

## GOAALL! reading



- 1 Read this article about football quickly and answer this question:
  - ***Do you think the writer likes the game or not?***  
**Yes / No**
- 2 Now read it again more slowly and look at the parts underlined. With a partner decide if they are facts, or the writer's opinions. Then fill in the chart below.

	<i>Fact or fiction?</i>
1. <b>It's a popular game all around the world</b>	
2. <b>There'll definitely be no escaping from the media coverage</b>	
3. <b>It's certainly a lively and colourful spectacle</b>	
4. <b>There's a bizarre looking mascot</b>	
5. <b>Everybody loves it!</b>	
6. <b>It's THE sport of the world</b>	
7. <b>It's BIG business</b>	
8. <b>Perhaps it's the simplicity of it all.</b>	
9. <b>It's easy to learn the rules</b>	
10. <b>But there's also an ugly side to it</b>	
11. <b>It's about power and masculinity</b>	
12. <b>To lose on the other hand is a disgrace and a shame</b>	

**So why is football such a popular game around the world?** Yet another tournament has started and millions of supporters from many countries are discussing the chances of one team over another, the form of the top teams and who the favourites are (and the underdogs too). The lucky fans who have tickets are unpacking their bags with shirts and flags and scarves of their nation's colours. The unlucky ones are glued to the television. Even those who aren't that interested in the game find themselves involved in predicting the results for the office competition (I'm betting on the host country). And there'll definitely be no escaping from the media coverage, commentary and publicity that makes it THE news event of the month. Famine? Forest fires? Fighting? Forget it. It's football, football, football.

It's certainly a lively and colourful spectacle. There's the razzmatazz of the opening ceremony, not to mention the fireworks and speeches and exotic performances for the closing ceremony. There's a bizarre looking mascot (usually some kind of fruit or animal / person) and fans covered in face paint. There are tantrums, tension and tears on the pitch, and everybody loves it!

Phew! So how did this happen? What is it about twenty two grown men running around a rectangular piece of land trying to get a ball from one end to the other? Why has it become THE sport of the world? It's everywhere! From domestic league competitions (like La Liga, and the Premiership) and international events

(The European Championships, the Copa America, the Asia Cup, the African Nations Cup) to the champion of championships the World Cup itself. Football is a global phenomenon and lucrative too. It's BIG business: many teams are quoted on stock markets around the world and huge sums are paid by satellite TV companies.

Perhaps it's the simplicity of it all. You only need a ball, a few mates and a patch of ground - in the street or on the beach or at school. And, despite the off-side rule, it's easy to learn the rules: pass, kick and shoot. Goal!

But there's also an ugly side to it. Something about the game brings out the patriot in us all that can be a touch too nationalistic. Suddenly there's more at stake than losing a match or winning a tournament. They are 'our boys' and they have gone to fight in a foreign field and the flags are flying in hope. Everyone is shouting and it seems more of a war cry than an encouraging cheer. To win is everything. It's not just a game; it's the latest battle in a history of rivalries. It's about power and masculinity and domination and victory and politics. To lose on the other hand is a disgrace and a shame. Enough for Andreas Escobar to be shot after scoring an own goal.

Ah well, that's the game. I may not know the difference between an assistant referee and a linesman, an indirect and a direct free kick but I'll be shouting loudly for my team. Is that the time? I'd better be off - the second half has just started. Come on the reds!