

THE Blizzard

THE FOOTBALL QUARTERLY / ISSUE FORTY-SIX



Below are extracts from each of the pieces featured.

🔍 Tim Stillman

Emerging from the Pack

How Sarina Wiegman's decisiveness and settled England side won Euro 2022

France 3/1. England 3/1. Germany 7/2. Spain 9/2. Sweden 6/1. Netherlands 17/2. These were the pre-tournament odds for Euro 2022 winner with one bookmaker. Since Germany won their eighth European title in 2013, Europe has not had a clearly dominant force. In a lean 16-team format you couldn't really expect to make big money by gambling on close to half of the teams to lift the trophy on July 31 at Wembley Stadium.

🔍 Alasdair Howorth

The Eruption

South Africa won the Wafcon, Nigeria faltered but the real story was the rise of Morocco

As if orchestrated by a sole conductor, hundreds of flares were lit at once, bathing the Stade Moulay Abdellah in red and white. The sea of red that is the Moroccan support chant "*Maghrib, Maghrib*" as the drums start up their cacophonous beat once again. There is not a spot on the stairs, let alone a seat left empty. The 53,000-capacity stadium is overflowing as thousands of fans climb over fences and force open gates in their desperate attempts to watch their beloved side march to victory.

↻ Paul Myers

Nurturing the Seedling

After a successful tournament, how does women's football develop further in Africa?

New names adorned the trophies for the women's football championships in Europe and Africa in July. England beat serial champions Germany 2-1 at Wembley in front of more than 87,000 spectators to brandish the country's first senior title in 56 years while South Africa overcame Morocco by the same result in front of more than 47,000 fans at the Prince Moulay Abdallah Stadium in Rabat.

↻ Tim Vickery

Next Levels

Brazil continues to dominate the Women's Copa América, but are there signs of progress?

The 1996 Olympics was the first to include women's football. The Brazilian authorities made it clear that they had little faith in their team, giving them only enough pennants for the group matches. So when they caused a surprise by making it out of the group, there were no pennants left. The goalkeeper had to hurriedly teach the captain an apology in English to her opposite number.

← John McManus

Building Qatar

Aspire, imports and the struggle to give the World Cup hosts a team to be proud of

In November 2022, the Qatar national team will play in the opening game of the World Cup. When they take to the field, they will bring to a close one of the most ambitious, contentious and bizarre preparation periods of any tournament host in the competition's history. As the country has geared up for its month in the spotlight, the attention of outsiders has fallen on matters more important than sport: Qatar's exploitative labour laws, the deaths of construction workers, limited freedom of speech and the illegality of homosexuality in the country. The scrutiny is vital. But a side effect is that little attention has been given to the remarkable story of the Qatar national football team.

← Kit Holden

Dissident in Inverted Commas

Was supporting Union Berlin really an act of opposition in Communist East Germany?

Union Berlin 0–2 BFC Dynamo, 14 April 1973

At half-time, Andreas makes a dash for it. He leaps over the advertising hoarding and sprints towards the centre circle, his red-and-white flag held high above his head. The Union fans roar him on from the block around the halfway line. Their team are a goal down in the Berlin derby against BFC Dynamo, and they could do with a little divine intervention. In the middle of the pitch, Andreas plants his flag in the turf and drops to his knees to pray.

↻ Ronny Blashcke

War Games

The contested meaning of football in a region racked by conflict

Almost every day, Rami travelled north from Damascus to Homs, two hours there, two hours back. Together with other young people, from 2009 onwards, he built up one of the first ultra groups in Syria, around the Al Karamah club. In addition to school, he went to work to finance his passion. He travelled to Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt to be inspired by the ultras there. He followed his favourite club everywhere; borders existed only in the Asian Champions League, as he was denied a visa for Singapore and Kuwait. The ultras of Al Karamah rehearsed chants, designed banners, organised away trips. They found something that was rare in Syrian society: unity and confidence. Until 2011, Rami missed only one of his club's matches, and he is still angry about it today.

↻ Ben Gilbert

Sacred Space

Ken Bates, electric fences and the worrying return of pitch invasions

Ken Bates seemed very proud of his electric fence, as though he were unveiling a World Cup winner or a state-of-the-art new stand. The Chelsea chairman hosted the press in April 1985 to announce what he considered "the ultimate deterrent" to the spiralling issue of crowd trouble that had become synonymous with English football. "People may howl about it being dangerous but it's been used in farming for a long time," he declared.

↻ Photo Essay

The Ball's The Thing

The journey made by the Spirit of Football ball

Spirit of Football is a not-for-profit community interest company dedicated to promoting a very special ball as the "star of the beautiful game" in the run-up to each World Cup. The Ball is football's equivalent to the Olympic torch. Every four years, it kicks off from Battersea Park in London, where the first game of modern rules football took place, with its destination the opening ceremony of the World Cup.

🔍 Felipe Schmidt

The Death of Beauty

Zico remembers the 1982 World Cup and the trauma of Brazil's defeat to Italy

Reaching Zico is not an easy task. Even today, as a 69 year old, he maintains the routine of a star. He's the sporting director of Kashima Antlers, in Japan, where he travels regularly. In Rio de Janeiro, he still is coveted for his opinions by every media outlet you can think of: he's on TV, on podcasts, on YouTube. He oversees schools for kids eager to learn how to play football.

🔍 Sean Cole

Fish Out of Water

How Christophe Dugarry helped Steve Bruce's Birmingham City avoid relegation

Greatness is a nebulous concept. In football circles, it's frequently invoked yet rarely quantified, much like the term 'world-class'. Nobody can quite agree on what it means, or, beyond a few obvious examples, whom it applies to. Even the most contrarian observer would surely accept that Pelé, Diego Maradona and Lionel Messi make the grade. For others, it's much less clear.

🔍 Günter Netzer

Two Ties

The Borussia Mönchengladbach great on two European games that defined his career

Everton 1970-71

To my surprise, I was now regarded as Gladbach's orchestrator and star attraction. I got praised and mobbed. Besides being a member of the national team, I was seen, and not only in the rose-tinted perspective of the Mönchengladbach press, as its future hope, no less than Wolfgang Overath and Franz Beckenbauer. Only the Bundesliga's governing body held back.

↻ Vladimir Novak

Piksi Dust

How Dragan Stojković's positive outlook has transformed Serbia

It was a quiet afternoon in the luxurious Hotel Miragem Health & Spa in Cascais, on Portugal's Atlantic coast. But all of a sudden, from the conference room where Serbia's national team had their meeting before their departure to Lisbon for the final and decisive World Cup qualifier against Portugal, came a burst of loud laughter, as if the players and coaching staff had just watched a hilarious video. When the players left the meeting, they were still laughing and boarded the bus to the Estadio da Luz with smiles and in an unusually relaxed mood.

↻ Emile Avanessian

The Winner

The astonishingly successful career of the astonishingly popular Dani Alves

A man wakes up in bed in a hotel suite. He is discombobulated. Despite his deep disorientation, he knows – and, for good measure, confirms using identification in the wallet he finds sitting on a nightstand – that he is Daniel Alves da Silva. He also knows that he is a footballer. As the fog of slumber dissipates, he realises that, bizarrely, though he's aware of the sport, and the clubs and players that make up its past and present, he's almost entirely bereft of memories of his own footballing life.

🌐 Ben Welch

Street Footballers

Is there a danger that academies can remove useful rough edges?

For 68 minutes Diego Simeone's red and white sentries managed to withstand the line-breaking advances of Pep Guardiola's metronomes. It looked like the over-thinker could not think his way out of this one. A treacherous trip to the Wanda Metropolitano for the second leg of Manchester City's Champions League quarter-final lay in wait. Until Guardiola unleashed a street kid from Stockport.

🌐 Rob Smyth

Liverpool 1 Arsenal 2

Premiership, Anfield, Liverpool, 23 December 2001

There's no bad way to win a league title. It's a uniquely rewarding achievement, nine months in the making, so anytime, anyplace, anywhere will do. But as any Arsenal fan will be generous enough to explain, that doesn't mean all title-winning moments are



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