

THE Blizzard

THE FOOTBALL QUARTERLY / ISSUE FORTY-SEVEN



Below are extracts from each of the pieces featured.

↔ **Nicola Ferrero**

Gallery of Talent

Lollo De Silvestri, Fabio Capello and Italian football's love of modern art

I first met Lorenzo 'Lollo' De Silvestri on 9 October 2018.

At the time he was playing for Torino, the team I've always supported, and I'd been following him for a while on Instagram. I was impressed by his articulacy in interviews and by the images he posted on his social profiles: photos of art exhibitions, very often at galleries and museums in or near Turin, from the Museum of Contemporary Art in Rivoli Castle to the Gallery of Modern Art. The funny thing wasn't so much that my team's right-back was posting photos of works of contemporary art as that he always seemed to be visiting exhibitions on his own.

↔ **Simone Pierotti**

From Across the Sea

Palermo's turbulent road to being owned by City Football Group

Walking across the historic centre of Palermo, the capital of Sicily, gives the illusion of travelling through both time and space. The largest island in the Mediterranean has been ruled by various cultures, each one marking a specific period – it's been a Phoenician and a Greek colony, a Roman province, it's been invaded by the Vandals, the Ostrogoths, the Byzantine Empire and the Arabs, who established the independent Emirate of Sicily. The Norman conquest of southern Italy led to the creation of the Kingdom of Sicily, which lasted from 1130 until 1816. Over seven centuries, the island experienced the dominance of the French House of Anjou, the Spanish Crown of Aragon, the Austrian House of Habsburg and the Italian Savoy royal dynasty. Later, it was merged under the House of Bourbon with the Kingdom of Naples as the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies until 1861, when Italy was successfully reunified.

↩ Mohamed El Gharbawy

The Falcon

The Qatari magazine that transformed sports publishing in the Middle-East

In 1976, delegates from Arab countries met in Dubai for the sixth Middle East Liaison Centre Conference, the regional headquarters of the International Military Sports Council (CISM). Military events played a fundamental role in developing sports at national level in the Middle East. Most of the athletes were amateurs, and offering the talented ones work in military institutions was the best way to allow them to focus on their sporting careers. National military football teams were in most cases the same national teams that took part in continental and global competitions. In some countries, this situation endured until the 1990s or even the early 2000s, when clubs turned fully professional.

↩ Paolo Vezzoli

World Cup

The actual World Cup rarely leaves Fifa's hands. This is the story of the replicas.

Italy did not qualify for the World Cup in Qatar, but there was a little bit of Italy there nonetheless – not only a few referees, fans and journalists, but something brighter: the Fifa World Cup trophy.

In Paderno Dugnano, a small town in the Milan metropolitan area, stands a pink-walled factory. It looks like many of the other industrial sites round about, but in that anonymous place, sporting glory comes to life. GDE Bertoni is a world leader in the design and manufacture of cups, medals and trophies, an amazing mix of know-how, industry and art. Inheriting the business of his father-in-law, Eugenio Losa established Bertoni in 1938 in a workshop in Milan city centre. Over the years the company has grown and changed headquarters, but not its artisanal philosophy. Every product, from the smallest to the most celebrated, is treated with maximum care and produced to the highest level of quality.

↔ **Ewan Flynn**

Enter the Dragons

Wales's qualification for the 1958 World Cup was unconventional, but the ramifications profound

Ernst Thommen, chairman of Fifa's World Cup organising committee, makes a show of jumbling nine lots that, according to legend, have been placed inside the glistening Jules Rimet trophy. Each bears the name of a team that has failed to qualify for the 1958 finals in Sweden. One has the unexpected chance of a reprieve. A hush descends on the room. Whichever country Thommen plucks out will face Israel in a two-legged playoff to determine the tournament's 16th and final participant.

For the Wales manager Jimmy Murphy, awaiting news in faraway Manchester, fate is about to intervene. It is a moment that will save his life.

↔ **Samindra Kunti**

The Salesman

Dadá Maravilha and the dismissal of João Saldanha before the 1970 World Cup

It's lunch hour and Belo Horizonte, the capital of Minas Gerais, is bustling. Despite the sweltering heat, downtown shoppers and hawkers all seem absorbed by their own interests and pursuits. The haggling is persistent and so is the cacophony of noise.

Shirt drenched in sweat and phone battery low, I feel exhausted. Wilson Piazza handed me the directions to meet my next interviewee, who, when I finally distinguish him, is leaning against a police car, chatting to local officers. Dadá Maravilha produces a generous smile. He's wearing rings on different fingers of each hand, a golden watch on his wrist and a leather pouch.

↻ Andy Wells

Thirty Years of Shirt

The chaos of Admiral's attempts to supply lightweight kit at the 1982 World Cup

Shortly before England's opening game of the 1982 World Cup, against France, Fifa told the Football Association that manufacturers' logos had to be covered up or removed to comply with global television regulations. France either didn't receive the call or ignored it, and happily wore their kit with Adidas trefoil clearly visible. For reason that were never properly explained, it was decided that both teams should wear their away kit: so rather than England in white and France in blue, England would wear red and France white.

Scott Oliver

When Three Giants Fell

The bizarre season when a trio of Spanish grandees were all relegated

Imagine, if you can, Arsenal, Tottenham and Newcastle United being relegated from the Premier League this season, or perhaps Inter, Fiorentina and Sampdoria falling through the Serie A trapdoor together. Can you envisage a scenario in which Werder Bremen, Stuttgart and Eintracht Frankfurt were the three teams demoted from the Bundesliga this year, or the Ligue Un script threw up an unlikely exeunt for Marseille, Lille and the recuperating giants Stade Reims? These trios are, currently, the third, eighth and ninth most successful clubs in their respective countries,¹ so the chances would appear slim for all three to go at once.² Yet this is precisely what happened in the 1999-2000 season in Spain, when Atlético Madrid, Sevilla and Real Betis – a third of the teams ever to have won La Liga – crashed out of the top division together in a storm of on-field calamity, institutional chaos and fan fury. There must have been something in the air that season, because Deportivo La Coruña won the title for the only time in their 113-year history, thus becoming the ninth club to win La Liga mere weeks before the three grandes' fate was sealed. So how did it happen?

↔ Christopher Hull

Alchemy

All managerial careers must start somewhere, and Brian Clough's began at Hartlepoons

Brian Clough's management career began at Hartlepoons United at 11am on Friday 29 October 1965. He'd signed a two-year contract on an annual salary of £2,500, making him one of the Fourth Division's highest-paid managers. At 30-years-old, he was also the Football League's youngest manager. He gave short shrift to Sentinel, the local Northern Daily Mail football correspondent, when asked about his aspirations: "I am aiming to win on Saturday and win the following Saturday. Then you can come back and ask me the same question, and you will get the same answer."

↔ Joseph Phelan

The Disrupters

Union Saint-Gilloise, the Belgian outsiders challenging both the elite and preconceptions

Seeing your team finish second, fingers within touching distance of trophy-lifting triumph, can be tough to accept. It's surely even harder to stomach when, for vast swathes of the season, your side was unquestionably the dominant force, coming out on top across pretty much every available metric, with more wins, more goals, the sturdiest defence, and a front line led by the league's most prolific striker.

↻ Shaul Adar

Exile

Mu'nas Dabbur and the complicated position of Israeli Arabs in international football

When Mu'nas Dabbur scored for Israel against Moldova in March 2021 it was greeted with almost unanimous support by Israelis. The Arab-Israeli striker was enjoying life in the Bundesliga and scoring at a good ratio for the national team. That was his eighth international goal and there seemed no reason why he could not go on to become one of Israel's highest goalscorers of all time. He was respected and his career was well covered in the Israeli media. But when he scored his tenth international goal, in the 5-2 demolition of Austria in September that year, the reaction was boos and jeers from a large proportion of the Israeli fans in Haifa, not far from his hometown of Nazareth.

↻ Matt Clough

Match of the Century

On a foggy afternoon in November 1953, Hungary shattered the myth of English superiority

The day of 25 November 1953 dawned with a scene that could just as easily have belonged to the Victorian London of Arthur Conan Doyle as it did the post-war era. Heavy overnight rain had left the streets slick and glassy, upon which ghostly apparitions of the buildings towering above them were reflected. The rain had given way to a cloying, nearly impenetrable fog against which the gas-lit street lamps strained. Cars rolled steadily past commuters swaddled in overcoats, hunched against the cool autumn air. Less than ten years before the Beatles inaugurated a decade of psychedelic technicolour, this was England in sepia, in many respects unchanged from the early 1900s. Maintaining the status quo was precisely what the England team sought to achieve that day. Teams had arrived from the Continent amid great fanfare before, and they had always thwarted their ambitions. It was imperative that they did so once again.

↩ Chris Lepkowski

Six Appeal

Chris Whyte on Arsenal, Leeds and his years playing indoor football in the United States

From pool parties with the pop star Paula Abdul to toasting the title with Eric Cantona, Chris Whyte took quite the scenic journey to winning the English League title with Leeds United.

Straight up.

But first, some context.

1992 was, as we're often told, the end and start of English football as we know it. The formation of the Premier League was about to generate a new wave of aspiration, affluence and globalisation that was to transform English football forever.

↩ Martin O'Neill

Meeting George Best

The former Leicester and Celtic manager remembers his first international call-up

One of the most respected figures in football, Martin O'Neill, was just 19 years old and studying to be a lawyer in Belfast when he was spotted by Nottingham Forest and flown to England. A key part of Brian Clough's legendary team in the 70s and early 80s, he represented Northern Ireland more than 60 times and led them to the 1982 World Cup. In these extracts from his new autobiography, *On Days Like These*, O'Neill recalls the first time he joined his national side alongside the brilliant George Best.

↻ Paul Brown

The Reid Carpet

An appreciation of a midfielder who embodied Everton and the eighties

I can still see it vividly in my mind's eye. The Wembley pitch is aglow in the May sunshine and the ball is floating through the air, pinged perfectly with just enough backspin to land in Gary Lineker's path. It bounces once. Twice. I hold my breath as he takes a touch with one foot, watch wide-eyed as he gets his shot away with the other just before Mark Lawrenson can recover. Hold my breath again as Bruce Grobbelaar spills it, and squeal with excitement and wonder as Lineker scores on the follow up.

↻ Ben Welch

Natural Born Killers

Can you teach goalscoring, and what does the changing role of forwards say about the art?

Goalscorers are special. Fans worship them, managers count on them and that gorgeous, frosted-tipped goal machine staring back from the mirror loves them unconditionally. Listen to a striker wax lyrical about their ability and you'd think they were a gift from the gods sent to earth to ripple nets for the entertainment of us mere mortals.

↻ Sean Cole

The Analyst

Max Bergmann on his journey from clipping videos to 3. Liga coach

On Tuesday April 19, the eyes of much of the football world were trained on Anfield, where Liverpool dismantled Manchester United with almost embarrassing ease to move back to the top of the Premier League table. At the peak of his powers, and still in the hunt for an unprecedented quadruple, Jürgen Klopp revelled in another dominant performance.

Featuring:

Nicola Ferrero	Christopher Hull
Lollo De Silvestri	Joseph Phelan
Simone Pierotti	Shaul Adar
Mohamed El Gharbawy	Matt Clough
Paolo Vezzoli	Chris Lepkowski
Ewan Flynn	Martin O'Neill
Samindra Kunti	Paul Brown
Andy Wells	Ben Welch
Scott Oliver	Sean Cole

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