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]
ARTICLE

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 enthral 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."

"The former — dribbling & passing but not scoring — are surely all tactics & no strategy."

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.

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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.]
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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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
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On the other hand they sometimes are so infatuated by the activity that they forget that the purpose of the game...
is to score goals and they are sometimes overcome by more elementary & tactically oriented teams.

This is because only the most players are adventurers - Pelle for Brazil, Taradonna for Italy, Robben for Germany - 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 which teams move the ball down the field to solve the challenge which seems to mingle bulk in prime time with a sudden, how-to-get-a-ballpast-stone-opponent clever with each side moving at high speed. one of whom is free - 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 find an unmarked open space, a boot to a position, from which to launch an unexpected shot onto
the goal. The great field generals like Zinoviev or Backenbauer 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 back we go for its decades in strategic terms, engineered the game of increasing sophistication. When I first saw strategy becoming a form 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 moved around. They were not as well conditioned as to stay on the field in their assigned positions. This was a radical change; deployment has taken place. It started with the midfielders working in effect as a third defender and one of the forwards taking his place at midfield. By now it has evolved into returning the attackers...
As a practical matter, one of the midfielders is usually assigned the role of libero intended to act as a "sniper" in defence, not with reconfining the most threatened positions on the field. Bedmarmer gave this role an additional significance by acting as a "quarterback" in defence and led an American and directing. Wharton football quarterback in the attack, with increasing the speed of modern games and the conditioning of the players. It leads to a kind of total football which means that whatever the assigned positions of the players his task is to reinforce the center of gravity, attack or defense depending on the situation.

The practical consequence is that forward work much harder to come by, and that defence tends to dominate over offence at least compared to the situation when
I just became acquainted with the game. Because the play finds all men to lose and rarely find all-and attacks unless of course they find themselves that behind. Since the number of possession yield from which a great deal of a high prospect of heading to a goal indefinite a disciplined defense can occasionally throw a technically superior team.

Thus a reputedly weak Greek team defeated a Polish team of the notably superior individual player in the 2004 European Cup and a very disciplined German team overcame a supposedly strong team from the Netherlands. Team Mexico retained its World Cup of 1974 and its team never out of repute on its zany style of defense to score drop off. Its theoretical aspects can be illustrated by the bowling at the finals of the World Cup over the last 25 years. I have attended several of the last nine and never cease to be mesmerized by that different character.

1970 over my first exposure, the continued "all or nothing" style of Brazilian
football. Led by its incomparable Pelé, Brazil had an all-star team of incredible veterans, the Brazilians literally ran the show and defeated Pakistan, a top global team, with a score of 4:1. The Italian team was a fine mix of Italian football, giving it the opportunity to apply its trademark skill in frustrating the opponent with swift counterattacks and a goalkeeper of excellence. But Brazil did not play by the book. It abandoned relative theoretical formations and entered the game with each and every player in a wild offensive literally running the show. Pelé was a solid team with the ball, as the Brazilians masterfully deployed high-altitude tactics which showed that they were a little by the semifinal between Italy and Germany.

3:2

(The score was 3:2 in overtime and the game with its own story.) That Brazil's home team eventually eliminated Sweden, which seemed to have triumphed in 1970,

a psychological shift. France took the title in 1974, after a game between the Netherlands and Germany. The Dutch
was elegant, offensive-minded, and one of the all-time greats. Cruyff, at 21, had defeated Brazil in the semifinal by the complexity of his movements, rather than by individual virtuosity. But it was merely a penalty kick on the 20th minute which awarded a penalty kick in the 91st minute giving it a 1:0 lead. It proved a pointed advice. For it tempted the Dutch to abandon their finely tuned game in favor of an attack style defense. The Germans, led by Beckenbauer,Throw say, then everything into an all-out attack successfully by a jenquist home public. This led to a 2:1 lead which Germany defended tenaciously through its entire half. From 1978 the Netherlands found itself once more in a final before a rabid international crowd.

In an extraordinary game the Dutch tried an Argentine team playing with Brazilian flair and European killer instinct in its last minutes. But after years earlier, they would win through the course and
proceeding
sent in advance to the home team. Argentina
a demonstration of the leading powers of course.

Argentina was marked as having no weaknesses!

But for forty-eight hours after the Argentina victory
celebrated with much

Britain, three countries to commemorate,

this to observe for a brief moment the bitterness of

the national strife.

In the World Cup semi-finals, Argentina

the semi-finals I watched: Brazil, France,
+ Argentina,

and Italy three times each the Netherlands twice. The

only game I still remember was

What I say in France

What it feels for the

And there the World Cup itself is

historically matched. Will this spirit be mirrored

in the World Cup game? Left it in hand to judge

the national teams to

see how

one prediction. I expect England to reclaim a place

major in the role through the recent signing of its star
In the remaining games, Italy beat Germany in a final in 1982.

An Italian team that had been hitherto in the
fringes of dominance emerged as dominant
early from the tournament in its finals.

In 1990, an unimpressed France systematically
beaten the team, who had carried and
unimpressed Argentine side. In 1998, an even
French team overcame a Brazilians equal
work after a bilevel semi-final victory over
the Netherlands proved inexplicably predictable.

The most disappointing match for
me was the semi-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 do for American soccer what it meant
- lift football fame of '98 which inspired the
public interest in professional football.

Unfortunately, the game was decided.
in a penalty shootout after 120 minutes of scoreless tactical manoeuvring.

What next?
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 accentuated by their size.

The United States plays in a very difficult initial group. It would have to overcome Italy, both established soccer power, and local Republic to reach the final. eliminating rounds. If it gets out of the US teams, major read to lose officials. The German team has been a mystery. It has never ventured far and a passionate public support.

If it gets on a roll it could go far.

Then and there is always Brazil which will guarantee excitement and few

arriving for happiness rather than endures.

But we will know the answer for the moment.

Of thirty two games guarantee to make itsello

for football of even the most feminine fans. It's to its loyal

that their addiction to the female priests. A