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Sport, Masculinity, Race and Nation: A Case of Fandom and the Football Industry

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SPORT, MASCULINITY, RACE AND NATION: A CASE OF FANDOM AND
THE FOOTBALL INDUSTRY

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Political Sciences

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ABSTRACT

Football (or soccer in America) is one of the most popular sports in the world, it is played worldwide from the United Kingdom to the Laos Islands. Usually called the beautiful game, fans' traditions are inherited from parents to children, and legendary players are venerated as demigods. However, with its growth, also came the growth of a billions-worth “non-profit” industry governed by FIFA. The love of the game is also used to explore the concept of “nation” and has a long history with dictatorships using “passion” to cover up their human rights violations as well as attempts to use it to reinforce national identities while reinforcing racial stereotypes. The present study examines the relationship between fans and identities (as well as how they perceive rivals), the exploitation of the sport for nationalistic purposes and how athletes carry that mission, and how racism and football are intertwined with a special focus on Latin America and Europe due to their long history with the sport.

The research for this study consisted of peer reviews from different studies on the sport, from the sociological to the political level, as well as zoom interviews with fans around the world and questions done in the *r/soccer* subreddit. Interviews were from 7-10 total people, and roughly ten answers to the question on reddit. Among the limitations for this study is how fans are a heterogeneous group - and how most fans do not think alike, and the major findings were that even though some people choose to become fans on their own, it is usually a family tradition and that people usually prefer a nation win over a club win. The conclusion of the project fulfills a gap in the literature regarding football and its relationship with nationalism and identity. Recommended future research includes more relationship between sports through a political science lens and studies on women’s association football.

DEDICATION

To my parents, and their love and support, without it, I would not be who I am today.

To those who played in the 2006 World Cup and got me interested in the sport. No matter how far I am from either Spain or England, the connection I feel to *Real Madrid CF* and *Manchester United FC* goes beyond any nationality, in the good and the bad.

To the *Venezuela National Team* (La Vinotinto), despite how many times they lose (almost always) that historical fourth place in Copa America was ingrained in my mind and made me sing the anthem at school with a little more pride. May we go to a World Cup one day.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I want to thank God for being with me in this entire journey - from leaving Venezuela where I was studying, to going to community college and eventually transferring to UCF and graduating this year. I want to thank my friends who supported me and contacted their friends for interviews. Thank you to Dr. Yovanna Pineda for all the support and advice. Lastly but not less important, thank you mom and dad for all your support and love.

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INTRODUCTION

Futbol is a simple sport: there are two teams of eleven men, there are two halves in the game that last roughly 45 minutes each, and whichever team scores the most goals wins. The players can use every part of their body except their hands, this includes their head and hips, and only the goalkeeper is allowed to use their hands. This simplicity may explain why there are so many fans around the globe who cheer for their favorite team at the international tournaments. National pride and passion mix in order to cheer for their nation by chanting, shouting out their support, or even using pyrotechnics in order to set up an atmosphere.

However, football is a complex industry regulated by the International Federation of Association Football or FIFA (Original name: Fédération Internationale de Football Association) who governs and overlooks professional football by a national and club level through their confederations (UEFA in Europe, AFC in Asia, CAF in Africa, CONMEBOL in South America, CONCACAF in North America, and OAF in Oceania) (FIFA.com, n.d.). This is a system where governments and people of power are involved, and “the people’s game” becomes another tool for the elites to use.

Taking this into consideration, I argue that underneath the idea of football as a unification tool that explores more complex ideas such as nationalism and soft power while at the same time reinforcing racist stereotypes. The purpose of this is to fill a gap in the literature when it comes to the relationship of sports and politics as how it explores oppressive structures in the game such as racism and masculinity in order to combat it.

In this proposed thesis, I explore the fan culture in football and how it influences the concepts of nation and identity. The term “fan” regarding a national team can differ a bit from its club futbol counterpart, it can go from a knowledgeable fan and someone who follows the

players closely to someone who follows the team only because it is a representation of their country. Regardless, both set of fans are likely to be passive or active participants on the humor culture in futbol communities, where the performance of the team usually means that they are “on top”, since sports is a way to exercise masculinity, by winning over “the other” it undermines the other team’s masculinity under the justification of humor.

Humor as a communicative activity is used in order to make the audience laugh, as well as indicates to the audience that anything said should be taken as a joke, and therefore not taken seriously (Brigaud, et al, 2021). It can be used from coping mechanisms to criticism of society through satire. According to the benign violation theory (BVT), for something to be considered funny it must follow 2 rules: there must be a violation (something that would go against the person’s expectations) and said violation must be benign (Kant, 2019). However, one of the limitations of this theory is that sometimes non-benign jokes or violations can still be considered funny and whatever is considered benign can depend on different factors. Other factors that influence humor are the superiority theory, where humor is found by putting down others in order to uphold the self-esteem (Snyder, 1991) and examples of this are racial or homophobic slurs that serve as “put downs”.

In other words, humor can also be used in order to reinforce differences between social classes and racial divides. Example of this is throwing bananas at black players in a football game, despite it would not be considered funny by most people (and usually has consequences such as suspensions from the stadium) the perpetrators would say they were doing it as a joke when they are reinforcing racial divides and stereotypes through these “jokes”.

The relationship between sports and politics is a long and complex one. Modern sporting events that involve several countries serving as a way to celebrate national identities (Bairner,

2001) and as a healthier alternative to long-lasting rivalries due to war and state-building (Dolan and Conolly, 2018), and this is especially true to international futbol; where in several international tournaments such as the World Cup, Eurocups, and Copa Americas, the entire population will rally behind a team of 22 men and will temporarily forget what separates them (race, politics, social class) to cheer for the team that represents their nation to be triumphant over the “enemy”.

In the book *Sport, Nationalism, and Globalization : European and North American Perspectives*, Sport Studies expert Alan Bairner suggests that other than war, there is no other event that unites people that are otherwise total strangers than an international futbol tournament, among one of the reasons is because people enjoy seeing their country succeed no matter the sport, and it will be more satisfactory if it is a sport that is popular and that the nation takes pride in (pp 17-18), the victory is even sweeter if it is a historical rival (usually defined as *derbies* in English football slang and *clasicos* in Spanish slang) The most popular examples are England v. Scotland (which is considered to be the first international football match ever) in Europe, and the Rio de la Plata derby between Argentina and Uruguay, which is the most played derby in football history.

Beyond rivalries, the most personal bond between the team and the fans is to see themselves reflected on the players and the goal that if one day they work hard enough, they can also represent their country as well. In 1998, there was recorded footage of a young French child called Antoine Griezmann asking for the autographs of the France National Team, who would win their first World Cup in their home country, twenty years later, in 2018, France won their second World Cup with Antoine Griezmann as an important part of the squad (French Football News, 2018). Another touching story is Brazilian player Gabriel Jesus, who in the 2014 World

Cup in Brazil was a volunteer painting mural in his town and four years later he got called to the Brazilian squad for the first time and signed a contract to play in England.

However, as uplifting as these stories are, as well as how easy is to get involved in the atmosphere - be either in the stadium or just watching the game with the family at home; if only this perspective is explored it gives an idealized view of futbol, and sidesteps the stereotypes meant to offend and identify the other group (rival team). Usually justified as jokes with sexist or racial undertones that serve the purpose to denigrate the opponent to uplift the team. As with most structures in society, football and football fandom is dominated by men, therefore, masculinity is not just a key part of football, it is one of its bases.

Masculinity, or rather, hegemonic masculinity, defined as “the configuration of gender patriarchy which embodies the currently accepted answer to the legitimation of patriarchy which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.” (Rocha, p. 4-5). Hegemonic masculinity also embodies the most honored way to be a man, makes all the men abide by its principles and it is reinforced through culture, institutions, and persuasion (Connell et al, 2005, p. 832). The culture of sports being one of the instruments for these masculinities to reinforce their power both in the game as with the fans, the attitude towards masculine football and women’s football is a big example of this, while the World Cup is respected and planned with care for both FIFA and its subsidiaries, the same care is not given to women’s World Cup.

Even though the cases where the rivalry gets violent are far and in between, countries and club with a historical rivalry tend to see the rival team as the enemy and it can escalate beyond what should be a game for the enjoyment of both sides such as games getting postponed physical fights, police intervention and in the worst cases with people dying.

RESEARCH METHODS AND SOURCES

I explore football through an interdisciplinary lens to understand its value in a socio-political context. The primary sources come from reviewed journals of experts in different topics such as sexuality, sociology, history, race, as well as non-scholarly sources such as sports news outlets like ESPN.

Another source of importance will be the opinion of the regular fan, either by discussing games online on either twitter or reddit or commenting about it with their friends either online or in-person, there is a disconnect between the academic view and the fan point of view. In order to test the hypothesis, both points of view must be compared and combined. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak however, the interviews and talks with fans had to be exclusively online, as a result of that, samples (fans) are smaller than usual.

I conducted original one-to-one interviews with people around the world through zoom, asking general questions such as when they started watching football, what team do they support, how do they feel about their national team and their opinion on recent tournaments such as the Euros and Copa America, out of the 10 people interviewed, 7 of them identified as women.

In order to explore the relationship between clubs and national teams, I went through the website *reddit* to ask if they would prefer a club team over a national team win. Like a forum, reddit is a community where fans can discuss their interests through posting, commenting or upvoting (or downvoting if they disagree) in specific forums which are called *subreddits*, with permission of the moderators, I commented in a general discussion thread and an average of 10 people replied, their gender and their age were not revealed, only what team they supported.

As football is a worldwide sport, examples and experiences across different countries have been picked. The research has a special focus on Latin America and Europe for their long

relationship with the game, and despite the cultural differences between both continents, there is a lot in similarities such as how the fans behave inside and outside the stadium, how race shapes the experience of players (particularly if they end up playing in Europe, as it is the highest level of football) and how governments and players can shift the image of a country through success.

Among the limitations of this research, besides COVID-19 and its consequences for fieldwork is also the limited number of people who answered to the research. 10 people for both interviews and reddit replies is a small sample compared to the millions of football fans that there are in the world. This research also did not consider women's football and their fans, as most of the people interviewed were mostly interested in the regular team. Future research might involve women's association football and their connection to national identity (particularly in the US) as well as more research within sports and the political field.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

My review of the literature explores the relationship between football in both club and country level through the lens of nationalism and identity politics, as well as touching on the racism and discrimination that is still present on football to this day. With the popularization of football in the 20th century and with the historical role of sports in masculinity. *Why football matters in Latin America* Joshua H. Nadel narrates with the popularization of soccer in Latin American countries, which went hand in hand with the birth of national identity and modernization, both countries took futbol, a sport that belonged to the English and made it their own, a tradition that still lasts to these days. Knowing the reason why these relationships regarding why futbol matters will be helpful to understand fan culture.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

It is commonly agreed that “the people’s game” started in England and then spread through the whole world. Originally born from rugby until it found an identity of its own, the first rules of Association Football were created by the English Football Association (FA) on 28 November 1863 (Kitching, 2015) and quickly became a favorite pastime for both wealthy children in Public Schools and then became very popular among urban and middle-class workers, where the popularity grew as the elite decided to focus on other sports such as rugby and alpinism.

In *Goal: A Cultural and Social History of Modern Football*, the popularization of the sport is attributed to several factors such as the industrialization of Great Britain giving workers of any gender free time, despite being a team sport players can exercise their own creativity and free will, and owners preferred their workers to engage in sports rather than loitering and smoking in their free time (p. 44-45). In *Futbol: why Soccer matters in Latin America*, Nadel explains that football had two births: the local and the national, the local support (clubs) lead to the growth and the support of the national team and their football identity. People would support the team closest to their local community, which was how many rivalries were born as the other team was a rival neighborhood or a rival city.

Football capitalized its status as the most popular sport in the 20th century with the help of the birth of the World Cups, and behind that push the mastermind was FIFA, born in 1904 in Paris with current locations in Zurich, as Dietchy (2013) says “the universality of football – and for some observers, its depravity – is today embodied by this organization” for good or for bad.

It did not take much time for other continents to challenge the teachers at their own sport, adopting football and bending it to fit their identity as players, football being used in order to

differentiate themselves from Latin Americans from Europeans and was a key part in developing Latin identities in the 20th century. Race was a huge factor in forming the identity of these new countries – and it would stay in their most recently beloved sport.

Race, Identity and Football

In *The Mestizo State: Reading Race in Modern Mexico*, Joshua Lund (2012) describes race as “theory of organization of the human difference that, even with the best of intentions, hides (or reveals) within itself a structure of hierarchy (p.4). In other words, it is a social construct in order to create an identity that is expressed through social and political means. In Europe, especially after the discovery of the Americas, race was used to exploit and segregate those who did not meet the European standards of beauty.

In the article *From Black-Blanc-Beur to Black-Black-Black?: “L’Affaire des Quotas” and the Shattered “Image of 1998” in Twenty-First-Century France*, Christopher Thompson discusses the shortcomings of the pseudo “post racial” society in France after the 1998 World Cup victory with their “black-blanc-beur” (black white *beur* – slang word for children of African immigrants –) national team led by Zinedine Zidane (who has Algerian parents) had the hopes to the beginning of a post-colonial France, one where their ethnicity didn’t matter, but rather everyone was united under one France. Zidane himself was a modern *beur* whose qualities were carefully shaped by the government and by the man himself: a national hero, one of the most popular players both in France and worldwide, and as Thompson points out: a safely assimilated North African Muslim who did not contest the status quo (Thompson, 2015, p. 106).

However, after the 2006 World Cup final where Zidane headbutted Materazzi and France lost against Italy in penalties soon after this event, a boycott in 2010 World Cup that made France leave the group stages and inner conflicts in France regarding the treatment of the

children of immigrants showed that there was a long way before their post racial society goals became a reality. French Football Federation president Blaquart Blanc that youngsters of foreign descent did not play for France out of pride, but rather “many youngsters of foreign descent, especially in football, have a real identity problem. I deplore the fact that kids who are developed by us then choose to play for other nations.” (Thompson, p. 108). The implication of this is that they only played for France for benefits, not because they felt French, and said implication is false. The only time children of descendants changed nationalities was when they were never chosen to play for France. Even when they are the current World Champions, it does not erase that people from the higher ranks of France thought that of prospective future players.

In *Football and Stereotypes: Narratives of Difference between Argentina and Brazil*, Pablo Alabarces states that both countries' pride themselves on their mestizaje and how this has been used in order to build a national identity. However, the meaning of mestizaje has different meanings to both. Focusing on how Tropicalism (narrative of mestizaje between indigenous, black and white) and Europeanism (narrative of being white and European) have influenced the Brazilian and Argentinian imaginaries and portraying the neighboring country as a contrast. Alberto & Eduardo (2016) agree with this notion, adding how the melting pot with the Spanish and the Italian communities contributed to the Argentinian Europeanist view and how it “hid ” other facets such as the indigenous population or afro-Argentines. These contrasting yet similar views on mestizaje shaped Latin American identity and it translated into their national teams.

Birth of National Identity in the 20th century

With the end of World War I, Latin American intellectuals who looked up to Europe as a source of progress and superiority were left disappointed with the violence that had torn the old continent apart. Consequently, they decided to look inside their own countries in search of their

own identity. Europe being white and Latin America being not was no longer a source of shame or something to be fixed, but rather the beginning of a new wave of nationalism and the beginning of the *mestizaje* identity.

Argentina had a huge influx of European immigration, especially Italian and Spaniard, and was received in a mostly positive way. Europeans brought with them their culture, and football served as a fast method of socialization between the locals and the recently arrived. However, Eduardo Archetti (2016) points out that after 1914, after immigration temporarily stopped because of the World War, intellectuals saw immigrants as a threat for Argentinean identity (Archetti, pp 30). Argentines then took the image of the *Gaucha* (cowboy) who previously had been associated with barbarism and turned it into a national symbol. The *Gaucha* was a good example of *mestizaje* because it had “the pride of the Spanish blood and the sense of independence of the local Indian population” in contrast with “the servile blacks and the false mulattos”, and according to these intellectuals, the *gaucho* or *criollo* was better than the original pure races. (Archetti pp 35-36).

It is not a coincidence that the *criollo* style or *la nuestra* is born in this wave of nationalism, with terms such as *pibe* or *crack* starting to gain traction in commentators’ vocabulary. Historian Joshua Nadel describes the *pibe* as a “poor boy who taught himself to play the game on the empty fields of Buenos Aires suburbs” and it could evolve into a *crack* or “a star player defined by his ability to keep the ball at his feet and to use a series of feints to go through opposing defenses.” (p. 53) In a time where most football academies were owned by the British, *pibes* with less resources could play against the Anglos on an equal ground and win against them. While the English style of playing was team-oriented and forceful, the *criollo* style was more individualistic and highlighted beautiful play. Despite being criticized as inefficient at first,

by the 1920's, the criollo style like the tango was seen as a legitimate representation of the Argentine people (Nadel pp 53-55). During the first World Cup in 1930, organized in Uruguay, despite losing at the finals 4-2 to Uruguay, Argentines took pride in the *Rioplatense* style of football. However, despite that, the Argentinian team had little success in international football after that until their first World Cup victory in the 1978 World Cup that was also played in Argentina.

In Brazil football had a similar beginning, when Charles Miller, a Brazilian born Englishman, returned to Sao Paulo with a football rulebook in hand and founded the Sao Paulo Athletic Club, and soon others followed suit. Like Argentina, these clubs were owned by immigrants or children of European immigrants. However, it is not the case that all of them were tied by ethnic ties, some of them were based on geography and school ties. Gregg Bocketti (2021) points out that the most successful and enduring clubs of Brazil, such as Corinthians and Paulistano in Sao Paulo, or Fluminense and Flamengo in Rio de Janeiro were not founded in any ethnic or national connections and were key in spreading the popularity of football through Brazil. However, they shared an elitist vision of the game with their ethnic counterparts, and this vision helped to marginalize those who weren't deemed good enough as opponents or teammates, especially non-whites and working-class players.

Why National Heroes Matter: Leonidas, Pele and Maradona

In Brazil, Afro-Brazilian players entered the field in large numbers in the 30s, the most prominent one being Leônidas da Silva, who played in the 1934 and 1938 FIFA World Cups, being the top scorer of the latest and a key part of giving Brazil third place in that competition. He is considered as the first Brazilian idol at a local and a national level. (Nadel, p. 64).

Leônidas' rise comes at a similar time when Brazil starts changing their views regarding their black population, after the Brazilian Revolution of 1930 and the rise of Getulio Vargas as president, the new government began to look for symbols of what it was to be Brazilian. Vargas, as well as other intellectuals, began to see the Afro-Brazilian culture as something that could make Brazil stand up from other countries. Modern symbols that are associated with Brazil such as Capoeira or Samba were considered national arts, and Brazil's football style, that was compared to dancing by commentators and fans of the game, claimed to come from the African blood that ran through the players veins (Nadel, p. 65).

However, this does not mean that afro-Brazilians were accepted into Brazilian society, they simply thought Brazilian's contribution to football was beneficial. In the 1950 World Cup, after the devastating defeat in what is known as *Maracanazo*, where Brazil was expected to win at home and lost against Uruguay in a victory shocking to everybody, the race discourse started again, and the mixed traits that were attributed to Brazil's success were now responsible for their loss. They particularly blamed the afro-Brazilian goalkeeper for the loss (Nadal, pp 66-75). The team had a severe revamp, replacing most of the players who played in the 1950 World Cup only to lose against Hungary in the knockout stages of the 1954 World Cup, the Brazilian public still blaming the Afro-Brazilian players for the failure of 1950 (Nadal, pp 66-75). It wasn't until Pele that Afro-Brazilians were viewed by the public not just as heroes, but also representatives of Brazil in the sporting world.

Known as the tri-champeon and the youngest player to play in a World Cup final with 17 years old, as well as the youngest player back then to score in a World Cup final (ESPN, 2018) Pele changed the history of Brazil in the international tournaments, as well as changing how Brazil saw itself. Ever since the failure of 1950, Nelson Rodrigues coined the term *complexo de*

vira-lata (mongrel complex) where Brazil “shrank into the shadows and praised the virtues of others” meaning that Brazilians saw themselves negatively compared to bigger nations.

However, with the victory over Sweden 1958, Pele contributed to diminish that street dog complex and made Brazilians see themselves in a positive light again (*Pele*, 14:30; 19:13). His legacy off the pitch is a complex one, characterized by his political neutrality in Brazil’s military dictatorship, never speaking for or against it, but even meeting the President after becoming Santos top goal scorer. Pele’s passivity regarding political issues is a matter of discussion for Brazilians till this day, even for fans. (*Pele* 1:02:00-1:03:19)

After an underwhelming performance in *Sweden 1958*, Argentina was starting to question the *criollo* style and its effectiveness. Despite having high expectations before it started, Argentina’s cracks such as Enrique Omar Sívori, Humberto Maschio, and Antonio Angelillo all left to play in Italy, with AFA (Argentina Football Association) refusing to call players from overseas and instead leaving them with an older generation of players where they ended up exiting the World Cup after a 3-1 loss to West Germany. Brazil winning the 1958 World Cup and the 1962 World Cup, making them the second South American country to lift the trophy, made Argentineans admit that the Brazilians were the best at the sport. (Ribaja and Parrish, p 657-659).

However, new players that represented the population's desire to win appeared at the beginning of the 1960, among them Boca Juniors legend Antonio Ubaldo Rattín, making the team switch to a more aggressive or tactical approach. Rattin’s legacy, however, was in *England ‘66* in a game against the hosts where he got sent off in the first half for ‘violence of the tongue’ (Britto et al, pp 676-677) and argued that the referee misunderstood him since he didn’t speak Spanish, the referee, Rudolf Kreitlein, claimed that Rattin had stared him down and gave him a

threatening pose. Rattin eventually walked off the pitch. Despite this incident, fans greeted the team back home cheerfully, it had been portrayed as a patriotic moment where Argentines saw Rattin as someone who did not stand by injustice portrayed by the English, the government saw the moment as convenient as well, with Rattin shaking hands with the President (Sibaja and Parrish, p 659-661).

However, this attack focused style of playing slowly went away as Argentina failed to qualify for World Cup Mexico '70 (which Brazil won) and went back to their old "classic" criollo style that focused on skill and outsmarting opponents by the *Argentina '78* happened, where the Argentinean team won their first World Cup. However, it wasn't until *Mexico '86* when Maradona was born was the symbol for Argentina as much as Pele was for Brazil.

Diego Maradona debuted with the Argentinian National Team at age 21 in *Spain '82* where defending champions Argentina left the World Cup in the second round, leaving a strong impression with fans and comparisons with Brazilian astro Pele. In Mexico '86 and at 25 years old, partially due to his experiences in the Italian club Napoli, Maradona arrived as a more mature player (Jones, 1986) and some may claim he single handedly carried Argentina to victory which was more than a sport victory, it had a symbolic political value to it as well.

In the 1986 World Cup, where Maradona is known for the *hand of God* (he pushed the ball towards the goal with his hand) and the *goal of the century*, both in the same game against England in the quarterfinals and to lead Argentina to their second World Cup in a 3-2 win against West Germany. Argentina's win over England, which could be considered a symbolic revenge from the 1982 Falklands War (Britto, 680) as well as Maradona's humble beginnings and the criollo style that characterized it turned him into an icon for Argentina in a similar way Pele was for Brazil.

Football as soft power

Soft power is described as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments” (Brannagan et al, p. 705) which exists in contrast to hard power (military power). Many states have used sport to promote their country's image and gain a more prestigious status in the international world (Connell, 2018). Hosting a huge event such as a World Cup or the Olympics would be a successful display of soft power. In the article *soft power and soft disempowerment: Qatar, global sport and football's 2022 World Cup finals* Paul Brannagan (2018) points out that countries like Qatar and the UAE, exceptional wealth has been used for integration in a way other Middle Eastern countries could not compare (p. 707). In the case of Qatar, current hosts for the 2022 World Cup, the *Qatari Sports Investment* (QSI) bought the French Club Paris Saint Germain, who bought Brazilian Astro Neymar Jr. in 2017 for 200M Euros (goal, n.d.). According to Connell, the reasons for the Qatari state to host the World Cup were the following: exhibiting Qatar's supremacy as a microstate; projecting notions of peace, security and integrity, and confronting national health crises.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, football has evolved from its humble beginnings and has evolved into a juggernaut. With this growth, football has also been used to promote ideals on race and masculinity such as the attempts of a post-racial France through their national team and symbolic victories such as the Argentina victory vs England in Mexico 1986 and Pele's rise to fame.

Football is also a tool for soft power, as a successful tournament will increase tourism and improve a country's image in the world of nations. The upcoming World Cup is being hosted in Qatar for this same reason, alongside showing the country's supremacy as a microstate, projecting notions of peace and integrity and confronting national health crisis.

In the following chapters, I will explore the relationship between football, identity and fandom; football and nationalism; and football and racism. On *Masculinity, hinchas and identity in the twentieth century*, it explores the relationship between the hardcore fans (hinchas) and how they form an identity towards the club of their preference, as well as the complex relationship with masculinity regarding on how they view themselves as well as how they see the opposite team as 'less' masculine.

Iconography and Nationalism it focuses on football as a tool for nationalism through the national team through the lens of banal nationalism, as well as exploring the relationship between football and oppressive dictatorships and discussion of the recent term *sportswashing*. Lastly, there will be focus on the athlete and their success and how their status as an "icon" can go beyond their career.

Race and Futbol: a complicated & timeless relationship go in depth about how despite the efforts of FIFA and federations to offer a more inclusive sport, racism still prevails in different aspects of the game. This chapter discusses how professional players of color immigrate for Europe due to work reasons and how fans of both sides reinforce racism on the field or spare them if they "play good". It also discusses the role of media on perpetuating these stereotypes with a focus on how English newspaper The Sun would treat several English players of color, especially Raheem Sterling. Lastly, I reexamine FIFA's attempts to fight racism and despite there has been an improvement under the new leadership, there is still a long way to go.

CHAPTER I

MASCULINITY, HINCHAS AND IDENTITY IN THE 21st CENTURY

The fans are important, some might claim they are the most important part of the game. They are people who support a team either because of location, family tradition or simply because they liked a player and started following their career. *Ultras*, *Barras*, *Hooligans* or *Torcidas* are different names for the same concept: a fan who is more passionate or “extreme” than the average fan, who tends to set the atmosphere for games as well as getting in fights and conflicts with the police. This chapter uses sources from books that focus on behavior and peer reviews that focus on *Ultras* behavior, as well as the ESPN webpages and zoom interviews.

The focus of this chapter is the club-fan relationship and how alcohol, *aguante* culture (to endure suffering for the club, meaning getting in fights if necessary) and rivalries can turn a game into something more violent than even the police must step in. The role of female fans in the football games and their experience as a fan vs as their experiences as women when it comes to misogynist chants and their reactions to it and how these chants serve to set narratives focusing on the World Cup 2014.

Findings through interviews confirm how winning the World Cup in 2014 was important for fans of both Brazil and Argentina in order to continue their own narratives through football, however, the winner of this tournament wasn't neither of the South American Giants, but a European giant: Germany, who had its own narrative and history against both teams and eventually won, becoming the first European country to win the tournament in the American continent.

The most common definition of fan (short of *fanatic*) stands for a person who admires or supports something, be it a show, a book, a celebrity or a sport. In Spanish, a person who supports a sports team is usually called a *'fanatico'* or an *'hincha'*. In *Classifying Sport Consumers: From Casual to Tribal Fans*, Hedlung (2020) points out that “Being a fan is generally not an individualistic pursuit” and that in sporting events they usually go in groups. Interacting with fellow fans and cheering for their favorite team as a group is what provides the most significant medium and value.

Though becoming a fan is mostly an individual choice, and it can happen at any point of life, most socialization in sports fandom happens from a young age, with children recognizing a team as theirs from a young age and by the time they are teenagers, they can be considered ‘true’ fans, another reason to support a certain team tends to be peer pressure from family (especially the father) tending to be an influence regarding a favorite team, followed by the influence of older brothers and friendships (Delia & Katz, 2019, pp 314-315).

While interviewing different fans, it confirmed that people choose teams for different reasons: Liz, who lives in the US but was born in Manchester, supports Manchester United because it was a family tradition (Liz B, Zoom interview, August 14 2021), Paula from Argentina says she isn’t much of a fan – but most Argentines know the basics about futbol such as the offside because they “carry it on the blood” supports Boca mostly through family tradition as well, and says that at least in Argentina people can tell who supports who by “just looking at them” (Paula R, Zoom interview, Sept. 7 2021) but there are some like Mary-lynn who is Canadian but started supporting European Giants Liverpool in a tough moment where she “felt bad for them” and is a fan to this day (Mary-Lynn B, Zoom Interview, 28 Jun 2021) and Grili from Venezuela began watching *futbol* in the Korea-Japan 2002 World Cup, and her liking of the

Brazilian players made her end up supporting Spanish giant Real Madrid (G. Avilan, Zoom interview, 11 July 2011). (See Appendix A)

Despite the popularity of certain European teams such as *Real Madrid*, *Paris Saint Germain*, *Juventus*, or *Barcelona* having fans across the world mostly through their star athletes such as Cristiano Ronaldo, Neymar Jr or Lionel Messi, among others, localization is still a key factor in supporting a team for many people. For example, if you live in London, you should be supporting a London-based team - not one from another city like Manchester or Liverpool. In a survey done anonymously to fans of the Premier League, England's football league, when asked if '*being a true supporter means attending matches in person*' 58% agreed with the statement, however, 42% of fans disagreed, quoting things such as work, money and family and other reasons to be more important than a game (Gibbons and Nutall, 2016, pp 531-534).

Teams cannot exist without fans (be either local or international) and owners know it, home games are considered an advantage over the visitor game because you got the support mostly on your side. Fans also have the power to stop the club's owners from deciding on their behalf if they feel it is not in the benefit of the club. In 2021, there was a proposal lead by Florentino Perez (President of Real Madrid) for what is called the *European Super League*, which was that the best clubs of England, Spain, and Italy would play each other through direct qualification instead of table position like they do in the UEFA Champions League (the competition meant to replace). It was worldwide criticized, and fans and players both protested about it until the project was postponed, it was proof of the leverage fans hold over the club, that even though with all the changes the teams *futbol* had ever since the first official regulation, the average fan still had a vote on the decisions the club had.

PASSION AND EMOTION: THE EFFECTS OF FUTBOL IN THE SPECTATOR.

According to philosopher Yun Tuncel, sports can serve as a catharsis for emotions, both positive and negative for players and spectators. *In Emotion and Sports: Psychological Perspectives* (2018) he suggests that without finding a proper outlet to discharge our aggressive instincts, there are higher chances to become aggressive in an unjust way, and that sports can be a good outlet to externalize that aggressivity if it is within the rules of the sport. Examples of this for a player could be the act of kicking a ball or yelling in frustration when a play does not go as expected (pp 17-19). While *futbol* is not as violent as other sports such as American football or boxing (though it does have its share of fouls), it is a sport where perhaps their most iconic scenes are due to cathartic aggressivity, scenes of Zinedine Zidane losing his temper and headbutting Materazzi in World Cup 2006 or Eric Cantona kicking a spectator who was insulting him for being French come to mind.

It is not just anger that is displayed from both players and spectators, but also despair and euphoria. In the World 2014, when Germany defeated Brazil in their own home in order to advance to the finals, the tears of the Brazilians were a contrast to the happiness of the Germans who got an overwhelming victory 7-1. In *Soccer* by Jean-Phillipe Toussaint, a memoir of the author's experiences with football, he recites the experience of a spectator as "*during the match I am in a state of simple-minded comfort (...) accompanied by a temporarily acceptable mental regression. I become biased, aggressive, combative. I insult the referee (...). I vilify the other team. I give free rein to the impulses of violence and aggression that normally have no place in my personality*" (pp 14). This description agrees with Tuncel's views on how sport serves as a positive outlet for emotions, however, it is worth mentioning that even though these emotions can be felt by any person regardless of gender, aggressivity and anger are commonly associated with masculinity, these impulses of violence sometimes do not leave as soon as the game ends,

sometimes the violence goes beyond what is acceptable in sport terms and at that point, not even the people in charge of the team can control them.

HINCHAS TO ULTRAS, BARRAS AND TORCIDAS: SONGS, VIOLENCE AND MASCULINITY



Figure 1: Boca Juniors' Barra Brava (La 12) showing support at their home stadium La Bombonera.

(Wikimedia Commons, 2010)

It is April 2021 and is the end of the *Bundesliga*, which is the domestic league of Germany. Schalke 04, the second biggest club in Germany and one of their most historic ones, gets relegated for the first time in 30 years. Relegation is common in football leagues (America's MLS being one of the few exceptions) and it is always hurtful for fans when it happens, after all,

it means that your team is no longer strong enough to compete at the top. However, what made the news even for non-followers of the Bundesliga was when Schalke players were chased by a bunch of their Ultras. In an interview with a player who preferred to remain unknown, he describes how some eggs were thrown at them, and some of them were punched and kicked, and that they were terrified (ESPN, 2021). The video went viral on Twitter, where you hear the Ultras saying “Uth [coach], you son of a b****”. Schalke 04 had to make a statement over how limits were overstepped, and that the safety of the players should not be compromised. Even though examples of this magnitude are rare, it is an example of how even frustration escalates out of control to the point not even the club or the players are exempt from the wrath.

There are different levels to be engaged in fandom, and sports are no exception. If hinchas is synonymous with fan, then by consequence there will exist more ‘hardcore’ fan. In the world of futbol, this fan goes by different names, in most of Europe, they are known as *Ultras*. In the Spanish speaking Americas, they are known as *Barras Bravas* and in Brazil they are known as *Torcidas organizadas*, their equivalent in the United Kingdom would be *hooligans*, but even though the terms do intertwine when violence gets out of hand; Ultras, barras bravas and torcidas are supporters, hooligans are “people who attend soccer matches to engage in aggressive and violent behavior before, during and after the game.” (Kerr, 1994, pp 11).

Ultras act as a collective rather as an individual, however, there is usually coordinating committee with a leader who leads the strategies of the group in matchday, such as the chanting and the choreography of the *curva* (part of the stadium that has curved seating and is usually where the ultras realize their activities). The relationship clubs have with these hardcore fans is complicated. Most will agree these groups make the stadiums more colorful, to the point clubs

will adopt the Ultras imagery while disapproving of some activities done in the brand's name, usually use of pyrotechnics, violence, and abusive chants (Doidge, et al. pp 3).



Figure 2: AC Milan Ultras (Curva Sud) in 2006. Wikimedia Commons.

Pyrotechnics (especially smoke bombs and flares) are very common in mainland Europe and Latin America. From an aesthetic point of view, it makes for gorgeous imagery if you catch it in photographs. In my interview with Mary-Lynn, she explained that she went to a game in Portugal while staying in Europe and in the Porto game she saw the Ultras creating the atmosphere through music and songs (Mary Lynn, Zoom Interview, June 21, 2011). However, there have been horrifying incidents such as the 2013 Copa Libertadores where a Bolivian 13-year-old Kevin Beltran died by being hit with a flare in a *San Jose vs Corinthians* match after the Brazilian side got a goal ahead by Paolo Guerrero. Witnessed claim that the flare came from the

Corinthians side (ESPN, 2013). In one of the most known Argentinian rivalries such as Boca Juniors and River Plate incidents tend to happen as well, in 2013 as well, the *Superclasico* had to be postponed just after 15 minutes after the second half because both sides were “setting off fireworks, tossed flares at players on the field, and climbed a steel fence separating the stands from the pitch” (Guardian, 2013). Even though no injuries were reported, it was enough for the authorities to step in to try to stop the violence.

The relationship between violence and sports is a growing problem that has plenty of discussion already - but a short-term solution seems impossible for the time being, and the outburst of emotions that should stay in the pitch in order to serve as an outlet ends up harming others beyond the pitch or even beyond typical fights between rival fans. In the United Kingdom, whenever the England national team plays (called affectionately The Three Lions), it is known that reports of domestic violence spike whenever the team loses or wins. Between the years of 2009 to 2012 Brazil became the country with the most deaths of *torcedores*, confirmed by police investigation and in 2013, there were 30 deaths related to gangs infiltrated as football fans, the current violence in Brazilian football has made the country surpass Italy and Argentina (Brandão et al, 2020), who for a decade had been ahead of Brazil in the violence in sports scenario.

Through the years, it has been a tradition (especially by the media) to condemn the *barras bravas* for ruining the game for the rest of the fans due to their behavior. However, even though they are partially responsible, pointing the ultras as the sole instigators of violence would be oversimplifying the issue. Alcohol, *aguante* culture as well as outside factors such as the police and even the lack of care from government authorities play as much of a role as the fans who light up fireworks in games or get in fights after a game.

EXPLOSIVE COCKTAILS: ALCOHOL AND FOOTBALL

Alcohol consumption is also an important display of masculinity in Latin America, especially in soccer games, and alcohol itself is related to sports-related violence. In 1995, the city of Sao Paulo banned alcohol in stadiums after a violent fight between two rival teams, caused a death and several injuries, and in 2003 Brazilian congress created the *Lei do Torcedor* (Law of Spectator) which prevented spectators from entering stadiums if they had any “objects, beverages or prohibited substances capable of generating or enabling acts of violence” (Caetano, et al, 2012). However, this did not stop fans from consuming alcohol and even FIFA requested the Law of the Spectator to be suspended for the World Cup in Brazil due to their partnership with German beer Budweiser, therefore, it could be claimed that alcohol is considered a part of the game even with the violent side effects of it, many people go see the games in bars or pubs, therefore making alcohol and games a routine as well.

In a study done exploring the relationship between alcohol and violence in Brazil, in an interview with torcedores, they admitted that many of them consumed alcohol before the games in order to gain “courage” in case they must fight and that sometimes drugs as cocaine or marijuana are involved as well (Brandão et al, 2020, pp 8-9), therefore, even if alcohol does not cause violence, it serves as an enhancer for it. It is also seen as a symbol of pride, an example is Argentinian club *River Plate* Barras Bravas calling themselves *Los Borrachos del Tablon* (The Drunkards of the Terrace) as an endearing term (Parrish, pp 5-6) and defending the team with huevos (balls) against anything that comes against them, be either against other team or even the police when it gets out of hand.

Alcohol is intertwined with the practice of *aguante* (to endure) which means to stick to the club even in the hard times and have patience, to resist both physically and mentally. Varela describes it as “aguantar is to love. To love is to suffer. To suffer is to cause harm. To harm is to

fight, to drink, to venture in an endless party-style martyrdom” (Doidge et al, pp 55). No matter how hard it gets, fans must stick by the club even through harsh times such as defeats with rivals or even relegation. By enduring, it also makes people see you as a “proper” fan and a proper man, and otherwise it would make you a target of ridicule. This sacrifice is also celebrated in fan chants where showdowns with the police are narrated (Huddleston, pp 11).

Chant in Spanish	Translation
<i>Todos los palos que recibí, todas las veces que preso caí, A la cancha voy igual, aunque nos busque toda la federal”</i>	All the hits I took, all the times I went to jail, I still go to the pitch, even though all the cops are after us

Table 1: Todos los palos que recibí (all the hits I took) - River Plate chant.

The police play two roles on the violence perpetrated by fans, on one side, they are supposed to stop it as the violence might be a risk for innocent people, and yet by getting in the way, they become another *barra brava* in the eyes of the fans - one that as odd as it sounds, is always on the side of the rival team in their eyes. There are little resources or training prepared to deal with the barras, and it usually ends up with the police enforcing the hostile environment instead of helping dissolve it. Studies have found that even though they are less used methods “proper attitude, a gentle search, a chat in the terraces or a smile during escorting can considerably reduce the tension.” and that surveillance cameras and trained intelligence units decrease hooligan violence, while more aggressive acts such as tear gas incites more violence (Ostrowsky, 2018, pp 413) however, despite these findings, most countries use violence is used in order to fight violence - for several reasons, among them that preparation and use to non-discriminative policing is more affordable in a limited fund - and sometimes it ends with tragic results such as the death of a teenage girl in Argentina in 1990 who died by a “lost shot” by an officer and it almost ended with the fans killing him in revenge (Gil, pp 141).

On the fan's side, it is known that an excess of alcohol consumption causes the person to be less rational and "less able to see the whole picture; less able to think about all their options; less likely to see the other person's point of view; less likely to reason with people; more likely to misunderstand a situation; more likely to feel threatened by another's actions; and more likely to feel strong, fearless, powerful, brave, and invincible" (Ostrowsky, pp 413-414) which can deteriorate their relationship with the police and unravel into a violent confrontation.

Another key tradition that occurs in games that is a way to express masculinity is through chanting aka yelling support to the team in a sing-along tune. It is worth mentioning that there is a key difference in European chanting and South American chanting, while every chant serves a double purpose: to uplift the team and taunt the rival (example: In *El Clasico* games, Real Madrid fans tend to say '*Hala Madrid*' (let's go, Madrid) as much as they chant '*Put a Barca*' (fuck Barca) and it points out the key moments of the team where they were close to victory but failed, such as when in 2014 in their closest chance to win the Premier League with *Liverpool*, English footballer Steven Gerrard slipped in a crucial game in order to win the league, and then Chelsea footballer Demba Ba started a counterattack, making Chelsea win the game and destroying Liverpool chances of winning the long desired league ('*Steven Gerrard Gerrard/he fell on his fucking arse/he gave it to Demba Ba/Steven Gerrard Gerrard*') in more extreme moments, even tragedies are free reign to chant about, collapse of stadiums, death of players and even mocking accusations of domestic violence can be considered fair game as well.

Even though it exists in both Europe and South American chanting, the latter has a particular have a focus on both sexual domination and infantilization regarding the opponent (Parrish & Nauright, 2013, pp 7) it is not uncommon to hear the words puto (gay), puta (whore) or cagon (coward) to refer to another rival. In this scenario, homosexuality is an act where one

depraves the opponent from their masculinity through sexual intercourse (Huddleston, pp 14-15) and therefore becoming the “true” man of the rivalry, making the other play a submissive role, the game is no longer about what better team will win, but also who is a true “man” on the pitch. This is also present in Brazilian chants, in the rivalry between Gremio and Inter, two teams from Porto Alegre, it is very common for torcedores of both teams to chant a song where they take the “strong” role and fans of Inter reply with the same song, switching the ‘submissive’ role to the Gremistas (Bandeira & Seffner, 2013, 253).

Argentinian chant	Translation	Brazilian Chant	Translation
<i>Boca, Boca, compadre, la concha de tu madre. Te cojimos en Mendoza, te cojimos en La Boca, te cojimos en la Copa, te cojimos en Europa</i>	<i>Boca, Boca, mate. You [Boca] son of a bitch, We fucked you in Mendoza, we fucked you in La Boca, We fucked you in the Cup, we fucked you in Europe</i>	<i>Atirei o pau no Inter E mandei tomar no cú Macacada filha da puta Chupa rola e dá o cú Ei, Inter, vai tomar no cú Olê, Grêmio, olê Grêmio</i>	<i>I threw a stick to Inter and told them to put them in their ass. You monkey son of a bitch, suck it and show your ass. Hey, Inter, put it in their ass Come on Gremio, come on</i>

Table 2: Boca, Boca Compadre (Boca, Boca, mate) - River Plate Fanchant towards rivals Boca Juniors and Atirei o pau no Inter (I threw a stick to Inter) - Grêmio Foot-Ball Porto Alegrens Fanchant towards rivals Inter.

Consequently, it is no surprise that the rival fan becomes more than just a local or historic rival: it becomes an enemy and a threat to the other's masculinity. In the middle of the violence, it is common for torcedores to forget the humanity of the other as they are fighting. In an interview with a torcedor, one said that it didn't matter if it went out of control if it wasn't a friend, and that they were just defending themselves (Maximo Pimenta, 2003, pp 46).

However, even though they are an easy topic to scapegoat, it is worth mentioning that even though there is a history of violence regarding these fans, not all ultras or torcidos are involved in violence. Paulo Serdan, President of the Torcida *Mancha Verde*, defender of the

Brazilian football team Palmeiras, said that even though he recognizes there are criminals and hooligans in the torcidas, there are people from different races and professions, and that they are all a big family (Maximo Pimenta, pp 46). In *Understanding Soccer Hooliganism*, John H. Kerr, former Rugby professor and adjunct professor at the University of British Columbia, is quick to point out that traditions vary from club to club, these clubs having their own culture and that one should not treat football supporters as a homogenous group (pp 10). *Ultras: Passion and Performance of Contemporary Football Fandom* agrees with both of these points, Ultras are united for their extreme camaraderie with their fellow supporters, and even though some ultra-groups get involved in extreme nationalism, there are fans of Amsterdam Ajax who did a pro-immigrant demonstration in the Netherlands (Doidge et al, pp 6-7) showing both sides on how even though violence is a part of football, camaraderie and concerns for issues outside of football also exists.

It is also important to notice that even though alcohol or sports can inflate violence, and the studies mentioned above can confirm it, violence does not exist in a vacuum in any country. In *“Football Fans, Alcohol Use and Violent Behavior”* Ostrowsky shows the effect of violence and how it affects football fans in different countries: Italian Ultras argue that violence in football reflects Italian society and that the problem does not lie with football or even its supporters. In Greece there was a link to football hooliganism and delinquency. In Latin America, specifically Argentina and Peru, some hypothesized that the reason why fans turned violent is due to either an extremely violent times of political violence like repression or dictatorships caused a change in the population, turned it more violent or number to violence (Ostrowsky 408-409).” Maximo-Pimenta points out that in Brazil the first *torcidas* are born at the end of the 60s and beginnings of the 70s, where Brazil was looking towards modernization

and urbanization of the nation (particularly in Sao Paulo) left a several part of the population “disjointed and disengaged with social bases”. It is impossible to talk about *barras*, *hooligans*, *ultras* or *torcidas* without touching the violence that influences those countries and blaming it on sport - who is “only” a vehicle for this violence to appear would be oversimplifying the issue.

NOTE ON FEMALE FANS:

The experience of female fans is completely unique and differs from woman to woman. In contrast with the hegemonic masculinity displayed by their male counterparts, for women there is emphasized femininity, which is oriented to accommodate the needs of men and focuses the woman in marriage or childcare, however, there are several femininities that subvert or straight up reject emphasized femininity, such as resisting femininity, which is when the women ignores what is “expected” of them, but they do not completely reject the idea of being a woman or that they identify as a woman (Pope, 2012, 179-180). An important point to consider when discussing masculinity or femininity is that people practice masculinity and femininities rather than becoming them (Jones, 2008, 519) and that different masculinities and femininities are used in different situations, example a man will not behave the same at his work than in a stadium.

In football fandom (and particularly in stadiums) most women are aware that for some male fans, being a woman means that they are not “true fans”, and it happens in several male-dominated spaces, they witness offensive misogynist language towards the rival team. In a female-focused study on fans of the Premier League, interviewees talked about how rival fans would talk about the wives of football players they did not like, the most infamous example being David Beckham and the chant “does she take it up the arse” in regards of his wife, Victoria (Jones, 2008, 521). The opinions were split, some women called the chants disgusted and refused to participate, some downplayed the insults and claimed that sexism in men’s football weren’t as

bad as other issues such as sexism and even some of them said it was said in good humor and therefore harmless but would reject it in any other situation (pp 527), and the last group embraced these practices as just “part of the game” and rejected any other practices of femininity from fellow female fans, instead wishing to embrace a more gender neutral identity, almost as if the idea of being a woman and being a fan could not coexist (528-530)

DECIME QUE SE SIENTE AND 2014 WORLD CUP: ARGENTINA FANS IN BRAZIL

In many ways, both for club and for the country’s national teams (*selección* in Spanish and *Seleção* in Portuguese), *fútbol* serves as a method to tell a story or to play a narrative. The World Cup, as important as it, has only been won by seven countries, and the first country to ever win it was a Latin American country, Uruguay, at home, in 1930. Before the 2014 World Cup, there had been seven World Cups in the American continents, and in all of those, a champion had always been a Latin American country. Uruguay won their first title at home in 1930 and their second in 1950 in Brazil, Brazil won their second cup in Chile in 1962, their third in Mexico in 1970 and their fourth in USA ‘94, and Argentina won their first one in 1978 at home and their second in Mexico ‘86.

Narratives in *fútbol* become even more relevant when the *selecciones* are involved since the team represents everybody living in the country. Maradona’s 2-1 goals to kick England out in quarterfinals in Mexico ‘86 is known to be felt almost as a revenge for what happened in the Falklands War and cemented Maradona as an important figure in Argentina and football, and sometimes these narratives are used by politicians in order to pursue their agendas.

In 2007, in Zurich, Switzerland, the *Federation Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA) chooses Brazil as the host for the 2014 tournament, which was one of the strategies of

president Luiz Inácio Lula Da Silva alongside the Pan-American games in 2007 and the Olympic Games in 2016 in Rio de Janeiro, through sport with a heavenly focus on soccer, Lula wanted Brazil to breakthrough as an agent in international relations and as a growing leader in South America (Freitas Couto & Valente, 198-203). Originally, the project was received eagerly by Brazilian population, however, with more spending than it was originally planned, as well as the national services being sidelined for the World Cup project, discontent grew and grew peaking in the protests that even eclipsed the 2013 Confederations Cup (a local tournament usually done the year before the World Cup) with an inevitable recession and continues corruption scandals that had hurt the Workers Party as well as the reputation of Lula's successor, Dilma Rousseff (p. 212-213). The eagerness that was shared through the cup was now split in half with at least 40% of Brazilians being against it -- or at least, they weren't against the Cup themselves, but against the corruption the tournament represented.

This was the second time Brazil had hosted the tournament, the first time being in 1950 (where they lost in the final to Uruguay 2-1 in an event called the Maracanço, since the event happened in the *Maracanã* stadium) and due to the problems mentioned beforehand, there was the implication that if Brazil won their sixth title at home, then most of the problems that happened beforehand would be largely forgotten. There was reason to originally believe this, as Nandara, who went to one of the games in 2014, told me that World Cups are very important regardless of the location, and that they even cancel classes when the team is playing (due to being closer to the South Pole, usually the World Cup is done in June-July, so it is considered the equivalent of winter break in Brazil) and, in her own words "when the team plays, it's the only time we feel pride of being Brazilian" (Nandara, S. Zoom interview, 30 Jun 2021) which is also the same feeling Paula told me she felt about Argentina's team, she says that it feels like "a party

when the team plays” and that “is one of the few prides of being Argentinean” (Paula, R, Zoom interview, 2021). From a politician point of view, people would perhaps forget all the scandals if the team won the Cup, as they might not love their politicians, but they certainly love their team.

However, one of the most memorable parts of the Cup -- if not the most memorable one was the Argentinian fans and their determination to show the viewers at home that they were the ‘*best fans in the world*’ whenever Argentina played, and among that determination there was the famous fan chant *Brasil, decime que se siente* (*Brazil, tell me how it feels*) at the tone of *Bad Moon Rising*, a song recorded in 1969 by the Creedence Clearwater Revisited (Alabarces, 2016, pp 151). The fan chant was so popular that it had a Brazilian response with *Argentina me diz como se sente* (*Argentina, tell me how it feels*) and was even used by club games through Europe after the World Cup, recently, with Argentina’s victory over Brazil in Copa America 2021, there are videos of the players singing the famous song after the game.

Brasil, decime qué se siente (*Brazil, tell me how it feels*)

Tener en casa a tu papá (*To have your father at home*)

Te juro que aunque pasen los años (*I swear even when the years pass*)

Nunca nos vamos a olvidar (*We will never forget*)

Que el Diego te gambeteó (*That Diego dribbled you*)

Que Cani te vacunó (*That Cani vaccinated you*)

Qué estás llorando desde Italia hasta hoy (*That you have been crying from Italy [World Cup ‘90] until today*)

A Messi lo vas a ver (*You’ll see Messi*)

La copa nos va a traer (*Who’ll give us the Cup*)

Maradona es más grande que Pelé (*Maradona is bigger than Pele*)

The song's first lines do not not only refer to Argentina being Brazil's futbol father, which in this context father is being used to infantilize the opponent, as that Brazil as the son would be beneath Argentina (the accuracy of this statement is questionable), then it references the goal of Claudio Caniggia after a pass from Diego Maradona, Argentina's most beloved player ever, with this goal Argentina eliminated Brazil from the World Cup in Italy 90. It finishes with the promise of Argentinean Astro Lionel Messi bringing the Cup back and to reiterate that Maradona is bigger than Pele.

Even though at the end Messi did not bring the Cup home, is it worth mentioning that after the Brazilian loss 7-1 to Germany in the semi-finals (known as the *Mineirazo* because it was in the *Estadio Mineirão* in Minas Gerais), lyrics were changed in order to do reference to these events. Starting with *Brasil, decime que se siete*, a clever wordplay by switching the word *siente* [feels] by *siete* [seven] which are the goals Brazil got at the final to be eliminated from the Cup, the beginning to the second part is identical to the original version, but instead of reminding Maradona and Caniggia's plays, they talk about Brazil's current star, Neymar, and how he got injured in the quarterfinals against Colombia '*Te juro que aunque pasen los años, nunca lo vamos a olvidar, que Neymar te abandonó, que Alemania te goleó, que pena me das, Pentacampeón*' (*I swear that even when the years pass, we will never forget, that Neymar abandoned you, that Germany humiliated you, how sad you make me, pentachampion*). This refers not just to the defeat, but Neymar's forced withdrawal from the team after he got injured in the quarterfinals against Colombia, it finishes with them mocking the fact that Brazil will have to support Germany at the final if they don't want Argentina to win: *Te pusiste la de Irán, la de Suiza y la de Bélgica, cómprate la de Alemania en la final* (*You put the Iran [jersey], the Switzerland and the Belgium as well, buy the German one for the final!*).

It is unclear what happened in that final for the Brazilian team to crumble, and only the people who were on the pitch know what happened, among the interviewees one suggested that pressure might have been too much to handle, on top of their teammate injury. Nandara confessed that she cried as the game was progressing. When asked about it, Paula (from Argentina) answered “obviously!” when asked if she had enjoyed the game when it went down, with Argentina’s unexpected arrival to the semifinals making it all the sweeter “*we kept advancing at the Cup, and every time we were like ‘okay, this is it’ and suddenly we see ourselves in the semi-finals, when we won against Netherlands in penalties, it was incredible over here!*” Considering it was the first final since Italy 90’, and their rival had just lost, the only obstacle in the way was perhaps the biggest one yet: Germany.

Germany had arrived at the tournament as a favorite, and even in the group stages it looked like the team deserved that title. Before World Cup 2014, Germany had been a finalist and reached third place two times in a row. In Korea-Japan 2002, they lost against Brazil in the final, in Germany 2006, where they were playing at home, they lost against Italy who won their fourth accolade that year. In South Africa 2010, they lost against Spain (who they had also lost against in the Euro championship twice) who moved to the final to lift their first World Cup. They had arrived with a mission: to evolve from semi-finalist to finalist to winner, and with a squad that was one of their best, they had plenty of reasons to be confident. Germany is also the country Maradona loses what would-have-been his second World Cup and Argentina’s third World Cup in Italy ‘90, as well as knocking Argentina out of the competition in ‘06 and 2010 in Maradona’s short stint as coach. In the end, Germany wins their fourth World Cup trophy and becomes the first European country to win cups in the American continent.

CONCLUSION

Fans can be defined as someone who supports something – in this case, it is someone who supports a football team or a player. In Spanish, they are called hinchas. Most fans pick the team their family supports as a child, but some people support the team where a player they liked plays at, interviews from different people confirmed this theory. Among fans, there are more extreme variations who go by Ultras, Barras Bravas and Torcidas and share a lot with the English hooligans, and they bring the atmosphere to the game as well as getting in fights with other fans and even the players at times, alcohol and the adrenaline of the game makes them more susceptible to be involved violence. The authorities sometimes must get involved, and in the eyes of these fans they are another rival team in their eyes, sometimes confrontations between police and these groups get too violent and innocents may die like it happened once in Argentina. Violence in the game is a growing concern, especially when Italy, Argentina and Brazil are the countries with more deaths due to Ultras.

Another important part of the game is chanting, which serves both as an uplifter of the team and a downgrade of the rival, usually calling them homophobic insults and referring to them as their ‘father’ to show their superiority. Examples of this was in the World Cup 2014, when Argentina fans referred to themselves as Brazil’s father with the famous *decime que se siente* chant. Despite both South American teams wanting to set narratives, with Brazil wanting to win to clear what happened in 1950 only to lose more violently against Germany and Argentina reaching the finals at their rivals’ home and losing against the European wall. Narratives are important to the game; they are used to set importance to rivalries especially in an international context. In the second chapter, I will discuss how narratives are set to discuss the national team and players as a tool for nationalistic interests.

CHAPTER II

ICONOGRAPHY AND NATIONALISM

Flags, national symbols, anthems, all of these are methods used by countries that exist in the world of nations to show their existence by the concept of nationalism. Despite not having a clear definition, nationalism at its most basic level can be defined to support the country a person is born in as well as seeing people outside the country as foreigners. Events such as international sport tournaments exist to show how much a country excels at a discipline, and in the case of football, this happens through the international football tournaments where the national team plays.

For this chapter, sources come from peer reviews in Ancient Greece studies, sports studies, political science studies, history books such as *The Nazi Olympics* and questions done to football fans through the website *reddit*, a website where people discuss their interests through subreddits (r/soccer, in this case) where I ask if they'd prefer their favorite team to win or a nation victory.

I will discuss the idea of the national team as an instrument of banal nationalism, which is reinforcing ideas of nationalism through everyday events such as unwaved flags in the background or historical figures in money. The role of the athlete and ever since Ancient Greece they were worshiped as “heroes” “demigods” or “icons” and how their achievements (or defeats) are intertwined to the nation to the point is heritage for future generations. Lastly, I talk about the government's use of football in politics with a focus on Qatar 2022 and the recently coined term *sportswashing* and the athlete's role in politics in this new celebrity culture, with a focus on

Maradona's legacy off and on the pitch and Brazilian Astro Romario who pursued a career on politics after retiring.

In international tournaments such as the World Cup, African Cup Eurocups or Copa America, despite the priority being the teams that are about to play, there is a lot of focus on the fans of the National Teams (NT for short). When the national anthem starts playing, it only does not show the players singing the anthem, the camera also focuses on the fans singing the anthem as passionately as the players, some of them with the flag painted on their faces or carrying symbols or caricatures that represent their countries. In the final of the Eurocup in Wembley, England, when Italy was down 1-0, the camera focused on an upset Italian supporter who was dressed up as a pizza and next to her, a fellow Italian who was dressed up as *Mario*, the plumber from the famous Nintendo franchise. Next to them but less popular, there was a woman dressed as a Roman Empress dress with the emblem of the Italian NT in her robe.



Figure 3: Mario and Pizza at the Euros 2021 final between England and Italy. (Twitter, 2021)

These outfits are entertaining and symbolic – they all represent the nation of Italy one way or the other, either by their famous pizza, a callback to the Roman Empire or even the famous video game character. These are examples of banal nationalism, whose concept will be explained further below.

NATIONAL TEAMS AND BANAL NATIONALISM

The concept of nationalism was born alongside the concept of nation-states, according to the concept of nationalist doctrine, the basic principles of nationalist doctrine are the following: We exist in a world of states, and the nation is the uncontested and only legitimate source of political power (Triandafyllidou, p 593-594, 2010) and the existence of our state implicitly means that other states exist. Therefore, nationalism is used to differentiate between the people who reside inside the state and the “foreigners” who come from other countries.

In his book *Banal Nationalism*, Michael Billig (1995) points out that nationalism exists because nations have history – and that history exists by remembering their ancient history while erasing what is “displeasing”, usually associated with the violence that came with the birth of these nations. The concept of banal nationalism is best represented with an unwaved flag: they exist in the background, unwaved and unsaluted, but they exist as a mindless reminder of your identity and where your loyalty belongs to in the World of Nations, while they would be waived with pride in days of national holidays such as the fourth of July. Another example would be how currency usually has national symbols or historical figures on them, but us, citizens, never pay much attention to it. I argue that there is another method: wearing a national team soccer *jersey*.



Figure 4: Uruguay flags waved in a World Cup qualifier against Venezuela, June 2012. (Baikovicius, 2012)

Ever since the first international football friendly happened between Scotland and England in 1872, national teams (NTs) have been used to rile up patriotic spirits when a football game comes near. Games against England were very important for the creation of Scottish national feeling in a time where members of the Scottish elite were starting to think of themselves as British (Koller & Brandle, p 141-142). In current England, despite having their last international tournament in 1966, football is still considered a symbol of Englishness alongside the Royal Family and the Cross of St. George (Clavane, 2020) and regardless of country, the call for the NT is usually a moment for celebration, it is a reward for doing well at club level and it means that you are good enough to represent the country in the World Stage.

On the website called reddit, where several people discuss topics according to their respective hobbies in sub-forums called *subreddits*. I went to ask questions in r/soccer in discussion posts where fans engaged in different discussions of the football culture, going from opinions of players to controversies regarding ownership of clubs or transfer rumors. The question asked was if they could choose between a sporting achievement – be either a club title such as winning the league or inter-club competition such as the *UEFA Champions League* (biggest European inter-club competition) or the *Libertadores* (biggest Latin American club competition) or making their country win an international competition such as the World Cup, then which one would they choose. Out of the 10 answers, most of them chose the World Cup easily, but a couple of them preferred a domestic title, among the reasons being that they are more attached to the team they see play every day rather than the national team that they only see a few times a year. (See Appendix B).

The relationship between the NT as a symbol of the country is even more noticeable when they either reached a landmark football wise, such as reaching a final for the first time or winning a trophy for the first time, when Italy won the *Eurocup* tournament this year (their first international achievement since 2006) there were pictures of Italian citizens celebrating outside the Colosseum waving the Italian flag. In Argentina, when they reached the final in Brazil 2014 after a penalty shootout against the Netherlands, citizens from Buenos Aires went to celebrate at *El Obelisco*. However, there is a dark counterpart to this euphoria, the jersey of the Croatia NT replicates the national flag, and that includes the *sahovnica*, which is the coat of arms of Croatia, and of a symbol of the fascist *Ustase* regime (Schiller, 2015). Football matches was an important part of Croatian lives through the breakup of Yugoslavia, and Zvonimir Boban, player from the Yugoslavia NT with Croatian roots, became a national hero when he did a karate kick on a Serb

Policeman who was beating up a Dynamo Zagreb (Croatian team) fan in an ethnic riot in a game against Red Star Belgrade (Serbia) (Schiller, p 188, 2015). Though not as politically involved as Boban, one could not talk about the NTs without the most important part of it: the legendary players.

THE MYTH, THE LEGEND, THE PLAYERS:

According to Nigel Nicholson (2015), the *hero-athlete* oral narratives (and the cult for those athletes) can be traced to the late archaic and early classical periods in Ancient Greece – which coincides with the foundation of the first Olympic games around 776 BC. As the name suggests, these narratives are collected stories around the idea that great athletes are heroes – in particular “a second Heracles” and in some stories the athletes receive a heroic or even divine cult of some action (p 2). The main elements of the narrative usually being a larger-than-life hero who performs great deeds both within and outside of the games and is eventually assimilated as a hero (p 9). By comparing these athletes to a second coming of Heracles – the famous demigod – it created a cult around their personalities, and some of their achievements were distorted or changed when it went from oral to written narratives as it fit the writers (or the community) agenda the best (p 7).

This phenomenon still happens in the present, perhaps more than it ever did in Ancient Greece due to social media. Across the different disciplines, there will always be the debate of the *G.O.A.T* (Greatest Of All Time) and will always back up the athlete of their choosing, good footballers will come and go, but the truly legendary generation of players are remembered of what they do at club and country level, which is why the World Cup is the most important trophy to win for professional players: it is a chance to get into history as one of the greats.

Gammon (2014) claims that it is not enough for heroes to be good at what they do, but it is also important when the averages and succeed were archived, in what era, and under which conditions, going as far as to say that “For the deeds attained by the sporting hero, context is everything” Furthermore, a hero must archive something that goes beyond what is possible, something that separates them from a typical “good” sportsman (p. 248-249) and these heroes and their deeds become heritage for the country and their generations to come.

At an international level, the concept of “playing for the shirt” is linked to the very beginnings of football. Originally, football was a pastime instead of a profession, something done by entertainment, health improvisation and fair play instead of a job, and receiving payment was frowned upon by many people (John Foot, p. 24-25, 2007). It wasn't until the start of the 20th century where the demands of fans and owners as well as the economy itself that football began taking the form of a business and professionalism was recognized, but these ideas are prevalent in the mind of a fan. In other words, when you get called up to play for the national team, fans expect you to leave everything on the field, or otherwise, regardless of ability, you are not worthy of the honor.

The privilege of becoming a hero does not apply to every sportsman, Franz Beckenbauer, World Cup winner and considered one of the best defensive players of all time, had success both as a coach and as a German Ambassador but in contrast Paul Gascoine, better known as *Gazza*, who was considered one of the best English midfielders of their generation, had their legacy tainted by their personal life due to alcoholism and wife-beating charges (Gammon 251-252). How much the tension between the past and the present will “ruin” the legacy depends on the people in the country and what standards they put their heroes to. In some cases, the people at

large will forgive their human fragilities to uplift their sporting achievements and pass them as heritage to the next generation.

In the same way a victory at international level gets the player's name written in sports history and elevates their status as a hero, defeat can be crushing for the player's reputation. Roberto Baggio, who was considered one of the best players of his era, never quite recovered from missing the penalty in USA 1994 which left Italy as sub-champions and gave Brazil their 4th World Cup title, but still had a decent career until his eventual retirement. Barbosa, the Brazilian goalie in 1950 when they lost at home against Uruguay not just ruined his career, it chased him after his retirement and eventual death, twenty years after the match a woman pointed his fingers at him and called him "the man who brought Brazil to tears" and was even once expelled from the national center in 1993 because he "could only bring bad luck" (Koeller and Brandle, p 132). Even though these examples rarely happen in the modern game – or at least not at the level Barbosa had to suffer, it is important to keep them in mind. If by winning you become a hero, then by failing – or being the responsible of the failure – you become a tragic figure at best, or a villain at worst.

GOVERNMENT USE OF FOOTBALL: THE SPORT AS A POLITICAL TOOL

If idealization of sporting figures exists since Ancient Greece, and the achievements of the athletes can be seen as heritage, it is not surprising that governments have tried to push their personal agendas through sports. Gift (2017) points out that the studies between political sciences and law are limited in comparison to other topics such as law or business or international relations, despite examples of politicians understanding it – when Fidel Castro died in 2016, there were plenty of news reporting the story of the Cuban dictator, but ESPN and Sports outlets also highlighted his positive legacy when it came to sports such as welcoming a

MLB player back to his country in the 90s, or to leverage sports in order to enhance nationalistic pride (p.130). Nelson Mandela's support of Rugby in the 1995 World Cup united a post-apartheid South Africa (Elcombe, 2021) In an international setting, an Olympic team who earns a lot of gold medals is considered more apt to host to Olympics next tournament over those who do not, and in football winning the World Cup increases a nation's profile in international relations, which contributes to more trading in the international trade (p. 150-151). Even more important, sport mega-events such as the Olympics or the World Cup are used as a method of soft power and helps upcoming World Powers with the opportunity to generate attraction despite possessing "unattractive" national characteristics (Grix and Lee, 2013).

While in an ideal setting paying attention to less known countries through sport events could improve the country's image and open the doors to tourism, in worst cases it has been used to "clean" the country's image from recent human rights abuses which is known as *sportswashing*. Although a fairly recent term, sportswashing has been existing a long time – one of the first cases being the 1936 Berlin Olympics in Nazi Germany, where the goal was for Hitler to promote its ideas of racial supremacy and antisemitism by not letting Jewish athletes join, regarding the German athletes, they wanted to make loyal athletes physically fit to serve the Fuhrer, with Goebbels stating "German sport only has one task: to strengthen the character of the German people, imbuing it with the fighting spirit and camaraderie necessary in the struggle for its existence" (Hilton, p. 13). In other words, they used an event that celebrates friendly competition in order to enhance loyalty in German soldiers and show this superiority to the World.

It was not the first time the axis used sports for their own benefit, as the second World Cup, Italy 1934 was used for fascist propaganda in order to show how fascism was the way of

the future, with Mussolini himself being a huge football fan. He claimed the football descendent from Italy, with a way more aggressive game with slightly different rules called *Calcio Fiorentino* that is still played today (*calcio* being the Italian word for football as well). In this case, with the World Cup tournament being fairly young, only experiencing the matches by radio or by assisting to the stadium, strong rivals such as the former champion Uruguay refusing to go due to disagreements with FIFA and England preferring to play in another tournament, it means they could manipulate the press reporting the tournament the way they desired (Hall, 2016) lying about the attendance and with very dodgy refereeing which ended up with the hosts as champions, the fascist paper *Il Popolo d'Italia* describing it as '*In the name and in the presence of Il Duce, the Azzurri win a new world title*' (Berlinski, 2018) and it helped to reinforce Mussolini's grip over Italy as he took this victory as a step towards the rebirth of the nation under fascism.

Even after World War 2, the relationship between football and dictatorships has been a complex one, especially in the South American continent. In Argentina 1978, where it won its first world title, despite the celebrations on the streets when it first happened, it is not looked as fondly as in their second world title. General Jorge Rafael Videla with shiny stadiums and new infrastructure to show a false image of the nation to the world and the tourists (Berlinski, 2018) while the political prisoners were being tortured under the eye of *la junta*.

In 2022, the World Cup will be held in Qatar this winter which has been a topic of discussion among people since its reveal in 2010. Qatar is a country that has little to no football culture in comparison to the other competitors for the host as well as its predecessors (Blake and Calvert, 2015). It did not have enough infrastructure to handle the minimum for stadiums (40,000 for groups and 60,000 for finals) and the climate of the country made it impossible to

host the World Cup in Summer as is the tradition (Bishop & Cooper, 2018) and has been rescheduled to winter instead. Due to its several violations of human rights – especially in regard to workers conditions to build stadiums with more than 6500 migrant workers dying ever since the World Cup was awarded – a lot of people accuse Qatar and FIFA of using football to “clear” the image of the country, a similar issue happening in 2018 with Russia.

There are some examples far in between that show a more positive counterpart to the use of football for socio-political reasons. In a highly globalized market, where players get signed where they get paid the most regardless of their country of origin, clubs like *Athletic Bilbao* are an exception, located in Basque Country, they only sign players who are ethnically Basque in contrast with rivals *Real Sociedad*. *C.D El Nacional* in Ecuador relates to this as well, only signing Ecuadorian players, *Altinordu* from Turkey only signs those who are ethnically Turkish. Football clubs are usually organizations, with their very own ideology, an example being with *Rayo Vallecano* from Madrid being a working class focused group that offered to pay a 85 year old woman’s rent for the life in the middle of the Spanish economical crisis (Gonzales, 2014) . Taking this into consideration, if players are “passed down” by generations due to their successes, and how the government can exploit the sporting events for their own desire, then the contributions of these sporting legends and their role in history is tied to politics.

PLAYERS AND POLITICS: THE SPORTING SIDE OF CELEBRITY CULTURE.

Olympic games winner Eric Heiden said once that “*sport and politics do not mix*” in opposition to the United States boycotting the Moscow Games in 1980 (Gift and Miner p. 132). Even though fans like to believe in that statement being true due to the concept of sports uniting people regardless of political differences, the statement could not be far from the truth. Yes,

sports have the power to unite people regardless of differences, but as it is stated in the previous sections, it is also a tool for the states to promote themselves by the means of sporting achievements. Moreover, the players (despite the pedestal they are put in due to their success) are still people with rights and beliefs, and while some prefer to keep their private political preferences aside, celebrity culture and politics work closely together in Latin America, especially when it comes to former athletes.

By David Marshall definition, celebrities can be considered as “clusters of individuals, [who] are given a greater presence and wider scope of activity and agency than are those who make up the rest of the population” (Ribke, p. 37). In other words, they are a small number of people whose presence and opinions are given more importance than the rest of the population, it can be because of followers, fame, or achievements and can influence how people see a topic or a person. Manchester United and Portugal’s striker Cristiano Ronaldo is the most followed person on Instagram with 399M followers, followed by Kylie Jenner and with Lionel Messi as third. Brands are aware of this popularity which is why they choose to promote or sponsor certain products for the following to see and hopefully buy the product, a similar pattern happens with when players get involved – one way or another.

The freedom of expression of athletes is a complicated ground with multiple gray areas, but the “right to shock and disturb the State or any sector of the population” which comes with freedom of expression is usually limited by the Sporting Organizations (SO) such as the Olympic Committee and FIFA since they consider it political neutrality a part of their principles (Di Marco, 2021, p 620-621) and Sporting Organizations have full authority to do codes and rules as they see fit in order to uphold this neutrality, and punish it by sanctions if athletes are deemed to break the rules. When English footballer Jadon Sancho wore a shirt demanding Justice for

George Floyd, the SO did not consider it a violation of the neutrality principle as the fight against racism is one of the pillars of sport, but discussions in regards of the independence of autonomous communities of Spain such as Catalonia or Basque country violate the neutrality principle as it can cause arguments between teammates inside the Spain NT (Di Marco p. 638). However, due to the fine line between censorship and neutrality, players tend to have opinions on politics and use their influence regardless, especially after they've retired and are a public citizen and the neutrality rule cannot affect them.

In his study *Maradona Inc. Performance Politics Off the Pitch* Nicolas Salazar-Sutil studies the former Argentina player and his politics on and off the pitch, according to him, what makes Maradona a symbol while is not his talent on the pitch but symbols that can be up to interpretation and that he himself is a "blank page" for the population (Sutil p. 442-443) which might be alluded by his autobiography where he says that sometimes his whole life is on print or film (Maradona, p.1). His symbolism did not just limit to when he carried Argentina to victory against England in the *Mexico 86* quarterfinals (and eventually won) and for what he said off the pitch after the game, his most important goals were the famous handball (known as the *Hand of God* after he denied it being a handball and saying it was God's hand who made the goal happen) and what is known by fans as "*the goal of the century*" as he beat England's defenses and scored a goal by himself, but what cemented his legacy of this game was when he said "'it was like recovering a little bit of the Malvinas [Falklands]" (Sutil p. 449). Maradona's blunt and controversial approach to interviews and media, which made him relatable in the eyes of the people.

On the political field, he had quite a history with politics, with him in the 1978 dedicating the victory of the Youth World Cup to General Videla, in the 90s he supported right winged

politician Carlos Saul Menem, but in the 2000s he supported Hugo Chavez and Fidel Castro. Salazar-Sutil points out that these ideas are “sophisticated strategies of political communication” as he was aware of his influence and used it to support the cause it felt more correct to him (regardless of if it was contradictory or not). Maradona’s influence extends even to Napoli, where he became a sporting hero by being aware that due to Italy’s geographic fracture, football gets very violent and passionate regarding rivalries (p. 450-453) and Maradona knew that becoming a sporting hero meant political and social capital on top of the economy.

Brazil is another country with a huge celebrity culture as well, with Brazilian *astro* Neymar Jr. and current President Jair Bolsonaro having a very close relationship to the point the president, the Minister of Economy Paulo Guedes met personally with Neymar’s father in order to discuss a judicial process done against the star’s company *NR Sports e Marketing* because it owned 42,571,693 euros in taxes and after this meeting the company did not have to pay a 500,000 fine by the city of Santos (Mundo Deportivo, 2020). Some players such as Romario, who is the fourth biggest goal scorer for the Brazil NT and a World Cup winner, even though he had disciplinary problems with coaches as well as laziness in practices, he was a key player in the 1994 World Cup win, many people who followed Romario’s career until the end believe he represents the true Brazilian “someone who does not conform to every rule, but has talent and has overcome social barriers to be successful, even if he needs to fight for changes in those rules” (Doidge et al, 2017, p. 269).

Similar to Maradona, he used his personality to influence voters for the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB) and was even elected senator from 2014 to 2017, before that he served as national deputy and was vice president of the Tourism and Sport Commission of the Deputies Chamber in 2011 and then elected president in 2013, surrogate on the Commission for Education

and Culture, vice-president on the Parliamentary front for people with disabilities and Director for sports and accessibility themes on the Parliamentary front for physical activity (Doidge p. 270). When he won the elections for senator, he became the most voted candidate in the history of Rio de Janeiro and he acknowledged it was for his following, but also because he related to the people's struggles since he grew up poor.

Overall, despite the national team being the representation of the country in international events, players are separate people with their own desires and backgrounds who shape them. Despite a lot of them being international stars, especially in Latin America football is seen to escape poverty and it is very common for players to give back to the community once they reach a certain level of success. People idolize athletes for their talent and their contributions for the team, but in cases like Maradona or Romario they also might connect to their personality and see themselves reflected on it. Even in modern football, where it is highly globalized and people support teams from the other side of the world and connect to players more than clubs at certain times, there are struggles and issues that affect players worldwide and this serves as connection to the fans.

CONCLUSION:

The national team (NT) is the representation of the countries in international football events and has been used as a tool to build national identities through the concept of banal nationalism. In banal nationalism, symbols such as historical figures in currency, unwaved flags in the background and even wearing your national team *jersey* are reminders that as a person you are part of that nation and its history. The victory of the team means the victory of the nation and converts the athletes into heroes if they win in certain moments of history. Maradona knocking England out in World Cup '86 the biggest example of it

Governments are aware of this influence, which leads to the government use of football and its rocky relationship with dictatorships. From the second World Cup being held in fascist Italy to current complaints about Qatar and the treatment of their workers, governments and powerful people use football to distract others from human rights violations on what is called sportswashing.

Lastly, the role of the athlete and their voice, though usually players must keep the balance between their freedom of speech and not say something that could ruin their careers, how that voice is used plays a huge role in their influence even after retiring. Among these examples there is Brazilian Astro Romario, who went to follow politics after he retired and even managed to be a senator in Rio de Janeiro. On the other hand, there are others whose behavior offside the pitch destroys the legacy they had on the pitch.

In the last chapter, race and futbol: a complicated and timeless relationship, it will focus on the relationships between race and ethnicity inside and outside the field, and how despite FIFA's and federation efforts to do a more inclusive sport, racism prevails in different aspects of the game. Held by sports journalists and aggressive behavior towards rival players in the middle of the matches.

CHAPTER III

RACE AND FOOTBALL: A COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP

Despite sports should be an environment where people from all races and ethnicities coexist together as one, as with all parts of society, racism is an issue that is deeply rooted within football, an issue that goes from isolation and comparison with their other teammates, unfair treatment in media and even fans throwing bananas at players of color. This chapter's sources are peer reviewed sources from journalist studies, race studies as well as journalist sources and FIFA's statements in regard to racism.

The topics explored in this chapter will be the relationship between football, race and nation and how football players who were children of immigrants had a different experience than their teammates as well as players of color who leave their home country to play in Europe as it is considered the pinnacle of football; the key role of the media perpetuating racist stereotypes focusing on the case of *The Sun* and the treatment of English player Raheem Sterling. Lastly, I discuss the attempts of FIFA to solve this problem with different programs and rules in order to reinforce their execution inside and outside the field such as the Say No To Racism and the Three-Step Procedure, however, I argue that until there is not a real institutional change in the sport, these are temporal solutions for a for a long-term problem.

Through the last decades, there has been progress when it comes to make football friendly environment for everybody, from fan activism to the clubs themselves to the federation themselves making official campaigns such as *Fair Play; Say no to Racism; Handshake for Peace; Football for Hope; Football for the Planet* which eludes to a more open game in a sport

that has been known for a long time for being almost exclusive to men – and therefore applying the rules of homogeneous masculinity despite the diverse amount of players.

Yet, by the same reason, and despite the progress that has happened in the last decades, football's ugliest face shows up particularly when a loss happens – rival fans will insult the players from the opposite team which often tend to be homophobic or racist insults. In some cases, sometimes even the fans turn against them, such as the penalty shootout against Italy in the Euro 2020 where the verbal abuse through social media towards Jadon Sancho, Marcus Rashford and Bukayo Saka (all black English players) was so bad the teammates and the clubs had to make statements to defend them.

While on different levels of microaggression that depend on the circumstances of the game players of color are constantly the object of racist remarks in particularly European settings – since European football is where players go to be considered “the best” due to the quality of the players. These dynamics also affect how fans of color feel at the stadium and their interactions with the sport. The relationship with the media will also be key part of this study alongside interviews with different players of different sports, since sport journalists, intentionally or not, set up a narrative that ends up contributing to the racial discrimination on the sport.

FOOTBALL, RACE AND NATIONALITY

As it is the case with most sports, football has a complex relationship with race. Originally being a sport that was originally played by Caucasians, now it is one of the most diverse sports with players from all continents far from “home” and mostly in European leagues which are considered the most competitive and best paid leagues in the world. At a national team level, even European teams have been more ethnically diverse reflecting the diversification of

the old continent (Wycliffe, 2021). However, this modern wave of players has been a double-edged sword, when they lose the first thing that comes in question is their nationality, players like Mario Balotelli, who had African parents but was born and raised in an Italian family pointed out that in the eyes of the fans he could never be seen as “fully Italian”. Mesut Ozil, who is German with Turkish roots also said that fans never saw him as fully German. The French national team, who in 1998 was considered a symbol for unity and post-racial France due to their players having different ethnicities blamed those minorities for the 2010 World Cup exit on the group stages.

Naturally, of course, one can have several identities that link to your “main” identity, and they do not have to be strongly intertwined (Wycliffe, 2021). People can be Asian and American at the same time, be Catholic and be supportive of LGBT rights, English of Caribbean roots and so on, therefore a person can reclaim as many parts of their personality as they please. However, by emphasizing the foreign origins of a person, it becomes a successful strategy to “other” them.

The very first dark-skinned footballer at an international level was Andrew Watson (1856–1921), who played for Scotland. Debuting in 1881, there would not be any other players of color until 40 years later (Przemysław, 2021). After the first international tournaments after the 1930 World Cup, migration for sport reasons became more common from the Americas to Europe, their cosmopolitanism being a key part of the development of clubs like *Lyon* in France, *Genoa* in Italy which started by British and Scotsmen and were exclusively for them, but eventually let Swiss and Austrians join, even *Futbol Club Barcelona* who nowadays is a synonymous of Catalan nationalism was founded in 1899 by a Swiss accountant who represented the interests of French and Swiss companies and it’s first players came from Britain, Switzerland, Germany and Austria, only becoming a symbol of Catalonia around 1920 (Taylor,

2007, p. 7-8). The South American migration of the 1930s connected Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay to Italy, Spain and France (p. Taylor 17-18) despite attempts in holding back the migration of the country's best players.

Spain was the home to Hispanic American players in the decades of the 1960 and 1970 – a bond that it still exists today, they called them *oriundos* (originating from) in order to avoid status as foreigners, with club Atletico de Madrid as the forefront of this movement, with their fans known as *indios* (indians) by rival teams (Spaaij et al, 2005, 154) to the point it is still used today by same-city rivals Real Madrid in chants. However, it is commonly agreed that Atletico had a very successful era thanks to those so called “indians” especially Hugo Sanchez, a player from Mexico who eventually transferred to Real Madrid. Currently, the club has fully embraced the identity that was before an insult, making their official mascot a raccoon called *indi*.

<i>Indios, Decidme qué se siente, Haber perdido la final, Te juro, Que aunque pasen los años, Nunca nos vamos a olvidar, Que perdiste la final, Contra el mágico Real, Esa mancha no se borrará jamás, Rojiblanco eres llorón, Además de segundón, Qué cobardes los hinchas del Calderón...</i>	<i>Indians, Tell me how it feels To lose [Champions League] final I swear, Even when the years pass We will never forget That you lost the final Against the magical Real (Madrid), That stain will never go away Rojiblanco you are a crybaby And always second place too How cowardly are the hinchas from the Calderon (Atletico stadium)</i>
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Table 3 - Chant against Atletico de Madrid by Real Madrid fans.

According to Spaaij, Spanish fans believe themselves to be less racist than their English and Italian counterparts since there are “less racial tensions” as Yugoslavian and Central Europeans claimed it was less hostile than their own environment (Spaaij p. 157) meanwhile players from Black and/or Latino descent often monkey noises are done by the public (both

Ultras and general public alike) to rival players despite having black players on their teams. Real Madrid *Ultra* group, the Ultra Sur (who the Spaniard club has tried to cut ties with) were known to verbally abuse players from rival teams while backing up Roberto Carlos, due to be considered a great player in his position, in other words, they are used in a more utilitarian way and the respect depends on how good the performances are (p. Spaaij 153-154).

JOURNALISM AND MEDIA:

The most popular way of consuming sports is through the media – be it through journalistic websites to keep news on the players (transfers, interviews, among others), streaming services such as ESPN+, Peacock or Paramount+. The English Premier League owned by NBC in the US just renewed their right to broadcast the matches worth a staggering 2.7Billion dollars until 2028 with a growing average viewership of 609,000 this year (Sportspromedia, 2018) and could be estimated to be more through illegal websites. In a world where sport is worldwide, it is hard and expensive to get tickets to see your favorite team, making the TV and the journalistic websites the mainstream way of how overseas fans interact with the team and the players.

The role of the sports journalist goes narrating what happens on the pitch – they are also the ones responsible to capture the personalities beyond the sport and whatever issues they face. Andy Cairns, the one of the executive editors of Sky Sports demanded his journalists to be prepared to discuss any serious issues: political protests, discrimination, mental health and even cheating (Bradshaw, et al, 2019). However, racial and discrimination bias can be found in the sports reporting. In contrast with sports coverage of men, which focus on skill and ability, their women counterparts tend to be the focus of a more “swallow” coverage focusing on their beauty, grace and body (Mastro, 2012) while narration of male athletes focus on courage and strength. Racial bias is also prevalent in sports as well, in football journalism, they would focus on the

physical strength of a player, while a white player would get the focus on their skill or their dribbling. Usually, it is attributed to also having a lack of diversity on the sports journalism as well, in other words, the lack of diversity behind the scenes affects the athlete's portrayal negatively, not on purpose but more likely to fall into preconceived notions of stereotypes.

With social media being as important as it is – most of the information on players, highlights, interviews and such come from the teams' social media and as such, they are not exempt of criticisms regarding stereotypes when it comes to their own players. On 10/19/2021 Dutch football team *AFC Ajax* posted two pictures together, one from their stadium and the other from a football field surrounded by the Brazilian favelas under the caption “what we see [our field] vs what Antony sees [the favelas]” originally the post was referencing the common belief among football fans (also a stereotype) that the best Brazilian players come from less privileged neighborhoods. The tweet was frowned upon by some Brazilian users, by pointing out that not all of them live in favelas, but also that Antony came from *Sao Paulo FC*, which is not just one of the most successful football clubs in Brazil, and with that it comes certain advantages and privileges for a player's growth. One of them also pointed out that the favela in the picture is from Rio de Janeiro, and Antony is from Sao Paulo, while the post stayed on the team's page, is an example on how stereotypes can be upheld by social media, even if it does not mean to be offensive at first sight.



Figure 5: AFC Ajax Twitter

In December 2018, England and Manchester City’s football star Raheem Sterling responded on Instagram to the racist abuse he had received from a group of Chelsea fans in a Premier League match. He also mentioned that both of his youth teammates, Tosin Adiyoboy (who is black) and Phil Foden (who is white) both bought a house for their mothers, but Adiyoboy’s story was pointed in a more negative way than Foden’s. (Bradshaw & Minogue, 2019, p. 121). His intervention happened in the same week a Tottenham supporter threw a banana at Arsenal’s Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang. Sterling stated that the aggressive fan behavior was fueled by the media's negative stories about black footballers.

Indeed, Sterling had a massive tabloid coverage over his lifestyle and alleged misdemeanors (Bradshaw p. 122) by English journalist website *The Sun*, one of them being on

the eve of Russia 2018, with the title “Sterling shoots himself in the foot” featuring a picture of a gun tattoo on his right leg. Criticism of this front page included that they did not reach out for Sterling’s version of the events, and that they forgot to investigate important events such as Sterling’s father was shot dead in Jamaica. Sterling defended himself on Instagram, explaining that he was two years old when his father died, and that he would never touch a gun in his lifetime, the only time the player “shoots” would be with his right foot, therefore that was the reason for his tattoo. Overall, the story was criticized for their poor journalistic standards despite *The Sun* trying to double down on if Sterling was the right person to be playing for England.

These sentiments are also seen in American Sports, and sports in general. Athletes prefer going to Instagram or Twitter rather than giving the benefit of the doubt to journalists who try to paint them in a positive light. They can either fight it, or they can ignore it if they want to. Andrew Lawrence, who is a contributor for *The Athletic*, claims that this might be ultimately for the best, as the best way for athletes to change the conversation is leading it themselves (Bradshaw et al, p. 123).

FIGHT AGAINST RACISM

#SayNoToRacism was a task force that started in 2013 former FIFA president Sepp Blatter in order to bring more awareness to the racism problem. Captains of teams wore the message on their armbands, anti-racism messages will be played over clubs' public address systems and a video containing player testimonials backing the campaign will be shown in each stadium. A *No to Racism* pennant will be passed between players in match lineups and they would pose together as to portray that both teams stand against discrimination on all forms (UEFA, 2013). Even the anti-discrimination message still stands as a prelude to most matches, and it is mostly carried by UEFA (A FIFA subsidiary in charge overlooking football in Europe),

this taskforce was disbanded in 2016. With FIFA writing to the members that “completely fulfilled its temporary mission” and “is hereby dissolved and no longer in operation.”. Not only this is inaccurate, but it ended 2 years prior to the World Cup in Russia, where records of racism incidents by Russian fans in stadiums went largely unpunished, with 92 incidents of discriminatory incidents in the 2014/15 season, against a total of 83 for the previous two seasons put together (The Guardian, 2016). When asked for an explanation, Gerd Dembowski, FIFA’s diversity and anti-discrimination manager said that the task force was only to ask for recommendations and since they were given, the purpose had been fulfilled.

This was met with criticism, especially as in 2016, according to Moscow-based SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, a group of nine young men in Yekaterinburg attacked visitors of a gay bar during the recent Euro 2016 tournament, shouting "Russia are the Champions" as the attackers also shot air rifles (Ramsay, 2016). Former FIFA Presidential Candidate Prince Ali of Jordan considered the justification as “shameful”. However, the organization reiterates that it would continue its fight against racism regardless of if the task force was disbanded or not.

March 21 is the “The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination” chosen by the United Nations to remember the Sharpeville Massacre, where the police shot 69 people who were protesting peacefully against the apartheid laws in South Africa (FIFA, 2021). In 2021, with the protests worldwide against racism, Gianni Infantino, president of FIFA stated.

“As the governing body of football worldwide, FIFA recognises and embraces its responsibility to lead the fight against discrimination (...) This fight also relies on the implementation of measures by FIFA, by the continental confederations, and by FIFA’s 211 member associations at the national and local level. As such, FIFA remains determined to work

together with our stakeholders to eradicate racism, indeed discrimination and violence of any kind, wherever it still exists."

Among the measures taken against discrimination in football is the zero-tolerance policy there is *Under the Three-Step-Procedure*, a referee will momentarily stop the match and request the verbal discrimination to cease, by the third warning, the match will be forfeited, as well as diversity and anti-discrimination training. However, as much improvement measures like this can help to the game in general, its implementation is harder to apply on individual cases, as verbal racism towards players is as strong as ever and matches rarely get stopped. Occasional punishments do not leave a strong message and until a proper "zero tolerance" stance happens, as well as a real change in the industry – journalism included – the football industrial complex will not change.

CONCLUSION

Racism in football isn't a new topic, players have been clear on how it has affected its experiences with the sport and their interactions with the fans. Players of color have been honest with their experiences and how it has shaped them differently from their white counterparts. It's common for people in games to throw bananas at rival players while praising and protecting players from their clubs if they play well. Sports journalism plays a role within it too, praising white athletes for their talent while black athletes are praised for their strength, and players of color are held to a double standard in their behavior off the pitch such as what happened to Raheem Sterling and *The Sun*.

FIFA's *Say No To Racism* task force started in 2013 to bring more awareness to the problem, however, it was dissolved before the 2016, 2 years before the World Cup in Russia under the justification that it had fulfilled its mission despite there being several racism incidents

in Russian games. Under the new head of FIFA, Gianni Infantino has implemented new rules and procedures that could even cancel a match if the referee sees racist behavior out of control, however, verbal abuse towards players continues and not all matches get stopped. Until there is not a real change in the industry that includes every branch of the sport, even the journalist branch, these are temporal solutions for a long-standing problem.

CONCLUSION:

Despite its humble origins as “the people’s game” football has evolved to be an industrial complex where governments and companies use a worldwide phenomenon to push their own interests by using the sport as a political tool to promote the interest of their countries and improve their image in the World of Nations. Starting with the first World Cup in Uruguay in 1930 and evolving into one of the most important events that occur every four years, such as the World Cup, and smaller events such as the Euros or Copa America, FIFA has been responsible for the growth of the sport for good and the bad.

Among the recent conflict between Ukraine and Russia, the figure of Roman Abramovich has taken a spotlight. The former owner of Chelsea Football Club, a London-based club that has seen a lot of success under him, is known to have ties with Vladimir Putin. Abramovich was governor of Chukotka in the 2000s under Putin’s approval and was a big part of the success of World Cup Russia 2018. Currently as the crisis develops, his assets are frozen, which was the main reason why Chelsea is on sale. Other recent cases such as Saudi Arabian owners buying English Club Newcastle have similar reasoning: using football as an investment and to sweep under the rug human rights violations as it is the case with Qatar and the immigrant workers as the average fan would not care as long as they get quality signings such as the Neymar case.

Racism and discrimination should have no place anywhere, less of all in sports, and being aware of it while keeping in mind it is unacceptable is the first step to deal with the problem. This thesis does not look to solve racism, but rather give awareness on how everything is intertwined in order to understand the topic and come up with new solutions. Lastly, it is important to remember that despite the negative sides of the sport, such as violence between fans, racism towards players and corruption at the higher levels of the organization, football

means something for many people as a family tradition, as a way to form friendships and even in some cases a way to escape poverty. That is why people care about it, and why it is important to study it.

APPENDIX A:

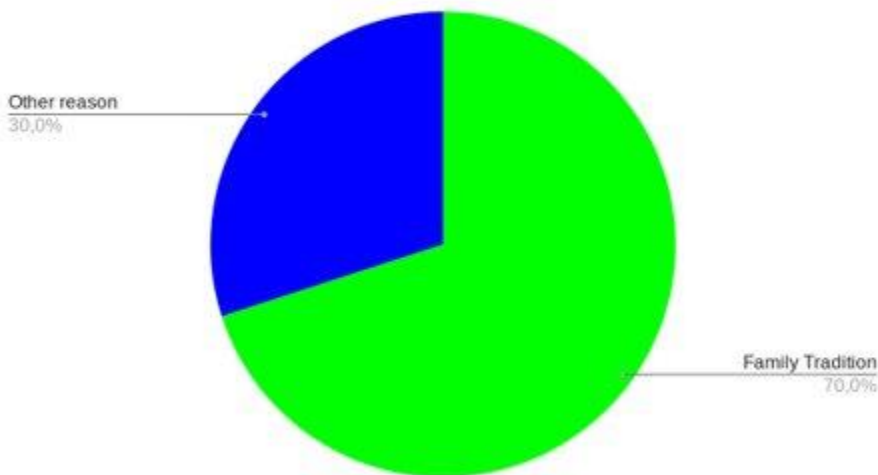
Why do you support your team?

This appendix consists of the questions and interviews done to the ten (10) football fans on Zoom. Especially regarding the question of why you support your team. Among the questions asked, these were the main four.

- Have you gone to a soccer game in person? If so, how did you feel?
- How long have you been a soccer fan?
- Who is your favorite team?
- Did you watch the 2014 World Soccer Cup? What did you think of the 2014 World Soccer Cup?

In order to test how people, become fans, I focused on questions #2 and #3 and created a chart based on the answers, family tradition identified as the color green, other reasons as the color blue. Most people interviewed support a team as a family tradition.

Why do you support your team



APPENDIX B

World Cup or Club Title

This appendix includes conversations that I had on the website reddit asking fans if they would prefer a World Cup victory over their favorite team winning the title. I asked the mods for permission (Image A) and then proceeded to ask the question in a Daily Discussion Thread (Images B and C).

Following, I proceeded to do a chart to compare the responses I got. The World Cup option was blue, and the club victory was red. Most people in the discussion preferred the World Cup, but there was a significant amount who preferred a club victory because they cared about their club more than the national team.

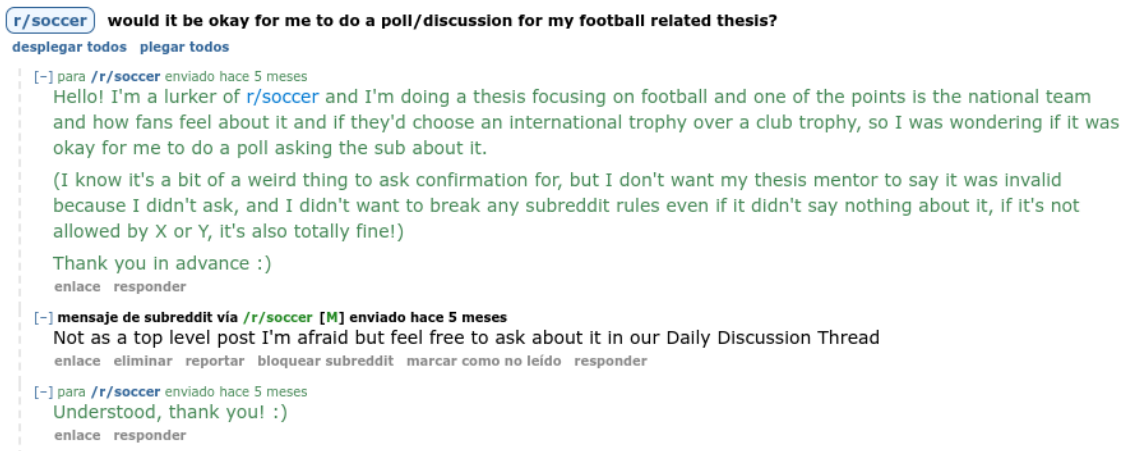


Image A.

[-] braanstarks 10 puntos hace 5 meses

For this specific part of my thesis, I'm currently focusing on international football so I am here asking [r/soccer](#) for help:

If you had to choose between a club achievement (be either a UCL or a league title) and an international win (World Cup — or even Euros or Copa or whatever your domestic equivalent is) which one would you choose and why? It doesn't matter how high or low the chances are of it happening in RL, listen to your heart!

(Personally, I am Venezuelan and I would take a World Cup qualification over a league title of any of my teams – let alone a World Cup lol. Still dreaming of that fourth place in Copa America 10 years ago)

enlace embed guardar editar desactivar aviso de respuesta eliminar responder

[-] L_McL 3 puntos hace 5 meses

World Cup over everything, then probably Euros, then PL, then CL

enlace embed guardar padre reportar give award responder

[-] dryduneden 2 puntos hace 5 meses

Club achievement because I care much more about my club.

enlace embed guardar padre reportar give award responder

[-] Y3llowflash1 5 puntos hace 5 meses

World Cup, easily.

enlace embed guardar padre reportar give award responder

[-] GratinDeRavioles 1 punto hace 5 meses

WC status:

CL status:

enlace embed guardar padre reportar give award responder

[-] Roller95 5 puntos hace 5 meses

I would take any club title over a World Cup

enlace embed guardar padre reportar give award responder

[-] mountainsky9 1 punto hace 5 meses

I would rather US wins a world cup (or even a semifinal) than Galaxy wins the MLS Cup.

enlace embed guardar padre reportar give award responder

[-] sabox4869 1 punto hace 5 meses

How about world cup knock-out round instead. Semifinal is a little bit reach.

enlace embed guardar padre reportar give award responder

[-] mountainsky9 -1 puntos hace 5 meses

I've seen us in a knockout round though, in 2014 and 2010. Winning 1 knockout match would be great, but id prefer my club winning the MLS Cup over 1 match

enlace embed guardar padre reportar give award responder

[-] Lyrical_Forklift 2 puntos hace 5 meses

I'm not one of those scouse not English types but I would take Liverpool winning the league over everying else.

enlace embed guardar padre reportar give award responder

[-] [deleted] 2 puntos hace 5 meses

World Cup > PL > UCL

The confederation cup of my country Isn't that prestigious or hard for us to win (Australia)

enlace embed guardar padre reportar responder

[-] Flamengo81-19 11 puntos hace 5 meses

My club winning a game > 2002 WC win

enlace embed guardar padre reportar give award responder

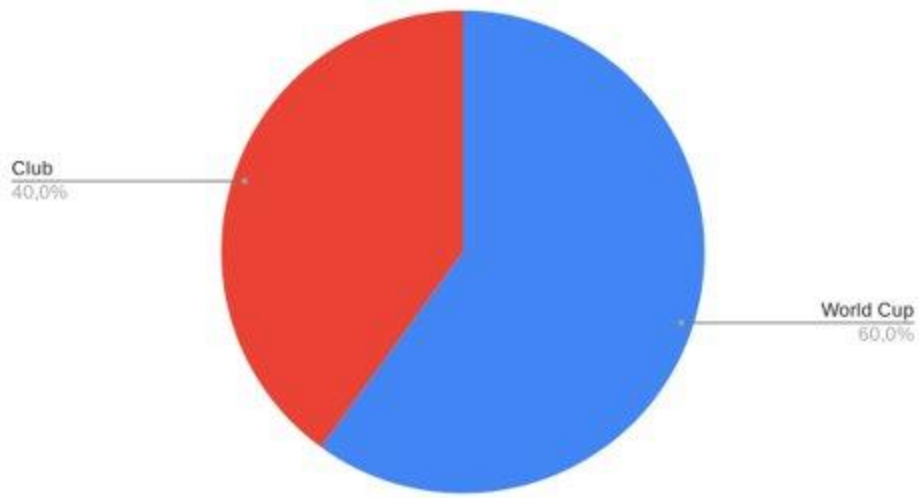
[-] [deleted] 1 punto hace 5 meses

World Cup > Copa America/Euros > UCL > national title

enlace embed guardar padre reportar responder

Image B and C

World Cup or Club Victory



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