

THE WEEKLY

FIFA

Fédération Internationale de Football Association – Since 1904



Magical moments

2013

VICENTE DEL BOSQUE

CHRISTMAS TRUCE

ATHLETIC BILBAO

5

2013: Our highlights from a fascinating year

Underdogs Tahiti took a turn on the global footballing stage in 2013. Coaching legend Sir Alex Ferguson bade the beautiful game farewell. A women joined the FIFA Executive Committee. A visit to the San Siro became a journey into the past. Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund shook up the European game. The FIFA Weekly reviews an incident-filled year, as our reporters and columnists pick out their personal favourite moments.

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Russian resurgence, Soviet-style

The money is rolling in and Russian clubs are in the fast lane on the European football superhighway, but the distribution of power offers a reminder of the Soviet era.

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Vicente del Bosque is currently the world's most successful coach. Now he wants Spain to become the first European team to lift the World Cup in South America. He speaks to The FIFA Weekly about his targets, desires and worries.

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FIFA Chief Medical Officer Professor Jiri Dvorak discusses head injuries and specifically concussion, calling for the adoption of a simple but crucial maxim: If in doubt, keep the player out.

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Lev Yashin, Gordon Banks, Dino Zoff and their ilk made history. The FIFA Weekly Top 11 of 'keepers includes some colourful characters.

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Their policy may seem anachronistic, but La Liga club Athletic Bilbao still only recruit players with Basque roots. Despite their self-imposed constraints, the club has never been relegated.

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Blatter: This Club World Cup is a milestone

The Club World Cup is an established fixture on the international calendar, but the tournament has never achieved universal acclaim. FIFA President Blatter adds his voice to the debate.

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Turning point

Hannu Tihinen withstood countless blows to the head during his professional career and was forced to give up the game prematurely in 2010. But the Finn does not regret a single moment he spent on a football pitch.



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Wagner Ferreira dos Santos
Escaping the drop with Fluminense



Premier League

23.12.2013

Arsenal – Chelsea

26.12.2013

- Hull City – Manchester United
- Aston Villa – Crystal Palace
- Cardiff City – Southampton
- Chelsea – Swansea City
- Everton – FC Sunderland
- Newcastle – Stoke City
- Norwich City – Fulham
- Tottenham – West Bromwich
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Hannu Tihinen
Career cut short by head injuries



Alex Ferguson
Farewell to a legend



Marcello Lippi
Guiding Guangzhou at the Club World Cup



Vicente del Bosque
The FIFA Weekly interview



Dash of colour
Tahiti captain Nicolas Vallar and his team provided ample proof at the Confederations Cup that even the smallest nations are worthy of a place on the biggest stage. Our cover illustration, in the style of French master and Tahiti connoisseur Paul Gaguin, depicts Vallar swapping shirts with Spain captain Cesc Fabregas.

Premier League

28.12.2013

- West Ham – West Bromwich
- Aston Villa – Swansea City
- Hull City – Fulham
- Manchester City – Crystal Palace
- Norwich City – Manchester United
- Cardiff City – FC Sunderland

29.12.2013

- Everton – Southampton
- Newcastle – Arsenal
- Chelsea – Liverpool
- Tottenham – Stoke City

01.01.2014

- Swansea City – Manchester City
- Arsenal – Cardiff City
- Crystal Palace – Norwich City
- Fulham – West Ham
- Liverpool – Hull City
- Southampton – Chelsea
- Stoke City – Everton
- FC Sunderland – Aston Villa
- West Bromwich – Newcastle
- Manchester United – Tottenham

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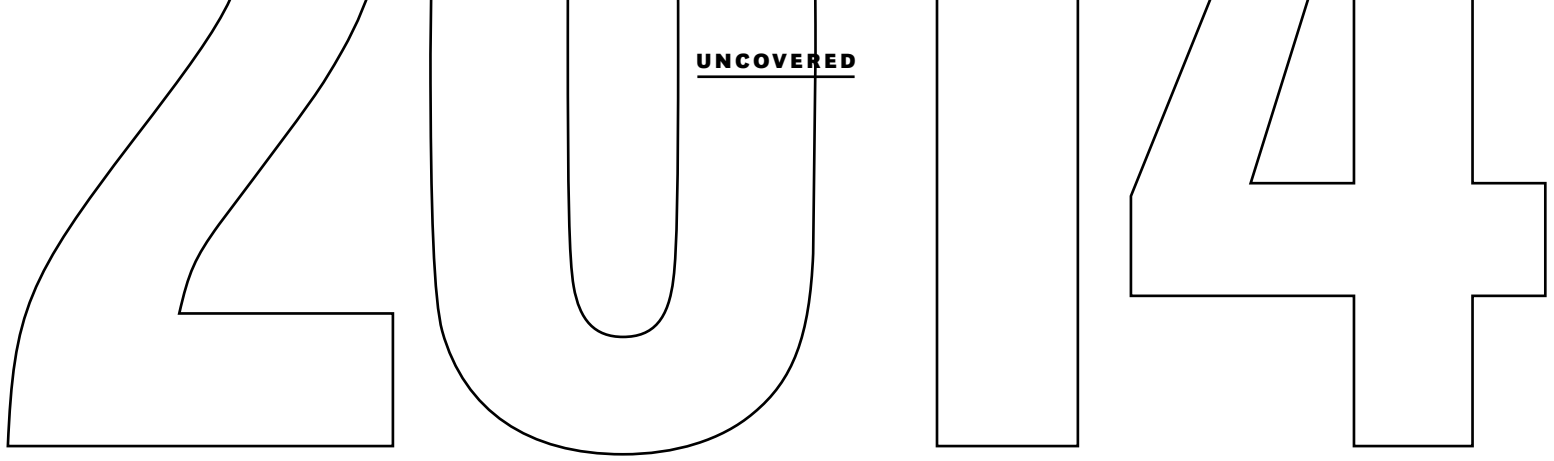
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UNCOVERED

A complete underdog challenges the world champion. Farewell to perhaps the greatest manager in modern times. Women are making themselves heard in FIFA's executive committee. A visit to the San Siro is becoming a journey into the past.

FIFA Weekly looks back on the year 2013 in football. Magical moments from a personal perspective.

2013



Tahiti players Lorenzo Tehau, Ricky Aitamai, Samuel Hnanyine and Vincent Simon (left to right) at the Confederations Cup match against Uruguay on 23 June 2013.

TAHITIAN DIGNITY AND PRIDE

Sven Goldmann

Fernando Torres fell in love on the evening of 20 June 2013. That can happen, of course, but rarely in football, where you respect your opponents at best. However, on this particular evening everything was different, and not because Fernando Torres had scored four goals at the Maracana, the world's most famous football stadium. At the end of the evening, the Spanish international spoke the heart-warming words: "We're all fans of Tahiti!"

Torres had become smitten with the very team he and his team-mates had just played off the pitch at the Maracana. Nevertheless, Spain's 10-0 win over Tahiti in the group stages of the Confederations Cup marked a great footballing moment. The world and European champion and Champions League winner's face lit up as he spoke about the souvenir photos his team posed for with the Tahitians, the "smiles on their faces" and a sporting spirit that seems to have long disappeared in the results-driven world of modern football. It was for all these reasons that Torres so warmly embraced Tahitian goalkeeper Mikael Roche, who plays for AS Dragon in the Tahitian capital Papeete and

threw himself so heroically at every Spanish shot that the Brazilian crowd roared "Man of the Match" at him, even though this accolade ultimately went to the Chelsea striker. Shortly before the end of the match, the Spanish superstar went one-on-one with the keeper but fired his shot onto the crossbar, prompting Roche to celebrate so exuberantly that it seemed almost as though he had cast a spell on the ball.

This was the night when Rio de Janeiro burned and football became a sideshow compared to the mass demonstrations unfolding nearby, but nevertheless the match was a great occasion. Some 75,000 fans in the Maracana sang just as they would if Flamengo or Fluminense or Botafogo were playing, and adapted their chants in honour of their new-found South Pacific heroes. The match became a performance the like of which will not be seen at another official FIFA tournament any time soon, featuring a David who knew and accepted his place and a Goliath who overcame his opponent with technical footballing precision rather than relying on rebounds, own goals and errors – all for the good of the game.

On the face of it, the Confederations Cup was celebrated as the scene of Brazil's comeback as a world footballing force, culminating in a 3-0 win over Spain in the final. But will this remain the tournament's lasting legacy?

Perhaps, when this competition is remembered in a few years' time, the only memorable story will be that of Spain and Tahiti: two mismatched opponents with a shared footballing vision. The Tahitians arrived at the tournament ranked 139th in the world but keen to be part, making the most of a rare opportunity to play the world champions by attacking with a fantastically high defensive line. There were no fouls, no delays and no unsportsmanlike behaviour. The Tahitians faced their inevitable defeat with dignity and pride. "Today didn't do football any harm," said Spain's coach Vicente del Bosque. "Today, football won."





Last respects: Stefano Borgonovo's funeral was held in Giussano, Lombardy.

STEFANO BORGONOVO LIVES ON

Luigi Garlando

What will be the abiding memory of 2013? Stefano Borgonovo's eyes. Eyes that closed for ever on 27 June when the former AC Milan, Fiorentina and Italy striker lost his eight-year battle with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), an incurable condition more commonly known as motor neuron disease. But the memory of those eyes lives on.

The debilitating condition worsened with every passing day, but Stefano was a great striker and knew all about holding up play. Even as his life force inexorably ebbed away, he gathered his remaining energy in his eyes and fought grimly to retain his last remaining means of communicating with the outside world. Despite the ravages wreaked by the illness he always managed to keep his eyes open.

Stefano communicated with his eyes, he laughed and he lived through them. For many long years these gleaming eyes were a beacon, showing him a way forward and giving him energy. His good friend Roberto Baggio paid a moving and appropriate tribute: "Dear Stefano, your greatest achievement was to transform the injustice of your illness into a medicine for others."

His tireless resistance against the malevolent condition is a timely lesson for every athlete. A centre-forward, for example, should continue to give everything he has through to the final seconds of a match, even with his team three goals down and already condemned to defeat.

This is what Stefano said when his condition was at its most acute: "I've learned to value what still remains for me personally: friends, positive feelings, little movements. I see the good things in life and despite it all I'm still happy, because I know there are people who have even less than I do. And that's why even now I can still smile." He spoke of the uncompromising power of hope and the ability to appreciate what really matters in life even if it was destined to last only a few short breaths longer.

Stefano's 50th birthday falls on 17 March 2014. We will celebrate because for us he will always live on, in our memories and as a shining example.



WHAT IS "ALS"?

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis – also known as Lou Gehrig's disease – is a debilitating illness affecting motor neurons in the brain. The causes of the disease are unclear. The degeneration is characterised by increasing muscle weakness (paralysis) and muscular atrophy. Paralysis leads to walking, speaking and swallowing difficulties as well as limited coordination and weakened arm and hand muscles. ALS is an incurable illness with a survival time of around three to five years. Death is often caused by pneumonia brought on by increasing swallowing difficulties and the paralysis of the muscles that support breathing.

www.fondazionestefanoborgonovo.it

FIFA'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SHOWS THE WAY

Tatjana Haenni

In 2013, a woman was elected to the FIFA Executive Committee for the first time, marking a further milestone in the history of women's football. The first major step came at the FIFA Congress in Mexico in 1986, when Norwegian delegate Ellen Wille demanded greater promotion of women's football, leading to the first friendly competition in 1988 and the first Women's World Cup in 1991.

The second major development followed in 1990, when Hannelore Ratzeburg became the first and, so far, only female member of the newly-founded FIFA Committee for Women's Football. Since then, women have regularly served on FIFA bodies such as the Technical or Football Committees.

Nevertheless, it was not until the FIFA Congress in Zurich in 2012 that FIFA President

Joseph S. Blatter proposed expanding the Executive Committee by one person and suggested that a woman should be invited and appointed to the Executive Committee by Congress for the first time in FIFA's history. Lydia Nsekera, former President of the Burundi Football Association and a member of the IOC, was invited by Congress to become the first co-opted member of the Executive Committee. At the same time, FIFA's statutes and regulations were adapted so that Nsekera did not need to be officially voted into the Committee at the 2013 Congress.

Three women put themselves forward for election. Congress confirmed Lydia Nsekera and appointed her as the first female member of the Executive Committee and appointed her two fellow nominees, Sonia Bien-Aime from the Turks and Caicos Islands and Moya Dodd from Australia, as co-opted members. Both were appointed as co-opted members as the FIFA Statutes initially only provides for the election of one woman to the Executive Committee, so the other two nominees were appointed in a different capacity.

It was also decided that women should be represented on as many committees as possible, such as the Referees Committee, which has always previously been an all-male panel.

The election of these three women is hugely significant for the future of women in football, but also for the future of women's football. It is a milestone as well as a reminder to all other football associations and organisations that women make up half of the footballing community. A 2007 McKinsey study entitled "Women Matter" adds that: "Companies with three or more women in top management functions score more highly for each organisational criterion than companies with no women at the top."

2013 appears to have been a breakthrough year for women in decision-making bodies. FIFA has cleared the final hurdle and sent out a clear signal in the hope that as many of its member associations as possible will follow suit. Women's football will only become emancipated and achieve the ultimate breakthrough when women are represented in football's highest decision-making bodies and when women's football has its own structures in every football association.



The first woman on the FIFA Executive Committee:
Lydia Nsekera from Burundi breaks new ground.





Trophies galore: Joyous celebrations for Bayern Munich and former coach Jupp Heynckes.

HERE'S TO THE HAPPY TEAMS

Jordí Puntí

This year, football has once again delivered us its weekly measure of joy and misery. When I think of an iconic image to sum up 2013 in football, one goal by one player immediately springs to mind: Zlatan Ibrahimovic, for Paris Saint-Germain against Bastia. Surrounded by defenders, he pounced on a rebound to score with an elevated flick of his heel. It was the move of a footballer turned taekwondo master. Ibra is so unique a player that his goals only remind us of the other goals he has scored, no-one else.

All happy teams are alike, but each unhappy side is different. We won't recall the miserable ones here though, because they are often merely a consequence of the happiness of others. The most joyous club of 2013 has to be Bayern Munich. Their play in the Bundesliga and the Champions League was often breathtaking, especially in the two-legged success against Barcelona which took them to the European final. Jupp Heynckes led those players with the virtuosity of a philharmonic conductor, and his successor Pep Guardiola has maintained his predecessor's fine work in the last few months, drawing on his fluid mastery of the German language. In truth, Guardiola's signing for Bayern is also one of the major stories of 2013, especially given the freedom behind his choice. And among the other coaches, only the retirement of Sir Alex Ferguson deserves greater attention: homage to an uninterrupted 27 years

chewing gum on the Manchester United bench.

On the subject of happy teams, Jurgen Klopp's Borussia Dortmund also springs to mind with their brilliant combination of technical ability, sweat and suffering as a collective unit. Each one of their players symbolises Klopp's football vision in their own way, but perhaps the one who impressed me most was Ilkay Gundogan, a young man with a technique and calm when passing the ball reminiscent of Xavi at his very best.

Because even though football is a team sport, we remember its outstanding individuals. This year, Ryan Giggs turned 40 years old while still starring for Manchester United, while Brazil's Ronaldo took part in a reality TV show at the age of 37 in order to lose weight, and achieved his goal.

2013 will also be remembered as the year of the Welshmen with bright futures ahead of them: Gareth Bale, who broke records in his signing for Real Madrid, and Arsenal's Aaron Ramsey, whose link-up play with Mesut Ozil, bought in the Madrid sales, could see him go far. Others have shown that they too have a bright future ahead of them, including Isco of Real Madrid, Lorenzo Insigne at Napoli, Eden Hazard at Chelsea and Gerard Deulofeu, on loan at Everton from Barcelona.

In terms of injustices, Iker Casillas' relegation to the bench at Real Madrid must be mentioned. By some paranormal phenomenon,

Spain's World Cup-winning goalkeeper was dropped by Jose Mourinho and remains a substitute under Carlo Ancelotti.

And on the subject of superhuman phenomena, 2013 was also the year of Eric Abidal. Having recovered from his liver transplant, the Frenchman returned to action for Barcelona, but was not given a contract renewal at the end of the season because the Catalan club did not see him fit for football at the highest level. So Abidal moved to Monaco, where he plays at the highest level every Sunday and now looks likely to feature at the World Cup in Brazil, much to the embarrassment of the directors at Barcelona who prematurely called time on his career in Spain.

But I would like to finish with another happy image, away from European football. It occurred in an airport in New Zealand, where Mexico went to play their World Cup play-off, and were greeted by a group of Maoris interpreting the Haka as a form of welcome. The Mexicans duly said thank you by belting out one of their songs: "Ay, ay, ay, ay, canta y no llores, porque cantando se alegran cielito lindo los corazones..." (Ay, ay, ay, ay, sing and don't cry, because, pretty little heaven, singing warms the hearts...)"





Victory from the jaws of defeat: Borussia Dortmund's Lukasz Piszczek, Mats Hummels and Nuri Sahin (left to right) celebrate booking a place in the Champions League semi-final.

THE NIGHT ANARCHY REIGNED

Roland Zorn

It was a night on which all those involved appeared to be adrift in a sea of emotions.

Even the Scottish team of officials, led by the experienced Craig Thomson, were affected by the thunderous and quite terrifying atmosphere at Signal Iduna Park on 9 April this year, when the second leg of Borussia Dortmund's Champions League quarter-final against Malaga escalated into a footballing drama in which keeping a cool head became almost impossible.

After a goalless first leg, the Andalusian side took a 2-1 lead thanks to an 82nd minute goal from Eliseu, with Thomson and his team failing to spot that the Portuguese winger was offside, as can happen in top-flight matches every week.

But that controversy was just the start of a frantic closing phase that at times bordered

on complete anarchy. Dortmund appeared to be heading for the exit, with Reus' equaliser in the first minute of injury time just a consolation. Nothing of the sort. BVB were determined to chase down every ball in the last four minutes of time added-on until they had pulled off "The Miracle of Dortmund".

Ultimately, they were helped by exceptional circumstances that appeared to have overwhelmed the referee too. Thomson and his assistants failed to spot no less than four Borussia players in an offside position as Lewandowski swung in his cross, nor did they then see that Santana was offside when nudging the ball over the line. This double error from the officials crowned an electrifying evening of football in which the laws of this unpredictable game seemed to cease to apply altogether. Anyone who was there

that night understood why it happened, but anyone watching afterwards found it incredible and incomprehensible. As is so often the case in football, it was ultimately all a matter of perspective.



MANNARI'S GENIUS RE-LIVED

David Winner



I love a bit of faded glory, even when it isn't my own. In May I visited the San Siro for the first time and saw Milan play Roma. Knowing the legend of Arrigo Sacchi's Milan of the 1980s, I hoped for a footballing feast.

The vast, lopsided stadium with its towers and giant roof was certainly impressive, though only half full. And the Milan fans, singing and waving their black and red flags continuously on the Curva Sud, were a raucous treat.

But the game was a let-down with bad football, two red cards and no goals. The match stopped at one point because of racist chanting by the Roma fans. I didn't even see Milan's famous red and black stripes because they wore a tacky change strip.

So the next day I went back. Virtually. Hankingering for a glimpse of a great past I'd missed I googled and found a treasure.

Someone on youtube had posted an entire San Siro match from 1989 when Sacchi's Milan, with Gullit, Van Batsen Rijkaard and Baresi were in their pomp. Against Juventus in front of an ecstatic capacity crowd, they played like gods and won 4-0. The cameras kept looking up at the half-finished roof, then being built for the 1990 World Cup.

And in my mind's eye I saw it all from my seat of the night before. The third goal was magical. Every Milan player seemed to take a touch in a move which flowed all over the field.

Finally, a cross was whipped in and a 20 year old substitute called Graziano Mannari scored with an impossible header – diving and flicking the ball in an arc over the goalkeeper into the far top corner.

Mannari, who also scored the fourth, was obviously destined for stardom. Why had I never heard of him? The answer, I soon discovered, was: knee injuries. This Juve match seems to have been his peak. As a squad player, he earned winner's medals for the scudetto of 1988 and the 1989 European Cup. But by the mid-90s his career was petering out with teams like

Pistoiese and Pontedera. Later he became a youth coach for Milan in Tuscany.

Perhaps time is not as linear as we imagine but, as Doctor Who says, “wibbly-wobbly” with past and present mixed up in strange ways.

For me at least, thanks to the computer screen, this was the year Mannari's thwarted genius lived again.



Aerial acrobatics:

“Goooooal! Goooooal! Manari!
Manari does it again!”
(Italian TV commentary)



Living legend: Sir Alex Ferguson.

SIR ALEX FERGUSON'S UNIQUE CAREER

Thomas Renggli

He managed Manchester United for 27 years, or 2,153 matches, and won 49 trophies, 13 of them in the Premier League and two in the Champions League. He was knighted in 1999. Scottish legend Sir Alex Ferguson (71) is a true footballing icon. The announcement of his retirement last May made the headlines and relegated the annual Queen's Speech at the State Opening of Parliament in London to the inside pages.

Ferguson led United from domestic mediocrity back to the elite of the world game, helping to build one of the most valuable brands in global sport and even surpassing the fame achieved by his most revered predecessor Matt Busby. It was not without its material rewards either, as his estimated personal wealth of £34 million made him the richest manager in the country. The son of a docker still retained impeccable working class credentials in his public persona. He struck David Beckham in the face with a boot, kept his players under surveillance from a dark limousine, and broke up wild parties by barging into hotel rooms with a look of thunder on his face, scolding his players as a teacher might chide a classroom. He swore into microphones and attacked a cowed press, but (almost) always stood up for his players in public. One lasting legacy of his childhood in a Glasgow tenement block was a strong sense of community, he said in a rare interview. And he never, ever talked anything but straight. Eleven quotes from a unique career.

"I won't be doing a Bobby Robson and be a manager when I am 70. It is just knowing when to quit."

Ferguson on his future in October 2008

"Just f**g patch him up!"**

Ferguson to a physio after the Scot had kicked a football boot at David Beckham's head

"That lad must have been born offside."

Ferguson on Filippo Inzaghi

"I've got a plan to stop him: it's called a machete. Plan B is a machine gun!"

Ferguson on Cristiano Ronaldo

"When an Italian tells me it's pasta on the plate, I check under the sauce to make sure. They are the inventors of the smokescreen."

Ferguson on Italian opposition

"My greatest challenge was knocking Liverpool right off their f**g perch. And you can print that."**

Ferguson on Liverpool - England's record league winners at the time - in 1993

"They say he's an intelligent man, right? Speaks five languages. I've got a 15-year-old boy in my team who speaks five languages!"

Ferguson on Arsene Wenger

"I can't believe it, I can't believe it! Football. Bloody hell!"

Ferguson after Manchester United's last-gasp victory against Bayern Munich in the 1999 UEFA Champions League final

"Sometimes you have a noisy neighbour. You cannot do anything about that. They will always be noisy. You just have to get on with your life."

Ferguson on Manchester City in 2009

"He was certainly full of it, calling me boss and big man when we had our post-match drink after the first leg. But it would help if his greetings were accompanied by a decent glass of wine. What he gave me was paint-stripper."

Ferguson on Jose Mourinho

"You shouldn't try to see inside the brain of someone crazy."

Ferguson on himself

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Thomas Renggli is chief editor of *The FIFA Weekly*.

Which way to turn? East or west? This is the question presently causing turmoil in

Ukraine, and it was very much the issue for Russian football a few years ago. The Russian Premier League responded by aligning its wages and fixture schedules with those of the top western European leagues. Up until 2010, fixtures were scheduled between March and November, but the system was then changed and this spring will see the title awarded in May for the second time. This was seen as the only way in which the Russian clubs in European competition could compete on a level playing field with clubs in England, Germany and Spain. It was also the only way of gaining genuine majority appeal with an eye on the 2018 World Cup.

There have been many changes in the east, but the power bases offer a reminder of the Soviet era. The Old Establishment currently occupy the top five places in the Premier League: Lokomotiv Moscow, Zenit St. Petersburg, Spartak Moscow, Dynamo Moscow, CSKA Moscow. The clubs' financing methods are also reminiscent of times gone by, supported as they are by major state controlled corporations. Lokomotiv are backed by the Rossijskie (RZD) railway company, Zenit by Gazprom, Spartak by Lukoil and Dynamo by VTB, a bank with close links to the Kremlin. As for CSKA, the former Red Army club, the ownership situation is a little murkier. Roman Abramovich, the current owner of Chelsea, was initially involved. After that the club was backed by the millions of the Bashneft oil company. As of this year the club is (officially) deemed to be self-financing. Is this really the case? The current President of CSKA Jewegenij Giner is a close friend of Abramovich.

Somehow or other the money is rolling in and the Russian clubs are in the fast lane on the European football superhighway. They may not be moving at quite the speed they would like but they are still making continuous progress. The current five year UEFA assessment sees the Russian league in seventh position, hot on the heels of the competition in France and Portugal.



Under construction: Russian football must overhaul its infrastructure for the 2018 World Cup (picture: Dynamo Stadium).

Three Russian clubs are still battling it out in Europe this season, with Zenit St. Petersburg involved in the Champions League and Rubin Kazan and Anzhi Makhachkala eyeing glory in the Europa League. The story of Rubin Kazan reflects the economic and political realities in Russian football perfectly. The club's Champions League victory against Barcelona at the Nou Camp some four years ago laid down a meaningful marker for Russian football. The club from the province of Tatarstan benefits hugely from the enormous oil reserves there. Canny manoeuvring on the political scene also enabled it to gain a solid foundation. Its most significant benefactor, Mintimer Schaimijew, was both President of Tatarstan and Vice-President of Rubin Kazan until January this year. The club saw hard times in the nineties and that was when

Schamijew installed the then Mayor as club President and transferred Rubin to the public authorities.

In the spring Rubin want to follow in the footsteps of CSKA Moscow in 2005 and Zenit St. Petersburg in 2008 by triumphing in the Europa League. This would only be a staging post for Russian club football. Russia's massive economic power and immense human resources mean that only one thing can satisfy the appetite of the world's largest land mass: victory in the Champions League. ⚽

“The power bases offer a reminder of the Soviet era.”



England: Premier League

On club devotion



David Winner is a London-based author and journalist. His books on football include 'Brilliant Orange' and 'Dennis Bergkamp: Stillness and Speed'.

On a radio phone-in show a Hull City fan called Ian was offered what outsiders might see as a rather attractive Faustian bargain. In its 109 year history Ian's team has never won a major trophy and has rarely been in the top division. Now owner Dr Assem Allam, a local tycoon who rescued the club from oblivion three years ago, put £70 million into it and dragged it to the Premier League, wants to rename the team "Hull Tigers", a move he thinks would make the team sound more powerful and bring in more money, especially from Asia.

The vast majority of lifelong fans – like Ian – are implacably opposed. While Allam's officials have started using the intermediate term "Hull City Tigers" traditionalists are adamant that only "Hull City AFC" will do. Because the club was founded under that name in 1904, they stand up in the stadium after 19 minutes and four seconds of every game to protest the change.

On Talksport radio last week Ian was asked if he might feel differently if rebranding helped Hull to become one of the great clubs of Europe. Very firmly, Ian said no. Why not? "Because it wouldn't be my club. It wouldn't

"Even winning the Champions League is no inducement"

be the club my father supported, that people stretching back generations have supported." Even the prospect of winning Champions League was no inducement. "What name do you want to have engraved on that trophy?" asked Ian. "Do you want it to be Hull City, which is the name we've had for 109 years, which we're proud of, or do you want it to be Hull ... (pause) Tigers? (He spat the word rather than spoke it). I don't want a trophy if it's going to have Hull Tigers engraved on it!" Never underestimate the power of ancestor worship in English football.

Most fans around the country feel exactly as Ian does. Dr Allam's proposal has stirred a storm of protest all over Britain and fans of other clubs have voiced their support for the Hull protests.

In the early years of professional football clubs "rebranded" themselves regularly and had a quite fluid approach to colours, stadiums and names. Chelsea started out in green. Arsenal were, at various times, known as Dial Square, Royal Arsenal and Woolwich Arsenal. Manchester United began as Newton Heath. Everton was originally a church team called St Domingo's. But things settled down and clubs as we came to know them became potent symbols of identity.

Owners may see clubs as businesses, but fans treat them as objects of religious devotion.

Many fans experience changes such as the new colours and badge imposed on Cardiff City by their Malaysian owner Vincent Tan, as evidence the game itself is being taken from them.

Dr Allam is evidently frustrated by all this. He scored a damaging own goal when he called anti-name-change protestors "hooligans" and said of the traditionalist fan group City Till I Die: "can die as soon as they want". But he is adamant. And the battle is coming to a head. Steve Bruce, Hull's manager, has said the owner has put so much into the club he should be allowed to change the name if he wants. Allam himself has threatened to walk away if he is thwarted and has upped the ante by formally asking The Football Association in London to sanction the Tigers name from next season. The FA has said it will consult fans before making its decision. ⚽

Argentinian League

The God squad



Jordi Puntí is a novelist and the author of many football features in the Spanish media.

God is Argentinian. Ask the fans that populate the country's football stadiums and they'll tell you as much, and not without good reason. After all, they have the divine talents of Diego Maradona and Lionel Messi to back up their argument, and now a spiritual element in the shape of Pope Francis, God's manager on Earth if you will.

The effects of this heavenly power could be felt only last weekend, when San Lorenzo de Almagro, the club that the pope supports, won the Torneo Inicial. *El Ciclón's* first league title since 2007 was gleaned on a tense, taut final day on which God himself seemed to be lending a helping hand at times.

Four teams went into the denouement with a chance of landing the title, and as fate would have it, they were pitted against each other,



Big cat benched: Hull City fans oppose the owner's plan to rename the club Hull Tigers.



with third-placed Velez Sarsfield hosting leaders San Lorenzo and second-placed Lanus visiting Newell's Old Boys, who lay fourth at the start of play. All four contenders had been in inconsistent form heading into the last round of matches, where the permutations were endless. Juan Antonio Pizzi's San Lorenzo were naturally the best-placed of the four, though defeat for them and a draw between Newell's and Lanus would allow Velez to take the crown.

The two games were all square heading into the last five minutes, with the leaders holding their hosts 0-0 and Newell's and Lanus locked at 2-2. Velez had not given up hope, however, especially with their guests sitting back, grimly holding on to the point they needed.

The game to that point had been a forgettable one, as long balls went astray and crosses were sent in to no-one in particular. Exasperated by the aerial wastefulness on show, the commentator on national TV implored the players to get the ball down on the ground and play a little.

Finding an extra gear from somewhere, Velez finally exerted some pressure in the closing minutes, pressure that culminated with Agustin Allione volleying the ball powerfully goalwards from inside the box and San Lorenzo goalkeeper Sebastian Torrico pulling off a superhuman reflex save, somehow clawing it over the bar. The scores would remain unchanged in both matches, leaving *El Ciclón* to celebrate their latest title.

The game was entirely in keeping with a low-profile championship race in which there was little to choose between the contenders. San Lorenzo's winning points tally of 33 is the lowest ever in the history of the championship, though that statistic should in no way detract from their achievement.

Pizzi's arrival as coach saw the Buenos Aires club return to their ball-playing ways and hone their counter-attacking game, and his contribution was rightly recognised by midfielder Juan Ignacio Mercier on the night the title was won: "Pizzi has given San Lorenzo an identity on the pitch," he said.

That identity is based on tactical astuteness, a core of experienced players, including Mercier, Leandro Romagnoli and the free-scoring Ignacio Piatti, and a clutch of promising youngsters, among them teenage striker Angel Correa.

San Lorenzo's reward is a place in the Copa Libertadores. As well as booking a return to the South American elite, their title triumph will also focus more attention on their ultimate goal of returning to Boedo, the Buenos Aires suburb where the club was founded and where their old ground, known as *El Viejo Gasometro*, was situated. Nationalised by General Videla's military junta in 1979, the stadium was subsequently sold and a shopping centre built on the site.

Though San Lorenzo have had an alternative home of their own since 1993, albeit in another part of town, the fans have been campaigning in recent years for a return to their old stamping ground. In 2012 the government of Buenos Aires approved "a project of historical restitution", by virtue of which the club will recover part of the old site and be granted the right to buy the remainder.

While hopes of a long-awaited return to Boedo grow ever stronger, on Monday a delegation of San Lorenzo players and directors travelled to the Vatican to offer the league title to the pope and, who knows, thank him for spiritual services rendered. In their prayers there will no doubt be a place for *El Viejo Gasometro* of the future. ☺

Brazil: Serie A

Fluminense spared



Sven Goldmann is a football expert for the "Tagesspiegel" newspaper in Berlin.

Rio de Janeiro has experienced some difficult days recently. The *Cidade Maravilhosa* (Wonderful City) is used to being the centre of attention, but although the eyes of the world were on Brazil recently, they were not looking at Sugar Loaf Mountain or the Maracana. Instead, the focus was firmly on the country's northern Bahia coast, where the World Cup groups were drawn at the holiday resort of Costa do Sauipe.

Two days later, the spotlight was once again back on Rio for less celebratory reasons when two of its most historic clubs were relegated from the Brazil's Serie A on the final day of the season. Vasco da Gama lost 5-1 to Atletico

Paranaense and played as poorly as the fans of both clubs behaved. The match had to be delayed for 70 minutes due to brawling among supporters in the stands. The police moved in and a rescue helicopter landed on the pitch to airlift injured spectators to hospital.

Fluminense only avoided an even more dramatic relegation thanks to a lot of luck and a little judicial assistance. Never before in Brazil have the defending champions been relegated into Serie B the very next season, but this was the fate that loomed over the *Tricolores* despite a 2-1 win over EC Bahia in their final match. Just a year earlier, Rio's Estadio Engenhao played host to a red, white and green carnival as Fluminense celebrated becoming Brazilian champions for the fourth time. The team returned to the refurbished Maracana this summer, but the move has not brought success.

Ultimately, a court managed to achieve what the defending Brazilian champions could not. The Brazilian sports tribunal STJD ruled that fellow relegation strugglers Portuguesa, from Sao Paulo, fielded ineligible midfielder Heverton in their 0-0 draw with Gremio Porto Alegre on the final day of the season. Portuguesa were docked the point they won against Gremio that day, plus three further points, consigning the team to 17th place behind Fluminense and a place in Serie B next year.

If Portuguesa had refrained from fielding Heverton and lost the match against Gremio, Fluminense would have been relegated instead. It is no wonder, then, that fans and cartoonists across Brazil poked fun at the manner in which the champions managed to avoid their fate. ☺



Name:

Vicente del Bosque Gonzalez

Date and place of birth:

23 December 1950, Salamanca

Clubs played for:

1969–1970 AD Plus Ultra

1970–1984 Real Madrid

1970–1971 CD Castellon (loan)

1971–1972 Cordoba CF (loan)

1972–1973 CD Castellon (loan)

Teams coached:

1985–1990 Real Madrid Castilla

1994 Real Madrid

1996 Real Madrid

1999–2003 Real Madrid

2004–2005 Besiktas

2008–present Spain

“The timing of the Champions League final worries me”

As a world champion, European champion and Champions League winner, Vicente del Bosque, 62, is currently the world’s most successful coach. Now he wants Spain to become the first European team to lift the World Cup in South America. Del Bosque speaks to The FIFA Weekly about Spain’s toughest competitors, the Brazilian climate, Messi and Ronaldo.

Spain are world champions, European champions and top the FIFA world rankings. Are they the best team in the world right now?

Vicente del Bosque: These results and rankings are certainly no accident; they reflect our performances over the past few months and years. On the other hand, Brazil are at a disadvantage in the world rankings because as World Cup hosts they haven’t had to play any competitive matches during the qualification phase. Spain are currently number one, but we should not lose our respect and humility as a result. Our past results will count for nothing at the World Cup finals.

Who do you currently rate as your toughest competitors?

That’s a long list. There are several strong teams, such as Germany, Holland, Russia, France, Italy, Portugal, England, Uruguay, Argentina and, of course, Brazil. There is also a wealth of talent beyond that; we mustn’t forget smaller teams such as Belgium, who have an exceptional crop of players at the moment.

A European team has never won the World Cup in South America. Do you think there are specific reasons for that, or is it simply coincidence?

The South American climate takes its toll on European teams, both in terms of temperature and, above all, the humidity. That can cause one or two difficulties, and I think England in particular will struggle in Manaus’s tropical climate.

What are you doing to ensure Spain can write a new chapter in its history next summer?

We have the quality and experience to win the title. Our players ply their trade not just in Spain but in other top European leagues, and the final squad selection will be based their performances in those leagues. Next year’s scheduling worries me slightly;

the Champions League final in Lisbon takes place on 24 May, with the World Cup set to start on 12 June. That doesn’t leave much preparation time.

So you’re hoping the Champions League final will be another all-German affair...

(laughs) I’m hoping for two things: as much preparation time as possible and an all-Spanish final. But whatever happens, we’re ready for every scenario and will make our preparations as flexible as possible.

Spain enjoyed a relatively easy qualifying campaign. Is that a bonus with regard to the finals, or do teams who have already overcome great obstacles or faced a stern test, such as France, have a psychological advantage going into the tournament?

I’ve got to disagree with you completely there. We had anything but an easy qualifying campaign and only qualified after the final round of matches. If we hadn’t beaten France away from home back in March, we probably would have ended up in the play-offs. It was a very finely balanced group. It was clear that France have a strong team even before their second leg play-off match against Ukraine.

Spain’s tiki-taka style no longer inspires the enthusiasm it once did. In fact, the team were even criticised for their playing style at Euro 2012 before dominating Italy in the final in a way scarcely seen in such an important game before. Is Spain’s short passing game the future of football?

Ultimately, it’s the players that determine the style. When you have footballers like Xabi Alonso, Xavi Hernandez, Iniesta, Silva and Villa in your team, it dictates the type of football you play. The Spanish team blend together perfectly, both on and off the pitch, and that makes any talk of tactics unnecessary. Our approach works best for us, and our success proves us right.

Your ability to break down the barriers between Barcelona and Real Madrid and unite both parties was a decisive factor in the team’s recent success. How did you manage that?

I appealed to the players’ sense of reason, and we discussed it at length. It was my job to make it clear to the players that the national team is a completely different platform to club football, offering them a unique opportunity to achieve great things together.

It looks as though you would also have been very successful as a political diplomat...

(laughs) I’m very happy as a football coach...

Let’s return to Barca and Real. These two teams contain three of the world’s most gifted non-Spanish players right now: Messi, Neymar and Ronaldo. Who is the best in your opinion?

(laughs) It’s very tough to choose between Messi and Ronaldo. I can only say this: I have cast my vote for the Ballon d’Or and I don’t get involved in debates between Barcelona and Real Madrid.

Does that mean you voted for Ribery or Ibrahimovic?

(laughs and says nothing)

What do you want for Christmas – and for 2014?

I would like a good year of football and a good World Cup in Brazil, for both the world and for Spain. ☺

Interview: Thomas Renggli



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Sep. 12-14 Brazil
 Sep. 17 Tahiti
 Sep. 21 Fiji
 Sep. 23 Vanuatu
 Sep. 27-29 Costa Rica
 Sep. 30-Oct. 2 Honduras
 Oct. 3-4 Panama
 Oct. 5-6 Jamaica
 Oct. 7 Cayman Islands
 Oct. 8 Bahamas
 Oct. 9 Bermuda
 Oct. 10 British Virgin Islands
 Oct. 10 Puerto Rico
 Oct. 11-12 Dominican Republic
 Oct. 13 Turks and Caicos Islands
 Oct. 14 Dominica
 Oct. 15 Anguilla
 Oct. 15 St. Vincent & Grenadines
 Oct. 16 US Virgin Islands
 Oct. 17 Antigua and Barbuda
 Oct. 18 Montserrat
 Oct. 19 St. Kitts & Nevis
 Oct. 21 St. Lucia
 Oct. 22 Barbados
 Oct. 25-27 Haiti
 Oct. 28 Grenada
 Oct. 29 Suriname
 Oct. 30 Guyana
 Oct. 31 Trinidad & Tobago
 Nov. 1 Curacao

Nov. 2 Aruba
 Nov. 3-4 Nicaragua
 Nov. 5-6 El Salvador
 Nov. 7 Belize
 Nov. 10 Israel
 Nov. 11 Palestine
 Nov. 12-13 Jordan
 Nov. 14-16 Egypt
 Nov. 17-19 Tunisia
 Nov. 21-22 Algeria
 Nov. 23-24 Morocco
 Nov. 25-26 Ghana
 Nov. 27-28 Kenya
 Nov. 29-30 Tanzania
 Dec. 1-3 South Africa
 Dec. 9-11 Saudi Arabia
 Dec. 12-14 Qatar
 Dec. 15-16 UAE (United Arab Emirates)
 Dec. 17-19 Bangladesh
 Dec. 20 Bhutan
 Dec. 21 Nepal
 Dec. 22-24 India
 Dec. 25-27 Myanmar
 Dec. 28-30 Thailand
 Dec. 31-Jan. 2 Vietnam
 Jan. 3-5 Malaysia
 Jan. 6-8 Indonesia
 Jan. 10-12 Chile
 Jan. 13-15 Argentina
 Jan. 16-17 Uruguay

Jan. 18-19 Paraguay
 Jan. 20-21 Bolivia
 Jan. 22-24 Peru
 Jan. 25-27 Ecuador
 Jan. 28-30 Colombia
 Jan. 31-Feb. 2 Venezuela
 Feb. 3-5 Guatemala
 Feb. 6-11 Mexico
 Feb. 12-14 Canada
 Feb. 16-18 Spain
 Feb. 19-21 Italy
 Feb. 22-24 Croatia
 Feb. 25-27 Turkey
 Feb. 28-Mar. 2 Sweden
 Mar. 3-5 Romania
 Mar. 6-8 Czech Republic
 Mar. 9-11 France
 Mar. 12-13 Wales
 Mar. 14-16 England
 Mar. 17-18 Scotland
 Mar. 19-20 Netherlands
 Mar. 21 Belgium
 Mar. 22-24 Russia
 Mar. 26-28 Poland
 Mar. 29-Apr. 2 Germany
 Apr. 4-6 Korea Republic
 Apr. 7-9 China
 Apr. 10-12 Japan
 Apr. 14-20 USA



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Concussion – be careful!



Living with the consequences of a head injury: Chelsea's Czech keeper Petr Cech wearing his headguard.

During FIFA competitions, an average of one concussion in 25 matches is registered. Basically, half of the concussions do not resolve in a subsequent absence. Careful medical attention is still necessary.

Jiri Dvorak

Based on scientific evidence and prior to the World Cup 2006, the International Football Association Board (IFAB) introduced the red card system sanctioning elbow to head hits. This resulted in a significant reduction of head injuries as well as in concussion.

The recent case of Hugo Lloris, the French National and Tottenham Hotspur goal keeper, aggravated the topic by returning to play following a sustained concussion. This was obvious in the case of Lloris.

The team doctor recommended replacing Lloris, however his decision was over-ruled by the team manager. Hugo Lloris returned to the field of play. As a result, this controversial decision raised a discussion amongst doctors and media.

F-MARC (FIFA Medical Assessment Research Centre) issued a clear recommendation on the return to play following a suspected or

an obvious concussion. A player who sustains such an injury must not return to the field of play unless cleared by the medical doctor.

In most cases, following a sustained concussion, a minimum of seven days is required to observe the typical symptoms. A medical assessment is appropriate. It is important for the managers and coaches to realise, understand and accept, that the player's health is the main objective and the most valuable asset, not only for the professional footballer but in general for all concerned.

FIFA, IOC and the International Team Sports Federation organized consensus meetings on this issue. The results are widely accepted by the medical and scientific communities. They should also be a guide to the managers and coaches, not only for the professional player but also recreational football clubs.

The insurance company *Nationale Suisse* set an example of collaborating between the sports representatives, medical profession and

insurance, in a special symposium on 28 November 2013 at the Home of FIFA. The relevant lectures are available on FIFA.com.

In relation to concussion and its management, generally speaking, the following should be applied: If in doubt, keep the player out. ⚽

Prof. Jiri Dvorak is the FIFA Chief Medical Officer.

T H E N

London,
England



1935

The Fulham players work on their fitness with a training run in casual shoes and loafers. John Arnold, under orders from the club physician to go easy on an injured knee, completes the session on his bicycle.

N

O

W

Tignes,
France

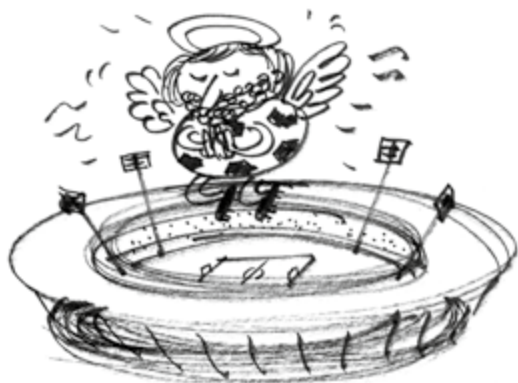


2010

It is neither Alpe d'Huez nor Mont Ventoux, but altitude training in Tignes is patently a punishing workout for the leading group of Thierry Henry, Franck Ribery and William Gallas (front, left to right) and the rest of the France national team. The image would prove prophetic: this laboured effort in the mountains foreshadowed a lacklustre showing at the World Cup in South Africa.

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The season of giving

Alan Schweingruber

Football promoters in the United States certainly have a task on their hands. Two weeks ago, much was still being written about their incredible vision. Buzzwords such as 'quality', 'excitement' and 'on the up' were being thrown around, and why not indeed? The national team had just completed an outstanding World Cup qualifying campaign, and Major Soccer League has never been so popular. Then, with Christmas just around the corner, that good mood dissipated like smoke. First, shockwaves reverberated from Brazil's Bahia coast when USA were drawn against Germany, Ghana and Portugal in their World Cup group, prompting the US media to announce "Welcome to the Group of Death". Then, the NBA struck another public relations blow to US soccer when an anonymous buyer paid 104,765 US dollars for a pair of Michael Jordan's old shoes from 1997. Who's still talking about soccer after news like that?

In essence, basketball is certainly an attractive sport, and Jordan's old shoes will make a nice present for a fan, especially after they have been left stinking under the Christmas tree for a few days. They will make it easier for the recipient to rate their favourite present this year, not to mention the fact that such a rare piece of sporting memorabilia is sure to leave a lasting impression on any visitors to the house. In any event, the Chicago Bulls legend's old sneakers would probably attract more attention than another famous piece of footballing memorabilia – the most famous cheat sheet in footballing history.

In late 2006, the crumpled note written in pencil by Jens Lehmann to help him prepare for Germany's 2006 World Cup quarter-final penalties against Argentina was auctioned to

a German energy company boss for one million euros – an amount the NBA could only dream of.

Christmas means presents, peace and contemplation; a chance to reflect on the past year and glance nervously into the future. Football fans everywhere spend the festive season wondering how they will endure more than a week without football. However, there is an upside. According to the largest European myocardial infarction registry, made up of 298 heart clinics, the risk of a heart attack is ten per cent lower over Christmas than even two days before Christmas Eve. In particular, any football fans who are smokers, inactive or overweight should make the most of this recovery period, as they fall under the register's Category One of people most likely to suffer a heart attack. This is particularly evident whenever a team has to take penalties in a cup tie or tournament, when the average number of heart attacks registered among men is three times higher than on average.

As a result, Category One fans would be well advised to spend the next six months eating healthily, jogging daily and cutting out smoking, because on 26 June 2014, the USA will play Germany in the World Cup. It will be the final and perhaps decisive match in Group G before the Round of 16 begins. Who knows, by then US football pundits might even be talking about a team 'on the up' characterised by 'quality' and 'excitement' once more. ☺

The weekly column by our staff writers

Best goalkeepers

- 1 **Lev Yashin (Soviet Union).** Voted the best goalkeeper of the 20th century, Yashin looked like a film star and saved 150 penalties in his career. In 1968 he became the only footballer to receive the Order of Lenin from the former Soviet Union.
- 2 **Iker Casillas (Spain).** Casillas has been voted "World Goalkeeper of the Year" for the past five years in a row. He won the European Championship in 2008 and 2012 and the World Cup in 2010.
- 3 **Gianluigi Buffon (Italy).** Moved from Parma to Juventus for 54.1 million euros in 2001 and has 138 international caps for Italy.
- 4 **Gordon Banks (England).** Banks was a 1966 world champion, five-time "World Goalkeeper of the Year" and made 628 top-flight appearances for Chesterfield, Leicester City and Stoke City. Who says England never produces any good keepers?
- 5 **Sepp Maier (Germany).** Won 95 international caps, more than any other German keeper, and played a record 442 consecutive Bundesliga matches. Won the World Cup in 1974 before a car accident ended his career five years later.
- 6 **Petr Cech (Czech Republic).** The lofty 1.96-metre-tall Cech has manned the Chelsea goal since 2002. His trademark is the headguard he has worn since suffering a skull fracture in 2006.
- 7 **Dino Zoff (Italy).** A national hero who played 112 times for his country, Zoff became the oldest player to win the World Cup in 1982 at the age of 40.
- 8 **Jorge Campos (Mexico).** Known for his colourful, self-designed shirts, Campos was bizarrely listed as a striker as well as a goalkeeper in Mexico's 1994 World Cup squad.
- 9 **Peter Schmeichel (Denmark).** The Dane made 398 appearances for Manchester United, keeping 177 clean sheets, and featured in the United team that beat Bayern 2-1 in the 1999 Champions League final.
- 10 **Jose Luis Felix Chilavert (Paraguay).** The highest-scoring goalkeeper in history, with more than 60 career goals.
- 11 **Fabien Barthez (France).** Won the World Cup and European Championship with France in 1998 and 2000, and allowed Laurent Blanc to kiss his bald head before each match.

A club like no other

Spanish Primera Liga club Athletic Bilbao only recruits players originating from the Basque country, the province of Navarra or the Basque region of France. Despite these constraints, the club has never been relegated.

**Jordi Puntí, Bilbao (text) and
Xavier Cervera (photos)**

When the referee blew his whistle to end the match in Bilbao on 1 December, Athletic's players embraced each other as if they had just won the league. Their fans cheered and celebrated with them, and for good reason: their team had beaten Barcelona 1-0, subjecting the Catalans to their first defeat of the season. The victory also enabled a new chapter of the club's history to be written at the new Estadio de San Mames.

This little jewel of an arena, only recently inaugurated, should create a largely similar atmosphere to that of Bilbao's former home, albeit in greater comfort and with larger attendances. Once the construction work is complete, the stadium will be able to hold 54,000 fans, but the club so desperately needed the new facilities that it was forced to open the arena before the work finished.

One of the stands has yet to be built, leaving the venue looking more like a baseball ground than a football stadium. The current gap in the structure also serves as a window to the past; the new San Mames stadium has been constructed just metres from its predecessor, giving a direct view onto the now fallow land on which the old arena once stood. The vista brings to mind memories of a "hallowed" place that acquired the nickname "La Catedral" (the Cathedral) from fans during its 100-year history.

Take a look into Spanish footballing history and it quickly becomes clear that the match between Athletic Bilbao and Barcelona is a classic Spanish league fixture. Together with Real Madrid, the Basques and the Catalans are the only teams to have played continually in the top flight without being relegated. In Athletic Bilbao's case, this long and successful

period is made all the more impressive by a policy that has given the club its own distinct character: it only recruits players who come from the Basque country, the Navarra province or the Basque region of France.

Teams without any foreign players are becoming an increasingly rare breed in the world of elite football, primarily because they have a significantly lower chance of bringing in top-quality players. For years, Steaua Bucharest practised this same policy, as did Spanish club Real Sociedad, and there are clubs elsewhere, such as Chivas Guadalajara in Mexico, Nacional in Ecuador or Saprissa in Costa Rica, who still retain this philosophy. The reasons for implementing such a restrictive policy are usually similar; Chivas fans speak about "national pride" and say they feel like "true Mexicans".

In Athletic's case, the Basque players have become one of the club's defining characteristics, an identifier with sentimental value. When I discussed the issue with Galder Reguera, who heads up the club's Fundacion Athletic, he reminded me that the club's recruitment policy is not simply a matter of ethics or social exclusion. It is important to clarify this, as the political conflict between Basque nationalists and the Spanish government has often generated confusion in this regard. In fact, Bilbao's Basque-only approach owes its existence to a historical decision whose roots lie in amateur football.

In 1911, Athletic played in several Spanish Cup matches, leading their coach, a Mr Shepherd, to draft in three professional English footballers. As soon as Bilbao won the competition, the Spanish Football Association decided that professional footballers could no longer participate in the competition. Bilbao reacted by deciding that they would no longer recruit foreign players, and the policy remains unchanged to this day.

As a result, it is to Athletic's enormous credit that they have established themselves so firmly in Spanish football's top flight without recourse to multi-million-euro player transfers. At the same time, the club has never used its

situation as an excuse when results fail to meet expectations.

Galder Reguera points out that there are plenty of foreigners at Bilbao, namely, "the thousands of fans across the globe who support the team and congregate in fan clubs." The club also occasionally accepts coaches from outside the Basque region, including Jupp Heynckes and Marcelo Bielsa. Since the 1980s, there have also been loopholes in Bilbao's Basque-only recruitment policy. Examples include the cases of Biurrun or, more recently, Amorebieta, who were both born in Brazil and Venezuela respectively but were able to enlist in Athletic's youth ranks by virtue of having grown up in the Basque country.

Heroes and friends

Athletic Bilbao love to honour their heroes, as demonstrated by the bust of Pichichi at the exit of the tunnel to the changing rooms, one of the few elements to have made the transition from the old stadium.

The bust is a memorial to Rafael Moreno Aranzadi, better known as Pichichi, a striker who played for Athletic between 1911 and 1921 and racked up an incredible goal tally during that time. Exactly 100 years ago, it was he who scored the first goal in the old Estadio San Mames. Today, it is customary for every team to leave a bunch of flowers on the bust when visiting the club for the first time. The trophy awarded each year to the Spanish league's top scorer is also named in Pichichi's honour.

Athletic's fans commemorate Pichichi, Zarra, Gainza and many others with a mix of admiration and affection, as they were not only heroes but also neighbours, who could often be seen strolling through the same streets as their supporters. Another of the club's idols is goalkeeper Jose Angel Iribar, or "El Txopo", who made his debut for Bilbao in 1962 before enjoying an 18-year career with the club. From 1964 to 1976 he was also the Spanish national team goalkeeper, before working as a coach for *Los Leones* after his retirement.



On the training pitch: Athletic also have two women's football teams.



Bilbao's new pride and joy: Some sections of the San Mames stadium are still under construction.



Quality time: In Bilbao's old town, supporters pass the time until the next match by playing card games.



The academy: Athletic's training ground is 14 kilometres from Bilbao.

“A club with a romantic philosophy.”



Pride of place: Bilbao won Spain's Copa del Rey for the eighth and, to date, last time in 1984.

I meet Iribar on a cold Tuesday morning at Athletic's training pitch, where fans greet him like a close family member whenever they see him. Iribar is now 70 years old and speaks with the pleasant self-assurance of a man with a wealth of experience who remains a club icon. When I asked him about the decision to recruit only Basque players, he says: "It's so deeply rooted in the club's culture that nobody thinks to question it any more. What some see as a handicap is actually an advantage for us, because it means the fans will bend over backwards for their club and can truly identify with the players. We also have many fans across Spain who are fascinated by the club's 'romantic philosophy.'" Iribar makes no secret of the fact that he received offers from Barcelona, Valencia and Madrid during his career, but says he never considered moving for a moment. "It was a different age," he reflects. "And anyway, who else could have treated me as well as this club has?"

It is not uncommon to bump into former players when strolling through the centre of Bilbao; faces that suddenly call to mind a football sticker, a certain trademark style or a specific goal, even though many years have since passed. Most of Athletic's former players have remained in the city or surrounding area since retiring and maintain an active relationship with the club.

On match days, fans generally fill the pubs and bars around the stadium in the streets of Licenciado Poza and Sabino Arana. Occasionally,

you may run into one or two former players sipping a beer, catching up with friends or enjoying a couple of "pintxos" – delicious, elaborately prepared Basque tapas dishes.

The Lezama football academy

Athletic Bilbao often provides its players with a job for life, operating not only as a financially sound club, but also appointing many of its former players to a range of senior appointments. For example, the club's president is currently Josu Urrutia, a ball-playing former midfielder who made more than 350 appearances for Athletic.

Meanwhile, the first team coaching staff comprises ex-players such as head coach Ernesto Valverde, Jon Aspiazu, Andoni Imaz and Aitor Iru, while Miguel de Andres and Antonio Karmona are responsible for technical reports and scouting. Bilbao's football academy in Lezama is headed by Aitor Larrazabal, and the youth ranks are overseen by other former players such as Estibariz, Suances, Ziganda or Joseba Etxeberria, who made significant contributions to Athletic Bilbao's recent past.

This internal structure ensures seamless integration and maximum commitment, and owes its existence to the football academy in Lezama.

The academy is a vital component of the club's philosophy. After all, if a team cannot recruit foreign players, it has to place even greater emphasis on its own youth system.

There are a total of twelve men's and boys' teams and two women's teams (the first team and a youth team) at Athletic, putting a total of 250 young players through their paces each season. The selection process begins for footballers as young as 11 years old.

Aitor Larrazabal, head of the Lezama academy, makes the role of the club's youth set-up quite clear: "This academy promotes a culture of commitment and dedication, but also upholds the values of comradeship and the idea that a team can only improve thanks to the contributions of each individual." According to Larrazabal, it is vital to impart these values so that "the club doesn't lose its best youngsters to richer teams at an early stage."

Lezama's social director Koldo Asua explains to me that the only way to undermine the power of money in children's and youth football is by establishing trust and emphasising the club's values. The players, and most importantly their parents, should feel that they are in the best possible place. Lezama has a classroom and two teachers to help the children with their homework before training begins.

When I ask him about the values in question, Asua outlines a set of commandments for young players, including quotes from Chesterton or Garcia Marquez such as: "A person's worth is measured by the loyalty of his heart and the humility of his soul." One



Evening training: Athletic's youth players are put through their paces at the Lezama football academy.

“The youth players discuss books with the first team”

practical example of the club's socio-cultural profile takes place once a month, when the children read a story such as “Le Petit Nicolas”, then discuss it with one of the first team players in the afternoon. This interaction with idols such as Iker Muniain, Andoni Iraola or Carlos Gurpegui motivates them and gives them an insight into the future they are working towards. There is just one extra important detail to mention: it is forbidden to talk about football during these conversations.

When Athletic have a title win to celebrate, they do this in a very special way. All the players and coaches board a barge that takes them up the estuary into the centre of Bilbao. The fans position themselves on the riverbank, cheering the team and waving flags in a unique and beautiful spectacle that the club's younger

fans have yet to experience. Athletic last won a trophy in 1984, when they completed a league and cup double.

The club has not been able to match that kind of success since. They came close in 2012 but lost in the finals of both the Copa del Rey and the Europa League. Despite this title drought, there is still an innate pride in being associated with Athletic. Larrazabal sums it up perfectly: “We're simply unlike any other club.” 🏆



14 seasons of top-flight experience: Aitor Larrazabal has led Bilbao's youth system since the end of his playing career.

The logo down the years



1898



1911



1970



1980



2013

Founded:

1898

Members:

35,354

Titles:

8 Spanish championships

(most recently in 1984)

23 Spanish Cups

(most recently in 1984)

2013/14 budget:

€64,152,000

Seasons in the Primera Liga:

All

A global jamboree

The FIFA Club World Cup is becoming increasingly important and is loved by clubs, players and fans alike. It is time to stop comparing it with other competitions.

Alan Schweingruber, Morocco

There is perhaps no other country in which the Champions League trophy is so important as in Spain, where the perennial duel between Real Madrid and Barcelona means the national championship has little variety to offer. In Brazil, Argentina and Chile, winning the Copa Libertadores is hugely significant, while in Italy, the Scudetto reigns supreme; indeed, Roma striker and former national team captain Francesco Totti even rates it above his World Cup triumph.

Now, the Club World Cup is gaining a reputation of its own. Comparing it to other competitions is like comparing a Rioja with a Bordeaux: both are appealing in their own way. What makes the Club World Cup special is how it brings together clubs from every

corner of the globe just before the holidays. It provides a challenge, an adventure, a learning experience and, ultimately, the pride of wanting to bring an international trophy home. "Look, there go the Brazilians," cries a Bayern fan at Marrakesh airport, pointing to a group of Atletico Mineiro supporters. Up ahead, Monterrey's Mexican fans snap away with their cameras. There are colours, flags and songs all around in an atmosphere of pure anticipation.

This unusual blend of clubs and cultures can trace its roots back to 1951, when the intercontinental competition was still called the "Copa Rio" and took place between the best clubs from Europe and South America. The event's founders rejected FIFA's proposal to include African clubs until the 1970s, and since FIFA inaugurated the official Club World

Cup in 2000, teams from all six confederations have taken part in the tournament.

There is huge excitement in Morocco, not least because this is the first time the event has been held in Africa. A Brazilian father who has supported Atletico Mineiro since childhood but lives in Africa, travelled to Marrakesh to watch the finals with his entire family. "I couldn't miss it," he explained. "Atletico is in my heart. It's simply fantastic what this Club World Cup has enabled me to do." 🌍

The weekly debate.

Anything you want to get off your chest? Which topics do you want to discuss? Send your suggestions to: feedback-TheWeekly@fifa.org.



The idea of a Club World Cup is very good, but only the first step in the right direction. The goal has to be a global Champions League lasting the whole season. It's the only way we'll ever really find out the best club in the world.

Markus Flach, Vienna (Austria)

What a fantastic tournament. It's all going so well and the Raja Casablanca fans are creating an unbelievable atmosphere. We're all really proud so many visitors have come to us from all over the world.

Said Maiza, Marrakech (Morocco)

I like the idea behind the Club World Cup. It's a lot more representative and fair than in the past when only the European and South American champions played each other.

Matthias Krobath, Zurich (Switzerland)

I think the Club World Cup is a bit second rate. You only have to look at the venues so far to know it's not exactly taking place on the biggest stage. Since 2005 it's been held six times in Japan and twice in the United Arab Emirates, and it'll be Morocco this and next year. I'll only start taking it seriously when the Club World Cup is held in one of the top European nations, like Spain, Germany, England, Italy or France.

Paul Cooper, Sheffield (England)

I'm a massive football fan and I rarely miss my favourite club Barcelona when their games are on TV. I'd probably have watched the Club World Cup if Barça were in it. But I'd basically say it's a secondary competition. The Champions League and domestic leagues are much more important to the leading clubs, for footballing and financial reasons. The title of Club World Cup winners lacks prestige and kudos at least for now.

Bernd Siegel, Berlin (Germany)

I'm going to the World Cup in Brazil next year. For me personally the tournament in Morocco is an appetiser and a fantastic opportunity to see my favourite club Atletico Mineiro live again at last.

Antonio Apolinario, Moatize (Mozambique)

"A global Champions League."

We definitely need a Club World Cup. But the event needs much better and bigger publicity around the world. That might be possible by signing up a global partner for example. At the end of the day it's about crowning the best club in the whole world, so fans all over the planet should be proud of their world champions.

Fabio Lenzlinger, St. Gallen (Switzerland)

The Club World Cup is always special because of the fantastic atmosphere. I've been to the tournament quite a few times. For us Bayern fans the trophy isn't quite as important as for the other clubs, but obviously we all want to win it.

Rudiger Muller, Munich (Germany)

I have to ask myself whether we really need the Club World Cup given the already overloaded international club football schedule. And in terms of the standard of play, it can't hold a candle to the European Champions League.

Stefan Ilgner, Stuttgart (Germany)



A milestone

Do we need a Club World Cup? That was a frequently asked question in the tournament's early years, but it is redundant now. When you see the effort and commitment put in by the competing teams and the crowds flocking to the stadiums in Morocco, there can be no doubt about the sporting significance of the event. FIFA has given intercontinental club football an attractive showcase with the Club World Cup.

Until the inaugural edition in 2000, the confederations only went head-to-head two at a time. The Intercontinental Cup featured the winners of the European Cup and the Copa Libertadores. There was the Afro-Asian Cup and the Copa Interamericana between the North and South American champions. The fact that Manchester United declined to enter the FA Cup in order to take part in the first Club World Cup clearly shows the significance attached to the contest by the leading clubs.

The current edition in Morocco sees the competition making its debut in Africa. It is producing football of the highest quality in all its many facets. The atmosphere is thrilling, particularly at matches involving home team Raja Casablanca. The setting could hardly be better and more passionate. And the first-ever appearance by a Chinese team, Guangzhou Evergrande and their Italian World Cup-winning coach Marcello Lippi, is a milestone in the history of football.

No other club competition offers such high-quality intercontinental comparison. The Club World Cup also symbolises the essential basis of the game, because clubs provide the players and the foundation for international football. In this respect the tournament in Morocco is a worthy prologue to the 2014 World Cup in Brazil.

Best wishes, Sepp Blatter

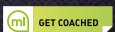
"I think the Club World Cup is second rate."



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France return to top five

The December edition of the FIFA Women's World Ranking reflects a busy period in which a total of 71 Women's World Cup qualifying fixtures were played in Europe plus a host of international friendlies especially in Asia. As a result, it features plenty of climbers and fallers. The top four remain the same, but France swap places with Sweden and move up to fifth, only a fraction behind the Brazilians who are in danger of dropping out of the top five for the first time since June 2007. The in-form French have never been as high up the ranking before, but

sixth is the Swedes' worst placing since the launch of the authoritative list. The biggest climbers in the top ten are Norway who move up two spots to eighth, their best placing since November 2010.

The biggest improvement of all is posted by Israel who move up six places to 55th. That is their best-ever performance in the ranking, earned by qualifying victories over Malta (up one to 87th) and Serbia (down one to 44th). Four teams from Oceania have dropped out of the rankings altogether due to a lack of matches, but Indonesia (68th) and Swaziland (112th) return to the classification.

Rank	Team	Change in ranking	Points
1	USA	0	2228
2	Germany	0	2156
3	Japan	0	2071
4	Brazil	0	2031
5	France	1	2027
6	Sweden	-1	2021
7	Canada	0	1978
8	Norway	2	1973
9	Australia	-1	1957
10	Korea DPR	-2	1956
11	England	0	1942
12	Italy	0	1892
13	Denmark	-1	1872
14	Netherlands	0	1868
15	Spain	2	1849
16	New Zealand	3	1834
17	Korea Republic	0	1829
18	China PR	-2	1826
19	Iceland	-4	1822
20	Scotland	0	1820
21	Russia	0	1806
22	Switzerland	3	1794
23	Finland	-1	1786
24	Ukraine	-1	1772
25	Mexico	-1	1760
26	Czech Republic	0	1696
27	Belgium	0	1680
28	Vietnam	0	1661
29	Austria	4	1650
29	Colombia	0	1650
31	Poland	-1	1647
32	Thailand	-1	1639
33	Republic of Ireland	1	1633
34	Nigeria	-2	1623
35	Romania	0	1606
36	Wales	1	1601
37	Hungary	-1	1576
38	Belarus	0	1565
39	Chinese Taipei	0	1564
40	Costa Rica	0	1561
41	Portugal	1	1550
42	Myanmar	1	1548
42	Uzbekistan	3	1548
44	Serbia	-1	1531
45	Slovakia	-4	1524
46	Trinidad and Tobago	0	1509
47	Cameroon	1	1467
48	Ghana	1	1459
49	India	1	1431
50	South Africa	1	1430
51	Equatorial Guinea	1	1429
52	Jordan	1	1415
53	Iran	2	1412
54	Haiti	3	1397
55	Israel	6	1394
56	Bulgaria	-1	1393
57	Northern Ireland	-3	1391
58	Slovenia	1	1387

Rank	Team	Change in ranking	Points
59	Albania	1	1379
60	Panama	2	1364
61	Croatia	2	1361
61	Hong Kong	3	1361
63	Turkey	2	1358
63	Kazakhstan	3	1358
65	Greece	-7	1352
66	Côte d'Ivoire	2	1344
67	Faroe Islands	0	1338
68	Uruguay	1	1330
68	Indonesia		1330
68	Morocco	1	1330
71	Estonia	3	1321
72	Guatemala	-1	1318
73	Bahrain	0	1314
74	Bosnia-Herzegovina	4	1312
75	Philippines	0	1311
76	Guam	0	1294
77	Laos	0	1293
78	Malaysia	1	1266
79	Senegal	2	1247
80	Montenegro	0	1242
81	Lithuania	1	1241
82	Zimbabwe	1	1224
83	Latvia	1	1192
84	Palestine	1	1182
85	Singapore	1	1177
86	El Salvador	1	1175
87	Malta	1	1166
88	Ethiopia	1	1163
89	Luxembourg	1	1156
90	Honduras	1	1153
91	Kyrgyzstan	2	1136
92	Congo DR	2	1132
93	Nicaragua	2	1111
94	Nepal	5	1104
94	Armenia	3	1104
96	Georgia	2	1100
97	Cyprus	4	1087
98	FYR Macedonia	2	1073
99	Namibia	3	1015
100	Bangladesh	3	979
101	Sri Lanka	3	965
102	Lebanon	3	955
103	Maldives	3	942
104	Tanzania	3	941
105	Zambia	3	938
106	Pakistan	3	937
107	Dominica	3	906
108	Afghanistan	3	899
109	Mozambique	4	873
110	Kuwait	4	870
111	Qatar	1	867
112	Swaziland		860
113	Lesotho	2	837
114	Belize	2	827
115	Bhutan	2	785
116	Antigua and Barbuda	2	757
117	Botswana	2	708
	Argentina **		1609
	Chile **		1544
	Ecuador **		1484
	Papua New Guinea **		1476
	Peru **		1450
	Paraguay **		1430
	Azerbaijan **		1341
	Jamaica **		1339
	Venezuela **		1338

Rank	Team	Change in ranking	Points
	Tunisia **		1325
	Algeria **		1320
	Tonga **		1316
	Fiji **		1306
	Egypt **		1289
	Guyana **		1256
	Congo **		1238
	Tahiti **		1238
	Bolivia **		1236
	Dominican Republic **		1226
	Mali **		1204
	Cuba **		1201
	Solomon Islands **		1195
	New Caledonia **		1188
	Benin **		1187
	Moldova **		1177
	Barbados **		1173
	Cook Islands **		1170
	Suriname **		1159
	Vanuatu **		1139
	Angola **		1134
	Sierra Leone **		1132
	Bahamas **		1111
	Samoa **		1110
	Puerto Rico **		1108
	American Samoa **		1075
	Guinea **		1063
	St. Lucia **		1061
	Eritrea **		1060
	Gabon **		1031
	Grenada **		1029
	St. Vincent and the Grenadines **		1008
	Burkina Faso **		1003
	St. Kitts and Nevis **		974
	Uganda **		965
	Turks and Caicos Islands **		963
	Bermuda **		950
	Guinea-Bissau **		927
	Syria **		927
	US Virgin Islands **		885
	Iraq **		882
	Liberia **		877
	British Virgin Islands **		867
	Cayman Islands **		847
	Malawi **		840
	Curaçao **		831
	Aruba **		803
	Comoros **		534
	United Arab Emirates *		1665
	Kenya *		816

** Inactive for more than 18 months and therefore not ranked.

* Provisionally listed due to not having played more than five matches against officially ranked teams.

The FIFA Women's World Ranking was first published in July 2003 to rate some 150 FIFA member associations on the basis of several factors including victories, home advantage, the strength of the opposition and the importance of matches. The ranking is published four times a year.



“I think, therefore I play”

As unpredictable as his free kicks, the creative genius that is Andrea Pirlo delivers a witty and well-written account of his whole career to date.

Luigi Garlando

Opposing players can never work him out. Expect him to bend it round the wall and he puts it over the top — a trick he learned from set-piece magician Juninho Pernambucano. But try jumping to block his shot and he fires it right underneath you.

Off the field he's equally enigmatic. The serious expression and narrowed eyes suggest a guy who is quiet to the point of tedium. And yet his teammates describe him as a prankster who is always in the mix when it comes to organising practical jokes and having a laugh.

In his autobiography, which comes out next spring and is co-penned with journalist Alessandro Alciato, including a forward by Italy coach Cesare Prandelli, Andrea Pirlo takes off the mask. Published by Mondadori, "I think, therefore I play" is as comical as it is surprising.

Who would have suspected that Pirlo was, in tandem with Daniele De Rossi, the instigator of much of the mischief aimed at poor Rino Gattuso

during Azzurri training camps. In his autobiography he recounts one such episode: "We had qualified for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa by drawing in Ireland, so the last group match against Cyprus in Parma, four days later, had become a kind of friendly match. [The then Italy coach Marcello] Lippi gave us the evening off in Florence. We all went out to dinner, except for Gattuso who stayed in. We returned drunk, we didn't feel sleepy and had a brainwave: "Let's go and annoy Rino." He was asleep with a nightcap on his head. As we climbed the stairs, De Rossi found a fire extinguisher and said: "I'm going to extinguish Gattuso." We knocked, he opened the door with bleary eyes. Daniele unloaded the whole thing onto him and ran to hide in his room, which was also my room. He left me at the mercy of this foam-covered monster in underwear, who screamed incoherently and proceeded to give me a good slapping."

Andrea Pirlo delivers a witty and well-written account of his whole career to date: from the tears of a child prodigy envied by his team-mates, who



Andrea Pirlo (with Andrea Alciato): "Penso quindi sono", Mondadori, Milan 2013, 137 pages, €16.00

didn't pass the ball to him, to the World Cup triumph of 2006, the Champions League in 2007 and the traumatic separation from Milan after ten years of love and success. The book begins with the story of this split, described in surprisingly acerbic terms: "Dumped. Thrown away. Scrapped. Or erased, destroyed, neutralised. Or shelved, abandoned, buried. Cast aside. If someone at Milan had a plan to finish me like that, it sank without trace. Like a mini Titanic."

Indeed, Pirlo moved on to Juventus and promptly won two league titles and two Italian Super Cups, before wowing the Maracana in the Confederations Cup and becoming the only Italian among the 23 shortlisted candidates for the Ballon d'Or.





An insight into Brazil

The 2014 World Cup in Brazil will no doubt set off a flood of new books about football. One of the early arrivals is an extremely readable account of the phenomenon of Brazilian football in words and pictures, from the Maracana to Pele. Brazil for the coffee table and sofa!

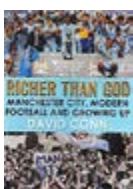
Reinaldo Coddou H.: "O Jogo Bonito. Brazil - A



Dutch Premier League pioneer

Dennis Bergkamp is regarded in many quarters as a key figure in the reinvention of the Premier League. Still an insular, overly physical and tactically crude competition 30 years ago, the English top flight now hosts some of the best football in the world - thanks to Bergkamp and Arsenal, says the player's biographer David Winner.

David Winner: "Dennis Bergkamp. Stillness and Speed: My Story", Atria Books, London 2013, 272 pp, £ 20



A new order?

This book traces the transformation of English football from a more or less traditional pastime into a wealthy global entertainment business, using the example of Manchester City. What happens to the core fan base when outside investors revolutionise the club? David Conn assesses the prevailing values in the modern game.

David Conn: "Richer Than God", Quercus Publishing Plc, London 2013, 432 pp, £ 17



Amateur football: Sheffield FC play Stamford AFC at the "Coach and Horses Ground" in Dronefield.

A journey to the heart of football

Daniel Gray heads out to discover England with the motto that "home is wherever football is played". He may well have a point.

Perikles Monioudis

It seems it is becoming increasingly difficult to write anything new about football, or at least to write in a uniquely new or inspired way. Nevertheless, many authors continue to try, not least because football has become a socially acceptable literary genre if not a bestselling one.

By contrast, the sport is now beamed across the globe more than ever before. The Premier League sells broadcasting rights to television channels worldwide; in Burma alone, a three-year contract cost 40 million US dollars. In the battle for media coverage, TV significantly outperforms books as a medium and has gradually become the only meaningful medium for football in recent times.

Back to books, though. Many consider Nick Hornby's acclaimed novel "Fever Pitch" to be the definitive book about the beautiful game. It depicts the obsession of a young man that becomes so personal it goes beyond football as a social phenomenon. And in "The Damned United" and "Red or Dead" (see page 37), David Peace primarily focuses on the psyche of his protagonist, a fictionalisation of coach Brian Clough, as well as the language of football and its rhythmic patterns.

Now, Daniel Gray has also sought to plough a new furrow by choosing the path of self discovery. Before his 30th birthday, he travelled across England, avoiding locations that already garner plenty of media attention and sticking to the provinces instead.

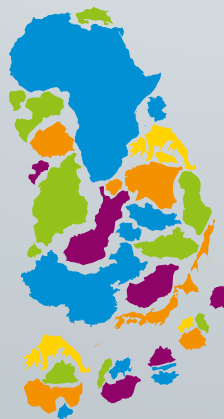
There, he discovered what football means to him while meeting people who have taken the sport and put their own spin on it: from lower-league players in slippers, to brass bands on bumpy pitches or young people sitting on the sidelines gobbling down fish and chips, whether beside the sea, in dense forest, on hilltops, motorways or in derelict blocks of changing rooms marked by weathered old signs.

By travelling through an array of small English towns, Gray unearths what could be termed 'living football' in a world where football is increasingly media-driven and sterile, and finds his own personal England along the way. 📖



Daniel Gray: "Hatters, Railwaymen and Knitters. Travels through England's Football Provinces", Bloomsbury, London 2013, 320 pages, £13.00.

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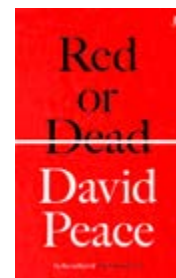
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Anfield, December 1964: Liverpool manager Bill Shankly (left) helps out with preparations for a game against Sunderland.



David Peace:
 "Red or Dead",
 Faber & Faber,
 London 2013,
 736 pages, £ 20.-

The deep rituals of football

No football book this year divided critics like "Red or Dead", David Peace's novel about the great Liverpool manager Bill Shankly.

David Winner

Some hailed it as a masterpiece. Others complained that the epic hagiography of the man who transformed Liverpool F.C. from second division deadbeats into world-significant giants was all-but unreadable.

Depending on your point of view, both interpretations are legitimate. In an age of short attention spans and cliché "Red or Dead" is certainly difficult. But it pushes the boundaries of what is possible in sports writing.

A decade ago Peace was regarded as one of Britain's most exciting young novelists, specialising in dark crime stories. Then he turned to football with "The Damned United", a brilliant account of Brian Clough's 44 days at Leeds United.

That book deployed a daring double-helix story-structure, with Clough's past and present entwined like a giant strand of DNA. But that was simplicity itself compared to the way he now attempts to depict Shankly as a kind of footballing saint.

Peace builds up an almost visceral sense of his subject's obsessive pursuit of success over

730-pages of thudding repetitions and mountains of seeming trivia. Every game, joke or act of kindness is covered.

Here's an example of the style: "Bill waited for the dawn, Bill waited for the light. And Bill got out of bed. Bill shaved, Bill washed. Bill put on his suit, Bill put on his tie. And Bill went downstairs. Bill ate breakfast with Ness and their daughters. Bill kissed them goodbye. Bill went out of the house, Bill got into his car. And Bill drove across the Pennines. Past Manchester - Into Liverpool. To Anfield."

At first, the style made me want to hurl the book across the room. Gradually, however its magic began to work. For this is not normal football literature but hypnotic incantation, more like music than prose. (Revealingly, the book works best when read aloud).


Later, describing Shankly's decision to replace Liverpool's white shorts and socks, Peace uses the word "red" 61 times in a few pages and the phrase "in red, all in red" 13 times in a paragraph. After their first match in the new strip Peace has Shanks telling his team: "You swept them aside like a fire. Like a red fire, boys. Red hot you were. Red hot, boys.

Every one of you. Every single one of you, boys. Like the red heat of revolution. That is what you were tonight, boys. The Red Heat of a Revolution..."

The relentless attention to the detail of Shankly's daily routine helps set up the later pathos when he unwisely takes early retirement and finds himself excluded from the club he built: we see him tragically washing his car for page after page.

Where conventional writing about the game tends to be concerned with facts, events and opinions, Peace has tried to express its deeper rhythms and rituals.

In the 1960s, as Shankly was building a new kind of football, film director Sergio Leone was doing the same thing to a different art form. Leone stripped the tired old western to its archetypal essentials, then used image and music to give his "spaghetti" versions the power of grand opera.

Peace has done something similar with mere words. No-one will ever be able to write about the game in quite the same way again. 

First Love





Place: **Shenyang, China**

Date: **20 December 2010**

Time: **9.40 am**

Football's Christmas miracle

First World War hostilities unofficially ceased along parts of the Western Front at Christmas in 1914, with German and British troops even playing football. It was a miracle attributable to the unifying power of the game.

Xavier Breuil

Flanders, the Western Front, 25 December 1914. The soldiers of the German Army's 133rd Royal Saxon Regiment are singing Christmas carols as they man the trenches, a stone's throw from the French village of Frelinghien, right on the Belgian border. Four of them emerge unarmed from the trench and make their way across No Man's Land to meet their enemies in the 2nd Scots Guards. There, on the wasteland between the trenches, the opposing soldiers fraternise, exchanging souvenirs, cigarettes, chocolate, drink and songs too. The Christmas truce is symbolised by a football match, as a Scottish soldier produces a ball and caps are laid down on the ground to mark out the pitch and the goals. It is at this point that accounts of the festive ceasefire, published in British newspapers such as *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Evening News*, begin to diverge. While some reported that a proper match took place and was won 3-2 by the Germans, others said it was a friendly kickabout, played for no other reason than to strengthen the bond between the soldiers and celebrate the brief interlude of peace.

Whatever the case may be, the impromptu match underlined the power of football to bring warring nations and peoples together and to encourage them to speak to each other. Yet more games were played in the Belgian section of the Western front that Christmas Day. German soldiers who had worked in England and attended football matches there took the initiative by challenging their British counterparts to matches such as the ones played in Saint-Yvon (near the village of Ploegsteert, in the Walloon region), or close to Messines, a village situated in Flanders, on the other side of the linguistic divide. These football matches were immortalised in 2002 in Dave Unwin's short animated film *War Game*, based on the Michael Foreman novel of the same name, and



Dale Barracks, Chester: German and Welsh fusiliers commemorate the 'Christmas Day Truce' (undated).

in French director Christian Caron's 2005 film *Joyeux Noël*, which stars a European cast featuring Diane Kruger, Guillaume Canet, Gary Lewis and Daniel Bruhl.

The behaviour of the soldiers on the front echoed the pacifist stance adopted by FIFA virtually from its inception. The reports and statements issued by the organisation between 1908 and 1914 stated as one that football was "a maker of peace", to use the exact terms employed by its then General Secretary Carl Anton Hirschmann of the Netherlands. On 28 June 1914, the very day on which Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated in Sarajevo – the event that would trigger the First World War – the 11th FIFA Congress in Oslo adopted the following declaration in favour of peace: "The Congress declares that it wishes to support all actions designed to bring nations together and to replace violence with mediation in settling any disputes there may be between them."

That desire for peace would resurface after the Christmas 1914 truce. At the time there were a number of people in the European football family who sought to show the importance of football in military preparations and achieving success on the battlefield, and who saw the war as an opportunity to promote the game and its usefulness to the authorities. In contrast, most of the players, administrators and supporters fighting on the front used their beloved sport as a means of escaping from the war and its hardships. By playing football in

the trenches they were able to recreate peacetime, a point made in his war diaries by the pacifist campaigner and French footballer Henri Dispan de Floran.

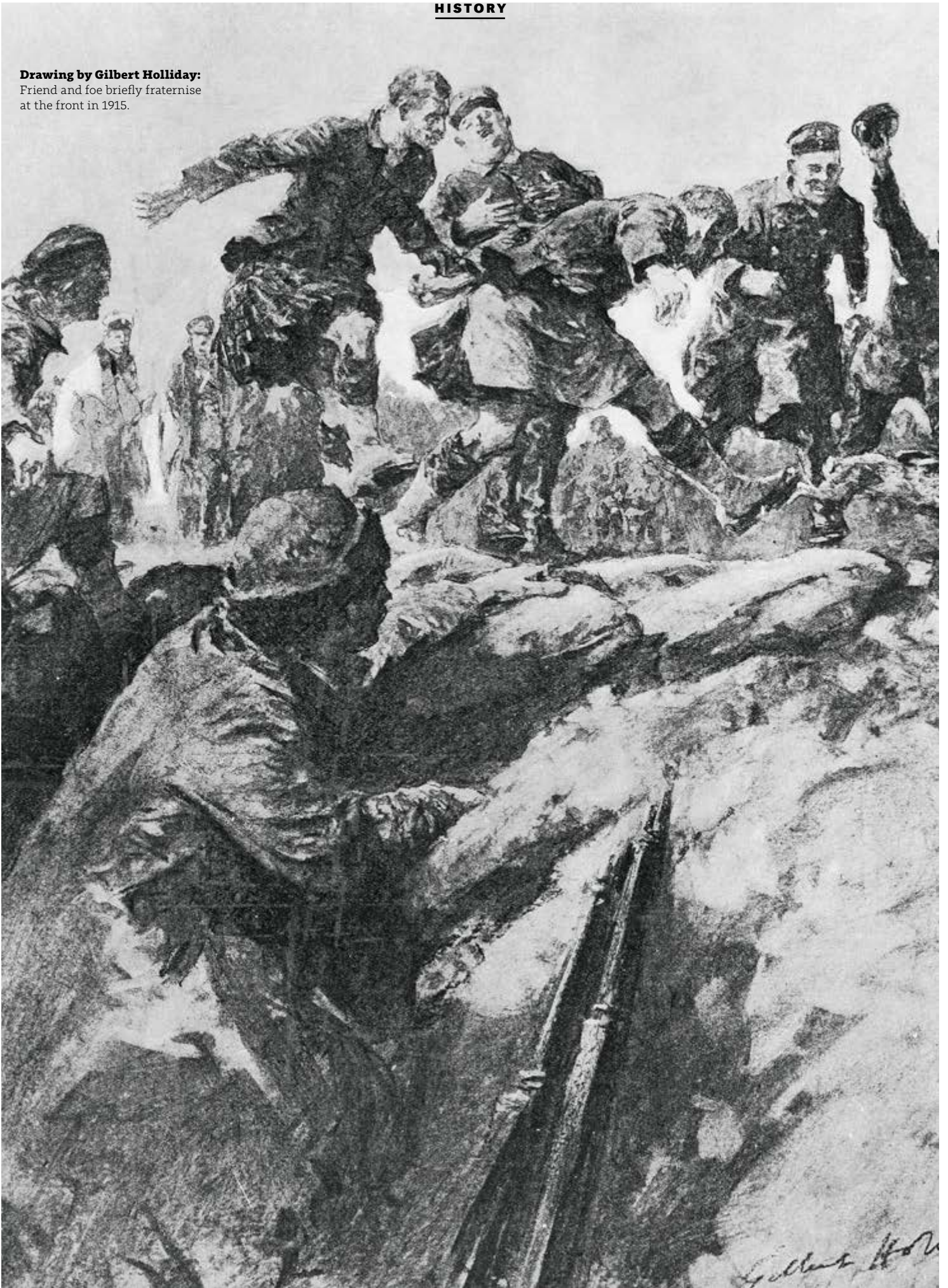
The war was also rejected by the English football fraternity. England was the only country where football was a professional game, one that had developed markedly in the years leading up to 1914. The British government held recruitment drives during half-

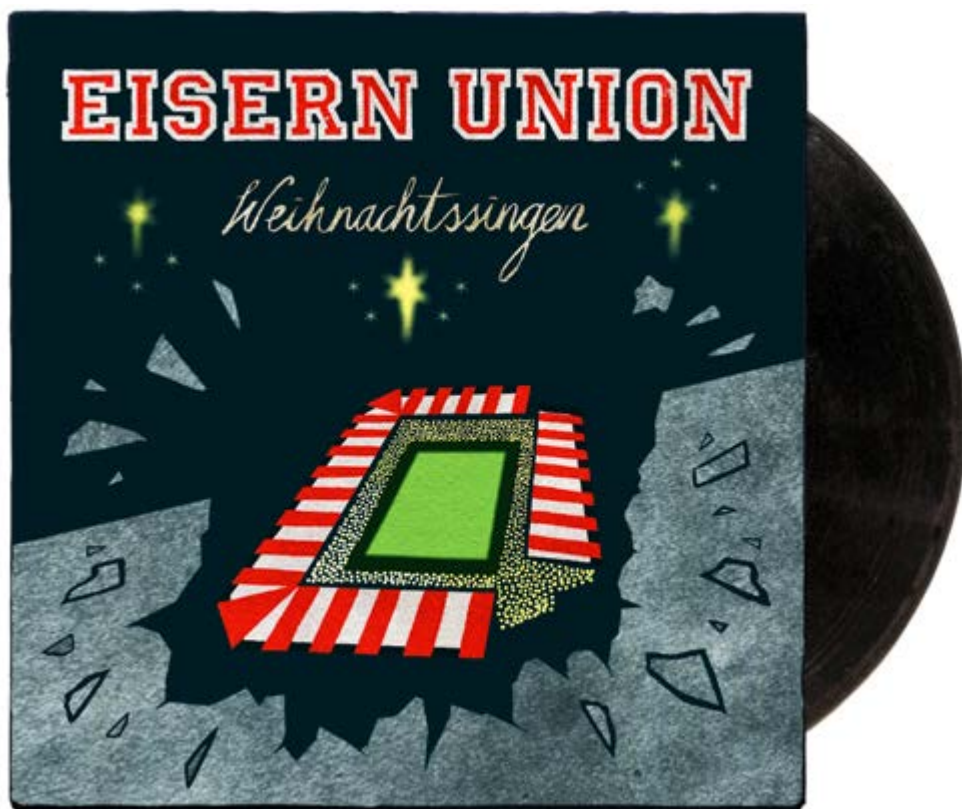
time at first division matches and recruiting posters also went up at stadiums to encourage football fans to enlist. One such poster at Chelsea's home ground Stamford Bridge read: "Do you want to be a Chelsea diehard? Join the 17th Battalion Middlesex Regiment and follow the lead given by your favourite football players."

Yet the propaganda directed at football players and supporters met with only partial success, with most of them showing a reluctance to go the front. Their distaste for war led to sections of English society rounding on the football community. One of its most virulent critics was *The Times*, which wasted little time in branding footballers cowards. In the end the British government introduced conscription in 1916, obliging all the country's men, its footballing fraternity included, to go to Europe to fight.

The football matches of Christmas 1914 served to underscore the belief held during the war years that "football is peace pursued by other means". It is for this reason also that the modern-day governments of Belgium, France and the UK wish to include a football match in their commemorations of the centenary of the outbreak of the Great War in 2014, the aim being to highlight the role played by the sport in the pacification of European society. ☺

Drawing by Gilbert Holliday:
Friend and foe briefly fraternise
at the front in 1915.





“Iron Union”

Hanspeter Kuenzler

At Christmas time, there is no football stadium more atmospheric than 1. FC Union Berlin's Stadion “An der Alten Försterei” in the Bundesliga second division.

Eleven years have passed since Union's fans first started singing Christmas songs. The tradition was born out of frustration when the team had been suffering a wretched run of form in the run-up to Christmas. After the last match before Christmas Eve, the mood among the club's supporters was so low that they all headed home without even exchanging holiday greetings. For one Torsten Eisenbeiser, this was simply too sad. He called a couple of friends and suggested that they should gather in front of the stadium gates to sing a couple of festive tunes. That evening, 89 fans joined him; the following year their numbers were even greater; and by the

third year, the sing-along had become an official club event. Nowadays, well in excess of ten thousand fans join in with the Christmas songs each year for the entire 90 minutes of a match, plus stoppage time. Each participant is given a small candle and a booklet containing the words to the carols. This year, the event will take place on 23 December 2013 at 19:00 CET, and the gates open at 17:00. Such a joyful occasion is typical of a club whose fans are well known for their dedication. Back in 2004, the club was in dire financial straits, prompting the fans to swiftly organise a blood donation drive and donate the proceeds to the club's coffers. By 2008, the club's stadium was badly in need of renovation, so 2,400 supporters grouped together and completed the work as a labour of love within 300 days. Union's history goes back to the days of the Iron Curtain.

Founded in 1966, the club provided an alternative to BFC Dynamo Berlin, which was chaired by the head of the feared secret police. At every free kick, Union fans chanted, “The wall must come down!” at the top of their voices. The official club song, “Eisern Union” (“Iron Union”) was recorded by German punk idol Nina Hagen in 1998 and still echoes around the stadium before each match. ⚡



Perikles Monioudis

People tend to construct their world in a way that makes sense to them. Over time, a picture of a person's life gradually emerges from thousands of experiences and perceptions, whether or not we are satisfied with the results. Puzzles perfectly illustrate this constructivist approach to life: first, all the pieces are placed on the table, then a frame is built and finally an image is gradually built from the edges into the centre. We only know what the finished puzzle will look like before we piece it together because the picture on the box shows us how the image should look: in this particular case, it shows Tommy Lawton in action on the pitch.

Lawton is one of the greatest figures in British football; even legend Stanley Matthews considered him the best player of all time. Growing up in Bolton after the First World War, the centre forward made his debut for Everton in England's top flight at the age of 17. Just one year later, in 1938, he won his first international cap against Wales, scoring a penalty in a match England eventually lost 4-2.

War broke out soon afterwards and Lawton served his country as a physical training instructor in the army, continuing to play football whenever he could. On Christmas Day 1940, he played for Everton against Liverpool at Anfield in the morning and for Tranmere Rovers at Crewe Alexandra in the afternoon. Later, Lawton explained: “The Tranmere people came into the dressing room and asked if anyone wanted to play as they were two men short. I said ‘Go on, I'll help you out.’”

Lawton went on to play for Chelsea and Arsenal before retiring in 1955 at the age of 35, having won 46 international caps. He died in November 1996 at the age of 77 after suffering from pneumonia.

Lawton lived to see Euro '96 held in his own country. Germany won the title in London that year thanks to a golden goal from Oliver Bierhoff, and the tournament provided one of the last pieces in the puzzle of Tommy Lawton's life. A puzzle bearing his image now forms part of the FIFA Collection. ⚡

“I saw black spots and bright flashes”

Although Hannu Tihinen withstood countless blows to the head during his professional career, he does not regret a single moment he spent on a football pitch.

I suffered my first concussion when I was 14. We were playing indoors in northern Finland. My head hit the floor and knocked me unconscious immediately. It was the start of a long series of injuries. I sustained blows to the head that required me to be stretchered from the pitch unconscious several times during my professional career in Norway, Belgium and Switzerland. As a defender of my size and style of play, you simply can't avoid those kinds of injuries; they're part and parcel of football.

I broke my nose twice and my cheekbone twice, mostly by taking elbows to the face. Fortunately, FIFA cracked down on that kind of foul in 2006, which is great. Even if it's sometimes difficult to determine an opponent's intent, your elbows simply shouldn't be anywhere near your opposite number's head. Ultimately, though, it's normal match situations that cause the majority of head injuries; player against player, head against head.

I can remember one moment particularly well. It was 2007 and I was playing for FC Zurich against Young Boys in Bern. I went up for a header in the penalty area, my opponent struck me full on the back of the head and immediately opened up a large wound; the turf was covered in blood. On the way to the hospital, it felt as though our team doctor had his finger in my head. I kept saying: “I'll do it myself, I'll do it myself. Take your hand out”. One year later, I was knocked unconscious again while playing a UEFA Cup match against Sturm Graz and I knew then that this couldn't continue. I have a family and after my career was over I wanted to spend time with them, chat with my sons and play football with them. A doctor from Zurich offered me the possibility of playing with a headguard specially designed for the needs of footballers. I was thrilled! The headguard gave me back my self-confidence; I only wished I had discovered it sooner.

Name:

Hannu Tihinen

Date and place of birth:

1 July 1976, Keminmaa, Finland

Position:

Centre-back

Clubs played for:

**1993-1996 KePS
1997-2000 HJK Helsinki
2000-2002 Viking Stavanger
2001 West Ham United
2002-2006 Anderlecht
2006-2010 FC Zurich**

Finland:

76 caps, 5 goals



In 2010, I finally made the decision to retire from football. It was in the 75th minute of a match against Aarau in a completely normal situation: no elbows, not even another player contesting the ball – a completely normal header. Suddenly, I saw bright flashes and dark spots and could no longer distinguish my team-mates from our opponents. It was the most difficult 15 minutes of my career. At that point, it became clear that I was done. Headguard or not, I no longer wanted to take the risk.

Despite all those blows to the head, I don't regret a single minute. I experienced some unbelievable times and was a Finnish, Belgian and Swiss champion. I scored two fantastic goals in the Champions League, one

of which was a backheel against AC Milan at the San Siro. Football has given me so much, and I'm extremely grateful for that. To have been able to experience everything has been a real gift. ☺

As told to Sarah Steiner

In Turning Point, personalities reflect on a decisive moment in their lives.

Tomorrow brings us all closer

To new people, new ideas and new states of mind.
Here's to reaching all the places we've never been.

Fly Emirates to 6 continents.



Hello Tomorrow



This week: roses, names and famous games. Test your knowledge in the last quiz of the year!

①



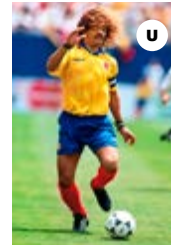
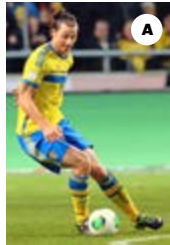
Which national team wears the shirt with the rose?

D Russia
N Mexico

H France
R England

②

The last name of one of these players is normally written differently in his home country compared to overseas. Which player?



③

The name of one of these countries usually appears on the national team shirt in English. Which name?



D Cameroon



F Italy



P Spain



S Belgium

④

It was billed as the Game of the Century and attracted a crowd of around 135,000. Who was playing?

E Great Britain-Rest of Europe 6-1
K Rio de Janeiro-North America 7-2
P Taiwan-Texas 4-4
T USSR-Real Madrid 8-5



The answer to last week's Quiz Cup was **CLUE** (detailed answers on FIFA.com/theweekly).

Inspiration and implementation: cus

Please send your answers to feedback-TheWeekly@fifa.org by **27 December 2013**. Correct submissions for all quizzes received by 31 December 2013 will go into the draw to **win two tickets to the FIFA Ballon d'Or 2013 on 13 January 2014**.

Before sending in your answers, all participants must read and accept the competition terms and conditions and the rules, which can be found at en.fifa.com/aboutfifa/organisation/the-fifa-weekly/rules.pdf.



Which club has the most members?

Eric Bolliger, Küssnacht

Answered by Thomas Renggli, chief editor: According to the latest figures it is Portugal's most successful club Benfica with 224,000 members. The Lisbon club has a large number of sporting sections including football, basketball, roller hockey, cycling, volleyball and handball. Bayern Munich, also a multi-sports club, are just a fraction behind on 223,985. FC Barcelona have 177,246 members.

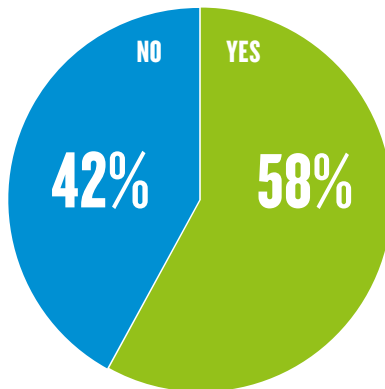


Is festive football a good idea?

The Premier League is the only major European league not to take a break over the Christmas and New Year period. Should the leagues in Germany, Italy and Spain follow suit and play through the holiday season?

LAST WEEK'S POLL RESULTS:

Will Bayern Munich win the Club World Cup 2013?



THE NEW FOOTBALL MAGAZINE

The FIFA Weekly appears every week on Friday as a print edition and an online magazine (www.Fifa.com/TheWeekly).

We report on the biggest stars and the hottest topics, but we also focus on a dialogue with our readers. Why not join in the debate?

Send your opinions to feedback-theWeekly@fifa.org



POPULAR

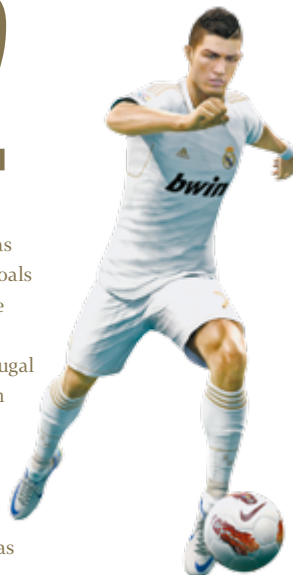
43,113



Rangers' average home crowd in the third-tier Scottish League One currently stands at 43,113. The Glasgow giants, compulsorily relegated to the fourth tier 18 months ago due to financial irregularities, lead the third division with a perfect record from 15 matches. (Picture: leading scorer John Daly)

VIRTUAL

35,2



Cristiano Ronaldo has scored 35.2 million goals and counting – in the FIFA 14 video game simulation. The Portugal hitman benefits from belonging to the most-often played virtual team. Some 720,000 players choose Real Madrid as their favourite club. (Picture: Ronaldo)

EXCLUSIVE

65



The German team base for the World Cup in Brazil will incorporate 65 rooms in 13 buildings. After failing to find an existing facility to their liking, the German FA (DFB) has opted to construct Camp Bahia some 30 km to the north of Porto Seguro. Should Joachim Low and his team win a fourth World Cup, their final match would be 1,100 km away in Rio de Janeiro.