

THE Blizzard

THE FOOTBALL QUARTERLY / ISSUE FIFTY



Below are extracts from each of the pieces featured.

Oluwashina Okeleji

Sunday Best

In terms of a confluence of expectation, enthusiasm and pride, 13 June 1998 represents possibly the last great peak of Nigerian football.

Tim Vickery

A Little Bit Now, A Little Bit Then

How can you ask me to do this? Choose just one moment from something that has been there for as long as I can remember. From turning up early for school so we could play – during break times too and, at the risk of turning this into a Monty Python sketch, many times all we had was a tennis ball. In the park after school and at weekends. My mate's older brother with some 1970 World Cup stickers, Ramón Mifflin of Peru and the realisation that there was a whole wide world out there. Starting my own sticker album in 1971 with my dad, and Pat Jennings the first one we stuck in. Outclassed by the Germans in '72 (an uncle brought me back a programme) and the 1-1 draw with Poland in '73 which stopped us going to my first World Cup – wrote about it for school. First matches, all a bit scary (this was the 70s). That volley I scored that reminded everyone of Dennis Tueart. Football losing out to music for a few years, and winning the battle back during Mexico 86, to which David Pleat's Tottenham side was a beautiful, brief and predictably ill-fated continuation. And all those subsequent times in the press box or behind the microphone. And amid all of this, if I really must narrow down to one, then let me take you down, 'cause we're going to... Wembley Stadium on 20 May 1992, when Barcelona and Sampdoria duelled for the right to be called the champions of Europe.

Mike Calvin

Heroes and Humanity

I was a novice writer, on a dream assignment, interviewing Bill Shankly. So why, then, was it a faintly troubling experience? Why did he appear diminished? He was 68, exercised daily and neither drank nor smoked. His olive-green suit might have drawn the colour from his face, but there were hints of the virility he exuded at in his prime.

Ewan Flynn

Perseverance

“When Hibs go up to lift the Scottish Cup, you’ll be dead.”

Sean Cole

After the Virus

I can’t imagine my life without football. Despite growing up in a family in which sport didn’t have a strong presence, somehow it became my biggest passion, the thing that occupies my time and thoughts more than anything else. It remains a reassuring constant, an unbroken link stretching back to childhood. The basis for so many friendships and social interactions, both brief and enduring.

James Young

The Journey

That I can’t remember much about my most memorable moment – or collection of them – watching football seems fitting. For even though it was only eight years ago, it feels so distant it’s easy to imagine it never happened at all.

Uli Hesse

Abused with the Great

There are favourite football moments that are self-explanatory. My team once scored an injury-time goal to avoid relegation and then went on to win the biggest trophy in club football against the best side in Europe only eleven years later. I was there for both games and I could tell you about them, but I assume you have heard stories not unlike these a few times before. So let me instead tell you about the day when I was watching a sixth-tier game in England in the pouring rain while 500 people, none of whom I had ever met before, were hurling abuse at me.

Jon Spurling

I Believe in Fairies

It is entirely fitting that, for someone who'd spent an inordinate amount of time on television in the early 70s, Brian Clough's tumultuous reign as Leeds United manager was bookended by two appearances on Yorkshire TV's current affairs programme *Calendar*, presented by future Labour MP Austin Mitchell.

Miguel Delaney

The Reign of Spain

The first thing you notice is how brilliant the gold is. It's just impossible to take your eyes off. That may seem obvious, but it's actually all the more pronounced when you have already seen the image countless times in photographs and on television. The reality of seeing the World Cup trophy itself is so rare and precious, all the more so when it is in the hands of perhaps the greatest player of all time, fulfilling the greatest football story of all time - to a point.

Cecilia Lagos

The Dislocated Jaw

Anyone who has known me since I was little will remember two certain things about me: 1) that I always wanted to be a sports journalist, in times when there were no women in this career path or girls who liked football whatsoever, and 2) that I was a sick-crazy fan of 'La Católica'.

Roger Domeneghetti

The Goal that Moved the Earth

When I was asked to write about a moment in football special to me, Leicester's title win was the obvious, really the only, choice. Seven years on, and despite having since seen the club lift the FA Cup and the Community Shield and play Roma in a European semi-final, it's still hard to comprehend what actually happened back in 2016. Every so often I delve into YouTube to watch the season's highlights, or videos of fans celebrating, or the trophy parade just to make sure that it wasn't a glitch in the Matrix, or that I hadn't briefly tumbled through the multiverse and into an alternate reality.

James Corbett

Spirit of the Blues

By the railings outside St Luke's church on the corner of Goodison Park, a line of old men, their skin stained blue by smoke bombs and reeking of cordite, cackle in disbelief, hugging and shaking hands, like a gang of Scouse Smurfs.

Sergey Bondarenko

The End of History

It happened three months into the war. I just came back from Berlin, where I lived in limbo, trying to understand what was supposed to happen now – end of the world or just the local apocalypse. It was the end of the season but it lost all meaning for me. Who is playing whom? Who will be in the Champions League next season? Wait a second – no one will be. There will be no Champions League for the teams from the country who just started the war.

John Harding

The Competition Winner

In the mid 1970s, with no live League football on either television or radio and with only BBC's *Match of the Day* highlights on Saturday evenings, fans consumed their football either in person or via the press. Between them the *Mirror* and *Sun* sold almost 7 million copies, the *Express*, *Mail* and *Telegraph* another 5 million. A tabloid war was raging and one of its victims was the *London Evening News*. Although it had been the biggest-selling evening paper in London over several decades, sales of the paper were falling as it struggled with financial problems: television was eating away its market share, industrial disputes had sapped it.

Jonathan Northcroft

Rehearsed Tomfoolery

There are different stories about the origins of the word 'tomfoolery' but my favourite comes from Muncaster Castle in England's Lake District and involves Thomas Skelton, a jester there.

Daniel Storey

A Time to be Born

Everybody who goes to a play-off final to watch their team anticipates how they will feel when the final whistle blows. Counterintuitively, playing through the two scenarios of your fate helps to ease the bloated, bubbling feeling in your stomach and your lungs. Lose and you know what you will do: the quick march, the head down, the bubble of your own despondency. You'll allow the personal hurt because it cannot be escaped, but recognising tens of thousands of others like you hurting just the same? It's just too much to bear.

Sasa Ibrulj

The Return of Love

I will share something deeply personal. A truth I never thought I could express aloud or put into writing. It's a sentence that would once have seemed incomprehensible to me, causing lingering self-contempt and the fear of appearing foolish to many.

Aleksandar Holiga

The Transistor Radio

I was ten years old when I was given a small portable transistor radio as a present. It was the 1980s in Yugoslavia and most of us kids only counted a bicycle, football stickers, some marbles and a comic book collection amongst our prized possessions. This was something different, though. It belonged to the realm of adults and I cherished it far more than the kids of today cherish their first smartphones – because for me it was the best thing in the world. And decades later, when *The Blizzard* asked me to describe my favourite moment in football, I thought of the day I got it.

John Brewin

Pride and Desolation

After decades working in and consuming the liberal-left media, patriotism can be a tricky issue to address. Offering full, unwavering support for the England team is problematic, given the stain that nationalism continues to be at both home and abroad,

particularly where football is concerned. The swish of the St George's flag, the fireworks launched from inappropriate orifices, the songs celebrating long-resolved conflicts of the 20th century, the creeping sense that despite the conditioning of the terrestrial TV programming of the 1970s and 1980s when the Second World War was still being fought on a daily basis, we haven't always been the good guys.

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Sam Kunti

Fortuyn's Wheel

It was the Netherlands' 9/11: everyone remembers it and everyone remembers what they were doing that ordinary Monday afternoon in May, 2002. Bert van Marwijk remembers it, Pierre van Hooijdonk remembers it and so do Joost de Jong and Ivo Opstelten, the then-mayor and member of the conservative-liberal party VVD, Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie. The coach was at a hotel, the striker on the way home from training, the mayor in a meeting and the reporter De Jong researching a story. With shock, they learned the news: the far-right politician Pim Fortuyn had been assassinated.

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Paul Simpson

Rite of Passage

"He shoots! He scores!" The catchphrase of the legendary Canadian ice hockey commentator Foster Hewitt which, by some mysterious process, became a football cliché, captures the exhilaration of Czechoslovakian striker Ladislav Petrás's goal against Brazil in the 1970 World Cup. As the goalscorer told the *International Football Book No 13* (published by Souvenir Press in 1971): "There is no time to think, football is not like chess. I just hit the ball at the moment I felt was right - and we were winning."

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Brian Homewood

The Other Side of the World

It's fair to say that the British media did not rate Peru's chances against Scotland in their opening group match at the 1978 World Cup. ITV dedicated almost the whole of its hour-long World Cup special to Scotland and the only footage it showed of the Peru was the squad sitting on swings and roundabouts at their team hotel. "Away from the rioting and civil unrest in their own country, the Peruvians look relaxed and happy," said Brian Moore.

Igor Rabiner

Rejecting Stalin's Son

Nikita Simonyan, Olympic champion of 1956 in Melbourne, top goalscorer in the history of Spartak Moscow (with a total of 160), who also scored the first goal of USSR team at World Cups (against England in 1958) is now 96. He told me how Vasily Stalin, the son of the former Soviet leader and founder of VVS (Air Force) football club, tried to force him to move to his team.

Paul Brown

The Rooney Supremacy

"The kid's got it all." That was the first thought that hit you when you watched Wayne Rooney at Euro 2004. Everton fans like me already knew this. But still, this was England. A step up. International football. The biggest stage. And the kid just smashed it.

Heather McKinlay

The Meeting

I am a chip off Dad's old block when it comes to the beautiful game. Though my earliest memory – when barely out of nappies – is a match renowned as ugly: Leeds v Chelsea in the 1970 FA Cup Final replay. The mud, the blood, the high tackles, the fights – oh and the goals – enthralled me as I followed the action on our little black and white telly. I was sent to bed long before the end. That just left little me proclaiming my support for the Boys in Blue (or dark grey as I'd seen them) and wanting more!

Shubi Arun

Reiss Lightning

"What have we just done?"

Gunnar Persson

First Contact

I was a boy of twelve. But I had already seen enough of the Wolverhampton Wanderers, the fierce tackling of Mike Bailey, the never-ending attempts by Derek Parkin to find a teammate with a cross, and that all too familiar front of the Molineux Street Stand.

Karel Häring

Only Connect

"Dear Karel. I hope you are well. I recently heard on Czech TV's main sport news the name Karel Häring and I thought it could be someone from your family as I know how close you have always been to football. That's the reason why I decided to write to you."

Scott Murray

We Have A Dream

I was nine and a half years old in the summer of 1982, and I'd love nothing more than to say that the first single I ever bought with my own pocket money was something by the Human League, Adam Ant or ABC. Sadly that's not something I'm able to do. The identity of the seminal seven-inch platter that launched a little boy's lifelong love of pop? 'We Have A Dream' by the Scotland World Cup squad featuring John Gordon Sinclair and BA Robertson. Yes, OK, I know, though a collaboration between 22 half-cut footballers, a teenage actor who couldn't hold a note and a piss-poor Ian Dury pasticheur ended up much better than it had any right to be.

Vladimir Novak

Unknown Glory

I know it sounds odd, actually funny, that I fell in love with football after a game which I neither attended nor watched on TV. As a matter of fact, while it was played I even didn't know that it was taking place.

Marcela Mora y Araujo

All Roads Lead to Román

“Maxi Rodríguez to Heinze touches on the left for Mascherano and Mascherano for Riquelme. Juan Román inside, playing it again for Maxi; Maxi steps on the ball, it comes to Sorín. It comes backwards for Sorín, Sorín in the central line, touches it for Maxi ... Max starts, Mascherano I mean. Mascherano plays the ball in the centre circle for Riquelme, backwards for Ayala, Ayala has Saviola wide open, Cambiasso is free inside, it goes to Cuchu, Cambiasso has it, goes to play it to Mascherano. Mascherano has Maxi Rodríguez right next to him, touches it to Maxi. Sorín gets ready on the left, the ball comes to Juampi, Sorín traps it with his chest, inside Crespo, inside Saviola, Sorín touching it back for Maxi Rodríguez again, he’s going to play it to Cambiasso, he’s going to touch it for Riquelme, it came to Cambiasso, Cambiasso for Riquelme, Riquelme covering the ball and touching it, backwards once again for Mascherano, Mascherano to Sorín, Sorín playing it for Saviola, half a spin by Saviola, escapes on the left, touches it for Riquelme, plays it for Saviola, Saviola for Cambiasso, Cambiasso to Crespo, Crespo backheel flicks to Cambiasso... let it be a goal.”

Luke Alfred

Flying Lessons

It’s difficult to know with absolute certainty when the Bafana Bafana coach, Clive Barker, started to fly. By flying, of course, I don’t mean a cushy seat up front in business on Emirates, I mean the thing he did when Bafana scored a goal.

James Montague

Stronger Together

On 29 July 2007, at the Gelora Bung Karno Stadium in Jakarta, Indonesia, the captain of Iraq’s national team scored the goal that created the greatest moment, and the greatest triumph, in the history of football. I know this is a bold claim, and one which could invite ridicule, but what actually constitutes the greatest moment in football is a slippery concept to grasp. Is it the greatest single moment of skill, like the Cruyff turn? The greatest goal, perhaps Maradona at Mexico 86? (No, not that one). The greatest match between two of the best teams in the world at the time? Perhaps it is an iconic moment that has never been forgotten or a moment that changed the game forever.. The final of the Asian Cup probably doesn’t count on any of those fronts. Because it was more important than that.

Rupert Fryer

Unfulfilled

Gastón Monzón lay in a heap, his piercing shrieks drowned out by the 45,000 others that echoed all around him. Metres away, cars stood desolate, windscreens shattered, seats peppered with broken glass. Back in Parque Patricios, they wailed in terror, their hands on heads, covering mouths or clawing desperately at their clothing. The rest of Argentina watched on in horror.

Shaul Adar

A Brief Taste of Glory

A few years ago, I flew from Israel, where I grew up, to England, where I've lived since 2000. Next to me sat a nice English couple and we exchanged small talk above the east end of the Mediterranean Sea. "So which team do you support?" asked the man.

Anthony Clavane

The Phantom Scream

It was, I'm pretty sure about this, around 17 minutes past one o'clock, on Sunday, 26 April 1992, that I heard a very loud, ear-splitting, scream in Colchester's sleepy, near-deserted town centre.

Osasu Obayiuwana

Chasing the Rainbow

27 years – extremely long years, for fans of Bafana Bafana, have passed, since South Africa lifted their first and, so far only, Africa Cup of Nations trophy on home soil in 1996.

Sasha Goryunov

Perestroika and Participation

It was a lovely early evening at the end of June. The heat had abated and the beach was almost empty and fairly quiet now. Not far from us, some teenagers were smoking and playing cards. The loser had to get down on all fours and do a circle, while shouting, “The Earth is shaped like a suitcase.” I spent a few minutes trying to come to terms with this concept before my thoughts drifted to the weekend’s match: “That Gullit, he can play but we have Dasaev, don’t we?”

Felipe Almeida

The Way Out

Excuse me for being egotistical; where I come from, we hardly have this luxury.

Daniel Edwards

Milito’s Way

El Cilindro was fit to burst. Completed in 1950, Racing Club’s venerable Estadio Presidente Perón (to employ its somewhat underused full name) is one of the finest sporting legacies of its namesake’s ever-controversial administration, an imposing concrete bowl which in its heyday housed more than 100,000 baying fans. Those same supporters over the years had become hardened to failure.

Shinobu Yamanaka

Zola at the Junction

Have you ever looked for a ‘sign’ at a crossroads in your life? Well, I have. It was the spring of 1998. I was a 31-year-old Japanese business expatriate in the United Kingdom. The company I was working for wanted me back from their London office to their Tokyo headquarters while I was thinking of staying in London to make a step in a completely different direction.

Daniel Gray

The Joy of Going Away

On the radio Gabrielle sings about dreams. Fluffy tassels protrude from the car window's top edge, trapped rigid. The rest of my scarf quivers outside, a red and white ensign lofted by the motorway headwind. One mishap with our new-fangled electric windows and it will skedaddle through the air and lay to rest in some South Yorkshire farmer's field.

Dan Jackson

The Return of the Messiah

There are only eight clubs who have played all their league seasons in the top two divisions of English football. Four of these are from London: Arsenal, Tottenham, Chelsea, and (perhaps surprisingly) West Ham. The other four are solidly northern: Everton, Liverpool, Manchester United and (perhaps even more surprisingly) Newcastle United. The Magpies' epic trophy drought is well known. Wyatt Earp, Thomas Hardy and the Dowager Empress Carlotta of Mexico were all still breathing when Newcastle were last champions of England back in 1927. But their strangely consistent league record has at least provided a crumb of comfort for the barren decades of disappointment they've put me through.

Yoichi Igawa

The Chocolate Box

Countless confetti, tinted in the colours of the setting sun, flutter through the hollow of La Bombonera. Ahead of the slowly descending pieces of paper, the huge blue wall behind the goal shimmers. The fans who have packed into the towering stands continue to sing hoarsely and to bounce without a break.

Mark Gleeson

Rejoining the World

Growing up in apartheid South Africa meant isolation from international sport and no national team to follow, so the enthralling path to a first ever South Africa fixture stands out as a most memorable footballing adventure.

Martin Mazur

Seeing Diego

That nurse, I will never forget her. Sue Ellen Carpenter. That was the woman who grabbed Maradona's hand after Argentina v Nigeria at the 1994 World Cup and escorted him to the anti-doping control. That was the woman who broke my heart. Or at least my football heart.

John Irving

The Trip

I was half-asleep, vaguely aware of a shadow shuffling towards the bed in the dark, then of a hand grazing my face. Then nothingness as I returned to the land of nod.

By Rob Smyth

Free-Kicks and Madeleines

I've never eaten a madeleine. I have eaten Sainsbury's beef grillsteaks though, and I know for sure I had them at around 7.20pm on 21 April 1999. This essentially worthless piece of information comes to you in association with memory, neurodivergence and most of all football.

Ian Hawkey

Paroxysms of Patriotism

They arrived in a rush, a caravan of young nations with new flags, revived anthems, some of them bearing war wounds. At the 48th Fifa Congress, no fewer than 14 countries were added to what the body's secretary general, Sepp Blatter, liked to call, ad nauseam, "our football family". Welcome, Armenia! Bienvenue, Belarus and the Baltics! Come on in, Croatia! This is how the world was in the early 1990s, with its sharp rise in the birth rate of sovereign states, Eastern Europe's frontiers being busily redrawn or fought over.

Elis James

Drama was Horrible

In May 2011 Swansea City became a Premier League club, an unfashionable team from South Wales but a side that played modern, attractive football under their young manager Brendan Rodgers. This achievement prompted wider interest as, curiously, the club was owned by a consortium of local fans with supporter representation on the board guaranteed through the fans' trust. Having spent the previous 30 years or so in the lower divisions, Swansea's Premier League promotion felt like the gate-crashing of a party, but by interlopers who improbably had all the right wristbands and lanyards, despite the extreme suspicion of the bouncers.

To celebrate our 50th issue, *The Blizzard* asked 50 writers from all over the world each to contribute a brief piece about a favourite football moment. Some are moments of great historical significance, some are very personal, others simply a time when everything just seemed to fall into place. There are writers from the UK and Ireland, but also from across the globe, from Japan to Russia to Chile to South Africa. In their variety and scope, both geographical and historical, the 50 pieces together offer a distillation of the spirit that has sustained us since our first issue back in 2011.

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RRP £13.00



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