

TEN THOUGHTS ON THE WORLD CUP - Stuart Fuller brings us his unique take on events in Brazil

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Due to the time difference between the UK and Brazil, watching every game of this World Cup was going to be challenge. However, travelling to the Far East and Australia would mean that even the early games back home would be kicking off at 2am. A challenge? Yes, but this is the biggest football tournament in the world. Work would simply have to wait.

Every radio phone-in, every newspaper, every cabbie would be talking about the action on the pitch, but what about those strange incidents and observations from the games that the TV cameras don't pick up. Here's my top ten from the first three weeks of the tournament:

1. Strange opening game goals

Omam-Biyik in 1990, Diana Ross in 1994, Papa Bouba Diop in 2002 and, of course, Scotland scoring twice in their 2-1 defeat to Brazil in France 1998. Add to that list Marcelo in Brazil 2014. I'm sure there was nothing he could do about the own goal he scored against Croatia, but it wasn't exactly a world-class finish was it? In fact, I'm sure that I could have put that one in. In case you were interested, the odds on an own goal opening the tournament were 20/1.

2. The white spray

Simple idea, very effective. How long before we see referees end the free-kick 10 yard line with a squiggle or even a kiss? What happens if it snows? Do referees have a variety of colours for different conditions? Suppose they get it confused with shaving foam? A great idea from my daughter, Lolly: "Why don't they make all spray paint disappear? That way people could graffiti but then a few hours later it's all clean again?" Clever girl, she will go far.

3. Odd pitchside adverts

What on earth was "FlyFutbol" all about? I Googled it and nothing came up. Gol.mcd.com? As anyone who works in the domain name world will know, the new .futbol domain is available AND McDonalds own it. So why not use it? Relevant, catchy and easy to remember. Yingli Solar? Ever heard of them? No, neither have I. But they must have deep pockets or a Marketing Manager who is the best salesperson in the world. "Hey boss, what about we advertise our solar panels on TV?", "Great idea Dave. What's the cost?". "A bargain at \$500 million." "Wow, that means we would only have to sell 10 billion units to get our return on investment. Great work, Dave." Rainham Steel must be very jealous that someone else has claimed their mantle of "company that everyone knows their name but no one knows what they do."

4. A nice young man

Not my words, but those of my mum on seeing a picture of Niko Kovac, the Croatian manager, on the touchline wearing a nice smart suit, shirt and tie. "That's what the manager should be wearing. He is the ambassador for his country. Look at that scruffy Herbert!" She is firmly in the camp of managers having to wear suits rather than shell suits. There's no dignity in that look at the age of 65, according to my mum. Her look of disdain when Jurgen Klinsmann walked out for the game against Ghana in a Christmas jumper was a sight to be seen.

5. Change kits

Spain in red, Netherlands in orange = kit clash. But why do they both have to play in their away kits? What is wrong with Spain in white, Netherlands in orange? Or Spain in red, Netherlands in blue? Ditto France (blue) versus Ecuador (yellow) – surely the French wearing off-white was more of a clash than wearing blue? And Belgium, “The Red Devils”, playing South Korea, “The fighting red tigers”: neither wore red.

6. Big Sam knows a World Class player when he sees one

Back in 2010, Sam Allardyce came out with a statement that shocked the footballing world. “I’m not suited to Bolton or Blackburn, I would be more suited to Internazionale or Real Madrid,” said Allardyce. “It wouldn’t be a problem to me to go and manage those clubs because I would win the Double or the league every time.” That same tactical genius saw Allardyce sign Colombian striker and scorer of their opening goal in the tournament, Pablo Armero, on loan from Napoli. A true world-class signing? Er, no. Allardyce put him in the starting line up once in five months, preferring ex-Bolton Wanderers midfielder Matt Taylor at full-back at the end of the season. Football genius.

7. Studio experts.... and Robbie Savage

The BBC managed to secure the services of Patrick Vieira and Thierry Henry. Two players who have won every honour at club and country level, and who are respected by their peers and by fans globally. And then they were joined by Robbie Savage, who won the Worthington Cup. Guess whose voice is the loudest?

8. Sloooooooooow motion

Do we really need those close-up shots of players appealing to the referee in extra slow motion, seeing spit fly in all directions and making them look even more dumb than they probably are. The producer who has control of the toy is like David Brent when he puts batteries back in Billy the Bass on the wall.

9. The second verse syndrome

Interesting to see that some of the national anthems, certainly all the South American ones, have had the second verse added as a “singalong chorus”. No problems with that when the Colombians belt out “Se baña en sangre de héroes la tierra de Colón” but it would have been problematic for the England players and fans when they should have been singing “Thy choicest gifts in store, on her be pleased to pour”. Thankfully our global embarrassment was restricted to the 90 minutes of the games.

10. Different coloured boots

Coloured boots are bad enough, and should warrant an immediate three-game ban, but wearing a different coloured boot on each foot? Seriously? It’s all down to Nike and their latest marketing ruse to make gullible players look even sillier, albeit significantly richer. Brian Clough would be turning in his grave. And don’t get me started on that get up Muslera, the Uruguayan keeper had on! Why not go the whole hog and wear one of those spandex body suits that people think are so funny to wear at the cricket, until they need a wee.