

FreeKick

Serving the Beautiful Game

ARE SOCCER PLAYERS
WIMPS?

By Stephanie Hawco

THE BEAUTIFUL GAME
AND MUSIC

By Gordy Ryan

BECOMING A
SOCCER FAN

By Crai Bower

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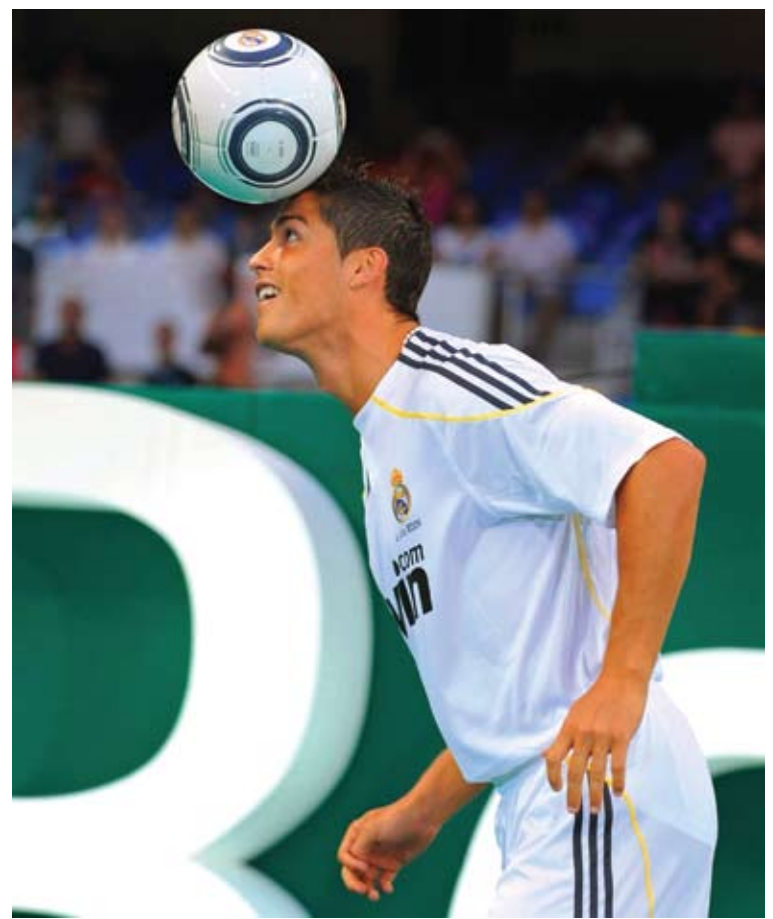


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CONTENTS

4 Contributors

5 Editor's Note

6 Becoming a Soccer Fan
By Crai Bower

8 The Beautiful Game & Music:
A Symphony in Motion
By Gordy Ryan

12 Cristiano Ronaldo
By Michael Oldham

14 The Sleeping Giant:
When Will Chinese Football Awake?
By Trevor Kew

16 Are Soccer Players Wimps?
By Stephanie Hawco

18 Soccer Shorts

19 Recipe: Fruit Crisp
By Heather McLean

20 Cosmo Striker
By Piper Bradley

21 Kidz Section

22 SoccerScopes

Cover Photo by Manuel Lino

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Raised in Argentina, Fernando always jokes that football runs through his veins. His passion, knowledge, and design talent gives Free Kick its face.



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Neil is a passionate local coach and suit in the football community. His multi-talented skills in competitive sailing and the beautiful game gave him a compass to travel extensively around the world. Here at home, he consults in marketing, PR, Internet sectors and all the latest soccer junkie info. Beware Voyageurs!

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Anna is a 17 year old Vancouver artist who is crazy for cartooning...and just a bit crazy in general. She migrates around the city in her cardboard starving artist box doing art for food and stealing your single socks from laundry machines.



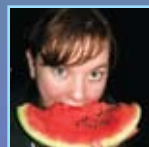
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Stephanie Hawco

Stephanie Hawco grew up writing in Newfoundland. Now, she's a Vancouver mom. She lives with her new little person, Oliver and her Cornish husband, who is forever reminding her that "it's football, not soccer."



Heather McLean

Heather's specialty is healthy and alternative vegan creations. She lives in East Vancouver.



Gordy Ryan

Gordy is a composer, musician, and keeper who has recorded and performed with Babatunde Olatunji, Santana, Airto, David Sanborn, and many other artists. His current band, OBA, has released the dance cd 'Beautiful Game', a funky fun ode to the game we love. www.obatheband.com

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Serving the Beautiful Game

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Publisher's Note:

Why "Serving the Beautiful Game?"

As a magazine we have the ability to give a much needed acknowledgement to individuals who contribute their energy to soccer. Our mission is to serve the players, fans, parents and coaches who want information and support for their passion.

Brazilian star Pele's most renowned quote was when he called "football" the "beautiful game." The quote speaks for itself to all those who have played soccer or admired it in the stands. It hits the mark between how it looks on the outside and how it feels on the inside playing it.

We feel the combination to "Serve the Beautiful Game" matches our ambitions as a magazine.

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Free Kick Magazine is an environmentally friendly publication. Printed on recycled paper.



EDITOR'S NOTE

Carrie Serwetnyk,
First Woman Canadian Soccer Hall of Fame

We couldn't help indulge ourselves with megastar Ronaldo on our front cover for September. Arguably the most prominent player in the world, he will lead Real Madrid into a fabulous season with a star-studded squad including Kaka and Raul. Our photos are from his debut fashion show as he showed off his uniform to 90,000 fans at Bernabeu Stadium, after inking a contract as the highest paid footballer on the planet.

We are also pleased to share our passion for the game through a look on how music parallels the rhythm, joy and culture of football. Go to games outside of our continent and fans are very much a part of the match through their percussion and songs. We asked Gordy Ryan, a musician and African Drum teacher, to articulate this fusion. Interestingly, his description of music seems to capture the essence most soccer lovers can't quite get their fingers on to describe the feelings of joy or spiritual connection they gain through playing.

In addition, our traveling writer Trevor Kew tagged on a ton of miles this season and found himself meandering through southeast Asia and into China. We are always excited to follow his footsteps and learn how soccer has been a way to connect with strangers in far-away places. Trevor has recently written a book called "Trading Goals," which is available for pre-order on Amazon.com The book is targeted to 7-13 year olds. Let's get out and support him by buying a few copies.

Recently I discovered a writer who has been aching to do something outside of changing diapers and breastfeeding. Our new soccer mom, Stephanie Hawco, has been humouring us with fresh stories on family life via the game and we are happy to share the ultimate macho question that hockey and football fans love to harass soccer players with: "are soccer players wimps?" Find out the results from her battle with her cauliflower-ear rugby-playing husband.

Yes, we hope to keep you amused as we hunker into Fall, including a few lessons for Vancouverites who will soon have to learn how to become soccer fans. Just looking over at Seattle, where there are enjoying astonishing success despite the recession with record crowds of 30,000 fans per game, we know that here at Free Kick, there is so much to look forward to. Let's enjoy the seasons as they kick off around the globe. With the World Cup next summer and the Whitecaps starting MLS in 2011, we can only sigh a collective "sweet."

Enjoy your version of passion with the beautiful game. We wish you the best. ⚽

Carrie

The Province

BECOMING A SOCCER FAN

Story by Crai Bower

CAN'T HEAR YOU!



There was a time when professional soccer ruled Vancouver. Back in the 70's, when the Whitecaps parlayed their province's affinity with England to draw a British Invasion of ridiculously short-shorted former Premier League footballers, Empire Stadium rocked with consistent crowds of 30,000-plus, fanatics danced in the streets, culminating with the 1979 NASL Championship over the Tampa Bay Rowdies. But how will today's über sophisticated Vancouverite, appointed in Hermés scarves and settled into wine bars, support the Whitecaps when they enter the MLS in 2011? Will a city, where donning a \$200 Canucks sweater or a temporary cheek tattoo displays loyalty, sing the ribald Whitecap anthems festooned in face paint while parading to drums through Gastown?

"We had season tickets at Empire Stadium," recalls Vancouver native Tom Ryan. "We had all the players from the British Premier League like wee Willy Johnson, who was mean on corner kicks and set pieces. One day, during a pivotal corner kick late in the match against San José, Johnson turned around and took a big swig of beer and then set up the corner kick and we scored. That play typified our team and our season."

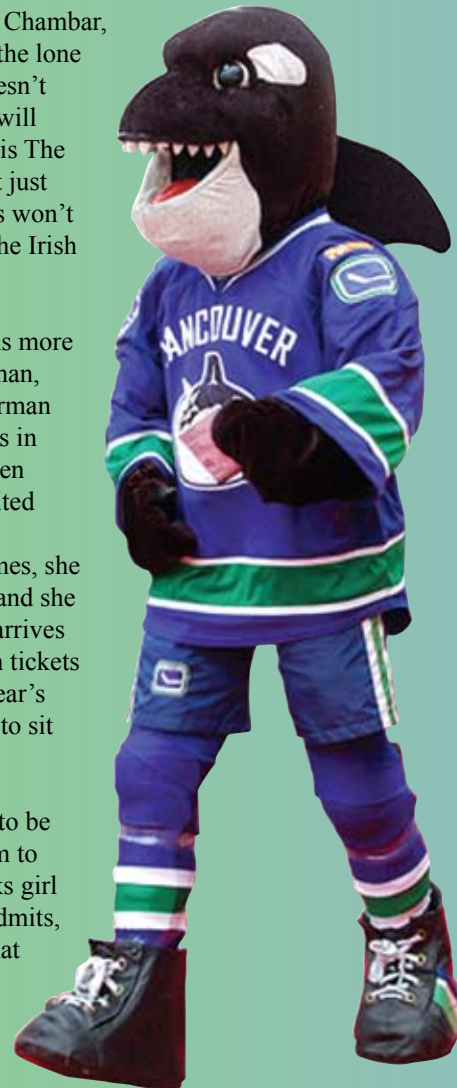
The 'forgotten coast' was raw in the 70's, best displayed by the mill culture when skid rows houses loggers, not tourists. No one noticed a little fanatical facial embellishment beneath the sawdust. Today a trace of 'Whitecap blue' paint should remain behind the

ears during the Monday morning developer meetings or webcasts. (Face paint doesn't wash out as easily as a cabernet stain.) Creating a Whitecap coif, call it the new wave, should also display universal devotion and provide an extra level of support for the home eleven, as seen in green faces and big hair among once and future rival Seattle Sounders supporters this season.

To sing the team songs in unison, the supporters will have to show up in unison, which may be challenging for the Vancouver follower, if the "ten minutes (stop time) tardy" rule at most Canucks games is any indication. Skip five minutes of a soccer match while finishing your pinot gris at Chambar, and you may have missed the lone goal of the match. That doesn't mean the rest of the game will be any less beautiful - this is The Beautiful Game after all. It just means the post-match pints won't flow quite as smoothly at the Irish Heather.

There are few Canucks fans more loyal than Pamela Groberman, principal of Pamela Groberman Media and Public Relations in Yaletown. Groberman's been known to cancel long-awaited April vacations when they conflicted with playoff games, she won't text during a game, and she never - or almost never - arrives late. She's also held season tickets to the Lions, though this year's renovations persuaded her to sit out a year.

"Are the Whitecaps going to be my number one sports team to support? No, I'm a Canucks girl all the way," Groberman admits, "But I'm excited to see what a big deal soccer will be. I mean what a day it'll be when you watch a soccer match and then



head to the Garage to cap it off with a Canucks game."

Groberman doesn't buy the "mellow" moniker, citing the Garage as one of the loudest arenas in the NHL. (Loudest? Really?!) Groberman and Ryan suggest one definite reason why Vancouver will shed its cool for the Whitecaps: rivalries. The Whitecaps-Sounders-Timbers rivalry existed long before the Flames and Oilers became Canucks sparring partners.

"The Sounders will for sure be our biggest rival," explains Ryan, "because the Vancouver-Seattle-Portland connection is huge. There's certainly a hate on for Toronto, but a pure rivalry point of view involves driving to a Sounders game or even to Portland."

Groberman opines more bluntly. "I have a hate-on for Toronto. Period."

Like many future converts, even though Groberman wasn't around Vancouver in the 70's, she's excited to ride the Whitecaps, even to break out a little.

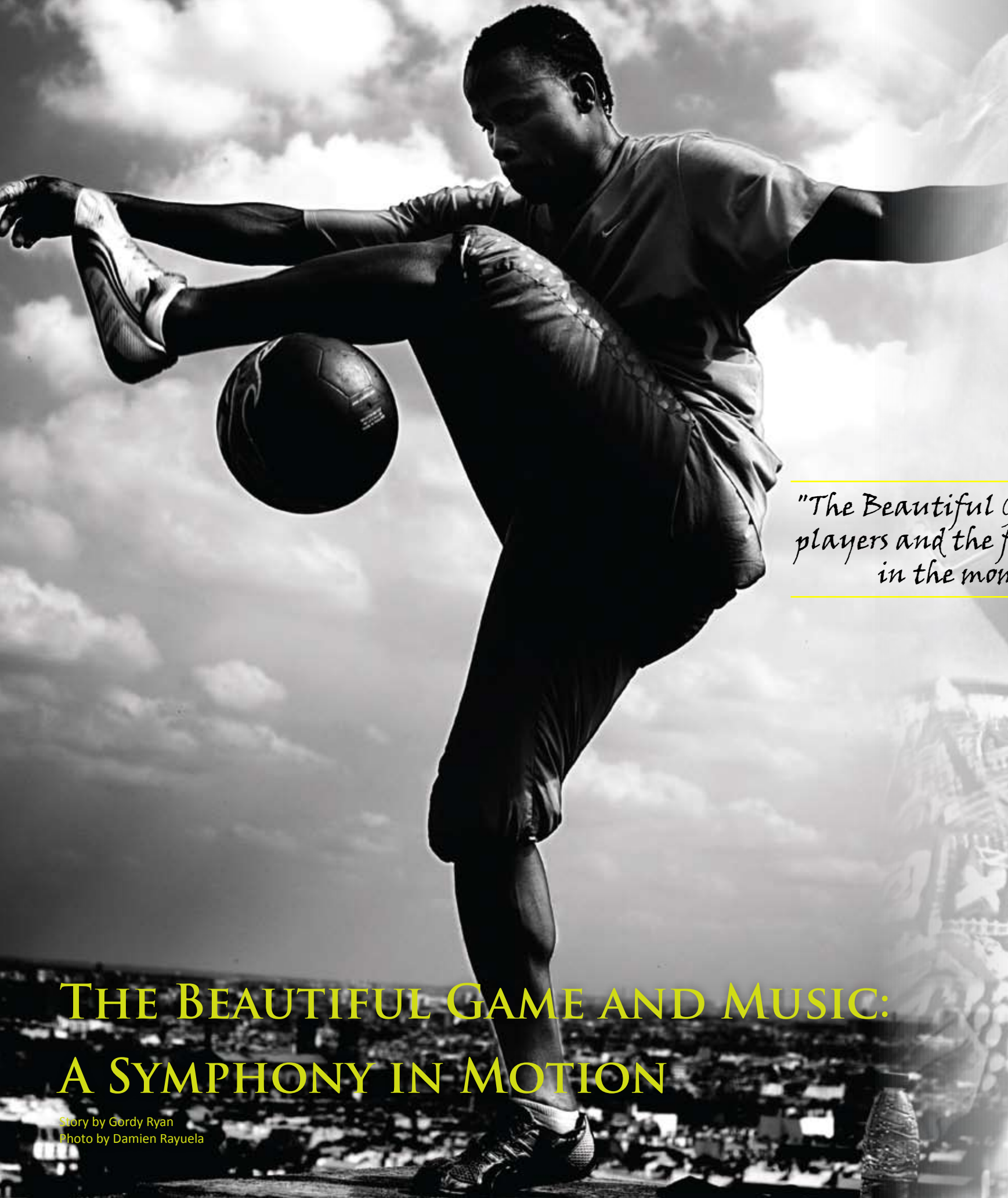
"I think I'll let loose a bit more, standing up throughout the match, unlike trying to behave as a hockey fan. I want to learn some of the old chants and songs, plus waving the flags will be cool. Perhaps I'll get a Whitecaps tattoo."

Let's hope that tat's of the permanent variety. 🏈



www.soccerx.ca

Photo credit Brittney Swankey



All over the world, futbol/football/soccer is known as the Beautiful Game, a name which honours the flow of teamwork and individual artistry which can make playing or watching the game a transcendental experience. There is music in its essence- the percussive sound of the ball meeting the foot, the rhythm of passes connecting player to player, the fluid motion of teamwork, the dance of player and ball, and the sudden pure brilliance of an astounding individual move. The compositional structure of the strategy in team play and the soaring free improvisation of an individual player in the moment make the sport parallel to the performance of a great band or orchestra- unified ensemble play and inspired solos. This wonderful feeling of musical 'play' in the game can be experienced by players at any level, in pickup games on the street or beach, in youth soccer, in the professional leagues, and in the World Cup.

The harmony that arises when the play is in rhythm brings joy to the soul. Then soccer, like music, becomes a universal language that communicates an intuitive understanding beyond words. When traveling worldwide with our band, The

and games, letting the action tell its story in songs that reflect the qualities of the game as a sport and an internal path to awareness. When the songs were ready, we recorded the album with the OBA Band, a group of players who had been together in the Olatunji Drums of Passion. The music is a celebration of our love for the Beautiful Game.

To feel the unity that arises during the game in a country where the music and soccer cultures are intertwined is truly uplifting. The drums at Black Star Stadium in Accra Ghana when Ghana plays Nigeria, or the effervescent Batucada bateria that plays throughout the game in Brazil, are thrilling sounds that reflect and inspire the action on the field. The Brazilian National Team plays a percussion batucada jam session in the clubhouse before a game, bringing the team together in rhythm. In Brazil, capoeira - a martial art form accompanied by rhythmic music - is a national pastime along with futbol. The circular acrobatic moves of capoeira are a perfect foundation for soccer skills, so it is no surprise that so many brilliant players come from Brazil to play in the top leagues in the world. Now many excellent players are coming from Africa, where music and dance are intrinsic to

"The Beautiful Game", a symphony in motion, with the capacity to inspire the players and the fans to experience the joyful transcendent feeling of being alive in the moment witnessing the expression of human spirit in action.

Olatunji Drums of Passion, we would bring soccer balls along on the tours. Then we'd go out on a pitch or in the street and play pickup games with the local players in our free time. In this way, we'd form friendships in the community, get a feeling for the culture we were visiting, and have fun while keeping in shape. We had an athletic band and we all agreed that our training in sport- especially soccer- had prepared us well for the incredible levels of energy and endurance that our shows demanded of us as musicians. Once at a celebration for Babatunde Olatunji's 75th birthday, he asked longtime friends to speak and share stories about his life. Professor Akiwowo, who had known him since their days growing up together in Nigeria, told of experiences in Mr. Olatunji's youth that he felt had created the basis for the amazing journey and success of this world famous musician. To our astonishment, he related that Baba's play as a goalkeeper on a team in Lagos called Boomer's Boys was a key element in the development of the incredible will that fueled his career. We all broke into laughter, realizing we all had played on teams in our youth, (on four different continents among the band members), and that the sense of joyful play and determination we had discovered in the game had helped propel all of us to success in our chosen path- music.

One day while watching my sons (Baba's godsons) play in a Premier League tournament, I started hearing a soundtrack to the action on the pitch, as if I was back on a soundstage again playing the music for a filmscore while watching the movie unfold. I began to compose music while watching practices

the culture of the people. Moving in rhythm is fundamental to smooth teamwork and individual creativity on the soccer field. It is well known that drums awaken the awareness of the movement center in the body. When this awareness is open, the player is "in the zone".

The best players in music and soccer play with their heart. Their spirit will carry them beyond the limits of physical endurance to shine with brilliance in the moment of truth. This willpower is also expressed in the impulse to work hard on a daily basis to refine one's skills, a virtue that is common to all great musicians and soccer athletes. This attention to the details of perfecting one's craft is a solitary activity that is necessary if one is to rise to greatness on the field. In the repetition of skills like juggling, dribbling while running at different tempos, practicing free kicks, passing to the wall, inventing moves with the ball, the player discovers the rhythm that makes the action fluid and effortless, the breath full and relaxed, and the mind clear.

An exceptional soccer club (or band) is composed of players that share this ethos of individual preparation, the willingness to work hard together in practice, and the orientation to play in harmony as a team. The goal of the club is to play in unity with an intuitive level of communication. When the game is on, it can become 'the Beautiful Game', a *symphony in motion*, with the capacity to inspire the players and the fans to experience the joyful transcendent feeling of being alive in the moment, witnessing the expression of human spirit in action. ⚽

THE BEAUTIFUL GAME AND MUSIC: A SYMPHONY IN MOTION

Story by Gordy Ryan
Photo by Damien Rayuela



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We interviewed folks about their "nightmare" dating moments. Just for fun, you get to be the referee in this scenario. Does this person get a red card, yellow card or would they be a perfect match for your team?

He bragged that he learned to play soccer in prison and showed me his tattoos to prove it.
Gloria, San Diego

He told me he loves soccer more than me. He still wants to be with me as long as I can accept that I am second. He even made travel plans to South Africa without me. I feel like drawing black pentagons on my body.
Kate, Toronto

She kicks me and tries to trip me when we walk down the street.
Dave, Burnaby

I started dating my soccer coach and he said he would only play me if I did what I was told.
Jenny, Scarborough

I dated a girl who had a breast reduction so she could play soccer without flopping around too much. I wish I had met her before this.
Mike, Seattle

I like this guy who shows up at my office and brings me little chocolate soccer balls as gifts.
Jessie, Toronto

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Cristiano Ronaldo

CR9

Story by Michael Oldham
Photo by Arturo Miguel

Place of Birth: Madeira, Portugal
Date of Birth: 05/02/1985
Position: Forward
Weight: 176 lbs / 80 kg
Height: 6'1" / 185 cm
Nationality: Portuguese

Back in 2001, when French maestro Zinedine Zidane moved from Juventus to Real Madrid for a world record transfer fee in the region of 78M Euros (approx. \$109M), many thought that sum would never be surpassed.

A three-time FIFA World Player of the Year, Zidane scored in two World Cup finals and was widely regarded as the finest player of his generation. It seemed only right that the price on his head would be higher than for anyone else.

But this summer, in spite of the financial troubles affecting so many sectors including soccer, the record was eclipsed by the very team who had splashed out all that money for Zizou eight years earlier.

Intent on wresting back the domestic and European trophies that their main rivals, Barcelona, had so spectacularly conquered last season, Real Madrid embarked on a shopping spree that put any other team's spending well and truly in the shadows.

On July 1st 2009, Cristiano Ronaldo officially joined Real Madrid from Manchester United for £80M (94M Euros, \$132M), making him the most expensive player in soccer history.

80,000 fans crammed in to the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in the Spanish capital five days later to see living proof that one of the longest-running transfer sagas of all time

had come to an end, as Ronaldo was handed Real's number 9 jersey by club legend Alfredo di Stefano.

His former manager Sir Alex Ferguson, who had sanctioned the sale of his star man, admitted that the Portuguese winger would be missed at Manchester United:

"Cristiano is a massive loss," said the Scotsman. "I have nothing but praise for the boy. He is easily the best player in the world. He is better than Kaka and better than Messi. He is streets ahead of them all."

Incoming Real Madrid President Florentino Perez played no small part in securing Ronaldo's signature, just days after signing another former World Player of the Year in the shape of Brazilian playmaker Kaka, again for a massive sum of 68M Euros (\$95M).

Fellow newcomers Karim Benzema (\$50M), Raul Albiol (\$21M), Alvaro Arbeloa (\$6M), and Xabi Alonso (\$48M) took Real Madrid's spending to over \$350M in this transfer window, as the team sought to piece together the next generation of Galacticos. But it was Ronaldo's fee that caught the attention, and inevitably raised the question of whether he is really worth all that money.

The player himself - eternally confident in his own ability - has no doubt.

"I think it's a fair figure," said the 24



year-old forward. "If Manchester United and Real Madrid agree with this amount then there is nothing more to say. I will show that the money they are paying has been a good decision."

But the same questions were asked back in 2003, when Manchester United shelled out the much lower fee at £12.24M (\$20M). It was still a high price for a player of just 18 years of age, with very little experience of top flight soccer, having only just broken in to Sporting Lisbon's first team.

He initially attracted criticism for his use of over-elaborate skills that seldom led to goal-scoring opportunities for him or his teammates. But within his first season in England, he showed glimpses of the qualities that had led many of Manchester United's first team players to encourage Sir Alex Ferguson to sign him, after facing him in a pre-season match just weeks prior to joining the Old Trafford club.

Soon enough, Ronaldo became a key player for Manchester United and began to live up to the hype surrounding him. Season after season he improved, and in 2008 he broke Man Utd legend George Best's goal-scoring record for a winger in one season, finally notching a career-high 42 goals in all competitions.

This was the first of many personal achievements that season, as he picked up the Ballon d'Or, the Golden Boot, the FIFA World Player of the Year, UEFA Club Forward of the Year, and top scorer in the Champions League, which his team won along with the Community Shield and the Premier League.

Since joining the new-look Galacticos, Ronaldo has not yet had time to show the ability that earned him these accolades.

He made a low profile debut on July 21st against Irish minnows Shamrock Rovers, with Real sneaking a 1-0 win thanks to a goal from fellow debutant Benzema. But it was soon followed by Ronaldo's first goal for the club, a penalty in a friendly match against Liga de Quito.

Those at Real Madrid will be hoping he can settle in quickly and shrug off the pressure that comes with being the world's most expensive soccer player. There have been murmurings at the Bernabeu that he is feeling the strain and is uncomfortable in the role that head coach Manuel Pellegrini has earmarked for him. But with his every move under the spotlight, these rumours may be nothing more than scare-mongering from Real's rivals or anyone hoping Ronaldo fails in his bid to become one of the greatest players of all time.

His new Real team-mate Royston Drenthe is confident that Ronaldo has already settled in at the club.

"He is phenomenal", said the 22 year-old Dutchman. "He's happy and friendly, he's always smiling and joking, and on the pitch he's an incredible player. He works a lot and is an impressive signing."

But if Ronaldo has learned anything during his career, particularly from incidents such as during Euro 2004 when he was blamed by sections of the British media for his part in fellow Manchester United team-mate Wayne Rooney's red card for a foul on Ricardo Carvalho, it's that as long as he concentrates on playing good football, the rest will take care of itself.

And love him or loathe him, playing good football is what Cristiano Ronaldo seems destined to do in a Real Madrid shirt. ⚽



THE SLEEPING GIANT: WHEN WILL CHINESE FOOTBALL AWAKE?

Story by Trevor Kew



“China isn’t always easy.”

...It was sage advice proffered a few months before my first visit to the world’s most populous nation. As I was perched on a shoulder of winding, narrow Chinese National Highway 214, on one of the steepest parts of its climb towards Tibet, inches from a sheer precipice dropping more than a thousand metres to the river below, I couldn’t have agreed more.

Having committed the cardinal travelling sin of believing the Lonely Planet’s distance scale, a planned fifty-kilometre cycle to a Tibetan monastery northwest from Zhongdian city in China’s Yunnan province had doubled to more than one hundred. Plus twenty, in fact, factoring in the wrong turn that nearly took me to Sichuan.

In fact, it had been brilliant. River gorges carving their way between monumental peaks, tiny remote Tibetan villages, two winding two-hour down-hills (and corresponding backbreaking

up-hills) – what an incredible day China had given me.

But I’d been cycling nearly nine hours and had no chance of making it back on my own by dusk. Parts of my legs that I didn’t know existed were starting to cramp up.

I stuck out my thumb. Several large vans and trucks passed by, honking cheerily. The passengers grinned, giving me huge thumbs-up as their vehicles whizzed past, nearly knocking my bike off the cliff. Waving produced similar results. Three donkeys ambled by. I seriously considered commandeering one.

At last, via prostrating myself in front of on-rushing vehicles, I caught a lift with a young Tibetan van driver who was dead-heading back to Zhongdian. Our closest common language was Mandarin, of which I speak approximately forty words, often disastrously mispronounced. And so it was a fairly quiet two-hour journey,

though we did get a few things sorted, given that of those forty words, about thirty-eight were to do with football.

We both liked football, we discovered right away. Somehow, through a combination of charades and numbers (some of which nearly sent us into the river below) we even managed to convey our collective amazement at how much money Madrid had forked out for Ronaldo earlier that summer. And we both agreed that our respective nations (Canada, the PRC) should be much better at football. When I mentioned I would be attending a Chinese Super League match in Guangzhou the following week, he dismissed it with a wave of his hand.

“China, football...bad,” he said with a big thumbs-down.

Football is, without a doubt, the most widely-followed sport in China, but supporters of both the domestic league and national team remain frustrated with the lack of quality in their country.

Everywhere I travelled in China, I heard the same complaint: in a country of more than a billion people, why is it so hard to find eleven who can kick a football?

The Chinese Super League officially kicked off in 2004 and has enjoyed massive media coverage in the country ever since. But despite high initial

secretary Googled the team for me, in Chinese, but couldn’t find it. I tried in English, via Wikipedia, and found out that Guangzhou were playing in a different stadium on the other side of the city, down the street from my hotel. Never easy.

Things started to turn around when I scored a ticket for 3 yuan (49 cents

while, surrounded by photographers in the middle of the pitch, he was dramatically presented with a cake. It didn’t feel much like a football match at times, but it was entertaining.

In so many ways, China is a country rushing forward at breakneck speed, anxious to prove to the world, and itself, that it has the potential to be



Olympic hurdler champion Liu Xiang and basketball sensation Yao Ming have earned massive appeal in China.

attendance for new teams, fans often prove fickle if their teams begin to lose. Sponsors have frequently dropped teams for the same reason (resulting in bewilderingly frequent name changes). Many teams are bought on whims by millionaires who treat them as playthings rather than serious investments. Corruption and match-fixing have proven hard to eradicate. Foreign players who have spent time in China have criticized the coaching, saying it limits creativity and individual judgment.

Nevertheless, it was with an open mind that I stepped into a taxi on the way to watch Guangzhou play Shenzhen on August 8th. Of course, (with China never being easy on a traveler), no one in Guangzhou seemed to know who the team was or where they played, so I inevitably ended up at the beautiful and massive Olympic Stadium, watching a group of construction workers jackhammer the empty parking lot. At the Stadium hotel, an incredibly kind

Canadian) from a scalper. I’d expected to catch the last fifteen minutes plus added time but either the referee had forgotten to start his watch or someone’s leg had been chopped off in a tackle, because I saw most of the second half. After five minutes of my first CSL match, I figured the safe bet was on the missing leg.

While the level of play was undeniably lower than in the domestic leagues of Japan or South Korea, it was still one of the most interesting matches I’ve seen in Asia. Hulking African and European players (four per team is the on-field limit for foreigners) bumped into each other and speedy little Chinese players ran around a lot. The Guangzhou fans, dressed in blue, seemed more concerned with singing in harmony at times rather than paying attention to the actual match, even as their team knocked in six goals. Most bizarrely, the fans stayed for fifteen minutes after the match to sing Happy Birthday to one of the Guangzhou players

the best. Sport is no different, with Chinese athletes achieving more and more every year. Their success at the Olympics in Beijing last summer may be just a taste of things to come. With success, however, come higher expectations.

As for football, the lack of any meteoric rise to the top seems to have discouraged many Chinese about the future of the sport in their country. Most prefer to support English or Italian teams and participation in the sport is still extremely low proportionately, when compared with other nations.

Still, given that one in every six people on Earth lives there, it seems naïve to write China off. If they could manage to harness even a fraction of the deep passion for football that undeniably exists within their population and channel it in the right direction, Chinese football could yet prove a force to be reckoned with. 🏆

Are soccer players wimps?

Story by Stephanie Hawco
Photo by Arnold Seefeld



are constantly questionably injured. Then, just before tuning out, I think about all the strong athletes I know who have devoted their lives to soccer. For example, my best friend growing up - who is all of 4'11" - who would eat your brains on toast if you crossed her on the pitch. I've seen her take on giant defenders, three times her height and twice her width, elbows to the ribs, one foot inside, wham, bam, goal. There was also that nameless forward who broke his femur at a match I watched in my hometown when I was about twelve. You could hear the bone crack throughout the entire stadium. Silence from the stands. A bloody big scream from him. But that was that. Ambulance, et-cetera et-cetera and the next year who is in the starting line up? Femur guy. Not a wimp, that femur guy.

You see, my husband is a rugby player: one of those toothless, cauliflowereared barbarians whose drive for glory drives him head-on into the meaty thighs of men of Hulkish proportions. Naturally, he would think that a sport less hard-hitting was "wimpy." It's the same with hockey players. They wear their injuries like badges of honour, as symbols of virility. The more black eyes and broken ribs, the better the game.

I will admit, though, that I do think that players trying on masks of pain and suffering every time they have their toes stepped on just to draw a free kick out of a ref is a little lame. Not hot. Wimpy, even. Personally, I think the whole debate

has more to do with vanity than anything else. A hockey player is hot until he smiles. A rugby player is hot until you get within 15 meters - except for you, my darling husband, you know I think you're gorgeous (even though you have broken your nose six times and you have had 72 stitches in your face.) A soccer player, on the other hand, is sweaty, athletic and aesthetically divine. He may have broken his ankles at some point, but if that's really a problem for you, you can always ask him to leave on his socks.

Perhaps, then, its more the appearance of professional soccer players that makes them seem sissy. I guess we have Becks - the original metrosexual - to blame for introducing manicures and cornrows to the sport.

Cristiano Ronaldo, reclining pool-side and dressed in Vaseline, doesn't help the cause much, either.

In conclusion, I'd like to tell you what my husband said when he found out I was writing this:

Him: I never said that. I'd never say that football players were wimps, because I know how hard they work. I know what exceptional athletes they are.

Me: Really? I'm pretty sure you definitely said that.

Him: No, I never! Definitely! I said that they're all pretty-boys, that's all.

Me: That's all?

Him: And that they jump all over each other and hug and pat each other after every goal... (pause) ...and fall down and cry to the ref a lot... (another pause) ...yeah, actually, maybe they are a bit sissy. Wimpy pretty boys, that lot.

And the debate continues... ⚽

What a Mighty appetite!



Six year old Nina McQuarrie chowed down after her first ever soccer camp.



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Soccer Shorts

WPS Final



Photo credit WPS

Sky Blue FC from Philadelphia defeated LA Sol 1 – 0 at the Home Depot Center in the inaugural final of the Women’s Professional League.

Canadian goal keeper Karina LeBlanc enjoyed the championship shut out and was named as a starter to the All-Star Team. Striker Christine Sinclair was included in the commissioner’s selection.

Brazilian sensation Marta received the Golden Boot Award for the most goals and league MVP honour. The WPS web site has images of Marta showing off her dazzling feet and throwing the opening pitch for the LA Dodgers where she juggled the ball for a few moments prior to a throw to home base.



Usain Bolt

Photo credit Brunel University

“Definitely. Cristiano is fast, but I’m faster. I’m the fastest in the world,” laughed Olympic champion and world record speedster Usain Bolt in an interview with the Real Madrid club.” I think I could outrun him with the ball because I know how to dribble it.”



British Hooligans Rampage Match

“Make sure you bring your bats and don’t bring your kids,” was one of the text messages prior to a hooligan brawl prior to a West Ham versus Millwall game in August. Reports suggest the fight between rival gang members was one of the worse incidents in British football history as hundreds of thugs ambushed fans.

“It was really nasty, absolutely terrible,” said Gary Lucas, 43, whose family has run a local cafe since 1966. “I’ve not seen anything like it since the bad old days of the mid-Eighties. They were walking along with bottles in their hands looking for supporters from the other team so they could attack them. I saw two lads on the floor with 40 to 50 people all laying into them.”

Sports Minister Gerry Sutcliffe said “it’s a disgrace to football. “We have made great progress in tackling hooliganism in this country and will not tolerate a return to the dark days of the 80s.” With England bidding for the 2018 World Cup, the incident could have very negative consequences.

In a commentary by Jeff Powell on Mail Online, he wrote “Cage those Ugly Beasts! The timing of this is no accident. Brutality is endemic in the underbelly, in this case bulging and tattooed, of British society. Seeking cheap thrills through violence is buried deep in our culture - if you don’t believe it

try a visit to the cinema - and the socio-economic circumstances are ripe for a resurgence. When football hooliganism first manifested itself in the Seventies, we were in the grip of the most severe recession since The Great Depression. The deeper the crisis became, the more widespread and, most harrowingly at the Heysel disaster, the more fatal the outbreaks of disorder." Cometh the credit crunch, returneth the lout from his bolt-hole.

With the World Cup less than a year away and England on the prowl to qualify for South Africa, FIFA may have a lot more to contend with than just the much feared unstable criminal activities of the local host nation. During the 1990 World Cup in Italy, the Three Lions were forced to play their matches on the island of Sardinia and Sicily to keep out unwanted hooligans.



Photo credit Houdini Boro

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Healthy Squares

by Heather McLean



Chocolate Chip Pecan Square Bar



Peanut Butter & Cranberry Square Bar

In a large pot over medium-low heat combine 1/2 cup of a nut butter of your choice (almond, peanut butter etc) and add in a 1/2 cup of maple syrup/brown rice syrup. Stir in 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1 teaspoon vanilla extract.

add:

- ✓ 2 3/4 cups of brown rice cereal
- ✓ 3/4 cup of hemp seed nuts
- ✓ 1/4 cup of cranberries
- ✓ 1/4 cup of pumpkin/sunflower seeds
- ✓ 1/4 cup of almond slivers and 2 tablespoons of flax seeds

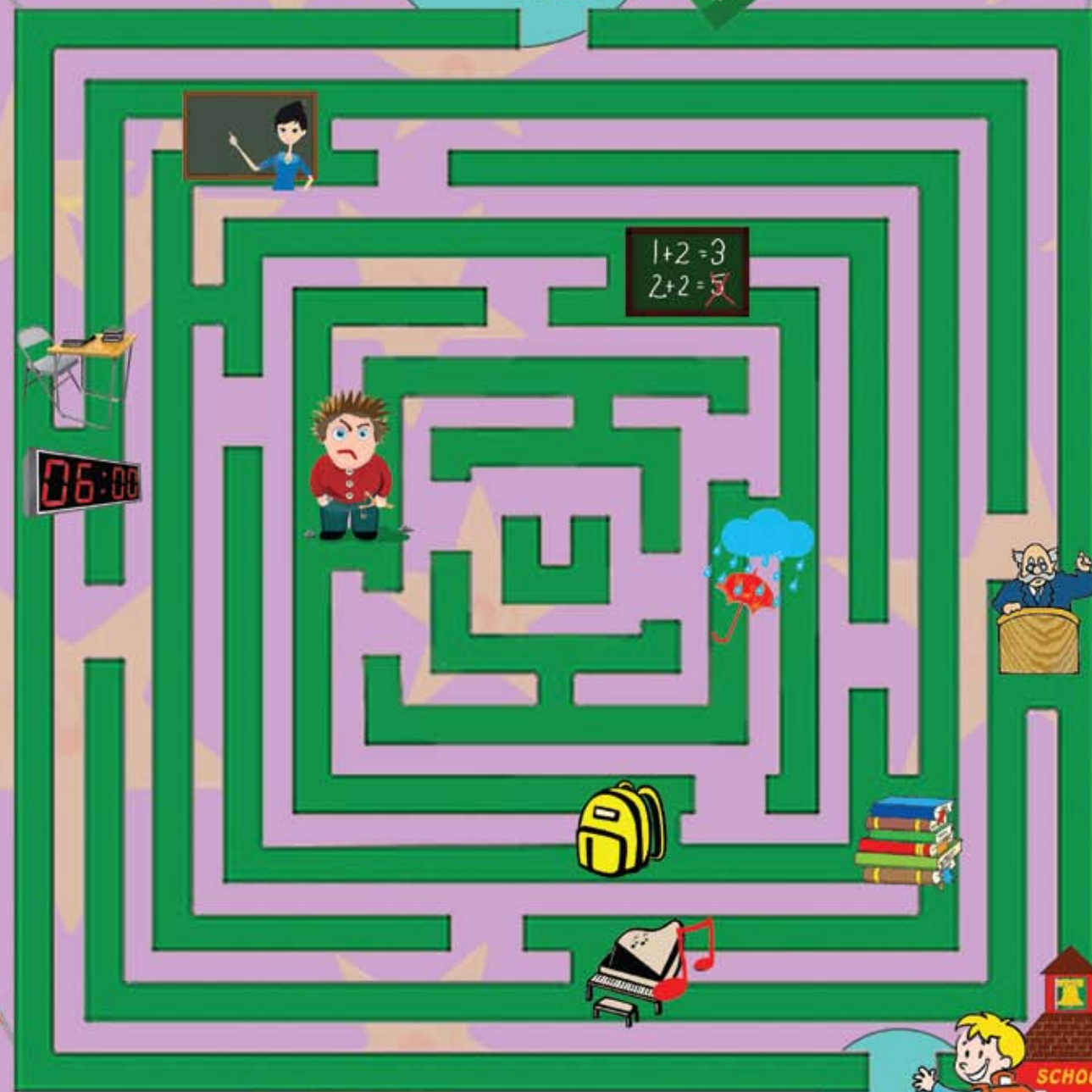
Mix well together. Turn off heat

- ✓ Lastly add a 1/4 cup of carob chips / dark chocolate chips and mix quickly so they don't melt too much
- ✓ Press into an 8 by 8 pan that has been lightly oiled. Press down evenly
- ✓ Refrigerate until cool and cut into squares.



TO DO...
 School is finished and its time to play. Help Peter find his way to the soccer field without running into obstacles that will delay his game.

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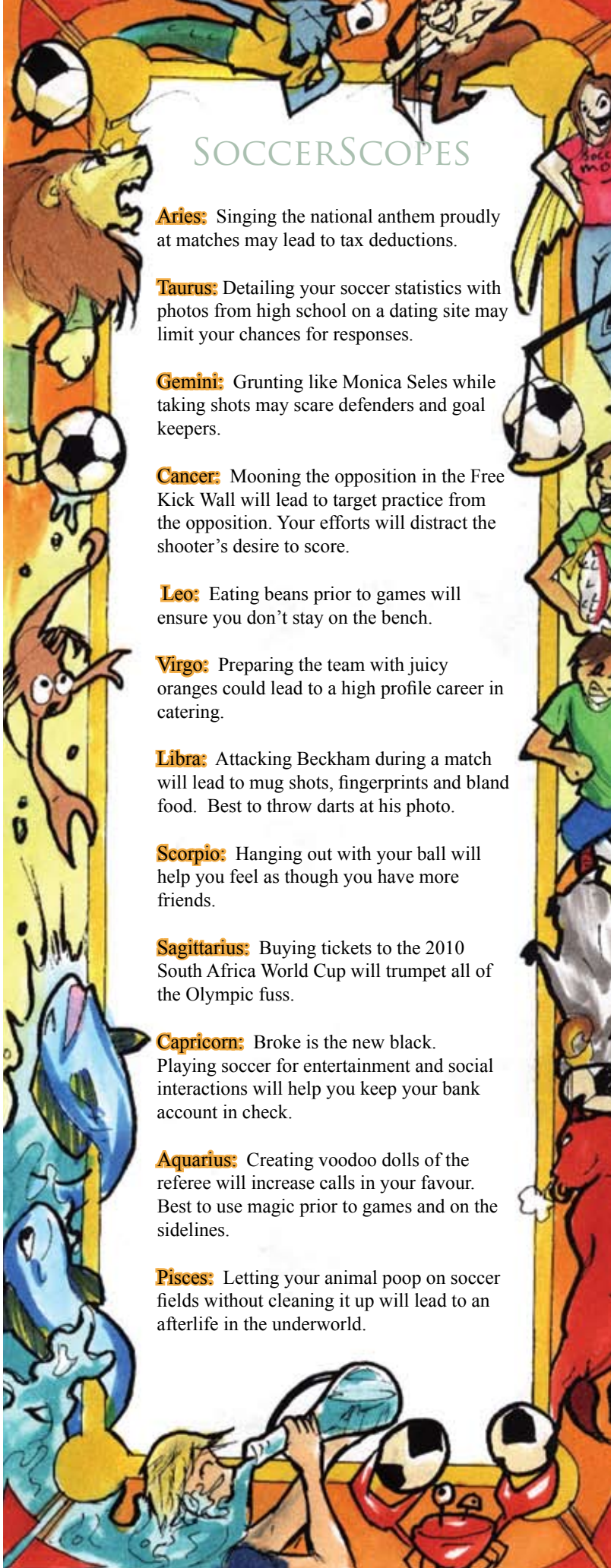
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SOCCERSCOPES

Aries: Singing the national anthem proudly at matches may lead to tax deductions.

Taurus: Detailing your soccer statistics with photos from high school on a dating site may limit your chances for responses.

Gemini: Grunting like Monica Seles while taking shots may scare defenders and goal keepers.

Cancer: Mooning the opposition in the Free Kick Wall will lead to target practice from the opposition. Your efforts will distract the shooter's desire to score.

Leo: Eating beans prior to games will ensure you don't stay on the bench.

Virgo: Preparing the team with juicy oranges could lead to a high profile career in catering.

Libra: Attacking Beckham during a match will lead to mug shots, fingerprints and bland food. Best to throw darts at his photo.

Scorpio: Hanging out with your ball will help you feel as though you have more friends.

Sagittarius: Buying tickets to the 2010 South Africa World Cup will trumpet all of the Olympic fuss.

Capricorn: Broke is the new black. Playing soccer for entertainment and social interactions will help you keep your bank account in check.

Aquarius: Creating voodoo dolls of the referee will increase calls in your favour. Best to use magic prior to games and on the sidelines.

Pisces: Letting your animal poop on soccer fields without cleaning it up will lead to an afterlife in the underworld.

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