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Opening Extract from...

How to Win the World Cup

Written by Graham McColl

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How to Win the World Cup

Graham McColl



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Contents

Acknowledgements		viii
Introduction		1
1	Because of the Cause	5
2	Have a Mad Manager	23
3	Avoid Great Expectations	46
4	Take Your Breaks	69
5	Don't Worry About Penalties	86
6	Don't Impress the Press	108
7	Take Your Time	129
8	Wallow in a Crisis	142
9	Play for the Team	157
10	Don't Worry About the Brazilians	173
11	Do Something Strange	203
12	Make Yourselves at Home	211
13	Get Into Shape	233
14	You've Won It Once . . .	252
15	Facts and Figures	261
Bibliography		285
Picture Acknowledgements		286
Index		288

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Introduction

WINNING THE WORLD CUP SHOULD BE A FAIRLY SIMPLE matter, shouldn't it? All you do is play the best, most entertaining football in each of your matches, overwhelm the opposition, captivate the world with an irresistible attacking style and win the Final in memorable fashion to establish your team as indisputably the best in the world.

The problem is, the World Cup has been won in this way on only a handful of occasions and the last time it happened was forty years ago, when Pelé inspired the brilliant Brazilians of 1970 to victory. That wonderful victory is still rolled out frequently as the way to win a World Cup but, as the nine champions of the world since then would tell you, that's not the only way to win. Indeed, on only a handful of occasions in the 80-year history of the World Cup have the eventual winners been indisputably the finest team in the tournament.

Finishing first is as much a test of nerve, adapting to the World Cup environment and combating circumstances as it is of pure footballing skill. No one will be more aware of that than Fabio Capello. Italy, his native country and the world champions in 2006, did not do much in that tournament to win over too many people outside their own country. Their approach to hurdling each stage of that tournament was not one designed to entertain people around the globe. Did that matter to the Italians? The two million people who turned out to welcome them back to Rome and who commandeered the country's fountains and squares to parade their delight after that triumph answered that question emphatically.

It goes against all our romantic preconceptions but if you are going to win the World Cup it is probably better if you are clearly not the best team in the competition. Those who have done most to light up a World Cup tournament by playing memorably attractive football tend to be more fondly remembered by the world at large than the winners themselves – such beautiful losers as the mesmerizing Brazilians of 1982, the Hungarians of 1954, the Dutch of 1974; even, to a degree, the Argentinians of 2006, though their general good impression was somewhat spoiled when they reverted to type and began a fantastic mass brawl at the conclusion of their quarter-final defeat to Germany. But you can still be sure that those teams would have instantly exchanged all the kind words and airy praise they have received in the years since for a good deal less popularity and the solidity of gold winners' medals.

As Fabio Capello ponders long and hard his England

squad for the summer of 2010 in South Africa, he will also be devoting much thinking time to all of the other factors that determine success or failure on the world stage – the variety of means used to win the World Cup incorporating the bizarre, the funny and the fantastic. If he is seeking inspiration, this guide to the essential stratagems needed to win the World Cup may be just the thing.

1

Because of the Cause

IF YOU'RE GOING TO WIN THE WORLD CUP YOU DON'T HAVE to have a demented dictator breathing down your neck, or commentators suggesting that your players are shooting up drugs and pairing off in homosexual relationships, or have a match-fixing court case beginning in the middle of the tournament that concerns more than half of your squad.

It does help, though. All of these factors have, as Fabio Capello will know well, helped Italy to attain their four World Cup triumphs, not least in 2006 when they became the current holders of the trophy. For the nation of Machiavelli, it seems essential for there to be a powerful element of intrigue involved if winning the World Cup is to become a going concern.

It is not only for the Italians that a powerful siege mentality or a strong cause is almost essential for a successful tilt at the World Cup. Several other nations have thrived

on being forced to turn inwards and draw on a feeling of solidarity necessitated by external pressures, but the Italians in particular appear to require a more powerful cause than merely winning the trophy to exert a grip on a World Cup campaign and drive the team towards victory.

For each of Italy's two triumphs in the 1930s, it was the gentle pleadings of Benito Mussolini, the fascist dictator, that helped bring the trophy home. 'Win or die!' was his encouraging message by telegram to the Italian squad as they set off for France in 1938 to defend their status as world champions. Mussolini, in common with many of the great football managers, was clearly aware of the importance of ensuring that his message got across to the players in black and white and without any possibility of confusion. Whilst that barbed, brutal demand could merely have been the type of zealous rhetoric that dictators can summon at will, the players would have been keen to take him at his word rather than test whether he was merely bluffing and acting the big bully boy again.

The trophy the Italians were defending had been secured in 1934, when the World Cup had been staged in their homeland to show off 'the pulsating of the masculine energies of a bursting vitality, in this our Mussolini's Italy', as Giovanni Mauro, an Italian FIFA delegate, put it. That aside, it may have helped, on a more practical level, that Mussolini hand-picked the referees for each match in which his team played. 'How can Italy not be champions?' Mussolini had mused philosophically at the start of the tournament, presumably while casting his eyes down the list of referees assigned to the World Cup and

picking out the ones that might best suit his team's progress.

'They were little crooks,' Josef Bican, the Austria forward, said of the Italians after their semi-final, won 1–0 by Italy and refereed by Ivan Eklind, the Swede, who impressed Mussolini so much that he was also given the honour of officiating at the Final between Italy and Czechoslovakia. 'They used to cheat a little,' Bican added. 'No, they used to cheat a lot. The referee even played for them. When I passed the ball out to the right wing, one of our players, Cicek, ran for it and the referee headed it back to the Italians. It was unbelievable.' Or, as Jean Langenus, a Belgian referee at the 1934 tournament put it, 'In the majority of countries, the World Championship was called a sporting fiasco because beside the desire to win, all other sporting considerations were non-existent and because, moreover, a certain spirit brooded over the whole championship. Italy wanted to win, it was natural, but they allowed it to be seen too clearly.'

For the tournament in France in 1938, a second World Cup contested by Italy in the cause of fascism, Mussolini chose for his team a tasteful strip consisting of the politically provocative black shirts, a fashion item indelibly associated with his regime. The Italians turned out in this natty little number of a change strip for the quarter-final against France at the Stade de Colombes in Paris. It had the immediate effect of bringing down upon the Italians' heads furious and near unanimous condemnation from the 60,000 crowd, both from the French themselves and from several thousand Italians who had been opponents of Mussolini's regime and who were now exiled in Paris.

The reaction of the onlookers had the unwanted effect,

for them, of unifying the Italy team, as Vittorio Pozzo, the Italy manager, had cleverly anticipated, with the Italians winning the tie 3–1 and going on to lift the trophy for a second successive time. Giuseppe Meazza, the captain, gave the fascist salute as he received the trophy and the boys dressed up nicely in sailor suits to be welcomed home by an ecstatic Mussolini, happy to have spared the team their lives in the wake of victory.

'Whether beyond or within the borders, sporting or not, we Italians . . . shook and still shake with joy when seeing in these thoroughbred athletes, that overwhelm so many noble opponents, such a symbol of the overwhelming march of Mussolini's Italians,' is how Londo Ferretti, another of Mussolini's propagandists, summed up the spectacle. England this summer might do well to consider opting for a last-minute change strip consisting of a Union Jack just to get the opposition really riled.

A more modern cause assisted the Italian team in their triumph in 2006. *Calciopoli*, the latest match-fixing scandal to hit contemporary Italian club football and described by Sepp Blatter, president of FIFA, as the worst in the history of the game, coincided with the 2006 World Cup – and the trial, involving Fiorentina, Juventus, Lazio and Milan, which began on the day before Italy's quarter-final with Ukraine, was due to conclude on the day after the World Cup Final. Thirteen of the Italian squad were drawn from the clubs involved and as soon as news of the matter broke, the *Azzurri* were besieged by crisis. There were calls for the players from those clubs to be withdrawn from the tournament – even demands that the Italian team itself should be removed from the World Cup

– and there were repeated calls for manager Marcello Lippi to resign.

Lippi was forced to mount a stubborn and public defence, through extensive press conferences, of the right of his team and players to participate in the tournament. He even received the dreaded vote of confidence from the Italian Football Federation. Massimo de Santis, one of Italy's World Cup referees, and a man subsequently convicted of involvement in match-fixing, was withdrawn from the tournament by the Italian Football Federation and the Italian players themselves felt under siege as opinion swayed back and forth on the matter.

The Italian legal authorities could not have done more to boost the Italian team's tilt at winning the trophy. Indeed, given the labyrinthine manner in which justice operates in that country, it was possible to suspect that the trial had even been timed for exactly that purpose. It was surely odd for a match-fixing trial to be played out parallel to a World Cup. Lippi said during the tournament of *Calciopoli*'s unifying effects, 'We are a family now, like never before.' A pretty dysfunctional one, perhaps, but one whose new-found sense of closeness would see it through to victory with the 58-year-old, paternalistic Lippi at its head, a man who is a master at using psychological wiles to extract the very best from his team.

Having gone to the finals in Germany boosted and unified by the match-fixing scandal, the Italians received regular top-ups to maintain their closeness and sense of a cause during the tournament. With an operatic sense of drama, Gianluca Pessotto, the sporting director of Juventus, one of the clubs under investigation (and

subsequently demoted from the top division of Italian football), threw himself out of a fourth-floor window of the club's headquarters while clutching a set of rosary beads on 27 June, plumb in the middle of the World Cup. Pessotto, 35 and a former team-mate of several of the Italian players, thankfully failed in his suicide attempt, which had been sparked by his depression at the implication of his club in the *Calciopoli* scandal, although he suffered severe injuries that would hospitalise him for weeks. Alessandro Del Piero, Gianluca Zambrotta and Ciro Ferrara, the former defender who was by now a coach with Italy, flew home to visit their Juventus colleague in between the last-16 match with Australia and the quarter-final against Ukraine.

As if all that was not enough, the German hosts of the 2006 tournament, which boasted the slogan 'A Time to Make Friends' (and who characterized their hosting of the tournament as 'Operation Smile'), brought the Italians even closer together in advance of the semi-final in which the two nations were due to face each other.

'Lazy and greasy parasites and mamma's boys,' was how the Italians were succinctly described by the Hamburg-based *Der Spiegel* magazine in the build-up to the match. They were also characterized as slimy beach bums whose greatest concern was in perfecting their appearance and who had a habit of emigrating to other countries where, *Der Spiegel* suggested, they had a tendency to 'suck dry' their hosts in the manner of 'parasites'.

The magazine's front cover, entitled 'Holiday Guide to Italy', helpfully illustrated this stereotypical piece with a picture of a bowl of spaghetti with a revolver lying on top

of it, which seems an odd place for any Mafioso to keep his gun. Luigi, a fictional Italian stereotype constructed by *Der Spiegel* for the purposes of its piece, was described as a type of 'overgrown baby' whose mission in life is to 'appear tired' while Mamma cooks and cleans and sews around him. After the age of 30, Luigi then seeks a beautiful young Italian wife whom he subsequently treats like a skivvy until she herself turns into an overworked, done-down Mamma while Luigi spends his days 'polishing his Fiat and talking about cars'. Italy would meet Germany by getting past Ukraine, the feature suggested, in their usual 'lazy, oily way'.

Coincidentally, a television campaign in Italy had resulted in FIFA opting to ban Torsten Frings, the Germany midfield player, from the semi-final with Italy after Sky Italia had highlighted Frings' confronting Julio Cruz in the on-field brawl that took place at the conclusion of the Germany–Argentina quarter-final. It was even suggested that, perish the thought, the video evidence on which Frings was banned had been sent to FIFA by the Italian FA.

It mattered little – the task of motivating the Italians had been done. 'No one on our side lifted a finger to make this happen,' muttered an outraged Lippi in relation to Frings' ban in advance of the semi. 'We were as incredulous as anybody else to hear about this today. It is outrageous to say that we were involved. We are happy to play any German team that they wish to field.'

Rino Gattuso was, as might be expected, more emotive than his manager about the slights visited upon his nation by the Germans. The ball-winning midfield player and a

man described by Marco Materazzi, the Italy centre back, as being so volatile he was liable to 'split the atom' when he had a cause in his sights, said of *Der Spiegel*'s comments, 'I feel very angry about it. It was an insult to all the Italian people that work here. It gives me a lump in my throat, I get so angry. I still have some uncles who live here and I know how much they suffered like many others who had to leave their homes and come here to find work. This game is so much more important than any I have ever played in before because we are trying to repair the image of Italian football. I can't wait to get out there.' A more languid response was forthcoming from Alessandro Nesta, the stylish centre-back. 'The Germans criticise us but then they dress like us and eat like us. I think there's a touch of jealousy in it.'

The Italians – highly disciplined professionals and supremely aware tactically – now had another unifying cause that helped to make them supremely strong. With the world closing in with its various crises, suddenly for multi-millionaire footballers with every degree of comfort and wealth at their fingertips, it must have been rather like returning to childhood, when the football pitch offered everything to them. If that feeling had in the years since been diluted by good living and the spoils of success, then now, under these circumstances, in a hostile environment, the pitch must have seemed a welcome refuge and the game a source of comfort. Against the Germans, the Italians produced their best performance of the World Cup, proving themselves anything but lazy as they maintained a ferocious pace into extra time.

It was, ironically, the Italians' iron-hard discipline that

provided the basis for this great victory, Lippi's defence holding fast to keep their fifth clean sheet in their sixth match at the tournament. Once the 90 minutes were over, the game became a more open affair as both sides chased the winning goal and Lippi, who had been sure before the tournament that his team had the best defence in the world, now made a calculated gamble based on that belief, which had been strengthened by Italy's performances up to that point. Content that his defence could deal with Germany's attack, he threw on Vincenzo Iaquinta and Alessandro Del Piero during the first half of extra time as Italy went for broke in a 4–2–4 formation that had four forwards nibbling away at the German defence. If the Germans had subconsciously been expecting Italy to revert to stereotype and sit back languorously for the draw, they were wrong.

Cannily, Lippi also had at the back of his mind that if they could not score the breakthrough goal, he had plenty of players on the pitch capable of scoring in the penalty shootout. But there was no need for his back-up plan – Germany's attacks continued to perish on the blue Italian defensive wall and Italy clinched their victory with two superb goals from Fabio Grosso and Alessandro Del Piero in the 119th and 120th minutes of the match.

The meeting with Germany was perhaps the final before the Final, with the two best teams in the competition going head-to-head and giving their all for victory: the Germans were the top scorers in the tournament and the Italians its most accomplished defenders. 'How clever – they really got things right,' *Corriere della Sera*, an

Italian newspaper, commented dryly to provide the perfect coda to the stereotyping in *Der Spiegel* that had helped motivate the Italians so much in their desire to reach the Final.

'It has made us stronger,' Lippi said again of the ever-present spectre of the match-fixing trial whilst his team prepared for the Final. 'Before we came here, I warned the squad that we might face a bad atmosphere but that hasn't happened and we have shown the world that Italian football is alive and beautiful. If we had been a weak squad, *Calciopoli* would probably have wiped us out but we were very strong mentally and the lads managed to turn everything that had happened into positive energy.'

Another element in the Italians' resolve was a purely footballing one. At the 2002 World Cup, Italy had been eliminated in the first knockout round by South Korea – helped by some severely questionable refereeing – and they had then failed to make it through the group stages at the 2004 European Championships. 'We've accumulated a lot of anger after two major disappointments,' Fabio Cannavaro, the Italy captain, said. 'We put that rage to good use on the pitch and you can see that at the World Cup – we are turning that anger into something positive.'

England's record in advance of the 2010 finals is not too dissimilar to that of the Italians: elimination by Portugal on penalties in the 2006 World Cup quarter-final and failure to qualify for Euro 2008. As with Italy, who appointed a hugely experienced Champions League winner in the shape of Lippi in 2004, so England too

installed as manager a man with similar experience and pedigree in Fabio Capello to take them through the two years prior to the World Cup.

It helped Italy that Lippi had created a tight-knit squad long before the World Cup began. During his first year in charge he had given out caps freely, experimenting with players, a number of whom were surprising choices for international recognition. Then, in mid-2005, the manager reversed that policy, following that period of expansion with one of contraction: he pulled up the drawbridge behind a select band of favoured players. This had the effect of unifying them in the knowledge that they were the ones who had come through the manager's selection process and who would be entrusted with World Cup work. The process of spreading the net wide had been productive – Luca Toni, now at Fiorentina, and Fabio Grosso had both caught Lippi's eye while at Sicilian club Palermo and had established their claims as internationals regardless of their modest club origins.

The tumultuous semi-final had taken a lot out of the Italians and when, in the Final, France began to get the upper hand during the second half, it was team spirit that saw the fatigued Italian side through. Almost as importantly, when their defence was breached, they had in Gianluigi Buffon a goalkeeper with a tendency to make exceptional saves look routine. When the match finished 1–1 and went to a penalty shootout, a most unusual event unfolded, with the Italian players surrounding Lippi and clamouring to be allowed the honour of taking a penalty kick. It said much about their unity of purpose.

'We are no longer just the nation of match-fixing, the

people who wash the dishes and cook the pizzas,' Umberto Zapelloni, an Italian journalist, wrote in *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, after Italy's victory, 5–3 on penalties. 'Thank you, Italy.' Gattuso was clear as to the principal guiding light that had led them to their victory. 'If the [match-fixing] scandal hadn't happened I don't think we would have won the World Cup,' he said. 'We demonstrated that with humility and the desire to be a real team you can achieve your objectives. When we've gone to a World Cup like prima donnas we've come home sooner than expected.'

Having been forced by external forces to act humbly and muck in together, the Italians' finer qualities had shone through. Nor can the team's desire to project a more acceptable image of their nation than that presented by *Calciopoli* be underestimated. 'We've shown we are great footballers, not criminals,' Alessandro Del Piero evinced. Pride had clearly been hurt and the World Cup seen as a means of mending it. In a nice gesture, Ferrara and Cannavaro took the World Cup to show the ailing Pessotto on their return to Italy.

In tandem with the heightened emotional reaction to adverse circumstances, there was sound practical sense behind the Italians' victory. They had opted for a comfortable but far from ostentatious base at the Hotel Landhaus Milser, an establishment in Duisburg that is run by Italians and possesses an Italian restaurant. The entertainment for the players was so determinedly down to earth that it consisted of nothing more than having a table-football game delivered at the beginning of June 2006 to help the boys feel the homely ambience to the

full. Not that it was anything approaching a dosshouse – not with a choice of 50 Italian wines and pasta lovingly stretched into perfect shape on the premises – but it was the sort of place that a middle-aged couple, enjoying a rare weekend away from their teenage kids, might find sedately restful. 'Everything was done by the book,' Fabio Cannavaro says of the organisational side of Italy's victory. 'Nothing was missing.'

It contrasted severely with England's base at Baden-Baden, where Sven-Göran Eriksson languorously presided over what appeared often like a bacchanalian celebration of wealth, celebrity, shopping and bling. With the players' wives and girlfriends so closely in attendance and sharing so much prominence with the players in reports home, it threw into debate just exactly who were the stars of the England show in Germany and spawned a new acronym: WAGS – for wives and girlfriends.

'Ours was the practical choice,' Marcello Lippi said. 'The airport, ten minutes, the training ground, ten minutes, the city, ten minutes; a one-hour flight to all the matches. The hotel was nice but not luxurious; it had a garden and a small lake.' The modern footballer, endowed with high-maintenance companions, fast cars and access to the world's most splendiferous hotels at the twang of a credit card, appreciates, it would seem, something a bit more Spartan if he is to concentrate on his work. England under Fabio Capello appear likely to be more attuned to the necessities for competing well in a World Cup in their planned choice of base for the 2010 finals, the Bafokeng Sports Campus, whose newly constructed hotel and training facilities sit in a

splendidly isolated rural location, with ready access to flights across South Africa.

Italy's World Cup victory in 1982 also owed much to a turning inwards for strength in the face of hostile external forces, on that occasion taking the form of press criticism, which perpetrated such slurs on the players as to suggest that they were taking hard drugs and that some had paired off in couples. But they were neither the first nor last to be united by a hostile domestic press but that, as they say, is another story.

Other nations have also been galvanised by a cause; not always, as in the case of the Italians, for the entirety of a tournament but at crucial junctures, when a spurt of inspiration was required from a team pulling together in harmony. At the Mexico World Cup in 1986, Argentina found themselves in a quarter-final with England for their first meeting with a British side since the Falklands conflict four years previously.

During the spring of 1982, Argentinian forces had invaded and occupied the Falkland Islands, a British overseas territory 300 miles from the coast of South America but claimed by Argentina as Las Islas Malvinas. British forces were dispatched to the South Atlantic and after a conflict lasting for two months that brought casualties on both sides, Argentina was forced to accept defeat and withdraw. The attempt to seize the islands had been one of the final throws of the dice of the generals who comprised a junta that had been in power since a military coup in 1976. This attempt at reviving support for the junta resulted in 255 British deaths and 649 on the Argentinian side, with more than half of those

Argentinian fatalities arising from the sinking of the cruiser *General Belgrano*. The enterprise could hardly be seen as a glorious cause, although it did spark a wave of powerful popular protest in Argentina that helped sweep away the junta.

The Mexican security forces, concerned about the prospect of warring English and Argentinian supporters, mobilised their own armed forces to deal with the situation and soldiers and sailors backed up the everyday police force as every fan was frisked on entry to the Azteca Stadium in Mexico City. Bobby Robson, the England manager, issued martial-type pre-match instructions to his players that demanded that they take out one prominent member of the opposition team. 'The nearest man goes to [Diego] Maradona and kills him,' Robson said, 'and if he doesn't, the next one does; simple as that.' The instructions clearly weren't heeded.

Maradona, for his part, was keen before the match to play down any link between the game and the Falklands issue. 'Why do you keep asking this question?' he asked journalists pressing him on it. 'We are not taking knives and guns on to the pitch.' The player had been well briefed by Carlos Bilardo, his manager, who had anticipated the Falklands issue being raised. 'I got the boys together,' Bilardo said, 'and I told them, "Tomorrow we'll have the press with us. We've got an open training session and the first thing they're going to ask you is how you feel. This is a sporting event and we only talk about football here." But we all knew what we felt.'

Nery Pumpido, the goalkeeper, still went bullishly off-message pre-match. 'To beat the English could constitute

a double satisfaction for everything that happened in the Malvinas,' he said. Subsequent to Argentina's 2–1 victory, *Crónica*, an Argentinian newspaper, got the 1986 World Cup quarter-final in some sort of perspective. 'Malvinas 2 England 1! We blasted the English pirates with Maradona and a little hand. He who robs a thief has a thousand years of pardon.'

Maradona, for his part, would later admit that the Falklands had been much more of a motivation for him and his team-mates than he had maintained at the time. 'More than defeating a team it was defeating a country,' he said. 'Of course, before the match we said that a football match had nothing to do with the Malvinas War but we knew a lot of Argentinian kids had died there, shot down like little birds. This was revenge. It was like recovering a little bit of the Malvinas. In the pre-match interviews we had all said that football and politics shouldn't be confused but that was a lie. We did nothing but think about that. In a way we blamed the English players for everything that happened, for all the suffering of the Argentine people.'

A more romantic South American cause inspired Garrincha, Brazil's wayward winger, in Chile in 1962. With Pelé suffering an injury in Brazil's second match, against Czechoslovakia, that kept him out of the remainder of the tournament, Garrincha became the Brazilians' chief source of talismanic inspiration. His desire to win the cup was fuelled by his burgeoning love affair with the singer Elza Soares who, by chance, flew in to perform at a music festival in Avisa, close to Valparaiso and Brazil's training base in Viña del Mar on the Chilean coast. When

Soares visited the team's hotel mid-tournament, Garrincha promised her, 'I am going to win the cup for you.'

He fulfilled his vow. 'At Viña del Mar we lost to one man,' Bobby Charlton said of Garrincha's effect on Brazil's 3–1 win in the quarter-final with England, in which Garrincha scored his first two goals of the competition. 'Little Garrincha scored with a header. He beat a lot of our big, strapping centre-halves. He outjumped them and headed the first goal and then he bent a free-kick round the wall, which nobody really did in those days . . .'

Brazil's semi-final against the hosts saw Garrincha supersede even that performance, smacking in two stunning goals to put Brazil into a 2–0 lead in their eventual 4–2 victory. 'What planet is Garrincha from?' Chile's *Mercurio* newspaper was moved to ask about the man fast emerging as the player of the tournament.

At the final whistle in Brazil's 3–1 victory over Czechoslovakia in the Final, Soares fainted, but half an hour later she boldly made her way through the dressing room, ignored the naked athletes who shared that small space with her and made straight for the shower to embrace passionately the man who had won the World Cup for her. This was daring stuff for 1962. Soares, the woman whose face and body had inspired the Brazil winger's near sensual performances, and whose affair with the then married Garrincha would be a source of some scandal, was in no doubt of her role in bringing the trophy to Brazil. 'The 1962 World Cup was a tribute to me,' she said. 'Garrincha told me, "Thank you so much for coming here, you make me so happy. I'll play better now because of it." '

As the 2010 World Cup nears, one nation, tragically, already has a cause in its heart. When Robert Enke, the Germany goalkeeper, committed suicide by walking in front of a train travelling at 100mph in early November 2009 it united the German nation in grief. Joachim Löw, the Germany manager, declared himself 'totally empty' on hearing the news of Enke's death. The Hanover goalkeeper, 32, had been treated for depression during the previous six years and had suffered the loss of Lara, his two-year-old daughter, in 2006. Enke had nonetheless enjoyed a resurgence in his career, being voted best goalkeeper in the Bundesliga in 2008/09 by his fellow professionals and winning eight caps from his debut for Germany in 2007. He had a strong chance of representing his country as their number 1 choice at the finals in South Africa.

Tragedy can unite a set of players. Of course, by the time of the finals in South Africa, the hard edge of the grief felt by Enke's team-mates in the national side will have softened, but his memory will remain in their hearts. It may be that they will see it as honouring him to do all they can to win the tournament or that remembering him will add to their seriousness of purpose as they go about their business. It will certainly have an effect, just as all the causes before it have done.