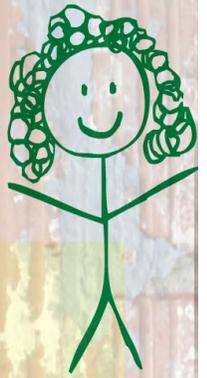


This November
SPEAK NO EVIL



hear no evil
see no evil
enjoy only GOAL



Ludo Ergo Sum

GOALDEN TIMES

Goalden Times

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Trivia, and then some...



First Whistle

Here's presenting the fourth issue of Goalden Times and it's been like 'watching the baby grow - from the tiny bundle of joy, kicking in the air to rolling over and then taking its first wobbly toddler step to feel the earth that is soon to become its playing field'. It's the most fascinating magic show in the world - perhaps only comparable to the magic on a football pitch. One is never prepared for the surprises that a fascinating game of football can present on a given day.

Take for instance, how Sir Alex Ferguson reeled for a while from the merciless drubbing as his "noisy neighbours" emerged as the club of the month to retain the top spot in England. And first time around in UEFA Champions League, they have turned the tables and brought alive the group of death. Moving on to Germany, Bayern Munich seems to be cruising through both the domestic and European competitions, but it remains to be seen how they perform after losing their charismatic midfielder, Bastian Schweinsteiger to an unfortunate injury which can keep him out of action for the rest of the year. In Spain, Real Madrid appears to be in great form. They have established a 3-point lead over their archrival Barcelona and look forward to changing the colour of the ribbon on the league trophy. Serie A continues to be the most competitive league with Udinese and Lazio sharing the top spot and Milan right behind them; but Juventus have a game in hand and a win will bring them back on top and make it a 4-way title fight.

In the European circuit, Ronaldo led Portugal into Euro 2012. They were joined by Czech Republic, Croatia and Ireland who also won their respective play-off matches. Moving to the land of Africa, Esperance have lifted the prized CAF Champions league and Zimbabwe striker Edward Sadomba

this year, the club president has triggered a fresh debate, suggesting FIFA should pay players during the World Cup. We will keep an eye on how this debate unfolds.

Before A.C. Milan could recover from the shock of a career threatening injury to Rino Gattuso earlier in September, they were hit by an unexplained illness to Antonio Cassano. Last heard, both are recovering steadily and inching back to being match-ready. As true blue football fans, we'd like to wish them all the best and look forward to their speedy return to the pitch. Here's wishing them a fast recovery - Forza Antonio. Forza Rino. Football needs you.

Follow football, follow us!

Fritz Walter – A Footballing Grandmaster

Prologue

In the early hours of a Sunday morning, a lean well built man is standing on the balcony of a hotel, overlooking the Lake Thun. The lake is calm and the first rays of the sun rising over the foothill of Alps, lights it up in a reddish-golden tinge, promising that the day is going to be pleasant and beautiful.

Clearly looking dismayed, he goes back to his room and lies down. At nine o'clock, he is out again in the balcony, now the sun is effusively up.

At lunchtime around half past twelve, his brother stormed down the corridor of the hotel, shouting, "It's raining! It's raining.. !" Visibly surprised, he ran down to his hotel balcony. It was indeed raining. Big grey clouds had gathered over the lake and the raindrops promised wind, cold and mud. "Now nothing can go wrong", he grinned.

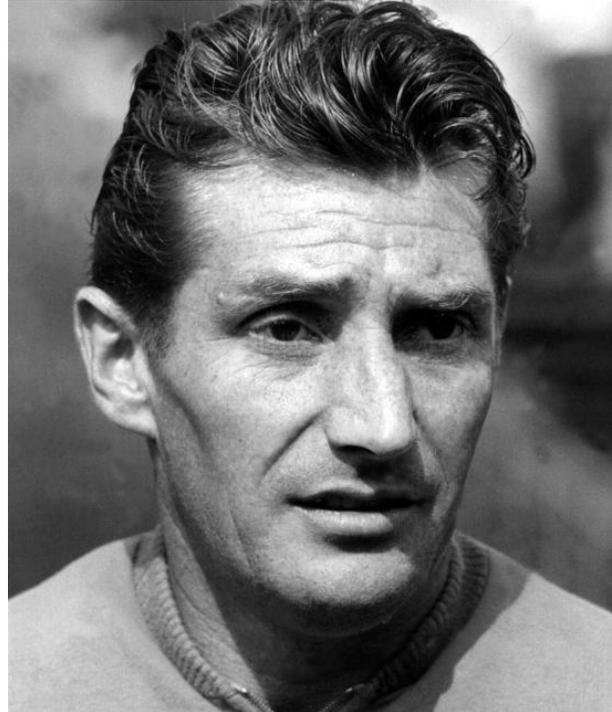
In two and half hours, he and his mates, will be playing a game of football, against the best team in the world, who had humiliated them just a few days ago. In little more than 5 hours, he and his friends will be living legends and literally will liberate their fellow countrymen from all their burdens and guilt, after World War II.

It was **July 4, 1954**. His name was Friedrich "Fritz" Walter, the best player Germany produced until Franz Beckenbauer - and there are more people than you would consider, who would still place him above 'Kaiser'.

Early Career

Friedrich Walter was born on October 31, 1920, in Kaiserslautern, remote and backward area of Pfalz, which is 65 km of Mannheim, home town of national coach, Sepp Herberger. Walter's father worked as a lorry driver until an accident cost him an eye. He opened up a restaurant in his hometown, before he spent some time in the USA, but returned home before World War I, and married a woman from Berlin.

Fritz, Ottmer and Ludwig (his two younger brothers) lived in the proximity of two boys called Ernst and Werner Liebrich. All of them were suffering from an English disease called football, and in the near future they all would play for FC Kaiserslautern and four of them would go to win the World Cup for



their country. By 1928, Walter had joined the Kaiserslautern youth academy and made his first team debut at 17.

War, Football and Debut

Before being called up into the national side, Walter got his share of a World War. He was drafted into the army in the 1940's, when things got severe on the fronts. At that time, Germany's so called clean and swift war machine started to show some signs of rust and waning. More men were needed on the front, footballers were no exception.

Walter the soldier or paratrooper marched or flew across France, Corsica, Sardinia, Romania and many other places during the following years, but before that, he made his international debut in July 1940, against Romania. He scored 3 goals, playing as a forward in a relatively easy 9-3 victory. National coach Sepp Herberger was immensely impressed, and soon Walter would become his favourite player, in fact he liked him as his surrogate son. "I'm happy Fritz, you can come and play for your country again." told Herberger. That sure was easier said than done.

In those chaotic times, until late 1942 (when everything collapsed), Herberger tried every trick in the book to get his young players from the mortal dangers of the front and back to the shelter and safety of a football ground. Incredibly he succeeded, and in those times German national team played another 25 matches, Walter only missed two of them.

Most of the matches during the war were worthless games, either allies or occupied countries, with two exceptions. In April 1941, in Koln, a magnificent German team unexpectedly beat Hungary, 7-0. In the return match, Budapest, May 1942, the Magyars playing for their pride, led 3-1 at halftime thoroughly dominating their opponents. "Don't let this become a catastrophe", Herberger was worried, he knew humiliation of any kind on foreign soil would not go well with the Nazi commands in Berlin. The second half was a different story though; led by a young Fritz Walter, the Germans managed to fight back, eventually winning 5-3.

3 years later, his performance in this match would save Walter's life. 12 years later, memories from this match helped him win the World Cup.

All international matches were suspended when Goebbels declared the country to be in total war. Herberger was out of a job and the entire nation was waiting for the inevitable. However, local leagues were still on, as some newspapers pointed out, "Sporting competitions to be carried through in order to sustain the work ethic", but things were farcical to say the least.

Meanwhile, Walter joined the Red Fighter Pilots in 1943. They were an Air force football team, founded by Major Graf, a war hero and an ex-goalie. Given the circumstances, he had spent 1943 and 1944 in relative safety. Russian offensive signalled the end of the team in January 1945.

In April 30, 1945, Adolf Hitler shot himself. The day before Hamburg won the last official football match played during wartime, against Altona 1942. A week later, Germany capitulated.

The entire team of Red Fighter Pilots were taken prisoners together by the Russians. Everybody preferred to be captured by the US troops, rather than the Russians, but that was not going to be the

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case for Walter. It meant Siberia, and a near certain agonising death. However, during the march towards the Siberian Gulag, he kept his eyes open for some football, if possible.

One day, in a Ukrainian War Camp, he played one of the most important football matches of his life - Prisoners vs Camp Guards. At half time, one of the Hungarian guards recollected the memories of May 1942, and came down to ask him, "I think I know you" he said, "I was there in 1942. I have seen you play against us. Hungary lost 3-5". The next day, Walters' name was strangely removed from the prisoners list to be sent to Siberia. He returned to his home town in late 1945. Being a famous footballer saved his life, but not many people were that lucky.

Post War

Hours after West Germany's first post-war game against Switzerland in the 1950, representatives of a French club FC Nancy, met Walter and offered DM 100,000 for his signature. A year later, Helenio Herrera, in charge of Atletico Madrid, negotiated with Fritz Walter. He offered DM 225,000, but in both the cases, the player declined the offers.

That was partly because their club and particularly, the national coach, somehow found ways of giving him at least some kind of financial security and stability. He was granted a loan so that he could start a cinema and laundry and that guaranteed him a good life in 1950's West Germany. Another reason for the player's disinclination was that, they knew that they would never again play for their country, as



professionalism was a strict no-no at that point of time, in West Germany.

Walter inspired Kaiserslautern to win German Championships in 1951 and 1953. The side became known as 'Walter's 11' in recognition of its most outstanding player.

World Cup 54

West Germany had not been allowed to play in the 1950 tournament but they qualified for the 1954 tournament, first FIFA World Cup in Europe since the end of the war. Competing in the WC was indeed a proud moment for them, but challenging for it, was like unthinkable for the Germans as the international scene was dominated at the time by the apparently invincible Hungarians, who arrived at Switzerland as runaway favourites after a four-year undefeated spell. A wager on the 'Magical Magyars' and their mystical captain Ferenc Puskas looked like a safe one for the 1954 tournament.

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Germany defeated Turkey 4-1 after going down 1-0; humbled by the Mighty Magyars 3-8, needed a playoff match against Turkey. Walter shone in the 7-2 rout, and again as the Germans beat a strong Yugoslavian side 2-0 in the quarter finals. The captain buried two penalties in the 6-1 semi-final victory over Austria to set the stage for a re-match with the mighty Hungarians in Berne's Wankdorf Stadium.

Miracle of Bern

July 4, 1954. 8 minutes gone into the final, Fritz Walter stood on the half way line, staring at the ground, *amidst the rain*. West Germany trailed the favourites, 2-0.

Walter was not the same man after the World War. His football instincts were intact but he was moody, sensitive and prone to self doubt. Anything would throw him off balance; bad refereeing decisions, critical remark and specially the weather. Ever since he caught malaria during his wartime marches, he was ineffective on hot sunny days. But he loved rain, and a steady downpour is still called "Fritz Walter "weather in Germany.

Walter was desperately trying to think about the game in May 1942, when his team came back from 3-1 down, against the same opponents. And somehow, like that match West Germany recovered quickly. Two minutes later, Max Morlock poked the ball past Grosics to make it 2-1, as the Germans slowly controlled the tempo of that game. Quarter of an hour gone, Max Morlock dribbled past 3 defenders and earned a corner. Helmut "Der Boss" Rahn volleyed the ball into the net. 2-2 it was.

The first 15 minutes after the interval The Magyars dominated, denied multiple times by Tony Turek (goal keeper) and the crossbar. Somehow, Hungarians lost some faith after that incident as the match again opened up from a neutral perspective.

Six minutes left to play, "Schafer sends a cross into the box" – Herbert Zimmermann reported, he was



doing commentary for the West German Radio. "Header... Cleared"..... The Ball falls to Rahn who fakes to shoot with his right foot, turns, and strikes it with his left... Grosics is not going to reach it... Zimmermann cried in the radio "*Rahn Schiest..... Tor ! Tor ! Tor ! Tor !..*" "*Germany Leads 3-2.. Call me mad, call me crazy.*"

It was an unlikely and inspiring upset, one that

had ramifications far beyond the world of sport. It marked the beginning of a new Germany, restoring

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national self-belief after the horrors of conflict and inspiring a new determination the length and breadth of the land. It was a kind of liberation for the Germans from all their burdens after World War II.

Walter became the first footballer ever to earn the ***Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany***, the highest honour in a long list of decorations. Years later, Walter would still grow emotional when he recalled the events of 1954. As a tribute to him on his 80th birthday, German television showed the 54' final. Walter wept: "I still have goose-bumps watching it."

After the World Cup and Retirement

Walter retired from the international football in 1956. He had a soft corner in his heart for Hungary and after the crackdown by the Soviets of the Hungarian uprising, the Hungarian football team were caught away from home, and for two years, Fritz managed their games and provided the financial backing, and in small measure, paid them back for having saved his life.

He made a comeback as Herberger persuaded him to come back for 1958 World Cup hosted by Sweden. He was 37, and hadn't played for the national team for at least two years. Germany struggled up to the semi-finals where they were beaten by the host nation in controversial circumstances. That was the last international match Walter played, ending ***his international career with 61 caps and 33 goals***.

In 1959, he left league football as well, ***having played 379 times for Kaiserslautern, and having scored 306 goals***. As a player, he was ahead of his time – an attacking midfielder before midfield had even been invented.

Later Life and Legacy

Fritz Walter was named an ***honorary captain of the German football squad*** in 1958. The other four are Uwe Seeler, Franz Beckenbauer, Lothar Matthias and Bettina Wiegmann.

Since 1965, he was living in Alsenborn, a small village near Kaiserslautern and sensationally taken their local team within one point of being promoted to Bundesliga. After that, Walter turned his back on coaching and management, shifting to a completely new career. He worked with offenders, helping them to get back to their normal lives after leaving prison. Manfred von Richthofen, president of the German Sports Federation, said: ***"Fritz Walter was a symbol of German sport in the post-war era. A man with marvellous abilities on the field, he was also engaged in social goals later in life. That has made him a model for future generations of sportsmen and women."***



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In 1985, still in the player's lifetime, the ***Betzenberg Stadium in Kaiserslautern was renamed*** after him. He said his last wish in life was to watch a game at the 2006 World Cup in the ground that bore his name. But his beloved wife Italia had died earlier that year, and he never got over the loss. At 2:14 on June 17, Fritz Walter, the true icon of German Football, left for his heavenly abode.

Four days later, Germany played USA wearing black armbands, on the following Sunday. 10,000 mourners were present for the funeral service, among them Gyula Grosics and Jenő Buzánsky, members of the 1954 Hungary Team.

Four years later, on his death anniversary, USA met Italy in a World Cup match at "[Fritz Walter Stadion](#)", and a minute of silence was observed in his memory. People of Alsenborn later built a small museum named "[Fritz Walter Haus](#)" in memory of their favourite footballing son.



(Walter's boot used in 1954 World Cup)

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2. [Das Wunder von Bern](#)
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Nibaron Chakraborty is a struggling poet and anarchist, and passionate about the history and histrionics of football.

Most Competitive League in Europe

Competition (re)defined

“Competition is a contest between individuals, groups, animals, etc. for territory, a niche, or a location of resources. It arises whenever two or more parties strive for a goal which cannot be shared.” Wikipedia defines competition this way. However, it is not so easy to define I guess. How do we classify *competitiveness* of a European football league? Surely, the most popular football league in the world need not necessarily be the most competitive one. Neither the *Galacticos* nor supposedly the best ever club team playing in the same league can ensure that.



English Premier League



Spanish La Liga



Italian Serie A



German Bundesliga



French Ligue 1

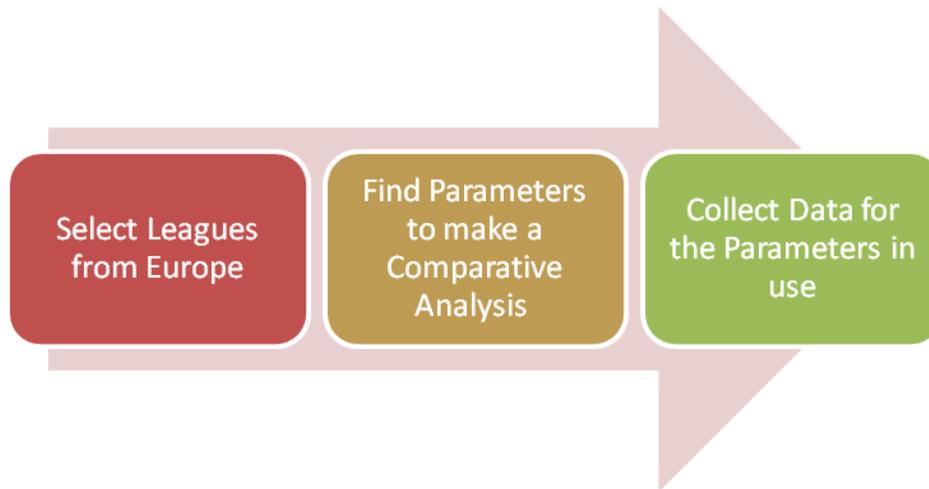


Dutch Eredivisie

Some may feel that the number of winners over the past few years is the best parameter to judge the ruthlessness of any league. But here's a question. How many of us have heard of the Campionato Sammarinese di Calcio? Not many, in my opinion. It is the football league operated in San Marino. Since its inception in 1985, it has seen 10 different winners – 5 in the last decade. This league is ranked 53rd in Europe by UEFA. The Swedish Allsvenskan, top division football league in Sweden has seen the trophy taking a tour of as many as 7 different club locker rooms during the same period. There can be several leagues in Europe which do not feature highly in the UEFA league rankings, or are not watched by billions, but they are certainly competitive by this parameter. Don't get me wrong, I am not saying that EPL or La Liga is the most predictable league in Europe. There are other contenders. Last time the Scottish League was won by a club other than Celtic or Rangers, was way back in 1984/85 – the club was Aberdeen, managed by a certain (not Sir yet) Alex Ferguson. So, let's not complicate things – just get on with some hard core facts and statistics.

Methodology

In this research, we have made certain assumptions and here is a quick snapshot to start off.



Select Leagues from Europe

For this analysis, top 3 leagues from Europe have been shortlisted – English Premier League, Italian Serie A and Spanish La Liga. For the German Bundesliga, French League 1, Dutch Eredivisie fans, I seek an apology. The 3 leagues chosen had the maximum number (4) of clubs appearing in the UEFA Champions League for the past few years. Germany has overtaken Italy this year and will be having 4 teams in the Champions League season 2012-13, but for the time period considered – more on that later – Italy used to have more participants than Germany. Under the parameters considered, the French or German League could have come up with the honours if included, but we have taken into consideration the pedigree of the league also.

Finalize Parameters

Certain parameters have been shortlisted to take the analysis forward. They are:

- No. of drawn games
- No. of matches won with a victory margin of 3+
- Difference in points across the league table
- Point gap between the 1st and 5th placed teams
- No. of Goals scored
- No. of different winners
- No. of different Teams featuring in the top 4
- Points dropped by the top 4 teams against the Mid table opponents
- Points dropped by the top 4 teams against the Bottom 5 teams

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Data Collection

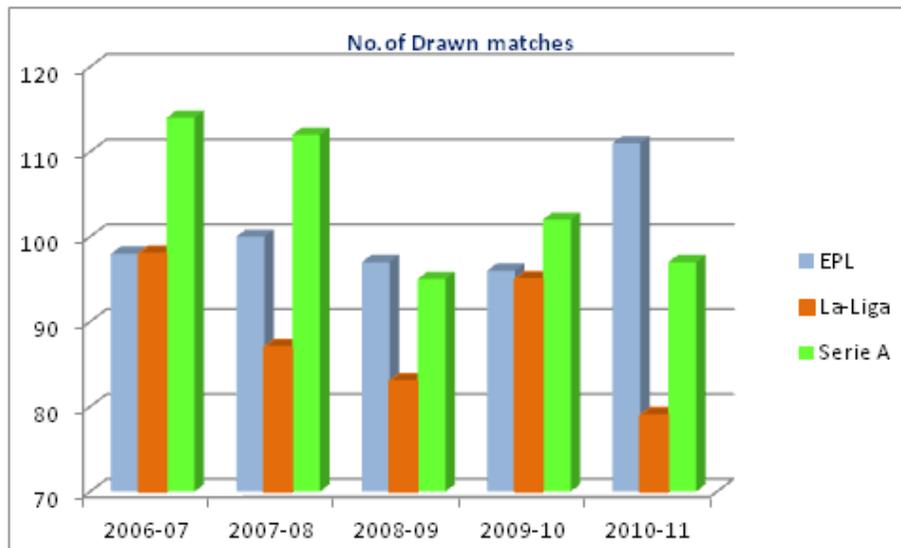
For the analysis, 5 years of recent data has been collected from the respective league's official website. There is no need for *normalization* as the league structure is the same for all the 3 leagues – 20 teams play in the home and away basis, at the end of which 3 teams get relegated. So number of teams, matches played, and the number of survivors in the league – are well synchronized to help our analysis. For the analysis, point deductions or any penalties imposed (most notably in Serie A 2006-07 season for the match fixing fiasco) have been ignored. Subsequently, the league standings have also been altered and updated. For example, Fiorentina was deducted 15 points at the start of the season and hence finished 6th in the League. Had they not been penalized, they would have finished 3rd and that is the place they have been put in for this piece's analysis. We are dissecting the competitiveness in the field, so any off-the-field implications are best kept away with.

Analysis

It is very difficult to rank the parameters or to decide which factor is to be given how much weightage. So, let us just assess the parameters individually as far as possible and see if we reach a coherent conclusion from there.

1. Number of Drawn Games

A drawn game, more often than not, depicts the inability to win of either sides playing. Putting it in the colloquial lingo, "they have cancelled each other out... it's a stalemate."



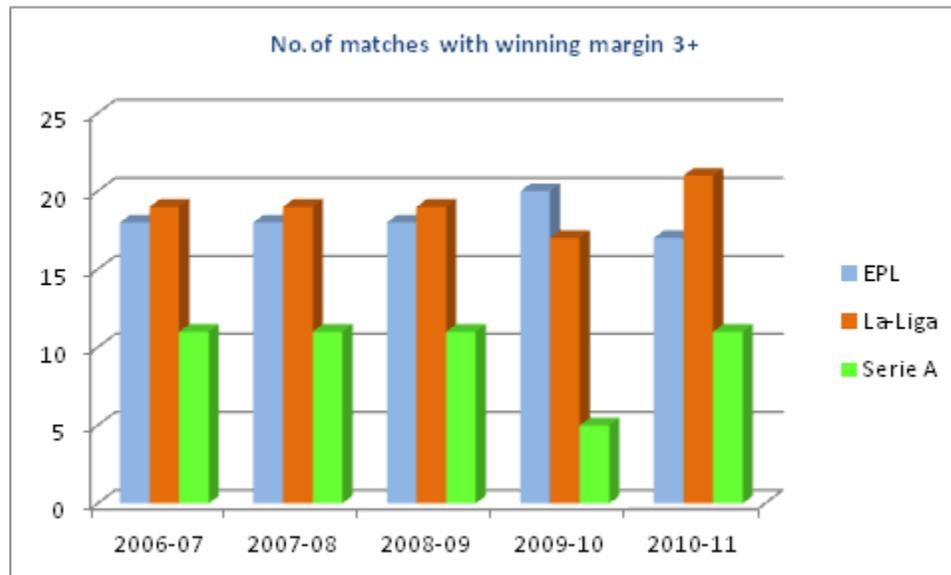
La Liga has a lower number of drawn games historically and that too at a downward trend. EPL and Serie A seem to lock horns with each other with the former taking over the mantle from the latter in recent years. This is due to the fact that EPL has an upward trend in number of drawn games, whereas Serie A is quite the opposite. Overall, the number of drawn games in these 3 leagues, hover around the 25% mark, take one or two percent here and there. So, it means effectively 9-10 drawn games for each team in a season on an average basis. That is pretty high, show-casing the high level of competition in each of the leagues.

2. Number of Matches with Winning Margin 3+



These score lines have been few and far between in EPL & Serie A

Fiercely competitive teams, when playing against each other, will have a very narrow winning margin. As a thumb rule, a margin of anything over 2-0 or 3-1 or likewise can be termed as a stroll in the park. Agreed, results can be misleading; but in a wide horizon, these anomalies are likely to be ironed out. So, let us see how many *thrashing* we have witnessed in the recent past.



As expected, Serie A teams have lived up to their reputation of having a tight defence and thus have had fewer experiences of these *thrashings*. The teams from Italy on an average experience this kind of humiliation only once in the entire season. For the other 2 leagues, the number almost doubles. The number of such matches has, more or less, remained constant over the years for each individual league. La Liga & EPL are neck and neck, although the former is slightly ahead.

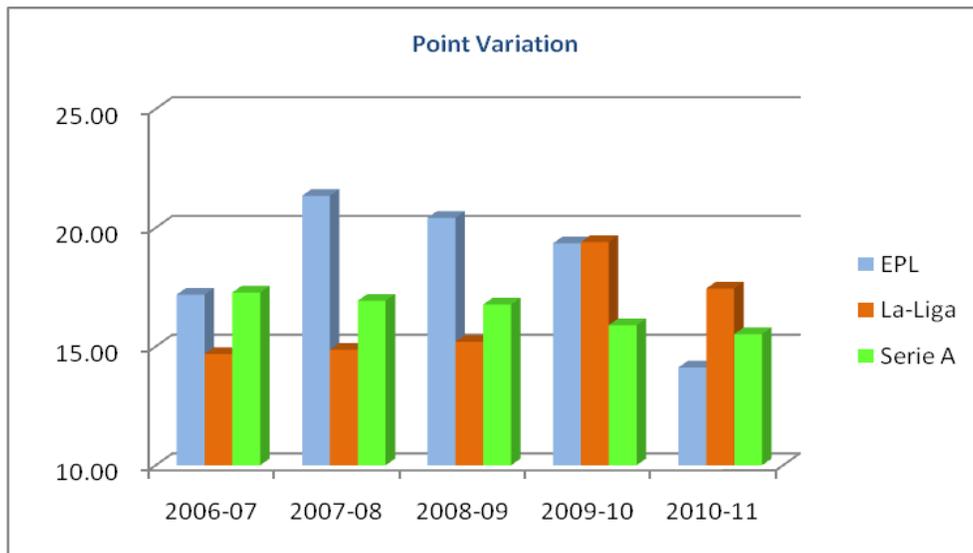
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3. Difference in points across the League

Let us now see by how much have the table toppers leapfrogged the last boys? To do that, we have categorized the 20 teams in any league under 3 broad subheads:

- Top 4 teams – they are the *Top* teams as they go on to participate in the top tier of European Club Football, the Champions League.
- Bottom 5 teams – 3 of these teams were relegated eventually, whereas the rest are assumed to be involved in a dogfight for survival for the majority of the season. Hence, it makes perfect sense to categorize them in the same bracket.
- The Mid tablers – rest 11 teams in the league.

Now average points earned by each of these 3 groups have been taken up for calculating standard deviation – a statistical parameter, to measure the proximity of variables under consideration – of points in the league. This gives us a fair idea of how closely the teams, or rather cluster of teams, are finishing the league.

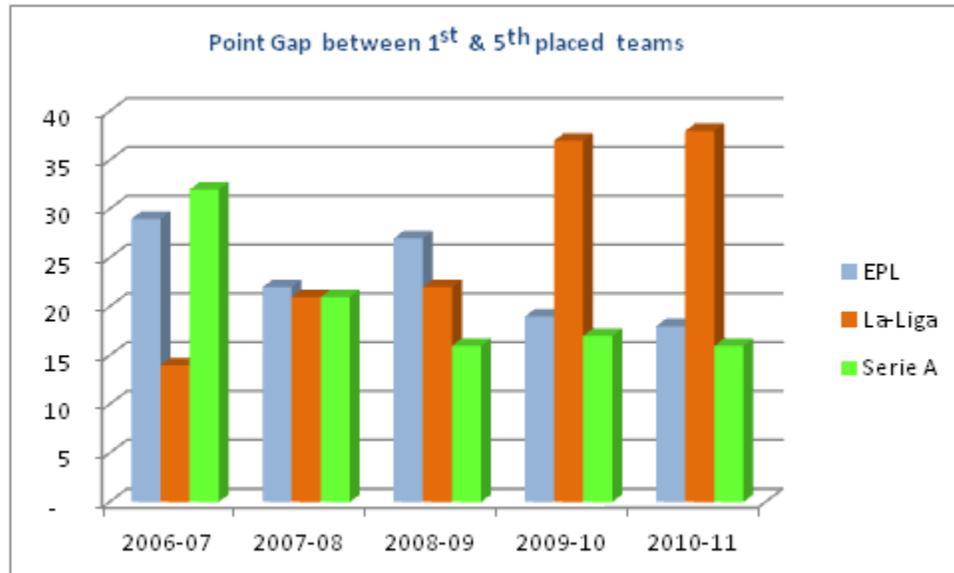


EPL is showing steady decrease in this, meaning the teams are getting ever closer. The figures are more or less constant for Serie A, although with a decreasing trend. La Liga is just the opposite in this regard – the teams are finishing with some considerable point gap among them. This was the scenario in EPL a few years back, but they have become quite competitive over the years. The case of La Liga is simply opposite.

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4. Point Gap between 1st & 5th placed teams

The team to finish 5th in these leagues are given a pat at the back with consolation. They nearly miss out to an elusive Champions League Football spot. So, let us see how the gap between the Champion and this unfortunate side has evolved over the years.



In sync with the previous stat, the gap seems to get more and more widened in La Liga. This is expected, as their champion team is a certain Barcelona. Also, the spread between the 2nd and the 3rd placed teams are widening quite alarmingly – 5, 10, 8, 21 and 25 points over the last 5 years. Just to put it into perspective, the 21 or 25 points gap is by far the biggest gap between any two consecutive placed teams for these 3 leagues over the last 5 years. In fact 25 point gap encompassed all the teams baring the top 5 in year 2010-11 in EPL. People do not call this league a *2-horse race* just for fun. For Serie A and EPL, there is a downward trend in this regard. So it shows there is an increasing competition towards the business end of the league.

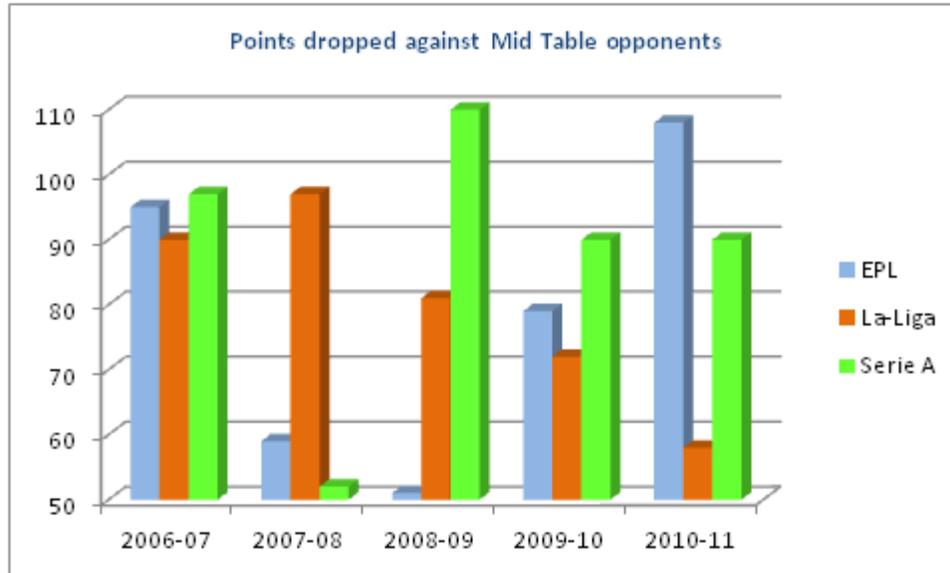


Udinese edging out Lazio for the last Champions League spot by goal difference in 2010-11

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5. Points dropped by the Top 4 against Mid-tablers

Depth of any league is measured by the skill, tactics and determination applied on the field by the mid-tablers – teams finishing 6th to 15th in the final standing. More often than not, they fancy their chances against the big boys, especially playing at home, and are capable of getting a point, sometimes even 3. Teams like Sunderland, Mallorca and Palermo have often played a significant part in deciding the fate of the league winner. Stronger these teams, more cut-throat is guaranteed in the league.



In La Liga, the mid-tablers are losing the ground steadily to the front runners – there is a steady decline in the points dropped. EPL demonstrates just the reverse trend, the mid-table toddlers are going from strength to strength. However, Serie A has been the leader by far in this respect over the years. EPL, though, has a sharper trend and may overtake Serie A if the pattern continues. Overall, the top teams drop one-third of points against the mid-table opponents across these 3 leagues. This is quite a hefty proportion – 1 draw every 2 matches.

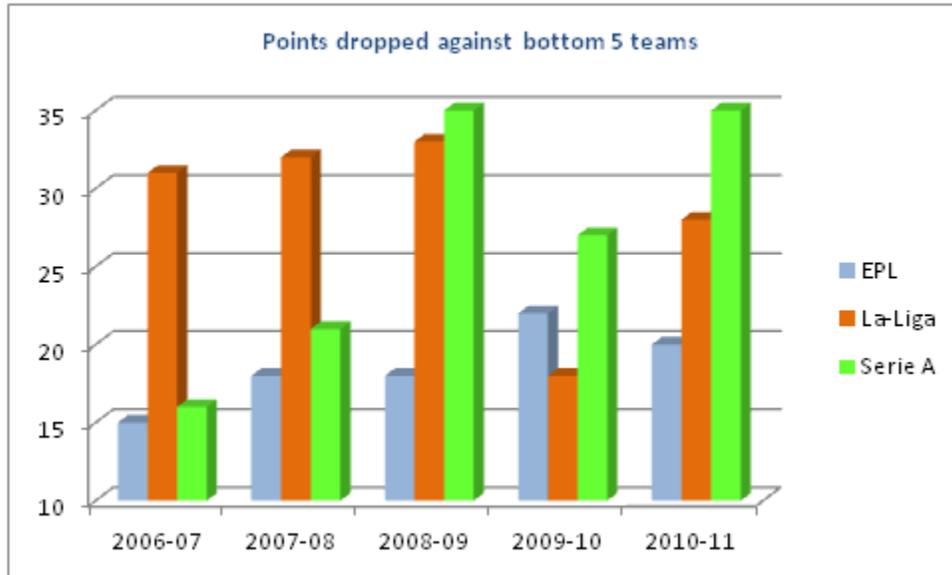


Mid Table teams look to set the scores straight

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6. Points dropped by the Top 4 against Bottom 5 Teams

The relegation contenders often play a spoil sport. The top teams are expected to win against them, that too handsomely. However, they can sometime cause an upset to the joy of other title contenders. A Fulham can upset Arsenal's plans of automatic qualification to the Champions League. A Livorno can snatch away the title from Roma. So, let us see how the stats stack up over the years.



Like the previous section, La Liga table toppers are improving year after year against the minnows. On the other hand, the other two leagues are finding it more and more difficult to walk away with the honours against the bottom clubs. EPL though, in spite of this trend, has a lower average points dropped – there the top 4 teams are doing fairly well against the less fancied opponents. Serie A teams have been the front runner in this stat – they are way ahead of the competition and are steadily increasing the gap. Overall, the top 4 teams are performing well enough against the lower clubs – they concede only 10% points in these encounters. However, the position of the league table, the time of the season when they are dropping points – these factors are more important. Like the bottom most team in the league table, Wolves were the first team in the EPL 2010-11 season to beat the eventual champions Manchester United. The defeat set the Red Devils on a poor run of form and Chelsea had the opportunity to cash in.



David v/s Goliath is not always a foregone conclusion

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Conclusion

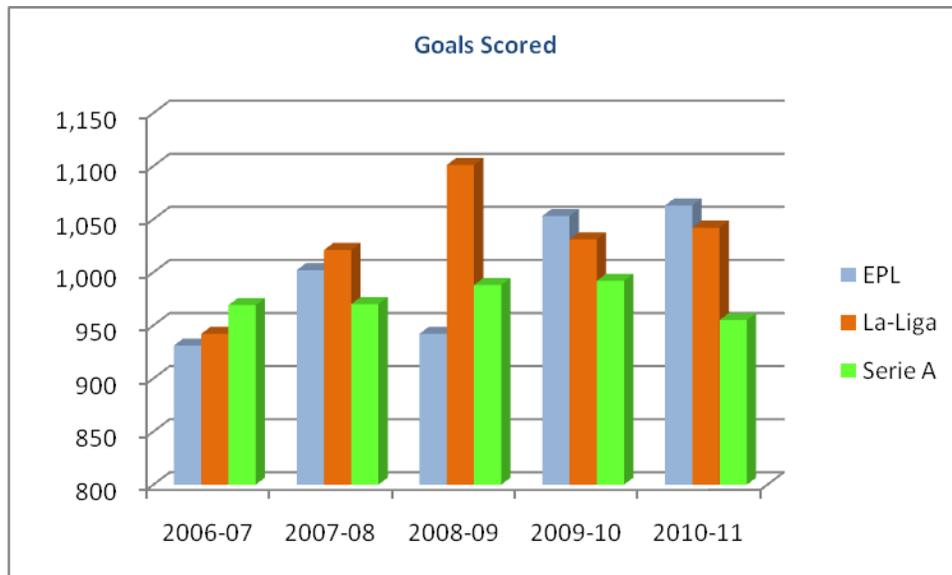
So many statistics and analysis! So where are we now? Can we reach any conclusion? Let us try to recapitulate the results in a nutshell.

	EPL	La Liga	Serie A
No. of Drawn Games	2	3	1
No. of Matches with Margin 3+	2	3	1
Variation of Points across the League	3	1	2
Point gap between the 1 st & the 5 th Placed Teams	2	3	1
Point Dropped by Top 4 against Mid-Tablers	3	2	1
Point Dropped by Top 4 against Bottom 5 Teams	3	1	1

In the above analysis, the most competitive league based on each parameter has been given rank 1. The arrow's direction represents the trend, whereas its colour depicts the competitiveness – green for more cut-throat, red for the opposite and yellow for middle-of-the-road competitiveness. For example, a green downward arrow means that the league has a downward trend as far as the parameter (say, Point gap between the 1st & the 5th placed Teams) is concerned, and that fact (the arrow being *green*) will make the league more competitive in the coming years.

It is quite evident from our analysis that Serie A is by far the most competitive League. EPL may be just edging out La Liga for the period under consideration. So, what about the hue and cry about EPL being the most competitive league in Europe? What does their dominance in the Champions League (i.e. number of teams featuring in quarters or semis) mean?

One thing going in favour of EPL is the number of goals scored. Serie A, being a defence dominated league, logically has less number of goals. EPL, though not as competitive as Serie A, scores over in this aspect.



A definitive answer lies in the trend analysis of our findings. While La Liga is finding it difficult to remain competitive as per the parameters provided here, EPL is fast catching up with the Serie A. In recent 2-3

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years, they have surely leapfrogged Serie A in every aspect of competitiveness. Moreover, number of goals scored in Serie A is shrinking. EPL is quite the opposite – far more goals are scored there and the rate is even better than La Liga. It is not surprising, since the top English clubs are now massive sports franchises which can lure the top players to the Premier league. So, EPL apart from being quite competitive is a fairly entertaining league (after all, a goal is what every football lover wants to see, isn't it!). If the trend continues for the coming years, EPL fans' claim will be hard to turn down.

Debojyoti Chakraborty is a hardcore Manchester United & East Bengal fan. You can reach him at debojyoti.chakraborty@gmail.com

The Next RED KNIGHT



Sir Alexander Chapman Ferguson took over the reins as the manager of Manchester United Football Club on 6th November 1986 after the board sacked Ron Atkinson when the team was in the relegation zone. It has been close to 25 years since United had anybody else other than Sir Alex at the helm. A generation of United fans doesn't know how it feels not to have Sir Alex blasting the living daylights out of referees from the touchline. Ferguson inherited a dispirited team of underachievers who had consistently, to their supporters' discontent, failed to break Liverpool's domination.

For the first few years, United didn't win a trophy under him till 1990, when they tasted success with the FA Cup win. It is said that his job was under serious threat before the third round tie against Nottingham Forrest. Since then, there has been a never ending supply of glories and trophies with 12 League titles, 5 FA Cups, 2 UEFA Champions League, 1 Club World Cup, 1 European Cup Winners Cup, 1 Inter-Continental Cup, 1 UEFA Super Cup and 9 Charity Shields - in total 32 Trophies.

Season after season, United have landed trophies under the great Scotsman; but after him, who? Many believe last season's league triumph and Champions League final appearance was only possible because Sir Alex was at the helm, as the squad was poor compared to other title winning United squads. The managerial cacophony that took place after Sir Matt Busby stepped down, is etched in the memory of

United fans. So, as Sir Alex completes 25 years in charge of United, the next managerial change in United will be crucial for the future of the club and will be one of the toughest decisions that the CEO of Manchester United Football Club would have to take.

It's said that no one person is bigger than the club. When it comes to players, it holds true. But what if someone's philosophy and direction defines the club in the modern age? Nothing of importance that happens at Manchester United goes without Ferguson's knowledge or approval. He is as close to impossible to replace, as any manager could be. Good luck following this act.

Like everybody else, I have a speculative list of three people who I believe has the potential and credibility to take over from Sir Alex, as the manager of United. The following three managers are relatively younger, but experienced enough and successful in their own rights. In my view, the next United manager will be young, as United would certainly opt for a long term successor instead of a stop-gap arrangement, to fill the big boots of Sir Alex.

Jose Mourinho:

José Mário dos Santos Félix Mourinho or simply Jose Mourinho is a name that divides football fans and pundits alike. If anybody has the personality and charisma to take over from Sir Alex, then this is the man. He has worked as an assistant manager and interpreter with legendary English manager, Sir Bobby Robson at Sporting Lisbon, FC Porto and then at FC Barcelona. His managerial career started with Benfica, then he moved to Porto, where he won the Champions League,



and then his first big move came when he took over at Chelsea from Claudio Ranieri, in 2004. Armed with Roman Abrahamovic's financial strength, Mourinho built a Chelsea side which won its first league title in 50 years in the 2004/05 season, thus breaking the Manchester United and Arsenal hegemony at the top of English football. He also won the treble with Inter Milan and is currently manages Real Madrid.

Strengths:

He is an 'attention-to-details' manager. A Jose Mourinho side cannot be accused of being under-prepared. Invariably all the Mourinho teams are well-drilled with a fantastic backline. He builds his team

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from the defence and firmly believes in the theory that offence wins you games but defence wins you championships. He is regarded as one of the most tactically sound managers in Europe and studies the opposition team thoroughly. He is known for building personal relationships with his players and so he automatically owns the dressing room and commands fierce loyalty from his players.

Weaknesses:

Jose Mourinho is widely known for playing winning but pragmatic football which directly goes against the traditions of Manchester United. United is known for playing entertaining and free-flowing football, and the Old Trafford crowd demands not only winning football but easy-to-eye football.

Mourinho is known for playing the pantomime villain, all too well. In some cases it might take the pressure off the players, but on the downside, instead of the players, the manager may enjoy the media spotlight a bit more than what is expected in Old Trafford.

Verdict:

Jose Mourinho is the top contender from taking over from Sir Alex. He has the managerial acumen and the required charisma and personality to fill the big boots of Sir Alex. He shares a fantastic rapport with the great man, and as David Gill has stated that Sir Alex will have a huge role to play on his successor's choice, so Mourinho is one of the, if not the front runner for the post. Will he be ready to commit his long term future to Manchester United, build another dynasty and play the kind of football the Old Trafford demands every time the successors of the 'Busby Babes' take the field?

Josep Guardiola:



Pep Guardiola enjoyed a stellar playing career with FC Barcelona with 263 appearances and won numerous trophies, including the European Cup in 1991-92 season. He finally left Barcelona in 2001.

His rise to become one of the most coveted managerial talents is nothing short of astounding. He was appointed as the coach of FC Barcelona B team at

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the start of the 2007-08 season. Under his guidance, the team subsequently won Tercera Division and qualified for the 2008 Segunda Division Playoffs, which the team won and was promoted. He replaced Frank Rijikard as the manager of Barca at the end of the 2007-08 season.

Before the start of the 2008-09 season, he made some sweeping changes to the Barca side by off-loading starts like Ronaldinho and Deco and brought in fresh players like Dani Alves, Seydou Keita and Gerard Pique. In his first season with the Catalan giants, the young manager won an unprecedented six trophies, an astonishing achievement for such a young manager. He is also the youngest manager to win the UEFA Champions League and he won it TWICE, in the 2008-09 and 2009-10 seasons. He has already won three back-to-back La Liga titles. Now that's an outstanding record for a young manager.

Strengths:

Under Guardiola, Barcelona has developed and mastered a mesmerising passing game that sometimes leaves their opponents chasing shadows in the midfield. His players are so adept in keeping the ball to their feet that the opponents are just left with no choice but to withstand all the pressure and hope to hit them back with a quick counter-attack. Another feature of Guardiola's Barca team is the pressing game that they play, which rarely allows the opponents to settle down with the ball. The football that Barca plays is beautiful to see but extremely hard to execute and physically demanding on the players, so Pep's players are extremely fit and he rarely rotates his team, barring injuries. Although he spent a lot of cash bringing new players to the club, he is ready to give youngsters in the club a shot at the first team, which is quite similar to Sir Alex's and United's philosophy of providing the youth a chance.

Weaknesses:

Josep Guardiola is regarded as one of the most, if not the most coveted young manager in the game but all his successes have been achieved in the familiar surroundings of the Catalan giants. Guardiola has played for Barcelona for a long period of time and then returned as their manager. He knows the club inside out and knows the brand of football that is needed for the La Liga. There arise questions as to how he can adjust his style of play in a different club, in a different league. Only time can answer that.

Verdict:

Josep Guardiola will be a kind of coup for Manchester United if they can acquire him. He is young, has promoted the brand of attacking football that the Old Trafford crowd bays for and will be willing to build one more dynasty. But can he adjust to a different club in a different league?

David Moyes:

Had I been the CEO of Manchester United, I would not think twice before offering David Moyes to fill up the managerial vacancy, with Sir Alex not around, but unfortunately I AM NOT! David Moyes is one of the finest British managers in the game right now. He is young, tactically alert and a fantastic man manager.



His managerial career started at Preston North End in 1998, taking over from Gary Peters as the club struggled in the Division Two. Preston avoided relegation and qualified for the Division two playoffs, which they lost. The following season, they won the Division Two title and was promoted to Division One and qualified for the playoffs with largely the same squad that won the Division Two title.

Moyes left for Everton to take over from Walter Smith in 2002. If we take Everton's budget into account then Moyes has achieved miracles with the club, and unearthed and harnessed talents like Wayne Rooney, Leighton Baines, Jack Rodwell, Seamus Coleman and the latest one, Ross Barkley. Everton achieved Champions League qualification in the 2004-05 season, a remarkable achievement for a club with a small budget.

Strengths:

I haven't seen much of Preston North End but whatever I have seen of Everton in the last 10 years, I can safely say, that a David Moyes team won't leave anything behind in the field, whatever the result might be. A trip to Goodison Park is always a tough fixture in the League calendar - an Everton team will hurry and hassle the opponent into making mistakes while displaying remarkable team ethic and commitment. They work their socks off on the field. David Moyes is known for making some smart buys and loan moves, as Everton's budget is very low. This season Everton's net spend was NEGATIVE, the only top-flight club with a negative net spend. Players like Tim Cahill, Mikel Arteta (who left for Arsenal this season), Royston Drenthe and Steven Pienaar were brought to top flight English football by David Moyes. Tactically smart and a fantastic man manager, David Moyes is a special managerial talent.

Weaknesses:

David Moyes has harnessed his managerial skills at Preston North End and Everton. With no offence to Everton, can Moyes handle the pressure and expectations that come with being the manager of a big club like Manchester United? Over and above, he doesn't have much experience of playing or managing in Europe, which is tactically a totally different ball game.

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Verdict:

If there is one British manager that deserves his chance of managing a top club like Manchester United, then David Moyes is the man. United's ethos lies in the fact that they try to build the foundation of a team through young players and they put a lot of emphasis on their youth academy. Moyes is known for identifying young players and nurturing them. Wayne Rooney is one of the best examples of a prodigal young player, nurtured by Moyes. He will carry forward the tradition, from Sir Alex, of building a team on young up-starts. He will be keen to build his own legacy at Manchester United and if he achieves success, then United need not worry about another managerial vacancy for a long time. I have discussed the strength of a typical David Moyes team. As opposed to Pep and Mourinho, Moyes doesn't have the requisite funds but his strength lies in the way he prepares the team, and his penchant for an astute buy.

Krishnendu Sanyal is a Manchester United fan and worships Sir Alex Ferguson and Roy Keane. Krish is a management grad by education and an accidental entrepreneur by occupation. He can be reached on twitter @kriacked and sanya.krishnendu@gmail.com

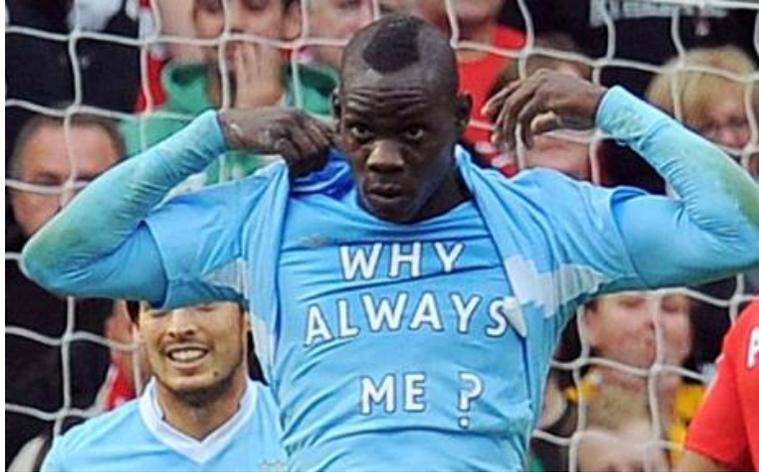
Deep Pocket Style Revolution

Some questions that have been looming large in the minds of football followers across the world: “Will the beautiful game continue to speak *Español* in future? Or will we witness a counter revolution in the way the game will be played?”

*La Rojas*¹ have been flying high in international and club football for quite some time now and there seems to be no stopping them. The Catalan crusade to *purify* the sport is quite clichéd by now. With hardly any success to show, the resurgent *Merengues*² challenge can be categorised as “*still taking shape*”. Add to that, football followers across the world are desperately seeking a strong opponent for *L'equip blaugrana*³, for the sake of healthy comparison.

Allow me to look beyond Spain as I switch my focus to the English game, and the direction it is heading towards. To talk about the English game, one has to start with Manchester United because of their sheer consistency with silverware. Any English club which has its eyes set on the Barclay's Premier League glory has to perforce adapt to a life with United in topflight.

But what did we see a few weeks back? The Noisy Neighbours making the Red Devils appear like strangers in Old Trafford. Manchester United's home form until that match was something the fans would brag about. Yet, the 6-1 drubbing was achieved with consummate ease and oomph. Mario Balotelli even took off his shirt to ask a very rhetorical question to the crowd in the Theatre of Dreams.



And since that weekend, while everyone was talking about it, the thought definitely crossed my skeptical mind:

“Is this a shock win?”
“Is the club following in the footsteps of its deep-pocket peers like Chelsea and the more recent addition, Anzhi Makhachkala?”

Mario Balotelli showing off a t-shirt saying 'Why always me?' after scoring against Manchester United

“Is money doing all the talking here?”

For me, the answer is, “No.”

¹ *La Roja* (The Red [One]) - nickname for **Spain** national football team

² *Los Merengues* (The Meringues) – nickname for Real Madrid C.F.

³ *L'equip blaugrana* - nickname for Football Club Barcelona

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Manchester City may have the money but their game is not shaped by it. Manchester City has achieved handsome victories since this season began. All this time I had been holding my judgment, saying it could be the bank that was the source of their proficiency. But half-a-dozen goals against Manchester United are proofs of a much greater determination. Mercenaries, that is, footballers hired for huge sums, are experts at what they do and they do it with elan. But it would take more than a pack of mercenaries to ram in three goals in the last five minutes. Though Manchester United did not help themselves with a so-called-gung-ho approach, the killer instinct and sheer professionalism showed by City cannot be ignored. The desire to establish themselves was clearly visible. The *coup de grace* that Roberto Mancini's men delivered that fateful Sunday will be spoken of for a long time in the history of football in Manchester.

Sir Alex Ferguson believed that what cannot be obtained with money, can be more than made up for with desire. The Manchester United eleven, irrespective of who features in it, are driven by that desire to win. But the Manchester United determination astonishingly went missing in a derby match. Wayne Rooney was there to orchestrate the attack, Rio Ferdinand and Patrice Evra to marshal the defence and Anderson, Nani, Fletcher all raring to go - what was on the cards was a routine Manchester derby. The game unfolded kindly for Manchester United - more shots on goal, a wee bit more possession and definitely more purpose in their sallying forth. Manchester United had to deal with Evans getting sent off though. It appeared Manchester City was struggling to cope with Manchester United's pressure early on but what it actually turned out to be was that they were soaking up the early pressure and biding their time. This, football lovers, is the counter revolution I was talking about. The men in blue patiently built up their game.



Manchester City Routs Manchester United 6-1

The Counter Revolution

A club founded on money is trying to make good on philosophy. Although it is the riches of the owners that is the wind in City's sails, Mancini seems to be trying to mould their game with astuteness, adroitness and assiduousness. And there can be no doubt that the former Internazionale coach has the sense and understanding to achieve something like what he did for Inter. An example of it is the way he has gone about handling the mercurial Balotelli.

The enfant terrible of Italian football has the reputation of being something of a rake but Mancini appears to have impressed upon him the fact that when you are paid to play the game you better deliver on the money. No less astounding was his way of handling Carlos Tevez. He has portrayed the strict disciplinarian in him and everyone around knows who's the boss.

And for those who have always sneered at money as an important tool for team building, this result is a worrisome sign. The theory that money cannot buy you a prize-winning team is fast turning out to be a myth that needs reappraising. But it's still early days as far as City's rise to glory is concerned. Sure, they are yet to win the laurels in England and in Europe but it is their approach to football that seems to me to be a new vocabulary of style. *"Rich kids sweating it out, earning it."* If this marriage of money and desire is consummated, then clubs which rely on power, determination and/or panache, will have a serious bogey to reckon with.

History of football is, however, full of episodes of rich clubs squandering away their capital and culture, and eventually turning out to be a bad investment for their owners and a sad excuse for a football team. But there is everything to be said for this revolution, that is, if it is one.

Name: *Swaraj Mir*
Game: Journalist
Age: 27
Location: Hyderabad
Sports: Football, Soccer, Futsal
Soundtrack: Take a Look Around (Limp Bizkit)
Possibilities: Explorer
Contact: swaraimir@gmail.com

Scouting Network



Michael Simões Domingues (Mika)

Born: 08 March, 1991

Nationality: Portuguese

Height: 1.95m

Weight: 90kg

Position: Goalkeeper

Contracted till: 2016 to Benfica

Termination Fee: 20.0 m €

They say that goalkeepers mature with time and a bright start has often led to huge expectations and subsequent downfall of goalkeepers. The truly greats though signal their entrance - a 17 year old Gianluigi Buffon singlehandedly stopped the marauding Scudetto winners, Milan, to a 0-0 and Iker Casillas made his debut as a 17 year old and was Madrid's #1 by next year. Michael Simões Domingues or Mika has put his markers early on in his career and in a season when a year older David de Gea was sold for 20m, Mika has taken strong strides to be a future #1 of Portugal.

Born in Yverden, Switzerland, Mika joined Sporting Clube de Pombal – a branch of the great Sporting Clube de Portugal, as a 10 year old. After 4 years there, he shifted to União de Leiria, a middle rung team, which managed to get itself relegated in 2007-08 but was promoted the very next year. Mika

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though was in the youth ranks and would only debut for Leiria in 2009-10 in a league match against Guimarães when the #1 goalkeeper got the marching orders. In those 30 minutes that he came in, Mika would concede a goal from a penalty but would make some brilliant saves to keep the score down to that single goal. His next opportunity would only come in the following season in a tough away match to one of the powerhouses of Portuguese SuperLiga – Sporting Lisbon. This time Mika kept a clean slate and came to the notice of the scouts. In two other matches, he would concede 6 goals, but the spark of the potential, that he had, was seen.

That spark though would become a raging fire in the FIFA U-20 World Cup held in Columbia in August 2011. Portugal reached the finals of the tournament only to lose to their Brazilian counterparts, but it was Mika who stole the show by not conceding his first goal till he came up against the hat-trick hero Oscar in the finals. That made it 575 minutes on the trot. It broke the previous record of going unbeaten for the longest duration in the U20 World Cup. To put it into perspective, the corresponding record in the FIFA World Cup is held by Walter Zenga of Italy and that is 518 minutes. Mika's heroics just didn't stay confined to the regular playing time. He saved 3 Argentine U20 penalties in a shootout in the quarterfinal to take Portugal U20s to the semis. He was awarded the Golden Glove for the stellar show throughout the tournament.

Europe's biggest clubs came calling for Mika but he chose to join Benfica and with Artur as the #1 and Eduardo, the former Portuguese #1, Mika will have to fight for opportunities. At 20, he has age on his side and has already progressed to being the #1 in the Portuguese U21 team. Keep your eyes on the Estádio da Luz, for the next big European goalkeeper may just come from there.

Journey from the Iron Curtain to Perestroika

The world we live in today is far from what it was, say twenty five years ago. In this age of media blitz and consumerism, many of us remember the old days when the world was divided into two blocks. Winston Churchill on March 5, 1946 had delivered a speech at Westminster College in Missouri. It had a line which spoke of dominating the social and political scenario of the world for the next four decades. "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an 'iron curtain' has descended across the continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe." This was the popularisation of the term – 'Iron Curtain'. The term had been used before in similar context, but this speech made it famous. The main country behind this Iron Curtain was Soviet Union. The Soviets were a power not only in the military and political circles but also in the world of sports. The Soviet football teams were very strong during this period. Sadly, the successor of the then powerful Soviet team, Russia has failed to achieve similar results. We will try and understand the reasons behind this decline and try to obtain some answers regarding this.



Soviet Union national team crest

Beginnings

The Russian revolution occurred in 1917, after which the entire country was under the grip of a terrible civil war for the next six years which led to a large scale loss of lives and property. There was no time for football or any sports during this period. The first official match played by the Soviet national team was on November 16, 1924 against Turkey which resulted in a 3-0 Soviet victory. There was an unofficial match played against the then independent nation of Estonia in 1923 which was won 4-2 by the Soviets. The national team was sponsored by the state and main emphasis was laid more on Olympics than on the World Cup. However, the team qualified for seven final editions of the tournament from 1958 to 1990, with the exception of 1974 and 1978. The results in the Olympics were far more spectacular with two gold medals and three bronze medals. In the UEFA Euro Cup they won the inaugural tournament in 1960 and finished runners up in three occasions. The Soviet national team also won the inaugural Under 20 World Cup in 1977.

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Gavriil Kachilin



Victor Maslov

Golden Age of the 60s

Much of the success in the 1960s was under the managerial skills of Gavriil Kachilin, who was a keen man manager with a great rapport with the communist party bosses whom he persuaded not to interfere in his team matters. A Moscow XI made up of different Soviet players managed by Kachilin was the only team to beat the great Hungarian team in their winning run of 34 matches in 1952-54. This victory brought him to the notice of the sports minister who put him in charge of the national squad.



The Soviet national team of the 60s

Another big influence on Soviet and world football during this period was Victor Maslov, the former coach of Torpedo Moscow and Dinamo Kyiv. Maslov is credited to have been the inventor of the 4-4-2 formation and the concept of pressing in the early 1960s much before its implementation by Sir Alf

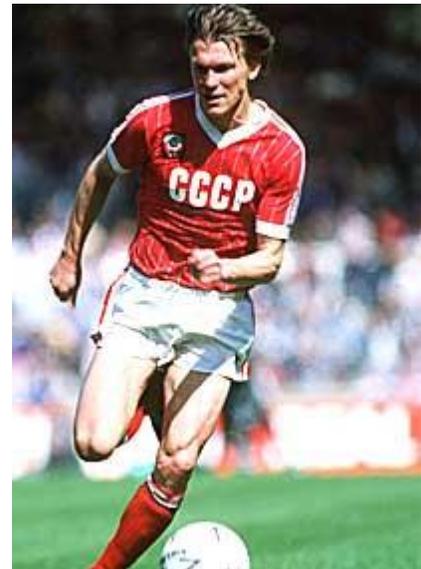
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Ramsey of England in 1966. He was the first person to understand the concept of not allowing opponents time with the ball. According to the noted football journalist Jonathan Wilson he was the initiator of modern football tactics as we know it today.

This was the golden age of Soviet football with a gold medal at the 1956 Olympics and victory in the 1960 European nation's cup. The best results in the World Cup were also during this period. The 1968 European nation's cup semi-final against Italy, which finished in a goalless draw after extra time, was also a memorable match. Till date it is the only senior international final tournament match to be decided by the toss of a coin. The Soviet captain Albert Shesternyov called incorrectly and Italy advanced to the final and eventually won the trophy. The man who was identified as the face of Soviet football during this time was the legendary goalkeeper Lev Yashin, voted as the best goalkeeper of the century in 2000 by International Federation of Football History and Statistics (IFFHS). Other major players of this period were Albert Shesternyov, Valeriy Voronin, Valentin Ivanov, Igor Netto, Igor Chislenko, Eduard Streltsov, Viktor Ponedelnik, Mikheil Meskhi and Murtaz Khurtsilava.



Valeriy Lobanovskiy



Oleg Blokhin : Ballon D'Or 1975

The Last Hurrah under Lobanovskiy

The other good period of Soviet football was in the late 1970's to late 1980's under the mercurial Ukrainian manager Valeriy Lobanovskiy, who had successfully managed the Dynamo Kyiv club to three European trophies in the 70s. During this period, Oleg Blokhin of Dynamo Kyiv emerged as one of the best forwards in Europe winning the Ballon D'Or in 1975. In the 1986 World Cup the Soviets topped their group by goal difference, winning their matches against Hungary and Canada easily. They drew the other group game against the defending European champions, France in a match which the media described as a match between two genuine contenders for the trophy. In the 2nd round they faced Belgium who were one of the best third placed teams to advance from the group stages. The Soviets were overwhelming favourites. The Soviet team dominated for long periods of the match and led by an Igor Belanov goal at halftime. The Belgians, unimpressive in the tournament till then, had two world class

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players in Jan Ceulemans and a young Enzo Scifo. Scifo equalised as the Soviet defence were put under pressure with counter-attacks and long balls by the opposition. Belanov restored the lead only to have Ceulemans equalise to take the match into extra time. The Soviets kept attacking and dominating their opponents in extra time, but conceded two counter-attacking goals, both of which were potentially off-side. Belanov completed his hat-trick by converting a penalty to reduce the margin. The Soviets laid siege to the Belgian goal during this period but could not equalise due to the magnificent performance of Jean Marie Pfaff, the Belgian goalkeeper. The exit of the Soviet team was described as a loss to the tournament. Ukrainian Belanov went on to win the Ballon D'Or that year after a very successful club season with Dynamo Kyiv.



Igor Belanov with the Ballon D'Or in 1986.

The team won gold at the 1988 Olympics defeating Brazil with Romario, Bebeto, Jorginho and Tafferel in the final 2-1 in an enthralling encounter. In Euro 1988 the Soviet team topped their group beating Netherlands on the way to the final. In the finals they were favourites against the Dutch whom they had defeated earlier, but fell to the genius of Ruud Gullit and Marco Van Basten. Igor Belanov missed a penalty to add to their woes. It was ironic that Lobanovskyi was defeated by the team managed by Rinus Michel whose idea of total football he tried to incorporate in his side. That was the last we saw of a strong Soviet side.

Decline and Fall

All this changed in 1989 after the fall of the Berlin wall, the subsequent advent of perestroika and glasnost and the demise of communism in Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union as a nation broke into different countries like Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and Belarus. The system which was in place was finished, as the financial support of the government was required for other important things. The state of the art facilities that they enjoyed were all destroyed due to neglect. The Soviet clubs which were majorly backed by large government organisations were left to fend for themselves financially.

This started an exodus as majority of the players started to move abroad to play for foreign clubs with lucrative contracts. The team did play as Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) for a few years and also managed to qualify for the Euro 1992 finals in Sweden. However, the CIS team was replaced by Russia in the finals by a FIFA decision as all the different countries wanted to develop their own national teams.

Facts figures and answers

The question which a lot of people ask is why does the current Russian team fail to produce similar results in international tournaments like the erstwhile Soviet teams? The answer is very simple - the current Russian team have the very industrious and organised mid-fielders and defenders. The Soviet team had their share of these players, but they had something extra. They had their creative Ukrainian mid-fielders, the lightning quick Belarusian wingers and very skilled Georgian full-backs. The current Russian national team has very few creative players like these. Similarly the Ukrainian and Georgian teams lack the organisation in defence and midfield of the Russian team. That was the essence of the Soviet team where the Russians would hold fort defensively and work hard. The Ukrainians, Belarusians and the Georgians would add the creative spark and flair. There have also been a few Latvian and Estonian defenders and wingers who have also been part of the Soviet teams. The Russians have played a little more than half the number of matches played by the Soviets till date. One cannot compare a single country with a conglomeration of fifteen different countries who have played double the number of matches. The game in the former Soviet states has also been plagued by politics, corruption and the advent of oligarchs of different types into the national federations. This has meant that the development of the game has evolved from the disciplined approach of the state to the whims and wishes of individuals. It is also a major reason for the number of players from these countries shining in clubs abroad but the national teams lagging behind.

The Soviet oligarchs have taken more interest in foreign clubs than their own. Chelsea and Roman Abramovich is the obvious example but others like Alisher Usmanov who owns a large share of Arsenal and Vladimir Antonov who bought Portsmouth from his countryman Alexander Gaydamuk, are also there. FC Schalke 04, the German Bundesliga club is sponsored by Gazprom, one of the major petroleum companies of Russia. It is a status symbol of the Russian elite glitterati to own a football club in a western nation. A few of these billionaires own some of the clubs at home as well. Leonid Fedun owns Spartak Moscow and the newest entrant to this elite group is Suleyman Kerimov, the owner of Anzhi Makhachkala. Anzhi have stunned the football world with a number of big name signings with massive sums of money like Samuel Eto and Roberto Carlos. Anzhi however is a product of the regional prestige of the Dagestan republic, who are proud of their roots and culture. The strange part is, the entire team stays and trains in Moscow, 2000 kilometres away and fly down to play their home matches in Makhachkala. This type of a system which is haphazard and based more on personal and regional egos and whims than logic, cannot possibly help in development of the game in the long run.

One positive point is that Russia will be hosting the World Cup in 2018. This will help in the building of a long term infrastructure like stadiums and training facilities. The Russian national team is also on the ascendancy with some good players playing in the major leagues of Europe. With the Russian system we can only say that either 'madness is their method' or 'there is method in their madness'.

Goalden Times

If we make a table of all the matches ever played by the Soviet Union it would read like this:

Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	Goals For	Goals Against	Goal Difference
379	212	93	74	674	333	+341

A team which has won nearly 56% of all their games and drawn a further 24% and lost only around 20% can be deemed to have a very successful record. Majority of the matches were against European opposition.

A similar table of all the matches played by Russia after the dissolution of the CIS:

Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	Goals For	Goals Against	Goal Difference
200	105	47	48	346	196	+150

This winning percentage is 52% with 24% matches drawn and loss percentage of 24%. The Russians have played more matches against lower ranked teams than their predecessors.

Epilogue

An all star Soviet Union squad of all times was selected by European Journalists in 1992 when the team was no longer in existence. It is a tribute to a bygone era where individuals rose above regional and ethnic differences and felt proud to play under a single flag and nation.

Soviet Union All Star Squad (All Time)

Name: Nationality: Club (Most appearances): Soviet National Team tenure

Goalkeepers



Lev Yashin: Russia:
Dinamo Moscow: 1954 – 1967



Rinat Dasayev: Russia:
Spartak Moscow: 1979 – 1990

Defenders



Vladimir Bessonov : Ukraine:
Dinamo Kyiv: 1977 – 1990



Anatoliy Demayanko: Ukraine:
Dinamo Kyiv: 1981 – 1990



Revaz Dzodzuashvili : Georgia:
FC Dinamo Tbilisi: 1969–1974



Evgeny Lovchev : Russia :
Spartak Moscow: 1969 – 1977

Goalden Times



Albert Shesternyov: Russia:
CSKA Moscow : 1961 – 1971



Aleksandr Chivadze: Georgia:
FC Dinamo Tbilisi: 1980–1989



Murtaz Khurtsilava : Georgia :
FC Dinamo Tbilisi: 1965 – 1973



Vasily Rats: Ukraine :
Dinamo Kyiv: 1986–1990

Midfielders



Valeri Voronin: Russia: FC
Torpedo Moscow: 1960 – 1968



Igor Netto : Russia:
Spartak Moscow: 1952 – 1965



David Kipiani : Georgia :
FC Dinamo Tbilisi: 1974-1981



Volodymyr Muntyan : Ukraine:
Dinamo Kyiv: 1968–1976



Oleksandr Zavarov : Ukraine:
Dinamo Kyiv: 1985–1990



Yuri Gavrilov: Russia:
Spartak Moscow: 1978–1985



Sergei Ilyin: Russia:
Dinamo Moscow: 1936-1939



Khoren Oganessian: Armenia:
Ararat Yerevan: 1979–1984



Alexei Mikhaïlichenko: Ukraine:
Dinamo Kyiv: 1987–1991

Attackers



Eduard Streltsov: Russia :
FC Torpedo Moscow: 1955–1968



Valentin Ivanov: Russia:
FC Torpedo Moscow: 1956 – 1965



Mikheil Meskhi : Georgia:
FC Dinamo Tbilisi: 1959–1966



Igor Belanov : Ukraine:
Dinamo Kyiv 1985–1990



Oleg Blokhin: Ukraine:
Dinamo Kyiv: 1972–1988



Grigory Fedotov : Russia:
CSKA Moscow: 1937–1945



Viktor Ponedelnik : Russia:
SKA Rostov-on-Don: 1960–1966



Igor Chislenko: Russia:
Dinamo Moscow : 1959 – 1968

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Six And The City

Sex and the City is an American television comedy-drama series created by Darren Star and produced by HBO.

Set and filmed in New York City and based on the book of the same name by Candace Bushnell, the show follows the lives of four New York women - who, throughout their varied careers, with all their idiosyncrasies and ever-changing sex lives, remain inseparable and confide in each other.

The quirky series had multiple continuing storylines that tackled relevant and modern social issues like sexuality, sexually transmitted diseases, safe sex, promiscuity, femininity while exploring the difference between friendships and relationships.

A feature film based on *Sex and the City*, written, produced and directed by Michael Patrick King, was released in 2008. *Sex and the City 2*, a sequel, was released in May of 2010.

This article has allusions to the popular TV series.

Scene 1: 8:20AM, Ms Evans' bedroom

Ms Evans woke up with a hangover and a very sore lower torso. This was not the first time that she'd woken up in the morning, feeling this way. Usually she would indulge in a tall glass of Irish every time she woke up with a hangover, an age-old practice from her Belfast days.

But this one was a totally different ball game. The pain was excruciating. More than the pain, it was the feeling of having woken up from a terrible nightmare. She collected herself, rolled the comforter over and just lay in bed, in a trance, for a while longer.

"Did I really do that? And at my place?" she wondered, as the nightmare kept flashing across her mind. Was there a way to find out?

Scene 2: Flashback early morning 1AM, K2, China Town

The ladies had a business meeting and the boss had taken the team to The Hacienda. It was also a pre-birthday treat for Mrs. Rooney. Ms. Evans, still recollecting scenes from the night before, could clearly remember a clown, who kept toppling prime Belgian beer over his own head in an attempt to impress the ladies around.

"Such an idiot", slipped through her lips. She recalled the sarcastic comments she had deliberately made audible to the big-mouthed, queer-dressed punk and his friends in the disco. What she witnessed in her nightmare was probably just a manifestation of her subconscious.

Scene 3: 8:45AM, Ms Evans' kitchen

While brewing the Irish in the coffee maker, Ms Evans felt an insatiable urge to figure out whether it really was a nightmare or it did happen. But whatever it was, she didn't want her mates to know. So, she decided the best thing would be to call up Mrs. Rooney and wish her happy birthday, to begin with. She would then try to piece the puzzle together. She made that call from her new iPhone 4S that was already flashing the birthday reminder. Ms Evans did her best to underplay her anxiety as she spoke to the birthday girl. Mrs. Rooney seemed quite collected, more than she had expected, as if nothing had happened last night. They discussed the party and the boys. It was not until then that Mrs. Rooney mentioned the noisy gang from the previous night, some of whom, Mrs. Rooney had invited to her party tonight as well. Ms Evans was getting it slowly but steadily. The party from last night was not all in her nightmare; part of it was true, after all.

Scene 4: 10:05 AM, still in Ms. Evans' kitchen

Ms. Evans took a long shower, still trying to locate the missing pieces of the jigsaw. Munching her fish and chips, she started gathering her thoughts again. This was not the first time such a thing had happened – earlier she had ended up where she should not have.

“So, what happened then?” she asked herself and noted down how things would shape up if it had really been true.

The boss would be furious – either he would throw a boot at her or shout at her; she quickly scrolled through the missed calls. Nope, he did not call. Had such a thing happened, Mrs. Evra would send her some jokes to cheer her up. But no, the last message was from an unknown number. She opened it quickly and it read, *‘Why always me’*. As if the morning was not mysterious enough without this cryptic message.

Good God! What had she got herself into!?!?

While running through other options, what struck her was the young Latina. Definitely the hairiest Latina she had ever come across, but now is not probably a time to laugh at her looks. She needed her. She dialled her number and ended up reaching her voice message.

Scene 5: 12:35PM, Ms De Gea's residence

Ms Evans did not waste any more time thinking, quickly gobbled up the remaining breakfast and zipped out. The only time she could spare was to decide the colour of her stilettos. She then rushed through the busy Manchester traffic and reached Ms. De Gea's residence on the other side of the city. She parked the car outside their apartment and walked up to the door only to find it locked.

“So she is out and not receiving calls either – wonder what this new girl is up to,” thought Ms Evans. She was about to leave a post-it on the front door with a message to call her back, when the next door neighbour looked at her inquisitively.

“You amigo of the gal?” asked the lady, with a broken half-Italian-half-English accent and oddly sporting a scarf indoors. What she then told Ms Evans was shocking. Ms De Gea was in a city hospital. She had been abused, beaten black and blue and robbed by a bunch of hooligans after her friends abandoned her post a late night party.

Ms Evans' face turned pale. She went back quietly, wishing she'd never dropped by to find out. It was all coming back to her now.

Scene 6: 10:35PM, Boss' office, Beetham Tower, City Center

The view from his 19th floor office would be worth walking miles for anyone else, but when you see it everyday from your cabin, it loses its charm. The old man stood quietly, his eyes looking beyond the Manchester skyline. He had gotten used to this view for 25 years now. Everything always seemed so small from his 19th floor office.

The doctor would not recommend him working so late at 70, but today that was the least of his concerns. He had tried hard to concentrate on his work all day, but was continuously distracted by the loud music from the office next door. They were having a party to celebrate some great feat. This was not a stray occurrence though, the once quiet and low key neighbours had started having these loud parties quite often in the past couple of years, and it was increasingly becoming a challenge to work peacefully. But today he wasn't able to take his mind off how his girls had let him down – they should have been more careful. It was so humiliating, he felt like one of those tiny dots on the pedestrian crossing from the 19th floor. He was missing the services of his senior officers who had retired last year. Mrs. Vidic had also called in sick at the last moment. Could they have controlled the girls and prevented the situation from getting out of hand? He had also thought of appointing some efficient middle managers to keep things in control, but alas, his company was no longer the highest paymaster in town and could not afford them.

Just about then a spine-chilling thought crossed his mind and his hands started shaking like it had happened that day. Could he have approached the game differently? Was it in his power to avoid the shame that was?

"There is only one way to go, Alex," he said to himself.

The grim jaws chewed on the no-more sweet gum as the long-shot faded off in the distant sky.

Anweshan Ghosh supports Manchester United and unsurprisingly loves injury time winners. He follows the EPL and the I-League. He is a consultant by profession but can happily give up his day job to be a water boy at the Theatre of Dreams. Apart from football he is also passionate about cars and movies.

This Month That Year

In this feature, we try to bring to you some past events of the month that make it special.

November 01, 1952 – Gillingham's Jimmy Scarth scored the fastest hat-trick of that era in the English League. In a Division Three (South) match against Leyton Orient, the ex-Tottenham Hotspur player achieved the envious feat of scoring 3 goals within a span of 2 minutes and 30 seconds. More than half a century later, in 2004, Bournemouth's James Hayter bettered that record by 10 seconds. Though some reports claim that Scarth had managed to get the goals in by a mere 2 minutes, FA is yet to approve that.



Jimmy Scarth

November 03, 1997 - A Malaysian-based betting syndicate bribed the security guards to rig the lights at the Boleyn Ground when the match between West Ham United and Crystal Palace was tied at 2-2. The match could not be started and the betters earned a whopping £30million. The story was known 2 years later when the same betting syndicate tried to manipulate a match in a similar fashion, but was caught this time round.

November 08, 1975 - Referee Wolf-Dieter Ahlenfelder blew the half-time whistle 29 minutes into the match between Hannover 96 and Werder Bremen at the Weserstadion. Fortunately, the assistant referee pointed out the error and the remaining 16 minutes of the half were played. Apparently, Ahlenfelder did not like any unwanted attention as he went into the break and even stuck his tongue

out to one of the photographers. He returned in the second half but the match finished without any further drama at 0-0.

November 10, 1899 – British forces in South Africa were playing a football match at the parade ground of the Gordon Highlanders near Ladysmith in the British Colony of Natal against a team from a local Natal regiment during the Second Boer War. Barely two minutes into the game, an *innocent* 90-lb artillery shell fired by Boer forces, flew over the playground just to explode harmlessly nearby. Amidst the shock at the arrival of such a guest, one of the Gordon players acted smart and sneaked in a goal. Responding to the objection of the Natal players, the Gordons later sent a letter to the Football Association. They argued that there is no ground for any such objection as per the rule book! FA was baffled, and even today they are looking for an answer.



Gordon Highlanders

November 11, 2007 – 26-year old disc jockey and a die-hard Lazio fan, Gabriele Sandri was travelling to Milan for a Lazio-Inter match, when he got involved in a clash with a group of Juventini and was unfortunately shot dead by a policeman. Hell broke loose across Italy in protest resulting in cancellation of football matches across Italy. Luigi Spaccarotella, the firing policeman, was convicted of criminally negligent manslaughter and sentenced to six years of imprisonment in 2009.



Fans put up a poster of Gabriele Sandri

November 14, 1973 – Italy beat England at Wembley in a friendly, by a late solitary goal. The goal scorer was a certain Fabio Capello.

November 17, 1989 – Egypt had to win against Algeria at Cairo Stadium to book a place in the 1990 World Cup. The arch rivals had a long history of hatred, dating back to the 1950s when Egypt refused to play matches intended to support Algerian independence. As time passed by, scuffles had become a regular affair in their matches. Egypt were the underdogs for this match but that did not dishearten their fans to pack the 1 million capacity stadium, a good 4 hours before the kick-off to the match. The hosts won, 1-0, but the match made the headlines for the consequent violence that took place, earning it the nickname of "Hate Match." After the final whistle, Algeria's players, coaches, and officials encircled the referee and began throwing plants and dirt into the stands. At a post-match conference, Algerian midfielder Lakhdar Belloumi struck the Egyptian team doctor, blinding him in one eye. Emotions were running high and this is evident from the [celebrations of the Egyptian fans](#) – they were returning to the World Cup tournament after a hiatus of 56 years.

November 18, 2009 – Thierry Henry, or his hand, helped France secure their place at the 2010 World Cup. After finishing second in their qualification group, France took on Ireland in a playoff. They won the first leg in Dublin, 0-1 but were soon 1-0 behind themselves in the second leg in Paris. With the sides dead locked at 1-1 on aggregate at the end of regulation, the match went into extra time, when France forward Thierry Henry clearly controlled the ball inside the Irish half with his left arm, before centring it for defender William Gallas to score the eventual winner. Neither did the referee spot it, nor did FIFA listen to the Irish appeal for a replay. After the match, Henry admitted to using his hand, but was not feeling guilty as he said, "I'm not the ref." France's luck ran out in the World Cup to follow, as Les Bleus crashed out after only one draw and two losses in the group stage.



I am not the ref

November 20, 1988 - The league match between Argentinos Juniors and Racing Club from Argentina saw a staggering 44 penalties. The Argentinean Primera Division had introduced the penalties that season to augment the excitement at drawn matches. The match under consideration ended 2-2 in regulation time, and seemed to go forever as the tie-breaker went on and on. The penalty shootout for only 1 additional was heavily criticized and it was abandoned after only one season.

November 22, 1922 – Wilf Minter of reigning Athenian League champions St. Albans netted seven times against Dulwich Hamlet from the Isthmian League, in an FA Cup Fourth Qualifying Round replay match. But he must have felt dejected as he still ended up on the losing side. The teams had finished 1-1 in the first leg. In the decider, played in front of a crowd of 4,060 at Dulwich's Champion Hill, both the teams could not field their first choice goalkeeper resulting in goals galore. Minter scored two hat-tricks – one in the first half hour and one in the last half hour of regulation 90 minutes of football – only to see Dulwich matching St. Albans stroke for stroke. Dulwich struck first blood in extra time, but Minter again fired in one more, scoring his seventh to equalize five minutes from time. But he could not prevent his team losing it 7-8 on that day. Dulwich again featured in another goal festival 7 years later in a 7-7 draw with Wealdstone in the FA Cup Fourth Qualifying Round.



Poor Minter

November 23, 2002 – Luiz Figo returned to Barcelona after his much talked about transfer to Real Madrid for a then-world-record-fee of £37.2 million for the second time. It was not exactly a joyous reception that he received from the Barca faithful. When Figo approached to take a corner, he was greeted with plastic bottles, cans, lighters, AND the head of a piglet and one of a rooster. The referee had to intervene and the match was stopped for about 16 minutes. The match was a pale one in comparison, ending with a scoreless draw.

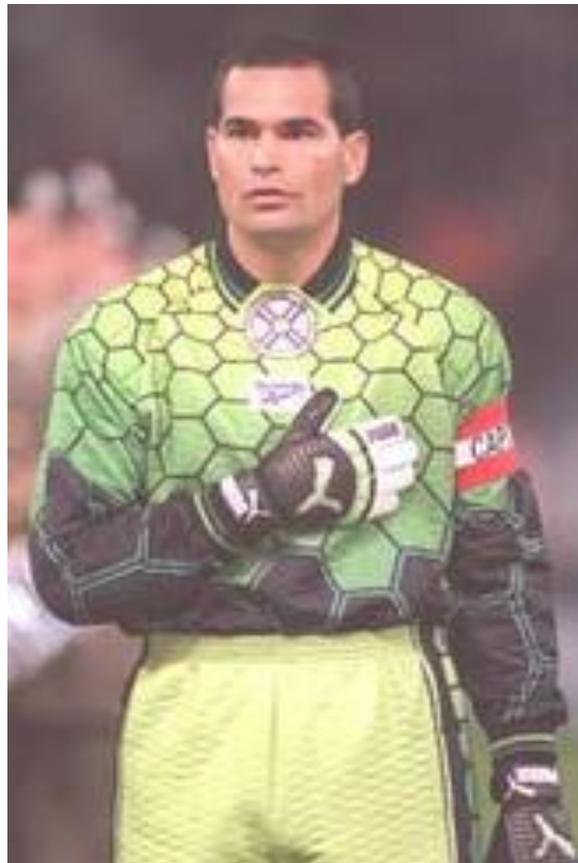


What a distraction

Goalden Times

November 24, 2009 – The Guardian's Paul Doyle had to go on in live commentary of a Champions League match between Barcelona and Inter Milan despite missing the first 32 minutes. The poor chief football writer for the Guardian website, Doyle, saw his TV getting blacked out just after the whistle. Barcelona went on to score the opening goal in the 10th minute, and Doyle reported, "Word is there's been a goal by Barca - scored by Pique - but intense study of my blank screen does not offer up any clues as to how it came about. Brilliant." His TV was up and running by the 33rd minute but there was not much of an action left, by then Barca had gone up 2-0 and had restored to some *boring* tici-taca passing game for the rest of the match.

November 28, 1999 – José Luis Chilavert, legendary Paraguayan shot stopper, scored a hat-trick for Vélez Sársfield as they defeated Ferro Carril Oeste 6-1 in an Argentina top flight match. This remains the only hat-trick scored by a goalie in any professional match. Chilavert, a dynamic character and an inspirational leader, was a swift dead ball specialist. He used to wear specially designed, a bit smaller on size, shoes to help him score from free kick and spot kicks. In the match against Ferro, in fact, all three of his goals came from the spot. In all, Chilavert scored a whopping 57 goals in club and international competitions during his time. Out of those 9 were for Paraguay, most number of international goals by any goalkeeper.



Lion heart Chilavert



A historic Moment

November 29, 1978 – Nottingham Forest’s right back, Viv Anderson became the first colored player to start for England in a friendly match against Czechoslovakia at Wembley. Anderson paid back the faith of manager Ron Greenwood in him by having a telling contribution towards the solitary goal of the match. In all, he appeared 30 times for England, till 1988 and was elected in the England hall of Fame in 2004.

Hans Gamper, born in Switzerland, was going across Barcelona to visit his uncle to Africa, when he fall in love with the city and settled down. He would then advertise on paper and go on to find eleven more people interested in forming a football club. Thus, on this day, the Futbol Club Barcelona was established in a meeting at the Gimnasio Solé.

Goalden Times

November 30, 1872 – The first ever official international football match was played between England and Scotland. Neither side was able to score on that day. Boring British Football!!!!



A Sketch from History

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2003 ASEAN CUP Glory

When was the last time Kolkata, considered the Mecca of Indian Football, witnessed eminent state leaders from a communist party, a nationalist party and a right-wing party joining hands, in the absence of a natural or human-induced disaster?

Let us go eight years back to Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport, Kolkata, where thousands had flocked to welcome the East Bengal team, while rest of the city slept.

Was this victory significant enough to garner such attention? Well, if you consider the history of Indian football, it is.

This was perhaps the first time an Indian club won a major international tournament outside India, defeating teams which are ranked way higher. East Bengal had previously lifted the Wai-Wai Cup in Nepal in 1993, but it would be unwise to compare the clubs from Nepal against the Thai team [BEC Tero Sasana](#), the finalist of 2003 AFC Champions League.

Mohun Bagan's victory over East Yorkshire in 1911 may be of huge significance to the Indian Independence movement, but neither was the tournament played on an alien soil, nor was East Yorkshire a professional football team. The fanaticism of the red and gold supporters, therefore, is completely justified. Let's look back and recollect East Bengal's path to glory.

It all started since East Bengal won the National Football League in 2002. This qualified East Bengal for an invitation from the organisers of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) football federation to participate in the LG ASEAN Cup. Note that since India is not a part of ASEAN group of nations, East Bengal could participate only on such an invite.

I doubt anyone ever dreamt that invitation could be the ticket to becoming international champions. Except perhaps the East Bengal coach Subhas Bhowmick, who had tremendous faith in his team. In fact, if the ASEAN Cup journey is a fairy tale, Mr. Bhowmick is the protagonist who transforms not only himself into a superhero, but his entire team.

He had retained the foreign recruits from 2002 - Suleh Musah (Ghana), Mike Okoro (Nigeria) and Douglas D'Silva (Brazil) - and signed up Indian football legend, Baichung Bhutia to strengthen the attack. Mahesh Gaoli and Debajit Ghosh were also recruited to reinforce the defence and midfield respectively. What Bhowmick successfully induced in the team was what was lacking in the Indian football clubs in general - professionalism. Physiotherapist trainer Kevin Jackson was brought in from South Africa. Hyatt Regency, Kolkata, hosted the footballers throughout their ASEAN Cup practice session. The team underwent rigorous physical exercises including parachute training as they practised together. Although Bhowmick was criticised in the local media for his expensive endeavours, he responded with a three goal-win over arch rivals Mohun Bagan in the Kolkata derby. The critics were of course totally silenced when East Bengal went on to winning the ASEAN Cup and then a national league title.

The venue for LG ASEAN cup 2003 was originally Vietnam, but the organisers moved it to Jakarta, Indonesia. The games were scheduled to be played at Gelora Bung Karno Stadium. This is the same stadium from where India claimed her last gold in Asian Games Football, in 1962, defeating South Korea.

Indian legends, including P.K. Banerjee, Chuni Goswami and Jarnail Singh were part of that victorious team. 12 teams from 11 different countries, including Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Malaysia were participating in the tournament. It was perhaps the biggest football tournament among the clubs in South East Asia.

East Bengal's first game was against Thai team BEC Tero Sasana. BEC Tero had already reached the finals of AFC Champions League that year (which they would eventually lose to [Al Ain](#) of UAE, a couple of months after playing ASEAN Cup). Everyone knew it was just a matter of time before BEC Tero wins this tournament. Mr. Bhowmick, in his press conference, used the biblical reference of David and Goliath to compare between the two teams and boost the morale of his squad.

Luck did not favour East Bengal initially. They played on the field with zeal and skill that left even the BEC Tero defence unexpectedly shaken. Tulunga, one of East Bengal forwards, received a ball and was moving alone towards the goal with no BEC Tero player in the vicinity. The Thai goalkeeper had no option but to push Tulunga outside the box. Rules of the game demand it be a red card, but the referee thought otherwise. This incident disturbed the red-and-gold boy's concentration. BEC Tero star Dusit Chaiman scored in the 86th minute, the only goal of the game to bring home their victory. However, this game instilled the much needed confidence in team East Bengal's spirit. Even the Thai coach was amazed to see an Indian team play such a standard of football, as seen among the teams in J-league.

East Bengal's next game was against Philippine's Army XI. This game can be called "Baichung massacre", considering the man alone scored 6 goals! Oh yes, you are reading right! The first goal was a penalty. The next one was via a corner, after deflection from East Bengal's Brazilian recruit, Douglas De Silva. Baichung's impeccable penetration skill across the Philippine defence resulted in four more. This match paved East Bengal's way towards the quarter final. East Bengal's owner Vijay Mallya flew to Jakarta to watch his team play. He was ecstatic and felt his team had truly attained international standards.

East Bengal's opponent in the Quarter Final was [Persita](#), the runner up of Indonesian league 2002. It was a daunting task for East Bengal to play an Indonesian team in their home ground, at a time when Indonesia was placed about 10 steps ahead of India in the FIFA rankings.

In the first half, Baichung's header found the back of the net to give East Bengal the lead. But soon after disaster struck as Debajit Ghosh had a head-on collision with Persita's Joydal Arif and was severely injured. Debajit lay senseless on the ground. Douglas De Silva tried mouth-to-mouth resuscitation on Debajit while Dr. Shantiranjana Dasgupta, a member of East Bengal's administrative unit, administered the immunosuppressant, Decadron. Debajit was subsequently carried to a nearby hospital.

To add insult to injury, a foul committed outside the East Bengal box was awarded a penalty for Persita. The Indonesian team didn't make any mistake scoring from the spot. However, Bijen Singh's goal in the second half secured East Bengal's place in the semi-final of the tournament. But the team had no time to celebrate after the game. They rushed to the hospital to enquire after Debajit. The young midfielder had regained consciousness and looked fit by then. Team East Bengal would now concentrate on the semi-final where they had to compete against [Petrokimia Putra](#), the Champions of Indonesian League 2002.

East Bengal got permission to play three foreigners in the semi-finals, as per the tournament rules. Along with Mussah and Douglas, the Nigerian striker Mike Okoro joined the team. Things were not looking good for the Indian team as Petrokimia scored via a free-kick just outside the box in the 23rd minute of the game. Baichung's close range shot found the back of the net in the 58th minute to level the scores. However, Mahesh Gaoli's kick of the ball to protest against one of the referee's decisions earned him a red card, and East Bengal was reduced to 10 men. The score remained the same for the entire duration of the game, forcing a tiebreak. East Bengal goalkeeper Sandeep Nandy's brilliant save earned the team a berth in the final, with the final score line being 7-6 for East Bengal. A team, whom perhaps, none expected to even win a single game, would now play the finals of the ASEAN Cup.

East Bengal was once again pitted against BEC Tero after their first game in the tournament. Not only owner Vijay Mallya, but a number of Indians residing in Jakarta had come to cheer East Bengal. The Indian national flag was being waved next to the red-and-gold team flag. Coach Subhas Bhowmick had to re-organize his team as he would be missing the services of his trusted men, Mahesh and Debajit. But he told the players: "Enjoy the game, enjoy the moment", and believe me, they did!

East Bengal was playing an-out-of-this-world football. The BEC Tero players hardly got possession of the ball. Mike Okoro scored for East Bengal from an Alvito D'Cunha assist in the first half. He ran with the ball for a few yards, carrying three Thai defenders with him and then took a shot just inside the box and bang on! The East Bengal players then celebrated in a style similar to Bebeto's celebration in the FIFA World Cup 1994, dedicating this goal to Okoro's newborn girl, Juliet.

The start of the second half witnessed a brilliant goal from Baichung Bhutia. He received the ball just outside the box, but had none to support him. On the other hand, there were a couple of Thai defenders on both sides and the goalkeeper was almost at his feet. Baichung dodged passed the goalkeeper by lowering his body, resting on his left hand, and then quickly getting up for a perfect shooting from his left foot to double East Bengal's lead. BEC Tero scored after about 12 minutes into the game to reduce the lead. However, the red-and-gold magic was not over yet. The Thai goalkeeper had no answer to Alvito D'Cunha's shot from outside the box in the 69th minute.

[\[watch the goals](#) – please note: goals 2 and 3 are in reverse order]

The next 20 minutes passed by without any significant change in the result of the game. East Bengal emerged champions of LG ASEAN Cup. Baichung Bhutia was awarded the golden boot for being the highest scorer while Sandip Nandy was awarded the best goalkeeper of the tournament.

East Bengal maintained their tremendous form, when back home they went on to win the national league back-to-back. However, the unfortunate bribery scandal that tainted coach Subhas Bhowmick forcing him to leave, hampered the team's progress later.

The ASEAN victory inspired Indian football clubs to participate and perform well at international tournaments. It brought back the much needed and long lost confidence. This is evident from the fact that another Indian club from Goa, Dempo SC went on to reach the semifinals of AFC Cup in 2008. The inspiration has not only been limited to the local football clubs. The Indian National team went on to qualify for the Asian Cup 2011, after a long hiatus of 27 years.

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East Bengal's glorious achievement set the tone for the future of Indian football. We hope to ride on such glory to finally become a part of the elite Football Universe.



Team East Bengal after winning the 2003 ASEAN Cup

Kanad Basu is a die-hard fan of East Bengal club and committee member of East Bengal the Real Power fan club

The Three Halves and Halves Nots⁴

A few months ago the media was awash with [reports](#) that FIFA was toying with the idea of introducing three halves of thirty minutes each in the 2022 Qatar World Cup. Though I couldn't find any official statement from FIFA confirming this ([in fact they had swiftly moved to refute the rumours](#)), I can't wait for this strategy to be introduced. It may turn out to be one of the most important innovations in football, comparable to the banning of snoods and booking players for taking off their shirt.

For starters, the term "three halves" is path breaking in itself. It can potentially change the entire footballing paradigm where every match, in fact, becomes a match and a half. It is straight out of the Kevin Keegan world of football expressions where there is no bigger honour than being the second best team in the world, where there isn't anyone bigger or smaller than Maradona. With it, FIFA can scale the marketing heights of Woolworth or Sainsbury's by offering three matches at the price of two tickets. Besides, with two half time breaks, they must come up with appropriate names for them too. Taking a cue from cricket, the breaks could be named tea and high tea, or supper and dinner depending on when the game is played, and embellished with appropriate sponsorships.

Beyond these obvious marketing and promotional opportunities, there are other ways to leverage the third half to make the beautiful game even more beautiful. The basic game of football has not changed since it started. It has always been played in two halves where two teams, comprising 11 players, fight for a ball. Tournaments like [Moretti](#) were a whole new ball game though. Now with three halves, FIFA will be well-equipped to introduce three-way match ups, much like the three-way elimination matches so widespread and popular in professional wrestling. Let us try to understand how it will work. In a match between Team A, B and C - Team A plays Team B, Team B plays Team C while Team C plays Team A in the first, second and third halves respectively. The goal difference for each team over the three halves is computed and the team with the highest goal difference declared the winner. If there is more than one team with the highest goal difference, the points are split. In case of knock-out matches without a clear winner, there are two or three-way penalty shootouts as necessary. Three-way penalty shootouts work in exactly the same way as the three-way match.

The question is what is in it for FIFA, apart from revenue, that is. Well, with three-way match ups of 90 minutes split in three halves, FIFA will be able to increase the number of participating teams from 32 to 48 with zero overhead. This is likely to reduce the chances of global favourites such as England missing the tournament by bowing out in the qualifiers. Besides, with more teams participating, TV revenue will also surge.

⁴ Title courtesy: *Anustup Basu*

However, in the mundane world of domestic and continental football, it will not be justifiable to have three-way matches for the simple reason that to maintain the traditional home and away format, the number of matches will increase beyond control and the schedule will become unmanageable. Nevertheless, an idea as radical and path-breaking as a game of three halves has its advantages. The domestic and continental competitions can continue to be held between two teams, but introduction of the extra half will add value to the player and spectator experience, as well as introduce avenues for new tactical thinking. In the following paragraphs I shall explain how.

One aspect football has not been able to market is the toss. It is such a trivial affair in the game that nobody but the referee is usually bothered about it. However, this third half might just give the toss a new lease of life. Journalists can spend column inches on which way the wind will blow, while broadcasters can perhaps slip in a weather report into the match preview. We may also have a full-fledged pitch report where the venerable experts will pick up blades of grass and blow them in the air, measure the hardness of the soil in various areas, especially the penalty box and provide expert comments. Captains will be interrogated on their decision and blasted or commended on it, and the armchair fan will have another topic to ruminate on. Of course, all the while the camera will silently follow them around to seize every moment that can enhance the drawing room-audience experience. What's more, it will positively contribute to the employment scenario as meteorologists and geologists will now be added to the entourage of coaches, doctors, physiotherapists, dietitians, nutritionists, psychologists, philosophers and the likes.

Most football fans will agree that time added on due to injuries and substitutions, is fast becoming one of the most intriguing topics of discussion. From waiting for the fourth referee to flash the number of minutes to be added, to anticipating when the referee will decide that enough time has been added and blow the whistle, to Manchester United inevitably scoring a goal well beyond the anticipated end of the half, time added on continues to enthral the football fanatics and divide opinion. What happens during half time is also occupying increased mindshare with pizza fights, handbags and accusations of referees visiting opponent dressing rooms bandied about with increased regularity. The additional half time break will obviously enhance these simple but nonetheless essential appendages to the football experience. Certain managers will also no doubt be delighted to find another window for unleashing the hairdryer to make sure that everyone is on their toes.

The move is also expected to have social and economic impact reaching far beyond the perimeters of the football field. With two half time breaks, the sales of hamburgers, baguettes and sandwiches in the stadium are sure to skyrocket, thus substantially boosting the stadium refreshments business, and creating more employment opportunities. Back home, we can expect a marginal increase in domestic harmony as during the extra break the football fan will perhaps spend a bit more time with his family during the hectic Saturday and Sunday evenings.

However, the question remains, what is in it for the players. There certainly is something. It is not apparent because we, the unforgiving audience, treat them like Roman gladiators and do not spend a moment to consider the trials they undergo on the field. We pulverize them for making simple mistakes without considering that they may be in obvious physical discomfort, the likes of which we seldom need to face. Have we considered that some of the misplaced passes, fluffed clearances, scuffed shots and flapped corners, inability to track back or mark the opponent could have a physiological reason? In other words, have we considered that not every player may be blessed with the industry of [Jens Lehmann](#)? So, the three halves will obviously give that additional opportunity to answer nature's calls, both proactively and reactively, that may have been inhibiting them from playing to their potential. Given that, I must say, every professional footballer will be flushed with delight if FIFA's new move is implemented.

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Worst XI Soccer Injuries

FIFA Law 12 Serious foul play says:

“A player is guilty of serious foul play if he uses excessive force or brutality against an opponent when challenging for the ball when it is in play.

A tackle that endangers the safety of an opponent must be sanctioned as serious foul play.

Any player who lunges at an opponent in challenging for the ball from the front, from the side or from behind using one or both legs, with excessive force and endangering the safety of an opponent is guilty of serious foul play.

Advantage should not be applied in situations involving serious foul play unless there is a clear subsequent opportunity to score a goal. The referee must send off the player guilty of serious foul play when the ball is next out of play.

A player who is guilty of serious foul play should be sent off and play is restarted with a direct free kick from the position where the offence occurred (see Law 13 – Position of free kick) or a penalty kick (if the offence occurred inside the offender’s penalty area).”

So one may defend his/ her superhero saying football is a body-contact game and that the player in question was not showing malicious intent. The crux of the fact remains that the one at the receiving end has been robbed of his living, his career and may be, his dream.

This edition, Best XI brings the darker side of football. The Worst XI injuries ever seen on a football pitch.

1. Roy Keane on Alf Inge Haaland

Roy Keane missed most of the 1997–98 season because of a cruciate ligament injury, caused by an attempt to tackle Leeds United player, Alf-Inge Haaland in the ninth Premier League game of the season. As Keane lay prone on the ground, Haaland stood over Keane, accusing the injured United captain of having tried to hurt him and of feigning injury to escape punishment; an allegation which would lead to an infamous dispute between the two players four years later. They made headlines again in the 2001 Manchester derby, a game in which Alf-Inge Haaland played.

Five minutes from the final whistle, Keane was sent off for a blatant knee-high foul on the Norwegian in what was seen by many as an act of revenge. He initially received a three game suspension and a £5,000 fine from the FA, but further punishment was to follow after the release of Keane's autobiography in August 2002, in which he stated that he intended "to hurt" Haaland. Keane's account of the incident was as follows:

“I'd waited long enough. I f***ing hit him hard. The ball was there (I think). Take that you c**t. And don't ever stand over me sneering about fake injuries.”

An admission that the tackle was in fact a premeditated assault, it left the FA with no choice but to charge Keane with bringing the game into disrepute. He was banned for a further five matches and fined

£150,000 in the ensuing investigation. Despite widespread condemnation, he later mentioned in his autobiography that he had no regrets about the incident, "My attitude was, f**k him. What goes around comes around. He got his just rewards. He f**ked me over and my attitude is an eye for an eye."

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_st29mlQwU

2. Martin Taylor on Eduardo

On 23 February 2008, in the third minute of Birmingham's home match against Arsenal, Taylor committed a foul on Croatian international striker Eduardo da Silva as a result of which Eduardo suffered a compound fracture to his left fibula and an open dislocation of his left ankle. He received treatment on the field for seven minutes before undergoing surgery at a local hospital, and was transferred to a London hospital the following day. The injury was so disturbing that Sky Sports, who were broadcasting the game live, decided not to show replays of the incident. Taylor was sent off for the offence.

In his post-match interview, Arsenal manager Arsène Wenger called for a life ban for Taylor, but retracted his remarks later that day, admitting they had been excessive and made in the heat of the moment. Shortly after the match, Birmingham City issued a statement asserting Taylor's lack of malicious intent and his distress at the injury, and sending their best wishes to Eduardo.

At president Sepp Blatter's personal request, FIFA's disciplinary chairman reviewed the matter, suggesting that the Football Association increase Taylor's punishment from the standard three-match ban; they refused to do so as there was no suggestion of intent.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfzs_ONOyA4

3. Abou Diaby on John Terry

On 25 February 2007, while participating in the 2007 Football League Cup Final against Chelsea, Diaby, while attempting to clear the ball out of the Arsenal defence, accidentally kicked rival defender John Terry in the face. Unconscious, Terry was stretchered off and hospitalized, but recovered to return to the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff for the trophy presentation following Chelsea's 2–1 win. Though Arsenal lost, Diaby was credited with an assist on the team's only goal of the match, which was converted by Theo Walcott.

It is still open to debate whether Diaby in fact committed a tackle, or in the circumstances the boot was high enough to be deemed dangerous play. To be fair to Diaby, he was trying to clear the ball from a natural position and there was no way he could have anticipated the consequence. But John Terry would have taken it with a pinch of salt.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VTm6KVoxkX0>

4. Michael Brown on Ryan Giggs

On 2006-07 season, Michael Brown came under criticism from the media for a two footed lunge on Manchester United player Ryan Giggs, however as Brown was booked for the incident no further action could be taken. Brown had also been involved in media controversy later for some of his tackling, most notably tackles on Ashley Cole and Sean Davis.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNugWnNjwwg>

5. Denis Irwin on David Busst

David Busst's short lived playing career came to an end on 8 April 1996, whilst playing for Coventry against Manchester United. Two minutes into the match, having ventured forward after his team won a corner, Busst collided with United players Denis Irwin and Brian McClair, resulting in extensive compound fractures to both the tibia and fibula of his right leg. The match had to be delayed for 12 minutes while blood was cleaned off the grass. It is reputed that Manchester United's goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel vomited on the pitch upon seeing the injury and had to undergo counselling afterwards, along with a number of other players. The injury is often cited as one of the worst in the history of football.

Busst's injuries were so bad that at one point he ran the risk of having his leg amputated. While in hospital, Busst contracted MRSA, which caused further damage to the tissue and muscle in the injured part of his leg. Despite having 26 operations, Busst remained a member of the official Coventry squad for a further seven months, but never played again and retired from the game following advice from his doctors on 6 November 1996 at the age of 29. It was however, not the break that ended his career, but the infections he suffered afterwards.

His testimonial match, played on 16 May 1997 against Manchester United, was a sell-out.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7tKvJNYnsU>

6. Harald Schumacher on Patrick Battiston

Harald Schumacher, of then West Germany, is best remembered for a highly controversial incident in the 1982 FIFA World Cup semi-final against France when he collided with and seriously injured French defender Patrick Battiston. Battiston had just Schumacher to beat after a through ball from Michel Platini, but shot wide of the goal. Instead of trying to defend the shot, Schumacher appeared to jump directly at Battiston, and collided with him in mid-air. Battiston was knocked unconscious, and later slipped into a coma. He also lost his two front teeth and had a damaged vertebra. He received oxygen on the pitch. Michel Platini later said that he thought that Battiston had died, because "he had no pulse and looked pale". The Dutch referee Charles Corver did not award a free kick for the incident.

Schumacher then proceeded to take the goal-kick and play resumed. Germany would eventually go on to win the game on penalty kicks after the match was tied at 3–3.

After winning the game, the goalkeeper caused more controversy when he was told that Battiston had lost three teeth, and replied: "If that's all that's wrong with him, I'll pay him the crowns." Schumacher later apologised in person to Battiston, and the apology was accepted by Battiston.

A French newspaper poll asked who was the least popular man in France, and Schumacher beat Adolf Hitler into second.

When West Germany and France met again in World Cup 1986, Battiston said that the incident was "forgiven and forgotten". However, he said that he was wary of getting "close to Schumacher" and said that he would hold a distance of at least 40 meters from the German goalkeeper. Schumacher would mostly refrain from commenting on the incident.

In his autobiography, Anpfiff, published in 1987, Schumacher said the reason he did not go over to check on Battiston's condition was because a number of French players were standing around Battiston and making threatening gestures in his direction.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4veX0VZlx4>

7. Felix Muamba-Musasa on Buti Ngulube

This comes with a caution: Not for the faint hearted.

In a ghastly incident from South African Premier Soccer League game on 24 May 2009 between the Mpumalanga Black Aces FC and the Carara Kicks, Buti Ngulube had his leg broken into half causing a "tranverse break" of a tackle by Felix Muamba-Musasa.

Both were chasing a 50-50 ball down the sideline, Ngulube had the first touch but caught Musasa's trailing boot. Musasa was given a red card immediately. Federation inflicted further an eight game suspension on charges of misconduct relating to unsportsmanlike behaviour and assault.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-l8mwYxxPNw>

8. Ben Thatcher on Pedro Mendes

Thatcher gained notoriety on 23 August 2006, in a game between Manchester City and Portsmouth. Whilst challenging with Pedro Mendes for a loose ball, Thatcher viciously and intentionally led with his elbow, knocking Mendes into the advertising hoardings rendering him unconscious. In the immediate aftermath, Thatcher is seen to be indignant and visibly irate with his now prostrate, motionless opponent. Mendes required oxygen at pitchside and suffered a seizure while being transferred to hospital, where he spent the night. Mendes was discharged from hospital the next day, but remained under medical supervision. Thatcher, who issued a written apology to Mendes, was investigated by the FA as a result of the challenge. He was disciplined and his barrister, Rupert Bowers, read a written apology following the hearing. Greater Manchester Police noted receipt of many "statements of

complaint" and also chose to investigate the matter. On August 30, Manchester City announced that Thatcher would be banned for six matches, two of which would be suspended and fined six weeks' wages for the challenge. This punishment is separate from the sanctions made by the FA, who suspended Thatcher for eight matches, with a further fifteen game suspended ban for two years.

The incident was the second time in less than three weeks that a Thatcher elbow had hospitalised an opponent, following an incident on August 4 in a pre-season tour of China, when his challenge caused a career-threatening collapsed lung for Yang Chungang, a 20-year-old midfielder from Shanghai Shenhua. Thatcher also faced possible action from Lancashire Police over a clash with ex-Blackburn Rovers player Ralph Welch; during a reserve game at Ewood Park in February 2006.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_8b1pd3Mas

9. Commins Menapi on Riki Van Steeden

In the 2006-2007 season, Commins Menapi became the first player to be sent off in a New Zealand Football Championship Grand Final with a nasty studs up kick on Auckland City defender Riki van Steeden. Van Steeden's leg was broken in the incident and Waitakere United lost the final 3-2. However, he would not be suspended for the OFC Champions League final against Ba F.C. because of the OFC and New Zealand Football being two separate organizations.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WdnMIffftNA>

10. Rachid Bouaouzan on Niels Kokmeijer

In his second season, while playing in the Eerste Divisie, Bouaouzan reached the Dutch news headlines due to a heavy foul on Niels Kokmeijer, his opponent playing for Go Ahead Eagles on December 17, 2004. Kokmeijer's leg was broken badly and he was subsequently forced to retire from professional football. Sparta Rotterdam suspended Bouaouzan for the rest of the season, which was more than the 10 match ban the KNVB awarded him. Besides that he was taken to court by the Dutch government for battery, a unique moment in Dutch football history. Bouaouzan was sentenced to a conditional six months in jail. In April 2008 the highest Dutch court confirmed this.

At the end of the season Sparta Rotterdam qualified for the play-offs where Bouaouzan returned on the pitch. In the last and final play-off match, Bouaouzan scored Sparta's winning goal over Helmond Sport, thus securing them a spot in the Eredivisie for 2005-06.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tC_c_71Cbcg

11. Boris Johnson on Maurizio Gaudino

Let us end this grave article on a jovial note.

Maurizio Gaudino is a retired German football midfielder. He was capped five times for Germany in 1993 and 1994, and was in their squad for the 1994 World Cup. Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson is a British journalist and Conservative Party politician, who has been the elected Mayor of London since 2008.

So the remotest of chances they would ever meet on football pitch was to be in a charity match.

In 2006, in a charity football match between England and Germany, consisting of celebrities and former players, Boris Johnson came on as a substitute for England in the 85th minute, and infamously rugby tackled former German international Maurizio Gaudino, in a vain attempt to win the ball with his head.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWIUp19bBoA>

Anweshan Ghosh supports Manchester United and unsurprisingly loves injury time winners. He follows the EPL and the I-League. He is a consultant by profession but can happily give up his day job to be a water boy at the Theatre of Dreams. Apart from football he is also passionate about cars and movies.

Maximus Tacticus – Chelsea

In this feature, we try to analyze the strategies of top EPL sides.

Induction

Chelsea are fast changing. Even by the fast paced standards set by Roman Abramovich, the billionaire owner of the London club, there is a buzz around that things are changing fast at Chelsea. There is a new coach at the helm of things, Andre Villas-Boas(AVB). AVB, is only a year or two older than the old custodians like John Terry or Frank Lampard, but that has not intimidated AVB from stamping his authority at Stamford Bridge. Here is a look at how things are shaping up at Chelsea on the field.

History Beckons

Jose Mourinho, as the boss of Chelsea did two noteworthy things – he led them to their first league title for over 50 years; and he did not bother to change his *boring* but effective ways of winning 1-0. The famous 4-3-3 formation had 3 spines in the form of John Terry, Frank Lampard and Didier Drogba. Times have changed. Old war-horses are no more spring chickens. Many a famous manager has come and gone after the “Special One” but have failed to replicate the same level of success. However, it seems like history is repeating itself as another Portuguese has won 4 titles with Porto and was promptly snapped up by Roman for the managerial post of Chelsea, although he lacks experience and is only 33! Incidentally he was the understudy to Jose Mourinho at Chelsea and then at Inter Milan - and hold on – the 4-3-3 is back.

Each coach has his own interpretation of the system and AVB is no exception. His mentor, Mourinho, used a 4-3-3 formation with classic wingers and asked the wide players to track back forming more of a 4-5-1 without the ball. Villas-Boas is more inclined to use modern-day wingers, or wide forwards, who would drift inside as a major goal scoring threat, themselves. Defensively, Chelsea are set for a more pressing game this season. They have bought in new players, who are younger, and they have the energy to press higher up the pitch. AVB has openly expressed his admiration for Pep Guardiola and it is not strange that he has strong influence of his pressing game, but under this new system, John Terry, the centre half, has been too vulnerable for his own good - the slip leading to Robin van Persie's 2nd goal during the 3-5 defeat to Chelsea can have a paramount impact on Chelsea's title claims. Hence, Alex and Ivanovic have a chance to step up and lay claim for that spot. It will be nice selection dilemma for the coach. The pivotal point in attack remains Fernando Torres. Many believe the old system did not suit him as Torres cherishes through balls played along the ground in front of him (a certain Steven Gerrard will second that). Torres thinks it is the lack of pace in Chelsea's passing that has augmented his poor form. To counter this problem, AVB has Raul Meireles and Ramires holding the central midfield together along with the ageing (and sloth, some may say) Frank Lampard. Meireles is preferred to guard the ship sitting back, Ramires is seen as the engine of the team bursting forward on every opportunity, while Lampard tries to have telling contribution playing between these two younger players. It is a fluid midfield where anyone can stay back and the other two can advance forward. In the wing, AVB has bought in fresh players – Juan Mata from Valencia (transfer) and Daniel Sturridge from Bolton, after

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having finished his successful loan stint there. Ashley Cole from the left and Jose Bosingwa from the right flank would burst forward to drag away the opposition full backs. Combine all of these in a short, quick triangle of passes in the final third of the pitch and Everton will validate their ruthlessness in their recent 3-1 defeat.



Good Old Days of 4-3-3

I Have a Plan B

The above system has its fair share of blemishes. Without an able holding midfielder – Michael Essien is on injury list for a while and he is not getting any younger, John Obi Mikel is good at playing square passes only and thus slowing down the pace of the game, Josh McEachran is too young to pitch in a solid performance week in week out – at his disposal, AVB has deployed Meireles at a deeper role. The recruit from Liverpool likes a more advanced role which is occupied by Lampard. Can he be eased out by the

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new *kid*, err boss? Early signs suggest that yes, he can. Lampard can be seen more of an impact player, come the business end of the season. Florent Malouda can be swapped with the young Sturridge if need be. Didier Drogba – yes, he still is registered with Chelsea – or Nicolas Anelka, can be seen in a fringe role in what seems to be their swansong season. Also, Chelsea traditionally like to play a high defensive line when in possession. With ageing stalwart Terry at the back, it can backfire against teams having a pacy counter attacking option.



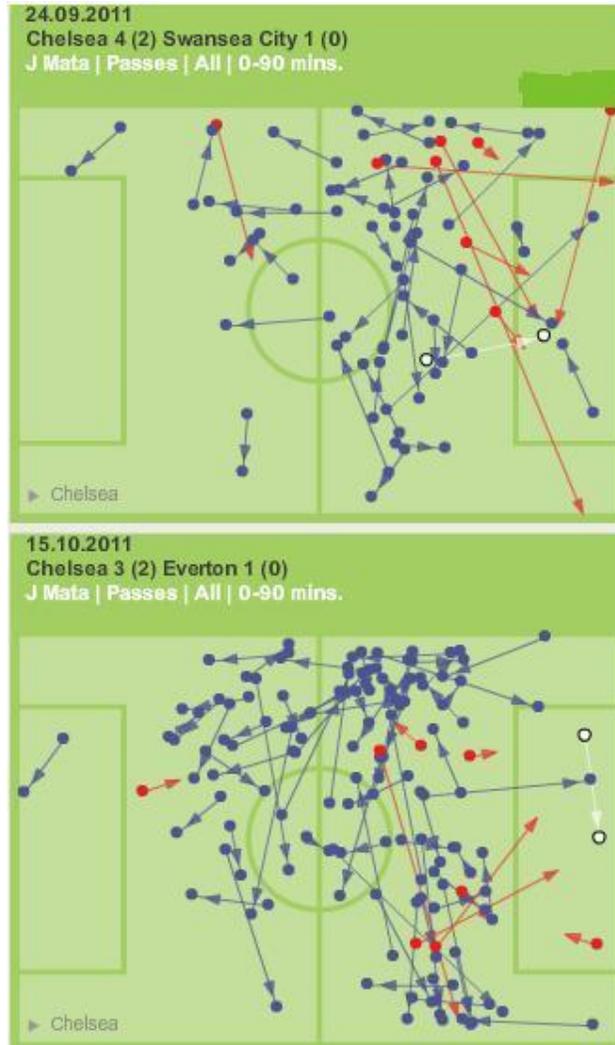
Hybrid 3 Forward

That is where AVB would look to reshuffle the pack, as he had done at times in the Champions league game against Valencia. He has a wealth of strikers at his disposal and none better than Drogba to partner Torres up front if Chelsea go with two up front. The midfield will shape up like a standard diamond with the wide players providing the width. The striking feature with this attacking diamond formation is that, both Drogba and Torres can start upfront. A defensive shield is provided in the form of Mikel in front of the defensive duo. AVB likes to play a short, quick and central passing game near the penalty area of opposition box, hence he will be tempted to feature all of Mata, Meireles and Ramires in the first team, even at the cost of earning the wrath of the Lampard faithfuls. Both the “wide” players

would look to drift in and cause problem for their markers. The fullbacks will overlap and draw the opposition fullbacks away, thus creating the space. One of Torres and Drogba will time and again sway like a pendulum, drawing one of the centre halves towards the sideline while the other will act as the focal point of attack. To break away from shackles, Chelsea can change to a hybrid three man forward line with the likes of Mata, or Sturridge pushing up considerably.

Man to Watch (1) – Juan Mata

Juan Mata, summer recruit from Valencia, is a typical new breed attacking midfield player. He starts on the left hand side of the midfield as suggested in the team sheet, but rarely chalks down the sideline like traditional wingers. He is more prudent in dropping to the “hole”, shifting position with the overlapping sideback, switching to the other flank seamlessly. He is a perfect replacement for the ageing Frank Lampard, though they are as similar players as chalk and cheese! Lampard made his mark as a box-to-box industrious midfield player who can contribute 20 goals a season. More importantly, he turned up in almost every game of the season. Mata is more of a creative force, and like every other creative player, is not so eager in tracking back. He loves to create goals and AVB’s short-n-slick passing game perfectly suits this Spanish playmaker. It is like a breath of fresh air – the creativity which Chelsea lacked so dearly for the last 2 seasons.



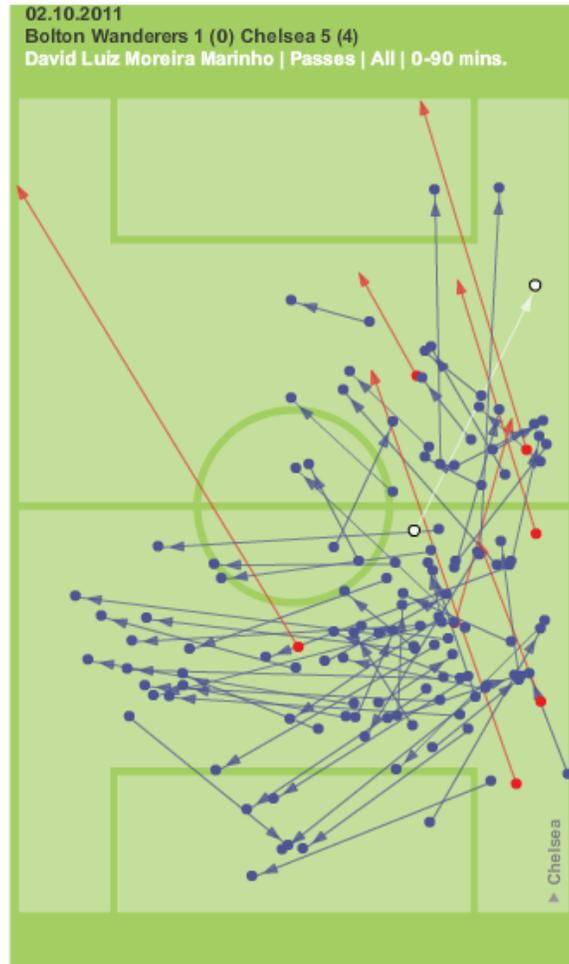
Mata Settling into England quickly

Man to Watch (2) - David Luiz

David Luiz, 24 year old Brazilian centre half who arrived at Chelsea in the summer of 2011 from Benfica. Assured with the ball at his feet, he is a very good passer of the ball. Besides, he reads the game very well and is an ideal ballplayer at the back to kick-start any attack. Often he is instrumental in making bursting runs through the middle and can provide an additional attacking edge. Hailed as the future Chelsea captain, he is slowly but surely taking it over from the old war-horse John Terry. What has been impressive is his link up play. Andre Villas-Boas prefers a short passing game, but Luiz brings in a bit of variety to the attack. Just look at the graphic below - how often he has tried to play a traditional English long ball to the overlapping fullback. Although he has a very poor success rate at that but don't forget it is his first season and it is a newish set up at Chelsea. With time, he is bound to improve. He has already shown his mettle with the assist to Daniel Sturridge against Bolton. Another glaring feature is that

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barring these long balls, he has not put a foot wrong – almost 100% accuracy in passing is awesome for a centre half.



David Luiz trying for perfection in Long Balls

Blue Line - Successful Pass

Red Line - Unsuccessful Pass

White Line – Assist

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The Dream Theme

Asked by a TV channel, a day prior to a major international match 11 years ago why he liked cricket better than football, an unpretentious Class IV student practicing outside the Eden Gardens clubhouse said, “You have to run less”.

An innocent answer, now overtaken by media hype, sponsorship power and big names. For a sport that has evolved to the T20 format, a more ‘gladiator’ version of the ‘gentleman’s game’ where “sixes and wickets!” have replaced the “blood and kill!” cries of yore, cricket has indeed become popular, so much so that it’s being played from the lanes and by-lanes of the big city to a clearing in a forest in rural India. This year’s Team India win in the World Cup has further bolstered cricket enthusiasm among the youth.

However, enough said about cricket. Amidst this cri-crazy milieu came a strong idea to marry a well-liked but ‘threatened’ sport with an omnipotent and perpetually revered Lady so that the ‘multitudinous offspring’ would breathe, eat and sleep the game. Football became the theme for the recently held [worship of Goddess Kali](#) (the lady in question) by a neighbourhood club in south Kolkata. One can say that the help of [Goddess Kali](#) was taken to rejuvenate, rekindle and radiate popularity of football.

Football has been, is and will be the first love of Bengal’s youth. So believe the members of the club *Eastern Park Netaji Sangha* (EPNS) in the Kalikapur/Santoshpur area of south Kolkata who attempted to spread their conviction, apparently aware of the inroads that cricket had made. “The annual worship of the deity of power is as accepted an event among the masses as is [Durga Puja](#) or Christmas in the West. “Our club has been organising Kali Puja for the last 35 years. It occurred to us that this year, we should have football as the theme in a bid to revitalise sagging popularity levels,” said Joyjit Sinharoy, a marketing manager of a Kolkata-based firm and a member of the club, who has been visiting the [Maidan](#) (the green area in the centre of the city) to watch football since he was a kid holding his dad’s hand.

Not that Eastern Park has a dearth of enthusiasts for the game. In fact, none of the youth from the neighbourhood chose to go to [Eden Gardens](#) on the day India played England in the only T20 match of the series. Instead, they all went to [Salt Lake Stadium](#) for the East Bengal-Prayag United (East Bengal being the most popular club football team in this part of the world) tie. It was this love for the game that they chose to propagate, and what better way for them to do so than to take the Goddess’s help?

Now, a word about the ‘collaborator’. She is the Hindu Goddess associated with eternal energy and destruction of evil. Kali means ‘the black one’, the consort of Lord Shiva. Kali is considered the Goddess of time and change. Although sometimes presented as dark and violent, her earliest incarnation as a figure of annihilation still has some influence. In Bengal, Kali is venerated in the festival Kali Puja – observed on the new moon day in the month of *Ashwin* (October-November). It coincides with [Diwali](#), the festival of lights which is celebrated across India by people bursting firecrackers and illuminating their houses with ‘*diyas*’ (small clay lamps) to signify the triumph of good over evil.

It is with such belief that Kali Puja is held every year by the masses. This year, *Ashwin*’s new moon was on October 26, and over 1,000 pujas were organised in Kolkata itself. However, perhaps the only one that had football as its theme was EPNS. The members’ enthusiasm has survived the onslaught of

cricket. If one visits the area any evening, one will find groups of residents in animated discussion, and the subject is always football. Access to live international matches on TV at the clubhouse has helped a lot, not just in keeping enthusiasm alive but also in providing scope to compare Indian football with European or South American. And it was this enthusiasm the neighbourhood wanted to share and spread with the Kali Puja pandal⁵-hopping crowds.

How did they go about it? A founding member of the club explained that the decision was taken about two months prior to the Puja. The design, the add-ons, the cost involved were all discussed and finalised. Then came the implementation, with division of labour being executed among the members of the club and residents of the area, both young and old. The concept was visualised by Joyjit, who proposed that the idol of the Goddess, about three feet tall, would be placed in a large football, which would have an opening outside of which the priest would perform the Puja rituals. The football structure would be three dimensional, made with cardboard panels stuck to a round frame. Three members of the club took five days to construct the football. This was suspended on a stage from rafters above, enabling the structure to sway a bit, even as the *pratima* (idol) inside remained fixed.

Along with the pandal construction, the decorations and frills surrounding it were made as well. Two huge flags, one of Mohun Bagan, the other of East Bengal, the two most popular football clubs in Kolkata, were put up alongside the ball. Charts were pasted on each flag, on which were written the complete history of all the trophies won by the respective clubs. The entries had which trophy, which year and where the match took place. The members gathered these details from websites on the internet and then got it verified by officials of the two clubs, the founding member explained.

Also put up were the names and pictures of 10 legendary players of each team, as well as two replicas of the IFA shield. "We managed to get hold of prints of rare pictures, which were enlarged and put up on boards at the sides of the pandal. Two important watershed moments of both the clubs were there in pictures. One was Mohun Bagan defeating the British East York regiment in 1911, the first time an Indian club won the IFA Shield, and the second was East Bengal winning the ASEAN Cup in Malaysia in 2003, the first time that an Indian club won the title by defeating Thailand's Bectera Sasana Club 3-1," Joyjit said, his enthusiasm matching the pride in having been able to procure and display such pictures.

The three days of the Puja were filled with football-related songs, like East Bengal's "*Machher Raja Ilish*" (the king of fish is hilsa – which is the 'mascot' fish adopted by East Bengal supporters as opposed to the lobster adopted by Mohan Bagan) and Mohan Bagan's anthem song depicting the 1911 win. They also played the popular song from the Bengali film [Dhanni Meye](#) (Exceptional girl), "*Sab Khelar sera, Bangalir tumi Football*" (The best of all games for Bengalis is you, football). The evenings were taken up by animated debates, called "*Elopatari*" (Jumbles), in which the pros and cons of the two teams were discussed threadbare on the public address system.

⁵ Pandals are elaborate structures made of bamboo and cloth which serves as a temporary temple for various religious functions. They display exquisite craftsmanship in the different types of designs adopted.

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A large number of people from neighbouring areas visited the pandal during the three days, especially after hearing that football had been made the Puja theme. Many admitted that the theme was quite unique. Players like Simon Storey and Nema Goswami from Mohan Bagan, and Mehtab Hussein from East Bengal, came and saw and congratulated the effort. The number of queries and encouraging messages from the hundreds of visitors over the three days that the Puja was held was ample proof that the objective of rekindling the love for the game had been achieved, not just in Eastern Park but the whole of south Kolkata as well. The spread, the get-up all combined to convey the message that football was still very much alive and kicking!



Clockwise from top left: * Simon Storey, Mohan Bagan player, and his friend at the Puja pandal

* Flags of East Bengal club / Mohan Bagan club* The Puja organisers outside the pandal * The Puja pandal with the image of Goddess Kali seen inside the football

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bifurcated, well-illuminated. Hotels of all sizes began popping up everywhere. My school got a fresh round of paint and my father's office which was just beside the ground got new shiny gates.

Within a year Siliguri was transformed into this swanky new town, all set to welcome its international guests. The venue, now ready, was christened Kanchenjunga Stadium, after the famous peak. It was a square-shaped ground, with a huge shiny gate and a capacity to hold 40,000 spectators. This meant that one side of the gallery would always be far away from the action. The lush green field on the one hand and the beauty of the Kanchenjunga peak that was visible from the top tiers of the gallery were incentives enough for anyone to be there at the scene of action.

The venue done, hospitality arrangements on track, it was time to reveal the names of the teams participating in the Nehru Gold Cup. We got to know Hungary, Soviet Union or the USSR, China, Poland, Bulgaria and, of course, India were to play. But then we heard Poland would not be able to make it. The tournament was postponed by a few days and the schedule altered to suit the Polish team and then they agreed to join the tournament. Most of the countries sent their Olympic teams barring China. China sent a B team full of under-21 players from the country. USSR looked the strongest with a star-studded line up headed by the golden-haired Alexei Mikhailichenko who was a crowd favourite.

The group stage would be round robin leagues among 6 teams – each team playing other teams once. Then depending on the points and goal difference (in case of equal points) there would be two finalists to take a shot at the trophy.

The Tournament

I don't remember much about the opening ceremony. The ground was full. I was at the pavilion side gallery called the *Focin* gate, right below the commentary box and beside the path leading to the footballers' dressing room. My uncle being one of the officials in the organising committee of the tournament had got passes for all the matches. I could not resist tagging along with him, considering I got to meet the footballers at the Mainak Lodge where they stayed, ate good food and even got a car ride back home! The inaugural match was between Bulgaria and Soviet Union which the Soviets won 0-1 with ease.

Football fever was in the air and for miles away from the ground one could hear the roar of the crowd.

The tickets were cheap, so not a single seat was empty in any of the matches. All teams got their share of support and crazy slogans from the crowd (which I am sure they didn't understand) and there was a general feeling of goodness all around. The local newspaper for the first time in their publishing history was printing live images instead of those taken from TV.

The first match for the home team next day was a terrible let-down. India lost to China B 2-0. The

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Indians were in trouble throughout the match and hardly looked like they belonged to the stage. The Chinese played professionally and scored two easy goals.

I still remember the game between Hungary and USSR the most. It was a fantastic contest between two east European countries. I didn't understand much of strategy then, but surely I had never seen anything as electrifying or speedy on a football field. The game was replete with attacks and counter-attacks, dominated by the Soviets. Though the Hungarians counter-attacked well, they finally lost by a goal to the Russians. The scorecard hardly reflected the thriller of a match that it was.

Another memorable match was the one India played against Hungary. As far as I can remember, Hungary scored their first goal and looked pretty relaxed. India counter-attacked and after a few minutes of attacking, the left winger Tarun Dey scored a fantastic goal with a header. The whole stadium was delirious. The first goal by India in the tournament and it came from a local boy (well a boy from the same state, alright). The joy was short lived though, because Hungary soon showed India who's the boss by scoring one more in the first and two in the second half to win the bout 4-1. That goal is probably one of the most celebrated football moments etched in my memory even after 23 long years.

India's best achievement in the tournament wasn't that though. The team played Poland on 28th January 1988 – a red letter day in my memory. It was a prolific game of football where for the first time India wasn't afraid to attack even though the opponent was a European team. The league stage was almost over, so probably the national coach Syed Nayeemuddin wanted to break out of his traditional defensive approach. It was an evenly fought match where India scored first and was leading by one goal to nil. It was an amazing half hour when we were in the front. Poland equalized later on and the match ended 1-1. [I don't recall who scored for India that day, but a little Google search tells me it was Vijay Kumar for India and Marek Lesniak for Poland who went on to play for Bayer Leverkusen later on.]

As the tournament progressed, it became quite evident that USSR was the indomitable superpower in the tournament. Apart from China & India all the four European teams were top notch teams, especially USSR, who went on to beat Brazil to win the Olympic gold in 1988. Poland was the second strongest team in the tournament who arrived late but soon went up the league table by beating Bulgaria, Hungary and China. Hungary got the better of Bulgaria and China.

USSR had beaten all the teams. Even Poland wasn't much of a competition to USSR. Despite altering the schedule for the Polish team, they had to play back to back games. USSR beat them easily 2-0.

Poland went to the final along with USSR. The stadium was packed to full capacity. And there were zillions of fans outside with Soviet, Polish and even Indian flags. It almost had a festive flavour to it.

Though I don't recall much about the final, I remember the Soviets winning the trophy.

That Handshake

The last but one match in the group stage was the India vs. USSR match which USSR won easily by 4-0. There was a special reason why I remember that day. My uncle took me to the players' hotel after the match to meet some of the players. Since there wasn't as much security in those days, it was easy to ask for autographs.

After almost an hour or so, my uncle got permission from the USSR manager and the captain to visit his suite on the first floor. We pressed the bell and there he was standing, right in front of me – Alexei Mikhailichenko – the blonde-haired captain of USSR. It was like a dream come true. He was a very handsome, tall and amicable person. He asked my name and helped me with his autograph on a tiny autograph book I carried. His was the only entry there, as I had never seen any sportsman in my life, forget getting so close and talking to him. He even asked me my favourite footballer's name. I wasn't much of an English speaker back then, but my uncle helped translate the question. I knew only one Russian footballer's name which I spurted out spontaneously, "Lev Yashin". That brought a smile to his face and he gave a pat on my head.

The tournament left definite marks on the town as well as the town's psyche. It remained clean and gorgeous for a few more years. Numerous football coaching centres sprouted like mushrooms everywhere. Every locality had its own football coach. I too joined one of them the following summer and started playing in the nursery league as a goalkeeper. The Lev Yashin dream looked all set to come true. That was until I broke my arm while saving a free kick which put an end to my short football career.

Come the next Olympics, half the people of the town (if not more) were shouting for Alexei's USSR against the otherwise favourite Romario's Brazil. I, of course, was one of them.

Siliguri had made a mark on the world football arena. The tournament provided an adrenalin shot into the arms of a bleak obscure border town. Soon a major domestic tournament was held at the same venue – the Airlines Gold Cup - where all the major clubs from the country took part. Later there were numerous international club matches and domestic matches held in the town – including matches for Asian Cup Winners' Cup, IFA Shield etc.

But like all other places in India, football gradually lost its sheen in Siliguri.

Kanchenjunga Stadium still stands, albeit sans the same glory. And, at the heart of the ground, like a naked wound, there now lies a muddy cricket pitch.

A few of the biggest names in the tournament –

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1. Alexei Mikhailichenko (USSR/Ukraine) – also known as Oleksei Oleksandrovych Mykhaylychenko; played for USSR & Ukraine national teams ; Club career – Dynamo Kiev, Sampdoria, Rangers ; Achievements – Olympic Gold Medal -1988, European Cup Winners' Cup - 1986, Serie A – 1990, Silver Medal at Euro88, Managed – Ukraine U-21, Ukraine Senior team, Dynamo Kiev ; Retired in 1997.
2. Marek Lesniak (Poland) – played for Poland national team ; Club career - Bayer Leverkusen(1988-92), a host of Polish clubs.
3. Yuri Savichev (USSR) – played for USSR national team ; Club career - FC Torpedo Moscow(1984-90), Olympiacos (90-92) etc.
4. Valdas Ivanauskas(USSR) - played for USSR & Lithuania national teams ; Club career – CSKA Moscow (1985-86), Lokomotiv Moscow, Hamburger SV etc.
5. Aleksandr Borodyuk(USSR) - played for USSR national team in Italia 1990, Russian national team in 1994 US World Cup. Club career – Dynamo Moscow, Schalke 04, SC Freiburg, Lokomotiv Moscow etc. Achievement(s) - has become the assistant manager of Russian senior team, working as an assistant to Dick Advokaat since 2010.
6. Andrzej Rudy(Poland) – played for Poland national team ; Club career – FC Koln, AFC Ajax, etc.
7. Georgi Georgiev (Bulgaria) – played for Bulgaria national team in 1994 World Cup (reached semi-final).

Ankan Paul supports Arsenal and East Bengal (in India). Ardently follows EPL & I-league and dreams of shouting for India in a FIFA World Cup match. Apart from football, he likes hiking, photography and movies.

The Burden of Expectation in the Belly of a Giant

World War II had ravaged the world. The entire continent of Europe was in ruins. The World Cup trophy would have been lost amongst many other valuables which were seized by the Nazis. The Nazis were after the trophy as well, but it was saved by the efforts of a man named Ottorino Barassi. He was the president of the FIGC (Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio or Italian Football federation) during the war. As Italy was the defending champions, the trophy was in a bank vault in Rome. Barassi sensing the danger to the trophy took it home and kept it in a shoe-box under his bed till the end of the war. There were very few countries willing to host the tournament after the war. People felt that spending money for a football tournament was wasteful when countries were rebuilding themselves from the ravages of war. Before the cancellation of the 1942 tournament, FIFA had received two bids from Brazil and Germany. The Brazilians presented their bid to FIFA again in 1946 when it was decided that the tournament would go back to South America after two decades. Barassi, the saviour of the trophy, was assigned to assist the Brazilian federation in organising the tournament, drawing on his experience from the 1934 tournament held in his country. The Brazilians presented the idea of building the largest stadium of the world in Rio de Janeiro, double the capacity of Wembley stadium, then the largest in the world.

The hosts started as favourites as they had won the Copa America in 1949 beating Paraguay 7-0 in the finals and Uruguay 5-1 before that. They had an impressive trio of inside-forwards in Zizinho, Ademir and Jair. Italy, the defending champions were weakened by the Superga air disaster involving the Torino team which resulted in the death of ten national team players. Sweden, the Olympic champion of 1948 was a strong team but their coach had refused to include players playing for foreign clubs. The best Swedish players had been signed up by Italian clubs after the Olympics, so they did not have their best side for this tournament. Yugoslavia, silver medallists from the Olympics were a good team. There was huge anticipation over the debut of England who had lost Frank Swift, Tommy Lawton and Raich Carter but still had Billy Wright, Stan Mortensen and 'The wizard of the dribble' Stanley Matthews in their ranks. FIFA had decided that the first two teams of the British Home Championships would qualify automatically for the tournament. England and Scotland both had qualified based on this FIFA directive. George Graham, the chief of the Scottish FA decided that Scotland would play only if they won the Home Championships. They lost the final to England and despite the pleading of Billy Wright, the England captain and Jules Rimet, they refused to go to Brazil. Uruguay had some good players like Juan Schiaffino and Alcide Ghiggia. All the East European countries like Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Soviet Union refused to play the qualification matches. Turkey refused to go, citing financial difficulties. In Asia - Philippines, Burma and Indonesia - all destroyed by war pulled out of qualification matches while India qualified by default. Argentina withdrew citing differences with the Brazilian Football federation. France and Portugal were invited in place of Turkey and Scotland. Portugal refused but France accepted. Germany and Japan were banned from playing international football by FIFA.

FIFA had changed the format of the tournament with four groups where all teams played each other, with each group winner advancing to another group of four teams to decide the champions. The format was to ensure that each team would play more than one match as opposed to the knockout format used for the last two editions of the tournament. There was no final match but the last match became a final by circumstances. There was no zoning of the groups and all teams with the exception of the hosts had to travel large distances to play their matches which was not ideal in those times. The draw was held in Rio just before the tournament with the 15 participating teams.

Group 1: Brazil, Mexico, Switzerland and Yugoslavia

Group 2: England, Chile, Spain and the USA

Group 3: Italy, India, Paraguay and Sweden

Group 4: Uruguay, Bolivia and France

India wanted to pull out citing financial difficulties, but FIFA agreed to bear the major part of the expenses. They still pulled out as they played barefoot and FIFA had banned barefoot play in 1948. France also withdrew due to the large amount of travelling involved in playing their two matches. Finally, only thirteen nations remained in the fray, same as the last tournament in the same continent twenty years ago.

Group 1

The tournament started on June 24, 1950 at the huge Maracanã stadium, then known as the Municipal in Rio de Janeiro with the hosts playing Mexico. The capacity of the stadium was halved as it was not complete. There were fireworks, 5000 pigeons and a 21 gun salute which did not bode well for the unfinished concrete structure. The people in the stands were covered in shards of concrete but thankfully none of them were large in size. The host team however was better prepared than the venue. The Brazilians hit the post in the 6th minute by a Jair shot. Then Ademir tapped the ball into the goal past the advancing goalkeeper Antonio Carbajal to put Brazil ahead. Mayhem ensued with fifteen radio commentators and a dozen reporters rushing onto the pitch for instant interviews! The referee George Reader of England cleared the pitch without much of a problem and the game resumed. Brazil kept dominating and hit the woodwork five times. After halftime, Ademir and Balthazar switched positions. Jair scored with a cross-shot and Balthazar added a third with a header off a corner from ten yards. Ademir added his second of the game by a driving in Jair's short pass. Brazil had won 4-0 but still their coach, Flavio Costa wasn't sure about their forward line.

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Half constructed Maracanã in the first match

Yugoslavia comfortably defeated Switzerland 3-0 with their incisive passing. This was the first finals match where the floodlights were switched on. Alfred Bickel, the Swiss captain was one of two players who had played in the last World Cup before the war. The other was Erik Nilsson, the Swedish captain. Incidentally both the players were from countries which were neutral during World War II. Yugoslavia defeated Mexico 4-1 in their next match living up to their reputation as one of the best teams in the tournament. Brazil played Switzerland in Sao Paolo in their second match. The Brazilian coach called their opponents as a team without any importance. He brought in a lot of new players from the Sao Paolo club to please the crowd. The same crowd wanted to lynch him at the end of the match and riot police had to be deployed. Leaving out Jair was a bad decision. The Brazilians struggled against the plucky Swiss and led 2-1 at halftime. In the 88th minute, Bickel got away and crossed for Jacky Fatton to score his second goal of the game and stun the crowd. The result meant that Yugoslavia needed only a draw against Brazil in the last match. The hosts were in danger of being eliminated. There was massive amount of tension in Rio when Brazil met Yugoslavia to decide who would reach the final group. Brazil had a huge slice of luck when Zlatko Cajkovski, the Yugoslavian midfielder cut his head in an unfinished steel girder at the stadium. The referee, Mervyn Griffiths refused to delay the start in a stoic show of British punctuality. Ten man Yugoslavia were made to pay for their deficiency by conceding a goal scored by Ademir in the third minute. Cajkovski rejoined in the tenth minute and the Yugoslavs matched the hosts in creating chances. The Yugoslav goalkeeper, Srdan Mrkusic was asked to change his jersey as he was wearing the same all-white strip of the Brazilians after 30 minutes (Shades of Graham Poll of 2006). Cajkovski hit the post and missed with the goalkeeper at his mercy in the second. The host eventually made the match safe with Zinho scoring in the 69th minute. The hosts had just about made it to the final pool.



Ademir of Brazil, the top scorer with 8 goals

Group 2

The English played their first World Cup finals match against Chile. The Chileans were facing their first European opposition since the 1930 World Cup tournament. Neil Franklin, one of England's best defenders had left England to play for Independiente Santa Fe of Bogotá for 5000 pounds and 35 pounds of bonus for each win. He was not pleased with the 20 pound a week wage cap imposed on footballers by the English FA in England. Columbia was not a member of FIFA and he refused to join the English team for the tournament which was a big loss for them. The coach, Walter Winterbottom did not even play Matthews. They defeated Chile with goals by Mortensen and Wilf Mannion in each half but looked far from comfortable at the back with Chilean George Robledo who played for Newcastle causing them problems. England team used oxygen cylinders to cope with the humidity during the halftime break but Billy Wright just didn't like the concept. United States played Spain and led through a Gino Pariani goal for 80 minutes. The Spaniards eventually equalised through Silvester Igoa and won 3-1 with further goals from Estanislao Basora and Telmo Zarraonandia, better known as Zarra, in the 82nd and 85th minute. The scoreline did not reflect the real story of the match. American defender Charlie (Chuck) Columbo played with gloves raising a few eyebrows. Spain next played Chile and defeated them 2-0 with both Basora and Zarra on target in the first half.



Joe Gatjaens (R) scores against England

England played USA in Belo Horizonte in a match that has been touted as the greatest upset in the history of football. The truth was that the Americans were not a bad side as they had shown against Spain in the last match. The English media has described the American win as nothing short of a miracle over the years but they were being unkind to their opponents to gloss over the shortcomings of their own team. Matthews was still not on the team as Winterbottom did not consider their opponents good enough to play the great man. Joe Gatjaens scored the only goal of the match with a diving header in the 38th minute. The English media describe the match as a procession of missed English chances and acrobatics by Frank Borghi, the American goalkeeper. Mortensen and Mullen missed chances but the Americans had their own chances to extend their lead. Pariani brought out a great save from Bert Williams, the English keeper. Alf Ramsey cleared off the line from a Frank Valicenti (Wallace) shot. The crowd grew from 10,000 to 40,000 by the end. An editor in London thought the scoreline was a misprint of 10-1 in favour of England. It was a bad day for the English against colonials as on the very same day England lost for the first time in a cricket test match against West Indies. The score in reality should have been 3-0 in favour of England as the Americans had fielded three foreigners in their team. The goalscorer Gatjaens had played for Haiti, Joe Maca was a Scottish player and Ed McIlvenny was a Belgian. There was a FIFA letter showing that the three were ineligible. However, Jules Rimet was persuaded by the American ambassador, Herschel Johnson who conveyed the wish of a certain President Harry Truman to overlook such small deficiencies and shortcomings. In their last match, England needed a win against Spain. At last Matthews started and Jacky Milburn was brought in. Both of them played well but the rest of the team were demoralised by the loss in the last match and Spain won it by a goal from Zarra in the 48th minute. Spain had qualified for the final pool with an all win record. In the inconsequential last match, the Americans were defeated by the Chileans 5-2.

Group 3

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The first match was between defending world champions Italy against the defending Olympic champions Sweden. Sweden had not selected the great AC Milan trio Gunnar Gren, Gunnar Nordahl and Nils Liedholm, known as the great Grenoli. Again a lot of people say what if? The match was well fought with the Swedes bossing the possession with crisp passing. The Scandinavians were 2-1 ahead at halftime through goals by Hans Jeppson and Sune Andersson after Italians had taken the lead through Riccardo Carapellesse. Jeppson added another in the second half. Ermes Muccinelli pulled one goal back in the 75th minute but the Swedes comfortably controlled the game till the final whistle to win 3-2. Nearly all the Swedish players were signed by Italian clubs after this match. The Swedes played the Copa America runners up Paraguay next and were two goals up within half an hour. Paraguayans fought back with goals in the 34th and 75th minute. After that the Swedes shut shop and played for the 2-2 draw. The Paraguayans needed to beat the Italians by a two goal margin to qualify for the final pool but were handed a 2-0 defeat. The Italians played well and it was the last the Italians were seen in a World Cup for 12 years as their national team went into decline. Italy was the first defending champions to be eliminated in the group stage, an 'achievement' which they repeated six decades later. Sweden qualified for the final pool.

Group 4

There was only one match in this group which was hit by the pulling out of France. Uruguay crushed Bolivia 8-3. In this match, Uruguay showed that they had some very good players like Roque Maspoli in goal, Rodriguez Andrade the nephew of the great player of the 1930 cup winning team and Obdulio Varela their captain. Schaiffino and Ghiggia were both impressive with Omar Miguez scoring a hat-trick. Uruguay made it to the final pool, easily playing just a single match which meant that they were much fresher and less travel weary than the other teams.



Uruguay team

Final Pool: Brazil, Spain, Sweden and Uruguay.

The first match in the final pool was between Uruguay and Spain. Both teams were very physical and rough. Zarra was marked out of the game by the Uruguayans. Ghiggia sprinted in to score the first goal in the 27th minute. Spain hit back with two goals from Basora in the 39th and 41st minute. Uruguay was

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saved by Varela who moved up-field and went past two opposition defenders and scored from the edge of the box. The bruising match finished 2-2 and two Uruguayans missed their next match. After narrowly qualifying from the group stage, Brazil unleashed their attacking prowess against Sweden by annihilating them 7-1. The Swedes were not a bad team by any stretch but four goals by Ademir, a brace of goals by Chico and one by Maneca finished their chances in the tournament. The three inside forwards Ademir, Jair and Zinho were magnificent with their inter-passing and movement which was far more skilful than anything seen in Europe in those times. All the three were lanky and sported pencil moustaches. They would have scored more goals if they had not played exhibition football for the last 30 minutes.



Brazil Team

Uruguay played Sweden in their second match. It was a close match, the Swedes taking the lead through Karl-Erik Palmer in the fourth minute, after he controlled and shot high across the keeper from a long floating free-kick from the wing. Uruguay equalised through Ghiggia in the 39th minute, who after a characteristic surging run through the midfield, volleyed a long shot to the keepers right. Sweden immediately regained their lead through a Stig Sundkvist goal with a left footed volley, after the second choice Uruguayan keeper Anibal Paz came out and dropped a cross under pressure from Jeppson to take a 2-1 lead into the break. After the break the Uruguayans kept attacking without any success. Eventually Miguez scored twice from loose balls in the 77th and 84th minute to give Uruguay a 3-2 victory and kept alive their chances of winning the tournament. Brazil played Spain and was equally impressive as the last match winning 6-1. Jair, Ademir and Zinho were magnificent again with their inter play leaving their opponents mesmerised.

Before the last match there was the league match to decide third place. Spain just needed a draw and Sweden needed a win. The Swedes won 3-1 to claim the third position. This was the best performance in the World Cup by Spain till 2010. Brazil went into the last match against Uruguay, just needing a draw to

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win the World Cup. They were overwhelming favourites playing at home in front of a crowd of 205,000, the biggest ever to watch a football match. The Brazilian press had already termed their team as champions. The Uruguayan captain bought a newspaper which proclaimed the Brazilians as champions and ordered his teammates to urinate on it to stoke their anger and focus. The mayor of Rio de Janeiro referred to Brazil as the champions in his speech before the match. The Brazilians were exceptional in their forward play but their defence had a few problems. The diagonal defensive formation left their wing-halves with no cover if the opposition wingers managed to penetrate. The Brazilians started off like their last two matches attacking Uruguay relentlessly. They had eight shots in the first five minutes but were frustrated by a wall of Uruguayan defenders. Eusebio Tajera marked Ademir and he was helped by Varela who was falling back. Above all, the Uruguayan goalkeeper Maspoli played the game of his life.



Maspoli in action during the final

Maspoli saved a thumping shot from Ademir after some crisp interplay between Jair and Zinho. Then he saved a great header to deny Ademir again. Chico had his shot saved by Maspoli after that. There was no goal at halftime but the spectators were in good spirit singing and dancing to the samba beats. The goal came in the 47th minute. The Uruguayan defence was in the left side to cover Ademir and Jair. A reverse pass from Ademir sent Friaca clear on the right side of the goal. He managed to hold off Andrade and beat Maspoli with a flopping cross cum shot (0-1). The entire stadium was in raptures. The volume was louder and the samba rhythm faster. The goal coming in the second half did not demoralise the Uruguayans who took heart from the fact that they had thwarted the hosts for so long. Varela started to make forays into the Brazilian half. Ghiggia then started to give the Brazilian left-back Bigode a harrowing time. In the 66th minute he took a pass from Varela and pulled Bigode to the left touchline, beat him by a body sway, crossed for Schiaffino to score with a sweeping shot just beating Brazilian defender Juvenal's tackle and goalkeeper Barbosa's outstretched hands (1-1). The stadium was silent. The Brazilians were still going to win the Cup if the score remained the same but the crowd reaction was as if they had lost the Cup.

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Schiaffino scores beating Barbosa: The goal that silenced 205,000 people

The Brazilian manager many years later said that it was the silence in the stadium that terrorised his players. Ghiggia repeated the move only to see Schiaffino shoot wide in the 71st minute. The Brazilian coach Flavio Costa should have done something to protect poor Bigode. Defensive tactical acumen was not the forte of Costa. Brazil kept attacking and Maspoli kept saving. Brazil had 30 shots on goal in the game to Uruguay's 12. In the 77th minute Julio Perez, the Uruguayan half back played a one-two with Ghiggia which flummoxed hapless Bigode. Ghiggia angled in from the right wing and Barbosa stayed back on his line expecting another cross, instead the Uruguayan unleashed a fierce shot below the keeper's hands, who got a faint touch (2-1). The spectators were now horrified.



Chico (C) shoots wide in the final

On the other end of the pitch, Maspoli continued his procession of great saves, first from a Jair shot, another from a Chico toe-poke. Then Ademir volleyed over the goal from close range. In the last action of the game, Maspoli dropped a high cross after being challenged. His teammate Andrade was the first to the ball and the final whistle was blown by George Reader, the English referee. The Uruguayans had triumphed for the second time in South America and were yet to be beaten in the tournament. Schiaffino described the after-match ceremony as having the atmosphere of a despondent funeral.



Obdulio Varela being presented the World Cup trophy

The Brazilians unfairly blamed the players of African origin for their loss, namely, Barbosa the goalkeeper. Thirteen years later Barbosa was given the goalposts as souvenir, which he took home and promptly used as fuel for a neighbourhood barbecue. The Brazilian all white jersey was deemed unlucky and with permission from the Football Confederation a newspaper held a design competition for a new jersey. The competition was won by a 19 year old named Aldyr Garcia Schlee who designed the current uniform reflecting their national flag. Ruben Moran is the only player to make his debut in the World Cup final and win. It was a very successful tournament with huge turnouts to the matches. The only down side was that an entire country was in mourning after the tournament finished.

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Triviela – Beyond Trivia

The Triviela is a Portuguese term to denote the art of kicking the football with the outside of one's foot. It is used to hide one's weaker foot and also to suddenly fool the opposition with a wickedly swerving ball from a difficult angle. In Triviela, we will attempt to find some football feats/facts which would make you sit up and take note, like it happens when you see Ricardo Quaresma try [these](#).

Winning Young

The Spanish Armada has completely overpowered the cream of World and European competitions. They currently own the European Cup, the World Cup (only the 3rd team ever to have this distinction after West Germany of '72 and '74 and France of '98 and '00), and in 2011, their youngsters have shown that the supply line is truly brilliant. The different Spanish age group sides have gone on to win the UEFA U21 European championship (3rd title) and the UEFA U19 Championship (5th title). Only a tiebreaker loss to eventual champions Brazil in the quarter finals of the FIFA U20 World Cup prevented a 3/3 scenario. The 4th global age group tournament – the FIFA U17 World Cup, did not have a Spanish team though.

The talking point of this article though, was the first age group tournament that took place – the U21 Championship. The squad included two players – star man Juan Mata and Captain Javi Martinez who were parts of the victorious Spanish team from the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Both had also made identical 20 minute appearances in the group stages – Javi against Chile and Mata against Honduras.

It is not unique enough that a player wins an age group tournament along with a World Cup, it is the ordering of those wins which is slightly confounding to say the least. Incidentally the youngest member of 2010 Spanish World Cup team was Sergi Busquets at 21 but he was not part of the U21 team that won the Euros. This achievement is so rare, that in European age group football, Javi and Mata are the only two to have achieved it. It may be pointed out here that a host of victorious Italian members from the 2004 U21 Euros would also win the World Cup two years later but that was in the right order of progression.

Our research of South American U20 Championships hasn't thrown anybody either who won that tournament after being in a victorious World Cup team. Since no other continent has won the World Cup, this sets Mata and Martinez as truly unique players, probably of all time

Talking Point: Javi Martinez is surely the world's only player ever who has won three continental/world tournaments without ever winning anything for his club. Playing for a club like Bilbao has something to do with it though, and till now he has two runner-up medals from the 2008-09 Copa del Rey and the 2009 Supercopa de Espana. In contrast, he has the winning medals of UEFA U19 European championship in 2007 as well as the World Cup in 2010 and captaining the 2011 Spain U21 team to European glory. It might be a matter of time before this is rectified though, as a move to a bigger club may be in the offing.

Winning without Playing in National Colours

Our tryst with the Spanish players' unique records continues and this one was pointed out first by Andrew Thomas (@twisted_blood) so a big thanks to him for initiating this research. We will not consider men who never appeared for their country and won laurels. Neither will we take wins made in lower divisions.

Victor Valdes has won all that can be won at club and country level. But he only made his 6th appearance in the Spanish colours in the loss to a young Italian at the San Nicola stadium in Bari. Valdes came in as a half time substitute for the man who has made 125 appearances since his debut as a 19 year old in 2000 – Iker Casillas. Valdes has won 5 La Ligas, 1 Spanish Cup, 3 Champions Leagues, 5 Spanish Super Cups, 2 UEFA Super Cups, 1 FIFA Club World Cup and 1 FIFA World Cup – 18 team trophies. With his 6 caps, we can give him a resultant total of 12 (18-6). We will try and find players whose tournament wins for club (in top division and continental tournaments) and country far outnumber their individual appearances for their country.

For obvious reasons, it is goalkeepers who hold onto the topmost positions because more often than not, it is that position where if there is an established keeper, it is difficult to dislodge him, like it was for Valdes to take the place of Casillas.

Player	Position	Honours/Wins	Caps	Difference
Helton (Brazil)	Goalkeeper	20 wins for Vasco, Porto & Brazil	3	17
Victor Valdes (Spain)	Goalkeeper	18 wins for Spain and Barcelona	6	12
Dejan Nemet (Slovenia)	Goalkeeper	13 wins for NK Domzale and Club Brugge	1	12
Lionel Charbonier (France)	Goalkeeper	12 wins for Auxerre, Rangers and France	1	11
Alan Kennedy (England)	Left back	13 wins with Liverpool	2	11
Mauro Tassotti (Italy)	Right back	17 wins with Milan	8	11
Albert Celades (Spain)	Defensive Midfielder	14 wins with Real Madrid and Barcelona	4	10

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Chris Sutton (England)	Forward	9 wins with Blackburn Rovers, Chelsea and Celtic	1	8
Sylvinho (Brazil)	Left Back	14 wins for Corinthians, Arsenal and Barcelona	6	8
Jose Moreira	Goalkeeper	9 wins for Benfica and Portugal	1	8

[*In case you have a name who fits this bill, do let us know. We'll include it with your name]

Talking Point: One current player, who can win a lot and whose national career has 'ended' is Milan goalkeeper Christian Abbiati. He already has 8 trophies with Milan and has chances to win more. His national cap count is 4 and is not expected to increase, considering he is 34 and not in Prandelli's plans.

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