



Russian World Cup logo

THE FORTUNES OF COMPANIES, OF PLAYERS AND MANAGERS, OF A NATION'S HOPES, MADE AND LOST WITH A KICK OF A BALL.

refereeing decision, the unlucky deflection, or the hand of god that loses the match will, like our performance, be forgiven in the rose of time that surrounds this summer's memories. Of world events, of milestones, births, deaths and marriages, of friends, our hopes and fears. The four years gap between successive competitions highlights the changes in our lives, captured in a slideshow of tournaments. When looking back at this World Cup, the memory will be of days in China, more significant than the result, a game, or a single birthday.

THE GREAT GAME

By Robert Watt

My ex-wife hated the world cup. She wasn't very keen on watching sports generally, but this competition always competed with her birthday. Her celebration overshadowed by an important game that inevitable shared the same day. Never mind that her birthday was four times as frequent, lasted 22.5 hours longer and was infinitely more expensive.

If the tournament was just about kicking an inflated bladder between two sticks I wouldn't have needed to pretend sympathy, but its barely about the football. The event is about history, politics and economics, wrapped in the sponsorship of big business and hyped by 24hr media. The fortunes of companies, of players and managers, of a nation's hopes, made and lost with a kick of a ball. Far more entertaining than her favourite soap.

The drama for this 2018 episode started during the bidding process with allegations of Russia using bribes to be picked as hosts. Or, maybe it began in 'The Great Game', the name for the 19th century political machinations between Russia and Britain over control of Asia. A match now replaying in The Crimea, in Syria, in the alleged interference of elections, data hacking and poisoning of spies. A prologue that's had governments comparing

these finals to Hitler's 1936 Olympics.

As the competition draws nearer and the commemorative product packaging, shop decorations, souvenir gifts, targeted advertising and TV shows, all become related to the theme of the cup. News stories will anticipate the violence of fans, corruption of officials, cheating, organisational failures, and infrastructure inadequacies. Hyperbole as predictable and as unavoidable as Christmas, a royal wedding or a wife's birthday.

By the time it kicks off on June 14th it will be, to paraphrase Bill Shankly, more serious than life and death. We will have been whipped into a footballing frenzy, sucked into a belief that our country not only could win, but that we deserve to. The team's performance becomes the nation's pride, the defence of freedom and democracy, a win is justice.

England won't win, but in the spirit that I'm sure is the hope of all competing nations- we could do alright. England is in a group they should qualify from, play Iceland that humiliated them in the Euros, then be up against their nemesis of Germany. It couldn't be more exciting in its prophecy; the chance to avenge, to right history, to create legends and defeat the villains.

Experience tells me, the result is more likely an embarrassing defeat. The bad



Football fans

球迷们的盛会

四年一次的世界杯即将在6月14号拉开战幕, 这是个让全世界男人热血沸腾的赛事, 却是女人们痛恨的一个月, 正如我前妻, 每次世界杯都赶上她的生日, 她总是埋怨我因为顾着看球而不能认真为她庆生。

其实在俄罗斯世界杯开赛之前我们就能预测到这一个月将会发生什么。除了足球本身, 媒体还会持续关注各种意外事件、丑闻、铺天盖地的赞助广告、黑哨、球迷骚乱、对场地设施的抱怨等等。

你的国家队能否赢得比赛事关国家尊严, 每个人都认为自己的国家应该赢得胜利。就拿英格兰来说吧, 处在一个很有利的分组, 面对曾经在欧洲杯上羞辱过我们的冰岛和宿敌德国队, 我们期待着复仇之战的打响。

历史的经验告诉我们, 比赛的结果过往往往充满尴尬。裁判的误判、鬼使神差的失误以及类似“上帝之手”这样的事情, 都会随着时间推移被人们原谅。四年一次的世界杯更像是我们人生轨迹的一个标记, 我们会忘了世界杯上发生了什么, 但永远记得那一年的世界杯我的生活发生了什么。