

on the shelf

the pick of the page-turners with pat candido

'The beautiful game' in focus throughout Africa

FOOTBALL MUTI by Robin Goode
(Jacana Media).

Reviewed by Luyolo Mkentane

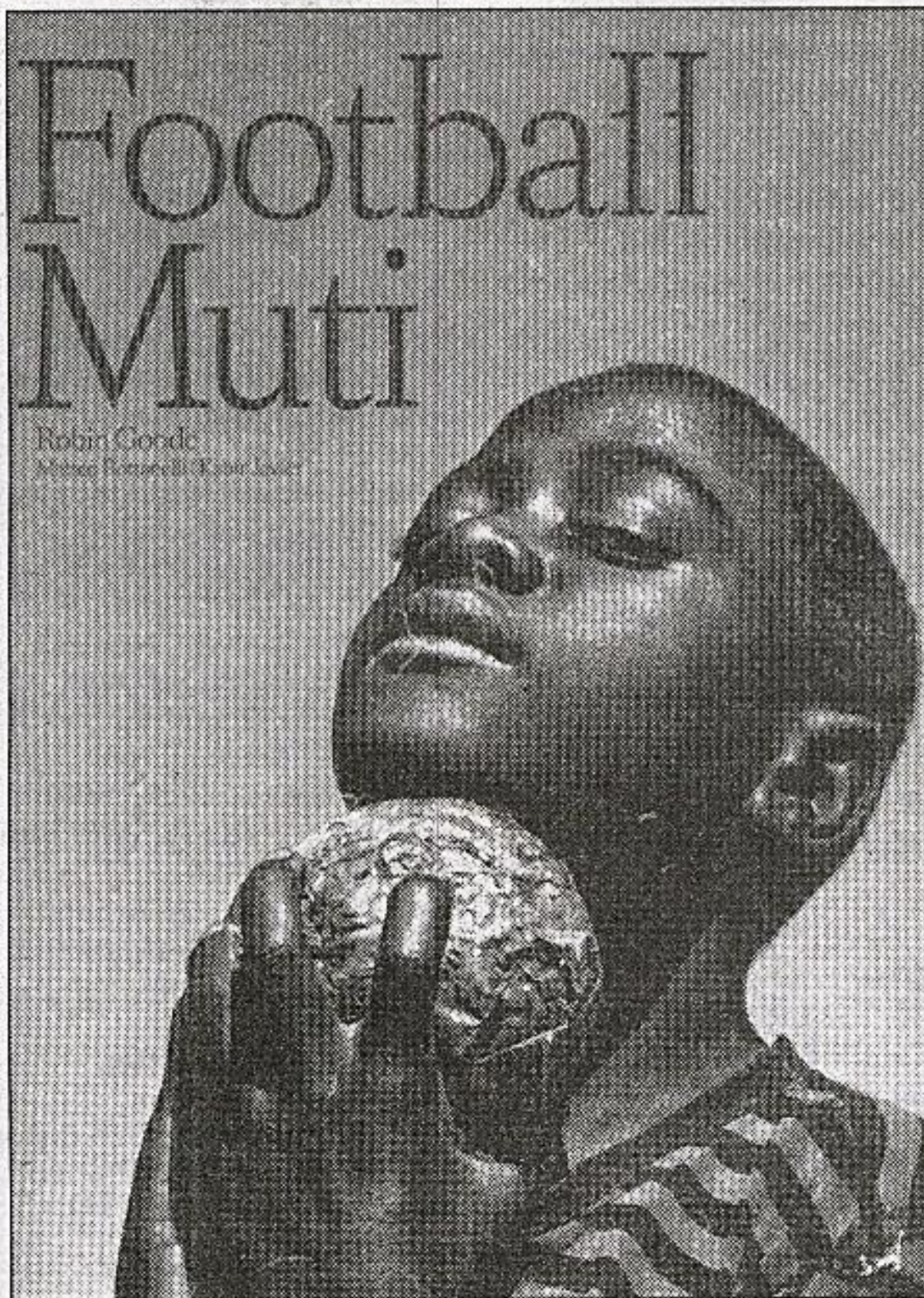
A PICTURE in focus tells a thousand words, so the saying goes. And that's exactly what author Robin Goode and contributing photographers Matteo Bottanelli and Kabir Javier did when they embarked on a journey through the African continent on their steel horses.

They captured enthralling pictures of young African boys playing the "beautiful game".

Published by Jacana Media, the glossy coffee table book also captures Goode's views and misplaced conceptions about Africa.

For instance, in a picture of an Ethiopian woman taken at a place called Gonder, Goode comments that: "This woman is from a forgotten place at the edge of the earth, her culture is ancient, but how she came to wear a Juventus (soccer) shirt I will never know."

On the other hand, the book casts the spotlight on how Africans were "feeling it", ahead of the 2010 Fifa World Cup, despite the predictions of many doomsayers that Africa in general and South Africa specifically, would fail to host a successful tournament of this magnitude.



Goode's images also capture the creativity of the not-so-privileged boys who used materials such as papers, plastics and even dried grass, to make their world go round, in making a soccer ball out of them.

Other good pictures include that of a little Ethiopian boy whose feet are so cracked that Goode comments: "... my feet

looked like marshmallows compared to his. I felt soft.

"A local once told me that Africans thought white skin tore easily."

Other pictures include a Zambian boy's feet on which are drawn what resembles soccer boots, complete with "laces".

What sets the book aside from other coffee table titles, is that it also provides the Global Positioning System co-ordinates of all the pictures, making it easier for soccer enthusiasts and tourists to visit the places if they so wish.

Through the book, Goode tried too hard to show that football knows no boundaries with regards to poverty and other social ills facing Africa. The book was the result of Goode's five-year-old "day dream" made possible, among others, by his great friend Bottanelli, wife Anita, mother Debbie, father Bob and sister Kate, "for their love and worried text messages".

He also thanked Italian motorcycle company Ducati, their technical sponsor: "Your steel horses carried us so far and made every Italian in Africa proud."

