

# THE Blizzard

THE FOOTBALL QUARTERLY / ISSUE THIRTY-EIGHT



*Below are extracts from each of the pieces featured.*

 Ben Jacobs

## **Who Really Ran BeoutQ?**

*An investigation into the murky world of the pirate television station*

“Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive...”

The eighteenth-century Scottish poet Walter Scott would have taken great relish in a verse from his romantic ballad Marmion being used to preface the story of the world’s most sophisticated pirate sports network. After all, Scott was also a lawyer and judge. Untangling the truth behind beoutQ – an illegal venture that stole major sports rights between 2017 and 2019 before suddenly disappearing – has required hundreds of both lawyers and judges. And it’s still no easy task to achieve, with Saudi Arabia and Qatar keen to spin a politically motivated yarn.

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 Moara Passoni

## **Corinthian Democracy**

*How Sócrates and his teammates offered a model of governance and why it ended*

In late 2019 the world watched in horror as the Amazon rainforest burned. The Amazon is the world’s largest carbon dioxide sink, which means that it plays a crucial role in preventing global warming. The eyes of the world were on Brazil and its new leader Jair Bolsonaro. His blithe inaction to the crisis, going so far as to blame the fires on Leonardo DiCaprio, showed everyone just how rotten Brazil’s democracy had become.

In 2020 Bolsonaro would continue to surprise the world with his response to the Covid-19 crisis. As the new virus takes over a nation with a population of 200 million, he dismisses all scientific recommendations and adopts negligence as a method of running the country, creating disorientation and putting at risk thousands of lives. Named by the Washington Post as the worst leader to deal with coronavirus, Bolsonaro shows how deadly his authoritarian populism can be.

 Tom Lewis

## Liaoning Cannot Go Down

*Corruption, match-fixing and the development of football in China*

Football pitches were few and far between in Shanghai in the eighties. My university had a dirt field, any grass long trampled to oblivion, on which any and all matches were played. It wasn't an environment conducive to attractive play; the ball bounced high and erratically, the stones studded into the playing surface took a toll on knees and elbows and, anyway, Fudan wasn't really a football college. Its volleyball team was its pride and joy. However, Tongji, the science faculty just across the way, has always been football obsessed; these days they still regularly reach the latter stages of the National University League but back then ambitions were limited to being city champions.

 Thathe Msimango

## The Couch Is Not For Sitting On

*Steven Pienaar's journey from a violent part of Johannesburg to the Premier League*

When Steven Pienaar was a child, his mother Denise didn't allow him to sit on the couch when he watched television. "You never knew when a bullet was going to come flying in through the window. If you were on the floor, you were below the level of the glass and safe. If you were on the couch, you were taking your life in your hands, and there were stories of people who had been hit by stray bullets."

He grew up in the township of Westbury, quarter of an hour's drive west of the centre of Johannesburg, beyond Melville. "What can I say about Westbury?" said Pienaar. "It's among some rough areas in and around Johannesburg, but it had to be one of the roughest. It's hard to describe just how bad it was, because gang violence, drug dealing and shootings were everywhere. It's calmed down a bit now, but in those days, when I was eight or nine, you witnessed violence and drug dealing at close quarters on a daily basis. You grew up with it. It was part of your life and no one ever dared try to do anything about it."

 **Luke Alfred**

## **The Whoosh**

*Televised English football and its importance in apartheid South Africa*

There were times in the 1970s when, as Ipswich Town's most fervent South African supporter, I was forced to become a craven pragmatist and support West Ham United. Such times didn't happen often, admittedly, but, now and then, I'd need to swap the blue of Portman Road for the claret and sky-blue of Upton Park.

Ipswich might be knocked out of a competition, say, or West Ham might find themselves swinging through Europe like singles on a Contiki bus. My good friend, Mick Ellingham, was a West Ham fan and I wanted us to remain on good terms, so – once in a while – I reluctantly became an honorary Hammer.

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 **Daniel Gallan**

## **Rare Home Shirt**

*One man's search for the kit that seemed to represent a better world*

No football kit has ever encapsulated the mood of a nation at a particular time as much as the one worn by South Africa at the 1996 African Cup of Nations.

A kaleidoscope of gold, black and white competing for space in a dazzling array of diagonal lines. It seemed as if the design team at Kappa had assembled three cannons, loaded them with different coloured fabric, fired them at each other and hoped for the best.

In a way, that is what Nelson Mandela was doing in his second year as the country's first democratically elected president. With a combination of immense natural wealth – most notably in vast gold reserves – and his unquantifiable aura, the 'Madiba Magic', Mandela had circumvented civil war. Black and white citizens had largely united under his patriarchal hand and had sought to build a better world together.

 Mark Gleeson

## Race Against Race

*Banned from the Olympics, apartheid South Africa instituted its own Games*

It is incredible now to think that the concept of one race group playing against another in a football tournament, in front of packed stadiums and amid feverish media attention, would have been hailed as a major breakthrough.

But back in 1973, South Africa was a bizarre place. Legalised racism was deeply entrenched and the country had become a world pariah, ostracised because of its apartheid system. It had been more than a decade already since the sports boycott had been launched, when South Africa was stopped from sending athletes to the Olympic Games from 1964 onwards, and also suspended by Fifa before the country could compete to qualify for the 1966 World Cup in England.

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 Louis Myles

## Calcio Historico

*A year with the players of one of football's most violent antecedents*

It is a late June Saturday afternoon in Santa Croce square, Florence. For the past week, the sun has been a lonesome presence in the sky, raising the daily temperature to well over 35 degrees Celsius. For the city's traders, this is good business. Gelato is sold by the bucketload, while the many trattorias are packed with tourists, all sampling the fine Tuscan cuisine and wine. But for the majority of residents in the city's four districts, the temperature has just added more tension to the climax of their year.

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 Tom Harvey

## Cottage Industry

*The inside story of Fulham's run to the Europa League final in 2010*

Fulham aren't a big club. For most of their existence, they've lived in the shadow of their more glamorous neighbours Chelsea. The two sides even share a postcode. But in 2009-10, Fulham enjoyed one of the most remarkable European runs in living memory,

playing 18 games to reach the Europa League final, overcoming questionable refereeing, an Icelandic volcano and the might of Juventus on the way. As it turned out, they were finally undone in Hamburg by a Diego Forlán goal in the last few minutes of extra-time. But the journey there was remarkable enough for a side that had only escaped relegation from the Premier League on the final day two seasons previously.

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 **Sean Cole**

## **Blue Horizon**

*When Birmingham City overcame Arsenal to win the League Cup in 2011*

By most conventional measures, Obafemi Martins's loan spell with Birmingham City couldn't be deemed a success. Recruited in the January transfer window of 2011 to help score the goals that would keep the club in the Premier League, he only found the net twice and his season was cut short by injury when he was needed most. Blues were relegated in his absence.

Yet something remarkable, and unexpected, happened in his fourth appearance. A late substitute in the League Cup final, Martins had only been on the pitch for six minutes when a moment of confusion between Laurent Koscielny and Wojciech Szczesny saw the ball spilled at his feet with the goal gaping. He couldn't miss and Arsenal had no time to recover.

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 **John Irving**

## **Personal Peculiar Inclinations**

*Why did Juventus sack Carlo Carcano in 1934 when they were two points off the top*

1934 was a momentous year for Italian football. On the international front, Italy won the second World Cup in Rome on June 10 and on November 14 fought the 'Battle of Highbury', one of football's epic matches – 'fought' being the operative word. At club level, Juventus, playing in their new Stadio Mussolini, which after fascism became the Comunale, clinched their fourth consecutive scudetto after an exciting head-to-head with Ambrosiana-Inter.

 Sergio Levinsky

## This Time Lucky

*Carlos Tévez, his return from China and the struggle to win over the Boca fans again*

What part does luck play in the career of a sporting idol? How much is about intuition and how much about opportunity? On the final day of the 2020 Argentinian Superliga season, River Plate could only draw with Atlético Tucumán, a result that meant Boca Juniors would take the title if they could beat Gimnasia y Esgrima la Plata. With 18 minutes remaining the match was level, but then Carlos Tévez shot from range, the ball folded back the hands of Jorge Broun, the Gimnasia keeper, and found its way into the net. There was a strange sense of everything returning to a familiar course.

 Simon Hart

## Magnum's Opus

*An interview with John Clinkard, Everton's physio through the glory years of the 80s*

"Hi, I'm Magnum." The words come with a big grin and a firm handshake. It is not Tom Selleck whose hand I am shaking but – as any Evertonian who was around in the 1980s will vouch – it is the next best thing. John Clinkard was the physiotherapist with the arresting resemblance to the Hollywood actor. Tall, dark and handsome, and with a moustache to match that of Hawaii's famous fictional private investigator, he was branded with his moniker in his first week after arriving from Fulham as Howard Kendall's new physio in the autumn of 1981.

 Neil Clack

## Gorosito's Revenge

*Néstor Ortigoza, defying convention and a return to Argentina's roots*

"He's fat, he's round, his arse is on the ground... [insert name of rotund 80s or 90s footballer here]." As late as 1994-95, Liverpool's team photo contained at least three double-chins and many were grateful that was the era of baggy shirts. Modern conditioning and dieticians have largely rendered the fat footballer extinct in Europe, but the winning goal in the 2014 Copa Libertadores final, when San Lorenzo finally

broke their duck, was scored by Néstor Ortigoza. The Paraguayan had been one of the outstanding creative players in the Argentinian league for some time but by no measure could he be described as svelte.

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 **James Corbett**

## **Everton 3 Wimbledon 2**

*Premier League, 7 May 1994, Goodison Park, Liverpool*

Earlier this decade, I was holidaying in Brittany with my wife and children when our poolside idyll was almost ruptured by tragedy. My eldest son, aged five, suddenly found himself out of his depth. From the corner of my eye I saw his head disappear under the water. The pool was full, but no one other than me had noticed. He rose again, and I could see the panic in his eyes before he sank to the bottom.

Terrified, I jumped in, fully clothed and scooped him out and onto the side. But for a bit of swallowed water, he was fine. A French lady watching the unfolding drama applauded me, but most people carried on reading their books and lazing in their reclining chairs as if nothing had happened. In a way it hadn't. The whole incident hadn't lasted more than 20 seconds. But for weeks after my dreams were filled with nightmares of drowning.

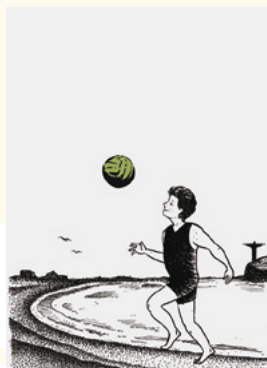
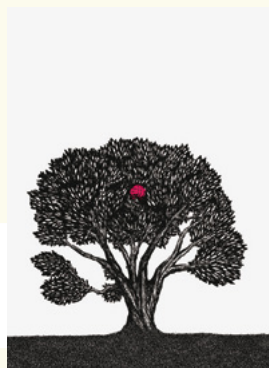
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 **Richard Jolly**

## **Eight Bells**

*Another selection of eight memorably awful Premier League relegation campaigns*

There are record-breaking relegations. Derby's historic low of an 11-point season may never be beaten. Nor, at the other end of the extreme, could Crystal Palace's feat of going down with 49 points. They are now an established top-flight club whose joint record Premier League points total, at the time of writing, came in a season when they were demoted.



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