

Groundbreaking books

Four great ways to spend time when you're not watching World Cup games.

BY MIKE WOITALLA

If there's one area of international soccer that the average American fan knows plenty about, it's the British game. That's due in great part to our shared language. Information on UK soccer is easy to access.

The publication of four thorough and entertaining books — in English — on the histories of soccer in Germany, Spain, Brazil and the Netherlands comes not a moment too soon. They appropriately arrive in a World Cup year. (The Dutch, of course, are the best team not make it to Asia, and "Brilliant Orange" helps explain how such a talented team could fail.)

When West Germany won the 1974 World Cup, a 15-year-old boy in Hanau was so overcome that, in a school essay on his career aspirations, he wrote, "I want to become a Ger-

man international!" The teacher scribbled "Too much imagination" on the essay and told him, "Maybe you're going to be a comer flag."

The boy was current Germany coach Rudi Voeller, the only coach at the 2002 World Cup who has won the title as a player (1990). The anecdote comes from "**Tor! The Story of German Football**" by Ulrich Hesse-Lichtenberger (WSC Books).

"Tor" is a delightful ride through the



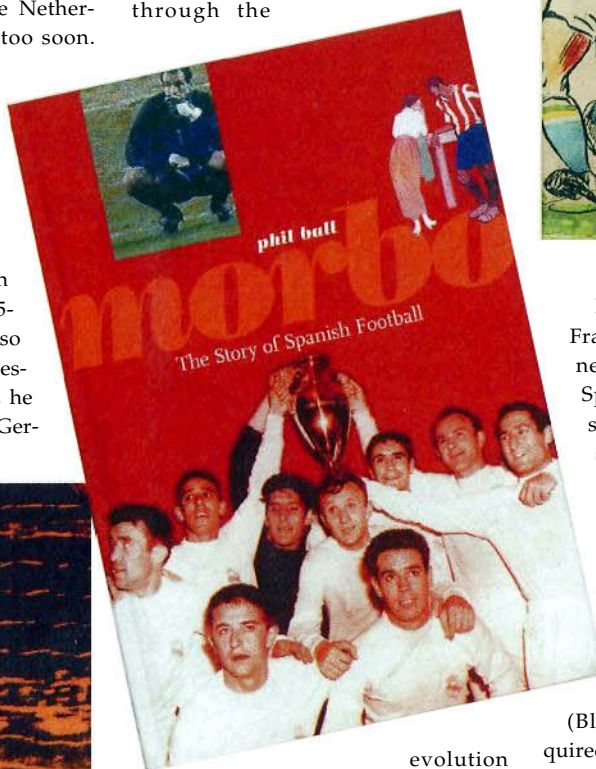
Much has been made of dictator Francisco Franco's Real Madrid connections and regionalism's role in Spain's soccer. Ball unbiasedly sheds light on such fascinating issues.

Brazil — source of the world's most attractive soccer — shares enough demographic and geographic characteristics with the United States that ignorance about that nation is inexcusable. That makes "**Futebol: Soccer, the Brazilian Way**"

(Bloomsbury) by Alex Bellos required reading.

The Johan Cruyff anecdotes alone make "**Brilliant Orange: The Neurotic Genius of Dutch Soccer**" (The Overlook Press), released in Holland in 2000, a delight. Author David Winner writes with humor and insight — always a fine combination.

NOTE: "Tor" and "Morbo" are available through www.sportsbooksdirect.co.uk and www.wsc.co.uk/shop/index.html. "Futebol" and "Brilliant Orange" can be acquired in the U.S. through regular channels.



evolution of German soccer. It destroys myths and recounts the shame and glory — on and off the field — of the nation that spawned the world's second greatest national team.

In "**Morbo: The Story of Spanish Football**" (WSC Books), Phil Ball writes, "Cervantes would have enjoyed the antics of [Spain's] national team, for they have been nothing if not Quixotic. Their story is a faithful reflection of the adventures of Quijote and Sancho Panza ..." — and off we are on an enlightening look at the world's most underachieving national team.

