

What we learn from watching European football

INQIAD BIN ALI

For many, watching European football constitutes of “extreme recreation.” They have their reasons to think so, too – all-nighters regularly to passionately support their heroes on the pitch.

Amidst their search for breathers, it is easy to forget one intriguing aspect. Watching European football is actually a nice way for young people to acquaint themselves with the culture of a far-flung continent.

Premier League (PL) enthusiasts are very much familiar with Boxing Day matches, which have subsequently made Bangladeshi fans conscious about the

holiday season, and its many customs. Fans might have also noticed players and coaching staff wearing embroidered poppies on their shirts during early November. This gesture is hugely significant. It honours Armistice Day during the First World War Remembrance Week, a reference to the poem “In Flanders Fields” by John McCrae.

It’s not limited to the PL only. Followers of Bundesliga should be familiar with the Munich Oktoberfest, the grand Bavarian festival that is celebrated from mid-September to early-October. On the other hand, La Liga fans get to learn about the rich folklores and rituals spread all over Spain.

A deeper observation of El Clasico lays bare an opulent tale of traditions, struggles and zeal between the Royalist Madrid and the Catalan symbol of self-sufficiency, Barcelona. It gives us an extensive historical context of the world’s leading club rivalry, starting from the partisan, pro-Madrid dictatorship of General Franco to the modern days.

PHOTO: REUTERS



Footballers’ goal celebrations also convey important messages. The leading European leagues are hugely diverse in playing squads. Players from different countries pull off their native country’s flagship traditional celebrations in front of the cameras, making their moments of joy a vital cog in the cultural variety of the game.

Brazilian players pulling off breath-taking *samba* dance has made the youth more informed about Brazilian culture. African players showing off their mesmerising, unique foot dance has been adding a uniquely rich cultural stardust to goal celebrations for years now.

The impact of football isn’t limited to the pitch only. The beautiful game now has an increasingly influential role in making the world a better place. The anti-racism and anti-discrimination campaigns have created a much more inclusive environment, while different programmes have raised awareness on a myriad of social issues.

Serie A’s campaign against domestic violence, where players put a red-spot on their cheek for a game-week, and the PL’s auctions for poppy shirts to support war veterans is exemplary in those regards.

The influence of football is immense. Europe is considered to be football’s hub, but it is also equally important as a cultural nucleus too. In this ever-evolving world, European football is a centre of fascination for a huge portion of the youth, and it has the potential to make them more socially responsible, cultured and better informed against the various stigmas which plague us even today.

Inqiad Bin Ali has ‘got a pain in his heart and a love in his soul’ to put it in an artistic way. He is found deep in thoughts at inqiadali007@gmail.com

Let it rip!

Playing with Beyblades in 2022

SYED TAMJID TAZWAR

Hundreds of years ago, Beyblades were sacred weapons used by warriors of the old, to defend the world against the ancient evil. Fast forward to the 21st century, they are used to settle feuds between poorly supervised kids with inexplicable hair.

When the *Beyblade* hype took over, I was one of the lucky few kids to take part. They were everywhere. The show used to air on Toonami right after *Dragon Ball Z*. Everyone was playing with Beyblades, up until the point when we all grew up and lost complete interest in them.

Now, almost a decade later, I have decided to take out my metallic spinning toys.

THE ASSEMBLY

When I opened that dust-shrouded box, I was welcomed by a cluster of disordered spinning goodness. Beyblades and spare parts from different renditions of the series in a bundled up disarray – a state where it’s tough to realise what’s from what. That’s the brilliance of Beyblades; I could assemble whatever I want, mismatching parts from different tops, and it would still work effortlessly.

I decided to assemble one. I started with the most important part, the “blade”. While assembling, I realised the older, simpler Beyblades stood the test of time superbly and were in great condition. The newer, more complex ones were in terrible shape. The dual-bladed Fang Leone looked like grains of sand glued together and could fall apart at any moment.

The seemingly less important, smaller parts actually modify how the Beyblades work. There is an attack-type, defence type, balanced equation going on here. If I manage to correctly put together the parts of one specific Beyblade, it’s going to work close to the TV version (minus the flying horses and laser dragons), which is a big reason why these things were so awesome.

THE DUEL

After some tinkering, my Beyblades were ready, and it was time for a Beybattle. Sadly, I couldn’t find my stadium, but no worries, I managed to slip away with a rusty old korai from the kitchen.

Without further ado, I let it rip, trying to launch two Beyblades as fast as I could. The Beyblades started moving towards the centre, striking each other after ages in some old cupboard. I kept

rooting for my decaying Fang Leone, even if it looked like it would fall apart any moment. It kept holding on against my Phoenix’s barrage of attacks as I kept praying for the metal to not fall apart and come out flying.

Thankfully, the Fang Leone stopped spinning before that, and I decided to pack everything up and call it a day.

The hype surrounding Beyblades has diminished, and it might not even return anytime soon. As an adult, seeing metallic tops spin around may not even make much sense. However, what we have are memories of the good times with friends, spending hours doing Beybattles, and arguing about which Beyblade is the best.

Perhaps the real Beyblade was the friends we made along the way.

Syed Tamjid Tazwar likes Beyblades, clearly. Contact him at syedtazwartamjid@gmail.com

