Argentina,
a demonstration of the leading power of force.
Argentina was wrecked initially, was undetermined
that official
shriek for fans and guests had to move with armed events
but for forty-eight hours after the Argentine victory
celebrated, with end
Buenos Aires was converted to tumults, attendance
was to observe for a brief moment the bitterness of
the national stage.

In the absence of the official
the seven nations I watched were Brazil, France,
Argentina
and Italy three times each, the Netherlands twice. The
only team that
better their status since France
What expectations for the
What a flair the World Cup is
historically wrought! Well this slate is bruised
in the World Cup above to the left of hand for
the national teams who saw
I dare not make a
prediction. I expect England to reclaim a place
in the role through the recent signing of its star
major
In the remaining games, Brazil and Italy beat Germany in group in 1982.

In Italian teams that had been hit hard in the 1981 final, a young and mobile striker emerged as dominant and the famous Brazil became dominant in its final.

In 1990, an unimpressed France and a systematic German team became a Locked but unimpressed frontman. In 1998, as the French team became a Brazilian equal, which after a brilliant semi-final victory met the Netherlands seemed inexplicably outlandish.

The most disappointing match for some was the semi-final of the 1994 World Cup match at Ellis Park in Johannesburg. As honorary chairman of the organizing committee I had hoped for a lift-saving match that might do for American soccer what its fierce - but football flame of 1994 which inspired the public interest in professional football.

Unfortunately the game was decided.
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 having for long threatened Europe.

The United States plays in a very difficult

virtual group. It would have to overcome Italy,
both established soccer powers,

and Brazil. The United States cannot be expected to

read the world. The American team

doesn't even understand

well and a passionate public support.

If it goes well in a semi, it could go far.

Then there is always Brazil which

will guarantee excitement and fans

arriving for happiness rather than endures.

By July 9,

But we will have the answer in the meantime.

a thirty-two games guarantee to make the hero

for football of the most精彩

fears to its extent that their addiction to the game prevents it. 