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THE GLOBALISATION OF 'BAD' MANAGEMENT PRACTICE: THE THREE POINTS FOR A WIN REFORM IN SOCCER

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The English Football League introduced the three points for a win reform in 1981. While it was presented as an experiment the initiative was never monitored. This did not prevent FIFA adopting it for the first phase matches of the World Cup on the eve of the 1994 tournament. This paper sets out to assess the impact of this reform on this and subsequent World Cups. We conclude by arguing that this whole process can be usefully understood in terms of the complex dynamics of human figurations. It is an interpretation that places emphasis on the relational impediments to effective managerial control.

The English Football League introduced the three points for a win reform in 1981. It replaced the two points for a win format that had prevailed for the previous eighty-three years. In 1993, FIFA announced that the winning 'bonus' point would be adopted for the first (the mini-league) phase of the World Cup finals that were to be held in the United States in 1994. Thereafter, it quickly spread to other international and domestic competitions. The English Football League's innovation was the response to a financial crisis. The member clubs were caught in a vicious circle of salary-inflation and declining gates. The League's executive was of the view that a possible solution to these problems lay in improving the entertainment on offer. The winning bonus point was conceived as a means of encouraging more attacking football, which would produce more goals per game. As its President, Jack Dunnett, made clear at the time of its introduction, if three points for a win proved to be unsuccessful they

could revert to the old system the following season (*The Times*, 26 August 1981).

However, in the event, what was presented as an experiment was one in name only because the football authorities never monitored its impact or established any criteria by which its relative success or failure might be assessed. Seemingly, they had no notion of how many extra goals would have been required to indicate that the innovation had been a success. Had the authorities bothered to monitor their 'experiment' it is difficult to see how they could have been anything other than disappointed.[1] The failure of the English football authorities to monitor the reform does not seem to have troubled FIFA's General Secretary, Sepp Blatter, or, indeed, the other football authorities that subsequently embraced it.[2] Therefore, in this paper we set out to rectify this monitoring omission, not only in an attempt to assess the impact of this 'experiment,' but also with a view to offering a sociological interpretation of the processes involved. We will focus on the impact the reform made on World Cup tournaments and then offer a figurational interpretation of these processes (See Goudsblom, 1977).

The choice of the United States as the host nation for the 1994 World Cup finals was driven by the desire of FIFA's executive to overcome the last formidable bastion of resistance to making the game more or less global. It was an aspiration that was encouraged by the promise of the United States Soccer Federation to establish a professional league on the back of the World Cup.[3] The decision was not without its risks. As one writer put it 'FIFA has never before charged its most prestigious tournament to the care of a country where the game is regarded as a minority sport, fit only for schoolchildren and a rather chic game for college students' (Morrison, 1990: 430). Not surprisingly, given the sporting traditions of America, it was a World Cup that was surrounded by much talk about the possibility of radically transforming the laws of the game. Some of the more extreme advocates of change wanted to divide the playing time into four quarters. They also bemoaned the fact that the game was not sufficiently high scoring and, in this regard, they made invidious comparisons with the established American sports. Simon Barnes reported that in 'the United States inter-Regional League… they are running a series of FIFA-backed experiments' (*The Times*, 8 June 1994). Apparently these included bigger goals, players being withdrawn after committing five fouls and the option of taking a kick-in rather than a throw-in. David Miller, also writing in *The Times*, could scarcely conceal his relief when there was an agreement 'by American television not to interrupt the 45 minute continuity of normal soccer, (an agreement) which killed the widely-rumoured intention by FIFA to introduce the "four-quarter" match' (27 November 1993).

Nevertheless, while the more radical proposals failed to find acceptance, FIFA did bring in a batch of reforms on the eve of the 1994 Finals. In addition to three points for a win in the first round they 'outlawed the tackle from behind; insisted on a liberal interpretation of the off-side rule; forced "injured" players off the field to avoid time-wasting and instructed referees to follow these new guidelines or be banished from the tournament' (Nawrat and Hutchins, 1996: 276). Two significant changes not mentioned by these authors were the modification in the 'back-pass' rule and the introduction of a new type of ball. John Goodbody reported on this latter development in the following terms: 'With FIFA anxious that the game should reach a potentially huge new audience in the United States, it wanted to arrest the steady decline in the number of goals.' To this end, they commissioned Adidas to produce the Questra ball: 'it bounces higher, flies faster and swerves more than its predecessors' (*The Times*, 25 June 1994).

The thinking behind the three points reform was revealed at a press conference in December 1993. When Blatter was asked to justify it he said:

> The essence of football should be going for goal. In the last World Cup, this was not the case; some teams were determined to get to the quarter-finals by drawing all three matches. I expressed long ago my view that three points for a win would reward attacking football and punish those who play negatively. I think now you will see one of the best first rounds for many years (*The Times*, 18 December 1993).[4]

Thus, it seems that the introduction of three points for a win was one element in a package of reforms whose roots may be traced back to a negative response to the football that characterised the World Cup finals of 1990 and a wish to ensure that the game was made more appealing to a potentially sceptical American public. However, the grounds for Blatter's belief in its goal generating potential remain obscure**.** It was, in effect, just another shot in the dark, but this time it was a shot that had global ramifications. UEFA followed FIFA down the same un-lit road and adopted the reform for the 1996 European Nations Championships. Thereafter, other nations fell into line. For example, Italy and Scotland introduced it into their domestic competitions for the 1994-95 season, Argentina, Germany and Spain for the 1995-96 season and Brazil in 1996.

The football cultures of different countries and continents are characterised by considerable variations, although an appreciation of this diversity does not preclude the recognition of global similarities. Relative success and failure in professional football tends to be measured overwhelmingly in terms of results. Few managers/coaches at the higher levels of the game will retain their jobs for very long if they consistently fail to deliver on this front. This guiding principle by which managers/coaches are judged brings with it constraints that influence the playing strategies pursued in all countries. For a manager/coach a central, if not

the central, question is: what are the best results that can be achieved with the resources at my disposal? Given the ubiquitous nature of these constraints, one might anticipate that the switch to the three points for a win format in international tournaments and other national domestic leagues would have been likely to have encountered similar obstacles to those experienced in England (Murphy, 2004). The success of the reform was dependent on persuading the majority of managers/coaches that it was in their interests to adopt more adventurous styles of play.

The six World Cup tournaments between 1930 and 1958 were relatively free-scoring affairs, averaging 4.24 goals per game. In terms of goals scored, the eleven world cups held from 1962 to 2002 have been more barren affairs, averaging 2.65. Over this latter period, the variation of goals per game ranges from a high of 2.97 in 1970 to a low of 2.21 in 1990; a range of .76 and a variation that falls some way short of one goal per game. Guillerno Canedo, the chairman of the organising committee for the 1994 finals, described the 1990 finals as a 'dire, dirty, destructive combat' (*The Times*, 27 April 1994). They returned the lowest number of goals per game in the history of the World Cup–2.21. To assess the impact of the three points reform we focus on the group but not the knockout stages of the finals. Table 1[5] presents the goal scoring patterns at the group stages in the seventeen world cup finals held between 1930 and 2002.

Table 1*
The World Cup Finals 1930–2002: Group Matches

Year	*Games Played*	*Goals Scored*	*Average/game*
1930	15	50	3.33
1934	-	-	-
1938	-	-	-
1950	21	80	3.81
1954	16	78	4.88
1958	24	79	3.29
1962	24	65	2.71
1966	24	57	2.35
1970	24	61	2.54
1974	36	93	2.58
1978	36	95	2.64
1982	48	129	2.69
1986	36	84	2.33
1990	36	82	2.28
1994	36	93	2.58
1998	48	126	2.63
2002	48	130	2.71

* A small number of group matches were actually played according to knockout principles and, therefore, they have not been included in this table. Only goals scored in open play have been counted, including penalties scored in the match proper. Goals scored in penalty shoot-outs have been omitted.

Table 1 shows that the three points reform did coincide with a slight upturn in the number of goals scored per game at the group stage/s. When compared with the goals record for the first phases of the 1990 finals there was an increase of 0.3 goals per game at the equivalent stage in 1994; an additional goal every three games. However, the rate for the 1994 finals is still lower than that which prevailed in the group stage/s in the 1962, 1978 and 1982 finals. In fact the goal-scoring rate at the group stage/s has been remarkably stable since the 1962 finals. From 1962 to 2002 the average number of goals per game has been uniformly lower than three per game and over this period it has only varied between 2.28 and 2.71. In other words, the variation over a period of forty years has been less than one goal every second game.

Taken over the full tournament, the average number of goals per game in 1994 was 0.5 of a goal higher than that of 1990. Yet if one of the chief aims of the package of reforms had been to appeal to an American sporting public ostensibly weaned on high scoring sports, like basketball, it is difficult to see how an increase of this magnitude could have been expected to register with them. While they may have made comparisons with basketball**,** the majority of them had no historical reference point for soccer. Nevertheless, many outside commentators greeted FIFA's strategy for the 1994 finals as triumph. For example, Nawrat and Hutchings (1996: 276) wrote:

> The beautiful game was born again. The midwives were FIFA, who used their legislative powers to privilege adventurous play…FIFA must get much of the credit for this resurrection… Self-professed experts had dismissed FIFA initiative as something concocted by meddling bureaucrats. How wrong they were…This was not FIFA taking a sledgehammer to crack a nut – this was taking a scalpel to excise a cancer.

The appropriateness of depicting FIFA as a surgeon deftly wielding a scalpel is open to question. As far as the three points reform was concerned, they conducted no research into the English experience and had they done so, it is difficult to see how it could have supported the introduction of a winning bonus point. Moreover, notwithstanding the fact that FIFA had four years between World Cups to pilot and assess various options aimed at facilitating more attacking football, they chose to wait until the eve of the 1994 finals to introduce a package of reforms. Introducing them en masse was bound to make it more difficult to assess their specific contributions. Blatter's instrument of choice was not so much the scalpel as the blunderbuss. The political skills recognised, even by his critics, do not seem to have extended to his understanding of the intricacies of policy (Tomlinson, 2000).

It does seem clear that unlike the winning bonus point, the new back-pass rule, the clampdown on the tackle from behind and the new ball, were

all likely to have a direct and significant impact upon the game. Fortunately for our purposes, the structure of the World Cup tournament, with its two distinct forms of competition – group competition within leagues and knockout matches – enables us to probe the respective impact of the three points reform and these other changes on goal scoring rates. Table 2 presents these data.

Table 2
A Comparison of Average Goals Per Game at the Group and Knockout Stages of the World Cup Finals–1930-2002

Year	*Games Played Group stage*	*Average goals/ game Groups stage*	*Games played at knockout stage*	*Average goals/ game knockout stage*
1930	15	3.33	3	6.67
1934	-	-	17	4.12
1938	-	-	18	4.67
1950	21	3.81	1	8.0
1954	16	4.88	10	6.2
1958	24	3.29	11	3.64
1962	24	2.71	8	3.0
1966	24	2.35	8	3.88
1970	24	2.54	8	4.25
1974	36	2.58	2	2.0
1978	36	2.64	2	3.5
1982	48	2.69	4	4.25
1986	36	2.33	16	3.0
1990	36	2.28	16	2.06
1994	36	2.58	16	3.0
1998	48	2.63	16	2.81
2002	48	2.71	16	1.94

As already noted, judging by the number of goals scored per game, the finals after 1958 have become distinctively cagier affairs. Table 2 demonstrates that this trend finds expression at both the group and knockout stages. The group stages of the finals from 1962 to 2002 registered an average of 2.55 goals per game with a range of between 2.71 and 2.2. The respective figures for the knockout stages are an average of 3.06 and a range between 4.25 and 2.0. In terms of trends, while the average goals per game for the group stages have been fairly stable over this period, the average for knockout games exhibits a more marked variation. Taking 1990 – the tournament that triggered the reforms – as our base year, the average number of goals per game for the group stage of the finals 1990-2002 is 2.55. This is exactly matched by the average for the group games for the period 1962-2002. In contrast, the equivalent figure for knockout games for the finals 1990 to 2002 is 2.39. The average for knockout games for the period 1962 to 2002 is 3.06. A comparison of the

group and knockout stages of the 1994 finals offers a clearer picture of the specific, immediate impact of the winning bonus point. The average number of goals scored per game at the group stage of the 1994 finals was actually 0.42 less than at the knockout stages in which the three points system did not apply.

Before drawing hasty conclusions from the above data, it is as well to appreciate the complexity of the broader human figuration. The early stages of any competition are bound to include teams with a wider range of ability and one might anticipate that the stronger teams are likely to find it easier to score goals at this phase of the competition. On this basis, FIFA's political decision to expand the number of teams entering the finals from 24 to 32 in 1998 is likely to have increased the number of weaker teams in the competition. Consistent with the above argument, it might also be reasonable to assume that goal-scoring becomes more difficult at the knockout stages of the finals because they are contested by the stronger, more evenly matched teams. Yet while the above reasoning may seem plausible it is not consistently supported by the scoring patterns of these two distinct phases of the tournament. While the scoring rate for the group stage of the 1998 and 2002 finals was higher than that of the 1994 tournament, the increase was only marginal and perhaps not as high as might have been anticipated on the basis of the above reasoning. However, while over the history of the tournament goals per game have generally been higher at the knockout stages, they are now becoming more difficult to come by. At the 2002 finals they reached a new low point with a rate of only 1.94 goals per game, the lowest scoring phase in the entire history of the World Cup. Indeed, an analysis of the goal-scoring patterns at the finals from 1930 onwards indicates that those who are concerned with the decline in goal-scoring rates should perhaps be less worried about trends at the group stage and more worried about what could prove to be an emerging downward trend at the knockout stages. As indicated above, while the average number of goals scored at the group stages has exhibited a certain stability since 1962, and in three of these eleven finals this figure has been lower than the level registered at the knockout stages, the dip in goals per game at the knockout stage in 2002 is unprecedented. In this regard, it will be interesting to monitor developments in Germany 2006.

One possible explanation for the relative stability of the average number of goals per game scored at the group stage is that at this phase of the competition, defensive strategies are already well established. Echoing Blatter's earlier cited comment, many managers have long been prepared to play for strategic draws if this served their purpose. This has become more possible because over the last decade or so the general standard of world football has risen appreciably. The market for coaches has become global and knowledge of sophisticated coaching techniques has

accompanied them. The weaker teams have become better organised. There is a pervasive attachment to the importance of 'keeping clean sheets', a euphemism for a commitment to defensive football. The modern football cliché that there are no easy matches contains a growing element of truth. These developments may go some way towards explaining why the entry of more teams into the finals since 1998 has not been accompanied by any marked increase in the number of goals scored in the opening phase. At the knockout stages, where, at least until the introduction of the penalty shoot-out, there was nothing to be gained by playing for a draw, one might anticipate more uninhibited attacking football and higher scoring games. However, this possibility seems to have been countered by the growing conservatism of managers and coaches, a conservatism which seems to be rooted in the game's perceived increasing cultural, political and economic significance (Bragg 2006: 113-16). The winning bonus of $500,000 offered to each player if Italy won the 1994 World Cup is but one indication of the growing seriousness with which national governing bodies view World Cup tournaments (*The Times*, 16 June 1994). Yet the promise of such rewards can be a double-edged sword. While they may be envisaged as an incentive, in practice they can induce a fear of failure. Since only one team can win the tournament, perhaps the paramount and growing pressure on managers/coaches is to ensure that their teams do not suffer 'humiliating' defeats. The simple palliative of an extra bonus point was, and is, unlikely to dampen such concerns. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that while FIFA have introduced a number of reforms aimed at encouraging attacking football, they still find themselves swimming against a conservative tide. It is a tide that seems to draw its strength from the growing world prominence of football and the greater risks to national prestige following defeat. The paradox is that the FIFA Executive have been at the forefront of driving this process.

Conclusion

In our view this process can best be understood in terms of the complex and dynamic figurations formed by human beings (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 38-9; van Krieken, 1998: 55-59; Quilley and Loyal, 2004: 1-22; Bloyce, 2004). The individuals and groups involved were subject to different sets of constraints. Managers and coaches–themselves not an undifferentiated group–sought to achieve relative success for their teams and, thereby, satisfy their employers and club supporters and retain their jobs. Given the limited resources available to most of them, relative success was more or less synonymous with developing fit, well-organised teams with a high level of commitment. The numerical dominance of such clubs/teams goes a long way towards explaining the prevalence of defensive strategies. Football administrators in England in the early 1980s had

different priorities. In this period the owners of the member clubs of the Football League felt themselves to be in the grip of spiralling wage costs and declining gate revenues (*The Times*, 25 August 1981). The League's administrators did not really know what to do to alleviate these problems, but felt under pressure to do something. It may be left to its then President, Jack Dunnett, to capture the collective state of mind of the Football League's executive when the reform was introduced. He conceded: 'we are in the position of a beleaguered garrison; the situation is very serious; gates have fallen 11% over the past season. All the management know something is wrong–we are not idiots. But don't ask me the solution. I don't know it.' (*The Times*, 6 June 1981). In this malaise they made the simplistic assumption that more goals would mean more entertaining football and the hope was that this would reverse the decline in attendances. The three points reform was seen as the means by which this process could be triggered, but, as we have seen, its implementation went unmonitored. As the seasons passed it simply became part of the unquestioned working environment of the football fraternity. This so-called experiment was given renewed prominence when Blatter announced that it would be one element in a package of measures introduced on the eve of the 1994 World Cup finals that were aimed at raising the game's entertainment level. The concerns that Blatter and the FIFA executive were addressing diverged from those that led the English football authorities to introduce the three points reform. They were striving to make the game more entertaining, but they also wanted to establish football as a 'truly global sport' by selling it to a sceptical 'American public.' FIFA's endorsement of the reform was sufficient to legitimise its global diffusion.

Some of the groups and individuals involved in these human figurations[6] were and are relatively powerful (Mennell, 1989). Some of them have the capacity to define what is and is not a problem and to initiate actions or strategies aimed at correcting or ameliorating the situation. However, their capacity to achieve their ends is limited by an array of inter-related and interdependent internal and external constraints (Soeters and van Iterson, 2002: 37). The internal constraints relate to their inadequate appreciation of their own limitations. This can stem from a lack of knowledge of social processes, and not uncommonly these limitations combine with considerable over-estimations of their own ability to exercise control over future developments. In addition, their capacities to develop effective policies tend to be hampered by flights of fancy. That is to say, their commitment to particular visions of the future lead them to engage in highly partial analyses of the conditions causing them consternation and hence to policies imbued with strong elements of wishful thinking. As such, the visions of the future they pursue are often

unrealistic. In other words, they adhere to an unrealistic appreciation of 'what is possible.' The external constraints relate to the sheer complexity of the relational networks of which they are a part. To adequately comprehend even the immediate figurations in which they were embroiled, they needed to recognise that it was not sufficient to focus solely upon the values, priorities and intentions of the parties involved. There was a need to conceptualise the 'composite unit,' that is to say, the relevant human figuration as a whole (Elias, 1978: 71). Only in this way would it have been possible to anticipate some of the unforeseen outcomes that were bound to emerge from the combined actions of the individuals and groups involved. Appreciating outcomes as a combination of planned and unplanned human actions fosters a more realistic understanding of the limits of the possible, and what can and cannot be achieved by concerted human action. Even if policy-makers do, on occasions, realise their ends, their achievement is almost invariably accompanied by a series of unforeseen outcomes. Policy-makers may perceive some of these as fortuitous, but they are likely to view others as less welcome. The consequences of yet others may remain hidden for varying lengths of time. We should not be misled by the tendency of policy-makers to claim retrospectively that the 'positive effects' were part of their original plans or, indeed, by the countervailing tendency for them to deny the connection between their actions and what are perceived to be the unanticipated 'negative side effects.' One source of unplanned outcomes is when an executive committee pursue distinct policies that are themselves at variance with one another. For example, while, as we have seen, FIFA have initiated policies aimed at making the game more attractive by placing the emphasis on attacking play, many of their other policies have been geared to the desire to increase the global prominence of soccer. These two dimensions of policy are captured in a key phrase of FIFA's President, Sepp Blatters' mission statement: 'Make the Game better, and take it to the World' (cited in FIFA, 2005). Clearly from his perspective, part of 'making the game better' is making it more entertaining. However, 'taking it to the world' requires resources, and the generation of these have involved expanding its links with a variety of commercial organisations and political bodies. Developing such ties inevitably increases the political and cultural prominence of the game and helps to raise the amount of national prestige at stake in international competition. The increasing fear of failure seems to be a key element discouraging managers/coaches from adopting more adventurous styles of play. Thus, one policy initiative has helped to undermine another. As such, the three points saga can be seen as an example of just one of the ways in which human figurations can produce unanticipated, unplanned outcomes (Elias, 1978; Mennell, 1989; Murphy and Sheard, 2006).

In our view, the thrust of the above analysis is at variance with much of management theory because of the latter's tendency to exaggerate the power of management to influence outcomes, a tendency that reaches its apotheosis in the 'power of positive thought' literature (see for example, Srivastva and Cooperrider, 1999). In our view this tendency to exaggerate the control that managers can exercise has more to do with ideological imperatives than it does with expanding managers' level of understanding.

Throughout, we have been cognisant of the need to distance ourselves from what Elias termed heteronomous evaluations[7] (Elias, 1987; Mennell,1989). In respect of this, we are bound to point out that the term 'bad management practice' in the title of this paper is not an externally imposed judgement. Rather it springs from the experimental criterion espoused by the President of the English Football League. He viewed it as 'an experiment' which, if it failed to live up to expectations, would be repealed. Since this so-called experiment was not monitored it is clearly a case of management not abiding by its own declared standards. FIFA then propagated this 'bad practice' on a global scale. Our aim has not been to assign responsibility. Rather, we have tried to understand these processes more adequately. Given the locations of the participating parties, given their intense level of involvement in their own narrow agendas and, given the internalised and external constraints they were under and the consequent pressure to do something, the chances of FIFA raising their heads and making a more detached assessment of the relational networks of which they were a part, and which they hoped to change, were most unlikely (Williams et. al., 1984). The problem facing anyone trying to determine the impact of this reform is that it was but one element in a complex human figuration. The dynamic figuration that gave rise to the decline in the number of goals per game is itself bound to have been multifaceted. The chances of a single specific reform reversing a deeply entrenched process are fairly problematic.[8] The chances become more tenuous if the reform in question is aimed at affecting the situation indirectly. In the case of the three points reform, the chances of it being successful were dependent on it influencing the mind-set of a crucially placed occupational group–the managers/coaches. Moreover, determining its impact is complicated still further if its introduction coincides with other developments, including other reforms.

Even though this package of reforms does not seem to have generated the desired significant increase in goals per game, it should not necessarily be interpreted as an abject policy failure. It is difficult to see how the reform of the back-pass rule, a clampdown on the tackle from behind and the introduction of balls which travel faster and swerve unpredictably could do anything other than benefit sides that are more committed to

attacking football. That these innovations have not found expression in a significant up-turn in goals scored might suggest that were it not for these reforms defences would have become even more dominant and scoring rates would have declined still further. It seems that the dominant trajectory of world football is in a cautious, conservative direction.

NOTES

1. The eyes of the League executive were on more entertaining football measured in terms of the number of goals scored. Managers/coaches were bound to focus on the number of points gained relative to their competitors. To adopt a more attacking approach, in the first instance with a view to turning more draws into victories, would have involved scoring more goals, but inevitably this would have made teams vulnerable to conceding more goals. Therefore, the calculation that managers/coaches would have had to make is: 'Are we likely to score more goals than we concede by adopting a more attacking style? ' For every additional goal they conceded as a result of modifying their approach they would have needed to score two. While we are not suggesting that this pattern would have had to be replicated in every game, the scale of these targets suggest that the odds were very much stacked against the League achieving their desired outcome by means of their three points reform. In practice there seem to have been three broad possible reactions on the part of managers/coaches to the introduction of a winning bonus point: (i) none of the managers were prepared to risk adopting a more attacking style, (ii) all managers/coaches responded positively to the incentive and opted for a more attacking approach and, (iii) only the more adventurous managers/coaches moved down this path. The remainder preferred a wait and see strategy. In the case of option one, little would change. Without the emergence of other changes, the goal-scoring rates would have continued to vary more or less within the prevailing parameters. In the case of option two, inevitably, given the competitive nature of a league, there would be some winners and some losers. Those who had faired better under the previous system would be likely to revert back to their earlier more defensive formations. This, in turn, would have implications for those who initially benefited from the adoption of more attacking strategies and these then might lead them to reconsider their position and so on. Option three would simply involve a variation of option two leading to a movement in one direction or the other, and possibly back again. In the event, in the crucial first season of the reform the number of goals per game fell from the 2.66 of the previous season to 2.54 in the English First Division. The respective figures for the ten years before and after the reform are 2.55 and 2.66, a marginal increase of 0.11 goals per game. This amounted to an extra goal every nine games. This suggests that the majority of elite managers in England made individual decisions to forego the in centive of a winning bonus point and stick to their previous, more defensive-minded game plans. Had individual managers chosen to make their own assessment of the consequences of the reform, they would have been confirmed in their initial judgement, although, of course, this would have involved an element of self-fulfilling prophesy.

2. An analysis of the reform's influence on elite level football in England has been presented elsewhere (Murphy 2004).
3. In the event, Major League Soccer was established in 1996, one year later than originally planned.
4. There were eight draws in the first round of the 1990 tournament. Three were 0-0 games and in five the result was 1-1. Five of these draws were concentrated in one group (F) and only two teams–Holland and the Republic of Ireland–drew all three of their first round matches. Only Ireland progressed to Round Two. Incidentally, while no teams at the 1986 finals drew all three of their first round matches, there were eleven draws at this stage. These included three 0-0s, seven 1-1s and one 2-2 result.
5. We could have calculated and included the level of statistical significance of these data. However, this would have been a genuflection for pedantic statistical reasons only. As Atkins and Jarrett have pointed out while 'the choice of a significance level is supposed to be rational and objective, in much social research there are no purely technical criteria on which this choice could be based. This problem forces the choice straight back on to "subjective" criteria' (1981:98). In the context of this paper the FIFA executive did not make public their thoughts on what sort of variation in the number of goals per game would constitute relative success and relative failure. Indeed, the likelihood is that they did not reflect in any depth on the matter. In any case, they would not have been able to isolate the respective influence of their various reforms. As far as the reactions of the competing managers are concerned, it is not possible to know what they would have regarded as a 'significant incentive' in terms of goals scored or points acquired to modify their playing strategies.
6. By introducing the concept human figurations Elias wanted to make the study of the dynamic interdependencies formed by human beings central to sociology. In doing so he was trying to overcome what he saw as a number of prevailing and still prevailing tendencies. Firstly, he was critical of the tendency to reify social structure. To see social structure as something over and above the human beings who comprise it. Secondly, he was equally concerned to challenge the often connected tendency to conceive of in dividuals as if they live apart from society (homo clausus) rather than seeing people in the plural (homines aperti) and, thirdly, he was striving to ensure that the focus is unerringly upon process (for a more extended discussion of these issues see Mennell 1989: 188-93).
7. Elias was committed to contributing to the development of the sociology of knowledge. As such he was critical of what he saw as the unproductive objective/subjective dichotomy that pervaded and still pervades discussion of the part played by values in the understanding of the non-human and human sciences. He saw human behaviour as involving a complex blend of greater and lesser involvement, greater and lesser detachment. Moreover, he argued that in the course of human history the balance between these aspects has tended to shift more in favour of the latter. This movement has found its strongest expression in the non-human sciences. In other words, the professional orientation of scientists working in these fields are characterised

by relatively high levels of autonomy. This compares with the more heteronomous, more involved, evaluations that are prevalent in the work of social scientists and, of course, people in general as they go about their daily lives (for elaboration see Elias 1987).

8. There are, nevertheless, important differences between a game and social life in general. For example, see Elias on games models (Elias 1978:71-103). It is possible to envisage silver bullet solutions to perceived problems in games. For example, the decline in the number of goals scored per game could and can be rectified by simply increasing the size of the goal. This would, however, prove to be a highly contentious move and might also have the consequence of widening the performance differentials at the highest levels in football and placing an even greater premium on prolific strikers.

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