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# Watching the Beautiful Game Through a Semiotic Lens

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## Introduction

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This paper grants me the possibility to discuss the world's most popular sports game, soccer, with a semiotic perspective on the topic. This paper will be composed of ten sections in total, the first and last paragraphs will be easing the reader into and out of the paper; the other eight paragraphs will be talking about relevant parts of the game using semiotic terms to help develop a better understanding of the game semiotically

The second section of this paper, titled "The Stories Behind the Badges", will go over how a club's logo comes about and discuss its importance [[7]]. It will discuss how these badges, according to postmodernism (39), reflect the team's national culture and will discuss the logos as a sign (51) of the team they represent. The fact that these badges are composed of icons (20), indexes (23), and symbols (58) will be touched upon as well. The connotation (6) and denotation (9) of example badges will be addressed.

The third section of this paper, titled "Boots: Players Expressions on the Pitch", will discuss the importance of the soccer cleat, football boot, and how it is the most common variance between each player, with each player making a paradigmatic (35) choice of boot. After describing the importance of the marketing behind the boots will be addressed in terms of the grammar (18) used in the marketing and the poetic function of communication (38) is used to make memorable phrases to sell more boots. [[6]] [[2]]

The fourth section of this paper, titled "The Cultural Importance on the Game", will be used to address the countries and the impact they have on the game, in regards to playing style and fan support [[3]] [[5]]. The idea of semispheres (48) having a profound impact on a country's playing style will be expanded along with the challenges that coincide with this game spanning across many countries and continents often with players playing together and not sharing a common

language; a specific case will be discussed when countries with the same language (26) have the possibility of not understanding each other due to accents (36) being too distinct between the sets of players.

The fifth section of this paper, titled “Managers: The Tactician, Leader, and Organizer”, will flow from the previous paragraph touching upon how cultures affect the manager’s playing style and decision making [[8]]. Included will be an explanation of the code (2) that they produce for the team and an image schema (21) used to help explain the code to the team when language barriers may be in place. Conceptual metaphors (4) are used in some terminology in soccer, and these prevail through language barriers.

In the sixth section of this paper, titled “Officiating a Match”, the job of the referee will be handled, as well as the role they play. Referees have many codes to enforce during a match and have many predefined haptics (15) and gestures (16) they perform. [[1]] The ways officials use gesticulates (17) to aid with multi language interpreters, the players, will be touched upon as well; the idea of using these to not require the metalingual function of communication (27) will be presented here. The officiating code the referees follow about the use of the emotive function of communication (13) and proxemics (42) towards them will be explained.

The seventh section of this paper, titled “The Nerve Racking Conclusion to a Game” will explain to the reader what penalty kicks are and what the specific circumstances that they need to be used are. The stakes and mind games played during these events will be expanded upon and the goalkeeper’s keen eye for certain gestures and knowledge of oculosics (32) is important in impacting the outcome will be explained with usage of “The Power of Nonverbal behavior” [[9]]. The syntagmatic (62) and paradigmatic (35) selection of the players to take the penalty kicks during a ‘shootout’ will be explained here.

The eighth section of this paper, titled “The Viewer’s Experience”, will explain why the game is so entertaining. It will explain the odd hyperreality (19) that matches occur in. The feelings and interpretations of firstness (14), secondness (46), and thirdness (64) are experienced when a goal is scored and the final whistle is blown. [[5]] The feeling and reason of passing on stories of soccer games as myths to people is a vital part of the experience of being a fan will be the highlight of this part.

The ninth section of this paper, the conclusion, will neatly wrap up any outlying thoughts and will summarize semiotics points brought up about soccer in this paper.

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## The Stories Behind the Badges

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**I want to write about** the badges, logos, that represent all the soccer clubs and the importance behind them. **I plan to focus on** the types of signs they are and the connotation and denotation behind them. **I would like my reader to** understand how important the badge is to the club and the fans and the meaning behind a few of them.

- ¶ I will write about what a badge is
- ¶ I will write about the places badges represent
- ¶ I will write about signs behind the badge
- ¶ I will write about the connotation and denotation of signs

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## Boots: Players' Expressions on the Pitch

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**I want to write about** advertising and marketing behind soccer cleats, boots. **I plan to focus on** the linguistics used in the marketing, specifically the grammar and the poetic use of language employed. **I would like my reader to** know why soccer players place so much importance on the cleats they wear and the market related to it.

- ¶ I will write about the different types of boots
  - ¶ I will write about common catch phrases used in marketing
  - ¶ I will write about different uses of language in campaigns
  - ¶ I will write about reason it's seen as so important
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## The Cultural Importance on the Game

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**I want to write about** how countries and their cultures impact players and managers ideologies and performances in games. **I plan to focus on** the way the game develops in different countries and how that changes all aspects of the game in those cultures; also how these changes culminate in an ‘identity’ that is wonderfully opposed at tournaments, like the world cup. **I would like my reader to** gain an understanding for how and why different countries play different styles of soccer.

- ¶ I will write about difference between Soccer and Football
  - ¶ I will discuss the difference in playing styles
  - ¶ I will write about the types of styles of play from different countries
  - ¶ I will write about how World Cups encapsulate ‘opposition’ perfectly
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## Managers: The Tactician, Leader, and Organizer

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**I want to write about** the role a manager has on a team. **I plan to focus on** culture permeating through the manager. I also want to talk about the different types of formations and types of plays that can occur. **I would like my reader to** gain insight into the job that a manager performs.

- ¶ I will write about the codes they develop for their team to use
  - ¶ I will write about common image schema used in tactics
  - ¶ I will write about the conceptual metaphors prevalent in soccer
  - ¶ I will write about the contexts where they get involved during a match
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## Officiating a Match

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**I want to write about** what a referee is and a brief overview of some of the codes they follow and officiate. **I plan to focus on** the dynamic the ref has with the players and managers. **I would like my reader to** understand some of the gestures referees use and their dynamic with the players.

¶ I will write about the gestures and haptics they use

¶ I will write about some of the codes they enforce

¶ I will write about their use of gesticulants

¶ I will write about the rules about proxemics regarding the referee and the players

¶ I will write about the emotive and metalingual functions of language

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The Nerve Racking Conclusion to a Match

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**I want to write about** the importance of this special moment that occurs during a game. **I plan to focus on** **I would like my reader to** know what a penalty kick is and why they are the most stressful, and subsequently most important, moment in a match

¶ I will write about what a penalty shootout is and why they occur

¶ I will write about the body language that occurs

¶ I will write about the oculusic

¶ I will write about the selection and order of players

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The Viewer's Experience

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**I want to write about** the experience of actually following a team and watching them play. **I plan to focus on** emotions, experience and impact of results. **I would like my reader to** gain a new understanding of why people are so invested in professional soccer and hopefully watch a game or two because of their newfound knowledge.

¶ I will write about firstness, secondness and thirdness of watching a match

¶ I will write about hyperreality games are played in

¶ I will describe the myths around people's favorite games or players

¶ I will write about the 'table' or brackets in leagues or tournaments

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## Conclusion

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In this paper, I attempted to look at the most popular game in the world not as just a fan watching some of my favorite players play, but apply the knowledge I gained in the field of semiotics to identify and discover some underlying semiotic principles and highlight the profound effects it has on the game so many of us love. Listed below are some of the relevant semiotic that were addressed in this paper:

- The **haptic**, **gestures** and **proxemics** that pertain to the referee, and by association the other players.
- The **denotation** and **connotations** that are inherently associated with all clubs based off of many aspects, commonly their badge.
- Many different functions of language, including **poetic**, **metalingual**, **conative** and **emotive** and their use and relevance to soccer.
- The semiotic concept of paradigmatic and syntagmatic and how this concept is prevalent in winning some of the sport's largest games