

The power of soccer

A number of soccer-themed books have hit the bookshelves during the World Cup. Omeshnie Naidoo reviews three of them

A *Game of Passion, Soccer in Africa* by photographer Tine Harden and Struik Publishers contains striking images drawn from 12 African countries where the beautiful game is a much-needed diversion from the harsh realities of daily life on weekends, during lunch breaks and at any other time where there are a few minutes to kick a ball around.

From Cape Town to Cairo, Bamako to Nairobi and Accra to Maputo soccer is a unifying force in the most disparate of circumstances.

It is a vehicle for dreams, an alternative to crime and an opium for the people in troubled times – soccer, as you will find, is about more than kicking a ball in Africa.

Clubs were first organised in Africa in the 1800s and soon became an important instrument in Africa's struggle for independence – a matter of Africa beating its former colonisers at their own game.

This book illustrates the power of the game in Africa – played on dusty street with home-made balls – compelling proof that soccer is Africa's game.

Football Muti by Robin Goode and contributing photographers Matteo Bottanelli and Kabir Javier, by Jacana Publishers, is a beautiful coffee table book of black and white images. It's the author's five-year-long dream and was compiled as he drove through Africa on a Ducati. The images of young children and their make-shift soccer balls tell the story all by themselves.

England 'til I Die, A Celebration of England's Amazing Supporters, edited by David Lane and published by Legends Publishing is another fascinating soccer book.



Ghana midfielder Micheal Essien is pictured with a fan at the Feista Royale Hotel, Accra, in the book *A game of Passion, Soccer in Africa*.

Following England has become a way of life for many of the teams fans and this book reveals the funny, absurd, emotional, peculiar, shocking and unbelievable bunch that they are.

It tells of fans' tales of

unwavering dedication, loyalty and trauma. Jobs and wives have been lost, overdrafts have plunged to new depths and countless sick days have been taken for the cause.

The author, who himself has followed England for more than

three decades champions the vast majority of genuine fans – aiming to encapsulate the true spirit of these steadfast supporters.

If you love the game, particularly England, you'll love this book.

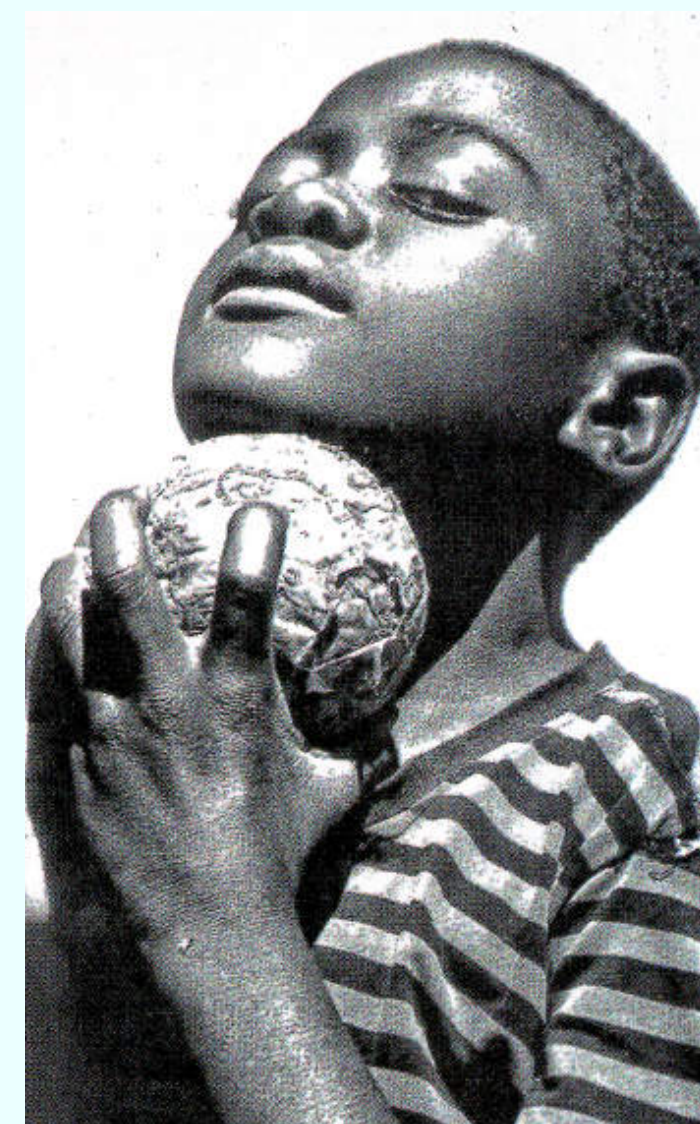
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A picture from *Football Muti*.

