



PICTURES OF SOCCER IN AFRICA

AS the spoilt brats of the universe unite to gripe about the speed of Jabulani – the official 2010 Fifa World Cup ball – in South Africa, Robin Goode reminds us of the reality of life in most parts of Africa.

The soccer ball is still an improvised thingamajig hand-made from tree bark, discarded clothing and all sorts of reject material. Thus contrived, it never truly assumes the desired round shape.

A real soccer ball, when found in the dusty patches of the continent where her children play, is a donated unit that is, more often than not, the worse for wear.

The book is a pictorial offering that's more like paging through the family's photo album. What makes it better than an album, though, are the quality of the pictures – great snaps – and the wit in Goode's accompanying captions.

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“A ball is as interesting as an old man's face, you can see a lot of good memories etched into them,” he writes on one page, to go with the picture of a bald ball.

On sponsored motorcycles, the team traversed Africa to observe the goings-on around soccer pitches. They came up with great work depicting the ball used, the feet that kicked the ball – nine times out of ten bare feet and the spectators, mostly old men, the sort that inspired the quote above.

The feet of the players tell a story of deprivation: “They were playing on tarmac without shoes.”

The goalposts, like everything else on these grounds, are makeshift paraphernalia.

It is on the sidelines of these grounds, on the periphery of modernity, that their camera finds a woman in a Juventus jersey.

