

Saturday, 6 October, 2001

It's England versus Greece

We draw, it a summer in Korea with Brazil and Argentina, we lose, it's a winter's trip to the Balkans and battle against the Ukraine.

It's the last minute and it's 2-1.

But we have a chance, a free kick on the edge of the box

John says he isn't interested and sits in the corner, a solitary gnome, clutching his pint and pretending to read his newspaper.

The pub is packed.

Oceans of white crossed with blood red scars.

The old enemy watch through a miracle of modern technology made large.

Everyone stands, panther tense, ready to strike.

Lunatics jockey for position so we climb the seats to be above them, our eyes unwilling to miss even a single glance.

The camera moves to his face.

He is blank, he is calm, he is in The Zone.

He strikes the ball and for a moment there is silence.

Someone mouths the word "shit" and the world explodes

Beer becomes rain, beer mats become fireworks.

We scream, we dance, we hug, we kiss.

On the screen we are aped by the crowd and stars past and present become instant lovers.

This is The Moment.

This is what it means.

This is why we watch football and football's coming home.

And over in the corner, John drops his Times.