

## Title: Gender bias in World Cup 2006 coverage: The men still don't get it?

### **Introduction:**

A Singapore's Straits Times reporter affronted readers when he opined that women who watched the World Cup were pretending to know the game ("the women just don't get it"). The article misrepresented 45% of the country's World Cup audience through several female stereotypes. This paper looks at gender stereotyping in selected newspapers' coverage of World Cup 2006. In previous football coverage studies, the media have portrayed women as inferior, frivolous and sexualized next to the dominant, heroic, heterosexual and masculine footballers. A study in the Singapore context might point to similar trends and provide insights to how women are represented vis-à-vis Wives and Girlfriends (WAGS) of the players, fans, columnists and punters.

Through content analysis of Singapore's main dailies, the Straits Times and New Paper, this paper examines textual and imagery presentation of World Cup news articles and identifies the female images portrayed. There is evidence that the coverage reinforced stereotypes of soccer as a heterosexual masculine activity, with women playing subordinate, sexualized complementary roles. Female views were not only under-represented but also characterised by questionable individuals like the "New Paper Soccer Babe" and a "Miss Singapore Universe finalist" who further reinforced clichéd power relations between male and female. Colourful spreads of scantily-clothed female World Cup spectators were commonplace. The WAGs of the footballers also received much media attention. These reports perpetuated gender stereotypes associated with football. From the findings, the paper also discusses factors contributing to such coverage and the implications of media representations of women to the society.

The paper will be organised into the following parts: (1) review of key themes, theories and previous research; (2) research methodology; (3) key findings; (4) analysis of findings; and (5) implications of gender-biased football coverage.

### **1. Review of key themes, theories, and previous research**

Sports sociologists and researchers have referred sport as a "masculine institution" in which men are superior to women expressed in terms of discourses, practices, and social relations in the patriarchal society. In sports, the gender order of masculine strength over feminine weakness is deeply entrenched and perpetuated in many ways. Women are underrepresented numerically as "social, societal and structural factors" discouraged female participation (Muller, 1999). They are also limited by ideological assumptions and socialization of weaker strength, aggressiveness and competitiveness relative to men. Leadership of sports institutions are dominantly male and female athletes are paid lesser than the males and are pressurized to take sports that are "feminine". Last but not least, the media representations of women in sports coverage are biased towards males.

A number of feminist sports theories examine gender order in the sporting institution (cited in Muller, 1999; Clayton and Harris, 2004).

i. Hegemony theory

Antonio Gramsci came up with this theory which basically relates to the power struggle between dominant and subordinate groups. The dominant group is able to establish its cultural system of values and practices as the most legitimate. This hegemonic system is constantly being challenged by alternative practices and values. Putting this into the context of sports, a scholar, Connell, identified the sporting culture as a masculine hegemony which purports the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. The mass media, schools, religious organizations, sport, and other institutions are often tools to maintain and reinforce this hegemony.

ii. Critical feminist theory

Critical feminists believe that sport is an institution created by and for men to reinforce the ideology of male superiority. By subordinating the role of females and their participation, sport has helped to prevent the society from being feminized. For example, it is said that English professional football is a masculine institution as its “relational dynamics, its working practices, its commercial ventures, and its promotional interests are replete with images of maleness” (Clayton and Harris, 2004).

iii. Poststructuralism

Poststructural feminists look at different forms of social organization and social meanings and values which support or contradict patriarchal structures. Some common forms of analysis look at how language and symbols are used to define and legitimize social organization and gender power relations.

iv. Cultural studies

Cultural studies look at how masculine values and meanings are created, reinforced and modified through participation, competition and spectatorship and how these affect individuals and the communities.

Two sports sociologists, Sabo and Panepinto (1990), say that a “hegemonic model of masculinity that prioritizes competitiveness, winning, aggression, violence, superiority to women, respect for and compliance with male authority” is inherent in football. This hegemony and its related practices is reproduced and perpetuated through various channels to legitimise, maintain and reinforce existing gender and class inequalities. Sports coverage in mass media “reproduce and instantiate hegemonic masculinity” so that men’s power over women become “naturalized” (Bryon, 1987; Messner, 1996). Entrenched sexist practice in sports minimizes natural gender similarities, emphasizes differences, and uses the media to create symbolic messages around these differences that make them seem natural (cited in Rowe et al, 1998).

Garland (2004) found the use of military metaphors, antagonism and hostility towards “traditional enemies” and nationalistic discourses in the English tabloid coverage during the 2002 World Cup.

Cohen (1993) says that television’s representation of male hegemony in sport is reinforced during men’s competitions by the regular attention given to women in the stands, who serve as comical targets and objects of sexual innuendo as the camera focuses on various parts of their bodies.

In their study of media portrayals of footballers and their partners, Clayton and Harris (2004) found two principal typologies of footballers’ wives: the beautiful, erotic woman and the devoted and supportive woman, which reinforce the male hegemony in the sport. Stereotyped traits of femininity such as beauty, passivity, expressiveness and supportiveness are important for upholding the ideals of the heterosexual masculine man.

In summary, references to studies conducted on sports and football coverage found some common metaphors of masculinity: war, aggression, nationalism, heroism and the heterosexual male. Women have been portrayed as inferior, frivolous and sexualized next to the macho, heroic, heterosexual and masculine footballers. With increasing female spectators of football worldwide and the record viewership of the recent World Cup 2006 competition, there is no more appropriate occasion to study the main themes of female representation in media reports.

## **2. Research methodology**

The research framework used is content analysis of World Cup 2006-related coverage in the sports sections of Singapore’s The Straits Times and The New Paper, to identify and highlight common themes of female representation in the coverage.

The Straits Times (ST) which was launched in 1845 is the main local English daily in Singapore. It covers world, East Asian, Southeast Asian, and local news, sports and financial news, as well as lifestyle articles. It has the highest average circulation of 386,000.

The New Paper (TNP) is Singapore’s only afternoon tabloid and was launched in 1988. It covers mainly soft news and entertainment updates and has a strong niche in sports, coverage, especially football. The New Paper has the second-highest average circulation of 113,000.

The research covers the dailies published from 1 June to 18 July 2006. If relevant World Cup coverage appeared in other sections of the papers (for example front page, special World Cup pullout, Life! section of ST), these will be examined as well. Coverage of these dailies was studied in terms of article content, pictures used and the layout, and common themes on the representation of women in the press were highlighted. The study of female representations would

not be complete without looking at how they are portrayed vis-à-vis the males. Hence, portrayals of the males, especially the footballers, are analysed so as to understand how gender relations are being articulated and get a more comprehensive picture of how women are shown.

### 3. Key Findings

Six main representations of females found prevalent in the coverage are: the WAG, Supportive Wife, Soccer Babe, “Token” Female Expert, Sexy Ornament and Soccer Mom.

#### i. WAGS

WAGS is a term coined by the mass media to refer to the “Wives and Girlfriends” of footballers.

The WAG has the following characteristics:

- sexy and attractive girlfriend/wife of celebrity footballer
- likely to be (topless) model, celebrity, lapdancer
- is usually blonde
- provides moral support and sexual needs of the heterosexual footballer
- engages frequently in shopping sprees and wild partying
- has limited interest in football
- competes for public/media attention
- involves in conflicts with other WAGS (within own group or with WAGS from other countries)

The most famous WAG is Victoria Beckham, wife of English footballer David Beckham, and singer who found stardom with the now-defunct Spice Girls. She was featured more often than any other WAG in the ST and TNP reports.

Selected coverage of the WAG is highlighted in this table:

Daily	Date	Headline	Comments
TNP	8/6	So GLUM, SO GLAM  MATCH 'EM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Photo of Ronaldo's wife, in football bra on front page</li> <li>- Photos of Buffon's, Chilean Neira's wives modelling bras in Munich fashion show – article started with this line “These women are queens on the catwalk. And their men are kings on the football pitch. Together, they pair up to become some of the most glamorous couples you'll see in the sporting and fashion worlds.”</li> </ul>
ST	15/6	World Cup WAGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- full page spread of the WAGS</li> <li>- (referring to Kahn's and Kehl's girlfriends at the</li> </ul>

			stand) – “Only the beginning and they already look bored” – showing their disinterest in football
TNP	21/6	THAT IS WHY THEY ARE LOSING FOCUS	- Finally England’s poor WC performance is attributed to the WAGS and not their skills or poor team work.
TNP	28/6	Battle of the WAGS	- Competition between groups within WAGS and their divisions. (divided into “the mummy brigade”, “the wannabes” and “the outsider”)
TNP	7/7	Sharing Joy and Heartbreak ... and a bit of everything else	- Pictures of the WAGS and comments on their fashion sense – what the wives wear to support their husbands - (referring to Buffon’s “Czech model” wife) “has faithfully worn an Italy jersey with her hubby’s name on the back for matches, even though she has appeared regularly in the German press wearing considerably less” - Side headline “WAGS scene was like a comedy” with Ashley Cole’s fiancée criticising the WAGS.
ST	9/7	The Final Showdown	- World Cup finalist teams Italy and France featured with key players, past glories, tactics, jerseys, coaches and their WAGS which appeared to be commoditised as the “trophy wives”
ST	9/7	Memories are made of these	- 10 highlights of World Cup 2006 showed “Tongues wagged” at 6 <sup>th</sup> place – about the English WAGS that made headlines with their shopping sprees and partying
ST	10/7	No WAGS pls, we’re English	- WAGS banned by new English coach

## ii. Supportive Wife

The Supportive Wife, as compared to the WAG, plays a more docile role and is usually seen at the spectator stands. Characteristics include:

- attractive wife of celebrity footballer, generally non-English
- lower profile than the “typical” WAG
- supportive role behind the husband’s career
- mother to footballer’s children
- seems more “focused” on football than the WAGS

The Supportive Wife is a departure from the “devoted, supportive women” described by Clayton and Harris (2004). There is an overlap between the Supportive Wife and the WAG, and it is observed that the Supportive Wife is increasingly being glamorised on aspects of her beauty.

Selected coverage of the Supportive Wife is highlighted in this table:

Daily	Date	Headline	Comments
ST	30/6	Support Squad	- German wives, Totti's, Lehman's and Van de Vaart's wives. Leading to this article on front page at left masthead of ST is the picture of de Vaart's wife with the caption “Beautiful game – spot the WC support squad of pretty wives and girlfriends”
ST	6/7	Field Marshall	- Feature on German football Ballack and photo of his partner (“mother of his three sons”) – portrayed as the woman behind the man
TNP	18/7	Klinsmann Enigma	- Emphasis of German player, Kilnsmann's family-orientedness and a photo of his wife (article mentioned she was ex-model) at the stands cheering husband, face seems serious as she follows the game

### iii. Soccer Babe

The Soccer Babe was presumably TNP's gimmick to use a youthful, attractive female as additional entertainment to the World Cup event. Leading to the competition, there was a contest between two finalists, Tracy and Charlene, for the title of “Soccer Babe” and the winner was to be decided via popular vote among the readers. Charlene had a commentary article which trivialized women by giving ‘survival tips’ for women such as indulging in shopping for football paraphernalia, painting nails with one's favourite football team colours, and catching beauty sleep etc. The eventual winner Tracy had her own daily column on a selected match and also played a game of street soccer with eight selected males. Though TNP branded the soccer game as a challenge and not a date, one of the participants was reported to be attracted to Tracy.

Tracy is known for making emotional remarks made like “it was a game of pretty football”, “so sad the Italian actors won” and “poor Becks, horrid England”. There was also a feature article of her shopping. Though there seems to be some effort in making Tracy a “legitimate football player” (she plays in a local university's football team), the portrayal of Tracy is heavy with female stereotyping. She is objectified as a symbol of desire, prize and game for men and her views on football have come across as highly emotional, frivolous and non-objective, traits often associated with female inferiority with regards to football.

iv. "Token" Female expert

A prominent "Token" Female Expert comes in the form of TNP's guest punter, Ginnie Goh, who is introduced as:

*"Ginnie Goh, 25, The New Paper's guest tipster, will go head-to-head with Brian Miller in the \$100 challenge – a pretend betting contest. A 2006 Miss Singapore Universe finalist, she graduated with a BA (Media and Communications) and Masters in Applied Commerce from the University of Melbourne)"*

Ginnie's stereotypical beauty queen image is reinforced by statements such as this:

*"The matches are coming thick and fast, with barely enough time for me to catch up on my beauty sleep".*

Her opponent, Brian Miller reaffirmed power relations between the two with his "Battle of the Sexes" language:

*"I'm happy to have won it for 'for the guys'."*

Overall this was a cliché battle of the sexes with the male prevailing at the end. The choice of a beauty pageant contestant against Miller, an experienced sports journalist was highly questionable. There does not seem to be any adequate justification other than the media's attempt to provide entertainment at the expense of women.

Other forms of the token female expert include the lone female ST Panelist (ESPN STAR Sports presenter Colette Wong) versus five veteran male sports experts, and the occasional article from a female journalist who does peripheral news such as reporting the views of the public or experts with no independent analysis.

v. Sexy Ornament

The most common female image seen in the sports sections of the papers is the Sexy Ornament. They are the attractive female fans at the stadium stands, who are usually scantily clothed or provocatively dressed. Images of female fans outnumber that of the male fans in the papers and sexy "Brazilian samba fans" are commonly featured. From these representations, there is an overemphasis on superficial feminine beauty and sexuality; women spectators were treated as objects of entertainment, side show before/after the football games and as sexual objects. Examples of coverage can be found in Appendix 1.

vi. Soccer Mom

The most common face behind the Soccer Mom is Brazilian player Ronaldo's mother. She is portrayed as nurturing and the pillar of support behind the player. Though she is not as commonly

featured as the other representations, she occupies a prominent position in the articles vis-à-vis a sizable image of her offering comfort to her son.

Selected Soccer Mom representations:

Daily	Date	Headline	Comments
ST	12/6	Ronaldo finds solace in parents	- Picture of Ronaldo's mom stroking his head with the commentary "Poor Ronaldo. The Brazil striker has been in the news for the wrong reasons lately....no wonder he needed to find solace in the company of his parents..."
TNP	15/6	More for Ecuador	- Picture of maternal spectator with her child
ST	17/6	Mothers Superior	- Photo of Ronaldo hugging and kissing his mom's head - "Enter mama Sonia. She is photographed with a loving hand on her beloved son ..."
ST	30/6	(no headline - Pictorial spread of World Cup images)	- Among the pictures of WAGS, is a picture of Ronaldo with his mom occupying central place

vii. Other forms of demeaning representation

Women are frequently sexualised and put down in many other ways as we can see from these selected articles:

Daily	Date	Headline	Comments
ST	4/6	What I want this World Cup: A Wand, Not a Cane	- Women are "memorable" in the World Cup, besides goals, controversies and stars - "Whoever said football was only a men's game? In particular Brazilian Samba girls are plentiful at any World Cup. Perhaps their seductive gyrating is one reason why Brazil are so strong. Their opponents always get distracted. Most are scantily dressed, always a welcome sideshow to any sporting extravaganza."
ST	4/6	Easier to find a girl than tickets to the grand final	- Beautiful women are demeaned as being easy catch than getting tickets to the World Cup final
TNP	25/6	What we've learned in Germany	- "We've learned...that Brazilian female fans are by far the sexiest, followed by those of Italy and Ghana" - Photo of Brazilian mini skirt on a fan
TNP	3/7	Bit of make-up and it's off	- "Bit of make-up and it's off to Germany" – on

		to Germany	stewardess who won contest to see World Cup and Pele
ST	17/7	How to make it beautiful again	- "Has football become too ugly? Is she in need of a nip/tuck to make her svelte, seductive and sexy once again?"

#### viii. Male representations

Prominent male representations found in the news coverage include the Hypermasculine Male, the Battle Warrior and the Hero.

The Hypermasculine Male, usually the celebrity footballer, is portrayed as strong, skilful, successful, brave, heterosexual and virile with an attractive, submissive wife or girlfriend. An example of such a representation is a ST article on Italian player Cannavaro titled "Diet, sleep and sex keep Cannavaro in good shape" (ST, 29 June 2006). The Hypermasculine Male is seen as being extremely macho, ready to inflict pain on themselves through physical activity and spotting tattoos. There are exceptions to this image such as "paternal" footballers (for example pictures of David Beckham and Paul Lampard with their children) and tearing players upon their loss. However such images still maintain a degree of "macho-ness" and are still masculine.

Footballers are often portrayed as Battle Warriors who exhibit characteristics of strength, bravery, aggressiveness and patriotism. They appear willing to sacrifice and suffer pain for national glory. In such coverage, warlike and combat language is used, for example: "Germans to march in?", "Korea's Firing Squad" and "Man o' war win brawling battle". There are also often graphic displays of war like pictures of fortresses and barbwire, and the use of war-related icons like "target board" and "explosive". In articles such as "The face of Hope" (ST, 4 June 2006) and "World Cup just as important as affairs of state" (ST, 17 June 2006), while the World Cup and football are equated with politics, war and nationalism and men were depicted as warriors and heroes of war, there is no mention of the role of women. There are numerous references to the male footballers and male politicians' contribution to state and world affairs, but women have no existence in these instances.

Common among the coverage is how popular football celebrities like Zinedine Zidane, Jurgen Kilnsman and Michael Ballack are lauded with Hero-like status in the papers. Zidane's infamous headbutt on Materrazi could be suggested as a show of masculine heroism aimed at preserving the integrity of his female relatives who were allegedly insulted by Materazzi. This is a tangential point but it is not far-fetched to argue that Zidance was further enhancing sexism even if unintentionally.

#### 4. Analysis of findings

This section highlights some of the probable reasons that contribute to the gender-biased reporting found in the research.

i. Male dominance in sports journalism

In the sport sections of ST and TNP, male journalists make up the overwhelming majority. A count was done for the journalists who had a byline in the sports articles studied. In the ST, there are only two female reporters versus twelve reporters (Jeanette Wong and Eunice Quek versus Marc Lim, Jeffrey Low, Roger Cohen, Wilfred Yeo, Marc Lim, Alvin Foo, Gerry Armstrong, Teo Cheng Wee, Rob Hughes, Christopher Ong, Chan Yi Shen and Tan Hong Ming) while the ratio in TNP was one female to thirteen males (Tracy Lee versus Gary Lim, Brian Miller, Dale Tempest, Stanley Ho, Lim Han Ming, Wang Meng Meng, Al R Dizon, Ernest Luis, Jeffrey Oon, Terry Pathmanathan, Eric Ding, Ivan Lim and Daniel Finkelstein). This is a common trend in sports reporting globally and is an important reason behind the masculine slant to the World Cup reporting.

ii. Agenda setting of the press and newsworthiness

The ideology of male superiority over women is manifested through the media practice of agenda setting. The media choose articles based on newsworthiness with elements such as deviance (novelty or the unusual), sensationalism, conflict or controversy, and prominence. The WAGs are frequently featured in the papers as they are newsworthy. Though a cliché concept, the mass media still use sex to make their media content appeal to their audience and hence the prevalence of images of provocatively-dressed female fans.

iii. Gender-biased stories from news agencies

There is only one reporter each from ST (Marc Lim) and TNP (Ernst Luis) in Germany and hence the papers rely much on foreign news agencies and FIFA for their World Cup coverage. It can be argued that the gender-biased reporting could be attributed to spill over effects from other sexist coverage from the international press.

iv. Reflection of readers' preferences

This could be viewed from two levels – macro and micro. From the macro level, the mass media is a reflection of society and hence will structure and transmit messages accordingly to the commonly held cultural perceptions and values of gender relations vis-à-vis male dominance in football and hence subordinating or excluding women from equal participation in the popular World Cup. At the micro level, the media assumes and structures discourse according to their understanding of audience preferences. Often than not, they will naturally take the preference of the male readers.

A personal friend who's a freelance sports journalist was asked what was his mental image of his readers. He replied unhesitant, "the male football fan". You can easily gather from the coverage what the typical male audience like to see: match preview and review, team strategy and skills analysis, as well as betting tips, and good-looking female fans for entertainment. What about the female audience? The ones who follow the game will probably read what the males read like the match updates and analysis reports etc. Undeniably some of them enjoy looking at the athletically

lean and trimmed muscled bodies of the footballers and reading about the WAGs. To an extent the media gives the audience what they want. However female audiences have increased over the years, for example an increment of 40% this World Cup compared to the last. In Singapore females took up 45% of the World Cup 2006 audience and South Korea, Croatia and some countries in Europe had similar trends. Evidently the nature of coverage has not caught up with this demographic shift to recognise the presence of female audience. One immediate improvement which can be made would be a fairer and more balanced opinion by the columns with regards to their references to women, instead of labelling them ignorant and excluding them from the right of their participation.

v. Advertisements catered predominantly to male market

A ST article (ST, 1 July 2006) reports that World Cup advertising is dominated by male consumer products such as beer, cars, and electronics, and featured “bawdy humour, men playing football and bikini-clad women”. Obviously, the increasing female viewership has not been paid attention by advertisers who continue to target the traditional male football fans. The problem is partly explained by the fact that markets perceive female audiences as less serious spectators and hence not a reliable market to target their ads. We can argue that this has some effect on the type of media coverage as the papers will angle their reporting to be somewhat consistent with the ads’ audience. This inevitably alienates the female spectators and hence could explain why they appear to be fleeting.

Muller’s quote (1999) illustrates the points discussed effectively:

*“Male dominance in the media is evident from the fact that the content and form of sports coverage are aimed at the interests of a male audience. The journalists who cover sports, and whose audience is first and foremost to be male, are themselves men. Consequently, women and girls watch stadium sports to a much lesser extent than do men, and they pay less attention to sports news in the media (Klein, 1989). The presentation of sport to the outside world – in the media, in publicity work, and in commercial aspects of sports – is essentially masculine (Langer, 1986) ...There is certainly no doubt of the importance of the media in moulding opinion – including opinions on sport. Hence many forms of discrimination which women experience in sport are rooted in ideological patterns which are broadcast to a very great extent by the media.”*

## **5. Implications of gender-biased coverage**

The stereotypical portrayal of women in the World Cup coverage contributes to the wider theme of sports as a gendered institution and how gender-biased values are expressed through symbolic representations in media coverage. In many instances the stereotyping is blatant in the way women are shown scantily clothed, as trophy wives or girlfriends of successful footballers and as outsiders

to football. These stereotypes are enduring and the media has been a guilty perpetrator of these values and beliefs. If left unaddressed, these stereotypes will continue to manifest, reinforce themselves and ultimately contribute to the systemic subordination of women socially, economically and politically.

If sports are dominated by the hegemonic culture of masculinity ala Gramsci's theory, then counter-hegemonic discourses are those from critical feminists who argue that this hegemony persists because the important institutions like government, sports and mass media are headed by males who seek to protect and maintain the hegemony of male dominance. Also countering this hegemony are the increasing female football audiences – their numerical presence and differentiated preferences are contesting the nature of football coverage and will play a greater influence on advertisers and coverage.

It seems likely that the press finds it more lucrative to trivialise women for comic relief and gratification to suit the male readers. Ultimately is media practice about using the cliché themes of heterosexual sex, beautiful women and heroism in order to sell content? The balance between responsibility and commercial viability remains a vital consideration for editors and journalists with regards to sexist reporting.

### **Conclusion:**

In this study on the representations of women in World Cup 2006 coverage by Singapore's Straits Times and The New Paper, women are found constructed as being inferior, frivolous, weak and secondary figures to the men who are masculine, superior, aggressive, skillful and strong. The coverage has reinforced the stereotypical images of women as non-athletic sex objects on the sidelines and perpetuated traditional stereotypical perceptions of femininity and female sexuality. The media hence are used as channels to repress women through an institutionalised social system of male dominance in football and sports in general. Media framing of sport largely reproduces and ideologically naturalises existing gender hierarchy and power relations as "common sense". This study also shows no significant change between the coverage of World Cup 2006 to the earlier studies. In response to the question whether football coverage is moving towards better representation of females, it seems that "the men still don't get it". However, this can change over time as increasing awareness, active campaigning, advocacy from media practitioners and market power can lead to better representation of women.

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Cup special



RISE FOR BRAZIL, as this fan drapes herself with the Brazilian flag.

PHOTO: REUTERS



BEAUTIFUL COMPANY, as these German fans wear the same soccer bikinis to cheer on the host nation.

PHOTO: AP



HAVING A BALL, as this pregnant fan paints on her tummy.

PHOTO: AFP



THE DIVINE PONYTAILS, as this Argentinian fan cheers her country on.

PHOTO: AFP



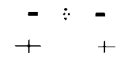
ALL SMILES as this Japanese fans enjoys the World Cup's carnival atmosphere.

PHOTO: REUTERS



COVERED WITH PRIDE, and not much else, is this Australian fan.

PHOTO: AP



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ception.  
England's base is not only difficult to reach up winding roads through heavily wooded and steep hills, it is also incidentally both forbidding and hilarious.

The enormous marquee-style structures in which the media centre has been accommodated are reserved for English-speaking media only and are packed with British journalists fighting for their exclusive rights.

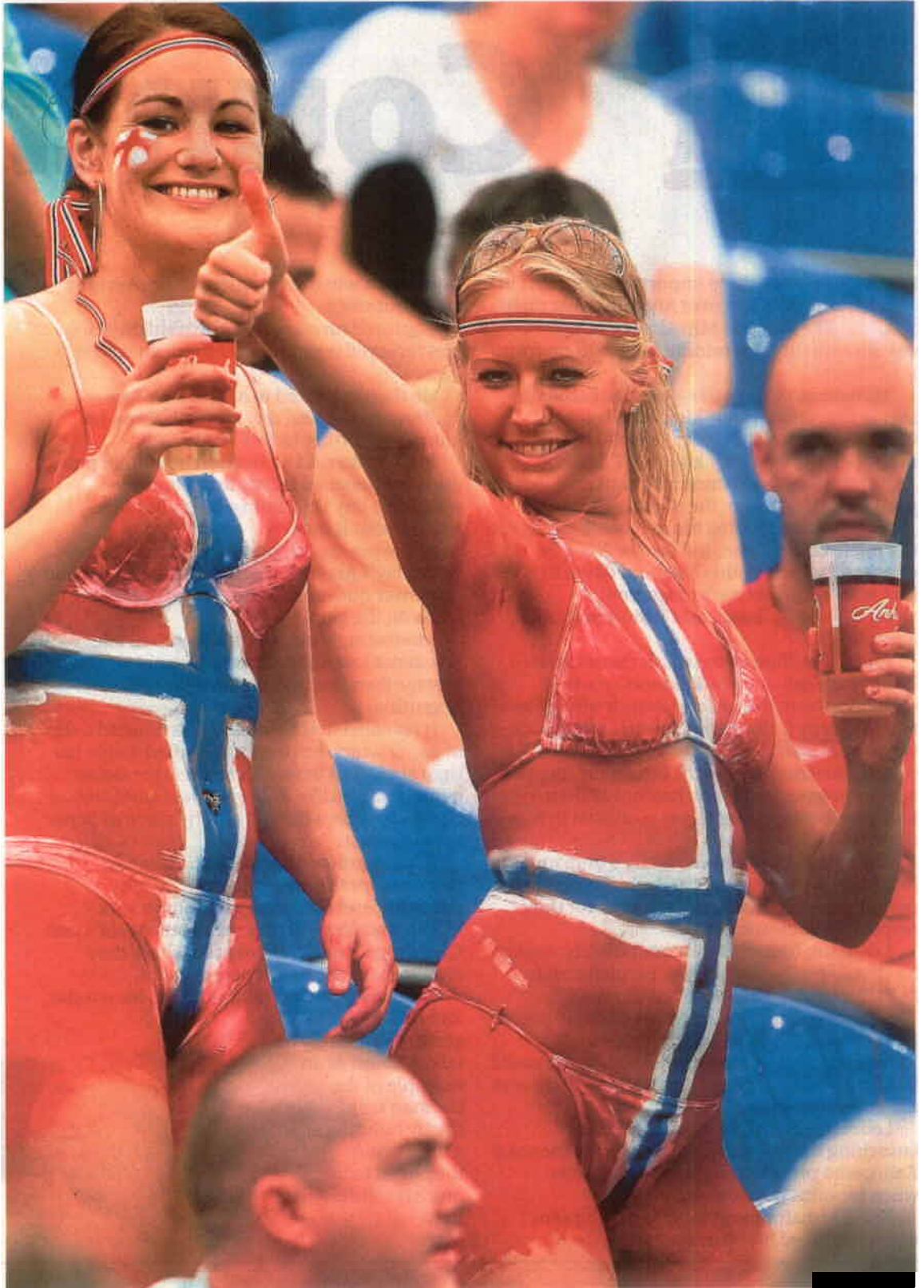
The facilities on offer are spartan but, unlike those at other team camps, there are no translators available to look after German-speaking and other visitors.

Even Togo laid on interpreters who worked from French into German and English.

Sweden conducted their pre-second round clash news conferences in Swedish, German and English while Paraguay always made everyone available in any language that could be understood.

## DUMBFOUNDED

On Thursday, two days before England played Portugal, several Portuguese visitors sat dumbfounded as David Beckham, Gary Neville and then Steven Gerrard were escorted in for group



**ALL FOR ONE:** English fans show their fullest support for the England team at Gelsenkirchen in Germany before this morning's quarter-final defeat against Portugal. pictures | reuters

that day, night or even the following day.

Portuguese reporters were told — in English only —

asked a question "out of turn" by using a Gerrard answer that, in Planet England's news-managed time-line, was not to be used until the

from their nearby luxury accommodation at the Schlosshotel for training. For 15 minutes, their scratching and yapping up

Peter Crouch to finally score. And there was Steven Gerrard's fantastic finish in stoppage time. I'm not just impressed, I'm super IMPRESSED.

*Lim Swee Tiam*

## Well done, England

ENGLAND'S performance in the second half was the antithesis of their first half. Sven-Goran Eriksson needed Wayne Rooney to save their pride after a 0-0 draw at half-time. Yet the finishing touches of Peter Crouch and Steven Gerrard sealed the game.

What I admired about the English was their determination. Unlike their first game against Paraguay, England looked very hungry in attack.

*Dinesh Nair*

BY TAN HONG MING

NEVER has The Straits Times readers' poll been so lopsided.

The ST asked 40 readers this question: Did England impress with their win against Trinidad and Tobago?

Answer: A unanimous No.

In fact, many readers felt very strongly about England's insipid performance. Most bemoaned the Three Lions' toothless attack.

Said Eric Perera, a 47-year-old copywriter whose English friend actually fell asleep during the match: "It was a really disappointing match."

"I had hoped the Chelsea boys would do some magic."

Student Ew Jing Dao, 24 pointed out: "England needed 82 minutes to score against Trinidad and Tobago."

"Does it mean those Trinidad and Tobago players are as good as the Premiership stars?"

Said undergraduate Liang Kaixin, 21: "England were painful to watch. They had so many chances but they couldn't convert!"

"Peter Crouch shouldn't even be playing in the World Cup."

Like her, many blamed England's monotonous long-ball strategy, built around the two-metre-tall striker, as the root cause of their lacklustre performance.

Said educator Justin Lloyd

## YESTERDAY'S QUESTION

Were you impressed with England's performance against Trinidad & Tobago?

**YES 0%**

**NO 100%**

Fernandez, 40: "You don't need a nuclear scientist to figure out England's style of play. They are simply crossing the ball into the box for Crouch."

"It's too easy to nullify

England's attack."

Added money broker Colin Maximilian Rozario, 40: "One on one, Crouch was horrible."

"If England are to rely on him, they would have no chance."

With his strategy under attack, Sven-Goran Eriksson's saving grace was his substitutions in the second half. The coach brought on Wayne Rooney, Aaron Lennon and Stuart Downing. It worked.

Said Gerard Stewart, civil servant, 42: "Lennon did more in the few minutes he was on than Beckham did in the whole match."

"England should stick with this line-up."

Said undergraduate Kevin

Lim, 23: "England were ridiculous in the first half. They threatened only after the introduction of Rooney."

The Manchester United striker had been rushed back into action despite not being fully fit, but many felt his introduction lifted the team.

However, Lim was quick to add: "This again showed England's reliance on Rooney."

A frustrated Tan Hong Pei disagreed. Said the 18-year-old student: "England have an abundance of talent. This is simply not the England I know. They will get better."

And England, at least according to readers, will have to improve, if David Beckham is to lift the trophy on July 9.



## Girls have all the fun

Sisterhood of The Beautiful Game overrun the Fatherland (clockwise from right): Fans from the USA, the Ukraine, Tunisia, Italy, and Brazil



PHOTOS: REUTERS, AFP





**IF you think football is all about 22 men chasing after one ball on a grass pitch, think again.**

**No other sport inspires such fierce patriotic loyalty from fans.**

**The month-long 2006 Fifa World Cup is turning out to be a brazen and colourful display of national pride.**

**All over Germany, fans of 32 teams, currently battling in the group stage, are getting the media's attention with creative ways of wearing their countries' colours.**

**And on these two pages, female fans are holding their love and support for their favourite teams as close to their hearts as possible. Sexy and eye-catching bras with motifs seem to be the standard dress code for these supporters.**

**Come 24 June, some of the teams will be heading into the final 16 of the tournament and only time will tell how much more creative these fans will get when the football fever rises.**

◆ *Say it, shout it, flaunt it... A Czech Republic supporter flashes everyone at the Group E match between her fave team and Ghana last week.*



# ***Brazen*** **show of support**