



The  
Shuttlecoque  
Sporting  
Club

The PURPOSE of the S.S.C. shall be:

1. To call attention to, and ably champion, those aspects of sport that are either most ennobling or transcendent. We believe vigorously in sport as Provocation—that is, that it facilitates those instances when something inside of us resonates vibrantly with something outside. We aim to shout to the roof tops the names of Enthusiasm's greatest practitioners, who, by virtue of their acts of physical genius, serve both to celebrate human potential and produce within us curious moments of inner freedom.

We shall call this the principle of SPORT AS PROVOCATION.

2. To promote and legitimize the idea of man at play (*homo ludens*), as opposed to the traditional American-Protestant disposition towards joyless toil and labor (*homo faber*). We consider most important and satisfying those acts in which we partake wholly without obligation, by virtue of their own worth, and which allow for experimentation and mastery—a.k.a. *autotelic* activities. Spectatorship, in particular, we esteem not as mere diversion, but as a participatory activity with its own demands that, when understood sufficiently, might provide equal meaning to that which we typically call “work.”

We shall call this the principle of PLAY.

3. To act as a retreat, meeting ground, and occasional symposium for those interested in The Good Life, by which term (i.e. The Good Life) we mean freedom from anxiety, emotional disturbance, and unnecessary exertions (a state known as *ataraxia*, in the Greek). And, while we do not endorse any one means of achieving this state, we founders do believe that a constant study of, and curiosity for, ethical philosophy—that is, The Art of Living Well—is imperative to its pursuit. Nor by this do we mean only a theoretical understanding of that philosophy, but a willingness to put into practice its most elegant precepts.

We shall call this the principle of ETHICAL LIVING.

4. To create, by virtue of a selective membership process, the ideal environment for adult camaraderie—especially that sort which produces animated conversation, a lively exchange of ideas, a generosity of spirit, and honest criticism. In particular, we honor the bond of fandom, which brings together those of us having been seduced by sport's penchant for Revelation, who wish to share amongst the equally devoted such stirring Provocations.

We shall call this the principle FRIENDSHIP.

5. Finally, to document and share amongst members such instances as illuminate the merit or further intensify the mystery of the first four principles. *Fides quaerens intellectum*, theologians call it: “Faith in search of understanding.” For we who have borne witness to great Enthusiasm, who have been seized by such pleasure as sport provides, there exists also the desire to recognize such experiences, whether by analysis, narrative, or praise.

We shall call this the principle of FAITH IN SEARCH OF UNDERSTANDING

To learn more, tune into the Shuttlecoque Sporting Hour on 1450AM, Sundays at 9:00PM, or point your internet browser to [sportinghour.blogspot.com](http://sportinghour.blogspot.com).

THE NEW ENTHUSIAST  
WEEK IN REVIEW  
BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE SHUTTLECOQUE SPORTING CLUB  
29 NOVEMBER 2007

EVERYTHING IS JUST FINE  
OR  
HOW TO LOWER YOUR  
STANDARDS GREATLY AND  
MAINTAIN SOME DIGNITY  
DESPITE SUPPORTING A  
NATIONAL TEAM THAT DREW  
WITH MACEDONIA AT HOME  
(YES, THAT'S A REAL COUNTRY)

England 2-3 Croatia  
21 November 2007

Last Wednesday the author of this article—along with hundreds of thousands of men, women, children and dogs—wept outwardly while rejoicing within as he witnessed a so-called *World Beater* demonstrate how to gracelessly emancipate itself from the confines of Europe's top sixteen teams. I am speaking of England's great and terrible crash out of the European Championship Qualification—the much-deserved result of a solid year of clumsy and dull football.

It was Croatia at Wembley and only one point was needed to secure a spot in next year's Championship in Austria and Switzerland. England had never looked good enough to qualify for the tournament—drawing at home with Macedonia and away to Israel, blowing a lead in Moscow and losing—and should have been eliminated already, but they had been given a miraculous last gasp chance when Israel scored a late winner against Russia at the weekend. Now, England needed only manage a draw to qualify.

Croatia scored first, easily, on a goal gifted to them by the inexperience of England goalkeeper Scott Carson who let a low and hard shot bounce a foot in front of him on a slick and soggy pitch. But it was just one goal, and so early in the game; there was no reason to panic.

England managed a few chances in the wake of that shocker, but left a remarkable amount of room for the Croatian midfield and attack. They soon capitalized, scoring their second goal a quarter of an hour into the match. Panic began to set in.

For the sake of the author's mental state, that is all the match description that will be given. England did manage to score twice to level the scores before conceding one more goal, but it was in the fifteenth minute of the game that the true nature of English football became apparent: second-tier *rubbish*. And as that realization dawned on this writer it was bundled together with a warm and wonderful sensation of relief.

For my entire life, I have considered England—as so many people do—I have considered England among the great teams of Europe and the World (even now the online bookies give England better odds of holding the World Cup trophy in 2010 than France, Spain, Portugal, and The Netherlands, all of which will be vying for the European Championship next summer). But it is well past time to stop believing that nonsense. Blame it on Steve McClaren or the FA, blame it on the players, blame it on a rigorous domestic schedule. You can blame it on anything you want, but it's time to face facts: England is not a great team.

There are many solutions being piped around the British press as to how England might return to its former glory (whenever that was), but I have the secret to maintaining some semblance of dignity while continuing to support the team: I am lowering my standards.

From this moment on I will support England for the team that they are: hapless, bungling, incompetent, dull, stubborn, unexciting, over-hyped, poorly managed, and heartless.

I know this sounds dreadful, and typing the above adjectives was a desperate act, but the catharsis and relief is immeasurable. I am willing to admit that England is in the second-tier of world football, on the level of teams like Poland, Greece, and Romania. These teams—all qualified for the European Championship next summer—do not approach each international fixture with the same conceit and bravado that England does and, consequently, are thankful for their victories and qualification, not appalled by their defeats. England must rearrange their approach to the game, just as the author is rearranging his approach to the team.

The process is simple and rewarding. I know, having successfully implemented a similar transition a few years ago with my beloved Portland

COACH C

*In which the author feigns expertise in matters sundry*

The bicycle kick, the step-over, the flip-flap: the world of football is full of special moves designed to foil opponents and seduce crowds. The more popular ones are on display each week in the top leagues. Here, Carson Cistulli explains how to perform some of football's more obscure tricks.

**The Magical Realist**

To perform this maneuver, begin with the ball in front of you. Now go to the place in your mind that most resembles South America. You should see: a woman madly in love with a mosquito, a militia that enters battle armed only with pointed satire, a street gang of bank tellers walking around an imagined city. Ask one of them, "What's the sixth romance language?" He'll reply: "Whatever sound a rose can make."

Now open your eyes (which, oh yes, were closed): the ball has been replaced by (turned into?!) a portable boom box, playing Samba's Greatest Hits at volume number eleven.

**The Hysterical Pregnancy**

First, carve a hole into your mid-section roughly the size of a football. Then, into it (i.e. the hole) place a football. Using simple household materials, stitch yourself together (Warning: this is impossible).

Now, when the referee blows the whistle, run past the opposition, directly into the goal mouth, and "give birth" to the ball: you have scored without their knowing! Unlikely? Maybe. Hysterical? Absolutely.

Finally, mark your goal with Bebeto's famous "Rock the Baby" celebration. It will have a meaning hitherto unconceived.\*

\*Pun absolutely intended

**The Sly Boots**

To begin, take the football to a nice restaurant or wine bar. Ask it about itself, where it comes from, what it hopes to achieve in life. If appropriate, pay it a compliment. "You're very symmetrical," is a good one. "Nice freckles," is also fine.

Offer to drive it home. Offer it tea and/or conversation. Offer to father its children, grow old and die with it.

And as you do all of this, remember: though it talks very little, it says quite a lot.

**The Lionel Messi**

Before you can perform this, you must first become *like the gods*.

**The New Enthusiast**

This is the move that defines a new way of being—a way characterized by a sustained and contagious appreciation of human potential. Not the sort to which today's films gesture tepidly, but the sort that arises out of the chaos and uncertainty of endeavor and good faith attempts at amusing one's contemporaries.

To perform it is simple: put your hand over your heart and say the Pledge of the Enthusiast. And continue saying this until you die—surrounded by friends whose hearts all burst with mutual admiration.

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Trailblazers. If each match is viewed as a chance to demonstrate the skill and potential of young and unknown players, as opposed to a tooth-and-nail attempt to not be embarrassed, the end result—whether a win or a loss—will be positive. A game like last spring's one-all draw with Brazil at Wembley would, and should, be considered a victory of sorts; and not the disgraceful blown chance at showing the world who is who. Certainly, the world already knows who is who, and it is time the English people and their team admitted the same.

—Eamon ffitch