



ONIONbag

HAVE A HEART: According to Dr. Frederic Berthier winning the World Cup lifts a nation's spirits, and lowers the death rate from heart attacks. During the '98 Final, when France defeated Brazil, deaths of men and

women dropped on the day of the match, watched by 26 million French TV viewers. Instead of about 33 deaths a day in the five days before and after the match, only 23 men died of a heart attack on match

day. There were also fewer deaths in women but the decrease was not as significant. He believes the national euphoria of the victory, combined with a day off from work also contributed to the fall.



QUILLSON footy

Garry Nelson's last stand

■ Peter Ferris

A few weeks ago we reviewed Garry Nelson's book, *Left Foot Forward*, and now comes the sequel, *Left Foot in the Grave*. This is, in fact, a more satisfying read, not least because Nelson has moved on, or down, from Charlton to become player/coach at Torquay. The season is 1996/97 and Torquay have just finished at the bottom of the Div. 3 and would have been relegated to the Conference had not Stevenage been refused entry to the Nationwide League because of the inadequacies of their ground.

The differences that Nelson encounters between the third division and the first, not to mention the Premiership, are vivid. Charlton, for example, like most clubs, had a training ground. At Torquay either Nelson or the manager has to 'phone the Council to find out on what bit of municipal park they can practice that day. "Wherever the dispatcher sends us won't possess any facilities. There won't be any goalposts. We take our own. Collapsible ones. Metal. We strap them lengthways along the roof of our ailing mini bus, which, food for worrisome thought, can hold our entire first-team squad."

There are few dreams down at the bottom of the Div. 3. Torquay bring in 67 young prospects to give the once over to, all on condition that they pay their own way to the ground. "We weren't even able to bung them a few readies to take back to their day job. You have to feel for them...When you've been steamrollered 5-0 by Newcastle, football can be tough at the top. It's a bloody sight tougher

at the bottom."

The book is an account of life at the bottom: trying to come up with 11 fit players week after week, trying to strengthen the team through loans, accepting long coach trips as an alternative to costly over night stays, the constant pressure of avoiding relegation.

There won't be any goalposts. We take our own. Collapsible ones. We strap them lengthways along the roof of our ailing mini bus

— Garry Nelson

to the breadline and scared in to incompetency by a not altogether paranoid anticipation of dropping below it. Sod the crowd. Never mind the quality. Get shot of it soonest and let some other bugger carry the responsibility."

Nelson embodies all the qualities of a professional: honest, committed both to his job and the game, and he writes about the issues of the time with passion. He has nothing but contempt for the police forces' attempts to dodge their responsibilities at Hillsborough, and the refusal of the top clubs to share their new-found television wealth with smaller clubs.

At the end of the season Nelson is offered a staff position with the Professional Footballer's Association. Players in England should be pleased that someone such as Nelson is there looking after their interests. ●



Blatter bent on techno-referee buggery

■ Alastair Knott

Don't get me wrong, I love technology. In fact I've got so many gadgets, gizmos and power tools that Tim the Tool Man Taylor would give me a twenty-one grunt salute, but as an old traditionalist when it comes to the beautiful game, I question the recent proposal by FIFA to introduce two-way radio communication between the guy with the whistle and his two assistants running the line.

Sepp Blatter and his Axes of Mildly Evil cronies over at FIFA headquarters announced in March that this new technology would be tested at the FIFA u17 World Championships in Finland this August. It was this tournament that, in '91, pioneered the backpass rule that later became standard throughout the world.

In addition to this, Der Führer Blatter also proposed a 'job creation' scheme for out of work officials. In order to banish refereeing

blunders he's suggesting the introduction of an extra official behind each goal to help ensure more accurate decisions. The 4th and 5th officials, called 'goal-line assistants' will act as an extra pair of eyes for the referee on penalty claims, professional fouls and disputes over whether the ball has actually crossed the line.

Does the game actually need these expensive, technical and bio-mechanical extras? The simple answer is NO. As my esteemed colleague Brian Deo wrote back in WFP issue 12 – what FIFA should

be targeting is the "Holy Grail" of referees – individuals that can emulate world class referees such as Italy's Perlugi Collina who is both firm and fair while able to spot a bit of bother from 300 yards.

Done correctly with tack and skill officials help players create a free flowing game that is a joy to behold, that's why it's the world's game. Unfortunately, whether playing or watching games on the TV its clear that this type of official is in short supply, everywhere. ●



Blind as Blatter: FIFA's visionary may have lost sight of the ball

BEST of letters

WFP welcomes all letters; your diatribe is our delight. We do, however, reserve the right to edit for taste, legality and available space. Unless otherwise stated, all letters will be considered for publication. E-mail to: worldfootballpages@telus.net. Mail to: World Football Pages/Letters, 2012 Hamilton Street, New Westminster, B.C., Canada V3M 2P6.

He who dares, wins

Most of us never do get around to writing letters. The time it takes to pen a good retort is often a factor, and the fury or passion that inspired the very thought of a letter, wanes quickly within our daily routines. And there's always the overwhelming doubt that your literary masterpiece will ever actually surface triumphant from the Heskey sized bulking bag of letters we envision before the editors of newspapers and magazines.

Truth is, for the thousands that want to have their say, very few ever do, and it's a wee joy when one actually appears. Some weeks WFP gets no letters whatsoever and I'm forced to provide more space for Alfie Lau's numbing rants, and spend hours wondering how to tease Krammerhead into making another stand to fill the column.

Yet for the most part through our first year, I think we've been quite fortunate fielding letters from all sorts, all sexes and all ages – 39 in in total over 24 issues – all but a couple on the bright side.

A few of our letter writers have gone on to fame and no fortune actually penning real articles for WFP, which is oh so cool and demonstrates what the marines have known all along – he who dare wins.

So in honour of our brave scribes, a small sampling of the best one-liners from our first year readership follows. Thanks to everyone who took the time to tell us what you think.

— *cjvg, Madman at the Helm*

■ The hell raisers

I know this will kick some serious ass.

— *Christine Campbell, BIV Media Group, Vancouver*

I suggest [Alfie Lau] thinks twice before he questions my dedication to soccer.

— *Krammerhead, Whitecaps supporters*

I am not impressed.

— *Ella Rodenkirchen, on Posterboy*
!#% the petition... buy season tickets and get your ass in the seats. It is great football played by local guys. !#% the English Premier League.

— *Robert K. Dunn, North Vancouver*

Why on earth would you consider it appropriate to have a photograph of a pre-schooler giving someone the finger?

— *Margaret Smith*

■ The dreamers

I would love it if you would cover Argentine football and possibly Brazil as well.

— *Ron Olcen*

Surely anybody that is remotely familiar with World Cup history would remember Bulgaria's fourth place finish in USA '94.

— *Emil Doskov, Bulgarian national*

■ The cocky buggers

A tiny bit of research on your part would have told you that the VMSL is the league around town.

— *William Azzi, President VMSL*

■ The illiterates

You know you have a quality product when someone like myself, a soccer illiterate, still really enjoys reading the WFP.

— *Heidi Hodgson, Vancouver*

■ The perverts

I hope you have not shot your load with all those Reuters photos.

— *Paul S. Hendren, Inside Soccer Magazine*

The North American mentality can pervert the game to what I call Sockeye – where they tell the kids to forecheck.

— *Alan Beaudet, BC*

Looking forward to receiving my life-size Clubber Lang doll. Gets kinda lonely here in Victoria.

— *Stuart Allen, Victoria*

... I read – that you Brit blokes enjoy the occasional decent paddling.

— *Mark Bicks, Kamloops*

■ The philosophers

Watch globally. Support regionally. Play locally.

— *Robert K. Dunn, North Vancouver*

Why is Vic [Bianchin] so negative.

— *Jim Sanderson, Mission*

You are irreverent, rude, funny, peculiar, so close to the truth it hurts and I have just found you.

— *Terry Carter, VP NCSSL*

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