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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
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 [The former - dribbling & passing
but not scoring - are surely all
tactically-oriented teams.]

This is because only the rarest players - Pelé for Brazil,
Maradona for Argentina, Platini for France - can score goals by
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[you might note this is an interesting contrast to most other sports than have become more high-scoring over time.]
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- thereby guaranteeing the emotional intensity and hope that sustains the official football fans. 

This is true even of Brazil's fans when national team wins only every third World Cup - albeit at a higher number than any other nation and not necessarily the best fans.)

But these fans are beyond the frenzy evoked by eleven men on dead ends, running a ball along a 100-meter long field with an opposing goal. Additional mysteries of the game reveal themselves in every manipulation of a ball by foot for prolonged distances, requiring an activity analogous to ballet. Flying especially teams that concentrate on the technical and artistic aspects of the game, such as Brazil, on the ball and many with American teams, astonish one with their versatility and abandon.

On the other hand, they sometimes are so infatuated by the artistry other states that they forget that the purpose of the game...
...to score goals and they are sometimes overcome by more elementary and tactically oriented teams.

This is because only the recent players - Pelé for Brazil, Taradona for Argentina, Rabiot for France - can score goals by essentially solitary efforts. For almost all other circumstances, it is teams and players which win games. The deductive quality of soccer resides in the intellectual penetration with the ball, which removes the ball down the field to solve the challenge which seems so simple but is made to seem

clear with aiddle. How to get a high percentage of

will and skills moving at high speed? one of whom

is in the middle 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

and uncover open space, about to a point

from which to launch an unexpected shot on its
the goal. The great field generals, like D'Urban or
Brockenhauer, had the uncanny skill of disributing
the ball among their teammates in a manner that
allowed inevitable in the abstract andBowditch
self-evident in execution. Games at its highest level
in this genre of unexploited simplicity.

And gradually, over the decades,
became strategic.

The game of increasing complexity
When first
stratgep, became a game the ten field players
were distributed with five attackers, three
midfield players and two defenders. As a result the attackers usually
were outnumbered the defenders, especially as the players
more of them stayed
were not as well conditioned as to stay on the field
in their assigned positions. Thus, a radical change
in deployment has taken place. It started with the
midfielder
in the half, becoming in effect a deep defender
and one of the forwards taking his place at midfield.

By now it has evolved into redeeming the attackers.
In recent years and deploying its remaining phases
in various ways, which for illustrative purposes
the 4:4:2 system is among the most widely used.
As a practical matter one of its midfielders is
usually assigned the role of libero intended to act as
a "melee" in defense with reaffirming
the most threatened positions on the field. Bennett
soon gave this role an additional significance by acting
as a quarterback in defense and like an American
in directing the offense. Whether
the quarterback on the attack
with its passing
the speed of modern means and the conditioning of
the players comes to a kind of total football which
means that whatever the assigned positions of the players
his task is to reaffirm 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
more offense at least compared to the situation when
I first became acquainted with the game because I play field of all men to live and rarely found all and attacks unless of course they found themselves at hand. Since the number of goals is small, and the prospect of scoring to a goal is finite, a disciplined defence can occasionally thrust a technically superior team.

Thus a supposedly weak Greek team defeated a Portuguese team of the supposedly superior national players in the 2004 European Cup and a very disciplined German team overcame a rapid-fire team from the Netherlands in the World Cup of 1974. Tactical teams over 24 hours to wear down the opposition. These theoretical aspects can be illustrated by the Bowery and the finals of the World Cup over the last 25 years. I have attended many of the last nine and never cease to be amazed by their different character.

1970 over my final encounter in the tournament all on nothing. Style of Brazilian
football, led by its incomparable Pelle, tested an all-star Italian team, with Giacinto, Riva, and all the rest of Italy's great forwards, as well as Italy's great goalkeeper, together with a very good Italian team. Unfortunately, this team couldn't keep up with the formidable French team, which scored a 4-1 victory. The Italian team was a joint effort, usually in international football, given the opportunity to apply its technical skills in frustrating the opponents. But the Belgians did not play by the book. It abandoned a tactical theoretical formation it entered the game with and sent every player into a wild offensive literally running the show. France was a solid team with Pannach in the middle. The French team played with a high altitude of passion, which impressed the French public and me little by little, semifinal between Italy and Germany. From theBeginning, having eliminated Switzerland, the French team triumphed in 1970. In the psychological shift, France climbed to the top in 1974. The game between the Netherlands and Germany, the Dutch
was elegant and offensive-minded. The quick game of the all-time greats - Cruyff. It had definitely
Brasil in the semifinal by the complexity of a manuever. In the final, rather than the individual virtuosity, Brazil's tactics included a penalty kick in the second half which turned out to be decisive. He scored a penalty kick in the first minute giving it a 1-0 lead. It proved a preliminary battle. For it tempted the Dutch to abandon their finely tuned game in favor of an attacking style
defense. The Germans led by Beckenbauer cleverly turned everything into an all-out attack. Successfully
by a frustrated home public. This led to a 2:1 lead which Germany defended tenaciously through its entire
half. The 1978 World Cup finally 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
rhythm, virtuoso in its best moments. But after years earlier they could not stay the course and
Let us return to the issue team Argentina a demonstration of its leading power of course. A match against
Argentina was marked historic was underestimation that official
2-0 for four guests left to mix with armed events.
But for forty-eight hours after the Argentine victory
celebration would end.

In those games I watched I saw Brazil, Spain, Argentina
and Italy three times each the Netherlands twice. The
only team that better than Brazil went to France
What hope there is for the

What is that the World Cup is

historically small? Will this elite be broadened
again? Not merely
in the World Cup alone? To keep it in mind to judge
the national teams choice based

prediction. I expect England to reclaim a place
in the top through the recent signing of its star
In the remaining games, Italy beat Germany in their final in 1982. An Italian team that had been haters in the early stages emerged as dominant. In 1990, an unimpressed Germany team overcame a lackluster and uninspired Argentine side. In 1998, an old French team overcame a Brazilian equal which after a brutal semi-final victory over the Netherlands turned inexplicably listless.

The most disappointing match for me was the final of the 1994 World Cup vs. Arise Koe Bole in Pasadena. As honorary chairman of its organizing committee, I had hoped for a life-saving match that might do for American soccer what it meant to football fanatics of 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.
player Rooney reduces its prospects. This may be the year for an African team to emerge, their lack of technical brilliance has been mentioned by the press. The United States plays in a very difficult virtual group. It would have to overcome Italy, both established soccer power, and legal republic in need of fresh cohesion.

canon. If it goes and face the US team, major read to re-officialise. The German team has been a mystery. It looks very tentative and a passionate public support. If it gets on a roll it could go far.

Then stand this is always Brazil which will generate excitement and fans. Arriving for happiness rather than endurance by July 9. But we will know the answer. In the meantime 32 teams guarantee to make the bids for football of even the most primitive fan. It is unclear that their ambition to the fullest permits it.