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-mindedly 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.

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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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to a goal is finite, a disciplined defense can occasionally thwart a
technically superior team. Thus a superbly coached Greek team
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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?]

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[with each side moving at high speed] one of whom

is pe - the finale - is permitted to use his hands to

intercept the ball. This turns the game into an exercise

like a mathematical equation, an ability to forecast

and uncover open space, react to a position

from which to tunnel an unexpected shot on the
the goal. The great field generals like Tostache or Bonchon 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. soccer at its highest level is then a game of complicated simplicity.

And back to the decade in strategy. As the game's increasing complexity

When I first

not strategy but became a fan 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 played

were not as well conditioned as to stay on the field in their assigned positions. Stiver's then a radical change in deployment has taken place. It started with the midfielders

under the left remaining in effect a two-sided defender

and one of the forwards taking his place at midfield. By now it has evolved into becoming the attacker.
fowards to end 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 midfielders is
usually assigned the role of libero (or to act as
a "sweeper" in defense most with reenforcing
to most threatened positions on the field. Beckenbauer
once gave this role an additional significance by acting
as an all-purpose defense and like an American
quarterback on the attack and to punish
the speed of modern moves and the conditioning of
the players. As such, it is a kind of total football which
means that whatever the assigned position of the player
is, his task is to reinforce 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 dominate
over offense at least compared to the situation when
I first became acquainted with the game because the
team they had
play较发展阶段 to lose and rarely found all-
and attacks unless of course they found themselves
stuck behind. Since the number of hoofed men Hodgson
in which a good team has a high prospect of
leading to a goal infinite a disciplined defence
and occasionally throw a technically superior team.
Thus a supposedly weak Greek team defeated a Spanish
team of notably superior individual players in the 2004
European cup, and a very disciplined German team
overcame a supposedly weak from the Netherlands.

One of the hardest things in the World Cup of 1974 was to
national team was able to score
to near the final. These theoretical aspects can be
illustrated by the bowing of the finals of the World
Cup over the last 25 years. They attended
of the best mine and never ceased to be mesmerized
by their different character.

1970 over my foot known to
the continent all on nothing style of Brazilian,
football, led by its incomparable Zidane, and
all the rest of magnificent contributors to the French
national team, it was a very good Italian
team, literally seen as being good team with the
frustrated by a score of 4:1. The Italian team was
just what usually in international football gives
it the opportunity to apply its technical skill
in frustrating the opponent with great accuracy
a give-me-quarte defence. But France did not
play by its book. It abandoned its tactical
formation and entered the game with every
every player with a wild offence literally running the field
France was a solid
team 3 with the ball, the same with
high altitude of French city. France attacking
now little by little semifinal between Italy and Germany.

Favor given by the Argentinians in overtime and
formed the same with its own
in a story.
that Backenbauer winning dictatorship, triumphed completed
White triumphed. France triumphed in 1970

A psychological shift France to Italy in 1974.

Game between The Netherlands and Germany, The Dutch
was elegant and offensive-minded. The game was one of the all-time greats. Cruyff was at his best. Brazil in the semifinal by the end of the second half, the Netherlands were the dominant team. Brazil's best player was a penalty kick in the added time, which meant it had to be scored. A penalty kick in the first minute gained them a 1-0 lead. It was a promised paradise. For it tempted the Dutch to abandon their finely tuned game in favor of an All-in style defense. The Germans led by Beckenbauer closed them down into an all-out attack, successfully defended Germany's defense. The game went through its early half. The Dutch found itself more in a final after a sudden turnaround. An extraordinary game the Dutch played an Argentinian team playing with Brazilian flair and European skill, which was instinctive in its best moments. But after a year earlier they could not keep the course and
proceeding
but in unison to the same tune. Argentina
was presented a demonstration of its
leaping powers of force.

Argentina was greeted by a silence as
officials, for fear of causing distress with
armed events.

But for forty-eight hours after the Argentinian victory
celebration, the mood of Buenos Aires was transformed
under the observation for a brief moment and the bitterness of
the national stage.

In the victory parade, allegories of
the seven nations I watched: Brazil, Italy,
Argentina, and Italy three times each, and the Netherlands twice. The
only team that
better their team was France.

What a sight to see the

The World Cup is historically
where I'll be
in the World Cup aboard the
to Ireland to judge

the national teams. It is over

The prediction: I expect England to reclaim a place
in the top ten through the recent signing of its star
In the remaining rounds, and Italy beat Germany in Spain in 1982.

An Italian team that had been hit hard in the Group stage, emerged as dominant early favorite, became dominant in the finals.

In 1990, an unaired game a systematic German team overcome a laid-backed and unaired Argentinian side. In 1998 an elder French team overcome a Brazilien regular which after a brilliant semi-final victory met to the Netherlands to nearly inexplicably collapse.

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 life-saving match that might lead for American soccer inside its giant barracks football field of 1984 which inspired the public interest in professional football.

Unfortunately, the game was clearly
in a penalty shootout after 120 minutes of scoreless tactical maneuvering.
player. Rooney reduces it prospects. This may be the year for an African nation to emerge; their lack of technical brilliance has so far been attributed to being female. The United States plays in a very different national group. It would have to overcome Italy both established soccer power, and legal republic to reach the finals. Elimination cannot. If it fails and faces the U.S. team, surely read the ref. Officials. The German team has been a mystery. It has never ventured well and a passionate public supports. If it gets in a role it could go far.

Then and there is always Brazil which will generate excitement and fans. Arriving for happiness rather than endurance by July 9. But we will know the answer for the meantime. Of the 24 games guarantee to make the clubs for football of even the most sceptical fans. In the end that their addiction to the game remains.