

**THE NEUTRAL SUPPORTER**  
*IN WHICH THE AUTHOR IS ALL,  
I'M JUST HERE TO HELP*

Each week (sort of) Carson Cistulli puts the chaos of global football into order by previewing the match most likely to please the fan whose only allegiance is to his own enjoyment. The four factors of the *Enthusiast Quotient (EQ)*—our very proprietary and shockingly precise metric—are 1) *Provocation Factor*, which assesses the game's potential for moments of individual brilliance, 2) *Dutch Factor*, which evaluates each team's penchant for controlled attack, 3) *Tugend Factor*, which considers each team's dedication to the cause, and 4) *Long Term Prospects*, which takes into account how worthy each team might be of the neutral's prolonged affection.

Match of the Week

Bayern Munich v Hamburger SV

Sunday, 24 February 2008, 8:00 AM PST

TV: GoTV

**Provocation Factor: 6.5**

\*Bayern's Ribery, named Most Likely to Perform the Impossible in his high school yearbook, will be absent for this fixture, unfortunately. Still, the game will feature Dutch Master Rafael Van der Vaart, who knows a thing or two about docking up with the footballing godhead. Other enthusiasts Altintop, Toni, Klose, Schweinsteiger, Philip Lahm, and Farnerud (of Bayern) and Olic, Trochowski, and Kompany (of Hamburg) all have the potential to wow. Special mention goes out to Shuttlecoque favorite, the under-utilized Jan Schlaudraff, and African Cup of Nations champ Mohamed Zidan, who should be starting at center forward for Hamburg.

**Dutch Factor: 7**

\*Both teams consist of skilled and intelligent passers in the center midfield positions. Ze Roberto, de Jong (actually Dutch), and Kompany are all pleasant to behold on the ball and participate nicely in the build-up to attack. The weak link here is Mark Van Bommel, who, for however effective he might ultimately be, is really just deadwood in the neutral's eyes.

**Tugend Factor: 7.5**

\*It's Germany—aka, the birthplace of Tugend—so one expects the best. Ivica Olic, left winger for Hamburg, literally *runs like a greyhound*, on all fours and with his tongue hanging out. Take him if the odds get better than 4-to-1. Bayern attacker Klose once requested that a penalty not be granted when he was tripped/fell in the penalty box. That was right before he walked into his boyhood home and admitted to having chopped down the family's beloved Kirsche tree. Finally, Bayern keeper Oliver Kahn eats small children. That's not relevant to anything—or even true, at all—but it's still something that we should think about for a minute.

**Long Term Prospects: 5**

\*The only weakness of the match. Both teams are seeing *lots* of other people. Bayern Munich's got more Germans hanging on it than a festive Weihnachten tree has Verzierungen. For their part, Hamburg are sponsored by Emirates Airlines—a move too blatantly commercial for any self-respecting neutral. Eamon ffitich says it doesn't bother him, but that's probably because he lacks the part of the human body commonly referred to as the “soul.” That said, German football still offers the charm of collectively-owned clubs, parity of competition, and those cheerful Teutonic faces.

**Enthusiast Quotient: 6.5**

\*Bottom line: it won't be match of the year, but will still offer reliable entertainment and competitive mettle. A real feel good piece, aimed more at the heart than the head.

THE NEW ENTHUSIAST  
SPORTING WEEKLY  
EXALTING THE WORLD OF SPORT, CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF LEISURE  
21 FEBRUARY 2008

**JOEL STRONG'S AMERICA**  
**IN WHICH THE AUTHOR ASKS YOUR SIGN**

*Eight Freshmen. One Cup.*

In Joel Strong's America youth is celebrated. While the NBA and NBPA's agreement to delay young athletes their God-Given-Right to earn a Paycheck in this (supposedly) free market society causes Your Leader to stay up late at night, it does create a new Class of College Hoopsters: **The One-and-Dones**.

Last year's One and Done entrants into the NBA included: Greg Oden (Pdx), Kevin Durant (Sea), Mike Conley Jr. (Mem), Brandon Wright (Char), and Thaddeus Young (Phi). Durant is a premier scorer (And a player Joel F. Strong wanted the Blazers to select... just sayin). Conley Jr. and Young are both starting and performing well. Wright is struggling to find minutes and Oden is injured, but both are expected to excel by next year. It's clear what these Super Frosh can do at the next level, which is why you should pay attention to this year's crop of youngUns.

Here's JS's Fave Freshmen, all of which the Citizenry can expect to hear about next year on future editions of the Action City Recap: Rip City Edition (should they choose to earn socially sanctioned paychecks soon and especially should the Blazers be lucky enough to grab one of these fellers in the Oh Eight Rookie Draft).

**JSA's Dream-Inducing Freshmen in Order of Dream Frequency:**

- 1) Michael Beasley (PF, Kansas St, #30)** His specialty is the Shooty-Oop in which a teammate purposefully misses a shot, creating a tailor-made opportunity for Lil Mike to take his 6'9" frame to the air and Grab-It-Then-Stuff-It. It's proving to be a very difficult play to stop and he's proving to be the best player in All of the Land.
- 2) Jerryd Bayless (SG, Arizona, #0)** Ohboyohboy does this kid make me fantasize. Anyone else catch his provocative effort this Sunday? Definitely the best basketballing yours truly has ever witnessed in a losing effort: 39 of Wildcats' 54 points, made 12 of team's 15 field goals, and they lost because everyone not named Bayless shot 3 for 23.
- 3) Eric Gordon (SG, Indiana, #23)** He plays the pretty game. Just watch.
- 4) OJ Mayo (SG, USC, #32)** The Trojans are now called OJ Mayo, Inc.
- 5) Derrick Rose (PG, Memphis, #23)** The top PG in the country leads the nation's only undefeated team. He easily creates distance for his mid range floater with pristine use of his young body.
- 6) James Harden (SF, Arizona St, #13)** Unfortunately, illness washed over the dude this last Sunday—induced, no doubt, from the thought of facing Bayless. I was looking forward to a few Bayless-Harden possessions. But they may face each other again in the Pac 10 Tourney. Keep close tabs, Citizens.
- 7) Donte Greene (SF, Syracuse, #5)** I love the tall man's jumper. Prettiness in a cup.
- 8) Kevin Love (C, UCLA, #42)** Doesn't frequent my dreams too much but reminds me so much of Lake Oswego that he appears in a few of my nightmares.

—Joel Strong

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**TWO DAYS**

**LATE**

**AND MANY**

**DOLLARS**

**SHORT**

*SPORTINGHOUR.BLOGSPOT.COM*

**WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO DO IT**  
**IN WHICH THE AUTHOR PLACES A CALL**  
**TO ACTION, AND ACTION ANSWERS**

*Champions League Mid-Fixture Up-Cap.*

Last week, the Battle Royale of European club football—known the world over as the UEFA Champions League—entered its Round of 16 phase as sixteen of that older dominion's glossiest and flossiest squads poked, scratched, bit, and noogied each other for continental supremacy in the first leg of what is know in the industry as a 'home-and-home-double-legger.' With eight matches played from Glasgow to Istanbul (née *Constantinople*) on two separate days, there was more top-tier football played last week than this writer could ever hope to shake a stick at; and, not for lack of a stick, he didn't even try. Instead, for reasons as virtuous as they are vague, the multi-faceted, double-dozen-karat-ed splendor of those eight separate matches was only communicated to this rather lazy sporting journalist via the internet; and especially such websites as footytube.com and futvolgoles.es, where the slightly pixilated, discerning fan can spend hours discerning slightly pixelated multi-national future super-stars and a potpourri of highlight reels and *resumen*. Admittedly, this is how the American European football fan must keep in touch, it's a fact of life, and this past week it is how your loyal informant kept abreast of the Champions League. Here is what he discovered:

**Tuesday, 19 February**

**Roma 2-1 Real Madrid** Not the overwhelming thriller that was anticipated. Madrid might be the best team in the world but they can't win away.

**Schalke 04 1-0 FC Porto** A goal by Kevin Kuranyi will add intrigue to the second leg, and Porto will surely pull out the stops back on their home ground.

**Liverpool 2-0 Inter Milan** Liverpool were lucky to win this game as Inter did everything they could to win, save try to score goals or even attack. Still lucky though.

**Olympiacos 0-0 Chelsea** Chelsea consider this a good result. The Shuttlecoque Sporting Club consider Chelsea to be the worst team to ever win the English Premier League.

**Wednesday, 20 February**

**Lyon 1-1 Manchester Utd.** The French juggernauts played well and should have kept a clean sheet. Then again, they are French.

**Fenerbahce 3-2 Sevilla** Turkish bracket-busters Fenerbahce pulled out a late victory in this thrilling, high-paced match. Look for an upset in Sevilla.

**Celtic 2-3 Barcelona** Another grab-your-crotch-and-fly-backwards kind of game. Celtic were unlucky and gifted Messi a late goal after running the Spanish side ragged down the wings.

**Arsenal 0-0 AC Milan** Much like their fellow Milanese, AC Milan played the famous *catenaccio* style and managed to keep the younger, better looking, and more down-to-earth Arsenal from getting a crucial goal.

It is important to note that the aforementioned 'home-and-home' system employed by UEFA is a blight on the game and a hindrance to beautiful football. In theory, playing one game at the home stadium of each team is logical and fair, but in practice this system serves as a detriment to the competition. There are myriad 'ins' and even more 'outs' regarding why the system is flawed, but to put it simply, it encourages certain (Italian) sides to play a very defensive style and count on the home-game as the end-all. The competition would better serve from using an English FA Cup method in which all a tiny, scrappy team must do is come correct for ninety minutes, get a little bit of bloomin' luck, and they might walk away victorious over a much more powerful squad (see *Liverpool v. Barnsley, 16 Feb. 08*). Furthermore, that scenario puts a greater amount of pressure on the more powerful side to produce goals, and consequently—hopefully—produce beauty.

Whatever the case, the UEFA Champions league is what it is. The reverse of all above fixtures will be played the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of March and, despite what all I said, are highly recommended.

—Eamon ffitich