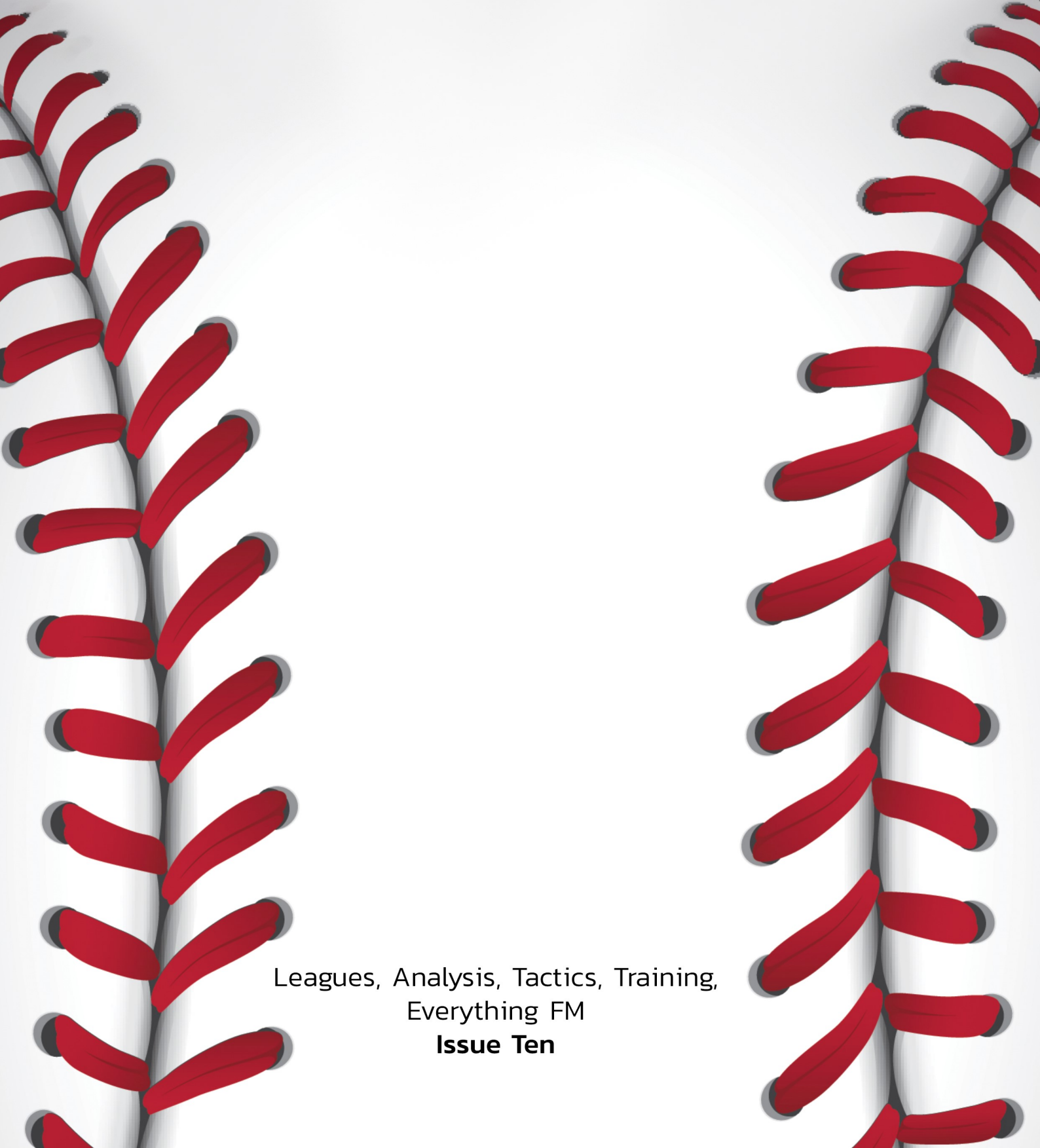
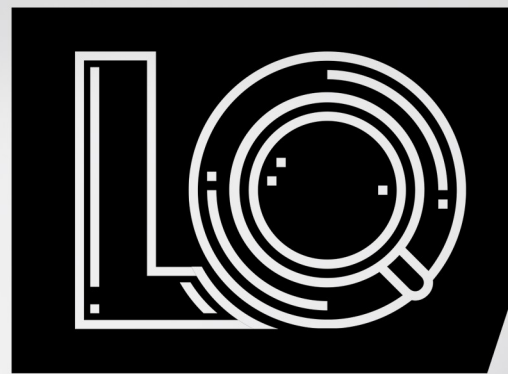


LATTE

QUARTERLY



Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training,
Everything FM
Issue Ten

Editor's Note

I like to think that this magazine has a hidden attribute rating of 20 for Consistency, now that we've reached double figures in issues. It's a great milestone for Latte Quarterly, and I'm really proud of the topics and all of the writers we've worked with along the way.

Our consistency is perhaps best demonstrated in one of our founding fathers: FM Adventure, who hits the decima badge having featured in all LQ issues so far. *Am I Picking The Right Players?* is classic FM Adventure, a reflective look back at the struggles of his FM22 save(s) and the corrective process introduced to arrest the slide.

Our next article is a headliner: *Out Of The Park Thinking* sees From Eleven, One back in LQ Towers to see if Sports Interactive can learn anything from the Out of the Park Baseball series. I am unsure if this e-mag will ever be seen as a pressure group on Sports Interactive's activity. However, the candid thoughts in this article prompts us to ponder at how much Football Manager can be improved if we were to think...you know...out of the park.

Next up is FM Samo to tactically look at Ralph Hasenhüttl's Southampton FC in *Two 8s, Two 10s and Two 9s*. It's an interesting team, with the mirroring of roles in a 4-2-2-2; but does FM Samo set up exactly the same in FM22? Read on to find out.

Our penultimate article is another book review, which I'm glad we have followed up on and hope to become a regular feature. In this issue, FM Tahiti discusses *Gunshots & Goalposts* and how the book draws him into visiting Northern Ireland every now and then in Football Manager.

Finally, I introduce something which I hope readers will find interesting in future issues and Bloggers can also be proud about...*La Copa: Club World Cup*.

Sit back, grab a latte and let the Football Manager inspired words enter your mind. Thanks for reading.

FM Grasshopper

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Am I Picking The Right Players?

By fmadventure

Out Of The Park Thinking

By FromElevenOne

Two 8s, Two 10s, Two 9s

By FM Samo

FM Book Review

By FM Tahiti

Introducing... La Copa Club World Cup

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Am I picking the right players? – fmadventure

In LQ9, FMGrasshopper brought us the theory of the 'Realism Spectrum' in regards to how people approach Football Manager. He outlined the idea of people falling into one of five descriptors from TheHackers to FMUltrarealists. In reference to this idea I want to bring my own thinking - not as a replacement or correction but more as an additional side thought. I feel that when thinking about how people play the game you can roughly see a split between the casual player, the hardcore player and the hybrid.

I want to add in my usual line that there is no right or wrong way to play Football Manager. That's the beauty of the game in that any one person can make it their very own story depending on how they approach a save.

I see the Casual player as someone who will pick up and play. The word casual possibly gives the impression of someone who isn't fanatical about it but I use the word casual in the sense that they may take a more 'hands off' approach to a lot of things. Downloading tactics, finding players from wonderkid lists, leaving everything up to their assistant. For some, FM Touch (RIP) can be the perfect vehicle for how they play the game.

The Hardcore player is one who would spend endless amounts of time researching and applying their own tactical theory. They'll scout relentlessly to find the next big talent, sometimes even applying their own 'Club DNA' or suchlike term. They'll often watch games on Comprehensive highlights or, dare I say it, even Full Match. They're au fait with the Analysis tabs and new Data Hub.

The Hybrid is where I place myself, taking bits and pieces from either end of the scale. I wouldn't dream of downloading a tactic and I avoid wonderkid lists like the plague but I don't get any joy from spending hours crunching the numbers and place a lot more emphasis on what I see in-game.

My struggles in FM22

I found my early ventures in FM22 to be very much lacking in any level of success. I was busy at work and as a result I was only really spending half an hour at a time on FM in any stretch. In retrospect, this would have been the perfect year for me to move across to FM Touch - where you can easily play through the seasons even at a more leisurely pace.

Six months into my tenure at SC Bastia in Ligue 2 I was given my P45 and sent on my way. I wasn't under any illusions as to where the problems lay - I'm not the greatest tactician when it comes to FM, I often just tinker with a rough set up until I find something that clicks. Sadly, at Bastia I didn't have players anywhere near the ability to account for the tactical failings in the short term.

I started afresh with RCD Mallorca in La Liga. With top quality loan players at the club, I managed to secure a low-midtable finish in the first season. As the second season began and I couldn't attract the same level of players, I started to fall into the same rut of poor performances and not seeing a way out of it. I fiddled from formation to formation, hoping to find the miracle but it wasn't forthcoming and we

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sat dangerously in the relegation zone. Then I stopped.

I took around a week or two away from the game to think about what I could do. I decided to take the plunge and open up Microsoft Excel. Getting the tactic right is one thing but I started to ask myself the fundamental question - Am I picking the right players? I used the export function from FM to extract a full squad view with every attribute and take a look at a very basic level of who were my best players. I created a ranking based solely on the aggregation of Technical, Mental and Physical attributes to give me my first glance at who my best (and worst) overall players were. On a very basic level I noticed that four of my five better players were all central midfielders - this was totally at odds with the tactic I had been using which had only two in the midfield area.

I started with a blank slate and considered how I could incorporate all my best players to fully utilise the squad's ability. I set out three in a flat midfield with an attacking midfielder ahead of them. I considered their greatest strengths according to the sheet showing their attributes and also checking back on FM for any player traits. Using this I decided on having a Deep Lying Playmaker in the middle flanked by the basic Central Midfield roles on Support and Attack - mostly because I could allow their play to be dictated by their individual player traits. Similarly I went with an Attacking Midfielder in the AMC position again allowing the player's traits to take the lead on how they played.

The rest of the tactic was a simple matter of building around the midfield and filling out positions and roles to complement my best players. In the end I went with a 4-3-1-2 which gave us the stability we direly needed while also allowing for the break outs to attack.

Gradual Improvements

It wasn't an instant hit - I wouldn't expect it to be. Initially the results weren't a great improvement but from reviewing the match stats and my own eye's view on the highlights I could see improvements were happening. It was only a matter of time before things clicked and indeed they did. From January to the season's end I watched my Mallorca side climb from a relegation battle to a safe place in mid table, feeling confident of pushing on in the next season to challenge for a top half finish.

Now that I have my sheet set up, my plan is to review the squad each season and re-evaluate where my strengths truly lie. It may not always be a matter of a total course change in terms of the tactical set up. Sometimes it may just be a good indication of what positions I should target when dipping my toe in the transfer market to rebalance the squad.

These may seem like simple problems to most people but at times I feel that extracting the data can really help you focus on what the true problems are by cutting out a lot of the extra noise in the FM UI.

Has FM22 been the final nail in the coffin for the more relaxed player or am I being a bit dramatic? I feel it's a bit of both to be honest. I definitely feel like FM Touch would have been the preferred option for me this year with having so much less time to play. Having taken the time to sit and scroll over the raw data, I can see the benefit in my save. I looked at a very basic level but I don't feel like I'd want to start delving deeper into the chalkboard type stats to the point that I'd spend more time on Excel than in FM - it would start to feel too much like hard work!



Out Of The Park Thinking – From Eleven, One

I've not been playing FM22 lately, but I have been playing Out of the Park Baseball 22 (OOTP). Whilst working out how to play the thing, it occurred to me that while the two games share a lot of DNA, they also do plenty of things differently to each other, and perhaps each game could learn from the other. This being a Football Manager-themed article, I'll be focusing on the things FM could learn from OOTP.

There are a lot of options offered by Out of the Park Baseball that I think could enhance the Football Manager experience, both things that appeal to me directly, and things that would seem to suit the community at large. You can't even get beyond the start screen for the first few of these choices to become immediately obvious.



Start Screen:

- Do you like a custom database? How about the option to start a "New Historical Game"? Any season back to 1871, for all love. Honestly, it's more like Crusader Kings with that spectrum of choice. If just the 150 years worth of selection isn't enough, within that, you can then decide whether you want historical transactions (transfers) to occur or not, or whether the league will expand as it did in reality, for example. So you can live within a realistic world, or allow it to follow an entirely new, unpredictable course.
- What about a "New Custom Game"? Create an entire league system from scratch, in any cities you desire, in any countries you like. There are a lot of settings and options that you can play around with. You can do this sort of thing in FM by paying for the Football Manager editor, but OOTP provides you with editing capabilities as part of the default game, and it's easy to use.
- "Import OOTP 21 Game". Let that sink in. You can continue your save game from the last edition, in the new one. Miraculous.

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Stats:

- In the stats department, European sports are like newborn children compared to old man Baseball. This gives OOTP an edge over FM for sure. Football Manager is trying to make stats a bigger part of play, but there's a lot of work still to be done. In Out of the Park, you can break down an individual's current season stats to a crazy degree. You want to know how your lead-off hitter has done, specifically against the New York Yankees, when facing left-handed pitchers, in innings 7-9 of games? No problem.
- Career Stats. That infuriating screen in FM, where you can see a very limited set of data, all neatly summarised with five numbers, but only from league games. OOTP provides a lot more stats, giving you career totals, an average season for the player, totals with each team in their career and career highs for each stat over a season. Best of all, those custom squad views you make? They can be used on the career stats screen too. An idea so good it immediately struck me as totally and utterly obvious.
- Records. Perhaps one particularly for the players of long term, one club saves. Sure, in FM you can see your top all-time scorer and appearance maker, and you get news stories as players approach club records. I love these things. In OOTP there are 20+ stats for both batters and pitchers in which the game keeps a top 10 list of players from a club, for single season records and career records. And these records go back forever.

Attributes/Ratings:

- FM has attributes, OOTP has ratings, and it's not just in name that they differ. In FM, attributes are fact. In OOTP, the ratings are the opinion of your Scouting Director. If you have a very good one, then the ratings are more likely to be accurate. This is one of my favourite differences between the games. It's like a beautiful middle ground between attributes and attribute-less.
- Ratings can also be viewed relative to different league standards. Rather than looking at your roukiest of rookie teams by comparing them to Major League players, compare them amongst their peers instead.
- Going into the settings, there are plenty of choices related to ratings. You can choose how accurate scouts are, from "very low" accuracy, to 100% accurate. You can also choose whether you want players to be judged relative to all other players, or just compared to players playing in the same position. You could have a top 5 second baseman, but it might not look like it when he's compared to all batters. Speaking of settings...

Settings:

- League evolution. Things like the league expanding, changing rules, and teams moving, can be selected to happen "from time to time". Events like these can really help a save feel more individual. I'm aware that some of these things are more usual in U.S. sports, but there are plenty of potential options for football. I'm also aware that baseball and football are completely different beasts, and that this option would probably be a lot more difficult to implement in the interconnected world of football, than it is in baseball, where leagues are wholly independent entities. But it'd be great eh?

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- Adjustable ageing rate. One of my personal bugbears in FM is the universal way in which older players' abilities absolutely plummet. OOTP allows you to tweak this rate, depending on your preference.
- Adjustable "talent change randomness" rate. In four seasons of playing OOTP Baseball, I've seen a couple of players unexpectedly change in current ability. I can't remember such a thing ever occurring in my FM saves. In reality, we see stories of players blossoming late, like Jamie Vardy, or Ian Wright. How often can you recall such a thing happening in Football Manager? Want this happening less, or all the time? Change the setting.
- Adjustable injury rate. OOTP acknowledges that it injures players less than the real world. FM is the same. OOTP gives you the option to adjust the rate up or down depending on your preference, and has a setting for "High (Realistic Modern Day)". FM is not the same.
- Adjustable trading difficulty. Finding it too easy to relieve other clubs of their wonderkids? Make the AI more demanding, and/or more likely to focus on youth. You can also change how much teams value player ratings, and stats, for both current and past seasons.

Faces:

- You don't need me to tell you that the faces in FM aren't good. The generated OOTP faces aren't spectacular, but they do at least look human.
- They also have facial expressions, which can change depending on the happiness of the player. Such a minor thing really, but I like that you can get an indication of a player's morale just by looking at his picture.
- Icons showing player/team achievements next to the player's face. Another relatively minor thing, but I love it.



In the above example, we can see a player who's a four-time All-Star, and has two Silver Slugger awards to his name. Hovering over the icons will give you more specifics.

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Director of Football:

- To be clear, you cannot play as a Director of Football in a baseball game. However, OOTP offers you the choice of playing as "Manager", "General Manager", or taking on both roles simultaneously. The General Manager role is analogous to playing as a Director of Football.
- The nature of baseball, and Major League Baseball especially, is such that the General Manager role makes a bit more sense as the default for a player like me. There are a whopping 162 games in a regular season! Managing every single one of these is not my bag, but it might be yours.
- Modern football clubs are run in varying ways, and it seems obvious to me that this should be represented in the game, by providing the player with different roles to take on. It would also provide the appealing prospect of more variety in gameplay, and I know from previous conversations, that it would please many members of the community.
- "It's Football Manager, not Football Director of Football". If an argument for not providing more options to improve a game is simply to refer to the name of the game as reason enough, I don't know what to say without being rude. FM at times seems to demand we live in the real world, realism is all. But then at others, casts reality aside completely. It feels like it doesn't really get the balance right. Perhaps the solution to this jarring contrast, is to instead allow the player to choose what they want to do, how much reality they want, how much control.

Little Things:

- Being able to search for personnel (staff) based on the role you're looking to fill. Potentially especially useful when trying to staff your youth teams.
- The "Tasks" area, in the "Manager's Office", is particularly useful for a new player learning the ropes, but is not as intrusive, frustrating, or forgettable as certain tutorials.
- Storylines. Occasionally, an event will occur, a player getting injured in a profoundly stupid way, or travelling to India to seek the guidance of a guru. They provide mirth sure, but can also have a big impact on a player and/or season. Personally, I like this option, though it can be disabled. I think they add a little fun and unpredictability to proceedings.
- When you're saving, or the game's processing, it comes up with facts or trivia. So far, so standard. But quite a lot of the time, these stats will be from the history of your save, and your team and players. A nice touch.

Intangibles:

- Tactics. Again, they're totally different sports, but Football Manager always seems to have "a way" to set up a tactic, *cough* Gegenpress *cough*, and player roles that everyone ends up using. I'm early to the OOTP experience, granted, but it seems like there are a broader number of routes to success (and failure), whilst the choices made by the player are clearly impactful. It's a nice balance.

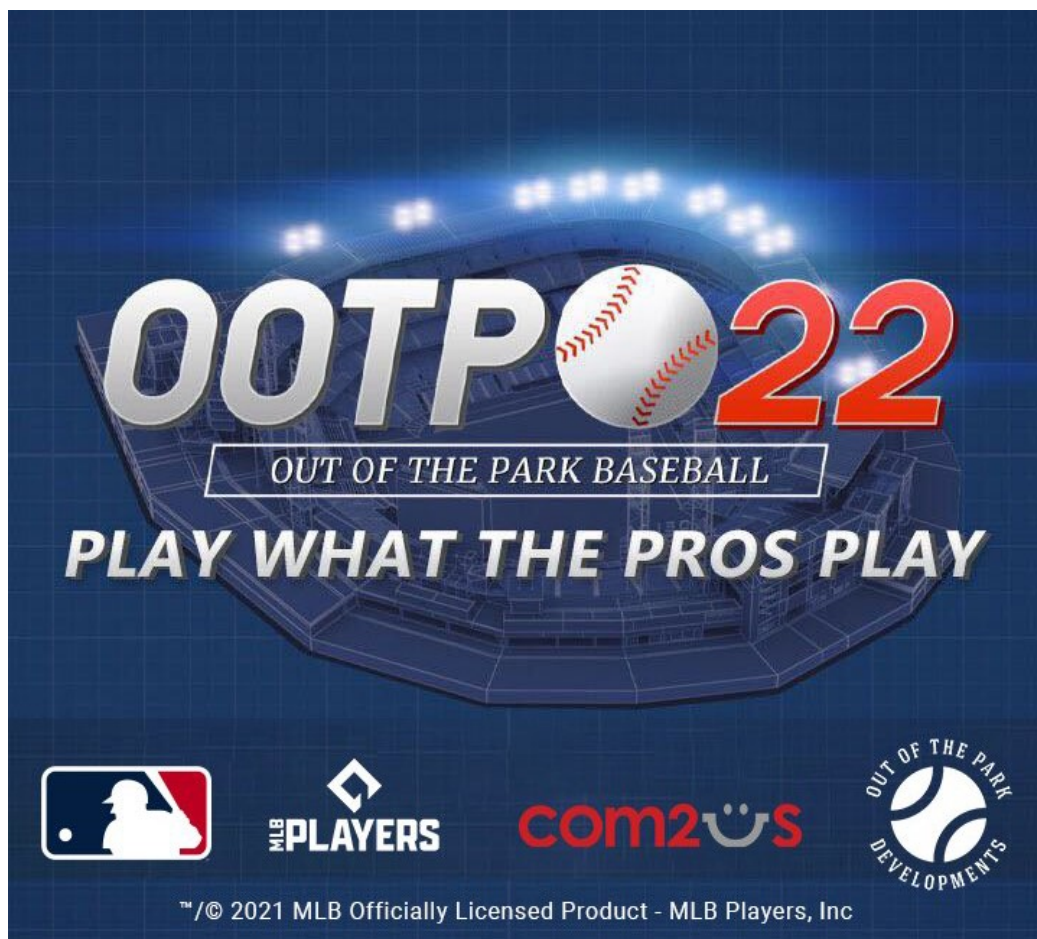
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- **Time.** This will link to the next point pretty heavily, so I'll be brief. OOTP seems to value your time more. It's a long 162 game regular season, but in OOTP you're not bombarded with empty content, so it doesn't feel like it. Sometimes in FM, you'll be going through a meeting or similar, and it seems like it makes zero impact on anything, other than using up your time.
- **Immersion.** It seems so much easier to become immersed in an OOTP save. In FM I feel like I'm always getting jolted out of the world I'm trying to lose myself in. Examples include, being asked questions by the media that make zero sense, or your League Two scout telling you that "this Messi fella is alright". Sure, they're minor things, but they all add up to ripping me out of the fantasy. OOTP seems to do a better job, and some of it is because it simply doesn't have so many pointless clicks. It feels more streamlined, but without losing meaningful features.

Conclusion:

I'm not advocating one game over the other here, both have their strengths. It seems clear to me that FM is superior in plenty of ways too, including, amongst other things, the portrayal of the actual games, and player training/development options.

However, if there's to be one overriding theme in the difference between the two games for me, I'm going to go with the word "Freedom". I thought my conclusion would focus on how customisable OOTP is, but it's really all about choice in the end. OOTP provides a playground for you to play the game in the way you want to play it.





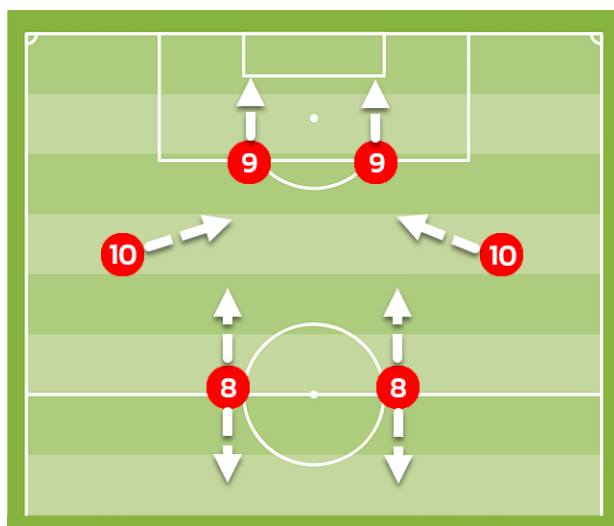
Two 8s, Two 10s, Two 9s – FM Samo

I'm not used to watching top tier football. I don't have Sky Sports or BT Sport, I never caught up on Match of the Day. If I saw a goal clip on Twitter then fine, but I didn't go hunting them down. I went right off the top level of the game on the pitch. That all changed this season. One of my career goals came to fruition and I got a job at an English Premier League football club. I'm missing going to see the club I love, but I'm loving reacquainting myself with football outside of Scotland.

I've thrown myself into Fantasy Football, there's constant office conversations about players, managers, and importantly for this piece, tactics. Getting to see these players up close and personal, week in, week out, has given me a new appreciation for looking at ways teams play and trying to interpret that into a Football Manager tactic.

There was only going to be one place I was going to go for FM22, it had to be Southampton. From my experience now, and there's no bias here whatsoever, I'd say they're actually one of the most interesting teams in the Premier League tactically. There's a set style there, a structure. It can be interpreted differently at times, but parts of it remain rigid. I had to try and come up with my own attempt at putting it together in the game. So here it is, read on for my FM22 tactical approach which is very much based on Ralph Hasenhüttl's in the non-FM world.

I should also say at this point that I've got absolutely zero insider knowledge here. Everything in this piece are my own opinions coupled with some additional info from those popular tactical websites you all read. Unfortunately I don't have a copy of Ralph's tactical playbook. Ralph might be hitting me up with a Teams message once he's read this though...



Two 8s

That preferred way of setting up in a 4-2-2-2 formation isn't uncommon but there's some really interesting differences with the way Ralph looks to instruct his players how to play, and one of those is in the central midfield position.

The traditional way to set up midfields in recent years has probably been more geared towards a three-man midfield. One player would hold and screen the defence, and the other two players would be free to roam, one maybe playing box-to-box with the other potentially more of a traditional 10 in an attacking sense.

Let's look at Saints' current two-man midfield as the use case. Oriol Romeu and James Ward-Prowse are tasked with performing all of these roles, and more, simultaneously. If you had to box them up, they'd likely go down as number 8s. They link the passages of play together. They'll slot into the defence to make a three if needed, they'll come short for passes out of the defence, they shift the ball from defence to attack and they'll move forward to support those attacks too. The interesting difference is that they're both performing the same role at the same time in the same match. They'll likely rotate between them at times throughout the 90 minutes, but they can shift between being destroyers to being creative players very easily.

If you had to categorise them then you would probably say Romeu was the more defensive of the two, with him being in the top 10 for both tackles and interceptions made by a midfielder in the league this season at the time of writing. Ward-Prowse could be classed as the more offensive one, with more crosses, assists and shots to his name this season but from watching them both they're both equally as comfortable on the ball and with covering as much ground as possible.

Can you set up like this on Football Manager? I've certainly seen it attempted to have the exact same role selected for players alongside each other in a two-man midfield, but it doesn't sit comfortably with me when I'm looking at how I want to set up tactically. The biggest thing I always think about when I'm putting a tactic together is variety. Will this vary our attacks and give us different options, for example. That's probably the key difference in the game versus real life, that real dynamism where you can ask two players to do the same thing but also perform differently at different times throughout a match and continually change their thinking.

In my save, I've gone for a very simple (or boring, depending on what way you look at it) CM on Defend coupled with a CM on Support duty. I think that's probably doing a disservice to the way Romeu and JWP play but I'm not actually sure there's a role that covers how they play. It's not really a Box-to-Box Midfielder, although the role description is probably the one that fits them best out of any available to pick from. "Non-stop dynamism" and "contribute greatly to both defending and attacking" look great as writing on a screen, I'm not sure you actually get those things when you select a player to perform that role. I certainly haven't seen it, maybe you have?

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It's all about the players in the role for me though. I've left it for so long as two CMs and I like those roles because it gives the players in the roles the freedom to perform to their abilities, rather than pigeonholing them into performing a role that has much more going on under the hood. In my head, they are Complete Midfielders. Adept on the ball, strong at winning the ball back and driving it forward. Billy Gilmour has been the perfect signing, with Ruben Loftus-Cheek also performing really well for me across the past few seasons. The next big breakout star in the role will be Filip Rønningen Jørgensen, my Norwegian wonderkid.

The one thing I often think is whether a change in role for one of them, or both, could unlock something different in my setup. Could the right player slotting into the right role in the centre of my midfield be the catalyst to push us on further? One to continue to ponder.

Two 10s

The attacking midfield duo are a combination of traditional wide players, who are also asked to come inside and vacate their positions more often than not. You'll notice that theme starting to develop, both players on both sides of the pitch are asked to do the same thing.

When the opposition have advanced into Saints' half the two wide players drop back in to effectively make it a traditional 4-4-2 formation. However, if that hasn't happened yet, or there's a turnover opportunity, the wide players double up with the strikers and press high to force the opposition into either going long or losing the ball. That counter-press has been one of the key aspects of Hasenhüttl's coaching playbook stretching back years and it's now evident at Saints too. When they win the ball back, you can clearly see the wide midfielders constantly looking for space to move into to get themselves into the positions they've been asked to find.

One of the biggest things I've noticed with this role on the pitch is the differences when certain players play in the positions. The likes of Moi Elyounoussi and Stuart Armstrong are probably the most ideal players to play there in the way that I see the formation and tactic working. They're more like wide playmakers. They'll come inside from out wide to operate in that half space (eugh). However, when it's someone like Nathan Redmond or Nathan Tella, they've got a bit more pace and are a little more direct. When it's Moussa Djenepo it's nothing but vibes.

Can this be replicated on Football Manager? Yeah, it probably can. Do I do it? To a certain extent but not the way it probably could be done with individual player role instructions depending on who's starting. Similarly to the CM situation, I've gone against Ralph and my wide players don't have the same role selected for them. On the right hand side, I've got a Winger on Support and on the left, it's an Inside Forward on Attack.

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The players I have at my disposal as options on the left-hand side are probably more attack minded, they're very different to how Ralph wants his wide players to play. Anthony Martial has been an option for a few seasons now. As a natural striker, his instinct is to attack and to score goals as opposed to creating them. Amine Gouiri is cut from the same cloth, although he did provide 13 assists as well as scoring 11 goals in his first season with the club in my second season. Young Brazilian, Marcos Leonardo, arrived in my most recent season and probably cemented his place in my side with 12 goals from wide left.

On the right I've been bringing in players who are much more in the mould of a wide playmaker type, with a little bit of traditional winger thrown in for good measure. Woo-yeong Jeong is two-footed with great speed, dribbling ability and natural technique. His Korean countryman, Kang-In Lee, is a similar player with a little bit less pace. They've both got great vision and Lee, in particular, likes to run with the ball and tries to make that final killer pass. The one addition to the Winger Support role I like to make for certain matches is to give them the freedom to roam from their position. This is much more in line with Saints' setup under Ralph. It's difficult to quantify the success of that instruction change, but I still like doing it.

The one key aspect that is very prevalent in my in-game setup and in Ralph's is that the space created by the two 10s enables the Wing-Backs to bomb on and provide that width. Tino Livramento has provided 38 assists in his three seasons for me so far. He's an attacking Wing-Back on the right, while Romain Perraud and Thierry Small now rotate on the left as a supporting Wing-Back.

I feel like you need that balance much more in the game in comparison to like-for-like replicas of real life tactical approaches. How would my team play if I did just select two Advanced Playmakers? How would they play if I moved to a traditional 4-4-2 formation and selected two Wide Playmakers? I'd try it out if I wasn't doing so well with my current approach!

Two 9s

I'm willing to argue with anyone that says Ralph Hasenhüttl's two strikers aren't two Pressing Forwards. Similarly to the midfield roles, they're probably Complete Pressing Forwards. They pressure the opposition into mistakes high up the pitch, trying to win the ball back. They look to bring their teammates into the game and they'll also look to forge their own chances when those opportunities arise too. They're Defend, Support and Attack duties all in one.

Nobody has embodied this more, in recent matches especially, than the strike duo of Ché Adams and Armando Broja. They've struck up a great partnership in the way that they work together but also separately. They've pressed when required but when there's a chance to drive forward and go it alone, they've done that too, Broja especially. He's still young but he's so strong and has great speed.

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It'll be interesting to see whether the January data update captures Broja's form this season. His ability on the game currently probably reflects where he was at the start of the season, a bit of an unknown quantity. He didn't make the breakthrough for me in his season-long loan in season one. Another summer acquisition has been incredible for me though. I've written at length already in my posts about Adam Armstrong's form, he's been defying his attributes. He's scored 104 goals for me in three seasons so far. I think it's all down to the overall tactic and how his role slots into that.

You've probably got the message by now. My tactic does not contain two Pressing Forwards. It doesn't even contain one, unfortunately. It did initially but the balance wasn't right and the way the role was performing wasn't quite what I would expect. I expected a super presser, especially with our much higher line of engagement and our trigger being to press much more often.

Adam Armstrong has been the focal point of our side, playing as an Advanced Forward. Ché Adams has mainly been his partner so far as a Deep Lying Forward on Support next to him. Again, the reason isn't too convoluted. It's as simple a strikeforce as they come in the game, and it works. It could be recency bias but Armstrong is probably the most prolific striker I've managed in recent versions of the game. He's on the end of the through balls from the midfield, he's on the end of our crosses from the Wing-Backs and, importantly, he's constantly harassing opposition defenders to try and win the ball back for us too.

Ché's Deep Lying Forward role is the one that provides balance to the side. He links up well on the right with our supporting Winger and drops into that space in front of opposition defences to pull them out and create space to attack in behind. He's had competition in my most recent season though. Benjamin Šeško arrived and he's ridiculous. He might even eventually just do both forward roles himself.

Playing as Southampton on FM22 alongside working at St Mary's has been great. It's helped me get even more immersed in the game this year and has also helped me form a few opinions on players a bit quicker than I might have if I wasn't just watching them every couple of weeks live. Though I still haven't been forgiven for selling James Ward-Prowse, who was so perfect as one of my two 8s for half a season...



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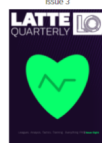
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LQ Book Reviews – FM Tahiti

Gunshots & Goalposts: The Story of Northern Irish Football by Benjamin Roberts

Like most FM players of a certain age I was well aware of the opportunities in Northern Ireland to win tin pot trophies galore. Silverware so minor that your own board, even at non-league level, wasn't that bothered. From playing there in game I was also aware of common facts like 'Everyone hates Linfield' and 'Don't ask why Derry City actually play in the league of Ireland', but not the why behind them. This is where Gunshots and Goalposts fits in.

I do love a good Football book but this was a bit of a departure from the likes of Wilson, and to an extent Cox. The focus of this book is much less on tactics and much more on the history and context that Northern Irish football developed in. It takes you all the way back to the initial formation of the league system and then through the resulting issues. Which means going back to the early 1900's, well before the existence of Northern Ireland, and the Republic, as they are now.

There's no avoiding the impact of sectarianism on Football in Northern Ireland and across the eventual border in book. It is embraced from the off with a depressing account of a match between Linfield and the now defunct Belfast Celtic. Players were mobbed, legs were broken, careers ended and shots literally fired. The focus initially stays with the two Belfast based teams but then eventually broadens as the political landscape shifted (and Celtic ceased to be Football Club due to worries of retaliation and violence- even Tifo jumped onboard). The Protestant/Catholic divide is never far away from the contents of the book but with Belfast Celtic out of the picture more focus is then placed on other teams, and the role of teams outside Belfast like Derry.

Less grim though (and I use this lightly) is the later exploration of how Northern Ireland did on the international scene, and the impact in England of players like George Best. That's right, if you make it through the chapters on sectarianism and violence you can move onto the ones about alcoholism, violence and potentially wasted potential instead. Northern Ireland have produced a lot of fine players, well beyond their means when you consider the size of the nation. But there is a sense of what could have been when comparing the success of Northern Ireland to the Republic and indeed the other home nations.

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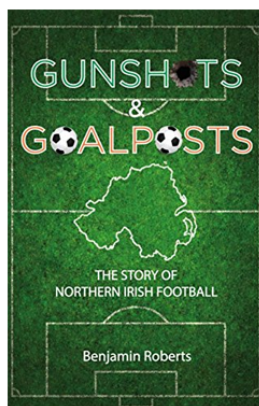
All in all the book covers a lot of delicate territory really well and you get a sense of the rich Football history. It's not going to take you through the key tactical changes or innovations like some other books will but it does really cover the people and the history. Many Football books are tactical or theoretical, this one is very human. And a like a person, this book isn't perfect. It's a bit rough around the edges and lacking finesse at times, but then so is Northern Irish Football. So it works.

Impact on playing Football Manager

Immediately after reading this I fired up FM20 and holidayed until Belfast Celtic were promoted to a playable league. The club had ceased to exist for decades, and according to the custodians of their name and silverware they still don't exist, but a few individuals decided to create a new Belfast Celtic. I felt it was time to bring back that old and bitter rivalry.

I was able to launch myself into the save. I cared more about the teams I was playing, and even had a new found respect for the Steel and Sons Cup. Why wouldn't I love a cup that gets played on Christmas Day? Days off are for weaklings. For me the book really helped flesh out a nation and league that although not very geographically distant is a world away from Football in England. I ended up back there for part of FM22 as well. This time with Portadown. I think I'll always be drawn back to it, because of the teams and because of the history. So go and buy it. It costs 1.99 if you've got a kindle. If you're not sure watch the two Tifo shorts on Belfast Celtic and Derry City

Sport › Football



Gunshots & Goalposts: The Story of Northern Irish Football

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La Copa: Club World Cup – FM Grasshopper



“The clubs you love to read about face-off in Football Manager 2022 Versus Mode”

The Football Manager streaming community has done an exceptional job of bringing people together, whether that’s the creators themselves or the viewers watching. The draft format sees creators selecting players from a wide pool, and attempting to gel them into a cohesive team for PvP. It appeals to a lot of people.

However, a personal preference of mine (and also a few Bloggers I speak to regularly) is to see that competitive element played out among teams we’re familiar with through written FM content. It’s why I’ve coaxed my Latte Quarterly pals into hosting **“La Copa Club World Cup”**. La Copa CWC is essentially a continuation of what we did back in Issues 7 and 8 of Latte Quarterly. Diego Mendoza, FM Adventure and I faced off in a little round robin tournament with our blogged teams and wrote about our experiences for Issue 7, before we saw Samo face-off against Coffeehouse FM bloggers FM Athlete and FM Eadster in Issue 8.

We now want to see La Copa back...but BIGGER. Eight Bloggers facing off in two groups of four, before moving into single legged Semi and Grand Finals. You’ll hopefully see a tactical insight into the PvP element of FM, with a concise summary of a Blogger’s tactic and their approaches to facing off against other teams we’ve read about.

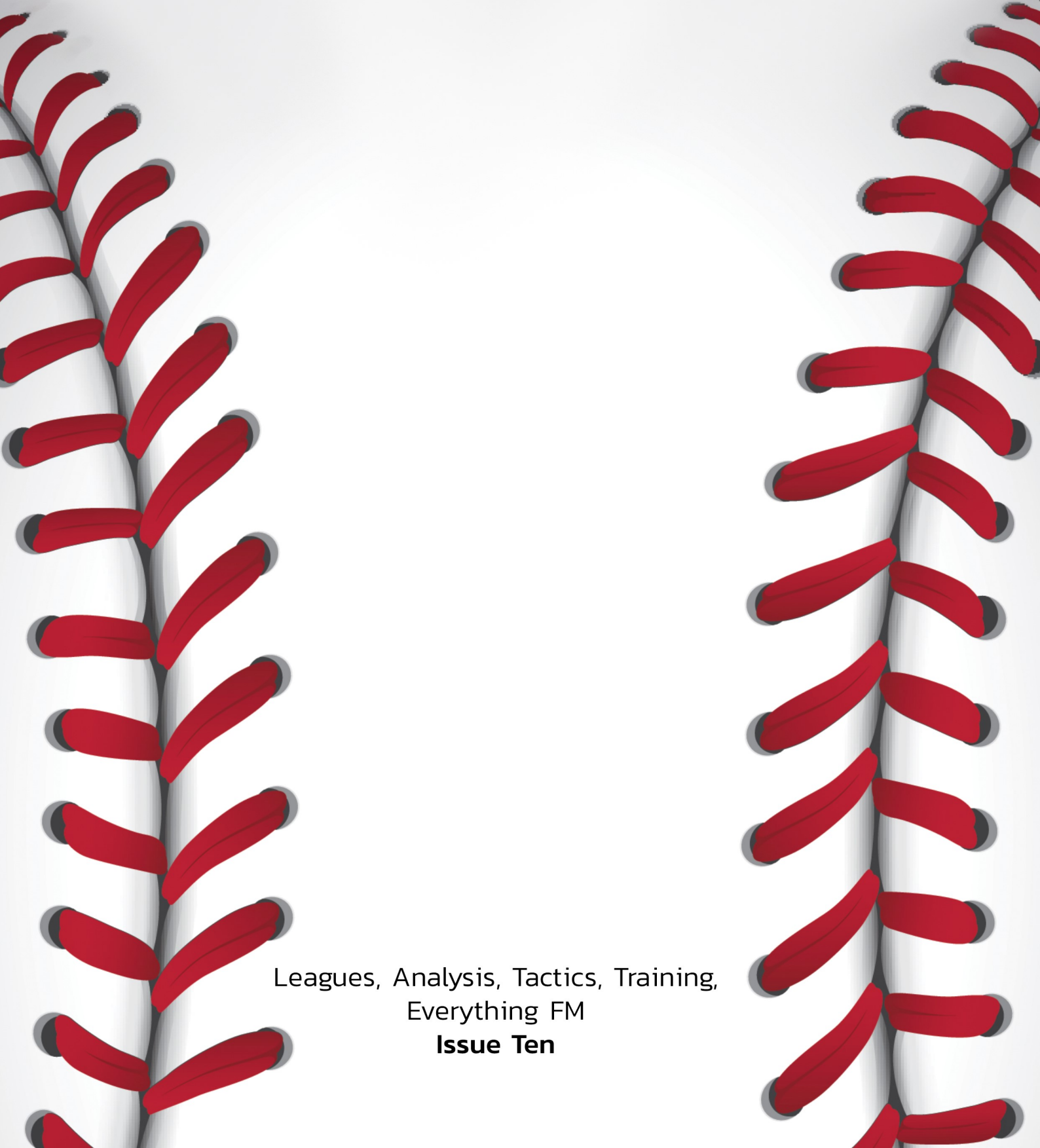
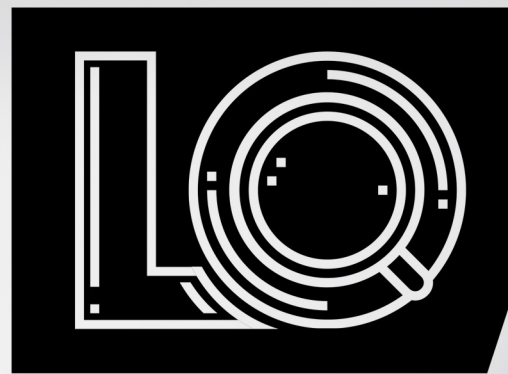
For now, we’ll invite six of the eight Coffeehouse Bloggers along with two special invitationals. If it’s a success, we’d love to invite more and more Bloggers into future iterations. Watch this space.

FM Versus Mode will be coming soon in a future update of Football Manager 2022. Follow: [@LaCopaLQ](https://twitter.com/LaCopaLQ) for updates.



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