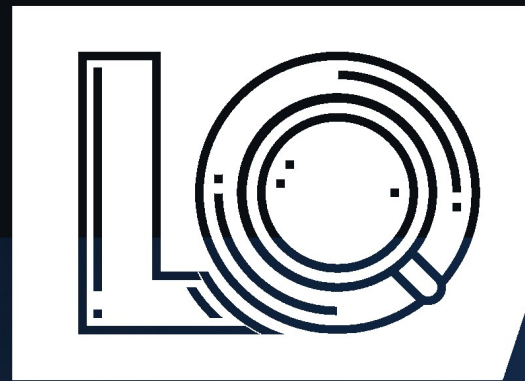


LATTE

QUARTERLY



LA COPA LQ



Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training... Everything FM | Issue Seven

Editor's Note

Yes, seriously. Akin to being the obscure ninth participant in the Streamer Showdown, I have rocked up at LQ HQ and decided that this publication needs another unnecessary hoop to jump through in order to be released on time.

Latte Quarterly Issue 7 brings you something new, whilst also being a familiar knock-off of previous editions. Investigative journalism has taken a hit in recent weeks, however 'Samorama' returns to universal fanfare as he tackles the rise of online Football Manager tournaments in "Samorama: PvP FM & La Copa LQ".

FM Grasshopper continues the issue with some tactical advice and explanation that even a child could understand. We don't need a 'Samorama' to work this one out though, as "Football Manager for 6-year-olds" is part-penned by someone within the target audience, and actually has some level of understanding of what they are writing (a rarity in the Football Manager blogging community).

Following on from the high bar set by the youngest LQ contributor to date is FM Adventure with his piece on "Why I blog FM", which is the latest in a line of 'meta' articles surrounding our thoughts on Football Manager and how it has become a distinct part of our lives. Why do we start a blog in the first place, and what do we view our own work as? Read on to find out!

Our final piece is brought to us by FM Old Dog, who cannot teach us a new trick, but does allow us to explore our Football Manager saves within the context of "A Hero's Journey in FM". Most stories, inside and outside of our Football Manager saves, follow the same pattern, yet they're so personal to the author. You'll want a refill of your latte before hitting this one, but just like the first six Star Wars films, it's totally worth the slog.

I am honestly chuffed to be a more regular part of this tremendous publication, and the fact it allows me to evolve my own Football Manager offerings over the coming months. Fewer instant sachets, more brewing time.

Enjoy!

TedRedwood

LQ Issue Seven:

Samorama: PvP FM & La Copa LQ

By FMSamo

Football Manager For 6 Year Olds

By FM Grasshopper

Why I Blog FM

By fmadventure

A Hero's Journey in FM

By FM Old Dog



Samorama: PvP FM & La Copa LQ – FMSamo

They're sweeping the FMosphere. Their popularity has soared and continues to soar.

How have player versus player FM competitions got so popular? Samorama is here to investigate.

It's probably been a long time since any of you were sitting next to a friend on another chair and taking turns to control the mouse. These were the origins of player versus player FM. It's how I actually got into the game back when CM01/02 was around, a friend in my street had got the game and we took turns making the decisions for our clubs in the same save universe. That feeling you got as your match against their side was fast approaching, how would you set your team up, who were you going to play where, could you make a last minute signing? What if those feelings could be bottled up and replicated? It's always been FM's struggle, that player versus player aspect. Has it finally fizzed up?

I covered off, with the help of many others, the fact that FM has been here for us when we've needed it over the past year or so in the last issue of Latte Quarterly. That competitive nature of FM has bubbled along over the years, only slightly pouring over the sides every now and again. Across the past year though, the rise of FM competitions has been meteoric. Firstly in the sheer number of them, there's been an absolute boatload, and secondly, for a smaller number of them, in popularity. The competitive FM pot is well and truly boiling over.

Was everyone just waiting around for a global pandemic to kickstart this? There hasn't necessarily been anything different or unique about FM20 or FM21 from the perspective of competitive action against one another. Why have so many competitions suddenly sprung up over the past year? Read on as I speculate through the eyes of the competition organisers, competition participants and competition viewers.

Organisers

Take your mind back to 2016. The world was simpler and there were discussions amongst a group of people that thought "hey, we should export our teams from our saves and play matches against each other, and write about it!". "The Versus Series" was born (there was probably loads more examples from before 2016 but who remembers those?). Aside from a memorable match between my Morton team and Ed Wilson's all conquering Stoke side, it didn't really get off the ground. The reason for that? The organisers (mainly me) didn't push it as much as they should have, it wasn't rammed into people's mindsets.

Fast forward to 2020. Everyone has as much free time on their hands as they've ever had before. Player v player FM tournaments became a great way to spend that time. There was an official Sports Interactive organised EFL Cup, the Scottish Football Association ran the eScottish Cup and the first Streamer Showdown appeared. Again, there were probably loads more.

The impressive thing for me has been the commitment to making sure these either run to a finish or happen regularly. It takes a lot to organise anything, just ask anyone that organises their weekly five-a-side match.

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I don't think I'd have the time, energy, patience or even skills to organise some of these tournaments to the level they reached. Then again, Football Manager isn't my full time job. I think it makes perfect sense to add something like this as another string to the bow if it is your job.

One thing I'm struggling to get my head around at the moment is the sheer number of copycat style tournaments that have appeared in recent months. Are they setting up in the hope they'll ride on the coattails of previous tournaments? What do the organisers of these events hope to gain from looking like an exact replica of ones that have come before?

I spoke to MozzaPlays, one of the organisers of the FMPlayoffs and he revealed that they're "looking to offer something a bit more accessible for streamers/creators." They wanted to "create something more fluid with a laid back approach." The Streamer Showdown comes into criticism from viewers at times because there's a perception that the same people are involved in rotation. The FMPlayoffs have set out to ensure that "at least 6 different faces appear each month, and [they] always have at least 2 debuts." The point of it for Mozza isn't about getting anything from it, "the main plus has been getting to know folk who take part better, that I didn't know on a personal level before."

Participants

What do participants in these tournaments get out of it? The glory, of course! A lot of people play Football Manager to win. It's going back to the days where you were slugging it out in person against your friend and passing the mouse to each other. There's a winner at the end of the tournament and they bring home the glory. Regular participant in a couple of versions of player versus player tournaments, CurtyFM, told me exactly that. "I've been very competitive for most of my life. Whilst that urge to win has waned as I've got a bit older, it's nice to rekindle the flames and go up against others."

Another point Curty made was around the collaborative aspect. Why did we come together to create Latte Quarterly? It's probably for similar reasons. Curty thinks it "absolutely makes sense to throw [himself] into other collaborative projects." I do wonder whether some participants go into tournaments thinking they can get more out of it than just being able to make pals and have a good time. We create Latte Quarterly for the love of Football Manager. I'd like to think all the participants in player versus player FM tournaments go into them for the same reason, but I do think some harbour grand plans to use them for their own growth gains to eventually earn something down the line.

One of the points I wanted to get across when it comes to participants is that it seems to be a given now that these tournaments use the FM Draft mode. As a participant, I'd love the ability to bring a side that I've built in my save to compete against others doing the same.

Maybe I'm in the minority here, but I'd get nothing out of having to put together a team using £500m and having Mbappe and Messi up front that I've never managed at any point on my main save. Maybe that's the challenge, and I know people do different levels of saves so it'd be difficult to get consistency but I'd much rather play against a team that I'd spent some time connecting with beforehand through that individual's content. Maybe this can act as a suggestion for anyone reading who's involved in organising these tournaments.

Viewers

One of my biggest questions is around crossover from a viewing perspective. You'll spend the next 20 minutes or so reading the rest of this issue of Latte Quarterly and once you're done you can spend some more time catching up on other FM blogs. There's bound to be some crossover between these tournaments at some point in terms of the times they're taking place at. If you're a potential viewer, how do you decide which one to watch? Are you just a fan of the biggest and most popular one? Do you follow individual streamers around like some football fans are only fans of Cristiano Ronaldo and support whoever he plays for? As with anything in the FM space, I imagine it'll be the tournaments that

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began first and that show they can last that are the most popular. If you start something and don't continue to follow through with it, that's when you'll fall down when it comes to viewer interest.

When I spoke to Curty, he made an interesting point from a viewer's perspective. "It's something different in a space that could be argued had maybe become a little stale." I think he's absolutely bang on there to be honest. There's probably a handful of people you could think of right now and pick out as doing something that's different to the rest. Obviously there's reasons for everything, we produce Latte Quarterly because we love FM, I blog FM because I love to keep myself on track during my saves, others will be the same. If you're someone that's in it for other reasons you've got to question what you're doing to make you stand out against others for viewers or readers.

It's a big "not for me" in terms of what I like, but from a marketing perspective it's been intriguing to see the Streamer Showdown develop a similar style of faux rivalry to wrestling and WWE. Storylines develop, battles appear, trash talk is exchanged. WWE is one of the most popular sports entertainment brands out there, so why shouldn't components of how they operate be adopted to see if it'll have an impact on viewer enjoyment of these tournaments. It seems to go down well with the regular viewers so I'm sure it'll continue.

So, with all that being said, I wanted to try it out for myself so I roped in a few friends for a mini-tournament. It wasn't quite the whole hog, we didn't have any viewers (would we have anyway even if we'd broadcast it?!). It was met with technical issues on my side, I discovered that my laptop has issues that saw me having to drop out of participating, so that's fun. Have a read on for all the details of La Copa LQ!



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FMSamo

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The Contenders

FM Adventure's Atalanta

This is my Atalanta squad which, at the time of writing, is in January 2024 - my fourth season in charge. In the completed seasons so far we've finished 4th, 3rd and 3rd with one appearance in a Coppa Italia Final and one appearance in a Champions League Final sadly on the losing side of both.

Tactically in FM, I'm a very stubborn person. I find something that works and I don't change it (save for a duty change here or there). I don't have a second or away/cup tactic. I set out this save to play with a 3-5-2: three at the back, two wingbacks, two central midfielders, one attacking midfielder and two up top. We press high, counter quickly and always look to be on the front foot.

To pick out a key player in this side, the answer isn't quite as obvious as you'd think. There are many players I feel are vital to how we play and what we've become. I've settled on our main striker Brenner. The Brazilian joined the club in July 2021 for what should be considered an absolute steal at just £12 million from São Paulo. In his two and a half seasons so far he has managed 73 goals in 120 games across all competitions. At the halfway point of 2023/24 he looks set for his best goalscoring campaign yet with 15 goals in 19 Serie A games so far. Brenner has everything I want to see in a leading forward, the obvious of good Finishing and Composure along with impressive attribute scoring in Dribbling, Technique, Off The Ball and the speed based Physicals.

I suppose I come into this tournament as the outstanding favourite, simply due to Atalanta's standing as a club in a top European league. This despite the fact that I am the only one of the four of us yet to get my virtual hands on a virtual trophy in FM21. Nevertheless, I'd be lying if I was to claim my expectations for this competition were anywhere short of winning the damn thing. As a weathered Tottenham fan, this is my PL Asia Trophy and I will celebrate it as a genuine success.

FM Grasshopper's Junior de Barranquilla

Hugo Ojeda's Colombian outfit are on the crest of a wave: 2023 Copa Libertadores winners and reigning domestic league and cup champions...there's no better time to enter La Copa LQ.

In contrast to FM Adventure's Atalanta, FM21 Junior have been tactically fluid in the three and a half years with Ojeda at the helm. For the first 18 months, Hugo began his spell in Barranquilla with a 4-2-3-1 system. For the all-conquering 2023 year a 4-4-2 was used to win South America's biggest club prize. However, 2024 sees a new-look narrow 4-1-3-2 being adopted which will be their formation going into La Copa LQ.

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Why change a successful tactic? Well, the simple answer is to fully embrace the exceptional young midfielders that are coming through the Barranquilla youth squads. 16-year-old Antony Padilla is making the step up in 2024, by playing the Half Back role. He's either footed, blessed with strong technicals and already disciplined enough to drop back into the back-line and provide support defensively. Ahead of him, young central players like Charles Asprilla and Eduard Paredes (both 17) have the license to get forward and link with the devastating front two of Jhon Durán and Ricardo Caraballo who have contributed to 125 goals between them in the 18 months they have played together. In amongst it all is 26-year-old playmaker Jorge Carrascal, entering his prime years and in with a shout to become Colombia's No.10 for World Cup 2026 in two years time.

There is no pressure on the Colombians, and for that reason there is a footballing innocence (perhaps stereotypically Colombian) in how Junior will approach La Copa LQ. They will play the same positive way, and will look to the young stars to cause a surprise against one of Europe's rising teams in Atalanta and outmaneuver Mendoza's Universidad. Vamos Junior!

Diego Mendoza's Universidad de Mendoza

It was an idea I've contemplated for years, creating a club in my image from scratch. FM21 was the year I'd finally do it, although my choice of location, for the now infamous Universidad de Mendoza, was a little less exotic than some may have hoped. Ground sharing with Santiago Morning, UDM have gone from being a club slung into the Chilean 2nd division with no staff, no players and £5m of questionable North African investment money in the bank to being Chilean Champions 3 years in a row, Copa Libertadores winners in 2024 and Recopa Sudamericana winners in 2025 (a 9-1 aggregate win over none other than Junior de Barranquilla). I find myself now in September 2025, dumped out of the Copa Libertadores in the Quarter Finals but on track for another Chilean League title and I have a very exciting squad to bring to La Copa LQ.

Tactically I only play one way, attack attack attack! No prisoners, no survivors. We do everything to the extremes and for the most part it pays off. For those that have followed me for a while you'll know that I'm rather partial to a 4-2-3-1 narrow and there have been versions of the "M-Anchor" over the past 6 versions of FM. Having been a bit more direct with Albirex Niigata last year, I've returned this year to a short passing game. That's not that I haven't carried forward a few lessons from my time in Japan and you will see technical finesse combined with the strength of aerial prowess of two certain Colombians, centre back Luis Salazar and striker Carlos Jimenez.

From goal scoring fullbacks, Marcelino Nunez and Christian Cuevas, and ball playing defender Rodrigo Echeverria, to creative midfield magicians Tomas Aranguiz and Gonzalo Maroni, and power shadow strikers Cristian Rondina and Tobias Pavon, UDM hopefully will entertain with a face paced, edge of the seat style of football. I once described my style of football in Japan last year as "(Pixelated) Balls out football", UDM's is more "Clothes off and burnt football".

Hopefully if we play the way I know we can in this tournament, we can keep hold of the ball, avoid it getting too Chile, penetrate the opposition defence frequently, and hope our own defence won't have their pants pulled down. Right I'm all punned out now, I'll let the players do the rest of the talking and see how far we get.

Vamos UDM!



Junior 1-2 Atalanta

Played in the 'neutral' venue of Ergilio Hato Stadium, Willemstad, Curaçao...a few miles off the Barranquilla coastline, Junior Club took a surprise lead against the 2023 Champions League Finalists in Atalanta. The goal scorer was in-form Colombian hitman Jhon Durán.

In truth, it was against the run of play. As the 1st half went on, Atalanta grew into the game and finally made their mark 2 minutes before halftime with Adam Hlozek making up for an earlier missed sitter to make it 1-1. It was a horrible time to concede, yet it did not stop the Colombians from coming out in the second half to play some wonderfully quick-passing football.

With Atalanta on the back foot, and in need of some inspiration, Carles Aleñá stepped up to rifle an insane volley from almost 25 yards out. The Italians get the three points, plus a bonus two for the goals scored. Junior leaves with just one point and has it all to do Vs Mendoza's Universidad. FT: Junior 1-2 Atalanta.

Universidad de Mendoza 0-3 Junior

The South American media had called it the 'Game Of The Century', Mendoza facing off against Ojeda in what can only be described as the most romantic coming together of two South American heavyweights. These were not rivals, they are simply long admirers across the continent, coming together for their 1st ever meeting to celebrate sexy football.

It was Mendoza's Universidad who took the game to the Colombians. Their quick one-touch passing caused all kinds of trouble for the Colombians as they chased after shadows in La Paz's choking atmosphere. Cristian Rodina was the man to go close twice, before Junior went ahead against the run of play on minute 28. Jhon Durán combined nicely with Caraballogol to score their 47th goal between them this calendar year. This did not faze Mendoza's Chilean side, they continued to dictate the game and dominate possession until Half-Time.

However, in the second half, only one side came out of the dressing room. Jhon Durán this time turned the provider for Caraballogol to score to make it 2-0 on 59 minutes. Junior Club were in the ascendancy, and with an eye on the La Copa LQ trophy they pushed on for more goals. The football reached another

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level, as both clubs pushed for goals...motivated by the extra point on offer for each goal scored in La Copa LQ. The final goal fell to Junior with two minutes to go, a subtle chip over the goalkeeper from MOTM Jhon Durán. A mouth-watering 6 points for Junior that springs new life into La Copa LQ trophy race, whilst Mendoza faces off against favourites Atalanta.

Atalanta 3-0 Universidad de Mendoza

It was a day to forget for Diego Mendoza's side who didn't turn up on the day. Atalanta bossed possession and never once looked like losing their early 3 goal lead.

Mendoza finishes rock bottom of La Copa LQ with zero points, whilst FM Adventure's Atalanta go on to take the inaugural La Copa LQ crown with a 100% win record. Will the trophy stay in Europe next time out? You'll have to wait for La Copa LQ II to find out..



LA COPA LQ

LEAGUE TABLE

POSITION	PLAYED	W-D-L	+	-	POINTS
	2	2-0-0	5	1	11
	2	1-0-1	4	2	7
	2	0-0-2	0	6	0

SCORING: 3 POINTS PER WIN, 1 POINT PER DRAW,
1 POINT PER EACH GOAL SCORED

Closing Thoughts

The initial idea and internal discussion around this article came from quite a negative place. I couldn't quite wrap my head around why these tournaments had suddenly sprung up and just why there were quite so many copycat versions doing the rounds. Surely you'd try and at least make it a little bit different to the other, more successful, ones you're taking inspiration from?

And hey, that's what we're going to do! My Samorama investigation has sparked something across the Latte Quarterly office. We're suddenly feeling very competitive. We suddenly want to face off against each other more often, for the ultimate glory of winning the La Copa LQ trophy.

We're going to give it that twist that I've alluded to and that we went with for this initial version. We're not interested in drafts to build squads that you've got no connection to. The squads we've all spent hours and hours meticulously building and shaping will be facing off against each other. The names you know from blog posts or YouTube series are the ones we want to feature in future La Copa LQ tournaments. Give us a shout if you fancy playing.



Football Manager for 6-year-olds - FM Grasshopper

Football Manager is a complex thing. It's complex because it's made up of many things that all come together to replicate another complex thing: association football. But the building blocks of what makes a complex thing are simple. Break it down bit-by-bit, or detach yourself from the overall end product, and you should in theory be able to explain elements of Football Manager easily and succinctly.

I am therefore roping my 6-year-old daughter (Alice) into helping me shape today's Latte Quarterly post. We're discussing Tactics with the old adage of: "If you can't explain it to a six-year-old, you don't understand it yourself" (a quote often attributed to Albert Einstein, but I have no idea whether he actually said this).

It should be said, the ordering and structure of this post was first outlined prior to sitting down and talking it through with Alice (over a few weeks on-and-off). We follow this structure:

1. **Tactic and Formation**

1.1 What is a tactic?

1.2 Formation

1.3 Team Instructions

2. **Player Roles/Duties and Combinations**

3. **Tactical Styles**

4. **Conclusion**



1. Tactic and Formation

1.1 What is a tactic?

So, the immediate question I am faced with: "What is a tactic?", Alice is nothing but direct. A personality which can be traced to her mother, the Team Leader of our household. A tactic is, first and foremost, the blueprint of how your teams play. If a tactic was a book, the chapters that make up that book are: formation, team instructions and player roles/duties. There are other bits, like opposition instructions and set pieces...but in my opinion you can do everything but them and still be successful.

But, I obviously don't reply with that. Instead I say:

"A tactic is what your players do when they don't have the ball, and what they do when they have it"

(I like to think my 6-year-old is quite clever, we recently got a Headteacher award and I've homeschooled as best I can this last year. But I did have to go round a few more basic issues about players, the colour of different kits, my thoughts about her teacher inexplicably swapping Arsenal for Tottenham in her teens etc. But a lot of these topics are obviously not going to be included in today's blog).

1.2 Formation

I teach Alice maths each week (poor her). For instance, $4+4+2=10$. But when we talk about formations, we always omit the goalkeeper. So, 4-4-2 is actually 11 players. I apologise to her for it not making sense and move forward showing her various formations: 4-3-3, 5-3-2, 4-1-4-1.

Formations can be defensive, or attacking (by having more players in one half than the other). They are the starting points of your players at kick-off...but that's really the only time the shape mirrors the tactics screen. The 4-4-2 for example will never be symmetrical; never equally perfect in form. Players are/behave differently from one another, in Football Manager and in real-life.

Briefly going through it with Alice really highlights that formations are essentially just a decision as to how many players of a certain type you want on the field. Do you have 2-3 predatory strikers up top, or fast the wingers out wide? Or do you have a bucket load of solid defensive minded players in your side? Choose a formation that allows you to fit them in.

It's the roles and duties in combination with the overriding Team Instructions that define how your formation morphs on the pitch. We will move into the later before coming back to the players roles in section 2.

1.3 Team Instructions

Maybe this was a bad idea: trying to deconstruct FM to a 6-year-old. Introducing Team Instructions came a few days after what came above and I felt I was recovering old ground. However, I did land on this gem:

"Team instructions are like when I shout at you and your brother to do something. Sometimes it's to quickly get ready for school, sometimes it's to calm down on a Sunday morning".

I usually build my mediocre tactics by first deciding the player roles. But I'm introducing Team Instructions first because they override how your players behave at a higher level. An example of this is telling your Goalkeeper to kick it long, in a hurried way. If you also intended to play Ball Playing Defenders in a patient low tempo approach, your team instruction will most likely override the traits inherent in the player role. Same in the reverse, you might decide to play No Nonsense Centre Backs but you may also be asking them to Play Out Of Defence. There's a conflict there.

But I will introduce Team Instructions first, because they are essentially the 'meat and veg' of your tactic. Certain Team Instructions will influence a number of other ones, or prevent you from using other

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ones. From the onset, it's probably worth asking yourself what kind of side you want to be. Risk takers, high block, low block, total football, anti-football etc. If you're struggling to understand a style, you can use the Tactical Preset Styles that Football Manager offers (covered in section 3).

A perfectly fine strategy is to build a tactic with very few instructions, let the variety come from your player roles and place trust in your players (and the Match Engine). However, one instruction that should always be carefully reviewed is Team Mentality. Firstly, because you have to set something...but secondly because it affects so much:

- The width of your play
- Passing directness
- Tempo
- Time wasting
- The lines of engagement + the lines of defence

But more importantly, the players' outlook on the pitch is affected and this is key. An attacking mentality like Positive/Attacking/Very Attacking will have my support and attack duties being more focussed on attacking than defending. They will launch themselves forward, taking risks to score and have an influence in the opposition's half. An example here is a Very Attacking Team Mentality will cause a Full Back on Support to play Positively, perhaps overlapping when there is a good opportunity to. If we dropped the Mentality back to Balanced...the Full Back is now balanced in his attacking/defensive duties, and the overlaps would be less common.

Admittedly I have lost Alice, but for the tailored 6-year-old advice:

"Get ready for school in a positive fashion, as we are 5 minutes late. Take a risk by guessing that those socks on the floor are clean" OR "Move carefully out of bed and downstairs on a Sunday morning. Your mum is sleeping and you don't want to wake her. Move cautiously".

2. Player Roles/Duties and Combinations

Today's chat with Alice is around 'Player Roles'...I'd probably struggle to explain Mezzalas, Carrileros and Registas to my brothers and they're in their 40s. So, I take an easier route with my 6-year-old:

"Player Roles are like characters in your Christmas Play. You have some that narrate bits of the play (midfield engine/playmakers). You have Mary and Joseph taking all the glory (attackers) and then you have those prepared to take the minor roles of donkeys, trees and stablemen (defenders and goalkeepers)".

From the outside, as an FM player, Player Roles to me are the scripts of how players behave in the Match Engine. We often see the term 'under the hood' applied to how player roles behave on the SI forums, because the mystic needs to be there (in my opinion at least) in order for FM to be such an absorbing game. You will not know how a role behaves unless you watch how it behaves, and even then some roles are tweaked between editions of Football Manager. It's a continual learning curve.

So, without watching every player role in isolation (under every team mentality, player instruction and combination around them)...how do you work out which one to initially use? Well, my advice to Alice is simple: "Read the player descriptions to know what a player mostly does". Sounds simple, but I would advise getting a bit of paper out and writing/drawing 'something' of what that player is described as doing...whether that's running, passing, holding his position etc. It needs to make cognitive sense to you, and only to you.

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To take an example, you can take two roles that share the same position and duty (more on duty in second): a Central Midfielder on Attack and a Mezzala on Attack. You can manually add in four Player Instructions to the CM-A in order to be more 'Mezzala-like'. The CM-A can get further forward, move into channels (or stay wider), roam and take more risks. Yet, even by doing this the roles will not behave the same...simply read the description:

- Central Midfielder on Attack: "With an Attack Duty, the Central Midfielder will more readily surge into the final third to support forwards in and around the box"
- Mezzala: "With an Attack Duty, the Mezzala will often leave his midfield responsibilities to his team-mates whilst mainly looking to make attacking contributions in the final third".

What you should glean from this is that no matter what you do with the CM-A, he will always be a midfielder surging into support attacks...whereas the attacking Mezzala will vacate midfield completely (especially that he has the ability to both move into channels and stay wide). He will essentially be an attacker, with a greater free role in your side. Understanding that will help you decide on what's best for your team and the collective.

The Duties you set kind of parallel what I said about Team Mentality in the previous section, mentality will alter their movement and creative license. Depending on the role, you can select Defend, Support or Attacking mentality. To Alice I say:

"Defenders usually Defend and Attackers usually Attack. It's midfield where you should blend the mentalities as you look to turn Defence into Attack, so always have some Support in there"

It's no doubt lost on her, but I think the above practice works to an extent on an extremely basic level. Obviously, you may want some 'blurring of the lines'...e.g. by putting in a solitary Supportive or Attacking Full Back into your 4-4-2 backline effectively distorts the team shape. As that player will be looking to get further forward and link up with teammates.

To recap:

- Choose your player's script, by reading the player descriptions and judging if you want that player to act that way in the Match Engine.
- Draw out implied movement/behaviour if it helps you.
- If this role has multiple duties available, decide what makes sense.

But all of the above will come undone if the combinations are not present in your tactic. For example, if your supportive Advanced Playmaker is perfectly suited to your selected player, but has nobody running beyond him...then his creativity is wasted and he will always have to pass back. Combinations are important.

Get that paper back out and pick a position and ask yourself if the player has the right level of support, passing options and space to flourish. You need a mixture, and not too much of one thing in my opinion. To Alice:

"Combinations are like a balanced diet. Remember the guy I told you about who only ate carrots? Well, he went orange and died. Players in Football Manager need a balanced diet of friends near them to pass to, but also those friends not being too close - who could run into them"

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Having gone through this exercise of explaining it out, I realise that my most memorable teams/tactics (and their successes) are defined by how good the combinations were functioning. Even if I only remember just a few of the guys, and the regular link-ups up they made to one another.

3. Tactical Styles

Tactical styles, in their present form, have been around for a few editions now. Essentially, they are ready-made setups of Team Instructions and Mentality that offer different flavours of football in the match engine. The only thing you need to select is the formation. Some formations suit a particular style in football. For instance, Gegenpress and Wing Play are naturally suited to wide formations because they offer coverage across the pitch.

Showing the tactical styles in FM21 is my last session with Alice, and now that I have told her that our chats (and her photo) will be included in a magazine...she is as enthusiastic as ever (I hadn't told her that it's an extremely niche Latte Quarterly e-magazine just yet). We flick through the styles and I land on Tiki-Taka and ask her what she thinks this kind of football this is.

Alice's quick response surprised me when she said this [tactical style] was like a "one-two", a piece of vocabulary learned from her footballing mentor: Year 1 friend Harley. In her words: "A one-two is where you basically need to be close together". My God, is this 6-year-old a tactical Goddess already? Because here are some of the fundamentals of basic Tiki-Taka. Short passing, playing out of defence, dribbling less with the players being closer together in a narrow formation.

You may be wondering how Alice garnered this opinion so quickly? **It's simple: she simply looked at the blue dots moving on the tactical style summary page.** On seeing this, I quickly moved to Gegenpress and after introducing its German name in an accent (we laughed), I asked her: *"Look at the blue dots and tell me: what is a Gegenpress?"*

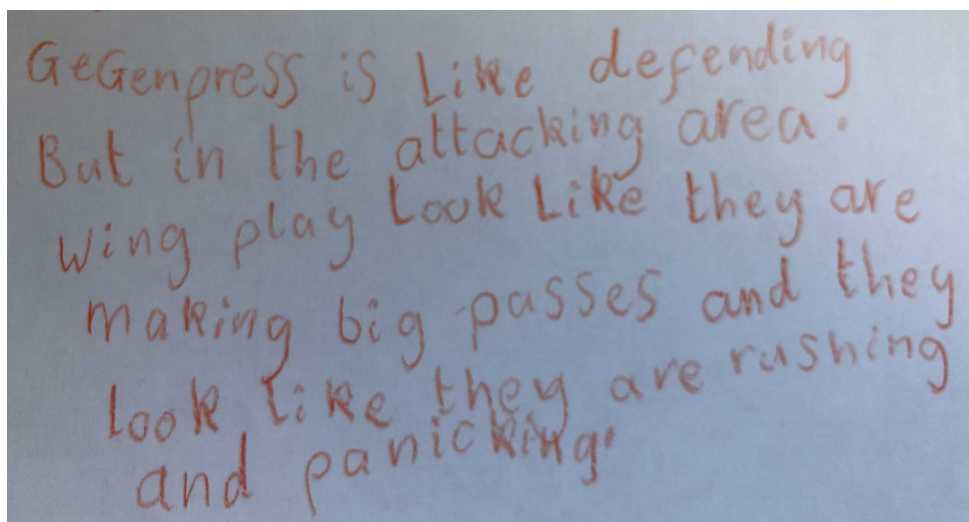
Alice responds: *"Gegenpress is like defending but in the attacking area"*

Holy.Mother.Of.God. Just get a 6-year-old to assess & summarise the moving image in the Tactical Style and you've cracked the code of Football Manager. A Gegenpress is personified by the much higher line of engagement and urgency that Alice is seeing here.

Testing the theory one final time, I drop down the list to Wing Play...seeing if Alice could notice differences in passing...and she got it first time:

"Wing Play looks like they are making big passes and they look like they are rushing and panicking"

Direct Passing on a Higher Tempo - well done Alice! I am genuinely shocked at how far we've come this evening and I am signing off our discussions as a massive parenting win.



4. Conclusion

I remain of the opinion that Football Manager is a complex video game. A game finely coded to mirror football as best it can. But this post has proved that one of its more gripping (and complicated) areas can indeed be broken down into digestible chunks.

This journey with Alice is certainly not a 'one-stop-shop' for all things tactics in Football Manager. But what it has shown me is that Football Manager can be as complicated, or as simple, as you want it to be. From Formations to Player Roles, and all the way through to Gegenpress, if you don't understand something...simply try explaining it to a 6-year-old, and it shall become clearer.

FM Grasshopper





Why I Blog FM – fmadventure

Why do I blog FM? I blog FM simply for my own enjoyment. I guess I could end this article on that basic statement but it wouldn't do any justice to the joy I get from FM and blogging to leave it there.

I've played FM for a long time, I don't think it's necessary to turn this into a phallus appraising exercise and tell you that I first discovered To Madeira. Suffice to say, my romance with the game has long outrun any real life relationship or friendship. I repeat this opinion of FM so much that it's probably become my very own cliché but Football Manager is such a uniquely absurd game. How many other (largely) single player games involve such a community element to them? I play the game in solitude but take great joy in talking to others about my own virtual career.

My first flirtation with blogging came probably close to a decade ago when I would spend an hour of my Monday morning at work writing up an email to a colleague with updates from how my save had gone over the past week. I got the read receipts but did he actually take any interest? I don't think I cared too much, it was just interesting to talk at length into the void about this alternate reality of my own.

The weekly emails were a gateway drug into finding the SI forums and discovering a whole world of like minded people who just wanted to wax lyrical about their 17 year old prodigy with the world at his feet. I didn't post much on the forums but I read plenty and engrossed myself in save after save. After a while I had grown to dislike the format of save updates on a forum. It was just too busy with interjections from outsiders putting their spoke in, I just wanted to read the ups and downs of someone's game at length without any external noise.

Eventually I found my way to twitter and blogging manna from heaven. I discovered the accounts of FMRamblings, Shrewnaldo, FMPressure and later on FMSamo, FM Grasshopper and AccordingtoFM. They were knowledgeable about the game to a depth I didn't really even consider before but what drew me in was just the variety of stories from their saves. Newgens became household names in my own mind. I had to dive in two footed and, having learnt from plenty of research, I needed a nom de plume and including the acronym 'FM' was certainly an unbreakable rule. Thus FM Adventure was born.

I got stuck into Wordpress and I blogged. I don't even remember the saves now but I got a strange buzz from writing about them and sharing them with others. Then people began to get invested in my saves, the same way I had in theirs, and it was great to delve into endless conversations about an entirely fictional world.

Reading this back I start to wonder about my own sanity. We have to level with ourselves sometimes and admit that this world of blogging about a football game is relatively odd but it's what we enjoy. I have no shame in admitting that immersing myself into the playing and writing has really dug me out of a hole at times and got me through difficult periods, be that illness or feeling down. The pros and cons of that are of course a matter for a different article entirely.

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Playing Football Manager is a hobby and a hobby is something that you do for your own personal satisfaction. I don't play golf because I want to make other people happy, I do it for my own enjoyment. This is why I don't bother looking at how many views I get on the blog or how many twitter followers I have. The numbers are fairly irrelevant to why I do it and I'm not sure the reading of them would provide me with too much satisfaction anyway. I don't like to get fanciful and call myself a 'creator' or talk about 'content' - two buzzwords that make my skin crawl when I see them thrown out in relation to playing Football Manager. I feel labels like this tend to lay an unnecessary level of expectation on people to ensure that they don't slack on the blogs/videos/streams.

When it comes to reading blogs, everybody has their own individual tastes. I admire people that can spend hours really delving deep into the mechanics of the game and come up with weird and wonderful ways of finding new players. Some like to religiously study in-game stats and craft crazy visual images to display them. It's not for me though, I'm not really interested in charts for the sake of charts. I just want to be gripped by the twists and turns of someone's save - why have they ended up at this club? Love for a player instantly turning to seething hatred when they refuse to sign a new contract and waltz off for free to a rival.

The world is a strange and, at times, very challenging place. It's important to take joy from wherever you can find it. I get my kicks from various things: family, friends, colleagues and even on the rare occasion from real life football. As absolutely bloody strange as it is to say, FM and blogging finds itself up on that list too!

fmadventure





A Hero's Journey in FM – FM Old Dog

"Mythology is an organization of symbolic images and narratives metaphorical of the possibilities and fulfillment in a given culture in a given time. Mythology is a metaphor."

– Joseph Campbell, "The Hero's Journey: Joseph Campbell on His Life and Work"

As was so ably described by AccordingtoFM previously in Latte Quarterly Volume Two, the Football Manager community can be as apt as the general public to fall prey to fake news, cognitive biases and logical fallacies. This all-too human tendency leads to the persistence of some deeply-held beliefs that can bleed into our behavior when we play the game. Although these have been immortalized in LQ, on FM Slack, and throughout Twitter as #MythMike moments, those situations might be better described as superstitions or even as memes (in the original sense of the word), than as myths.

There are other levels, however, on which mythology operates in Football Manager if you look hard enough. Not just myth, but monomyth, sometimes called the hero's journey.

The complete hero's journey involves some seventeen different stages or possible stages, but is summarized briefly as:

"A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man." Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, p. 23, as quoted at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hero's_journey (last accessed April 10, 2021).

The full stages:

1 Departure

- a. The Call to Adventure
- b. Refusal of the Call
- c. Supernatural Aid
- d. The Crossing of the First Threshold
- e. Belly of the Whale

2. Initiation

- a. The Road of Trials
- b. The Meeting with the Goddess
- c. Woman as the Temptress
- d. Atonement with the Father/
Abyss
- e. Apotheosis
- f. The Ultimate Boon

3. Return

- A. Refusal of the Return
- B. The Magic Flight
- C. Rescue from Without
- D. The Crossing of the Return Threshold
- E. Master of the Two Worlds
- F. Freedom to Live

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The progenitor of the monomyth was Joseph Campbell, who laid out the theory in his 1949 book *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, which took its name from the theory that many stories, from a variety of cultures throughout the world, share certain characteristics. That, in effect, the hero of all of these stories was the same, despite different details or cultural variations.

Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century this theory gained currency and was used not only as a lens through which to see old stories, but a template that could be used to frame new ones. George Lucas was heavily influenced by Joseph Campbell in the writing of *Star Wars*. See *Empire of Dreams: The Story of the Star Wars Trilogy* at 9:12.

Lucas met with Campbell and discussed *Star Wars* with him and has said of his goals in writing the *Star Wars* movies "I've tried to take the ideas that seem to cut across the most cultures, because I'm fascinated by that and I think that's one of the things that I really got from Joe Campbell, was that — what he was trying to do is find the common threads through the various mythology, through the — the religions." See *The Mythology of 'Star Wars' with George Lucas* at <https://billmoyers.com/content/mythology-of-star-wars-george-lucas/> (last accessed April 24, 2021).

Luke's journey in both the first film and throughout the first trilogy follows the structure laid out by Campbell. Consider that in *A New Hope* he discovers the message from Leia in R2-D2, then finds Obi-Wan, who asks him to go on an adventure. Luke at first refuses, but when he returns home he finds his aunt and uncle dead. Thus, he sets out from the only home he has ever known. He learns of the Force and begins to be tutored in using it, but he and his friends find themselves facing obstacles and are cast down into the abyss (literally in the garbage compactor scene, figuratively when Obi-Wan is struck down). They rally and overcome these preliminary obstacles, then face a decisive battle. During this battle Luke rejects the Force, seemingly forsaking the gifts he has been promised. At the last minute he relents and uses it to claim ultimate victory, for which he is rewarded. And so on for the next few films, but I'm told this is supposed to be an FM article, not about *Star Wars*.

To give another prime example, even the *Lord of the Rings* follows many aspects of this structure. Recall that the true rewards for Frodo at the end are not just that he has destroyed the ring and ensured the greater race, but that he and his friends can drive the bad men out of the Shire that Saruman had brought into it and then that he sails away to the West with Gandalf, Bilbo, and other friends and companions.

After the success of the original trilogy of *Star Wars*, Campbell appeared in a US television series with Bill Moyers called *The Power of Myth* in 1988. Moyers, a respected journalist and former White House press secretary for Lyndon Johnson, helped popularize the theory for a whole new generation. Sadly, Campbell had passed away from cancer shortly before the series aired. The book which accompanied the series, also called *The Power of Myth*, provides an accessible introduction to Campbell's concepts. This was a good development given that *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* is more akin to a textbook than the pop psychology books most of us are probably used to reading today.

Campbell's theory was that this basic structure was the underpinning of most of the stories that have been told throughout the world, whether the adventure is writ small as in a child going to fetch water from the well and meeting a fairy, troll, or trickster, or as large as a royal hunting party going out and running afoul of the gods.

Campbell's work and the monomyth theory certainly has some large blind spots and areas that are downright cringe-worthy these days, and there are several valid criticisms. These include his sexism in describing the hero's journey as typically male (often with a woman as the goal or prize at the end) and his selective reading of some cultures' myths and stories in order to fit them into his theory. Then too, there is the criticism that characterizing everything as a hero's journey can lead to a dilution of real heroism. Further, some argue that he imposes the Judeo-Christian concept of a savior onto myths from disparate communities which historically do not use that concept. Others think that he attempted to

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force the foundational Judeo-Christian stories into mythic structures when that tradition should stand alone, making his efforts at best unnecessary and at worst heresy.

Despite these criticisms, many of which are undeniable, his influence has been large and there is no doubt that many major works of fiction from the second half of the 20th Century and the first part of this one have taken a template from his work. He has also spawned a secondary flowering of theories of other ways of looking at story structures. If you want to spend a fun few hours falling down various internet rabbit holes look for Dan Harmon's Story Circle, the seven basic plots, the book *Save the Cat* and its sequels, or just browse <http://tvtropes.org> for a while.

At this point, a reader may be forgiven for wondering if this has anything to do with FM (also a frequent question that was asked about my short-lived FM blogging). To be sure, FM does not give us the linear narrative of a Star Wars movie, or even a narrative game like a *Zelda*, *Red Dead Redemption*, or *Goldeneye*. Yet it's also not a sandbox like a *Minecraft*, *Animal Crossing*, or *No Man's Sky*. So what is the role of narrative or the monomyth in FM? As a simulation game, isn't it more like *Civilization* or *Cities: Skylines*, where you're just building something? After all, the game just keeps going and you never finish it. There's always a new season.

Anyone who follows Miles Jacobson on Twitter can see that he has an appreciation for narratives, particularly films. While FM does not include what on some games might be called a story mode, there are ways that you can have an underlying journey in the game. Here are three ways monomyth can be seen in FM... with slight stretching in some cases.

First and most obviously, there are many FM content creators who create entire narrative adventures for their managers. The best of these weave FM in and around a detailed story, sometimes lasting through multiple editions of the game and sometimes quick nearly daily updates. *FM Grasshopper*, *FM Eadster*, *FM Stag*, and the crew at *From the Cheap Seats* all do this well, to name just a few. Do these stories hit all of the hero's journey stages? Probably not, but they hit enough to keep things interesting!

Second, think purely of the basic pattern many saves take: your manager leaves home by taking over a club. Even if you're just becoming manager of the team you've rooted for all your life that plays just down the street, it's new for the manager in the game. After all, you've just created her or him. Sometimes the save progresses for a bit, a few hours of gameplay or a few days of gametime, and it becomes obvious that this is not the save which will hold your attention, thus refusal of the call. Do you refuse the call completely though? Of course not, you start another save.

Then there's the bringing in new staff and players who often inspire an initial burst of success, this may often be followed by a mid-season drop in form, leaving things tight as the season heads to a conclusion. Sometimes, the drop doesn't come at mid-season and the first season is a triumph, but instead the club runs into the dreaded sophomore slump, where the second season turns into much more of a slog than the first was. After coming through this period, often with the aid of the game's version of supernatural help, you bring back a boon to share in the form of prize or tv money to share with the players and improve the squad.

What's that? You don't believe the game gives supernatural help? Doesn't it sometimes seem that the game injects some unnatural boost? Whether it is coaches who should be too good for your level, players who are too cheap for their abilities, or just the fact that any given human-controlled team seems to have a leg up on the competition, I think the game helps out. Don't believe me? Though it uses an imperfect tool, try this experiment: take over a club in the lowest tier of a nation. At the end of your first season, pick out a few of your players and use the comparison tool of "find similar players." See if your players don't compare with players at higher level teams or in more competitive nations.

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In my own FM21 save I struggled for a few seasons to get staff. I have been managing Alta, who start the game in the Norwegian 3rd tier. As far as I can determine, Alta are the northernmost club in the game. Consequently, there's a decent sense of realism in that even many Norwegian coaches told me that it was too geographically remote for them to consider joining us. After a few seasons I was really beginning to grit my teeth and get frustrated at the near total lack of decent staff prospects (really, at some points I felt I was offering contracts to the only physio who was willing to talk with me, even if they had a 6 or 7 for physiotherapy).

Just at that point, someone came up who was willing to discuss a contract: Patrice Evra. Now, although he never seems to have played in Norway, I'm willing to concede that somewhere right at this moment Patrice Evra may be giving an interview about a long-held dream to coach in the Norwegian lower leagues... but I doubt it. And compared to who we had coaching for us at the time, it seemed a supernatural development. For instance, my assistant at the time had attributes far below Evra's and was on a month-to-month contract because he wouldn't even discuss a renewal with me!

Similarly, just as I was lamenting that I couldn't find any decent players, who do my scouts turn up but an 18-year old Brazilian newgen good enough to play nearly anywhere on the pitch for us. Who had just happened to have been released on a free and ended up in my save's universe. Thanks to poky laptop speed, I don't have Brazil loaded in the game, it's not all that easy to get a work permit in Norway for an unproven player, and we had still not cracked the top tier yet. Yet he showed up right on my doorstep. Supernatural? You be the judge. Think back on your own save and decide for yourself whether you think you've been very good, very lucky or if there's a thumb on the scale.

This supernatural aid can lead to a jump on quality that leads you to the crossing of a threshold which is a point of no return. You've gotten your club promoted or into a continental competition and nearly the whole squad want pay raises. You're never going to be go back to having a total wage budget of £1,000 a week and have to admit that you're now managing a different club than you were in the beginning.

Even after this aid is given, do we see many saves that go on long unbeaten runs and win domestic and continental competitions? Yes, some, but we see many more which still face stumbling blocks. Making the final only to fall at the last hurdle and be cast down into the abyss. After all what is the abyss in Football Manager? The beginning of the season (or pre-season even) when you have to start all over again, fend off clubs trying to take your players, ensure that training is still sound, make any tactical tweaks needed due to squad changes and then gird yourself for another forty, fifty, or even sixty match season.

Now, not all of the stages of the hero's journey are present in Football Manager. But even here we can see the outlines of the temptress, as when a larger club offered you a job interview just as you start finding success, or atonement, when you bring back the player who had been sold as a youngster but now as a wily veteran helps you take the next leap.

If we take a step back, maybe there's a third way in which the hero's journey can be seen in the Football Manager community. After all, if you're reading this, you've gone outside the game to learn more or try to play better. In the context of the entities in the game, isn't that a bit supernatural?

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Why do we play FM? Campbell might say we do because we want to feel alive.

"People say that what we're all seeking is a meaning for life. I don't think that's what we're really seeking. I think that what we're seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances with our own innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive."

- Joseph Campbell, The Power of Myth, p. 5

We pick up FM, we struggle, or we pick up FM because we struggle with something else. Or there's no struggle and we can share what has brought us success with others.

We gather in discords, on Twitter, in twitch streams, on slack. What are we looking for? Assistance, not just with the game, but with life. After all, there are members of the FM community who aren't even playing the game regularly. Some of them host podcasts. From time to time. What if the whole point of FM was the friends we made along the way?

After all, what does the original Star Wars trilogy end with? Luke smilingly gazing at his father figures before letting himself be led back to a party with his friends. Since the start of the first movie he has found not one, but two communities of which to be a part.

FM Old Dog



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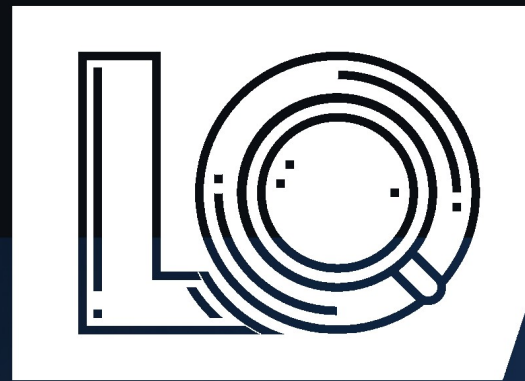
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We invite articles of serious analysis, tactical discussion, guides, hints and tips or even tongue in cheek humour.

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