

# Friendly flavoured footy

## ■ Liz Goodman, Leicester, England

**Y**ou only watch the cricket because they're winning, my partner announced the other day. Actually, no, the only reason I watch the cricket is because there is no football or rugby on in the summer, and I would rather watch 11 men chase a small red ball around a field than no-one chase any kind of ball around at all.

But still, it's not the same, and the day I fully understand the rules of cricket is the day **Stevie Gerrard** joins **Everton**. Luckily for me then, there are some football games played over the summer here, and they are called 'Friendlies.' Friendlies are interesting and they pair the most ridiculous teams together in the name of making a bit of money and flogging a few more season tickets. Your **Manchester United**'s of the world go on tours of potential fan base countries such as the USA and China, sell overpriced merchandise and plot world domination. But what does everyone else do?

## Pornography on the stands

To search for friendlies is to find team names you may never have heard of. **Tranmere Rovers** for example, Merseyside's poor football relatives, but home of **Canada's Ian Hume**, have played the mighty **Vauxhall Motors**, **Connors Quay** and **Cammell Laird**, which sounds Scottish but is in Cheshire (posh English county). **Connors Quay**, on closer inspection is in Wales and, according to the hilariously true-to-life website [knowwhere.co.uk](http://knowwhere.co.uk), the town is "full of junkies and slags, the place to avoid". Other details for the would be visitor to the Welsh town is

invaluable; Fred the Newsagent is "always drunk" while in Simon's, the newsagent there has a "nice selection of banned porn on the top shelf."

## Thanks for the pitch

On **Chelsea**'s website, its 5–1 demolition of lowly **Wycombe Wanderers** does not warrant a match report. Yet on Wanderer's site there are 10 different reports of the game from various slants. Several Chelsea players are rewarded with their own report, most of whom seem to comment on the pitch itself; "The pitch was very good and I enjoyed it," – **Robben**; "The pitch was looking really good," – **Terry**; "The pitch was of fantastic quality," – **Mourinho**. They all successfully avoid talking about the quality of Wycombe's football. Next stop for Chelsea is a step up in the challenge stakes – away at **Benfica**. **Champions League** new boys **Everton (Reserves)** have also played Welsh 'Giants' **Connahs Quay Nomads**, while their first team tours Austria.

## Spurs save the best for last

**Spurs** travelled away to several time giant killers **Stevenage Borough** and beat them 3–0. When you click on 'Match Report' a blank page appears. According to Borough's website the forthcoming friendlies against **Luton** and **Peterborough** will "...give fans a far better

idea of what to expect from Boro this season". Spurs latter pre-season preparations look a bit more mouth-watering to the **White Hart** faithful too – a tour of South Korea and **Maradona**'s former club **Boca Juniors** are next up.

## Elsewhere in soccer's underbelly

Still in North London, **Arsenal**'s plans are a little more modest, away to **League Two**'s **Barnet** and then a tour of Austria to take on **Weiz, Ritzing** (who?) and **Utrecht** (ah, I have heard of them).



**KEY TO CITY:** *Lout and legend Maradona awarded key to Connor's Quay; and may cause a racket by not showing up for the Spurs friendly against his former club, Boca Juniors?*

And how are Manchester United getting along? Well before they take-off for the Far East, they travel up to Scotland to face **Clyde** (a nod to **Fergie**'s former career as an apprentice in the Glasgow shipyards on the River Clyde) and down to Peterborough, for **Barry Fry**'s testimonial. It's almost like they want to remind themselves where they came from before they face their future as **Michael Glazer's Man Utd™**.

And what, you may ask is my most eagerly awaited friendly (apart from, of course, **Leicester vs. Inter Milan**)? It has to be Aug. 6, when **Premiership Portsmouth** take on **Iran** at **Fratton Park**. You have to wonder who knows who to understand how that one came about. ●