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 enraptures 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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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 1986 World Cup will open the World Cup soccer competition in the USA, initiating a month of football frenzy around the world. Billions will be glued to their television sets whenever the games are being played — this means early morning in London and Asia for the evening games. For the first two weeks, there will be three matches a day as the 32 survivors of a global competition that started three years ago are whittled down to 16 by playing in pools in four groups of four, with the top two teams in each group advancing to a sudden death round. After some 60 matches, culminating in the final on July 9 in Berlin, this to last team is guaranteed a minimum of three games, and the ultimate winner must prevail in seven games over the course of a month. Billions watch in awe to intercept their work schedules. The natural mood of the people will be affected, particularly by the sudden-death overtime games.
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This is true even of foreign fans whose national team wins only every third World Cup - albeit at a higher number than many other nations, frequently to the detriment and satisfaction to the devoted fans.

But these fans must go beyond the frenzy evoked by eleven men on each side maneuvering a ball along a 100-meter long field with an opposing goal. Additional mysteries of the game reveal themselves. For example, manipulating a ball by foot for prolonged distances requires an activity analogous to that of walking. This aspect of the game is especially evident in those teams that concentrate on the technique of - like the Argentinians - and many South American teams - but astonish us with their versatility and abandon.

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like a mathematical equation, an ability to finish

and maneuver open space, shoot at a position

from which to launch an unimagined shot onto its
the goal. The great field generals like Zinoviev or
Bekenheuer 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" implicit simplicity.

And back wards into the decades in
by becoming strategic
noit d'age the game of increasing complexity
When I first
not strategy became a fact. The ten field players
were distributed with five attackers, three wingfield players,
and two defenders. As a result the attackers usually
outnumbered the defenders — especially as the players
more often stayed
more not as well conditioned as to stay so they kept
on the field
in their assigned positions. This was a radical change; the
deployment has taken place. It started with the
midfield
under half moving in effect a third defender
and one of the forwards taking his place at midfield.
By now it has evolved into redrawing the attackers
fowards to 2 end. Deploying the remaining players
in various ways. This in part 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 a sweeper to act as
a "sweeper" on defense while remaining
the most threatened positions on the field. Bedrock
hence the role an additional significance by acting
as defensive line and acts as an attacker
in attacking. When
the speed of modern moves and the conditioning of
the players evolve 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 as we
move harder to come by, that defense tends to demand
more offense at least compared to the situation where
I just became acquainted with the game. Because the play suited all not to lose and rarely scored all and attacks unless of course they found themselves at hand. Since the number of first-rate field players is so high, the prospect of leading to a goal is finite, a disciplined defense can occasionally thwart a technically superior team. Thus a supposedly weak Greek team defeated a French team of the most superior individual players in the 2004 European Cup and a very disciplined German team overcame a mid-level team from the Netherlands in the World Cup of 1974. National teams over 25 years to wear down the offense. These theoretical aspects can be illustrated by the bowing at the finish of the World Cup over the last 25 years. There extended never of the last nine and never seen to be unmanaged by their difficult character.

1970 over my first experience in the continent all in nothing style of Brazilian
football, led by its incomparable Pelé, stood an
all and all of formidable victories, the Brazilians
literally came to a very good Italian
team, literally came to a very good team with the
promised by a score of 4:1. The Italian team was
just which usually in international football gave
it the opportunity to apply its technical skill in
frustrating the opponent "9" with a great nearly
a give-no-quarter defense. But Brazil did not
play by the book. It abandoned its tactical
formation, it entered the game with and then every
player with a wild offense literally running the field.
Penalty was retail
team 2 with the ground. The Brazilians, with their
high altitude of Venecia city and freezing air, shut
the little by the semifinal between Italy + Germany.

The game by the Argentine in overtime and
the same with its same

that Pele's brace winning determined the victory, completed
while the Dutch offense triumphed in 1970

a psychological shift because the table in 1974-

games between the Netherlands and Germany, the Dutch
was elegant and offensive-minded. The quiet game of the all-time greats – Cruyff. It wasnfected
Brazil in the semifinals by the complexity of its presence. In the final
rather than the individual Albertine. Both sides battled a penalty kick on the outcome
which turned out to be awarded a penalty kick in the 90th minute gaining it a 1:0 lead. It was
a primed decade. For it tempted the Dutch to abandon
their finely tuned game in favor of an all-out style
offense. The Germans led by Beckenbauer chose to
then everything into an all-out attack
consisting
by a frenzied home 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, lunatic crowd.
In an extraordinary game the Dutch took on Argentina
Team playing with Brazilian flair and European
ballet, instead of the usual narratives. But after
generations earlier they could not stage its course and
not in accordance to the home team. Argentina
a demonstration of the lacking power of force.

Argentina was marked difficult circumstances
that official
staff for future guests led it more with armed events
But for forty eight hours after the Argentine visit
celebrated with each
Bernos trials met combinations, seldom
that to observe for a brief moment the bitterness of
the national stage.

In the the games I watched I saw Brazil these
Argentina
and Italy three times and the Netherlands twice. The
only team that
better their stand were France
WHAT experiences for the
WHAT a Flair the French surprise in
historically拿出
Well the will be enjoyed in
the World Cup along the left it hand to judge
the national teams it is the

judgement. I expect England to reclaim a place
major in the role along the recent zoning of its star
In the remaining games, and Italy beat Germany in Lyon in 1982. An Italian team that had been hit by in the Group match emerged as dominant. Italy started becoming dominant in its finals.

In 1990, an unprovoked gunmen's systematic German team overcame a hard-boiled and unprovoked Argentine side. In 1998, an older French team overcame a Brazilian equal which after a brilliant semi-final victory over the Netherlands seemed inexplicably Shell-Geit.

The most disappointing match for me was the final of the 1994 World Cup at 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 it saved - let's football fame last 1984, 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 we...
player Rooney reduces its prospects. This may be the year for an African team to emerge, their lack of technical brilliance being far more important than efficiency.

The United States plays in a very difficult group. It would have to overcome Italy, both established soccer powers, and great Republic for reach to finals. Elimination cannot. If it can, and face the US team, might read to quarter-finals. The German team has been a mystery. It has a new manager and a passionate public support.

If it gets in, a roll it could go far. Then, and that is always Brazil which will guarantee excitement and fans awaiting for happiness rather than endurance by July 9.

But we will know the answer in the meantime. Of thirty two teams guarantee to make the trip for football of ever the most tremendous fans - to its tail that their addiction to the game permits it.