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 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:

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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

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In the remaining final, I saw Italy beat Germany in Madrid in

1982. An Italian team that had been lethargic in the early group

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game a systematic German team overcame a hard-boiled and

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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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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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Television sets will be glued to when the games are being played - this means early morning in London for the evening games. For the first two 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 eight in each of four groups of four. The top two teams each group advancing to a sudden death round. The round of 16 will culminate on the final on July 9 in Berlin. This to last team will be guaranteed a minimum of three games and the ultimate winner must prevail in seven games over the course of a month. Whichever will be to win by most goals to survive their work schedules. The natural morale boost and losses will be affected particularly by the sudden-death Knockout stages.
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and player which win games. The decisive quality

of soccer resides in the intellectual penetration with the ball which allows a player to control the challenge which seems so mighty but is prone to turn

even with a mistake. How to get a ball past an opponent

with each side moving at high speed one of whom

is free in the middle is permitted once his hands to

intercept the ball. This turns the game into an exercise

like a mathematical equation, an ability to find

the unowned open space, a kick to a position

from which to launch an unexpected shot and 4
the goal. The great field generals like Zinoviev and
Bekenheus had the uncanny skill of distributing
the ball among their teammates in a manner that
seemed inevitable in its abstract and irresistibly
self-evident in execution. Lacks at its highest level
is then a game of complicated simplicity.

And back we go. Ten decades in

strategic

tried to engage the game with increasing complexity.

When I first

not strategy to become a game 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
more often stayed
were not as well conditioned as to stay on the field
in their assigned positions for longer periods of time than a radical change;
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 redefining the attackers.
fowards to and deploying the remaining players
in various roles. 

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, not to act as a "sneaker" or defense stopping with defending the most threatened positions on the field. Bednara

gave this role an additional significance by acting as a "sneaker on defense and acts as a "sneaker" on offense. The quarterback on the attack, is functioning with this in mind, pushing the speed of modern games and the conditioning of players leading to a kind of total football which means that regardless of his original position of player, his task is to reinforce the center of gravity, attack or

defense depending on the situation.

The practical consequence is that forwards
much harder to come by; that defense tends to diminish since offense at least compared to the situation when
I first became acquainted with the game because the play suited all my needs and rarely found all-out attacks unless of course they found themselves left behind. Since the number of goals was few, each goal had to be kept under control with a high prospect of leading to a goal in view. A disciplined defence can occasionally throw a technically superior team. Thus a superbly coached Greek team defeated a Portuguese team of the top technical indoor player in the 2004 European cup, and a very disciplined German team overcame a theoretically sound team from the Netherlands. In the World Cup of 1974, the Netherlands were 2-1 up, but with only 20 minutes left in the game, a Hungarian defender scored to win the game, and the West German manager had to resign.

These theoretical aspects can be illustrated by the notion of the final of the World Cup over the last 25 years. I have attended nine of the last nine games and never cease to be marvelled by their different character.

1970 over my first exposure to the continent, all on nothing, style of Brazil.
football. Led by its incomparable Pele toward an
all-striker victory, the Brazilians
literally came up to a very good Dutch
team: literally were a very good team in the
frontline by a score of 4:1. The Dutch team was
just what usually in international football gives
it the opportunity to apply its technical skill
in frustrating the opponent with such accuracy
and a give-no-quarter offensive. But the Brazilians did not
play by the book. It abandoned its usual tactical
formation. It entered the same with each and every
player with a wild offensive literally running the ideas.

Player was a solid
team with the Frenchl. The Frenchman actually prevails
with the French. A hard and very strong
defending, a little by the semifinal between Italy and Germany.

By the big red ball in overtime and another
of them with a score
that Frankformation being elaborated, I was able to complete

White team scored another triumph in 1970


Game between the Netherlands and Germany, The Dutch
was elegant & offensive-minded to squander one of the all-time greats — Cruyff. It had defeated Brazil in the semifinal by the unnecessary & unnecessary
rather than the individual brilliance. But it also invested a penalty kick on the outcome which turned out to be a boredom. Awarded a penalty kick in the first minute gaining 1:0 lead. 2 years a promised relief. For it tempted the Dutch to abandon their finely tuned game in favor of a halting style of defense. The Germans led by Beckenbauer, then they ran everything into an all-out attack successfully by a jingled home public. This led to a 2:0 lead which Germany defended continuously through its entire half. From 1978 the Netherlands found itself more in a final before a rabid lunatic crowd.
In an extraordinary game the Dutch tried an Argentine Team playing with Brazilian flair and European killer instinct in its final minutes. But after years earlier they could not stay the course and
Proceeding, first in awe to the home team Argentina,
a demonstration of the healing power of soccer.

Argentina was ranked highest, most nurturing.

That official staff for future guests led to more with armed escort.

But for forty-eight hours after the Argentina victory,
celebrated with red Buenos Aires, most forward tumultuous,

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

In the whole game, I noticed a certain symmetry.

The seven games I watched I saw Brazil, France,
Argentina, and Italy three times each the Netherlands twice.

The only team that ever made it to France
was Argentina.

What allocation for the
What a shame the World Cup elite is
historically smooth With this side so balanced
in the World Cup above the rest, it is hard to judge
the national teams otherwise.

And yet make a
prediction. I expect England to reclaim a place
in the fold through the recent signing of its star
In the remaining games, Italy beat Germany in 1982.

In 1990, an unheralded team from Switzerland overcame a lackluster and unheralded Argentine side. In 1998, an elderly French team overcame a Brazilian rival, which after a thrilling semi-final victory met the Netherlands team inexplicably better.

The most disappointing match for me was the final of the 1994 World Cup, which was held in Pasadena. As honorary chairman of the organizing committee, I had hoped for a lift-sparing match that might do for American soccer what the World Cup did for football.

Unfortunately, the game was decided...
The penalty shot was after 120 minutes of scoreless tactical maneuvering.

What was
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 averted by experience. The United States plays in a very difficult virtual group. It would love to oversee Italy, both established soccer power, and Italy, and qualify for the World Cup. The German team has been a mystery. Its loss was inevitable and a passionate public suggested if it plays in a roll it could go far. Then and this is always Brazil which will guarantee excitement and fans. Winning for https://www.sportsdirect.com/united-states/usa-coupons.html?onsale=true and Adidas for happiness rather than endurance. In July of that we will know the answer. In the meantime, 32 games, guarantee to shake the Chile, for football of even the most frenetic fans. It is unlawful that their addiction to the game persists.